

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Kirby E. Sutton (Part 10)

Bucklesberrian, Kirby Edward Sutton (1866-1930) squeezed time from his busy life as a traveling salesman and farmer to dabble in politics. Although he never ran for elective office, Kirby used his popularity and his wealth to contribute both time and money over the years to advance the then-conservative Democratic party.

In 1894, Kirby represented La Grange on a committee that recommended delegates to the Lenoir County Democratic Convention (*New Berne Weekly Journal*, July 19). He was a delegate to the State Democratic Convention in 1900 (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston, March 24). Kirby donated funds to national Democratic party candidate, William Jennings Bryan, for his 1908 U.S. Presidential campaign (*News and Observer*, Raleigh, October 20).

In 1916, Kirby served as a delegate to the Democratic State convention and the Democratic Senatorial Convention (*The Daily Free Press*, April 22). At the fall campaign event, Kirby took on a greater political leadership role as spokesman for the local Democratic party:

1916, September 2: "The Democratic campaign in the [Lenoir] County was started off in fancy fashion at La Grange Friday night. There were between 200 and 300 persons besides candidates present at an old fashioned rally....Mr. Kirby Sutton, Moseley Hall township chairman, presided over the meeting. He explained the occasion to the audience in a few very pertinent and nice remarks..." (*The Daily Free Press*)

Kirby's political involvement continued in the next election cycle. He endorsed Democratic candidate, N[oa]h J. Rouse, in his 1920 campaign for Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court (*The News Reporter*, Littleton, April 28). Kirby's greatest contribution to politics may have occurred that same year with the powerfully written, paid political ad he authored for Democratic party candidate for Governor, Cameron Morrison, excerpted below:

1920, March 18: "I desire to commend to my friends the candidacy of Hon. Cameron Morrison, for Governor, having a deep feeling which inspires in me great confidence that Mr. Morrison will receive the nomination at the hands of the Democrats of North Carolina. The people of this State are not given to be unmindful of real service in their behalf. For more than a quarter of century now, Mr. Morrison has in every campaign fearlessly and ably fought the battles of the party. Harking back to the exciting and troublous days from [18]92 to 1900 when distrust, discord and wild and senseless clamor, frequently aimed at our best men and sound principles, afterwards so recognized, we who passed through these stirring scenes, vividly recall that

Morrison's voice sounded loud throughout all North Carolina as he warned against the dangers of dissension in the Democratic party, and counseled the voters to uphold the party under whose guidance the State had safely come out of the perils following the Civil War and the days of Reconstruction....He has now arrived at the age when experience gives him that wisdom and grasp of public affairs which enable him to occupy with great acceptability the exalted position of Chief Magistrate of the State....and so now, I believe when they [voters] have been reminded of Mr. Morrison's great and distinguished service to the party, they will not withhold from him full expression of their confidence and appreciation, but will tender to him the nomination of Governor as an expression of his splendid service and as a testimonial of their regard for one of their most distinguished citizens..." (*The Daily Free Press*)

Morrison went on to defeat attorney and gubernatorial contender, John J. Parker, to become North Carolina's 55th Governor from 1921-1925.