

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Kirby E. Sutton (Part 11)

He made decent money as a traveling salesman and wholesaler, but Kirby Edward Sutton (1866-1930) may have pulled his biggest paychecks from his 1,200-acre farm in Bucklesberry.

From visits to numerous farms in eastern North Carolina in 1918, James O. Guthrie of Raleigh concluded that Kirby's farm was the finest. Writing about "this incomparably productive part of the State," in the *Wilmington Morning Star* (June 30), Guthrie reported that Kirby's tobacco crop brought an extraordinary \$30,000 the previous year. Additional profits poured in from the sale of cotton, corn, stock, and other farm products.

One way Kirby invested his wealth was through purchasing other land. During 1916 alone, he divvied out more than \$60,000 for six properties over a brief four-month period:

1916, August 10: "Realty Transfer. G. V. Cowper, Commissioner, to K. E. Sutton, Moseley Hall township land, \$44,555." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

1916, September 27: "Realty Transfers. Arthur Kornegay to K. E. Sutton, La Grange property, \$2,755..." (*The Daily Free Press*)

1916, December 2: "Realty Transfers....W. L. Taylor to K. E. Sutton, La Grange lots, \$840. W. L. Taylor to K. E. Sutton, La Grange lots, \$760..." (*The Daily Free Press*)

1916, December 6: "Realty Transfer. L[illian Sutton] Perry to K. E. Sutton, Bucklesberry land, \$9,000..." (*The Daily Free Press*)

1916, December 18: "Realty Transfers....N. H. Robinson and wife to K. E. Sutton, lot in La Grange, \$3,800..." (*The Daily Free Press*)

Kirby's purchasing power may have been boosted by his association with the Rouse Banking Company in La Grange. Four months prior to his real estate spending spree of 1916, Kirby was among several directors elected by the stockholders of the Bank at their annual business meeting in April. Announced at this meeting was the flourishing success the Bank experienced that year, which resulted in a substantial dividend payout to stockholders.

As money attracts money, Kirby was also a stockholder with the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad (A&NCRR). First appointed to the powerful and prestigious A&NCRR board of

directors in 1913 by Governor Locke Craig, Kirby was still serving on the board in 1916 when he made the incredible land grab.

The A&NCRR annual business meeting in Morehead City that year was reported to be "more largely attended than is usually the case; 17,967 shares of stock were represented in person or by proxy," (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston, August 11). Not a coincidence, the payout of stock dividends probably helped pad Kirby's purse, giving him greater ability to rake up real estate in 1916.

For reasons unknown, Kirby decided to sell his farm at the end of the decade. Auctioned over the two-year period, 1919-1921, one parcel of 630 acres was purchased for subdivision by the Atlantic Coast Realty Company for \$75,000.