

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

C. S. Wooten Reflections (Part 1)

A lawyer and gifted writer by profession, Council Simmons Wooten (1840–1930) had great admiration for Bucklesberry and its people. He enjoyed an unusually special relationship with the early Sutton families, which he wrote about at-length in a piece published in the *Goldsboro Messenger* in 1886. Titled, *Bucklesberry: Some Interesting Notes from Lenoir County*, a reprint of Mr. Wooten’s profound reflections is provided in this, the first of three installments:

“There is a section of country on the north side of Neuse River, in Lenoir County, extending from White Hall to the west bank of Falling Creek, a distance of about ten miles, known as Bucklesberry pocosin. From the River to the foot of the hill where the piney woods region begins is from three to four miles wide. This section embraces what may properly be termed the valley of the Neuse, and is sufficiently elevated above the high water mark so as not to be subjected to overflow from freshets in the River.”

“The soil is a snuff or brown color and is very fertile, producing from 300 to 500 pounds of lint cotton to the acre, and averaging from 6 to 8 barrels of corn and from 10 to 15 bushels of wheat. It is not what may be called a swamp, but rather a second low grounds that make out from the River. While the surface soil is rich in vegetable matter or humus, yet the clay is within five or six inches of the top. So it will be seen that it has elements of fertility in it that is capable of being brought to the highest state of cultivation.”

“The owners of this land think it is the best land in the world, and that if they had to farm on the hill or upland that they would starve to death. They would as soon think of selling their wives as parting with this land, so attached are they to it. Indeed, I heard one say that he had 40 acres that he would not take \$100 per acre for.”

“Fifty years ago this region was comparatively unsettled; there not being more than half a dozen families within its borders. The bear, the deer, and wild game of every description roamed undisturbed over this vast wilderness, until population began to pour in, when it became the paradise of the sportsman.”

“It was first settled by a family by the name of Sutton, and it is now chiefly owned by people of that name or their kindred. The original settlers were a thrifty, prosperous, industrious and honest population. The name Sutton is a synonym for the above qualities. By their prudence and foresight, they accumulated good fortunes and left their posterity in comfortable circumstances. Contrary to the general rule that one generation makes money and the next spends it, the present generation of Suttons know how to make and to keep money.”

“Of the older men of that name that I knew when a boy was Hardy Sutton [1803–1861] who was the wealthiest and the leader among the Sutton family. With his fine manly figure, erect and stately shaven face and a ruddy glow to his cheek, with a kind and benevolent expression of countenance, he was a true type of the ideal farmer, and might be termed a handsome man.”

“He was scrupulously neat in his dress, and to see him in his plain white shirt and home made coat and pants you would have a fine model for an artist if you wanted one of a true farmer. He was the perfect embodiment of hospitality. When you went to his house you were greeted with a smile and given a cordial welcome. It was so different from that welcome you receive when you go to a man’s house who does not want you.”

“His wife [Annie Hill Sutton; 1807–1881] was a fit companion for such a man. When I knew her she was getting old and from the traces of former beauty, she must have been in her younger days quite handsome. She was a fine specimen of a country matron, with a fat, rosy cheek, indicative of generous living and good health.”

Parts 2 and 3 of C.S. Wooten’s reflections of Bucklesberry will appear in upcoming issues.