

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Bumper Crop 1902

Farmers in Bucklesberry and other parts of Lenoir and surrounding counties have been blessed this year with generally good weather, regular rainfall and a temperate growing season. By many accounts, history may record 2021 as a bumper crop year for corn.

Unfortunately, bumper crops do not typically translate into more money for farmers. According to Joy Harwood and associates at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service, "LOW PRICES [emphasis added] are often associated with bumper crop years," (March 1999, Report No. 774, p. 66).

This year could be an exception to the rule, given the prospects of a bumper crop. In a May 31, 2021 article, *Food Business News* senior editor Ron Sterk reported that the USDA has "forecast higher prices for grains" (para. 1) for 2021-2022. He further stated that the expected average price of \$5.70 per bushel was "up 31% from \$4.35 as the current year forecast and up 60% from \$3.56 in 2019-20" (para. 2). In late August of this year, the actual market price hovered around \$5.40 per bushel of corn, not far from the forecasted price.

One hundred nineteen years ago in 1902, Bucklesberry and La Grange area farmers were poised for a bumper crop of corn. Although there was some regional drought and isolated storm damage, journalists at the time reported a historically abundant corn crop. Early projections that year were made in other parts of the State, for example, Salisbury, NC:

1902, July 5: "All the farmers who come to Salisbury nowadays report that crops are in a flourishing condition. The condition of corn is especially flattering and one of the best corn crops in ten years is expected if the favorable conditions continue." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

In neighboring Goldsboro and Wayne County where farmers experienced optimal weather, including seasonable rain, there were reports of a potentially good corn crop ahead:

1902, July 10: "The delightful rain Monday afternoon was timely, as crops had suffered very much for the past few days, especially on sandy land. The prospect for an abundant corn crop is encouraging to farmers." (*Goldsboro Weekly Argus*)

1902, July 16: "There are few farmers in the area who have not [had] to buy corn this year, but thanks to the Giver of all good things, if nothing happens to blight the present prospects, they can

sell as much next year as they have bought this year. We do not think there has been as good prospects for a bountiful corn crop in ten years..." (*Goldsboro Weekly Argus*)

Dry conditions in 1902 in certain places, however, caused some farmers to doubt the likelihood of a bumper crop. Others remained hopeful:

1902, July 29: "In speaking of the great complaint the farmers are making of the drought....this year [they nonetheless expect] to make a much larger [corn] crop. And so it probably is with most of the farms in this County [Lenoir], the crops which a few weeks ago were better than the highest expectation for them, even now are in a much better condition than last year." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

More on the bumper corn crop of 1902 will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.