

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Prize Porkers

Farmers have produced exceptional crops from the nutrient rich soil in Bucklesberry for generations. They also raised livestock on this goodly land. Hog production, in particular, is as old as the community itself.

A 1788 document in the Clellan Sutton Collection identifies Benjamin Sutton (ca. 1752–1837) and brother, Simon Sutton (ca. 1766–1813), who conveyed six hogs as payment for goods purchased from merchant, Moses Westbrook. The hogs weighed 544 pounds, and ranged from 74 to 120 pounds each.

Descendants of Benjamin and Sarah Hardy Sutton (1759–1846) have continued the tradition of hog farming in Bucklesberry. Almost two centuries later, the late Robert Hardy Sutton, Sr. (1916–1994) and Wesley Allen Sutton (1929–1992), fourth great-grandsons, farmed in Bucklesberry and operated hog finishing houses in the 1970s and 1980s. Current descendants, Julian Thomas Sutton, third great-grandson, and Wesley Freeman Sutton, fifth great-grandson, are retired hog farmers.

Characterized by the *Greensboro Daily News* in 1920 as “the champion pork-producing section of eastern Carolina,” Bucklesberry and its farmers have grown some of the largest hogs in the State. News outlets reported on these prize porkers over the years:

1883, January 23: “That famous and self-sustaining section, Bucklesberry, is now showing itself in the meat business. I learn from Thomas Sutton, of that place, that a number of hogs have been killed the past week all of them very fine. Twenty-five head slaughtered by him averaged 171 lbs., net.” (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1884, February 20: “Jerry [Jeremiah, Sr.] Sutton, of Bucklesberry, killed a porker last Friday, two years old, which weighed, net, 680 pounds, and there is no telling how much more he would have weighed, for this was the full capacity of the steelyards.” (*The Weekly Star*, Wilmington)

1907, December 12: “Mr. Julius E.[Eri] Sutton, who lives about five miles from La Grange in that section of the county known as Bucklesberry, killed a hog this week 28 months old that weighed after being dressed—net 815 pounds. Mr. B.[Ben] H.[Hardy] Sutton, a neighbor, of Mr. J. E. Sutton, killed one 25 months old that weighed 550 lbs. These two men are the sons of these good old substantial farmers and good men, Josiah Sutton [Sr.] and Hardy Sutton, who lived before the [Civil] war, whom it is said of them never bought a pound of meat or a bushel of corn in their lives. It would seem from the weight of these hogs, that these sons are worthy of their sires, and are still keeping up the good work...” (*News and Observer*, Raleigh)

1916, August 11: “Lenoir County should be proud that it has farmers who are raising and selling on the local market fifty-six pound hams, such as was reported in yesterday’s news columns of The Free Press, when Mr. Jere [Jeremiah] Sutton [Jr.] of the Bucklesberry section sold a magnificent specimen of such proportions in Kinston. The hog, from which the ham was taken, weighted five hundred and eighty-five pounds, and any county in the State, or any other State, for that matter, would be proud to produce such stock...” (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

1920, December 24: “Roy Sutton yesterday slaughtered a hog which weighed dressed 805 pounds. Sutton neglected to weigh the animal before it was butchered, when its estimated weight was between 1,000 and 1,100 pounds. The porker had a younger brother which went the way of all good pigs last year at a dressed weight of 720 pounds...” (*Greensboro Daily News*)

1921, December 2: “Bucklesberry, a few miles from here, champion large hog locality of the State for years past, today reported its first important ‘kill’ of the new season. Finley P.[Parrott] Sutton was stated to have killed 12 hogs weighing 3,500 pounds. As many more on his farm will be slaughtered shortly and will add 2,000 pounds to the Sutton meat supply. Sutton’s total for the 24 animals will be approximately 5,500 pounds. Single animals in Bucklesberry section, where the numerous farmer family of Suttons has its center, often weigh 800 to 1,000 pounds...” (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

[Caption for accompanying photograph]

900-lb. pig slaughtered on the Harold Junius Sutton farm in the 1940s. John D. (Dee) Williams standing in the background. Photograph courtesy of John Warters Sutton, Jr., grandson.

