

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## S. I. Sutton (Part 2)

Samuel Ivey (S.I.) Sutton (1834–1904) of Bucklesberry may have been an abandoned child. For certain, he was either an orphan or a foundling, since the names of his parents are not readily known and cannot be determined or verified with available records. Nonetheless, circumstantial evidence suggests that Thomas Sutton, son of Benjamin and Sarah Hardy Sutton, was the likely father of S.I.

The 1850 Census for Lenoir County lists a 16-year old named, Ivey Sutton, living in the household with Thomas Sutton, age 68. They were the only two in the household. Both were identified as farmers by occupation. Ivey's age of 16 in 1850 coincides with a birth year of 1834, aligning precisely with the 1834 birth year for S.I. recorded in the Hardy and Annie Hill Sutton family Bible.

The Ivey listed in the 1850 Census and S.I. were one and the same. There were no other men with the name, Ivey Sutton, in Lenoir, Duplin, or Wayne Counties that would have been S.I.'s age, according to genealogist, Martha Mewborn Marble. The Ivey name was used with only one other man in Bucklesberry with the surname, Sutton, and that was John Ivey Sutton; however, he was not born until 1879, some 45 years after S.I.'s established birth year. Although S.I. was the name referenced in most public documents, a 1919 death certificate of one of S.I.'s known sons lists his father's name as Ivey Sutton, suggesting Ivey may have been the family name of choice.

Ms. Marble, along with other genealogists, have suggested that S.I.'s presence as the only other member in Thomas' household in 1850 points toward the possibility that S.I. may have been Thomas' son. But we know members of a household are not always related. Moreover, if S.I. was indeed the son of Thomas, then Thomas would have been about 52 years of age when he sired S.I.

Some have asserted that Thomas's older age at the time of S.I.'s birth would eliminate him as S.I.'s father. However, there were other Bucklesberry Sutton men who fathered children well into their senior years. For example, Jeremiah Sutton, Sr., was 58 years old when his last children, twin sons, Dee and L.M. Sutton, were born in 1894. So, Thomas' age of 52 at the time S.I. was born would not have been inconsistent with the times.

S.I.'s presence in the household of Thomas minimally suggests that S.I. had no intact family with two parents at the time. Whether his parents were deceased, which meant he was an orphan, or whether he was abandoned, indicating he was a foundling, it is significant that Thomas cared enough about S.I. to allow him to live in his house so that he could provide shelter and

subsistence. There was also the possibility of a reciprocal tradeoff for Thomas. As a sharecropper, he may have needed S.I. as a laborer.

In addition to living in Thomas' household, records show that Thomas and S.I. partnered in property transactions. The Johnston-Dobbs-Lenoir Counties Grantor Index for 1853–1855 shows that Thomas and S.I. sold two parcels of land, one to James M. Harper, and the other to Samuel W. Scarborough. More importantly, there are two additional property transactions in the Grantor Index in which property was directly passed from Thomas to S.I. in the 1853, the year of Thomas' death. It is plausible, then, that these two final property transactions to S.I., which may have been gift deeds, signaled Thomas owning up to his paternal relationship with S.I. as his father, at least in part.

But there is stronger testimonial evidence that Thomas was the father of S.I. A current descendant of S.I., who kept a personal journal when she was a young girl, recorded notes from family conversations that included a grand-daughter of S.I., born in 1896, well before S.I.'s death in 1904, who stated that her father and the other children of S.I. often acknowledged Thomas Sutton as the father of S.I.

Absent a paper trail to prove S.I.'s paternity, we can rightly question whether he was born a Sutton at all. Genetic testing conducted in 2016, however, provided indisputable proof that S.I. was, in fact, a Sutton. YDNA test results of one of S.I.'s descendants matched the genetic markers of four other Bucklesberry Sutton descendants, all of whom are proven descendants of John Sutton, the first Sutton to arrive in Bucklesberry from Bertie County around 1750. It follows, then, that S.I. necessarily had to have descended from John Sutton as well, making S.I. a bona fide Sutton, too.

Circumstantial evidence allows us to conclude with some degree of confidence that Thomas Sutton was the purported father of S.I. But if Thomas was, in fact, S.I.'s father, one question may forever remain unanswered: Why did Thomas not leave a formal record of some kind to publicly acknowledge that S.I. was his son, possibly, his only son? We may never know.