

[Series, Article #4]

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Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Sutton Ties to Bertie County

John Sutton was the first known Sutton to arrive in Bucklesberry in the mid-1700s. Martha Mewborn Marble, a descendant of the Bucklesberry Suttons and manager of the Old Dobbers website (www.olddobbers.net), contends that John was born circa 1730 and died before 1773. His whereabouts prior to his arrival in Bucklesberry has been a mystery for generations. Speculations have ranged from New Jersey, to New York, and from Virginia to northeastern North Carolina. Strong circumstantial evidence, including a will, a deed, and a bride, suggests John may have migrated from Bertie County, NC.

Bertie County Will. Thomas Sutton, Sr. of Bertie County had five known sons, one of whom was John. All of Thomas' sons were named in the will, proved March 2, 1750. Oddly, each son inherited 150-200 acres of land from their father, except John. Not completely excluded, John received one black slave, named Andrew, sixteen head of cattle, and housewares from his father's estate. It is unknown why John received no land. One theory is Thomas may have rationalized that his son, John, did not need a share of land since John already possessed 100 acres of land received years earlier through an inheritance from his Aunt Mary Jones, sister of his mother, Elizabeth Luerton Sutton. But John's brother, Thomas, Jr. similarly received land (180 acres) from their Aunt's estate. Further, Mary awarded all of her cattle to George, yet another brother of John. Thus, with two of John's brothers also having received an inheritance from their Aunt, the reason why John did not receive a share of his father's land remains unknown.

Bertie County Deed. A mere ten weeks after Thomas, Sr.'s will was proven, John sold the parcel of land he inherited from Aunt Mary, according to a Bertie County deed filed May 17, 1750, possibly signaling his intent to relocate geographically. Research by Ms. Marble confirms no mention of John Sutton in any Bertie County public or court records after 1750, which would suggest his departure from there. Around this same time approximately 100 miles from Bertie County, a John Sutton emerged in largely unsettled Dobbs County, specifically, the Bucklesberry Pocosin. It is significant that the first Sutton named in the oldest of the Clellan Sutton Collection of Bucklesberry Papers, dated around 1750, was John Sutton.

Bertie County Bride. Also noteworthy is the marriage of one of John's sons, Benjamin, to Sarah Hardy from Bertie County. Ms. Marble argues the union of these two, who were reared in communities some 100 miles apart, is no chance occurrence. A 1780 letter included in the Clellan Sutton Collection addressed "To Benj Sarah living [in] Dobbs," and signed, "Your Loving Brother till death Wm Parrot Hardy," establishes Sarah's relationship to William Parrot Hardy, whose roots can be traced to Bertie County. It is plausible, then, that Benjamin may likely

have accompanied his father, John, on trips back to the homeland of Bertie County to visit relatives from time to time, giving him ample opportunity there to meet his bride.

Dr. Francis R. Hodges, professor of history (retired) from Florida Southern College and native of Lenoir County, also believes that the Suttons of Bucklesberry originated from Bertie County, lending support that John was the first. In a USGenWeb manuscript (no date), Dr. Hodges noted that the Suttons "had migrated from Bertie County to the Neuse valley before the American Revolution, and which by the end of the eighteenth century had already established many branches in Bucklesberry and the adjacent regions of Lenoir and Wayne."

Future articles in the Bucklesberry, Back in the Day series will share more about John Sutton, including DNA evidence, his short life, and his land and possessions.