

JOHNSTON MOVES WEST



Logisticians at Work



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.

You are standing where the northern column of Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee divided on April 15, 1865, as it maneuvered west away from Union Gen. William T. Sherman's army. Confederate Gen. A.P. Stewart's

corps marched to Gibsonville along present-day U.S. Route 70 while Gen. Stephen D. Lee's corps, which Johnston accompanied, marched through Elon on today's N.C. Route 100.

Army marching in the rain

Courtesy Library of Congress

The other Confederate column moved west through southern Alamance County as Johnston and Sherman began negotiating the inevitable Confederate surrender.

Johnston's army was marching back up its supply lines as it moved west, meeting trains bringing food and equipment from Salisbury under the direction of Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard. The Confederate supply situation here contrasted sharply with that confronting Gen. Robert E. Lee when he evacuated Richmond and Petersburg on April 2–3 and marched west, away from his supply sources, planning to turn south and join Johnston. Lee lost valuable time at Jetersville waiting for supplies that never arrived, which enabled Federal cavalry to block his way south.

The soldiers in the Army of Tennessee revered Johnston, who was known for taking care to see that his men were well fed and supplied. While Johnston's critics believed that he was



Gen. Joseph E. Johnston
Courtesy Library of Congress



Gen. A.P. Stewart
Courtesy Library of Congress



Gen. Stephen D. Lee
Courtesy Library of Congress

overly cautious, most soldiers thought that he was unwilling to risk their lives unnecessarily. Johnston himself was concerned that he had been returned to command of the army to serve as a scapegoat for failure—a concern that later proved to be well founded.

Gen. Joseph Eggleston Johnston had a unique connection to Alamance County. Here, his father, Peter Johnston, and his father's close friend, Joseph Eggleston, had fought under Lt. Col. Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee, Robert E. Lee's father, during the Revolutionary War at an engagement known here as Pyle's Hacking Match. Johnston was named for his father's friend and carried his sword, refusing to leave the Seven Pines battlefield without it after he was wounded.