

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Settler John Sutton (Part 5)

One of the first settlers in the pre-Revolutionary War community of Bucklesberry was John Sutton (ca. 1730-bef. 1773), believed to have migrated from Bertie County, NC in 1750. Two documents strongly suggest his geographic association with that part of the State. The March 1750 will of John's purported father Thomas Sutton, Sr. (1699-1750) from Bertie County named him as a beneficiary. A Bertie County deed indicated John sold the 100 acre farm he inherited from his Aunt Mary Jones in May 1750.

In addition, the marriage of John's son Benjamin Sutton (1752-1837) to Sarah Hardy Sutton (1759-1846), who was born and reared in Bertie County, also points to John's likely roots from there. Although persuasive, the will, deed and bride are circumstantial evidence that falls short in definitively proving John was from Bertie County.

The late Martha Mewborn Marble (1944-2019), genealogist and Bucklesberry Sutton descendant, contended that only genetic evidence would conclusively prove John's whereabouts prior to his arrival in Bucklesberry. Therefore, she proposed a multi-phase strategy.

Phase I of the strategy would obtain YDNA-67 samples from documented male descendents of the three known sons of John Sutton of Bucklesberry—Benjamin, John, Jr., and William. Although all Phase I participants would have the Sutton surname, they did not have to be residents of the Bucklesberry community or Lenoir County. The YDNA-67 markers would then be compared to determine whether Phase I participants matched genetically.

Similarly, Phase II would obtain YDNA-67 samples from documented male descendants of Sutton ancestors known to be related in Bertie County, where John's purported father Thomas Sutton, Sr. (1699-1750) lived, and in the adjacent Perquimans County. As with participants in Phase I, all participants in Phase II would have the Sutton surname, but they did not have to be residents of Bertie or Perquimans Counties. A subsequent comparison of the YDNA-67 markers would determine whether the Phase II participants matched genetically.

Phase III would conclude the study by comparing the YDNA-67 markers of participants from Phase I with the markers of participants from Phase II. Genetic matches between the two groups of participants would provide definitive proof that John Sutton originated from Bertie County.

The study commenced in earnest in 2016. Five males with the Sutton surname agreed to participate in Phase I. All were documented descendants of the three known sons of John Sutton—

Benjamin, John, Jr. and William. Each participant purchased a YDNA-67 test kit from FamilyTreeDNA (FTDNA), designed to analyze the 67 STR (short tandem repeat) markers on the male Y chromosome. Males who matched on at least 64 of the 67 markers are genetically related and share a common ancestor.

To preserve confidentiality, Phase I participants were identified simply as A, B, C, D, and E. Participants A and C, both of La Grange, NC, and participant B of Smithfield, NC were documented descendants of John's son Benjamin Sutton. A resident of Weymouth, MA, Participant D was reared in Kinston, NC and was a documented descendant of John's son William Sutton (1760-bef. 1820). Participant E, also of La Grange, was a documented descendant of John's son John Sutton, Jr. (1758-bef. 1830).

Implementation of Phases II and III, along with the results of the study, will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.