

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Kirby E. Sutton (Part 4)

Reared in the heart of Bucklesberry, Kirby Edward Sutton (1866-1930) was an educated man who built a successful career in business and farming. Devoted to his brothers, Albert Hardy Sutton (1858-1911) and John William Sutton (1860-1906), and sister, Elizabeth (Betsy) Ann Sutton (1868-1945), Kirby never married and had no known descendants. He poured his life into work and the community.

Kirby began his business career as a young twenty-year old. He joined the Wooten and Wooten firm in 1886, which may have been the Shade Wooten and Brother general store and grocery that was operating in La Grange in the 1890s.

By 1889, Kirby was a partner with the Isler and Sutton firm of La Grange that dealt in farm supplies and cotton. As a junior member of the business community, Kirby was recognized as "a young gentleman brim full of energy and business sagacity," (*Goldsboro Daily Argus*, December 10, 1890) with the "essential elements of success—energy, perseverance and good judgment" (*The State Chronicle*, Raleigh, July 3, 1891). For reasons unknown, the Isler and Sutton firm did not survive the 1890s.

In 1893, Kirby accepted the appointment of postmaster in La Grange, a position he held for several years. By 1895, however, while still serving as postmaster, Kirby turned his talented business eye again toward the mercantile trade:

1895, January 19: "Mr. Kirby E. Sutton, the popular postmaster of La Grange, and Prof. [George] Hadley, of that thriving town, were on a business visit to this city yesterday." (*Goldsboro Daily Argus*)

The 1896 *Branson's Business Directory* listed Kirby among the merchants and tradesmen of Lenoir County, operating as the K. E. Sutton and Company general store in La Grange. Available records indicate that his store was established by the fall of 1895:

1895, September 2: "Mr. K. E. Sutton, of La Grange, passed through the city today en route to Baltimore to purchase his fall stock of goods..." (*Goldsboro Daily Argus*)

1895, September 19: "Mr. K. E. Sutton, while north, bought a new stock of goods, and will go into the mercantile business again." (*New Berne Weekly Journal*)

1895, October 31: "Mr. K. E. Sutton is having platform scales put down in front of his store."  
(*New Berne Weekly Journal*)

Kirby may have delegated the daily operation of his new La Grange store to an associate soon after it was established in 1895 since, by the spring of the next year, he had formed another partnership:

1896, March 27: "K. E. Sutton, of La Grange, N.C., has made an assignment, with J[ames] A. Hadley as assignee. No particulars." (*The Wilmington Morning Star*)

Hadley was listed in the 1880 Census as a young farmer in the Saulston community of Wayne County. Apparently, he had begun a business venture of some kind with Kirby in 1896. Hadley and his family later moved to Mt. Airy, NC where he became a real estate dealer, according to the 1920 Census.

Kirby's business relationship with Hadley was apparently short-lived. By midyear 1896, Kirby was employed out-of-state. For the next decade or more, his work as a traveling salesman and broker would take him back-and-forth between his Bucklesberry homeland and business firms in Baltimore, MD.