

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

S. I. Sutton (Part 5)

Samuel Ivey Sutton (1834–1904) was an individual of many talents, indicative of a true, nineteenth century Renaissance man. Nothing lends greater support for this claim than the numerous and varied jobs he held over his lifetime. He was successful at each and every one.

Farming was the first official occupation recorded for Samuel Ivey (S.I.) as a young man in the 1850 and 1860 Censuses. For a period of time during the 1860s, he dabbled in the education profession and offered tutorial services to Bucklesberry youth. But by the 1870 Census, S.I.'s occupation was listed as farmer again.

Well-regarded as a tiller of the land, folks welcomed S.I.'s views and perspectives on farming. An 1873 fertilizer ad published in the *Goldsboro Messenger* named S.I. as one of a handful of Lenoir County farmers, along with Benjamin Franklin Sutton and Levi Mewborn Sutton, who attested to Whann's Raw-bone Super-phosphate as a "celebrated Fertilizer...with entirely satisfactory results to those using it." Known for his farming expertise, S.I. provided his assessment of the corn crop yield in the same news outlet in 1879. Earlier that year during the summer, S.I. provided a report to the *Kinston Journal* on the cotton crop in Bucklesberry and the adverse effects of crab grass.

At age 45, and in the prime of his working life, S.I. was listed as a farmer one final time in the 1880 Census. His three adult sons, Noah, Joshua, and Andrew Jackson (A.J.), all unmarried that year, were still living in the family household. Noah and Joshua were listed as laborers on the farm. It stands to reason that S.I.'s club foot condition, for which he never received medical treatment, caused continuous lifelong mobility issues that significantly impeded his ability to farm effectively. His adult sons provided him with the support he needed to maintain a successful family farm.

Throughout the 1880s, S.I. supplemented the family income with other work. By 1881, he held the post of Magistrate for the Moseley Hall Township of Lenoir County. In Branson's 1884 *North Carolina Business Directory*, S.I. was listed as both farmer and Magistrate. A peace keeper, S.I. oversaw cases related to fighting, larceny, and trespassing, all reported in *The Kinston Journal* in 1881, and a cotton theft case in 1882. S.I.'s role as Magistrate also involved routine judicial tasks such as conducting marriage ceremonies, as reported in the *New Berne Weekly Journal* and *The Daily Journal* (New Bern). From time to time, S.I. heard more serious criminal cases, for example, an 1884 stabbing incident that was reported in *The Daily Journal*.

On July 8, 1885, S.I. was appointed U.S. Postmaster for La Grange. Having served with distinction, the *Goldsboro Messenger* said of S.I., "Our post office is equipped with new U.S.

mail boxes which are quite handsome. Mr. Sutton, our P.M., is determined that the postal service shall keep abreast with the wonderful improvements in our thriving little town.”

Yet another career transition occurred for S.I. in the mid-1880s, possibly the most significant of his life that had far-reaching impact among the local citizenry. In August, 1885, by order of the House of Representatives of the North Carolina General Assembly, S.I. was named to fill the vacancy of Justice of the Peace for Moseley Hall Township for a term of six years.

It appears that S.I. continued to farm with his sons until the mid- to late-1800s, after which he relinquished complete operation and ownership of the farm to them. Nestled on the North side of the Neuse River near the present Hardy Bridge in the Frog Point area of Bucklesberry, S.I.’s farm was mapped geographically in an 1886 deed from S.I. and wife, Mary Jane, to sons, Noah and Joshua. Witnessed by youngest son, Andrew Jackson (A.J.), the indenture transferred the entire 200-acre farm to Noah and Joshua for \$1,800.00.

S.I.’s primary occupation cannot be verified in the 1890 Census. A fire at the Commerce Department Building in Raleigh in 1921 destroyed virtually all 1890 Census records for the State, including Lenoir County. But S.I.’s career path quickly took a sharp turn entirely away from the farming profession as the decade of the 1880s came to a conclusion.

The death of J. D. Portis, railroad and express agent for the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad (ANCR) in La Grange on January 17, 1890, prompted the appointment of S.I. as the new La Grange agent for the ANCR. Thus, at the age of 55, S.I.’s farming career officially came to an end, although he may well have continued providing fatherly, consultative farm advice to his sons.

The last Census to name S.I. was in 1900. His occupation was listed as depot agent. S.I. remained employed as the ANCR railroad and express agent in La Grange until his sudden death from a paralytic stroke in 1904.

Caption for accompanying photograph:

Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad Station, La Grange, circa 1915. Picture originally published in *200 Years of Progress*, Lenoir County Board of Commissioners, 1976.

