

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Christmas 1886

One hundred thirty-six years ago, local newspapers published reports about Christmas celebrations in 1886. About thirty miles northwest of La Grange in Fremont, NC, it was all about the town tree and gifts:

1886, December 30: "Christmas passed off quietly. The Christmas tree was pretty and had a great many things for the children and grown folks, too. The children were delighted, and some of the presents to the old folks would occasionally raise a roar of laughter and slapping of hands. But some of the poorer children got but little." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

Christmastime in neighboring Kinston, NC was more spectacular. In addition to the mythical Santa Claus, their celebration included fireworks and a candy-pulling party:

1886, December 30: "Christmas, 1886, was ushered in by horns, guns and fire crackers. Everybody seemed happy. Santa Claus will long be remembered by the little ones....The young people have enjoyed themselves hugely in and about town. Parties, sociables, etc., have been in order. But the old fashioned candy-pulling at Dr. F. M. Rountree's, Monday night, December 27th, caps the climax for fun and enjoyment." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

Christmas happenings in greater La Grange were reported by Bucklesberrian and townsman Samuel Ivey (S. I) Sutton's (1834-1904). Excerpts from his December 29, 1886 column mentioned a parade of sorts:

"Christmas has gone--and the money too."

"Sim[eon] Wooten gave his oyster sociable Saturday night. The participants say they had a very nice supper."

"The schools have all closed and most of the students gone home; we are glad to learn the majority of them will return."

"Christmas comes but once a year, but when it comes, it brings good cheer, was the motto of some of the young men Friday night. We are sorry to learn that one young man lost his 'plug hat,' and another fell in a flour barrel."

"There were two Christmas trees in La Grange Saturday night, one at the Baptist and one at the Methodist Church. Both of the trees were very pretty, loaded with presents for the little ones. Every little fellow went home happy as he could be, thinking about the Christmas tree."

"Mont Kibler and Joe Paris gave their grand street parade Christmas Day about twelve o'clock. The spectators were standing along Caswell Street waiting to see the two gallant knights. When the two knights mounted their steeds, they came with such speed that Don Quixote himself and his noble Squire would have been put to flight." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

The best of festivities pale in light of the true meaning of Christmas. Through a miracle birth, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, left his regal throne in heaven and came to earth to save sinful mankind. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14)