

Bucklesberry, Back in

Lillian Sutton Perry (Part 15)

The untimely death of Lillian Sutton Perry's (1864-1946) husband Daniel Elijah Perry (1847-1897) doubtless shook her to the core. But with strength of character, she picked up the pieces of her life and moved forward by the grace of God.

Lillian remained a widow and never remarried. There are no indications that she ever worked outside the home. As her children grew into adulthood, news items were periodically published about happenings in her life. Among the early reports was an interesting purchase she made:

1898, April 25: "Mr. T. R. Huffines, of Rocky Mount, delivered a fine Lester piano to Mrs. Lillian Perry yesterday and left today for his home." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

The Lester Piano Company of Philadelphia was established in 1888. With a reputation of affordable, well-built grand, upright and spinet instruments, Lester pianos were most popular in the early-twentieth century. Lillian bought her piano on the threshold of the company's emerging success.

A love for piano playing likely explained Lillian's desire to have a fine piano in her home. She first studied piano as a former student at Kinston Collegiate Institute. As she furthered her education at Salem Female Academy, advanced piano playing was included in her curricular program.

Although Lillian and her children were blessed with a secure and comfortable lifestyle, they were not immune from accidents and tragedies. One that touched them directly occurred as the New Year of 1899 rolled-in:

1899, January 7: "The fire department answered the alarm this afternoon very quickly, having the engine nearly to the scene of the fire in less than five minutes, when a messenger announced that the fire was out. The fire was at the home of Mrs. Lillian Perry, on the edge of town. The alarm was occasioned by a chimney catching fire." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

Upon Dan's premature death, Lillian instantly became head of household and was responsible for overseeing family business. Over the twelve-month period beginning September, 1899, she confidently managed rental property and grew the family's assets by constructing several new dwellings:

1899, September 15: "Mrs. Lillian Perry is having a four-room house built on East Street, between the college building and Mr. Henry Gray's." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

1900, April 13: "College building for rent, very suitable for boarding house. Apply to Mrs. Lillian Perry." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

1900, September 1: "Mrs. Lillian Perry is having a 3-room cottage erected back of the old college, facing the A. & N.C. railroad." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

The referenced college was Lillian's alma mater, Kinston Collegiate Institute. According to historian Charles E. Taylor, the last mention of the College in local newspapers was in 1894, and "it is likely that Kinston College's demise came soon after" (www.ncpedia.org/kinston-college).

Lillian probably obtained the school property after her husband's death, but sometime before 1900. Whether it was for sentimental reasons or because she considered it a viable investment is unknown.