

SUTTON TIES TO BERTIE CO.

~ Part 1 ~

John Sutton was the first known Sutton to arrive in Bucklesberry in the mid-1700s. Five documents in the Clellan Sutton Collection, all ranging in date from 1748 to before 1773, either name John or can be attributed to him. This Collection of 320 documents is the largest album of its kind that speaks to the ancestry and origins, and the lives and times, of the Sutton Family from the Bucklesberry community of La Grange, NC (Lenoir County; formerly, Dobbs County). No other available documents from the mid-1700s identify a Sutton to arrive in Dobbs County earlier than John, thereby affirming him as the first Sutton in Bucklesberry.

Martha Mewborn Marble, Bucklesberry Sutton descendant, genealogist, and manager of Old Dobbers website (www.olddobbers.net), believes that John was born circa 1730 and died before 1773. His whereabouts prior to his arrival in Bucklesberry, however, have been a mystery for generations. Speculations have ranged from New Jersey to New York, and from Virginia to northeastern North Carolina. Circumstantial evidence, including a will, a deed, and a bride, suggests that John migrated from Bertie County, NC.

Bertie County Will. Thomas Sutton, Sr. and Elizabeth Luerton Sutton of Bertie County had five known sons, one of whom was John. All of Thomas' sons were named in his will, proved March 2, 1750. Oddly, each son inherited 150-200 acres of land from their father, except John. Not completely excluded, John received one black slave, named Andrew, sixteen head of cattle, and house wares from his parents' estate. Why John received no land from his father is unknown. One theory is Thomas rationalized that John did not need a share of land since John already possessed 100 acres of land received years earlier through an inheritance from his Aunt Mary Jones, sister of his mother. However, this theory cannot be supported since John's brother, Thomas, Jr. similarly received land (180 acres) from his Aunt's estate. Further, she awarded all of her cattle to George, yet another brother of John. Ms. Marble has suggested a more likely, alternative theory. Perhaps Thomas decided not to award John a share of land because, at the time he was preparing his will, John had already moved out of Bertie County, or he had announced his intention to move away.

Bertie County Deed. A mere ten weeks after Thomas, Sr.'s will was proven, John sold the parcel of land he inherited from his Aunt Mary, according to a Bertie County deed filed May 17, 1750, possibly signaling his intent to relocate geographically. Research by Ms. Marble confirms no mention of John Sutton in any Bertie County public or court records after 1750, which would suggest his departure from there. Around this same time approximately 100 miles from Bertie County, John Sutton emerged in largely unsettled Dobbs County, specifically, the Bucklesberry Pocosin. It is significant that the first Sutton named in the oldest of the Clellan Sutton Collection of Bucklesberry papers, dated around 1750, was John Sutton.

Bertie County Bride. One of John's sons, Benjamin, married Sarah Hardy from Bertie County. They made their home in Bucklesberry. Ms. Marble believes the union of these two, reared in communities some 100 miles apart, is no chance occurrence. A 1780 letter included in the Clellan Sutton Collection addressed "To Benj Sarah living [in] Dobbs," and signed, "Your Loving Brother till death Wm Parrot Hardy," proves Sarah was a sister of William, whose roots can be traced to Bertie County. It is plausible, then, that Benjamin may likely have accompanied his father, John, on trips back to the homeland of Bertie County to visit relatives from time to time, giving him ample opportunity there to meet his bride, Sarah.

Dr. Francis R. Hodges, professor of history (retired) from Florida Southern College and native of Lenoir County, also believes that the Suttons of Bucklesberry originated from Bertie County, lending support that John was the first. In a USGenWeb manuscript (no date), Dr. Hodges noted that the Suttons "had migrated from Bertie County to the Neuse valley before the American Revolution, and which by the end of the eighteenth century had already established many branches in Bucklesberry and the adjacent regions of Lenoir and Wayne."

DNA PROVES JOHN'S ORIGIN

~ Part 2 ~

Circumstantial evidence supports the belief that John Sutton of Bucklesberry migrated from Bertie County in the mid-1700s. But shy of DNA evidence, we can never know for certain his origin.

In 2015, Ms. Marble, in consultation with the international Sutton Project (www.familytreedna.com), recommended a strategy to gather DNA from Sutton descendants of Bucklesberry which could then be compared with that of Sutton descendants from Bertie County, who branched from Suttons in Perquimans County. Matching DNA of Sutton descendants from Bucklesberry with Sutton descendants from Bertie and/or Perquimans Counties would definitively prove whether or not John originated from one of those areas.

A family's lineage and genetic traits are passed down to succeeding generations through male descendants. Therefore, Phase 1 of the strategy included obtaining YDNA-67 evidence from male Sutton descendants whose lineages could be traced to the three known sons of John Sutton of Bucklesberry—Benjamin, John, Jr., and William. If their 67 genetic markers all matched, then Phase 2 would include obtaining YDNA-67 evidence from one or more male Sutton descendants from Bertie or Perquimans Counties. Finally, if YDNA-67 evidence of the Bucklesberry Sutton descendants from Phase 1 matched that of the Bertie or Perquimans County Sutton descendants from Phase 2, then we would have confirmation that John Sutton originated from that area.

In 2016, five Sutton males, all descendants from one of the proven sons of John Sutton of Bucklesberry, agreed to YDNA-67 testing through Family Tree YDNA for Phase 1 of the study. In order to preserve confidentiality of the descendants, they are identified simply as A, B, C, D, and E. Descendants A and C of La Grange, NC and Descendant B of Smithfield, NC are from the Benjamin Sutton line. Descendant D of Weymouth, MA is from the William Sutton line, and Descendant E of La Grange is from the John Sutton, Jr. line. Remarkably, when the DNA results were analyzed, the 67 genetic markers of all five Bucklesberry Sutton descendants matched with a variance of no more than three markers, proving their relationship to each other and to John Sutton.

Phase 2 of the plan was advanced by identifying two Sutton males whose lineages could be traced to Suttons from Perquimans and Bertie Counties and who agreed to YDNA-67 testing. Descendant G descends from a line of Suttons in Bertie County where he also resides. Descendant F of Chattanooga, TN, was born in Washington, DC, but reared in Rocky Mount, NC. However, his father was a Sutton descendant from Perquimans County.

Incredibly, Perquimins County Descendant F's 67 markers matched those of the five Sutton descendants from Bucklesberry. However, Bertie County Descendant G's markers did not match Descendant F or that of the five Sutton males from Bucklesberry. Descendant G's markers did match descendants with other non-Sutton surnames.

The only way that Descendant F could genetically match Descendants A, B, C, D, and E is for all to share a common Sutton ancestor. We know that Descendant F's roots can be traced to George Sutton, and wife, Sarah Tilden Sutton, of Perquimans County.

Through a series of patrilineal relationships, the lineages of Descendants A, B, C, D, and E, all descendants of John Sutton from Bucklesberry, can be traced back to George and Sarah Tilden Sutton of Perquimans County through wills and various court documents, as follows:

- ▶ John's parents were Thomas Sutton and Elizabeth Luerton Sutton of Bertie County.
- ▶ Thomas' parents were Joseph Sutton and Parthenia Durant Sutton of Perquimans County.
- ▶ Joseph's parents were Nathaniel Sutton and Deborah Astine Sutton of Perquimans County.
- ▶ Nathaniel's parents were George Sutton and Sarah Tilden Sutton of Perquimans County.

Thus, Descendant F and Descendants A, B, C, D, and E all can be traced to George Sutton, making George the common Sutton ancestor of all six Sutton descendants descendants.

The mystery of John Sutton and where he originated prior to his arrival in Bucklesberry has now been solved. DNA evidence, coupled with circumstantial evidence, provides definitive proof that John Sutton of Bucklesberry migrated from Bertie County.

