

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Alexander Richard Sutton (Part 8)

Many people remain employed in one occupation their entire lives. Others, like Alexander Richard Sutton (1860-1928), have broad vocational interests and enjoy several lines of work throughout their careers.

In addition to farming, Alex owned and operated several cotton gins. He also jointly managed a tobacco warehouse, ran a merchandise store, and was an agent for the Mullet Line Railroad.

The job for which he may have been best known, though, was milling. The 1880 and 1900 Censuses listed farming as his trade or profession. But in the 1910 and 1920 Censuses, he was listed as a "millman" (miller) and a grist mill owner-employer.

Over the course of his lifetime, Alex owned and operated two grist mills in the La Grange area. With business associate John Daniel Walters (1858-1933), he purchased a grist mill from Capt. A. James McIntyre (1831-1903) in 1885. That same year they upgraded the mill with fixtures for grinding wheat. A planing saw was later added.

In 1897, a fire destroyed the mill at a loss of about \$4,000. A U.S. Department of Agriculture map dated 1900 showed "Sutton's Grist Mill" situated on the immediate east side of Falling Creek near the present Trinity Methodist Church, suggesting that Alex and John had rebuilt the mill. The year they ceased operation of the mill is unknown.

Alex purchased a second grist mill with his wife Hulda Hooker Hardy Sutton (1862-1928) in 1903. Located about a mile and a half south of the town of La Grange, Alex's grandniece Majorie Sutton Oliver (1933-2016) pinpointed the location of the mill in her 1974 book and identified the Lassiter family as former owners:

"Alex and Hulda....bought the old Steven Lassiter Mill located between La Grange and Walters Dairy on the Jones Road [U.S. Hwy 903] to Seven Springs. The mill straddled Bear Creek. The bridge and part of the dam still remain. Alex with the help of his oldest son, Eddie, operated the mill which ground corn and wheat for meal and flour." (p. 46)

The origins of this mill stretch back to the 1800s and rightly are associated with the Lassiter family, who were among the first residents of Lenoir County. On the historical Gilmer map of 1863, "Lassiter's Mill" was plotted geographically in the same location as the grist mill described by Marjorie in her book.

By the early 1880s, the mill had been inherited by a descendant of the Lassiter line who married into the Joyner family. Thus, by the time Alex and Hulda purchased the mill a quarter century later in 1903, it was called Joyner's Mill.

Alex Sutton's name was eventually associated with the mill. A 1938 N.C. State Highway and Public Works Commission map showed "Sutton's Mill Pond" plotted in the same place as "Lassiter's Mill" on the Gilmer map.

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