



JOHNSTON MOVES WEST

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Ruffin Mills



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.

The southern column of Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee approached the Haw River here at Ruffin Mills as it marched west away from Union Gen. William T. Sherman's army on the rainy morning of April 15, 1865. Col. John W. Hinsdale, 3rd North Carolina Junior Reserves (72nd North Carolina State Troops)



Army marching in the rain - Courtesy Library of Congress

later wrote, "We found the stream rising rapidly. In crossing the river, several of our boys were drowned by leaving the ford to reach some fish traps a short distance below and being caught in the swift current and swept down into the deep water below."

Lt. Robert M. Furman, 2nd North Carolina Junior Reserves (71st North Carolina State Troops), wrote, "One of the smaller boys disappearing under the water, a taller and stouter comrade grabbed him and pulled him up, he dived down a second and third time and on being pulled up by his comrades, suspecting an attempt at suicide, asked what he meant. 'Why,' said the little fellow, shivering and dripping, 'My gun's down thar and I'm trying to git hit.'"



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



Lt. Robert M. Furman
Courtesy North Carolina Office
of Archives & History



Musician William J. Worsham
Courtesy North Carolina Office
of Archives & History

"The men tried to form the Monkey's chain by holding each others hands, but the current was too strong and broke their hold," wrote musician William J. Worsham, 19th Tennessee Infantry. "We ... debated in our minds whether to go on or return as the water then was under our arms and deeper further on. Just then Gen. [Benjamin F.] Cheatham came riding in and as he passed us we caught hold of his horse's tail and landed safely on the other side."