

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Agriculture 1927 (Part 2)

Some of the finest crops in the Southeast are grown in the nutrient-rich soil of Lenoir County. A prime example is the reclaimed pocosin bottomland in Bucklesberry. Nestled next to the Neuse River, it is arguably the County's oldest farm community established in the mid-1700s.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture published a historically significant report in 1927 that discussed the origins of Lenoir County and the state of agriculture. Authors R. C. Journey and W. A. Davis described the climate and crops observed firsthand at the time:

"The climate of Lenoir County may be termed oceanic—that is, the seasonal changes in temperature are not so great as they are farther inland. The heat of the summer and the cold of the cold of winter are tempered by breezes from the ocean. The climate is characterized by short mild winters and long but not excessively hot summers. Temperatures are pleasant during spring and fall. Snow falls occasionally but seldom lies on the ground more than a day or two. Rainfall is well distributed throughout the year and is sufficient for the crops commonly grown." (p. 2)

"Agriculture had its beginning in Lenoir County several years before the Revolutionary War. The first settler started farming east of Kinston in 1740, and a little later another settlement [Bucklesberry] began near the present site of La Grange. Farming was first conducted on the terrace soils along Neuse River, but it soon spread to the uplands. Early agriculture consisted mainly of the production of rice, corn, wheat, cotton, tobacco, apples, peaches, and pears, and the raising of hogs and cattle. Practically all these products were consumed at home. The production of rosin and turpentine was an important industry until about 1880, when the resources were exhausted. Lumbering has been important from the time of earliest settlement. The original longleaf pine timber had practically all been cut by 1900." (p. 2)

"Cotton and tobacco are the cash crops now grown, and corn and hay and forage are the important subsistence crops. Corn is grown in all parts of the county and on nearly every farm. It is used mainly as feed for work animals, but a small part is used for food." (p. 3)

"Cotton and tobacco are produced solely for cash, and the economic welfare of the county depends to a large extent on them. On most farms these crops are grown on soils suited to their successful production, but in some places they are grown on soils poorly suited to them because better soils are not available. Though the acreage of tobacco is less than that of cotton, the gross cash revenue from it is greater. The tobacco is bright yellow or lemon colored and is high quality particularly suited to the manufacture of cigarettes and smoking tobacco. The product compares

favorably in yield, color, and quality not only with that produced in other counties in the bright leaf belt of eastern North Carolina but with the best grown in the world." (p. 3)

"Hay and forage crops consist mainly of soybeans, cowpeas, oats and vetch, Sudan grass, millet, and rye. Some of this feed is produced for use on the farms, but much of it is fed at the local dairies. A large acreage of both rye and oats is sown as winter cover crops and for grazing. These crops are plowed under in the spring." (p. 3)

More from the 1927 *Soil Survey of Lenoir County, N.C.* will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.