

[Series, Article #9]

Published 1.18.17, *The Weekly Gazette*, La Grange, NC

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Clellan Sutton Collection

Respected farmer, Clellan Thomas Sutton (1908–1999), lived and worked his entire life in Bucklesberry. An austere gentleman of impeccable character, known for his interest in Indian artifacts, Clellan also recognized the importance of preserving old family documents. In the 1940s, Clellan obtained a batch of documents from the home place of his great-grandparents, Hardy (1803–1861) and Annie Hill Sutton (1807–1881). Constructed in the 1840s, this three-storey house was located just off Kennedy Home Road in the heart of Bucklesberry, and remained erect and occupied by Sutton descendants until its demolition in the 1970s.

The documents remained in a hand-woven basket in Clellan's possession until September, 1976, at which time Clellan loaned a sample of the papers to East Carolina University. Copied and cataloged in the Joyner Library Manuscript Collections (Manuscript #315) in January, 1977, by ECU archivist, Martha Elmore, the duplicated documents were titled, *Sutton Family Papers*.

Upon return to Clellan, the papers were stored again in the basket and saw little daylight until 2014, when several local Bucklesberry Sutton educators began meeting weekly to inventory the documents, scan them, and enclose them in protective, acid-free, archival-quality plastic sleeves. Then began the arduous task of transcribing the documents, a labor-intensive effort that was completed in December, 2016.

Referred to as the Clellan Sutton Collection by local Bucklesberrians, the documents span a nearly 200-year time period from 1748 to 1939. But these are not the only old Sutton documents out there. Other descendants presently living in Bucklesberry, and some who reside out-of-state, also have various old papers in their private possessions. Nonetheless, the Clellan Sutton Collection arguably represents the largest album of its kind that chronicles the lives and times, and ancestry and origins of the Sutton Family from the Bucklesberry community.

The Collection is massive, containing 321 documents. One-third of the documents are bank records, Bible records, birth records, catalog orders, court papers, deeds, indentures, inventories, land grants, letters, mortgages, photographs, postcards, prescriptions, promissory notes, sketches, surveys, and wills. The remaining, overwhelming two-thirds of the Collection are receipts and invoices, which should not be surprising. Without conventional photocopiers and scanners, folks during that time were unable to make duplicate copies of important documents, including tax payments, charges on accounts with local merchants, and the like. Therefore, careful preservation of hand-written records of business transactions that could not be reproduced was critical to avoiding disputes.

The importance of the Clellan Sutton Collection goes without saying. Although photographs of the earliest Bucklesberry Sutton ancestors are few, the text documents in the Collection give us a

glimpse of their personalities, interests, passions, and imperfections. More important, one can sense in these documents the love and dedication they had for their descendants to come, as well as their desire to preserve family heritage. Interested readers may view some of the document scans and access the transcriptions of all 321 records from the Collection at the website, www.SuttonAncestry.com (see Records tab).

[Caption to accompany photograph]

Clellan Thomas Sutton (1908–1999)

