

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Agriculture 1927 (Part 4)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture *1927 Soil Survey of Lenoir County, N.C.* documented farm life in Bucklesberry and the broader community. Authors R. C. Jurney and W. A. Davis profiled structures, dwellings, animals, machinery, fertilizer, farm labor, renting, share cropping, and land value. Excerpts from this historically significant report follow:

"Most of the farm dwellings are large and substantial, although many of the newer homes are of the smaller urban type. Tenant houses are generally small. The barns are as large as the type of agriculture pursued requires, and there are many outbuildings for storage purposes. Tractors are in use on many farms. The fences are mostly woven wire with barbed wire at the top. The work animals are both mules and horses, but mules predominate. Practically every farmer has an automobile and many have more than one."

"Definite crop rotations are not followed in Lenoir County. Some farmers follow a 4-year rotation of cotton, tobacco seeded to rye, corn and soybeans grown together, and cotton. Tobacco is often grown on the same land for three or four years in succession. Corn is produced continuously on the dark land of the [Neuse] River terraces. Tobacco and cotton are frequently followed by rye grown for a winter cover crop."

"According to the 1925 census, the purchase of fertilizers at a total outlay of \$682,490, or an average of \$217.70 to the farm, was reported on 3,135 farms from a total of 3,353 farms. Most of the fertilizer is ready mixed, but some farmers use home mixtures of practically the same chemical composition as the commercial grades. A complete fertilizer of the 3-8-31 grade is almost universally used....Magnesium limestone is used to some extent on tobacco land to prevent sand drown. To provide a part of the total ammonia, nitrate of soda is applied to cotton as a top-dressing at the rate of 100 or 200 pounds an acres. About the same amounts of this material are applied to corn when the plants are from 2 to 4 feet high. Stable manure is used on the light land for corn. Tobacco land is also given a very light application of stable manure. Lime is used by some farmers on corn and legumes. The home-mixed fertilizer is usually composed of cottonseed meal, superphosphate (acid phosphate), kainit, and nitrate of soda. It is applied to crops in about the same quantities as the ready-mixed grades..."

"The labor supply, which is mainly colored, is fairly efficient. The price paid by the month ranges from \$30 to \$35 without board, and from \$20 to \$25 with board. The price by the day ranges from \$1 to \$1.50. Cotton pickers received from \$1 to \$1.50 a hundred pounds. Laborers in tobacco fields receive from \$1.50 to \$3 a day and tobacco curers from \$25 to \$35 a week."

"According to the 1925 census, 27.8 percent of the farms are operated by owners, 71.6 percent by tenants, and 0.6 per cent by managers. Tenancy was 55.7 per cent in 1880. Under the share rental system the landlord furnishes land, work animals, and one-half the fertilizer and receives one-half the crop. A small acreage of land is rented for cash."

"In 1925, according to the Census, the average value of land was \$53.83 an acre. The price of land varies with the location in respect to towns, markets, good roads, churches, and schools, and with the value of the timber growth. Farm lands command from \$50 to \$250 an acre, the prevailing price being about \$100 an acre." (pp. 5-6)

More from the 1927 *Soil Survey of Lenoir County, N.C* will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.