

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Hardy Sutton (Part 4)

A third generation patriarch, Hardy Sutton (1803-1861) was the son of Revolutionary War Patriot Benjamin Sutton, Sr. (ca. 1752-1837) and Sarah Hardy Sutton (1759-1846). Hardy's grandfather John Sutton (ca. 1725-bef. 1771) migrated from Bertie County, NC around 1750 and was one of the early settlers of Bucklesberry.

A handful of Bucklesberry records in the Clellan Thomas Sutton Collection provide a glimpse of Hardy's character and values. For example, he honorably paid his debts. Several receipts show he settled the balances on accounts he held with local merchants.

Other receipts were for school tuition, suggesting he and wife Annie Hill Sutton (1807-1881) wanted proper education for their children. He also provided spiritually for his family. In 1860, the year before he died, Hardy and five other men organized and built Bucklesberry's first local house of worship, Hickory Grove Church, which remains open today.

Twenty-five years after Hardy's death, attorney-author Council Simmons Wooten (1840-1930) wrote about Bucklesberry and its people for whom he had great respect and admiration. He gave an eyewitness account of Hardy and Annie in unusual detail, describing them as gracious, hospitable people:

1886, August 2: "Of the older men of that [Sutton] name that I knew when a boy was Hardy Sutton who was the wealthiest and the leader among the Sutton family. With his fine manly figure, erect and stately shaven face and a ruddy glow to his cheek, with a kind and benevolent expression of countenance, he was a true type of the ideal farmer, and might be termed a handsome man."

"He was scrupulously neat in his dress, and to see him in his plain white shirt and home made coat and pants you would have a fine model for an artist if you wanted one of a true farmer. He was the perfect embodiment of hospitality. When you went to his house you were greeted with a smile and given a cordial welcome. It was so different from that welcome you receive when you go to a man's house who does not want you."

"His wife [Annie] was a fit companion for such a man. When I knew her she was getting old and from the traces of former beauty, she must have been in her younger days quite handsome. She was a fine specimen of a country matron, with a fat, rosy cheek, indicative of generous living and good health..."

“I recollect when I was a boy I went with my father to Hardy Sutton’s to attend to some business for the old gentleman. When dinner was announced I went to the table and such a profusion of good eating I never saw before spread on one table. At the foot of the table was a dish at least three or four feet long filled with chicken pie.”

“Mrs. Sutton took a stand behind my chair kept piling up the pie on my plate, and telling me that I was eating nothing and that I must be sick. I was young and small and was afraid not to eat, for from the way the old lady piled it on my plate I thought she would be mad if I did not eat it. Now I tell you that you can’t insult me or make me sick by putting something good to eat on my plate, for nature has blessed me with good digestive organs.”

“Insisting on people’s eating is characteristic of the Sutton family. A stranger who is not acquainted with this habit of theirs is liable to get into trouble, for there is danger of eating too much, especially a man who is not accustomed to such sumptuous fare as they spread before him.” (*Goldsboro Messenger*)