

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Thanksgiving 1879 (Part 2)

More than two centuries passed between the first Pilgrim Thanksgiving in 1621 and the proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 that established a national Thanksgiving Day. Not all towns and communities were initially on-board with an annual observance of Thanksgiving, even after passage of time.

Upwards to two decades later, apathy within some rural towns and communities was reported. One week before Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1879, local newspaper editor James W. Harper lamented, "Will the people of this section observe the [Thanksgiving] day? We suppose not. They paid but little attention to it last fall and it is to be presumed that they will do likewise now..." (*Kinston Journal*, November 20, 1879).

Harper's assessment was spot-on accurate for Bucklesberry and La Grange. Published reports on and surrounding Thanksgiving Day that year reflected typical, routine happenings. La Grange news leading up to Thanksgiving week indicated nothing special:

1879, November 13: "La Grange Items—J. R. Heath, becoming boisterous and profane on the street today, was taken in charge by policeman Murchison and carried before the Mayor, who finding him rather drunk for trial proposed to wait till tomorrow, while his subject cooled off in the town lockup." (*Kinston Journal*)

Although complimentary of the town of La Grange, the report filed by 'Roving John' on Thanksgiving Day was about his travels in late October, totally devoid of any news about Thanksgiving:

1879, November 27: "La Grange is a beautiful, thriving, little town. Its inhabitants are clever, social and hospitable. Mr. Kinsey has one of the best schools here to be found in eastern Carolina. He was born to be a teacher. If I had my boys to send off to school, I should send them to Jos. Kinsey. He is not only a 'natural born' teacher in the school room, but also preeminently a teacher of Christianity in his daily walks. Mr. Kinsey is doing a great deal for La Grange. A good school helps very much to build up a place, and with the school they have at La Grange, we do not wonder at the town growing very rapidly. They have two nice churches also at this place, viz., Methodist and Missionary Baptist, a religious paper, edited by Rev. B[ushrod] W[ashington] Nash, and many other attractions of which we cannot now speak, as we have to pass through Greene and back through Lenoir, Jones and Craven to the land of fishes" (*Kinston Journal*)

Similarly, news reported for La Grange the week after Thanksgiving indicated no mention whatsoever of any special events:

1879, December 4: "La Grange Items—Dr. Wooley is quite sick....The White Concert Troupe gave a very entertaining performance here some days ago. Though blind they verify the old saying: 'Where there's a will, there's a way.' Besides making a living they are collecting funds for the establishment of an asylum for the blind. They travel through the country by private conveyance and the four represent three States, Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia." (*Kinston Journal*)

Other than the heralded annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City, there are few public celebrations of Thanksgiving in local towns and cities today. In modern America for many folks, Thanksgiving Day has morphed into private gatherings where God's bountiful blessings are still rightfully recounted.