

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Alexander Richard Sutton (Part 2)

The odds are incredibly low that two, let alone four, people in a small town would have the same first and last names. Yet, remarkably, this occurred in Bucklesberry in the late 1800s. Four individuals shared the name Alex Sutton.

Among the four was Alexander Richard Sutton (1860-1928), son of Richard Walters Sutton, Sr. (1828-1920) and his first wife Mary (Polly) Catherine Hill Sutton (1837-1876). According to late descendant Marjorie Sutton Oliver (1933-2019) of the Jason community, the family homeplace was located about two miles west of the railroad bridge in Falling Creek toward La Grange.

Alex had nine siblings: Richard Walter, Jr. (1858-1939), Martha Jane Sutton Hill (1859-1932), Egbert (1862-1937), James William (1865-1941), Mary Susan Sutton Gray (1867-1928), Lydia Ann Sutton Alexander (1869-1913), Harriett (Hattie) Olivia Sutton Smith Coker (1871-1945), Noah Henry (1873-1951), and Huldah Elizabeth Sutton Mewborn Abrams (1876-1961).

Additionally, he had three half siblings by his father's second wife Nancy Sutton Hardy Sutton (1850-1902): John Thomas (1877-1963), Nancy Jane Sutton Rouse (1883-1972), and Effie Estelle Robinson Jester (1884-1962).

Known as Alex, sometimes A. R., various public records, including Censuses and newspaper reports, documented happenings and events throughout his life. He was only nine years of age in the earliest known record.

On August 24, 1869, Alex was among eighteen arrested and jailed in New Bern, N.C. It was a huge story reported widely across the State. With the sensational headline, "A Big Haul of Desperadoes," used by several of the news outlets, the following was reported:

"Since the first of last April [1869], Capt. Mowers has been acting as a detective and ferreting out the perpetrators of the crimes that have constantly been committed in and near Lenoir County....Acting on the information he had at his command he hired what assistants he needed, and Monday night [August 23, 1869]...he commenced his operations [and] not a citizen of Lenoir County except those engaged knew that there was an officer in the vicinity, and before day light yesterday eighteen prisoners were awaiting the train that was to bring them to this city [New Bern]." (*The Tri-Weekly Examiner*, Salisbury, August 30, 1869)

"Sheriff W. N. H. Hunter, accompanied by a posse...brought down by the freight train, yesterday morning eighteen...citizens of Lenoir County, who were arrested on the previous night, and lodged them in Craven Street jail. These eighteen men are charged with various offences and crimes such as regulating, horse stealing, theft, and murder, and are said to be a part of the band that have been depredating in Lenoir, Jones, and Duplin counties for the past four years. This, however, is improbable as most of them are mere boys in appearance and age, and have by no means the aspect of men inured to a long course of crime." (*Newbern Journal of Commerce*, August 25, 1869)

"Their names are as follows: James Wiggins, Thos. Waters, Sen., Wm. Coker, Marion Sutton, Nathan Sutton, Alex. Sutton, Richard Sutton, James Daily, W. B. Nelson, J. L. Parker, Wm. Wiggins, Wm. Pool, Alex. Thomas, J. T. Sugg, R. F. Hill, Egbert Hill, Everitt Hill and Benj. Jones. Another man named Redding Hines, fired into the band that went to arrest him, leaped from a window and escaped." (*The Daily Standard*, Raleigh, August 26, 1869)

More on the life of Alexander Richard Sutton will be shared in a future Bucklesberry article.