

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Dempsey E. Wood (Part 5)

Sportsman and Bucklesberrian Dempsey Eugene Wood (1847-1921) loved fishing seemingly more than life itself. Journalists all across the State were captivated with Dempsey's success at the sport and routinely wrote about it.

As the 1800s came to a close, Dempsey established himself as a seasoned, expert angler who could haul big catches that continued into the next century:

1908, July 24: "Mr. Dempsey Wood, of Falling Creek, the veteran fisherman, came up from Pamlico County this morning on the P. O. and W. train, where he has been trying his luck with the hook and line which was very good. He had along with him a nice lot of fish...." (*The New Bern Sun*)

1913, June 20: "Dempsey Wood of Kinston, the champion angler of Eastern North Carolina, made another fine catch of fish a few miles below New Bern yesterday afternoon. With Mr. Wood were Mr. and Mrs. R. M. Bryan and the party succeeded in catching fifty pounds of fish with hand lines in three hours. Their catch consisted of several varieties of the finny tribe." (*The New Berne Weekly Journal*)

Dempsey was passionate about fishing. He loved it so much that he would fish long periods of time, sometimes to the point of exhaustion:

1917, October 5: "According to fishermen returning from Morehead City and Beaufort, the sound is filled with fish of most every variety, and for the past few days anglers have reported unusual luck. Mr. Dempsey Wood, of Kinston, and one of the best known fishermen in Eastern North Carolina, passed through New Bern last night returning from a short fishing trip, and he stated that he actually caught fish until he was tired. He was accompanied by Mr. W. G. Jones and stated that it kept [one] man busy all the time baiting their hooks and taking the fish off for them." (*The Morning New Bernian*)

Occasionally, Dempsey would encounter reptiles and other animals on his fishing trips, readily reported by journalists:

1909, October 13: "Mr. Dempsey Wood, of Kinston, who has been on a fishing trip to Oriental, was a visitor in the city yesterday. He was exhibiting a large sea turtle weighing about fifty

pounds, which he caught with a small hook and line while there. After seeing the turtle it seemed rather impossible for it to have been hooked with anything less than a spike or something similar." (*News and Observer*, Raleigh)

1919, November 4: "Dempsey Wood of this city [Kinston], and A[shby] L. Baker, of Raleigh, are back from their monthly fishing trip in the coast country with a big record for a week's outing. Mr. Wood, retired businessman who has fished for 'everything in the western hemisphere nearly,' reports a bear hunt as a side line on the recent trip. A month ago their yacht penned a porpoise family in a creek and enjoyed the novel diversion of capturing them. Messrs. Baker and Wood caught 277 black bass in Pamlico and Pungo Rivers last week." (*The Charlotte Observer*)

As Dempsey neared the end of his life, he set fishing records and took extended fishing trips and cruises on yachts with friends, the focus of next week's Bucklesberry article.