

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Settler John Sutton (Part 9)

A genetic study conducted in 2016 conclusively proved settler John Sutton (ca. 1730-bef. 1773) of Bucklesberry originated from Bertie County, NC. He was the first of his paternal line to arrive by 1750 in the Bucklesberry Pocosin of old Dobbs County, from which Lenoir County was later formed.

The few records available suggest John lived a relatively short life. Although he migrated to Bucklesberry in his twenties, he was only 40 to 45 years of age when he died. No available information exists on the cause of John's death.

Although Bucklesberry boasts at least 17 known family cemeteries, a marked grave for John Sutton has never been identified. No doubt he is buried in Bucklesberry. Like most graves in eighteenth century rural America, John's grave probably had a wood marker. But it would have deteriorated rapidly and decayed to dust within 50 to 100 years.

For his life's work, John was a farmer, as were virtually all early settlers in old Dobbs County. Farming in colonial America was considerably more challenging and difficult than current-day mechanized farming, suggesting John was nothing less than a passionately hard worker.

The inordinate physical strain he experienced continuously year-round may have caused health issues that he battled without the aid of a physician or medical intervention, which could have prompted early death. An immensely strong, daring, and brave man, John accepted the risks of relocating from his settled homeland in Bertie County to primitive old Dobbs County. The trade-off, however, may have been a shortened life.

John was not the only settler in Bucklesberry in the mid-1750s. He was joined by other men and women of equally strong character who shared common goals and shouldered similar burdens. Together, they worked sacrificially over many difficult years to develop a farm community that continues to flourish today.

Early Colonial American settlers and their descendants were considered 'first' families. In addition to Sutton, other first family surnames of mid-eighteenth century Bucklesberry included Burnett, Giles, Herring, Johnston, Jones, Rouse, Uzzell, and Williams. All were referenced as neighbors or named in business transactions in the oldest Bucklesberry documents dated between 1748 and 1773 in the Clellan Sutton Collection.

Central to any first family are its matriarchs and patriarchs. Although John is the proven patriarch of the first Sutton family of Bucklesberry, his helpmate and family matriarch is unknown for certain. To date, the name of John's wife has not been proven, nor is it known for certain whether he was married more than once. Further, the mother of John's children is not proven.

The late Marjorie Sutton Oliver (1933-2019) of the Jason community of La Grange, a Bucklesberry Sutton descendant and author of the 1974 book, *The Suttons of England and North Carolina, USA, 1620-1974*, believed that John's wife was Ann Sutton. The late genealogist, historian and Bucklesberry Sutton descendant Martha Mewborn Marble (1944-2019) also considered the possibility that Ann Sutton may have been John's wife.

More about Ann Sutton will be shared in the next Bucklesberry article.