

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Alexander Richard Sutton (Part 15)

Milling was Alexander Richard Sutton's (1860-1928) career legacy. He was owner-operator of a grist mill formerly located on Bear Creek and U.S. Highway 903, one mile south of the town of La Grange. He purchased the mill property in 1903 from the Joyner family.

Alex had to rebuild the collapsed mill on the property. The old mill originated with the Lassiter family of Bucklesberry in the mid-1800s. Site of a number of interesting news stories, the La Grange community took great pride in Alex's millpond:

1920, August 9: "Alex Sutton, owner of a millpond which is one of the glories of the Moseley Hall section, is the champion La Grange fisherman. Sutton reports the capture of a 27-pound turtle in the pond. He sold the turtle for \$5 to a meat dealer who butchered it, retailed it for 60 cents a pound and received nearly \$10 for the edible portions." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

A man with broad occupational interests, Alex was a farmer, a cotton gin owner-operator, and a merchant in his early and mid-adult life. Interestingly, in her 1974 book, Alex's grand-niece Marjorie Elizabeth Sutton Oliver (1933-2019) revealed that he was also an agent for the Mullet Line Railroad for a period of time.

Completed in 1858, the 96-mile stretch of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad that connected coastal Morehead City to inland Goldsboro was known as the old "Mullet Line." Author David S. Cecelski described its significance and contribution to the economy for more than three-quarters of a century:

"Indeed, for much of the nineteenth century, the mullet trade on the North Carolina coast comprised the largest saltwater fishery in the South. Even as late as the 1930s, large numbers of fishermen still moved to the barrier islands every autumn to work out of camps like the one at Brown's Island. From Ocracoke Inlet to Cape Fear, their camps lined the shores. Centered at Morehead City, N.C., fish dealers loaded so many barrels of salt mullet on outbound freight cars that local people referred to the [Atlantic and North Carolina] railroad as 'the Old Mullet Line.'" (*Southern Waters*, Fall 2014)

Despite his varied work career, Alex had time to serve the public. He was appointed election registrar for the Falling Creek precinct for the August 1900 elections. In 1904, he became supervisor for the Moseley Hall township of the Lenoir County branch of the Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Association, a position he held for many years.

Long-time residents of the Falling Creek community, "Alex and [wife] Huldah moved to La Grange and lived on Railroad Street, where they raised five of their seven children to adulthood" (p. 46), according to Mrs. Oliver. The transition occurred in the spring of 1904 and made the social news column:

1904, March 4: "Mr. A. R. Sutton, of Falling Creek, has moved into the house recently vacated by Mr. Albert Miller...[who] has moved his family and the post-office into the Fields Hotel..." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

Alex and Hulda Hooker Hardy Sutton (1862-1928) are buried at Fairview Cemetery in La Grange. Mrs. Oliver noted in her book that "Huldah was also sick at the time of her husband's death and was carried upstairs during the funeral" (p. 46). Hulda died five days later.