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Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Columbus Day 1892 (Part 2)

America recently recognized Columbus Day on October 11, 2021. A review of the history of this patriotic holiday is especially important in light of the increasingly diminished emphasis on patriotism in our nation today.

Not until 1937, by order of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, did Columbus Day become a federal holiday to be observed every year on October 12. Since 1971, the holiday has been recognized annually on the second Monday of October.

The first nationwide observance of Columbus Day was held on October 21, 1892 by proclamation of U.S. President Benjamin Harrison to mark the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' landing in the New World. U.S. Commissioner of Education William Torrey Harris echoed the President's proclamation by issuing a resolution for all public schools in the Republic to unite in celebration of the first Columbus Day. North Carolina Governor Thomas M. Holt promptly followed by issuing a resolution:

1892, August 18: "Columbus Day October 21, 1892 [is to] be observed as a general public school holiday throughout the State of North Carolina. On the soil of this State, more than three centuries ago, the first child of all the English-speaking millions of America[ns] was born. It is fit and proper that the children of this commonwealth should renew the patriotic vows of their illustrious ancestors, and begin the fifth century of American history with an act of devotion to their common country." (*Goldsboro News Argus*)

Despite the momentous proclamations and resolutions, the first Columbus Day was not universally recognized. Available public records that year confirmed no reported event in Bucklesberry or in the nearby towns of La Grange and Kinston. Archived local newspapers for 1892 are incomplete, however, and Columbus Day programs in one-room schoolhouses like Hickory Grove School in Bucklesberry may have occurred.

Goldsboro was the nearest town to Bucklesberry that reportedly held a Columbus Day event. The planning and excitement leading up to the big celebration, including an announcement on the eve of Columbus Day, was palpable:

1892, October 18: "All business men who intend to take a prominent part in the Columbus Day parade next Friday, are requested to send their names to Mayor Hollowell today, in order that

they may be assigned a position in the march. Please attend to this today." (*Goldsboro Daily Argus*)

1892, October 20: "The Columbus Day celebration tomorrow will be the grandest sight ever witnessed here. In the forenoon there will be an industrial street parade, composed of all the local lodges, military company, fire department, all the graded school children, historical and business floats, bands of music, culminating with interesting exercises on the graded school grounds. At night a historical program will be carried out at the Opera House by local talent for the benefit of the library fund. All railroads entering the city have agreed to give reduced rates." (*The Goldsboro Headlight*)

More details on the first Columbus Day event in Goldsboro will be shared in the next Bucklesberry article.