

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Settler John Sutton (Part 19)

Challenges and risks awaited settler John Sutton (ca. 1730-bef. 1773) when he migrated to Bucklesberry by 1750. Unsettled territory at the time, it was part of the backcountry on the east side of Johnston County, from which old Dobbs County was formed in 1758.

According to historian-author Dr. Lindley S. Butler, PhD, "the backcountry was the last area of the State to be settled and, consequently, the most volatile region of North Carolina society for many years," (ncpedia.org, 2006). Fueling the volatility was unrest among native Indians.

Long before settlers first arrived, native Indians occupied North America. To them, settler encroachment represented an unwarranted land grab. Further, they viewed settlers as interlopers who threatened their societal culture.

"The European discovery and settlement of the Carolina region," wrote historian William G. DiNome, "signaled an era of radical change for local Indians, one marked by the toppling of the previous Indian way of life..." (ncpedia.org, 2006). In an effort to protect their culture and the land they believed was theirs, the Indians fought back.

The most populous and powerful Indians in eighteenth century North Carolina were the Cherokee and the Tuscarora, both Iroquoian tribes. The Cherokee occupied the Blue Ridge Mountain region in the western part of the State while the Tuscarora dwelled along the coast and in the central Piedmont areas.

Tuscarora resistance against encroachment came to a head with the Tuscarora War of 1711-1713. The culminating battle occurred at Snow Hill, NC just north of La Grange and the Bucklesberry Pocosin. "The once great and powerful Tuscarora Nation was broken into pieces when their final stronghold, Fort Neoheroke, was burned to the ground," explained Sara Whitford (2014), "a major blow to the Tuscarora, one from which the nation would never fully recover."

Although 900 were killed at Fort Neoheroke, "about 250 Tuscaroras fled to New York to join the Iroquois Confederacy, while as many as 3,500 additional Tuscarora sought refuge in the swamps of North Carolina" (TuscaroraNationNC.com). They continued to reside in their hunting territory villages along the Neuse and Cape Fear Rivers.

After the French and Indian War of 1754-1763, "many Tuscaroras settled in the lower southeastern part of North Carolina...and maintained their blood kinship ties with other

Tuscaroras" (TuscaroraNationNC.com) in several counties, including nearby Duplin County. They were the first inhabitants of Wayne, Lenoir and Jones Counties prior to their formation.

A remnant of aging and next-generation Tuscarora Indians were likely living in or near the Bucklesberry Pocosin when John Sutton arrived by 1750. Not in great numbers, they resided in isolated villages. Settlers remained on alert for lingering Indian attacks, although most had ended by 1725.

For defensive purposes, some early colonial houses had windowless basements made of stone or brick with ground level gun slits or gunports. Still standing today, the old John Ivey house, located a few miles west of Bucklesberry in the Seven Springs community, has a basement like this. Descendant Mollie Ruth Ivey (1982) indicated the house may have been built as early as 1767.