

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

First Sutton Family

We traditionally refer to our nation's President, wife/husband and children as the First Family. This doesn't mean they were the earliest family to arrive in America. Rather, the President's prominence and leadership as our country's top, elected official entitles his/her household to be called the First Family.

First families are also those who descend from colonists or early American settlers. Such is the case with the first families of Bucklesberry. In addition to the Suttons, other first families included the Burnetts, Gileses, Herrings, Johnstons, Joneses, Rouses, Uzzells, and Williamses, all of whom were named in the oldest of the Clellan Sutton Collection of Bucklesberry documents dated between 1741 and 1773. The focus of this article is on the First Sutton Family of Bucklesberry and patriarch, John Sutton, who migrated from Bertie County, NC. Readers are directed to the Old Dobbers website (www.olddobbers.net/Sutton.html), managed by Martha Mewborn Marble, for a full, historical account of available research on John Sutton.

Foremost to the First Sutton Family, of course, is the wife and mother of John's children. Unfortunately, we do not know the name of John's wife, nor do we know whether he may have been married more than once. Along with other genealogists, local La Grange resident and Sutton descendant, Marjorie Sutton Oliver, author of the 1974 book, *The Suttons of England and North Carolina, USA, 1620-1974*, believes that John's wife was Ann Sutton. Assumed to be John's widow, Ann is named in the 1780 tax list for old Dobbs County, from which Lenoir County eventually derived. Although John's name was absent in the 1780 tax list, he was identified in the earlier 1769 tax list.

It is believed that Ann was the daughter of John Turner, probably from Southampton County, VA, who also owned land in old Dobbs County, possibly in or adjoining Bucklesberry. Entries from the grantor-grantee county indices dated 1750 to 1758 show that John Turner gifted or sold land to John Sutton on three occasions, providing support that Ann indeed may have been John's wife. Ms. Marble notes that, although the Turner family owned land in old Dobbs County, they never lived there. Rather, the Turners were neighbors of the Suttons in Bertie County.

Ms. Marble's research also identified another Ann Sutton, widow of one, Dr. Joseph Sutton, from 1773 estate records in old Dobbs County. Joseph's wife was Ann Ward, purportedly from Carteret County. So, the Ann Sutton named in the 1769 tax list could have been either Ann Ward Sutton or Ann Turner Sutton.

If Ann Turner Sutton was the wife and widow of John Sutton, we do not know whether she was the mother of his children. Nonetheless, available records prove the following three sons of John

Sutton: Benjamin Sutton (born ca. 1752; died 1837); John Sutton, Jr. (born ca. 1758; died 1820-1830); and William Sutton (born ca. 1760; died 1813-1820). All three sons were born and lived in Bucklesberry and are named in the Clellan Sutton Collection of documents. The following four Sutton men are also named in the Clellan Sutton Collection and believed to be additional sons of John Sutton: Thomas Sutton (born bef. 1758; death year unavailable); James Sutton (born 1755-1767; death year unavailable); Richard Sutton (born 1755-1773; died 1800-1810); and Simon Sutton (born 1765-1767; died bef. 1813). It is likely that John had daughters, but no evidence is available on who they might have been.

John's three proven sons—Benjamin, John, Jr., and William—and their families lived out their lives in Bucklesberry and were largely responsible for populating the Sutton community. Research from the Old Dobbers website, coupled with Ms. Oliver's book, and the 1973 book, *John Sutton and Benjamin Sutton*, co-authored by Bucklesberry residents, Estelle Sutton Creech, Grace Sutton (deceased), and Linda Sugg Ivey Cauley (deceased), allow us to trace from John Sutton ten generations or more of Suttons and relatives who currently reside in Bucklesberry, La Grange, and beyond.

Most significantly, we know from DNA evidence that the “city Suttons” of La Grange and the “country Suttons” of Bucklesberry and the Bear Creek area, once believed to have originated from separate Sutton families and geographical areas, all descend from the First Sutton Family of Bucklesberry and patriarch, John Sutton. Whether this is cause for rejoicing or disappointment remains to be seen! Hopefully, all Suttons and relatives from our community will view this as blessed news, that our several hundred year lineage is now known and established with greater certainty.