

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Lillian Sutton Perry

One of the grand ladies of Lenoir County, Lillian Sutton Perry's (1864-1946) roots can be traced to the farm community of Bucklesberry. Born the year before the Civil War ended, Lillian died at age 81, the year after the close of World War II. Her death certificate indicated apoplexy due to arteriosclerosis as cause of death.

The informant on Lillian's death certificate was her son, Ely Jackson Perry, Sr. (1896-1968), who named Bettie Gray as her mother, and Manorah Sutton as her father, both of Lenoir County. A study of Lillian's ancestry, though, revealed conflicting information on her parents as reported on the death certificate. Her mother, Elizabeth (Bettie) Gray Sutton (1842-1904) is not in dispute.

But her purported father, Manorah Sutton was unverifiable. An Internet search produced no records with the name, Manorah Sutton from Lenoir County. Neither were there any hits on variations of the name, such as Manoah Sutton or Minoah Sutton. Similarly, a search of U.S. Census records from 1850 to 1940 produced no one named, Manorah (or Manoah or Minoah) Sutton as a household member or head of household from Lenoir County.

However, a little known record, the 1879 will of William Sutton (ca. 1796-1884), called Old Billy, definitively identifies Lillian's father:

"Item 4th. I give and devise to my Grandchildren Willie F. Sutton and Lillia[n] R. Sutton children of my dec'd son Noah H. Sutton the sum of One hundred and fifty dollars each upon the following conditions that they are not to charge any rents from their Mother's, Bettie Sutton, land or their own land until they arrive to the age of twenty one years and in the event they do make any charge for said rents the hundred and fifty dollars each is to be null and void as their Board and Tuition will over balance the said rents." (*USGenWeb Archives*, Lenoir County, NC)

Despite the misspelling or mistranscription of her name and the questionable middle initial, the will named Lillian as a granddaughter of Old Billy. It further named Bettie (Gray) Sutton as her mother, which is consistent with her death certificate. Most significantly, the will identified Old Billy's son, Noah Henry Sutton (1838-1865), deceased at the writing of the will, as Lillian's father. The will also named William Franklin Sutton, Sr. (1862-1913), a proven brother as the only sibling from the brief union of their parents.

Two additional, historically significant documents confirm Noah Sutton as Lillian's father. One is the death certificate of her brother, William, which names Noah as his (their) father. The other is Lillian's marriage license, dated December 1, 1885, which reads in-part:

"To any Ordained Minister of any Religious Denomination or any Justice of the Peace of said County: D. E. Perry having applied...for a LICENSE for the Marriage of D. E. Perry of Lenoir County aged 26 years,...the son of Elijah Perry and Susan Perry the father now dead, the mother living, resident of Lenoir County And Lillian Sutton of Lenoir County aged 20 years,...the daughter of Noah Sutton and Bettie Sutton the father now dead, the mother living, resident of Lenoir County..." (www.familysearch.org)

Lillian's established paternity links her to the Suttons of Bucklesberry, one of the first families to arrive in largely unsettled Dobbs (now Lenoir) County in the mid-1700s. More on her lineage follows in a future article.