

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Farmers United 1873 (Part 2)

Bucklesberrians faced unusually difficult times in 1873. Although cotton production soared that year, farmers were hamstrung by a dwindling labor force. Pitifully low cotton prices made matters worse. Farmers had little money to buy needed supplies and services for their families.

That same year physicians decided to raise medical fees. Like rubbing salt in a wound, farmers were understandably irritated. In response, they united at a countywide meeting in La Grange on May 24, 1873 to voice their concerns for what they believed to be inequitable business practice.

On May 29, the *Goldsboro Messenger* published the proceedings of this organizational meeting that included seven carefully crafted resolutions, the first of which was provided in last week's article. Below are five of the remaining six resolutions:

"Resolved 2nd, That we will thus unite and organize ourselves and by our united action protect in every way, our common interest as a class and in doing so protect the interest of all."

"Resolved 3rd, That we do now organize ourselves for that purpose under the name of La Grange Farmers' and Laborers, Mutual Protection Club."

"Resolved 4th, That a Committee of three be appointed by the Chairman of this meeting, to prepare by-laws, rules and regulations for our government and report the same to our next meeting."

"Resolved 5th, That the fee bills as recently published by the physicians of this County, [are] the outcroppings of oppression and [are] the ingenious work of crafty and selfish men, and that we will not employ any physician that adheres to and charges any such rates."

"Resolved 6th, That we see no reason for larger fees than were charged in antebellum days as the cost of living is no greater now than it was then, either for man or beast. We will therefore not pay any more for medical attention now than we did then, and we now by this resolution give notice to every physician that this shall be understood and form our part of the contract in case he is called upon to attend any of us or our families, and anything charged beyond that will be resisted and only paid when determined by our courts of law."

Two Bucklesberry farmers who helped facilitate this meeting were Samuel Ivey (S. I.) Sutton (1834-1904) and James Wood (1815-1875). S. I.'s farm was located on the north side of the

Neuse River in the Frog Point area of Bucklesberry near the bridge on the east and west sides of Hardy Bridge Road.

James Wood owned land on the north and south sides of Kennedy Home Road in the Pot Neck vicinity. His plantation house, believed to have been built by the Civil War period, still stands today. Now bearing the name of his son, the Dempsey Wood house has been handsomely restored and was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Current owners are James and Janet Lambert.

Also in 1873, Lenoir County farmers united once more to establish a local chapter of the Grange at a July 7 meeting in Kinston. Known more formally as the Order of the Patrons of Husbandry, the Grange was a rural association of farmers that promoted community values and impacted State agricultural policies.

Among the farmers named as officers of the Lenoir County Grange was Benjamin Franklin Sutton (1838-1897). Benjamin owned a sizeable farm along the Hardy Bridge Road in the Frog Point area of Bucklesberry. His homeplace, no longer standing, was situated directly across the highway from the residence of Francis Burke Sutton and the late William (Billy) Pickard Sutton (1924-1993), grandson of Benjamin.