

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Clellan Sutton Interview (Part 3)

Old letters, receipts, and deeds are a means of documenting a family line or the history of a place. But recollections of what someone has observed and what they remember over their lifetime, are also an important way to explain or unlock mysteries of the past.

Few in the Bucklesberry community of La Grange had a more clear-eyed memory of the past than Clellan Thomas Sutton (1909–1999). Local genealogist and historian, Glenn Fields, recognized this quality in Clellan and interviewed him by videotape in 1994 during the last few years of his life.

Part 3 of this interview, transcribed below, centered on two Bucklesberry landforms: Pine Bush Road and Pine Bush Landing. Clellan's wife of more than 60 years, Pauline Sutton (1910–1995), joined the conversation near the end of this segment of the interview:

Glenn: "I noticed on a map that I've got that the roads might have been different way back yonder. And closest I can get out of 1948 photographs which aren't, you know, that far back, the roads are pretty much like they are now. But I've got a map...a recognizance map...[that] engineers made during the Civil War, and it shows the roads where people's houses and everything like it was then. And I noticed one thing that was on that map, and it's on that road by Jack [and Nina] Herring's...Pine Bush Road."

Clellan: "Right."

Glenn: "And on that map I saw Pine Bush Landing."

Clellan: "Right."

Glenn: "And it was down there on the [Neuse] River somewhere."

Clellan: "It's just a little ways down here."

Glenn: "Do you remember when the boats stopped in there?"

Clellan: "Oh, that I do! I've seen them."

Glenn: "Tell me about Pine Bush Landing, then."

Clellan: "Well, they used to pull seine [fish nets] there on one side of the River. A high bank on this side was where the steamboats would unload fertilizer."

Glenn: "Well, Jack [Randall Sutton] said something about a house being down there one time. Do you remember that?"

Clellan: "Yeah, well, I remember the house. Now, it wasn't right up on the River bank. It was about as far as from here to the road down there."

Glenn: "Was it kind of a motel-hotel type thing or something?"

Clellan: "Well, it was a dwelling house and that type thing."

Glenn: "Oh, so, the person that lived there...was he like maybe looking after the landing or something?"

Clellan: "No, I think he just lived down there in that little house."

Pauline: "You know what, I've been on them boats..."

Glenn: "Have you?"

Pauline: "They cooked on them..."

Clellan: "Well, this is the River road right here."

Pauline: "I don't know how they were motored..."

The boats that Clellan and Pauline observed were steamboats that had been operating on NC waterways since the late-1800s. From research compiled by Ron Vinson at the www.historync.org website, more than 200 steamers traversed rivers and sounds in the State during the nineteenth century.

The 97-ton, sidewheel-style steamer, *Kinston*, was built in 1881 in New Bern. It served communities along the Neuse River for many years. The *New Bern Daily Journal* documented a stop that the *Kinston* apparently made in Bucklesberry, possibly at Pine Bush Landing, on December 15, 1885, reporting that it "arrived last night [in New Bern] with a full cargo of cotton and quite a number of Bucklesberry farmers."

Although Pine Bush Landing is no longer functional, it is still recognizable today. The home of Tuffy and Troni Baker now rests on the high River bank facing the old landing.