

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Early Beginnings (Part 6)

Bertie County native John Sutton (1720/30-by 1773) was among the proven early settlers of Bucklesberry. But others from Bertie County likely preceded the Suttons, for example, the Herrings. The significance of the Herring family in the early colonization of Bucklesberry cannot be understated.

Descendant Dr. Robert A. Herring, MD (1882-1983) contended in his 1969 genealogical narrative that seven Herring brothers—Abram, Anthony, Edward, John, Samuel, Simon, and Thomas—lived in eastern North Carolina during the colonial era. Several were grantors, grantees, or witnesses on land documents dated 1723 to 1743 in the same-named Bucklesberry area of Bertie County.

Concurrent with this time period are other patents, transfers, and surveys dated 1736 to 1739 for land in then old Craven County that bear Herring brothers' names. Although Bucklesberry is not explicitly named, these land documents reference the Neuse River and/or a well known Bucklesberry landmark—Bear Creek—thereby affirming the geographic area of Bucklesberry described in other land patents of that period.

During the 1700s and much of the 1800s, Bucklesberry was a considerably larger community with land on both sides of Bear Creek. In an 1886 news story, "Bucklesberry: Some Interesting Notes from Lenoir County," famed attorney-journalist Council S. Wooten, Esq. (1840-1930) indicated that early Bucklesberry stretched from Seven Springs (formerly Whitehall) on the west side of Bear Creek to Falling Creek on the east side of Bear Creek, spanning some ten miles.

The Herrings indeed were among the first landowners in the Bucklesberry area. In his narrative, Dr. Herring identified the indexed abstract of a little known 1720 land grant to his ancestor John Herring (1684-1760):

"Bertie County deed book D, p. 276, records the transfer of 380 acres of land by John Herring to Abram Herring which 'is part of a patent to John Herring granted to him August, 1720, on the south side of Bear Swamp [Bear Creek]' consideration 150 pounds, deed dated May 10, 1736, witnessed by Simon Herring whose name appears as witness on many of John Herring's deeds. Bear Swamp [Bear Creek] is the location of the original John Herring holdings in present Lenoir County, N.C...." (p. 2)

Short of explicitly naming Bucklesberry, this indexed abstract stands as the earliest known indirect reference to the Bucklesberry area. Further, it represents some of the first land obtained in the backcountry of old Craven County before Bucklesberry was named. Most importantly, this 1720 land patent to John Herring predates the 1738 land patent to John Williams, the first known document that names Bucklesberry.

Herring descendants remain landowners and residents in Bucklesberry today. Acreage inherited from their ancestors is located on the north side of the Neuse River, along Bear Creek, between Jenny Lind Road and the aptly named Ben F. Herring Road. Benjamin Franklin Herring, Sr. (1828-1907) was the twice great-grandson of patriarch John Herring.

More will be shared in an upcoming article about Herring land holdings in early eighteenth century Bucklesberry.