

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Alexander Richard Sutton (Part 13)

The Joyner Mill property was purchased by Alexander Richard Sutton (1860-1928) in 1903. The sale included a collapsed grist mill, which Alex rebuilt the next year. Located on Bear Creek a couple of miles south of the town of La Grange, the mill variously served the community.

In addition to producing flour and corn meal, the nearby mill pond provided good fishing. Local churches also conducted baptisms there. Social events and recreational outings were held at the mill pond as well. One, in particular, was reported in *The News and Observer*, on August 12, 1910:

"Delightful House Party. La Grange Aug. 11—Misses Alice Carr and Bettie Gray Sutton gave a most delightful ten-day house party beginning August 3d at the home of their parents on Washington Street. Those attending were Misses Bennie and Fade Whichard, and Lillian Carr of Greenville; Misses Helen and Ruth Chapman, of Grifton; Messrs. Ralph Kinsey and Roland Fields of La Grange; Wheeler Fields, of Fields; and Alexander Harper, of Greenville."

"On the evening of arrival the guests were entertained by the hostesses at a midnight lunch. Thursday was enjoyably spent picnicking at Seven Springs. Friday evening in the spacious yard at the Sutton home, they partook of a watermelon feast. Saturday evening a delightful moonlight ride was given. The house party accompanied by the young people of LaGrange spent the following Monday at Joyner's Mill where they indulged in rowing, fishing, and bathing. Tuesday evening the young men of the town added much to pleasure by giving a complimentary dance to the house party. On Wednesday evening every one enjoyed the hospitality of Miss Frances Hodges."

"Thursday morning the guests departed with sad hearts, declaring the Misses Sutton most charming hostesses and LaGrange an ideal place to visit ."

Generating the first electricity for the town of La Grange may have been the most significant contribution that Alex's mill made to the community. Still referred to as Joyner's Mill years after he bought the property, the town commissioners brokered a long-term agreement with Alex:

1908, February 14: "It is very probable that La Grange will have electric [street] lights in the near future. The owners [i.e. Alex Sutton] of the Joyner Mill, a mile and a half from town, have just had a conference with the town commissioners and they say that a ten-year franchise will be

granted by the town to run a light plant, the water power to be furnished at the Joyner Mill..." (*Snow Hill Laconic Standard*, cited in *The News and Observer*, Raleigh).

The partnership went forward, but began to sour before the ten-year period ended. Alex had to sue the town for failure to pay for service provided:

1914, November 17: "Monday afternoon in Superior Court the case of *Sutton vs. La Grange*, which had been on since Saturday, was compromised and a consent judgment was signed. The plaintiff recovered \$1,150 for electric lighting furnished [to] the town of La Grange, agreed to continue service, and made binding stipulations safeguarding the agreement....[The] defendant contended that he had violated the contract by inefficient service." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

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