

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. (Part 6)

Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. (1836-1900), known as Jerry, was father of the largest family in Bucklesberry history. Married three times, his first two wives left him a widower with twenty-one children. Only Benjamin Sutton, Jr. (1795-1864), Jerry's uncle, had the same number of wives and children.

Truly a family man, Jerry was an exceptional farmer. Industrious and enterprising, he stayed busy year-round with other work in addition to farming, including operating a fishery and a distillery.

As successful as he was, life was not always smooth sailing for Jerry. He faced tragedies and disappointments, too. For example, in the early 1880s, a purported arson occurred in Jerry's home:

1882, December 6: "The kitchen of Jere[miah, Sr.] Sutton, in Bucklesberry, was found to be on fire about 9 o'clock on last Friday night. Jerry believes that someone acquainted put fire to it." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

Jerry and his family experienced serious illness in the mid-1880s. A potentially deadly virus found its way into his household with second wife, Sarah (Sallie) Ivey Sutton (1846-1893) and their eight youngest children:

1884, June 18: "Several of Jerry Sutton's family have been confined with measles. The disease has been very severe in many cases." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

Fortunately, Jerry's children were spared from the death grip of measles that year. But two months later, Jerry himself faced a life-threatening assault from a tenant who lived on his plantation:

1884, August 13: "A difficulty occurred in Bucklesberry last week between Jere[miah, Sr.] Sutton and Bryan Johnson in which Johnson was badly worsted. A judicious use of a hoe upon the forehead felled Johnson, and in the fall his right leg was broken in two places. The difficulty occurred at Sutton's house, the particulars of which I have not learned further than that Johnson was pursuing Sutton with his knife when the blow was given. Johnson is said to be a dangerous man while Sutton is regarded as peaceable." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

A more serious incident occurred a few years later with yet another tenant on Jerry's farm. The result was a tragic loss of limb:

1889, December 11: "Robert Arnett, living on Jere[miah, Sr.] Sutton's place, had the misfortune to cut his leg last week. The cut was so severe that amputation was necessary." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

More than once, Jerry experienced the worst grief a parent could know, the death of a child. Sadly, eight of his children preceded him: Maxaline (1853-1864); Fannie (1863-1869); Elsie Susan (1870-1871); Mary Ann (1869-1872); Alonzo Harold (1852-1875); Willie Robert (1890-1892); and twin sons, Dee and L.M. (1894; lived only one day).

Jerry also saw the death of a son-in-law, Edward Herring, the first husband of daughter, Octavia Beatrice (1874-1938):

1899, June 2: "The remains of Mr. Ed. Herring, of Wayne County, were taken through here to Mr. Jerry Sutton's, in Bucklesberry, for interment. He is said to have been a most excellent man." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. was not immune from the hardships of life. Rather than succumb, however, he found the grace and strength of character to rise above difficulties and sorrows, a testament to what may have been his greatest success.