

The Various James Albrittons of Pitt County, North Carolina 1745-1864

by Timothy Dean Hudson

The multiple men by the name of "*James Albritton*" constitute a severe impediment to Albritton research in Pitt County, North Carolina, as it proves exceedingly difficult to distinguish between them in the surviving records. A total of seven adult men named "*James Albritton*" lived in Pitt County between 1745 and 1864, with additional ones living there in the last half of the nineteenth century. By the mid-1800s, middle names had become common, and this helps us to distinguish among the James Albrittons of the 1850-1900 era.

Until about 1780, only two men by this name lived in Pitt County, a father/son pair, and they are relatively simple to distinguish based upon their distinct residences on either side of the Tar River. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, several younger James Albrittons had now reached adulthood, and this makes differentiating between the James Albrittons in the Pitt County records of this period quite complicated. Ultimately, sorting them out during the 1784-1830 period requires a careful examination of the land descriptions given in the deed records, the only surviving Pitt County court records. This necessitates an understanding of Pitt County geography to identify the exact neighborhood in which each man lived.

As land tended to remain in families for several generations, precise identification of the men named "*James Albritton*" in Pitt County between 1784 and 1830 ultimately requires an examination of land descriptions given in deeds of their grandchildren during the 1840-1860 period. Accompanying separate documents give a thorough analysis of the Pitt County James Albrittons during this period based upon the land descriptions.



Pitt County clerks typically distinguished between the James Albrittons by the standard "*James Albritton Sr.*" and "*James Albritton Jr.*" These designations did not necessarily imply a father/son relationship as they do today, nor were these suffixes a permanent part of the men's names as they are in modern times. Rather, the "*Senior*" and "*Junior*" designations were fluid descriptors allowing court officials to distinguish between the older and younger men of the same name. In our case, we see that the man identified as "*James Albritton Jr.*" in 1775 became "*James Albritton Sr.*" by 1784-1785 after the death of his father in 1773.

This situation complicates the identification of these men. Despite how the court clerks identified these men in the records, the Albritton records described in these notes will refer to the men according to the following designations in an attempt to clearly identify them:

James Albritton Sr. (17 Sept 1705–c1773)

He was the son of Thomas Albritton and grandson of Ralph Albritton of York County, Virginia. After arriving in the North Carolina Province in 1745 from Princess Anne County, Virginia, James initially settled north of the Tar River in Beaufort County, but he moved in 1750 to Onslow County on the southeastern North Carolina coast. In 1756, he returned to the Tar River region, this time settling south of the river on Cow and Cross Swamps. This region became Pitt County in 1761, and he spent the rest of his life there.

James Albritton Jr. (1728/1738–c1795)

The son of James Albritton Sr., this man settled along Grindle Creek on the north side of the Tar River about 1760. He spent his life there, and it does not appear that he had any children to survive childhood. Beginning in the 1780s, a decade after his father's death, Pitt County clerks began referring to him as "*James Albritton Sr.*," as he had by then become the eldest man of this name in his extended family.

James Albritton, son of Peter (2 July 1761–c1797)

The son of Peter Albritton Sr. and grandson of James Albritton Sr., by April 1784 he left his father's plantation on Cow Swamp south of the Tar River and settled near his uncle, James Albritton Jr., along Grindle Creek on the north side of the Tar River.

James Albritton, son of Matthew (13 July 1765–27 Sept 1829)

No known primary source document verifies his parentage, but his tombstone states that he is the son of Matthew Albritton, making him a grandson of James Albritton Sr. This connection fits the documentary record, which shows him closely associated with Peter Albritton Sr. (his presumed uncle) and Peter's son, James Albritton (his presumed first cousin). James Albritton, son of Matthew first appears in the Pitt County records in 1788 and lived there on a Cross Swamp plantation that adjoined that of his uncle, Peter Albritton Sr., until 1800. After his second marriage to Sarah Pope, James Albritton son of Matthew sold his Pitt County property on Cross Swamp and moved to Snow Hill, in Greene County. His descendants remained in Greene and Lenoir Counties into the twentieth century.

James Albritton, son of Jonathan (c1795–c1835)

He was the grandson of Peter Albritton Sr. and a great-grandson of James Albritton Sr. He spent his life farming in the Pactolus neighborhood, the community along Grindle Creek

north of the Tar River where his great-uncle, James Albritton Jr., had settled in 1760. The farms of brothers Jonathan and Joel Albritton adjoined, and by the 1830s, the land James acquired there adjoined the lands of his first cousin, Pitt County Sheriff Howell Albritton, son of Joel. James Albritton died young, apparently in the mid-1830s. It is not clear that he married or left descendants. In fact, it is unknown what became of his lands after his death.

James C. Albritton (c1810–1864)

The son of State Senator Luke Albritton, James C. Albritton was another grandson of Peter Albritton Sr. and great-grandson of James Albritton Sr. Born on his father's Pactolus farm, he became active politically and operated a hotel and store in Greenville.

James B. Albritton (20 Nov 1814–16 Apr 1840)

The son of Samuel Albritton, he was the grandson of James, son of Peter, great-grandson of Peter Sr., and great-great grandson of James Albritton Sr. He was the third generation in his direct paternal line that died prematurely.

