

# The Chatham Historical Journal

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## Citizen and Soldier of Chatham County:

### *James W. Horton*

by Gregory A. Coco\*

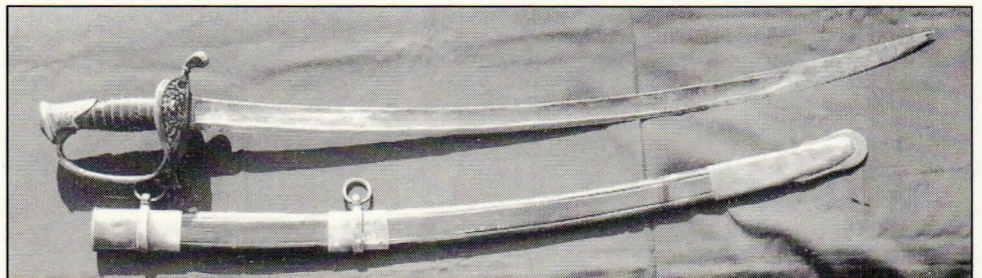
When dawn broke over a bleak countryside around Appomattox Court House on 10 April 1865, the legendary Army of Northern Virginia had already ceased to exist. Now only a memory, its saga had ended with General Lee's surrender a day earlier. Now all through that dreary Monday, as Union soldiers furiously printed off the parole passes which would enable the Confederates to safely return home, Lee's defeated veterans mulled over their uncertain futures and divided meager rations around some of the last campfires they would ever share together.

One of those dispirited men was undoubtedly Lieutenant James W. Horton, of Company D, 15th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. Lieutenant Horton had diligently served three hard years of wartime duty, and as quickly as the paroles were issued he and 138 disbanded survivors of the Fifteenth said their farewells and stepped off for home. According to Federal records, on that journey from Appomattox the only private property James Horton took along was "1 sword & [some] clothing."<sup>1</sup> Fortunately for the lieutenant, the trek southward from Virginia was only 100 miles (as the crow flies) to his family's farm near Grove, Chatham County, North Carolina.

*Gregory A. Coco is a park ranger at the Gettysburg National Military Park. A native of Louisiana, Greg has lived in the Gettysburg area since 1974. He is the author of fifteen books on the Civil War, including Gettysburg's Confederate Dead and A Strange and Blighted Land: Gettysburg, The Aftermath of a Battle. The Chatham County Historical Association is honored by his preparing this article on James W. Horton for the Journal.*

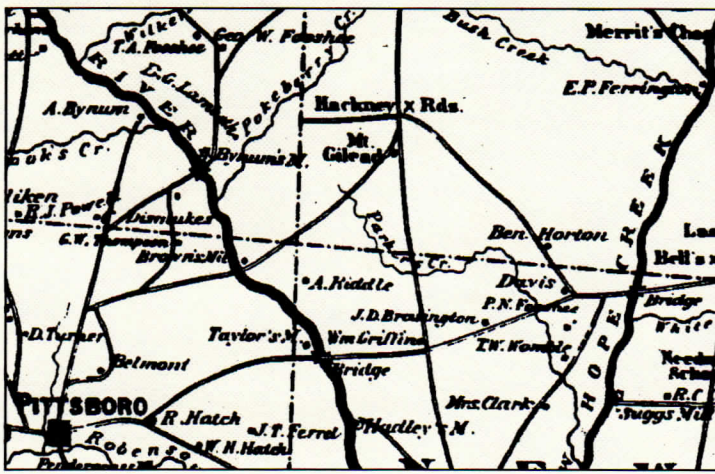
Curiously, my involvement in the life of James W. Horton started not in Grove (which no longer even exists) or in Pittsboro but with the sword he carried back from the surrender. All was set in motion in 1998 when a distant relative of James Horton walked into a Civil War collectors' show in Greensboro carrying Horton's sword. The weapon was not for sale, the man said, he simply wished to learn a little about the artifact and perhaps even its value. At the show, this gentleman made contact with an antiques dealer who supplied him with the information and then made a standing offer to purchase the sword any time in the future. Eventually the owner did decide to part with the heirloom, and the dealer arranged a transaction between Horton's descendant and one of his clients, an attorney from Asheboro.

I first saw the sword in November 2002. Intrinsically, it had great appeal as a Civil War relic, but what drew me to the piece was the fact that Lieutenant Horton had carefully inscribed his own name into the leather scabbard. This personal touch was intriguing and motivated me to learn the *history* of the soldier who had carried it, with the idea of using Horton's biography in a program I often give as a park ranger on the Gettysburg battlefield. Through my own research, and with the expert help of several generous people in



*Lt. James W. Horton's sword and scabbard. The sword is a Confederate wartime product of the Richmond firm Boyle and Gamble and was probably made for Mitchell and Tyler, a company of the same city that sold military goods. Interestingly, Horton's infantry officer's sword is only 34 inches in length. This type of weapon usually averages 36"-38" in length. If Horton was indeed only five feet tall, as reported in the military record, then perhaps he had this sword made especially to accommodate his unusual stature.*

*(Photograph courtesy of Gregory A. Coco)*



Portions of "Map of Chatham County, N. C." by Capt. N. A. Ramsey, 1870, showing location of Benjamin Horton's farm. Grove was close to the bridge across New Hope Creek.

or near Chatham County,<sup>2</sup> a few pieces making up the puzzle of James W. Horton's life finally came together.

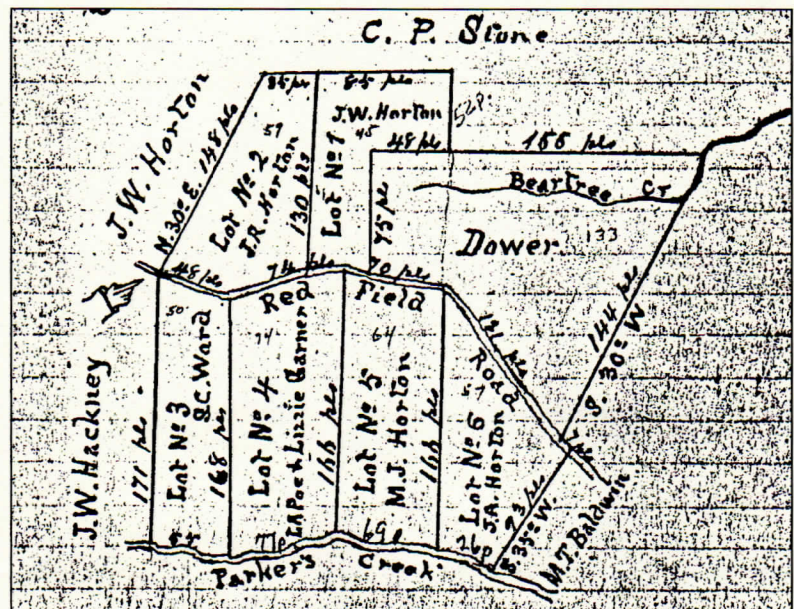
In 1800, James's great-grandparents, Amy and William Horton, along with several children and the family's slaves, left worn-out tobacco plantations in Northhampton County, near the Virginia border, for more fertile soil in Chatham County. There they purchased land near Pokeberry Creek, between the Haw River and New Hope Creek northeast of Pittsboro. One of the sons who accompanied Amy and William was James, the grandfather of the unborn Lieutenant Horton. James and his wife Rebecca eventually had six children. Their son Benjamin, born in 1810, married Susan Foushee, a woman sixteen years his junior. Susan and Benjamin, who were farmers, became the parents of eight offspring, including James W., the first child, born in May 1836. The family may have lived east of Parker's Creek along the road from Hackney's Crossroads. According to an 1870 map of the county, their farm was located southeast of Mt. Gilead Baptist Church and west of New Hope Creek and Bell's Crossroads, in the vicinity of a small community known as Grove. Grove in its heyday consisted of a post office, a store, a school, a few houses, and a cotton gin in later years.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing is known about James's youthful years, except that in 1850, a census-taker recorded his age as 14 and the fact that he was attending school. In 1860, 24-year-old James was still living at home with Benjamin and Susan and seven siblings, but in this decade he was listed as a schoolteacher. The following year, 1861, was probably a landmark period in the life of James Horton. War had broken out between the States, and as a single man at the perfect military age, he did not hesitate long before enlisting in the North Carolina state militia as a lieutenant in the 49th

Regiment. By March 1862, with the war effort intensifying, volunteers were desperately needed to fill the ranks of the hard-pressed Confederate army. On 24 April James and many of his neighbors and friends gathered at John Riggsbee's store, where they were mustered into service in Captain E. H. Ward's company for "three years or the War." This unit, nicknamed the Chatham Cossacks, soon became Company B of the 49th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. Horton's first "Muster-in and Descriptive Roll," made out at Camp Mangum near Garysburg, registers him as "2 Sgt, age 25, 5 feet tall, born in Chatham County, occupation, farmer."

The 49th Regiment was soon ordered to Virginia, where it was engaged in combat several times that summer during the Seven Days Battles around Richmond and then at Harper's Ferry in mid-September. On 12 September Sergeant Horton was captured at Frederick, Maryland, during the Antietam campaign (probably while ill) and confined in a U.S. general hospital in the same city. Seven days later he was transported to Ft. Delaware as a prisoner of war and was confined there until his exchange on 2 October 1862. Returning to his unit in November, Horton was back in time for the battle of Fredericksburg a month later. On 9 January 1863 his Company B was transferred to the 15th North Carolina Infantry, becoming Company D of that regiment until the end of the war.

The Fifteenth, in 1863, as part of General John R. Cooke's brigade, saw action near Charleston and Savannah and then returned to Virginia, where it participated in the Bristoe and Mine Run campaigns. In



Division of Lands of Benjamin Horton's estate, including the widow's dower, 1885. (Book BK, p. 436, Chatham County Register of Deeds)

1864 and 1865 the regiment fought through the bitter battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna, Cold Harbor, and the Petersburg siege, as well as in several other fierce engagements, finally ending its fighting days with the Army of Northern Virginia at the close of the Appomattox campaign.<sup>4</sup>

During those long months of harsh duty, some important matters affected James Horton. In March or April of 1863 he was promoted to 1st Sergeant of Company D, an indication that he possessed leadership qualities. By late summer his rank has risen to 3d Lieutenant, further proof of his soldierly abilities. (This was likely when James purchased a sword, unless he obtained one in 1861 as a militia officer.) Shortly thereafter, on 18 September, Horton was appointed 2d Lieutenant, a position he held until the surrender, when he and nineteen other men of Company D answered their final roll call at Appomattox. As spring approached in early 1864, the lieutenant was granted his first furlough. It was for a period of eighteen days and the destination was Grove. Subsequently, by October of the same year, James took another leave of absence to his home. This one originated from General Hospital Number 4 in Richmond, where he was convalescing from “intermittent fever.”

Following the war, James Horton appeared to have returned to farming and teaching, because the 1870 census lists him owning \$300 worth of real estate and living with his parents and several siblings. According to one family source, during those turbulent postwar years James was a member of the Ku Klux Klan for a time. On one occasion he was ambushed while returning home from a meeting near Trade’s Hill. In that encounter his horse was killed, and he suffered a broken leg.

One point of Horton’s life is clear: he never married. The 1880 census places him as a boarder in the house of his 70-year-old mother Susan, along with a brother Alfonzo, age 30, who had served as a private in Company D, 35th North Carolina Infantry. James’s father Benjamin may have been dead by then, although his gravestone at Mt. Gilead says 1883. In 1900, James, at 64, was again in residence with his mother and a 62-year-old cousin named Rebecca Burgess. In that year, at age 84, Susan is noted as being the mother of eight children, five of whom were living.

On 11 June 1901 James applied for a veteran’s pension from the state of North Carolina, claiming that in 1864 he had been “taken with Chronic Diarrhea and have never yet fully recovered from it. [I] am now very nervous and am almost totally disabled for the performance of manual labor.”<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, Horton’s signature on this application, as well as within his military records, exactly resembles the name carved



Gravestone in Mt. Gilead Church Cemetery, 2003

(Photograph by Branson Kimball, courtesy of Gregory A. Coco)

into the leather scabbard of his sword.

We are uncertain as to the date when James Horton died. It may have been during the winter of 1908-1909, because his last will and testament, written on 30 April 1906, was probated on 1 March 1909. In that document James left all of his “real and personal property including household and kitchen furniture, farming implements, incomes, rents and seventy-one acres of land” to his sister Savannah C. Ward,<sup>6</sup> probably because his mother had died in 1903.

In closing, I regret that there is not more to tell about this man. Much interesting information is certainly missing regarding his looks, his personality, and his experiences. Today, the remains of James W. Horton, a good citizen and a brave soldier, lie in the Mt. Gilead Baptist Church cemetery, next to the people who knew and loved him the most. And perhaps that is the best ending of all.

#### NOTES

1. James W. Horton in Compiled Service Record (CSR), Old Military and Civil Records Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (In the surrender terms agreed to by Generals Grant and Lee, officers were allowed to keep their personal baggage and sidearms.) All details about Horton’s military service are drawn from material in the compiled service record.

Detail of parolees of the 15th North Carolina Infantry Regiment is taken from *Paroles of the Army of Northern Virginia Surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, April 9, 1865* (Richmond, Va.: Southern Historical Society

Papers, Vol. XV, 1887), p. 274, 276-278.

2. Shannon W. Pritchard, Studley, Va.; William W. Ivey, Asheboro, N.C.; Jane Pyle and Barbara Roth, Chatham County, N.C.; Branson Kimball, Durham, N.C.; Philip B. Ennis, Lancaster, Pa.

3. Barbara Roth, letter to author, 7 January 2003. Dr. Roth draws on information in Richard Walser's biography of George Moses Horton, interviews with Alma Council, great-grandniece of James W. Horton, and others living in the vicinity of the former Grove.

Other details of the Horton family are from U. S. Censuses of Population for Chatham County, North Carolina for the years 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900.

4. Sifakis, Stewart, *Compendium of the Confederate Armies - North Carolina* (New York, N.Y.: Facts on File, 1992), p. 105-106.

5. James W. Horton, "North Carolina Soldier's Application for Pension, Act of March 2d, 1901," dated 11 June 1901, North Carolina State Archives, Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, N. C.

6. Will of James W. Horton, Book F, p. 571-573, Chatham County Clerk of Court.

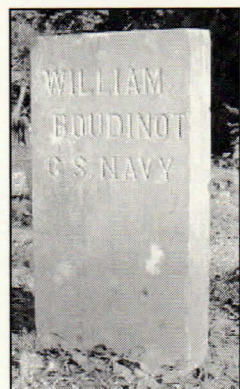
The author would like to thank the kind people mentioned in the article for their invaluable assistance in preparing this paper. If anyone can add to the story of James Horton, please write to Greg at P. O. Box 400, Bendersville, PA 17306-0400, or call (717) 677-8028.

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## Gravemarkers of Civil War Veterans in St. Bartholomew's Cemetery, Pittsboro

The recently-published *Gravesites of Chatham County, North Carolina*<sup>1</sup> lists 174 burial sites of Confederate veterans. Twenty-two of these graves are found in the cemetery of St. Bartholomew's Church in Pittsboro, all but two of them marked.

The simplest of the gravestones marking sites of Civil War veterans have an interesting history. In October 1898 the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was formed in Pittsboro. A year later the chapter decided to install headstones for Confederate veterans buried in unmarked graves.

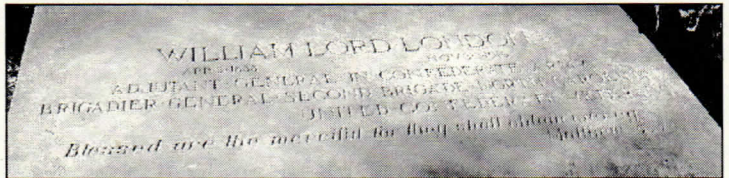


Navy Captain  
William Boudinot

In November 1900 the gravestones were erected in Pittsboro cemeteries. Made of gray Tennessee marble, the markers carried the name of the veteran and the unit in which he served; no dates or ranks were given. Seven of the fifteen stones erected were placed in St. Bartholomew's cemetery,<sup>2</sup> though two cannot be found today.

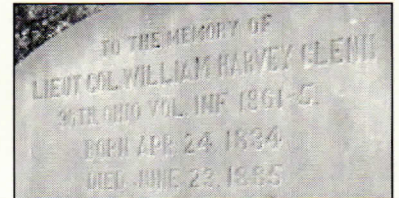


Col. Ross R. Ihrie



Maj. William Lord London, ("Brigadier General, Second Brigade, North Carolina United Confederate Veterans")

Unusual in a Southern cemetery is the gravesite of a Northern soldier. William Harvey Glenn Adney, lieutenant colonel in the 36th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, was a professor of mathematics and science, teaching in Pittsboro after the war. After being gored by his prize bull, he was tended by ex-Confederate soldier friends until his death in 1885.



Lt. Col. William Adney

-- Jane Pyle

### NOTES

1. Will and Audrey Heiser, *Gravesites of Chatham County, North Carolina*, Second Edition, (Pittsboro: Chatham County Historical Association, Inc., 2002). "The Roster of Confederate Veterans from Chatham County," compiled in 1996 by the Colonel Randolph Lane Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, edited by Richard Sailey, records 526 burials. Because many tombstones do not have information about military service, CCHA is now working to add it to the *Gravesites* database.

2. *The Chatham Record*, Pittsboro, N.C., 13 Oct 1898, 12 Oct 1899, 15 Dec 1899, 29 Nov 1900.

The *Chatham Historical Journal* is an occasional publication of the Chatham County Historical Association. Its purpose is to disseminate items of historical interest about Chatham County. To be considered for publication, articles or photographs should be previously unpublished, of reasonable length, and include detailed sources of information.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary, CCHA, Box 913, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312.

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