



JOHNSTON MOVES WEST



Hardee's Column



CAROLINAS CAMPAIGN

The Carolinas Campaign began on February 1, 1865, when Union Gen. William T. Sherman led his army north from Savannah, Georgia, after the March to the Sea. Sherman's objective was to join Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia to crush Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Scattered Confederate forces consolidated in North Carolina, the Confederacy's logistical lifeline, where Sherman defeated Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's last-ditch attack at Bentonville. After Sherman was reinforced at Goldsboro late in March, Johnston saw the futility of further resistance and surrendered at Bennett Place near Durham on April 26, ending the Civil War in the East.

Here, on the rainy morning of April 15, 1865, the southern column of Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee approached the crossroads on your right along the road to your left as it marched west away from Union Gen. William T. Sherman's army. The column, under Gen. William J. Hardee, had bivouacked in Chapel Hill on the campus of the University of North Carolina. Supposed to move out at 4:30 A.M. toward Greensboro, it did not depart until after 6:00. Its destination also



Gen. William J. Hardee
Courtesy Library of Congress



Col. John W. Hinsdale
Courtesy North Carolina Office of Archives & History

was changed to Swepsonville and the Haw River ford there, along present-day N.C. Route 119.

Hardee's column included the 3rd North Carolina Junior Reserves (72nd North Carolina State Troops) under Col. John W. Hinsdale.

Sixteen- and seventeen-year-old Alamance and Forsyth County boys comprised Co. C. Hinsdale

later wrote that "our line of march was on the Salisbury and Hillsboro road, over which 200 years before the Catawba Indians passed in their visits to the Tuscaroras in the East. Governor [William] Tryon and later Lord Cornwallis had led their troops

over this historic way in the vain endeavor to subdue the men whose sons now trod footsore and weary over the same red hills, engaged in a like

struggle for local self government." The column departed from that path here and headed to Ruffin Mills.

The winter of 1864-65 had been very wet, and early in April a flood destroyed all of the bridges across the Haw River except the railroad bridge at Granite Mills. The choice of crossing had potentially fatal consequences because of high water.



Army marching in the rain - *Courtesy Library of Congress*