

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Alexander Richard Sutton (Part 7)

Following the tradition of his ancestors, Alexander Richard Sutton (1860-1928) was a fifth generation farmer. He was preceded by his father Richard Walters Sutton, Sr. (1828-1920), his grandfather James Sutton (1798-bef. 1870), and his great-grandfather John Sutton, Jr. (1758-bef. 1830). His twice great-grandfather John Sutton, Sr. (abt. 1730-bef. 1773) was the first of their paternal line to migrate to Bucklesberry from Bertie County around 1750.

For many years, farming offered a good life and sufficiently paid the bills for most families in La Grange and the surrounding communities. Although Alex continued to farm throughout his life, it was not enough to satisfy his broad vocational interests.

With the necessary financial means and a keen ability to multi-task, Alex pursued several other lines of work over his career. At one time, he jointly managed a tobacco warehouse:

1902, July 1: "Messrs. W. A. Carter, R. H. Hardy, Carson E. Cobb, John D. Walters and Alex Sutton will manage the old tobacco warehouse this season. This is a strong team of hard working, influential and clever gentlemen, which ensures success for our market." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

Alex was also a merchant. In her 1974 book, grandniece Marjorie Sutton Oliver (1933-2016) noted that Alex and son Edward Lathan Sutton (1880-1970) "ran a general merchandise store and [Alex] was agent for the Mullet Line Railroad," (p. 46). Reported in detail, Alex's store was completely burned to destruction:

1903, February 7: "The stock of Mr. A. R. Sutton, of Falling Creek, was destroyed by fire yesterday morning and the building which was owned by Mr. J. A. McDaniel."

"No one knows how the fire originated but it is the general opinion of people around there that it was caused by rats in the store."

"About 2 o'clock yesterday morning Mr. Sutton's son who was sleeping in the store, was aroused by a crackling sound and looked out of his room and saw the building on the inside a complete mass of flames and his mode of egress nearly shut off. He grabbed up his pants and shoes and ran from the store just in time to save his life. In a few minutes the building and contents were a mass of ruins. While the fire was in progress some cartridges and powder that were in the store began to explode and it seemed like a war on a small scale."

"Nothing at all was saved of a stock of over \$3,000. Mr. Sutton carried \$1,500 insurance on the stock, and Mr. McDaniel had the building insured, which was valued at \$400."

"It is said that Mr. Sutton will continue business as he has leased another store house near the old stand and will probably put in a stock there." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

More about the life of Alexander Richard Sutton will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.