

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Josiah Sutton, Sr. (Part 2)

The life of Josiah Sutton, Sr. (1810-1898) spanned nearly a century. A successful farmer, Josiah and devoted wife, Nancy Hill Sutton (1818-1905), lived to see three generations of descendants. His obituary described him as a God-fearing man of personal honor and impeccable character:

1898, September 13: "Mr. Josiah Sutton, Sr., died at his home in Bucklesberry Monday morning, the 12th instant, at 4 o'clock, in the 89th year of his age. Mr. Sutton has been wonderfully blessed with good health, and a remarkable degree of success. He has never had to buy corn nor bacon and always had some to sell. He was the first to pay his taxes every year. He would not allow you to credit him for anything. If he did not have the money with him he would wait until he came again. He was never unmindful of the Source from whence came all blessings. 'Owe no man' was his motto. In all his dealings with his fellow man he was scrupulously honest. He was, perhaps, the oldest man in the county, and for 66 years lived with the wife whom his death leaves a widow. He leaves a large family of children, grand and great-grand children, a widow and a host of friends to mourn his demise. The remains were laid to rest in the family burying ground Tuesday afternoon in the presence of a large concourse of people." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

Civil War hero, Col. George F. Whitfield, helped prepare Josiah's will on August 19, 1868, thirty years before his death. Reported by the local newspaper, Josiah left instructions for Simeon Wooten, local farmer, merchant and politician, to read his will publicly:

1898, September 16: "...Mr. [Josiah] Sutton [Sr.], deceased, about two years ago requested that Mr. Simeon Wooten should read his will before his remains be taken out for burial, and his request was complied with, in the presence of his children. Mr. Wooten, who read the will, says it was the most touching and pathetic instrument he ever read. Dictated by Mr. Sutton and penned by that gifted scholar and gentleman, Col. G. Whitfield, it brought tears to the hearers when read." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

A copy of Josiah's inspirational will was obtained recently from State Archives in Raleigh. Probably never read by many of Josiah's descendants and most Bucklesberrians over the more than a century since his death, the will is transcribed in full below:

"In the name of God, Amen. I, Josiah Sutton, of the County of Lenoir and State of North Carolina, being of sound mind and memory, blessed be God for the same, yet knowing it was once appointed unto all men to die and after death to Judgment, do this the nineteenth day of August one Thousand eight hundred and sixty eight, make constitute and ordain this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following."

"First, it is my will and desire that my soul return to the God Who gave it, and my body be buried in a descent Christian like manner, the expenses to be paid out of my estate by my Executors herein and after named."

"Secondly, after paying all my just debts, I give and bequeath unto my beloved wife Nancy Sutton at my death, all my land (not deeded away), also all of my household and kitchen furniture, all my farming utensils, and all my stock of every name and nature, also all money on hand or due me by note, to have and hold and use the same during her natural life time and at her death all of my property of every name or nature, to be disposed of and divided equally among all of my children, viz., my son Josiah Sutton, my daughter Patsy Sutton, wife of John Sutton, my daughter Penny Rouse, wife of Geo. W. Rouse, my daughter Sallie Sutton, my son William [Billy] Sutton, and my son Ben Hardy Sutton and daughter Nancy E. Sutton. I further authorize my wife Nancy Sutton to give to each or any one of the heirs named above as they grow up or leave her such things or any thing she can spare but every thing so given to be counted at a fair value as so much of his or her part in final settlement of my estate at her death, or my death should her death occur first."

"Thirdly, I nominate and appoint my son Josiah Sutton [Jr.] and Geo. F. Whitfield my Executors to this my last Will and Testament. Josiah Sutton {seal}. Signed [and] sealed in the presen[ce] of witness[es], G. F. Whitfield [and] Jerry [Jeremiah, Sr.] Sutton."