[Series, Article #22]
Published 4.19.17 in *The Weekly Gazette,* La Grange, NC

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

S. I. Sutton (Part 6)

Samuel Ivey Sutton (1834–1904) was a busy man. To be sure, fatherhood kept him busy. He and wife, Mary Jane Uzzell Sutton, reared six children of their own. Samuel Ivey's (S.I.) work also kept him busy. Among the positions he held over his career were farmer, educator, Magistrate, U.S. Postmaster, Justice of the Peace, and railroad-express agent. Yet S.I. found time to contribute to the community and the State, and he did so with unusual initiative and leadership.

His service to the local church began when he was a young man. S.I. was a charter member of the Hickory Grove Methodist Church in Bucklesberry, established around 1860. Other charter members were Benjamin Franklin Sutton (1838–1897), Hardy Sutton (1803–1861), Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. (1836–1905), Josiah Sutton, Sr. (1810–1898) and Levi Hill, Sr. (1830–1893).

More than 30 years later, Hickory Grove Church, part of the Baptist denomination at the time, found itself in the courts in 1896. Rev. B. W. Nash, editor of the *Baptist Review* newspaper, alleged that the church property had been conveyed to the Baptist denomination, although the deed had been burned. Challenging his claim, and representing a group of church members, S.I. partnered with attorneys who prevailed in Lenoir County Superior Court. On appeal to the State Supreme Court, Associate Justice David. M. Furches affirmed the lower court ruling. By 1899, S.I. was a member of the La Grange Baptist Church congregation, served as a delegate to the First Annual Session of the Neuse Baptist Association, and was a member of the Association's Finance Committee.

For much of the last three decades of his life, S.I. was extensively involved in politics and the then-conservative Democratic Party. He served as a delegate to county and state conventions, promoted presidential and gubernatorial campaigns, facilitated voter registration, and more. In 1876, S.I. was the Democratic nominee for Lenoir County's seat in the N.C. House of Representatives, a race he lost to Sheriff James K. Davis. There is no evidence that S.I. ever ran for public office again, although he stayed busy politically, holding various local posts, including township assessor for Moseley Hall in 1880, member of the County Board of Magistrates in 1884, member of the Board of Commissioners for La Grange in 1886, and county representative to the State Judicial Convention in 1898.

S.I. advocated for public health and safety. In the closing years of the 19th Century, the State was experiencing high incidences of small pox, diphtheria, and typhoid fever. The N.C. Board of Health inspected samples of drinking water from county public health officials and individuals across the State in 1897–1898, which were shipped to the State Experiment Station for chemical and biological analysis. S.I. cooperated in this important endeavor by providing a water sample from his household. His water source from a driven pump received a mid-level rating of 'Good.'

S.I. was a patron and charter subscriber of *The Farmer and Mechanic*, a weekly newspaper out of Raleigh. Well-read on farming issues of the day, S.I. became aware of the importance of soil conservation and proper use of fertilizers. The 1881 annual report of the N.C. Agricultural Experiment Station documented S.I.'s participation in a state-wide study for which he submitted a sample of marl from his farm for analysis as a fertilizer.

A civic-minded individual, S.I. cared for the well-being of the community, including the education of youth. In 1881, he served on the school committee for Lenoir County District 13, along with Josiah Sutton, Sr. and Caleb Sutton. In an 1886 *Goldsboro Messenger* newspaper ad were the names of several townsmen, including S.I., who endorsed the La Grange Collegiate Institute.

S.I. was a member of the La Grange chapter of the Knights of Honor, open to "men of good moral character, who believed in God, were of good bodily health and able to support themselves and their family" (Wikipedia). One of the most successful fraternal beneficial societies of the 19th Century, the Knights provided social, educational, and charitable support for members' families and the broader community. S.I. was elected Financial Reporter for the La Grange Knights in 1884.

S.I. was also a member of the Lenoir County No. 233 Lodge of the Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons (or Freemasons) of La Grange. At the time, the Lodge was focused on supporting the Masonic Orphanage project, specifically, the Oxford Orphan Asylum, later named the Masonic Home for Children, located in Granville County. In 1879, the *Goldsboro Messenger* newspaper thanked individuals who made donations to the Oxford Orphan Asylum. Included were several Bucklesberry farmers: Benjamin Franklin Sutton (2 hams and 50 pounds of flour); Junius E. Sutton (1 ham); and S.I. Sutton (1 ham and 1 shoulder).

In 1882, S.I. was elected as the Lodge's highest ranking officer, a position he held for many years. The week after S.I.'s death in 1904, the Lodge passed a resolution expressing, "the earnest work he had done for the strengthening of the Lodge." S.I. was Past Master of the Lodge when he died.