

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Settler John Sutton (Part 4)

The Clellan Thomas Sutton (1908-1999) Collection contains several hundred historically significant records about Bucklesberry and its people, dating back to the mid-1700s. Among the oldest of the pre-Revolutionary War documents is a circa 1757 survey of land in the Bucklesberry Pocosin of old Dobbs County for John Sutton (ca. 1730-bef. 1773), suggesting he was among the first settlers.

John was already situated in Bucklesberry years earlier, though. Contemporary with this survey is the April 28, 1750 will of Francis Grice of old Dobbs County. John was named as one of three witnesses, proving he was living in Bucklesberry in 1750.

John's origins before his arrival in Bucklesberry have been a mystery for generations. Direct circumstantial evidence, including his purported father's will, a deed, and his son's bride, all discussed in previous articles, strongly points to the likelihood that he was from Bertie County, NC.

Other circumstantial evidence, although indirect, ties John to Bertie County. His half-sister Mary Sutton Hardy (1740-1800) and her husband Lemuel (Lamb) Hardy, Jr. (1730-1797) of Bertie County moved to old Dobbs County in the late 1760s. They settled in the current Jason community north of La Grange, about ten miles from Bucklesberry.

Lending support that John was the first in his paternal family line to arrive in Bucklesberry, Dr. Francis R. Hodges, PhD, retired professor of history and native of Lenoir County, claimed the Suttons of Dobbs County originated from Bertie County. In an undated manuscript, he noted the Suttons "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" (*USGenWeb*, para. 9).

Although the available circumstantial evidence is persuasive, John Sutton's origins can only be determined for certain with DNA evidence. This requires establishing whether known descendants of John Sutton from Bucklesberry genetically match known descendants of John's father Thomas Sutton, Sr. (1699-1750) from the Bertie County area. These results, coupled with circumstantial evidence, would provide the needed proof that John migrated to Bucklesberry from his presumed homeland of Bertie County.

Genetic traits are biologically transmitted to succeeding generations through male descendants, which determines lineage. The YDNA-67 test analyzes sixty-seven STR (short tandem repeat) markers on the male Y chromosome. When the YDNA-67 test results of two males match on at least a 64 out of 67 markers, then they are genetically related and share a common ancestor.

In 2015, in consultation with the international Sutton Project (www.familyreedna.com), the late genealogist and Bucklesberry Sutton descendant Martha Mewborn Marble (1944-2019) proposed a multi-phase strategy that would gather needed genetic evidence from known Sutton descendants for comparison.

More about this study, along with the results, will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.