

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Alexander Richard Sutton

At least 151,671 different last names and 5,163 first names were identified in data tabulated by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000. The number of last names (surnames) increased to 162,253 in the 2010 Census. Statistically, when first and last names are joined, the number of unique pairings exceeds a staggering 7.8 million.

Claimed by 38,318 people, Ancestry.com determined that James Smith was the most frequently occurring first-last name combo in the U.S. The probability of individuals with the name James Smith, however, is only .0115%, or about 1 in every 10,000 people out of a population of 339 million.

Nationally, the odds of people having the same first and last names decrease dramatically with less common names. At the local level, the probability plunges even lower. Finance and statistics expert Aaron Brown estimated, "the probability of two randomly selected U.S. residents from the same city having the same first and last name may be 1 in 100,000." (quora.com, n.d.)

For towns with smaller populations like La Grange, such odds are infinitesimal and almost impossible to fathom. A 1 in 100,000 probability translates to 1/1000th of 1 person in every 100.

Incredibly, despite the odds, there were four individuals with the name Alex Sutton who resided within miles of each other in Bucklesberry in the late 1800s. At the time, Bucklesberry was a larger community than it is today. According to attorney-author Council Simmons Wooten (1840-1930) in an 1886 article, the outer boundaries of Bucklesberry "extend[ed] from White Hall [now Seven Springs] to the west bank of Falling Creek, a distance of about ten miles." (*Goldsboro Messenger*, August 2, 1886)

Of the four named Alex Sutton, one died in the Civil War in 1863. The other three were contemporaries and lived during the same thirty-year period from 1884 to 1917. All four were Sutton descendants from Bucklesberry.

The first Alexander Sutton (1841-1863) was one of twelve children born to Benjamin Sutton, Jr. (1795-1864) and his second wife Eliza Herring Sutton (1822-1857). Alex had eleven additional step-siblings from his father's first wife Mary Jane Hines Sutton (by 1840-unknown). The family homeplace was located on the west side of Bear Creek, off of U.S. Highway 903 and Alice Wartens Road.

The second Alexander Sutton (1849-1917) was among eight children born to William I. Sutton Sr. (1810-1954) and Sarah (Sally) Rouse Sutton (1819-1888). The family homeplace was purportedly located on the south side of Mays Store Road, across the highway from the still standing homeplace of Nathan George Sutton (1847-1819), Alex's brother.

The third Alexander Richard Sutton (1860-1928) was one of ten children born to Richard Walters Sutton, Sr. (1828-1920) and his first wife Mary (Polly) Catherine Hill Sutton (1837-1876). Alex had three additional step-siblings from his father's second wife Nancy Susan Hardy Sutton (1850-1902). The family homeplace was located about two miles west of the railroad bridge in Falling Creek toward La Grange, according to late descendant Marjorie Sutton Oliver (1933-2019).

Finally, the fourth Alex Milton Sutton (1884-1933) was among eleven children born to William (Billy) M. Sutton (1847-1926) and Sarah (Sallie) Mewborn Dawson Sutton (1855-1928). The family homeplace has been restored and is located on a private road between Kennedy Home and Pine Bush Roads.

Numerous public records reference Alexander Richard Sutton. More about his life will be shared in a future Bucklesberry article.