

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Death and Drinking: Spring 1922

Excessive drinking and alcoholism can lead to early death or life-threatening disease and disability. Death and drinking are not inextricably linked, however. The overwhelming majority of deaths worldwide, fully 95%, are caused by heart disease, stroke, and lower respiratory infection, including lung disease.

The Bucklesberry community witnessed both a serious alcohol issue and an unexpected death in the spring of 1922. But the two were totally unrelated. The death occurred two weeks before the alcohol matter:

1922, March 15: "Mrs. Patsy Elmore, 93, died in the Bucklesberry section recently. She was one of the oldest women in that vicinity. Her death was unexpected. She is survived by one son, Jerry Elmore, and five daughters, Mrs. J[ohn] F[ranklin] Barwick, Mrs. Dora [William M.] Fields, Mrs. J[oe]l I[rving] Vause, Mrs. [Spencer] R. Rackley and Mrs. Lou [Alonzo] Rouse. She was a woman of fine Christian character. Burial took place in a private burial ground." (*The Kinston Free Press*)

Martha "Patsy" Sutton Parks Elmore (1829-1922) was the fourth of fourteen children born to Hardy (1803-1861) and Annie Hill (1807-1881) Sutton. Patsy married twice. Little is known about her first husband, Mugar "Major" Parks. The 1850 Census indicated they had three children and lived on the north side of the Neuse River in Wayne County.

The 1860 Census found Patsy married to her second husband, Joel Elmore (1831-1919) and living in Bucklesberry near her parents. Among the individuals listed in their household were the three children from Patsy's first marriage, Elizabeth Parks (age 12), Dempsey Parks (age 9), and Martha Jane Parks (age 8), along with three younger children from her second marriage, Thomas E. Elmore (age 4), Odora Elmore (age 3), and Joel H. Elmore (age 7 months). Patsy was the mother of eleven children altogether. Her death certificate indicated she died of heart disease.

Two weeks after Patsy's unexpected death, Bucklesberrians received another jolt that rocked the neighborhood. They had a surprise visit from revenueurs:

1922, March 28: "Several raids were today reported to have been made in the La Grange and Bucklesberry neighborhoods by La Grange policemen and prohibition enforcement officers. A 60-gallon plant was demolished in the vicinity of La Grange Sunday. At Bucklesberry, the raiders declared, the moonshiners had been warned and were on the alert. Three hundred gallons

of 'beer' were discovered there, however, and John Foss was arrested with two gallons of whiskey in his possession, according to the raiders. He was bound over to Federal Court at New Bern." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

The liquor bust was a wake-up call to Bucklesberry locals who were making their own brew, as did some of their ancestors. One, in particular, Jeremiah "Jerry" Sutton, Sr. (1836-1900), was widely known for his expertise in distillery. With a three-acre apple orchard that fueled his operation, and a twenty-one foot high gin screw that pressed apples into juice, Jerry produced apple brandy in bulk. He sold it locally and delivered it in barrels.

Jerry's grandson, Jack Randall Sutton, current Bucklesberry resident, claims that Jerry had a federal license for making alcoholic beverage. Almost a decade after Jerry's death, North Carolina passed a prohibition law in 1909. The nationwide constitutional ban on alcohol began in 1920 and continued through 1933.