

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Josiah Sutton, Sr.

The second of nine children born to John and Elizabeth Sutton of Bucklesberry, Josiah Sutton, Sr. (1810-1898) married Nancy Hill Sutton (1818-1905). They reared a family of ten children on a farm in the heart of Bucklesberry.

Their two-story homeplace was situated between the Kennedy Home Road and the brick ranch house owned by the late Wesley Allen, great-grandson of Josiah, Sr., and Shirley Ferrell Sutton. Although it stood for approximately 150 years, the old house was demolished in the 1970-1980s.

One of the last descendants to live in Josiah's and Nancy's homeplace house was granddaughter, Lucy Sutton (1887-1961). The homeplace farm is currently owned by 2xgreat-grandson, Robert Hardy (Sonny) Sutton, Jr.

There are no available photographs of Josiah Sutton, Sr., and little is known about his life. From a few newspaper reports published between 1880 and 1898, however, we get a glimpse of his personality and character:

1880, November 25: "Jerry [Jeremiah, Sr.] Sutton, Esq., was in town on Monday and tells us it is a true tale about his having a stalk of cotton from last year's growth that has on it 81 bolls of cotton—that he has banked up dirt well around its roots to try to keep it alive through another winter. He says Joe [Josiah, Sr.] Sutton's reward of 50 cents...is too small, that if he will put up a bag of cotton the 80-boll stalk will be forthcoming." (*Kinston Journal*)

1882, December 7: "Another hog stolen last week, in this neighborhood, this time from Joe [Josiah, Sr.] Sutton. Joe believes it to be the same thief who has been stealing from Thomas Sutton. The reckoning is ahead." (*New Berne Weekly Journal*)

1883, April 1: "Joe [Josiah, Sr.] Sutton says that his hogs are dying of a new disease, 'the peeps,' since they have been shut up, they stand and peep through the cracks of the fence, and thus die of the 'peeps.'" (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1886, August 2: "Last summer one of the Wayne County men went to a reaping at old man Josiah Sutton's. He went into the dining room and old Uncle Josiah, who loves to see people eat when they come to see him, took a position at the back of his chair and commenced filling his plate with the good eating, and every time the Wayne County man would slacken in his eating, the old man would tell him he was eating nothing and that he must be sick. The gentleman from Wayne says he thought old Uncle Josiah knew more about what he was eating than he did

himself, so he kept piling in. After he went home during the night he had the colic and he had to have a doctor and before he got well the bill amounted to \$30. He says he will never let a Bucklesberry man feed him or scare him into eating too much again, and that they may get behind his chair and threaten and persuade, but he has learned one lesson he will not forget." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

1898, May 3: "Saturday morning, as the sun was rising, a good many of the young boys met at Mr. Josiah Sutton's to trim down an acre of woods for the purpose of building a Free Will Baptist church, which will be built immediately. Mr. Josiah Sutton gave \$50 and one acre of land which we appreciate very much. It seems that the love of God has been shed abroad in the hearts of a good many young people." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

From all indications, Josiah Sutton, Sr. was a personable, honorable, generous man of impeccable character, dearly loved by his family and respected by the community. A second article to follow will share his obituary and will, which speak to his extraordinary reputation.