

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Basics of Life

In post-colonial America, people grew most of what they ate and made much of what they owned. The Bucklesberry community was no different. The few goods and supplies that were purchased in the late 1700s largely reflected the basics needed for sustenance and survival.

A few merchants sold goods and supplies in Bucklesberry before the turn of the nineteenth century. In the Clellan Sutton Collection of papers, three merchants are named: Major Croom, Jr. (circa 1855-1810); Moses Westbrook, Sr. (1742-1816); and Bryan Whitfield (1754-1817).

Invoices and receipts from the Collection generally show the purchase of staples needed for cooking and sewing. Several of these documents are transcribed below with definitions of terms (from www.dictionary.com) that were contemporary with the times. Prices for items, paid in the British monetary system of pounds, shillings, and pence, have been omitted:

Invoice-receipt #1, before 1773: "Sold for John Sutton 5 Barrels pork...Ditto 6 Barrels & 1/2 Corn...29 lb ullage pork...John Sutton [debtor] to pork & Corn...to Cash pd Mr. Sutton...to 5 Bushels Salt...to Cash for [account]."

John Sutton was born around 1730 and died before 1773. He was the first of the Sutton family to migrate to Bucklesberry from Bertie County. Ullage was a unit of measure, "the amount by which the contents fall short of filling a container, as a cask or bottle."

Invoice-receipt #2, 1779: "Benjamin Sutton...1779...1 Bushel Salt...1 Bar iron...4 lb Sugar...1 yd Linen...1 lb Pepper...4 yard Camric..."

The son of John Sutton, Benjamin was born around 1752 and died 1837. Cloth merchant, William Booth (www.wmboothdraper.com), described cambric as an 18th century fine linen, "used for neck and pocket handkerchiefs, camps, shift and sleeve ruffles for ladies and for gentlemen's shirt ruffles, and neck cloths, stock[ings], and handkerchiefs."

Receipt #3, 1799: "Simon Sutton...February the 7th 1799...Cash paid...1 qt Cider...Cheese 1 lb...1 3/4 lb Sugar...1 lb Capers."

Believed to be a son of John Sutton, Simon was born between 1765 and 1767 and died before 1813, according to Bucklesberry descendant and genealogist, Martha Mewborn Marble. Capers were "a spiny trailing Mediterranean capparidaceous shrub...with edible flower buds...which are pickled and used as a condiment."

Receipt #4, before 1800: "Mr. Benjamin Sutton...Thread 1/5...Urns 2... 1/4 Rum...Beef...Tallow 37 lb...Hog 73 lb...Bushel Salt..."

Tallow was "the harder fat of sheep, cattle, etc. separated by melting from the fibrous and membranous matter naturally mixed with it, and used to make candles, soap, etc."

Invoice #5, before 1800: "Benjamin Sutton Bought of Moses Westbrook...linen...1 1/2 Broad Cloth...1 yd Shalloon...1 Stick Twist...2 Skains Silk...13 Coat Buttons...4 3/4 yd Velvet...3 Skains Silk."

Shalloon was a "light, twilled woolen fabric used chiefly for linings." Stick twist was a "common quantity of heavy cord" (www.dalton-newsletter.com).

The final receipt in the Collection references what might be viewed as two of the most basic implements used by Bucklesberry farmers and their families during this time period:

Receipt #6, 1798: "Benjamin Sutton April 1798...plow and cotton."