

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Clellan Sutton Interview (Part 7)

From its founding in the mid-1700s, land has always been a precious commodity in Bucklesberry. Other than traditional values, farmers and their families for generations have had little of enduring value to pass on to their descendants except farm land. And they were serious about preserving the land for future children and grandchildren.

A local Bucklesberry resident reported that one of the last discussions he had with his father a few days before he died in the late-1900s was about farm land. The father urged his son not to sell the land if at all possible so that it would remain in the family line. With tongue-in-cheek, the only exception his father allowed was if the Kinston Global TransPark were to expand out Bucklesberry way. The dying father knew there was virtually no likelihood that would ever happen.

Local genealogist and historian, Glenn Fields, interviewed Clellan Thomas Sutton (1909–1999) in 1994. Both exchanged recollections of how land in Bucklesberry has been passed down for hundreds of years. This segment of the interview is transcribed below:

Glenn: "Something's always been interesting to me. I have tried to trace back the ownership of where I live. I live where I grew up, and, of course, my family one way or the other has owned that land for a long time. It hasn't been passed down...[directly from my] great-great-great-granddaddy Ben [Benjamin Sutton, Jr., 1795–1864]."

Clellan: "It's just exactly like this land right here."

Glenn: "[Benjamin] left it to his son, Daniel [Sutton, 1822–1894]. And then, Daniel, sold it for a dollar to his daughter [Emma Sutton Taylor, 1866–1945] and her husband [Benjamin Oliver Taylor, 1859–1895; first husband]. And she sold it to her uncle, who was Daniel Hines [1847–1928]. And Daniel Hines was my great-great-granddaddy on my Daddy's [Roland Fields, Jr., 1920–1999] side."

Clellan: "I've heard."

Glenn: "And so, that way, it was still in the family. It just switched sides in my family."

Clellan: "Well, that's about like it is through here."

Glenn: "Yeah, and, then, granddaddy Daniel sold it or left it to his son, Dee [Daniel L. Hines, 1868–1945]. And then he left it to his children. And cousin Will [Willie B. Hines, 1892–1955]

got most of it, and then Daddy bought it from him, so that's how it went around. It started out in Mama's [Aline Sutton Fields, 1922–2003; great-granddaughter of Benjamin Sutton, Jr.] family and came back into Daddy's family."

Clellan: "Well, that's just about like it is right here."

Glenn: "And that's the way I came [to have some land]. I bought it from Daddy, and then it's back right where it was. But what I was interested in, do you know if there was any of this land in here that was land grants or anything like that from the King? A lot of it was back then in the 1700s. I can't trace mine back any more than sometime in the middle 1700s. One man bought it from another man, but I can't find out how the other one got it."

Clellan: "Well, this land right through here, from here back on around to the Neuse River land, Clifton's [Sutton, 1891–1980] and down, was bought. I got something about it in about 1780 or 1790 like that. It wasn't as far back as some of the Crooms over the River, some of them."

Glenn: "Yeah, some of them."

Clellan: "It was about given to you, but it didn't cost...[but] about a dollar an acre!....They bought it from the State of North Carolina. That was after the Revolution [Revolutionary War], you know. It wasn't exactly like the land grants were back then."

Glenn: Right. "[inaudible] I can't think of what it is. It wasn't an outright gift, like the land grant was. They didn't want to control the land, but they wanted to control who owned it so they put somebody in ownership of it. They didn't want to look after it. So, that was about the way...that came about."

In fact, some of the land in Bucklesberry was deeded from the King of England through a land grant. A descendant of George Hodges Sutton (1907–1965) and Ruby Violette Ballance Sutton (1904–1983) owns a land grant document dated 1763 that identifies a 75-acre tract of land deeded to John Sutton (ca 1730–before 1763) from King George III.

Hodges Sutton was a farmer and lived in Bucklesberry his entire life. He was a 3xgreat-grandson of John Sutton, the first Sutton to migrate to Bucklesberry from Bertie County, NC in the mid-1700s.

Also, included in the Clellan Sutton Collection of Bucklesberry papers is a 1794 land grant to Benjamin Sutton (ca 1752–1837), son of John Sutton, who purchased 396 acres of land in the Bucklesberry Pocosin from the State of North Carolina "in consideration of the sum of Thirty Shillings for every hundred acres."