

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Clellan Sutton Interview (Part 6)

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Bucklesberry students attended Hickory Grove School, the community's first schoolhouse. Some attended Farm Valley School in Falling Creek, located just a few miles down the road from Bucklesberry.

By 1925, enrollment swelled at the two-story bricked La Grange School (now demolished) with the official consolidation of seven, mostly two- and three-room schoolhouses in the area, including Aldridge, Fairview, Farm Valley, Hickory Grove, Institute, La Grange, and Oak View Schools.

In 1994, local genealogist and historian Glenn Fields interviewed Clellan Sutton (1908–1999), recognized for his knowledge of Bucklesberry history. Part 6 of this interview, transcribed below, are Clellan's and wife, Pauline's (1910–1995), recollections of schools in the early 1900s:

Pauline: "We went to school with the little children in the [Hickory Grove] schoolhouse."

Glenn: "My next question was about the schools."

Pauline: "Uncle Jerry [Jeremiah Sutton, Jr., 1875–1945], Papa's [Charlie Andrew Sutton, 1883–1945] brother....sent his children to La Grange [School]. And he used to tell Papa that he didn't believe...[in] the school out here, but he sent us to Farm Valley...School [in Falling Creek]..."

Glenn: "There was no where else to go, was there?"

Pauline: "No, but, Uncle Jerry used to come and sit on the porch and talk to Papa, and he'd say, 'Charlie, you are doing the wrong thing sending your children to Farm Valley School. You ought to send them to La Grange [School] where they could get some good learning'...Zell [Sutton Hobson, 1909–1998, Pauline's sister]...was valedictorian of her class [at La Grange School]..."

Glenn: "Well, was the nearest school the one right down in here [Bucklesberry]?"

Clellan: "Yeah, between here and the Hickory Grove Church [pointing down Kennedy Home Road]."

Glenn: "What was the name of it?"

Clellan: "It was Hickory Grove School."

Glenn: "Hickory Grove."

Pauline: "You know where Julian Sutton's [1884–1943] house is?"

Clellan: "It was right there....I tried my best to get a picture of it, but I missed out. I could get part of it, but I couldn't get the picture of the whole building."

Glenn: "It doesn't exist anymore, I don't reckon. Some of those old school buildings are outbuildings somewhere on the farm now, you know. I have seen some before..."

Clellan: "But that old [Hickory Grove] School building, I went to it all except two years. All I ever went to school was out in the country."

Glenn: "Well, who taught there? Was it local people, or did somebody come here?"

Clellan: "We had [teachers] anywhere, from East Bend, North Carolina to Currituck County teaching."

Glenn: "All women?"

Clellan: "Women, all women."

Glenn: "There were a few men teachers back then. I think most men taught in the military schools."

Clellan: "There were good teachers, I tell you that, back then."

Pauline: "The school committee [included] Clellan's daddy [Herman Sutton, 1875–1950], and my daddy. Who was the other one, Clellan? There were three of them."

Clellan: "Johnnie Barwick [John Thomas Barwick, 1880–1932]."

Pauline: "Uh, huh, Uncle Johnnie Barwick. There was three of them in that."

Glenn: "They took care of it around here!"

Clellan: "They were just like the Hickory Grove Church. Now they left there and improved on. Other schools had to consolidate in the 20s."

Glenn: "The [Hickory Grove] school, did it go to eighth grade. Did it go that high, or was it sixth grade?"

Clellan: "No, it was seventh."

Glenn: "Seventh grade."

Clellan: "Farm Valley [School] now in Falling Creek went to the ninth. There were three rooms there. [Hickory Grove School] had two."

Glenn: "Separate them out then, couldn't they? Well, did the same teacher teach all the grades?"

Clellan: "No, there were two [teachers] out here. Each room had a teacher. Started first grade up to about fourth or fifth. And then the others up to the seventh."

Glenn: "Well, I talked with Daddy [Roland Fields, Jr., 1920–1999]. He started out in the school down there by C. W. Brittain's, and I think he went to the first grade there. And then I don't know if they shut the school down or what, but he had to go to La Grange [School] the next year. When he went there, they put him back in first grade just like he'd never been to school...which he might have needed putting in first grade, I don't know! [Glenn laughs]"

Clellan: "Yeah, there were schools all over the county back through that time, up to about the consolidation in the late 20s."