

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Sutton Seine Beach Bridge

The Neuse River was a lifeline for Bucklesberry back in the day. From its waters, locals fished for food and sport. In addition, the River was a source of business. Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. (1836-1900) and Dempsey [E.] Wood, Jr. (1847-1921) bought a fishing establishment in 1880 near Pine Bush landing on the Neuse.

Agriculturally, the River produced marl, a valuable lime-based fertilizer used by farmers to loosen hardened clay soil and improve crop production. Commercially, as a natural waterway, the Neuse allowed farmers to transport crops and goods by steamer to Kinston and New Bern which were then sold on the open market.

Despite its many benefits, the River separated communities into northern and southern sides, impeding travel. Traversing the River safely and easily was difficult, dangerous and impossible at times.

Eventually, the remedy was construction of a wooden bridge, located immediately west of a large sandbar on the Neuse River in the Frog Point area of Bucklesberry known back then as Sutton seine beach. The sandbar is still visible today from the current Hardy Bridge Road concrete bridge that was constructed in 1954.

The prospect of a bridge at Sutton seine beach created widespread interest. Reported by newspapers in Goldsboro, Kinston and New Bern, the planning phase for the bridge spanned a full year in 1882, prior to its construction in 1883:

1882, January 24: "The Justices of the County held a meeting at the Court House on Monday, 23 being present....A petition was presented signed by many citizens of Trent, Moseley Hall and Falling Creek townships asking aid to build a bridge across Neuse River at some point between White Hall [Seven Springs] and Kinston. A committee consisting of Messrs. W. L. Kennedy, S. I. Sutton and A. W. Whitfield, was appointed to ascertain if a bridge was necessary to locate it and to find out what amount could be obtained by private subscriptions and report to the August meeting of the Justices..." (*Kinston Journal*)

1882, August 17: "—Kinston *Press*: Two committees have been appointed by the County Commissioners to inquire into the expediency of building two bridges over Neuse River—one between White Hall [Seven Springs] and Kinston and the other in the neighborhood of the upper Daughety bridge and to report at next January meeting." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

1882, November 11: "The County commissioners at their last meeting, appropriated five hundred dollars to aid in building a bridge across Neuse [River] at the Sutton seine beach. Reliable subscriptions to the amount of near nine hundred has been raised, and work will be the next thing in order." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1882, November 18: "The Neuse River Bridge committee held a meeting here last Monday, and organized by electing Dr. J. M. Hadley Chairman, D. C. Murchison Secretary, and H. E. Dillon Treasurer. Dr. J. M. Hadley, J. Frank Hardy and Ben. F. Sutton were elected a building committee, and met at the place where the bridge is to be located, on Tuesday [Nov. 14, 1882]. Upon measurement it was found that the River was 75 yards wide from bank to bank; depth of water, 8 feet at the deepest point. A portion of the posts and cap-sills were contracted for at reasonable rates. J. F. Hardy was appointed to collect subscriptions on the South side, Thomas Sutton in Bucklesberry and D. C. Murchison in La Grange. Subscribers will be expected to pay when called upon. Complete the bridge and the next thing in order is a Graded School." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

These news reports document three Bucklesberrians who were directly involved in the planning phase of the Sutton seine beach bridge: Benjamin Franklin Sutton (1838-1897); Samuel Ivey Sutton (1834-1904); and Thomas Sutton (1826-1894). Next week's article will share the timeline of activities that led to construction of the bridge in 1883.