

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Family Squabble

Possibly the most publicly aired family disagreement of the late-nineteenth century was that of Bucklesberrian, Samuel Ivey (S. I.) Sutton (1834-1904) and his son, Andrew Jackson (A. J.) Sutton (1859-1919). At the heart of the squabble was A. J.'s decision to move to Florida in 1884 to look for greater opportunity as an up-and-coming merchant.

A farmer in Bucklesberry that year with his two oldest sons, Joshua Nunn Sutton (1857-1941) and Noah Sutton (1855-1903), S. I. was also a magistrate in La Grange and a reporter for *The Daily Journal* in New Bern. The newspaper gave S. I. a convenient forum to communicate disapproval of his son's relocation to Florida:

1884, June 13: "Mr. A. J. Sutton, who went to Florida about three months ago, returned here last Monday. Afflictions in his father's family brought him home. For several years Mr. Sutton was engaged as clerk in the mercantile business in this place [La Grange; R. B. Kinsey's Store], and had won for himself a name second to none here for attentiveness and reliability. But the fancy paintings of the 'Land of Flowers' and the gay descriptions of wealth in the immediate future, caused him to leave home, living and devoted parents, kind and affectionate brothers and sisters, and seek his fortune in that land. Many are the irreparable wrongs that have been imposed on our best young men, who are at certain ages just ready for adventure, by giving to them highly painted and fancied descriptions of the wealth and distant lands that can never be realized. North Carolina is to all practical purposes a 'goodly land,' and the sooner our young men, and especially the good ones, learn to discredit the many absurd, unreasonable and selfish accounts of the advantages of other States and remain at home the better for them and our State." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

Within just a few days, A. J. returned to Sumterville, FL, on June 16, 1884, where he penned a response to his father's news item:

1884, June 28: "Well Pleased With Florida, Sumterville, Fla, June 23, 1884. In 'La Grange Items' of last week's paper was an item in regard to myself which would leave the impression that I was fooled away from North Carolina. It is an erroneous statement, and I think it due to myself and others to say that such was not the case. No 'fancy paintings' of the 'Land of Flowers' caused me to leave North Carolina. The many young men leave home to hunt better localities, in which to invest their money and use their energy, who get disappointed, none can doubt; but the majority better themselves. North Carolina is a 'goodly land' but Florida is a 'goodlier land.' That more can be made here on a given amount of capital and labor, none, at all conversant with the facts, will deny. I am well pleased with Florida. A. J. Sutton." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

Perhaps it was his standing as a reporter for the newspaper, or maybe his status as A. J.'s father, but S. I. had the final word on the matter:

1884, July 2: "In reply to the denial of A. J. Sutton to 'erroneous statement'...sometime ago, I ask in what particular was the statement incorrect. He had never seen Florida, and knew nothing but what he had heard, and the most of this was certainly 'fancy paint.' If this did not cause him to go to the 'Land of Flowers' then he must have made a leap in the dark, which I hope he will not claim that any sensible man would do. Many young men equally as competent to judge of the goodness of that 'goodlier land' as Mr. Sutton, have been there, some to make it their home, others to satisfy themselves as to these 'fancy paintings' and returned some of them almost disgusted with the land and the paintings. But these saw for themselves--using their own glasses. As to making more 'on a given amount of capital and labor,' is simply a sneeze at some one else's pinch of snuff. But few sensible people believe it. Many of the readers of the JOURNAL know the relationship existing between A. J. Sutton and myself, and I will here say that all the pleasures due to that relationship have been fully enjoyed by us until his recent visit to North Carolina, and for anything arising then or since I do not blame him. I hope that I'll not have occasion to refer to this again, having said nothing but what I have good reasons to believe is true." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

'Father knows best' was a prevailing belief generations ago. This proved to be true with S. I. and A. J. After only one year in Florida, A. J. moved back to La Grange in April, 1885. By September, he announced plans to start a mercantile business, and in November the same year, he married Fannie Cornelia Gardner (1866-1950).

A. J. eventually started a department store in Kinston in 1910. His three sons joined the family business in 1916. Located on South Queen Street, A. J. Sutton and Sons, the 'One Price Cash Store,' was highly popular among shoppers for many decades. The store closed its doors for good in 1978.