



JOHNSTON MOVES WEST



Holt's Mill



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.

Confederate Gen. William J. Hardee led Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's southern column of the Army of Tennessee here to Holt's Mill on the rainy morning of April 15, 1865, on the march west away from Union Gen. William T. Sherman's army. Gen. Robert F. Hoke discovered a more suitable crossing here than at the Ruffin's Mill ford earlier that morning, although flooding had raised the usually placid creek up to the level of a cartridge box—three feet deep. The men and boys had already made perilous crossings to



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



Lt. Col. W. Foster French
Courtesy North Carolina Office of Archives & History

get here; they also feared a Federal cavalry attack. Col. John W. Hinsdale, 3rd North Carolina Junior Reserves (72nd North Carolina State Troops), wrote, "In the midst of the peril of the crossing of the river, Lieutenant-Colonel [W. Foster] French, realizing the danger to which the smaller boys were exposed, jumped from his horse, and stationing himself in mid-stream just below the line of march, rescued several brave lads from inevitable death. Standing there, watching his chance to save life, he was every inch the faithful officer and brave soldier, and no wonder the boys loved him."

The column bivouacked along both sides of this road between here and the old Alamance Regulator battleground of 1771 two miles southwest, and learned that



Army marching in the rain - Courtesy Library of Congress

Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had surrendered six days before at Appomattox Court House. The main body of the Federal army was more than sixty miles away from Hardee's column on this day, so there was little threat of an engagement, but some of his men had died simply crossing flooded rivers and creeks.

The textile industry came to Alamance County early in the 19th century with the Quakers of Cane Creek. Edwin M. Holt's mill here produced Alamance Plaid and marked a technological innovation: weaving dyed fibers together rather than dyeing the finished cloth. His mill kept North Carolina soldiers well clad. Contrary to the myth of the Confederate soldier in rags, North Carolina governor Zebulon Vance reported 92,000 sets of uniforms in warehouses when the government evacuated Raleigh.