

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Clellan Sutton Interview (Part 10)

Bucklesberry's origin can be dated back to the mid-1700s. By more than a century, this old community was settled long before the town of La Grange was incorporated in 1869.

Families who pioneered Bucklesberry included the Herrings, Lassiters, Rouses, and Suttons. But they were not its first people. An unsettled area at the time, Tuscarora Indians were the original residents.

It should be no surprise, then, that remnants of Indian life from yesteryear can be found in fields all around Bucklesberry. Collectible artifacts are rare, however. One local Bucklesberrian claims that, for every near-perfect arrowhead he finds, there are hundreds more that are severely chipped or broken.

The late Clellan Thomas Sutton (1909-1999), life-time Bucklesberry farmer, had one of the finest collections east of Raleigh. Transcribed below from a videotaped interview, local enthusiast, Glenn Fields discussed Indian artifacts with Clellan at his home in 1994:

Glenn: "I know all down in this area there are good Indian arrowhead hunting places."

Clellan: "Especially on the Neuse River. I understand they liked to be on a stream...or Bear Creek up here. They said that was a mighty good place."

Glenn: "Right. Well, they had the same requirements that we've got, and that was food, and water, and somewhere dry to sleep. And the three basic necessities were something to drink, something to eat, and somewhere to rest."

Clellan: "The high land, the high part of it. They [Indians] didn't go into the low part."

Glenn: "Sandy land."

Clellan: "And the Neuse River."

Glenn: "Have you ever found very much stuff [Indian artifacts]? I found most of mine plowing tobacco or chopping with a scythe. Have you ever found anything, say, like an axe head or anything in this area? I know you found some arrowheads. Everybody's found some of them if they've been out in the fields any."

Clellan: "Do you mean where they [Indians] camped and lived?"

Glenn: "Well, things like your arrowheads and your axe heads. Have you ever found any of that stuff out in this area on your own? I know you said you bought some." [referring to Clellan's display of Indian artifacts]

Clellan: "Well, they'd be found in the fields, most of this."

Glenn: "Right. Everybody's found points [small arrowheads], but then, every once in awhile, you'd find that one thing you'd just be tickled to death over. Have you ever found anything that was really unusual? I know you said you bought the [Indian smoke] pipe up there [pointing to display], but I've got one particular arrowhead that I'm just tickled to death over that I found, and it's almost a perfect triangle and...I bet it's no more than an eighth of an inch thick. How in the world did they made it? And it's got sharp points on each corner of it, and...almost as sharp an edge all the way around it. That's the most perfect arrowhead I've ever found, and I was just wondering if you'd ever found anything that stood out...Indian artifacts, spear heads, pipes or anything like that."

Clellan: "Well, I've seen where they cooked, and I've seen where they camped out, and where they buried their refuse. They cooked at the [Neuse] River. They'd eat the mussels from the River. Have you ever seen those big ole mussels? They'd eat them and bury them. They dug a hole and buried everything."

Glenn: "That was their landfill!"

Clellan: "I've seen them. And I've seen their beads and broken pipe stems, on so on."

Glenn: "Yeah, they must have had some really long pipes. I used to work with the Soil Conservation Service, and we'd walk those soil surveys. We used to walk all over the land, and you'd see little pieces of pipe stem. On about every site that we went to, you'd see a little piece of pipe stem. And I found three pipe bowls, since I've been looking for stuff."

Clellan: "You don't mean the whole thing, do you?"

Glenn: "Well, it was just the bowl. The stem was gone, but the bowl was in tact. There was a red one and two white ones, and I found all three of them over there in Edgecombe County But that was somewhere close to the Tar River, just like you talked about down here at the Neuse River. And I'm really proud of them, even though the stems were gone."

Clellan: "Were they made to put a stem in them?"

Glenn: "No, it was all bowl."

Clellan: "All the way. That's what I was thinking."

Glenn: "It was like that one." [pointing to Clellan's display]

Clellan: "Right here." [pointing to display]

Glenn: "The three [pipe] bowls I have are a lot smaller than that. Some of those pipes I believe were English pipes. The Indians had pipes, too. I think some of them, though, probably were English. They made them pretty much the same....it would fit right between your finger and your thumb. And if you turned it any other way...it didn't fit....I thought that was unusual....They kind of custom-fitted it to the hand."