

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Settler John Sutton (Part 10)

The origins of settler John Sutton (ca. 1730-bef. 1773) of Bucklesberry was a mystery for generations. Named in several of the pre-Revolutionary War records in the Clellan Sutton Collection of Bucklesberry documents, circumstantial evidence strongly suggests he was from Bertie County, NC. A genetic study in 2016 conclusively proved that John indeed originated from there.

Although no death record exists, John lived a short life. A young man in his twenties when he arrived in Bucklesberry by 1750, he purportedly died before 1773 when he was 40 to 45 years of age.

The name of John's wife and helpmate is uncertain, given the scarcity of historical records from that time period. Identified in the 1780 tax list for old Dobbs County as a property holder, Ann Sutton is his assumed wife.

Wives were not named as property holders, however, if the husband was alive at the time the tax list was compiled. Although John was named in the earlier 1769 tax list, the absence of his name in the 1780 list suggests he was deceased and that Ann may have been his widow. Ann Sutton's name listed alone explains the significant value attributed to her taxable holdings that year, presumably from the estate of a deceased husband.

If Ann Sutton was his wife, she may have been the former Ann Turner, daughter of John Turner, purportedly from Southampton County, VA. He owned land in old Dobbs County, likely in the Bucklesberry area where John Sutton was a landowner. Entries from grantor-grantee county indices dated 1750 to 1758 show that John Turner gifted or sold land to John Sutton on three occasions. Probably not coincidental, these transactions lend support that Ann Turner (Sutton) could have been John Sutton's wife.

The late Martha Mewborn Marble (1944-2019), genealogist and Bucklesberry Sutton descendant, noted that, although the Turner family owned land in old Dobbs County, they never lived there. Rather, the Turners were associates and neighbors of John and his Sutton relatives in Bertie County. If Ann was indeed John's wife, she could reasonably have accompanied him when he migrated from Bertie County to Bucklesberry in old Dobbs County.

Further muddying the waters, as it were, Ms. Marble's research from 1773 estate records identified a second widow also named Ann Sutton in old Dobbs County. This Ann Sutton,

however, was the former Ann Ward of Carteret County, widow of Joseph Sutton. Ann was the daughter of Enoch Ward. His 1750 will names both daughter Ann and her husband Joseph Sutton. The origins of Joseph Sutton and whether he may have been a relative of John Sutton is unknown.

It is plausible, then, that Ann Sutton named in the 1780 tax list for old Dobbs County could have been either Ann Ward, daughter of Enoch Ward and proven wife of Joseph Sutton, or Ann Turner, daughter of John Turner and assumed wife of John Sutton. Ms. Marble's final assessment was that Ann Sutton named in the 1780 tax list for old Dobbs County was most likely Ann Ward Sutton.

There is no concrete evidence, then, that Ann Turner was the proven wife and widow of John Sutton, let alone the mother of his children. The transfer of three properties to John from Ann Turner's father, however, and the prior association of the Turner and Sutton families from John's homeland of Bertie County, provide the basis for the belief she was John's assumed wife.