

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Settler John Sutton (Part 6)

Circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that settler John Sutton (ca. 1730-bef. 1773) migrated to Bucklesberry from Bertie County, NC by 1750. The late Martha Mewborn Marble (1944-2019), genealogist and Bucklesberry Sutton descendant, believed only genetic evidence could conclusively prove John's origins. Therefore, she proposed a three-phase YDNA-67 study that commenced in 2016.

Phase I of the study included five male participants, signified as A, B, C, D and E for confidentiality. All had the Sutton surname and were documented descendants of John Sutton of Bucklesberry in Lenoir County through one of his known sons—Benjamin, John, Jr. and William. Participants A, C, and E resided in La Grange. Participant B lived in Smithfield, NC, and participant D was a resident of Weymouth, MA.

Phase II included two males with documented Sutton surnames whose lineages could be traced directly to Bertie and Perquimans Counties where Sutton families are known to be related. Participant F of Chattanooga, TN was born in Washington, DC, but he was reared in Rocky Mount, NC. His father was a documented Sutton descendant from Perquimans County. Participant G descended from a documented line of Suttons in Bertie County where he resided.

The study progressed throughout 2016. All seven participants purchased YDNA-67 test kits through FamilyTreeDNA (FTDNA) to gather and submit genetic samples. The kit requires the user to gently rub the inner cheek wall of the mouth using a cotton swab for one minute, after which the swab is inserted into a secured vial. Each participant submitted two swabbed samples of genetic matter to the FTDNA lab in Houston, TX for analysis.

Remarkably, the genetic markers of the five Sutton descendants in Phase I matched each other with a variance of no more than three markers, proving their genetic relationship to each other and to their common ancestor John Sutton of Bucklesberry. Unfortunately, the genetic markers of participants G and F did not match each other, which meant they were not genetically related and did not share a common Sutton ancestor.

The final Phase III of the study compared the markers of Phase II participants with the markers of Phase I participants. Although Phase II participant G was a Bertie County Sutton descendent who resided in Bertie County and who produced documented Sutton lineage through a valid birth certificate and family records, he did not genetically match Phase I participants A, B, C, D and E, all Sutton descendants from Bucklesberry, Lenoir County.

The other Phase II participant F, a Perquimans County Sutton descendent, however, did genetically match Phase I participants A, B, C, D and E of Bucklesberry, Lenoir County with a variance of no more than three markers. This result was significant in that it established their genetic relationship to each other and to a common Sutton ancestor. Comparison of patrilineal relationships revealed the first common ancestor of participants A, B, C, D, E and F was Joseph Sutton, Sr. (1673-1723) of Perquimans County who was married to Parthenia Durant Sutton (1675-bef. 1723).

For generations of Bucklesberry descendants of John Sutton, the most important outcome of this study was confirmation of his origins. The genetic match of Phase I and Phase II participants provided conclusive evidence that he originated from Bertie County and, by extension, Perquimans County.

More about John's ancestry will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.