

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Agriculture 1927 (Part 5)

During the 1960s, a Bucklesberry farmer reportedly discouraged his children from carrying on the farming tradition. He advised them instead to go to college where they could learn another trade or profession. He was a small-scale farmer. Working fewer than a hundred acres of land, he made a comfortable life for his family. Although he loved farming and bequeathed the land to his children, he saw no future in farming for them.

Bucklesberry and other rural communities have very few small-scale farmers today. Some younger farmers, in particular, must cultivate a thousand or more acres of land in order to begin to make a living. Far from small-scale.

In today's economy, farming land alone typically will not pay the bills. Farmers must engage in additional related work such as hog finishing, turkey production and the like to generate needed funds to care for their families. Some even work other part- or full-time jobs simultaneously while they farm to make ends meet.

Small-scale farming nonetheless has been the backbone of working America for many generations. Almost a century ago, the *Soil Survey of Lenoir County, N.C.* published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture documented small-scale farm life in Bucklesberry and the broader community in 1927. Authors R. C. Journey and W. A. Davis concluded their report with the following summary:

"Lenoir County is in the eastern part of North Carolina and has a land area of 399 square miles or 255,360 acres. The relief ranges from almost level to undulating and gently rolling. The elevation above seal level ranges from about 25 to 125 feet. Drainage conditions vary from good to moderate and inadequate. A large percentage of the land is well drained."

"A county was formed in 1791. Kinston is the county seat and largest town. Railroad facilities are good and hard-surfaced State highways extend to nearly all parts of the county. Kinston and La Grange are important cotton markets and Kinston is also an important tobacco market. The climate is mild, the average length of the frost-free season being 209 days."

"Agriculture began in the county prior to the Revolutionary War. At present it consists of the production of cotton and tobacco as cash crops, and of corn, hay, and forage as subsistence crops. Dairying and hog raising are of minor importance."

"Definite systems of crop rotation are not followed. Commercial fertilizer is in general use. A large percentage of the land is farmed by tenants. The average value of the land in 1925 was \$53.83 an acre."

"The soils of Lenoir County are divided into two groups, the well drained and the poorly drained soils. The well-drained soils include members of the Norfolk, Kalmia, Dunbar, Ruston, Lenoir, and Cahaba series, and the poorly drained include the Okenee, Leaf, Portsmouth, Plummer, Bladen, Coxvill, Leon, and Johnson soils, and swamp."

"The important farming soils are Norfolk fine sandy loam, Norfolk sandy loam, Kalmia sandy loam, Kalmia sand, Okenee loam, Okenee sandy loam, Dunbar fine sandy loam, Ruston fine sandy loam, and Leaf very fine sandy loam. The minor farming soils are the fine sandy loam, deep phase, fine sand, sand, and loamy sand of the Norfolk series, Kalmia fine sandy loam, Leon very fine sandy loam, Bladen fine sandy loam, Cahaba fine sandy loam, and Johnston Loam."
(*Soil Survey of Lenoir County, N.C.*, p. 24)