

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Early Beginnings (Part 3)

Ideas on when Bucklesberry was settled have been bandied about for generations. Pinpointing an exact year is virtually impossible. But identifying the correct century is certainly doable.

A 1924 news story in *The News and Observer* of Raleigh reported Bucklesberry was colonized in 1820. However, two land surveys both associated with John Sutton (1720/30-by 1773)—one dated 1745 and the other 1757—emerged decades later that proved Bucklesberry was inhabited some seventy-five years earlier in the mid-1700s. These surveys allow the historical record to be corrected. Bucklesberry was settled in the eighteenth rather than the nineteenth century.

The 1745 survey is the oldest of the 313 documents in the Clellan Sutton Collection. It is smaller than a standard five-by-seven-inch greeting card. Written with quill pen and ink on cream/tan-colored rag paper (cotton or linen paper), the beautifully flowing and slanted penmanship is in the Copperplate or English Round Hand style. Stronger than paper today, rag paper is incredibly durable, which explains in part why the survey is still intact after more than a quarter of a millennium.

Although the ink is faded in places, much of the critical information on the survey is clear and readable. In the upper-right corner is a rectangle-shaped diagram with the following words inscribed, "Contains 160 a[cres] At Least One Inch to 100_ " The literal transcription of the narrative of the survey clearly identifies Bucklesberry (blanks represent tears or holes in the document from deterioration along the creases of the folds):

"September 17th 174_ Surveyed for John Giles a tract of land lying in Craven County on the north _ Neus River on the South _ Bucklesberry pocosin Beginning at a water oak Standing on an Island of said pocosin _ Archibald Mukelroys Island and Plums Island then Due So 30 po then _ 70 po then N 20 E 128 _ _ Then with a direct _ First Station for one hundred and sixty acres [torn area] Na. _"

Additional research was required to determine the missing last digit and confirmation of the year on the survey. Fortunately, a patent dated October 14, 1748 for the same 160-acre tract of land surveyed was discovered at nclandgrants.com. Archivists from the State Archives of North Carolina noted that, "The original request for this land was entered on 06 Apr 1745. It took 3 years and 6 months to issue the [land] grant." Therefore, the tract of land was surveyed between the patent request year of 1745 and the patent issuance year of 1748.

Confirmation of the year eventually hinged on Bucklesberry's county affiliation. Although the survey indicated Bucklesberry was located in Craven County, other documents in the Clellan Sutton Collection show Bucklesberry was located in Johnston County. Easily reconciled, Johnston County was formed out of Craven County in late 1746. Thus, a 1747 or 1748 year on the survey would have required a Johnston County location. The indicated Craven County, then, meant the tract of land was surveyed in either 1745 or 1746.

With a month and day provided on the survey, the year can be determined. The September 17 date necessarily occurred between the patent request date of April 6, 1745 and Johnston County's specific founding date of June 28, 1746. Since the calendar date of September 17, 1746 falls several months after Johnston County's founding date, the year of the survey was confirmed for certain to be 1745.