

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Dempsey E. Wood (Part 8)

Champion fisherman and crack shot hunter, Dempsey Eugene Wood (1847-1921) wore a number of hats when it came to work. He was a stockholder with the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad and served on the board of directors for many years. Also a politician, Dempsey was elected to the State House of Representatives in 1883-1884.

But Dempsey's first livelihood was farming. He was widely regarded as one of the best farmers in Lenoir County and the surrounding area. In addition to operating his own farm, he showed great insight in evaluating crop conditions and farming trends. His assessments were reported by local newspapers:

1883, July 3: "The Crop Outlook. The following replies have been received at the Cotton Exchange in reply to inquiries sent out by the Secretary, giving the condition of the crop up to the 1st of July....Dempsey Wood, Falling Creek: Condition very good; weather rather too wet; stand very good, and about eight days later." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1887, February 24: "Dempsey Wood, Esq., made a flying trip to the city [New Bern] on Tuesday night, returning next morning. He says the fertilizer craze, from the best information he could get, was not on the wane yet. He was looking after Burrus' oyster shell lime, manufactured in this city, which he knows to be what it is recommended." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1889, July 21: "Mr. Dempsey Wood, of Lenoir [County], was in town [Wilmington] Saturday. He reports the crop outlook in his section not encouraging." (*The Wilmington Messenger*)

1899, August 20: "Crops Damaged By Storm. Mr. Dempsey Wood, a director of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, was a visitor in the city [Raleigh] yesterday. Mr. Wood reports that the storm did much damage in the east. Corn and cotton were blown down in several counties. Mr. Wood says the crops were damaged as far as Goldsboro." (*The Morning Post*, Raleigh)

1901, July 16: "The testimony as to the badness of North Carolina crops is overwhelming. Dempsey Wood of Lenoir County, whose section is noted for good farming, says the crops there and elsewhere, so far as he has seen are the poorest in many years. He says: 'All the fertilizer is washed out of the ground. This is the reason why nothing grows.' Even on the very best tended farms in this part of the State the crops are pitifully small. More peas will be planted than ever before, large as that crop always is." (*The Asheville Weekly Citizen*)

1901, July 17: "Yesterday Mr. Dempsey Wood, of Falling Creek, sent *The Post* a full grown cotton boll that grew on his place. He says he has many more just like it." (*The Morning Post*, Raleigh)

1901, August 21: "Mr. Dempsey Wood, one of the best farmers in Lenoir County, is in the city [Raleigh]. He says the corn crop is very poor—the worst in twenty years; the tobacco crop light and chaffy, and that not more than one-half a crop of cotton will be made." (*News and Observer*, Raleigh)

Dempsey's views on farming continued to be of interest to the public and were reported by news outlets years after he announced his retirement from farming in 1906. These will be shared in next week's article.