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Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Politics and Plows

Business and politics should not mix. Neither should religion and politics, or sports and politics, for that matter. But history has shown that politics and farming (plows) can be a good mix.

The first five U.S. Presidents, and two twentieth century Presidents, Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter, were all farmers. Some North Carolina Governors farmed prior to holding office. For example, Gov. William Kerr Scott, elected in 1948, was a dairy farmer from Alamance County. Gov. Elias Carr, farmer from Edgecombe County, was elected in 1892 and returned to farming when his term ended. Biographies of some 30 farmers in our State who made significant contributions as politicians or legislators can be found at the NCpedia website.

Not to be left out, Bucklesberry can claim a number of farmer-politicians from the 1800s, including Samuel Ivey Sutton, William Sutton, John Warters, and Dempsey Wood. Their contributions to local and State government were important and noteworthy.

Samuel Ivey (S.I.) Sutton was born in 1834 and died in 1904. His involvement in politics was extensive. From serving as a delegate to county and state conventions, to promoting presidential and gubernatorial campaigns, to facilitating voter registration, and more, S.I. remained fully engaged in local and State politics for the then-conservative Democratic Party for much of his latter-adult life.

S.I.'s culminating political achievement may have occurred in 1876, when he ran for the N.C. House of Representatives as the Democratic nominee for Lenoir County, an election he lost to J. K. Davis. There is no evidence that S.I. ever ran for public office again, although he stayed busy politically, holding various posts: township assessor for Moseley Hall, 1880; member of the County Board of Magistrates, 1884; member, Board of Commissioners and Commissioner of Records for La Grange, 1886; and county representative to the State Judicial Convention, 1898.

William Sutton (1824–1872) was the son of Benjamin, Jr. and Mary Jane Hines Sutton of Bucklesberry. He was a Civil War Captain, according to one of his descendants. William was elected to the N.C. House of Commons in 1850–1851 and 1854–1855. The late genealogist, Mattie Jolly, wrote that William was instrumental in helping extend the railroad through Lenoir County. While in office, he submitted several bills, including incorporation of the town of Kinston. He also advanced the appointment of four justices of the peace for the county and passage of a law that would abolish trafficking of intoxicating liquors. Strangely, and we are uncertain why, the record shows that Rep. Sutton was granted a leave of absence from the House of Commons on January 25, 1851 for the remainder of the session. Genealogist, Martha Mewborn Marble, provides more information about William at www.olddobbers.net.

John Warters (1845–1917) was married to Mary John Sutton, daughter of John A. and Martha (Patsy) Sutton. Representing Greene and Lenoir Counties, he was elected to the N.C. Senate in 1889–1890. John served on Standing Committees for Claims, Enrolled Bills, Library, and Propositions and Grievances. He presented several bills and amendments during his tenure having to do with public libraries, prohibition of “bushes on boats...in pursuing ducks” in Currituck County, and extending work time on roads and support of the Kilkenny Road Law, both in Tyrell County. The only local item on the Senate docket during John’s term had to do appointment of a cotton-weigher for the town of La Grange. Sen. Warters is buried in the John A. Sutton family cemetery directly off Kennedy Home Road in Bucklesberry.

Dempsey Eugene Wood (1847–1921) was the son of James and Elizabeth (Betsy) Sutton Wood. Elizabeth was the daughter of John and Elizabeth (Aldridge) Sutton of Bucklesberry. Dempsey was elected to the N.C. House of Representatives in 1883–1884. He offered several petitions to the House on behalf of Greene and Lenoir County citizens, including a request for a stock law and appropriation of funds for wounded Confederate soldiers.

Rep. Wood filed numerous bills. One had to do with establishing a graded school in Kinston. Another authorized Kinston College to bestow “marks of honor and distinction upon students and others.” Probably his most important bill had to do with collection of taxes to build a bridge across the Neuse River in Bucklesberry. Construction of the bridge was completed around 1883–1884. It was replaced in 1954 with the current Hardy Bridge. A concrete piling from the old bridge can be seen today on the banks of the Neuse.

Caption to accompany photograph:

Senator John Warters (1845–1917) of Bucklesberry served in the N.C. General Assembly in 1889–1990.

