

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Clellan Sutton Interview (Part 12)

Bucklesberrians are adamantly possessive over their land. Any possibility that it might slip away from families who have owned it for generations is a fearful matter. Short of idolizing it, some would as soon cut off an arm or lose a leg than be forced to sell their land or have it taken from them.

But folks in this old community are no different than others across rural America. They simply want the best for their descendants. Despite the changing times, preserving the traditional way of life, which includes keeping long-held farm land in family lines, is critically important to people in Bucklesberry whose ancestry stretches back to the mid-1700s.

The transfer of land, then, to the next generation is a primary aim of many residents here. Legal maneuvers such as bequeathing through life estate have been used to keep land within a family. But the life estate tactic is generation-specific. That is, it would take only one misguided decision from a surviving parent or child, and farm land could vanish from a family line.

This was a topic of discussion between local historian, Glenn Fields, and the late Clellan Thomas Sutton (1908-1999) in an extended interview that was videotaped in 1994. Other segments of the interview have been published previously by the *Gazette*. In the part that follows, Glenn and Clellan share information on how real property and farm land changed hands in their families:

Glenn: "When your daddy [Herman Sutton, Sr., 1876-1958] got the land, about how big was the farm in acreage?"

Clellan: "Oh, there was about three hundred and twenty acres when they divided it up back then. He had a part."

Glenn: "And he inherited it, I reckon, from his father [Julius Eri Sutton, 1847-1925]?"

Clellan: "Yeah, about seventy-five or eighty acres, somewhere along there."

Glenn: "So, the land pretty much down here [Bucklesberry]...has been in the same ownership, more or less, right on down through the years, hasn't it?"

Clellan: "Ever since...ever since..."

Glenn: "Very little of it has been sold...I mean, if you owned it, and you were kin...you inherited it."

Clellan: "All the land right through in here, especially the Sutton land, it's been in [the Sutton line] all the time."

Glenn: "That is so important to me. I've never inherited anything and don't expect to inherit anything. To pass land down through the family...that is just so important to me. I hate to see somebody who has inherited [land to] sell it."

Clellan: "Yeah, that's right."

Glenn: "It's like that's the end an era...I have such a strong tie [with the land]. I reckon that I always felt like I was going to go back home. And I had no idea Mama and Daddy [Roland Fields, Jr., 1920-1999; Aline Sutton Fields, 1922-2003] would have ever moved out of the [homeplace] house...I didn't expect them to. But when they told me they were going to sell the farm, I said, 'What are you going to do with the house?' And he said, 'Well, I'm going to sell it. Why? Do you want it?' And I said, 'Yeah, I want it, I've always wanted it. You knew I wanted it.' So, we sat right on the front porch, and he told me what he would take."

Clellan: "Whereabouts did you stay back then?"

Glenn: "Do you know where C. W. Brittain lives?"

Clellan: "Oh, yeah."

Glenn: "Well, you go right on past there and go to the stop sign....At that stop sign, you look right straight across the field [and] there's a big two-story house over there..."

Clellan: "I didn't know you were that close by."

Glenn: "Yeah, that's where I grew up....A lot of people call it the old D. [Daniel] Hines House."

Clellan: "Yeah, I know. I remember about that."