

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Hardy Sutton

The Hardy and Sutton families have lived in La Grange for many generations. Remnants of both families still reside in the area today. Hardy relatives and descendants made their homes mostly in the Institute community while Sutton kinfolk were prevalent in Bucklesberry.

The Hardy Sutton Cemetery is one of several old, well maintained family cemeteries in Bucklesberry. At first glance, onlookers might conclude that 'Hardy Sutton' is a double surname and that the Cemetery is for two distinct families, Hardy and Sutton. Not so.

The Cemetery was named after Hardy Sutton (1803-1861), a third generation Bucklesberry farmer. He was the last of eleven surviving children born to Revolutionary War Patriot Benjamin Sutton, Sr. (ca. 1752-1837) and Sarah Hardy Sutton (1759-1846).

As with other early Bucklesberrians, only limited biographical information is available on Hardy. There are no known photographs of him and no published obituary. But a few historical records give a glimpse of his character in handling business affairs.

For example, in the Clellan Thomas Sutton Collection of Bucklesberry documents are six receipts that bear Hardy's name. Dated over a ten-year period, three show that he honorably settled his account with local merchants on items purchased through credit:

1826: "Recd Kinston July 25th 1826 of Mr Hardy Sutton nine dollars and fifteen cents in full – Jno [John] & Jno [John] C[obb] Washington"

1832: "Mr. Hardy Sutton Bot [bought] of J[ohn] & J[ohn] C[obb] Washington 1832 Sept 11th 2 Galls Rum a 7/6 – \$1.50"

1835: "Received Kinston June 17th 1835 of Mr. Hardy Sutton the sum of sevin [sic.] dollars fifty cents to pay for Rum lot of Holland J[ohn] & J[ohn] C[obb] Washington & Co"

John Washington (1767-1837) was a large landowner with some 4,730 acres situated in several counties, including Lenoir. He had a storehouse and a warehouse on a lot near Kinston, according to Victor T. Jones, Jr., Special Collections Librarian at the New Bern-Craven County Public Library. This may have been the base of operations for a mercantile business that he and son, John Cobb Washington (1801-1889) apparently operated in Kinston, which would explain the credit on account they extended to Hardy.

Hardy's purchase of rum in two of the receipts might give the impression that he and wife Annie Hill Sutton (1809-1881) were regular consumers of alcohol for pleasure. However, there is a greater likelihood the rum was used for medicinal purposes. Wrote Smitha Mundasad (2014), "Concoctions of gin [rum of Holland] and wine were once thought to hold health-giving properties."

With few advances in medicine and treatment of disease and issues with safe drinking water and human waste disposal at the time, Hardy and Annie surely faced various illnesses. In addition, six of their fourteen children had been born by the date of the third receipt, 1835. Ranging from newborn to age ten, they were susceptible to frequent sickness.