

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Columbus Day 1892 (Part 3)

The first nationwide observance of Columbus Day was held in 1892, marking the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' landing in the New World. Despite both a presidential proclamation and a gubernatorial resolution, available public records revealed no reported celebrations or events in Bucklesberry or greater Lenoir County that year.

Archived local newspapers are incomplete, however, and a patriotic program may have occurred at Bucklesberry's one-room schoolhouse, Hickory Grove School, since Columbus Day was declared a holiday in the State's public schools.

The closest town to Bucklesberry that held an event was Goldsboro. It was a spectacular celebration of the highest order likely attended by some Bucklesberrians, according to published reports:

1892, October 23: "The Greatest Gala Day in the History of the town...Columbus Day—dawned bright and beautiful in Goldsboro, and from an early hour the city was astir with busy preparations for the day's public observance....Promptly at 10 o'clock the various historical, industrial and trade floats, the fire companies, the Goldsboro Rifles, the mounted Knights and carriages began to arrive at the starting point, and at 11 o'clock sharp the procession moved on its march of the city, and all along the line, throughout all the streets of crowded spectators...wonder and admiration and public-spirited gratification prevailed with prolonged enthusiasm. Even the most sanguine had not expected anything half so grand, beautiful and imposing. It was a spontaneous *Mardi Gras*, so to speak, of historic characters and brilliant pageantry, and will long be remembered in Goldsboro as the most imposing and successful public celebration of any day in all her past history....its inception and brilliant culmination is largely due to Prof. J[oseph] Y. Joyner, the efficient Superintendent of our City Schools, and Hon. A. B. Hollowell, the patriotic and aggressive Mayor of our city....Visitors from nearly every town in the State were here, and all agreed in common that it eclipsed anything of the kind they had ever seen in any of their respective towns..." (*Goldsboro Daily Argus*)

Not to be excluded in the day's festivities was participation of the Goldsboro Colored School and the State Normal School that afternoon before a large crowd. Details of their excellent program were also reported:

1892, October 25: "Reading, President's [Benjamin Harrison] proclamation. Raising, cheering and saluting the flag. Pupils pledge [of] allegiance. Singing—*America*. Prayer, by Rev. C. Dillard.

Singing—*Star Spangled Banner*. Address, by Prof. H. E. Hagans. Singing—*Glory Hallelujah*. *Columbus Catechism*, conducted by Mr. Hagans. Singing—*Columbia the Gem of the Ocean*. The exercises were interspersed with lively music by the Colored Goldsboro Cornet Band. The event of the day was the address by the able Prof. Hagans [Principal, State Normal School], who spoke [about]...the life and adventures of Columbus and the effect of his great discovery upon the civilization of the world..." (*Goldsboro Daily Argus*)

Unfortunately, almost one hundred thirty years later, Columbus Day 2021 was recognized with little fanfare. Celebrated for decades with great pride and patriotism, this national holiday essentially has been reduced to a date on the calendar, although it remains a paid holiday for federal employees. Overlooking entirely Columbus' discovery of the New World, undue criticism of the explorer by some progressive groups today has resulted in dismissal of Columbus Day in lieu of an alternative Indigenous Peoples' Day.