

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## White Oak Grove Church (Part 8)

Recently identified documents in the Church of God magazine, *The Gospel Messenger*, provide definitive proof of White Oak Grove's earliest beginnings. Over the ten-year period from 1896 to 1905, fourteen published reports referenced White Oak Grove, founding pastor, Rev. Louis Barkley Foss (1834-1908), or other church planting efforts in the greater La Grange area.

One previously reprinted report was a heartfelt letter from Louis in 1902 about the church he planted at Bear Creek in Bucklesberry. What began as a Christian Union (now, Church of God) work around 1893 was eventually chartered by the Brethren Church and named, White Oak Grove, in September, 1900.

Acknowledged in his letter, Louis faced persecution from family and friends for embracing a church governance other than the traditional Baptist and Methodist of the day. Yet he persevered, and White Oak Grove began to grow. The last of three 1902 reports was optimistic for Louis' fledgling church:

1902, October 18: "Seven Springs—During the first days of September Bro. [Louis Barkley] Foss, Bro. Mitchell and myself made our annual [White Oak Grove] church visit to all the members but one or two. We found them in the faith. Sept. 13 Bro. T. C. Denton came among us and remained a week preaching ten sermons, holding one council meeting and one love feast. Fourteen communed. During the meeting two were added to the fold by baptism, Bro. Briant Mitchell was elected deacon, and Bro. Foss advanced in his ministerial work. Since the organization of the church, two years ago, she has increased numerically seventy-five per cent and spiritually some.—N. N. Garst. Seven Springs, N.C., Oct. 7." (p. 668)

White Oak Grove was not the only church being planted by the Brethren in the area. Joining Louis in expanding their presence was Rev. Noah N. Garst, home missionary assigned by the national Brethren leadership.

Meetings and outreaches held at other nearby locations included Dail schoolhouse (Seven Springs), Goundnut schoolhouse (northeast of La Grange, probably in the vicinity of Groundnut Creek), Gaynos schoolhouse (unknown location), and the Genoa community (intersection of U.S. Highway 117 south toward Mount Olive and US Highway 13 west toward Grantham). Louis was actively involved, according to two 1903 reports from Rev. Garst:

1903, March 28: "Seven Springs–Feb. 1. I began meetings at an old schoolhouse we might call the Dail schoolhouse, for it belongs to a Mr. Dail. He has granted me the use of it for awhile. At the place I held fourteen meetings in succession with very good interest. Since then Bro. [Louis Barkley] Foss preached there once to an attentive audience. The first Sunday in March I had two meetings at Gaynos schoolhouse, where we had good attention and interest by a goodly number of people. On Monday night following we had meeting at Ground Nut schoolhouse. Perhaps I shall get the use of the church at this place. At these places the people seem to have the right spirit toward all persons. The more I am among these people, the more I love to be here. I am glad I have the opportunity to work here.–N. N. Garst, Seven Springs, N.C, March 16." (*The Gospel Messenger*, p. 204)

The second 1903 report will be shared in next week's Bucklesberry article.