

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Early Beginnings (Part 2)

A 1924 news story published in *The News and Observer* of Raleigh reported that Bucklesberry had reached its one hundred year centennial anniversary. The article claimed Moseley Hall historians believed "John and Hardy Sutton...opened Bucklesberry to colonization in 1820," hence, a purported 1920s centennial date.

However, a Lenoir County soil sample survey conducted by R. C. Journey and W. A. Davis of the U.S. Department of Agriculture published three years later in 1927 suggested that Bucklesberry had been colonized much earlier. They described Bucklesberry in a veiled reference as a pre-Revolutionary War "settlement [that] began near the present site of La Grange," (p. 3).

Arguably the oldest named farm community in the county, Bucklesberry's early beginnings indeed can be traced to the mid-1700s and the Colonial America period. Nestled along the north side of the Neuse River, five miles south of the town of La Grange, Bucklesberry's geographic location has generally remained the same over time, although county affiliation varied as North Carolina's counties were being formed and renamed during the last half of the eighteenth century.

Identified in early documents as "Bucklesberry Pocosin," it was a settlement in then eastern Johnston County, which had been formed in 1746 from old Craven County. Referred to simply as "Bucklesberry" in later documents, it was part of old Dobbs County, which was carved out of Johnston County in 1758. Bucklesberry eventually became part of Lenoir County, which was created from the southern part of old Dobbs County in 1791.

Interestingly, Bucklesberry was on the map long before the towns of La Grange, Goldsboro, and Kinston were established. Incorporated in 1869, La Grange was an outgrowth of Moseley Hall township that was settled soon after the Revolutionary War ended in 1783. Kinston (Kingston) was founded in 1762. Goldsboro (Goldsborough) grew out of Waynesborough, the first town to emerge in Wayne County in 1787.

Key Bucklesberry records in the Clellan Sutton Collection predate the founding of Kingston, Moseley Hall and Waynesborough by dozens of years. Two land surveys, one dated 1745 and the other 1757, identified Bucklesberry specifically and referenced land near its Neuse River location, proving a pre-Revolutionary War existence. Therefore, Bucklesberry was inhabited some seventy-five years before the 1820 colonization year indicated in *The News and Observer* news story of 1924.

Both surveys describe land obtained by settler John Sutton (1720/30-by1773), the first of his paternal line from Bertie County to arrive in eighteenth century Bucklesberry. He is named in the 1757 survey of 275 acres. Although not named in the 1745 survey of 160 acres, it has been attributed to him. Passed down through the family line, the presence of both surveys in the Clellan Sutton Collection suggests the documents originated with John.

John Sutton the elder is the proven grandfather of brothers John Sutton (ca. 1779-1848) and Hardy Sutton (1803-1861). Therefore, grandsons John and Hardy cannot be credited with colonizing Bucklesberry, as reported in *The News and Observer* news story of 1924. Rather, their patriarchal ancestor, from whom they inherited land, rightly helped settle Bucklesberry.

Upcoming articles in this series will discuss the two land surveys in-depth. In addition, the contribution of another family pivotal in establishing Bucklesberry will be shared.