

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

S. I. Sutton (Part 3)

Samuel Ivey Sutton (1834–1904) did not grow up in a traditional, two-parent home like many other children in Bucklesberry. No doubt his parents were known by immediate family members and other close relatives at the time, but there is no evidence that S.I.'s mother and father ever married or provided a stable, intact home for him.

Samuel Ivey (S.I.) probably longed for the day when he could be part of a family that was whole. He found the opportunity with Mary Jane Uzzell (1833–1915). They married in 1852–1853. In addition to an enduring devotion that produced a fifty-year marriage, the two shared something else in common that may have initially drawn them together—absence of a mother.

S.I.'s mother could have been alive during his childhood, but she did not rear him or provide him with a home. It appears that Mary Jane's mother died when she was a young teen. The death certificate for Mary Jane named Elizabeth Uzzell as her mother and James Uzzell as her father. But Elizabeth was not listed in the 1850 Census with her husband, James, Mary Jane, her brother, James, and two-year old Ila. A current descendant of S.I. and Mary Jane has speculated that Elizabeth may have died at or after the birth of daughter, Ila, about 1848, which would explain why her name was omitted in the 1850 Census.

The first listing of S.I. and Mary Jane as a young couple in their own household, or as members of someone else's household, would have occurred with the Census taken immediately after their marriage in 1853. But their names were not included in the 1860 Census for Lenoir County, although both were prior residents.

A move away from Bucklesberry some time after they married explained why S.I. and Mary Jane emerged in neighboring Jones County, where they were listed in the 1860 Census with their four children: Nancy; Noah; Joshua; and Andrew. By the 1870 Census, however, S.I. (or Ivey) and Mary Jane had returned to Lenoir County with their family that included a fifth child, two-year old son, Calhoun.

Tragically, sadness visited their household during the 1870s, as the 1880 Census did not list S.I.'s and Mary Jane's son, Calhoun, signaling his death in the interim. Indeed, the January 18, 1877 issue of the *Goldsboro Messenger* newspaper recorded young Calhoun's obituary: "Died, In Lenoir County, Saturday, January 13th, 1877, GEORGE CALHOUN SUTTON, youngest son of S.I. and Mary J. Sutton, aged 9 years and 4 months. The heartfelt thanks of the family are given to their friends and relatives for the kindness shown them in this time of affliction." The nature of Calhoun's premature death is unknown.

The 1880 Census for Lenoir County showed two additional daughters born to S.I. and Mary Jane for a total of six surviving children, all unmarried, living in the household, and ranging in age from 4 to 26 years of age: Nannie; Noah; Joshua; Andrew; Louisa; and Alice. The three sons, and two of the three daughters, Alice and Louisa, eventually married. Some of their descendants reside in Bucklesberry and La Grange today.

S.I. and family experienced another personal heartbreak in 1890. The June 26 issue of *The Daily Free Press* (Kinston, NC) reported the death of Ivey Westley Sutton, grandson of S.I. and Mary Jane, and one-year old infant son of Joshua and Fannie Ellen Bay Peele Sutton of Bucklesberry. Ivey died at the home of his grandparents in La Grange. Two other sons of Joshua and Fannie died by 1900: William Wallace Sutton, born 1894; and Raymond Baxter Sutton, born, 1897.

The 1900 Census provided a surprising revelation, specifically, that Mary Jane was the mother of eleven children, five more than the six surviving children named in the previous Census. So, in addition to Calhoun, who died in 1877, four other children born to S.I. and Mary Jane apparently died in childhood or youth. The 1900 Census also named the three adult daughters as continuing members of the household. Daughter, Louisa Graham, was listed as having been married for four years. Her two young children, Ruth and Harold, were named as grandchildren in the household. Why Louisa and her children were living in her parents' home is unknown.

If witnessing the death of five of their own young children and several grandchildren were not enough to bring S.I. and Mary Jane to the brink of endless bereavement, the death of their oldest, adult son certainly could have driven them to it. Predeceasing his father by a year, Noah died in 1903 at the age of 47. Surviving were his wife, Alice Peele Sutton, and four children.

Despite the many sorrows, S.I. died in 1904, leaving behind a devoted wife, and faithful, loving children and grandchildren, all of whom had given to S.I. a half century of what he never experienced as a young boy. A family that was whole.

Caption to accompany photograph:

Samuel Ivey (S.I.) Sutton, center right, with his three sons, Noah Sutton, left, Andrew Jackson (A.J.) Sutton, center left, and Joshua Nunn Sutton, right. Circa 1882 tintype photograph is owned by a current descendant of S.I. and Mary Jane Uzzell Sutton.

