

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. (Part 3)

Married three times and father of twenty-one children, Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. (1836-1900) was doubtless a family man. Known as Jerry, he was an exceptional farmer and a top producer of cotton, wheat and hogs.

Maintaining his home and the farm should have been enough to keep Jerry busy year-round. But news reports indicate he found time for other work, possibly to generate additional income for his large family. For example, he operated a fishing business with Bucklesberry neighbor, Dempsey Wood, Jr. (1847-1921):

1880, March 29: "Messrs. Jerry Sutton and Dempsey Wood, Jr. have bought a fishing establishment on Neuse River near Pine Bush." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

1880, April 1: "Brother Jerry Sutton and Dempsey Wood, Jr. have bought a fishing establishment, on Neuse River near Pine Bush. Hope when the brethren make a good haul on shad they will remember us. We have not had any this season. We have neither been able or willing to pay the prices charged for them in this market. Our taste should never lead us into extravagance; unless it be a matter of necessity." (*Kinston Journal*)

1880, April 8: "Dempsey Wood, Jr., gave us on Saturday a sketch of his fishing operations at the new seine beach opened by him and Jerry Sutton, referred to in the *La Grange Review* two weeks ago. He said on Monday Dr. Kennedy of Pamlico, Jake Harper, Claude Kennedy, Jerry and himself had a 'beach stew' and destroyed four large roe shad. If that crowd of gourmands make many visits to the beach, brother Nash had as well make up his mind to get no shad this year." (*Kinston Journal*)

Jerry also dabbled in buying and selling land. In 1881, he posted an ad to sell a sizeable section of his Bucklesberry plantation:

1881, August 25: "For sale. 500 Acres of Land lying in Bucklesberry Falling Creek township. 300 acres in a high state of cultivation, well adapted to corn, cotton, potatoes and peas. Also, horses and mules and corn and fodder enough to run a farm for next year. One half cash. Balance on easy terms. Jerry [Jeremiah, Sr.] Sutton, Falling Creek." (*Kinston Journal*)

By the end of the next year, Jerry purchased another plantation, presumably for his son, Richard Alpheus Sutton (1859-1926), who apparently was anticipating marriage:

1882, December 7: "Jere[miah, Sr.] Sutton has bought the Wayne County plantation of Ben Parks, the chief of the Wayne sportsmen. Ben goes to Florida, and Alpheus will need some fair damsel to bunch his keys, brush the floor, etc." (*New Berne Weekly Journal*)

Jerry's success in hog production, possibly the largest in Bucklesberry, may have prompted his interest in the meatpacking business:

1886, December 22: "Mr. Jere[miah, Sr.] Sutton wants a sausage cutter that will cut two hundred and fifty pounds of meat per hour, and a steam engine to run it. Who can fill the bill?" (*The Daily Journal, New Bern*)

In his aging years, with young children still living in the household, Jerry rented a portion of his plantation to tenant farmers and sharecroppers:

1892, March 24: "Mr. Richard W. Sutton [Jr., 1858-1929], who last year farmed on Mr. Jerry Sutton's plantation in Bucklesberry, raised with one horse one hundred barrels corn, seventeen bales cotton, two hundred and fifty bushels potatoes and seventy-five bushels peas. He bought thirteen dollars' worth of fertilizers, went in debt less than fifteen dollars, fattened two thousands pounds of meat and sold forty dollars' worth of beef cattle..." (*Statesville Record and Landmark*)

To suggest that Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. was an idle man would not be true to the facts. His involvement in business ventures beyond farming indicates he was highly industrious and enterprising, qualities that should be admired and emulated by all.