

Elder Benjamin Bell Albritton
Son of Samuel, grandson of James, and great-grandson of Peter Albritton Sr.

by Timothy Dean Hudson

Benjamin Bell Albritton was born on 4 December 1816 on his father's farm near Pactolus, in Pitt County, North Carolina, the youngest son of Samuel Albritton and Tabitha Bell to survive infancy [1]. Samuel Albritton wrote his will when his only two sons, James and Benjamin, were still young teenagers, and he died in 1831 when Benjamin was only fourteen. He left his sons his primary 300-acre plantation which included the 250-acre tract originally purchased in April 1784 by the boys' grandfather, James Albritton, son of Peter Sr. James and Benjamin's portion of their father's plantation remained undivided through 1839, by the time both had reached their mid-20s, married, and fathered young children. On 8 February 1839, a court document described a portion of it as [2]

...parte [sic] of the lands whereon Samuel Albritton Lived and died on and it being the undivided share that Benj^a B. Albritton was in title [entitled] to by the will of his father...and the undivided piece or parcel of lands descended by Will to James B. Albritton & Benj^a B. Albritton and is at this time undivided...

On 16 August 1834 at the age of seventeen, Benjamin Bell Albritton married Catherine Hatton (29 May 1818–11 Feb 1888), daughter of Robert Hatton (2 Oct 1763–1 Apr 1840) and Mary (?–15 Jan 1845) [3]. During their married life, Benjamin and Catherine Albritton farmed near Grindle Creek, working the lands of her father, Robert Hatton, in the 1830s, and later portions of his father's old plantation.

Benjamin B. Albritton became a Free Will Baptist minister in about 1842 as a young man of only twenty-five. The following year, he became the pastor of the Parker's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church near his home in Pactolus in the 1840s and pastored the church for over a half-century [4]. He traveled widely across eastern North Carolina for preaching appointments, especially to churches in Pitt, Craven, and Beaufort Counties. The New Bern newspapers often announced his visits, such as this one from 1886 [5]:

Rev. Ben. Albritton preached at the Old Chapel to a crowded house on Sunday last. We always like to see Uncle Ben in our midst.

People especially noticed the large number of people Elder Albritton baptized into the Free Will Baptist faith throughout his ministry. In September 1889, when he had reached the age of seventy-two, Albritton had baptized 3,088 people. That month, he conducted a "protracted meeting" at the Bear Creek Church near Washington, in Beaufort County, and during this meeting he baptized an additional forty-six people [6]. By January 1898, he had baptized 3,456 members and performed marriage ceremonies for over two hundred couples [7]. In July 1898, at the age of eighty-one, Elder Albritton conducted a two-week revival at his home church of Parker's Chapel. By the time of his death in September 1899, he had received and baptized into the Free Will Baptist faith a total of 3,460 souls [8].

The Panic of 1837 severely affected Benjamin B. Albritton's financial circumstances. While that disaster caused many Pitt County farmers to pick up and emigrate from eastern North Carolina, Elder Albritton persevered, selling and mortgaging parts of his father's plantation to help his family survive the severe economic downturn. On 28 April 1838, Benjamin sold

...all right title and interest in an undivided moiety or piece of Land...which land descended to me by the death of my Father Samuel Albritton decd...

to his father-in-law, Robert Hatton, for \$250 [9]. On 30 January 1841, his sister's husband, Henry Harrington, served as security on several notes Albritton signed, and to indemnify his brother-in-law, Albritton mortgaged

...one Horse, one mare, twenty Head of Hogs, House Hold and Kitchen furniture farming tools twenty five Barrels of corn fodder pease [peas] Bacon & pork...,

as well as the interest he and his wife inherited in the estate of her father, who had recently died [10].

A few months later, on 7 April 1841, in debt for \$165.41 to his neighbor and his father's first cousin, Pitt County Sheriff Howell Albritton, Benjamin B. Albritton mortgaged

...all of his crop of corn Pease [peas] and fodder which is now planted and growing or may be cultivated on a piece of land known by the name of Robert Hatton Lands...

He also mortgaged his interest in the slaves belonging to his father's estate that remained on his mother's plantation and in which his mother, Tabitha Albritton, held a life estate: Marina, Smithy, Faribee, Adaline, Harriot, Reddick, and a man, Miles, as well as a younger boy, Miles [11]. On 15 December 1843, Benjamin B. Albritton sold his brother-in-law, Calvin Moye, a 21-acre portion of his father's old plantation for \$25, with another brother-in-law, Luke Short, witnessing the transaction. Moye is believed to have married Albritton's sister, Hannah, while Short was the husband of another sister, Lydia. This transaction appears to have merely conveyed to Moye the portion of the old James Albritton plantation he then worked and had no bearing on Elder Albritton's financial situation [12].

Although economic conditions improved significantly beginning in the mid-1840s, it appears that Benjamin B. Albritton's financial problems of the latter 1830s plagued him for many years. In 1850, he owned no real estate in his own name, and he only owned one slave, a twelve-year-old female. In 1860, he owned real estate worth \$200, with his personal estate valued at \$1160, consisting of two male slaves aged sixty and seventy. In both years, he listed his occupation as Free Will Baptist minister, but he undoubtedly farmed to support his wife and child, as Free Will Baptist preachers did not receive a full salary in that era [13].

After the Civil War, Benjamin and Catherine Albritton continued to farm his family lands near Pactolus, with Benjamin's occupation listed as farmer in both 1870 and 1880. In the former year, he owned real estate valued at \$600, with his personal estate valued at a mere \$200. Their eldest grandchild, Martha Ann Harris, lived in their household in both 1870 and 1880 [14].

Benjamin's mother, Tabitha Bell Albritton, wrote her will on 8 April 1857, bequeathing Benjamin and Catherine a lifetime estate in her lands, but leaving them to their only daughter, Henrietta. Tabitha also directed that

The ballance [sic] of my property consisting of household & kitchen furniture, also money & notes remaining after the payment of my debts and funeral expenses and of the gifts and bequeaths above mentioned I give & bequeath absolutely to my dearly beloved son Benjamin B. Albritton....I do hereby constitute and appoint my trusty son Benjamin B. Albritton my lawful executor to all intents and purposes to execute this my last will and testament according to the true intent and meaning of the same...

Benjamin qualified as executor of his mother's will in November 1865 and managed her estate, apparently as she directed [15].

Sometime in the 1870s, Catherine fell and injured herself, and in 1880, she was described as "Maimed by a fall" [16]. Given the rudimentary medical care available in that era, if she suffered a broken hip from the fall, she likely remained an invalid the rest of her life. Catherine Hatton Albritton died on 11 February 1888 [17].

Benjamin B. Albritton remarried on 24 February 1889 at Stonewall, Pamlico County, to Sarah F. Ives (1843–28 Feb 1931), daughter of Constantine Veran Swan (c1795–c1861) and Susan H. Stye (c1818–May 1892) [18]. Their marriage took place at her home in Stonewall, and afterwards, Benjamin left his home in Pitt County and joined his wife at her family home along the Pamlico Sound. However, even after moving to Pamlico County in his seventies, Elder Albritton "always came back to fill his appointments at Parker's Chapel" near his family home at Pactolus [19].

In January 1898, the Greenville newspaper published this article about Benjamin B. Albritton [20]:

Rev. B. B. Albritton, a native of Pitt county, but now living in Pamlico, was in town Saturday. Mr. Albritton is an octogenarian, being now in his 82nd year. He has been twice married, and among his progeny are six great grandchildren...Mr. Albritton is remarkably well preserved and active, being much more so than many men ten years or more his junior. May many more years be added into his useful life.

The church near his home plantation, Parker's Chapel, held a revival in July 1898 that lasted two weeks, and Elder Albritton returned home and assisted with the services. In March 1899, at the age of eighty-two, Albritton made the journey home to Greenville to testify as a witness in a long-standing court case [21].

In September 1899, Elder Albritton made his regular trip from his home in Pamlico County to his daughter's home on their old family plantation north of the Tar River to prepare for an associational meeting in Pactolus. He "*was taken sick soon after reaching the home of his daughter and never got up again.*" Benjamin Bell Albritton died at his daughter's home in Pactolus on 20 September 1899 [22]. His family buried him besides Catherine in the family cemetery. It is known today as the Harris-Albritton Cemetery near Greenville [23].



Children of Elder Benjamin Bell Albritton

Benjamin B. Albritton and Catherine Hatton had but three daughters, only one of whom survived to adulthood.

1. **Martha Ann Elizabeth Albritton** (8 Jan 1836–1 Feb 1836).
2. **Mary Ann Tabitha Albritton** (20 Mar 1837–25 Sept 1843).
3. **Henrietta Louisa Albritton** (20 Jan 1839–8 Jan 1918) was identified as “*Henrietta Lewesor Albritton*” in her father’s Bible [24], but it appears her name was “*Henrietta Louisa Albritton*.” When she was merely seven years old, her father wrote and signed this note in the front of his Bible: “*When I am dead it is my desire for Henrietta Loweisor Albritton to have this my holy Bible this the 4 of May 1846*” [25].

Henrietta’s grandmother, Tabitha Bell Albritton, wrote her will in 1857, including this bequest [26]:

To my dearly beloved Grand daughter Henrietta Louisa Albritton I give & bequeath absolutely all my lands and tenements now occupied by my son Benjamin Albritton reserving nevertheless to said Benjamin Albritton a life estate in the same and to his wife Catharine Albritton in case she survives him a dower or one third of the same.

In 1867, Henrietta married Henry Clay Harris (28 Mar 1844–26 Mar 1913), son of James Harris and Sarah Briley [27]. Henrietta and Henry Harris raised their family of seven children on the old Samuel Albritton farm about five miles north of Greenville [28].

Henry C. Harris died in 1913, while Henrietta lived to the age of nearly seventy-nine years, dying of heart disease. Both Henrietta and Henry are buried in the Harris-Albritton Cemetery on their farm, undoubtedly the old Albritton graveyard on the plantation where her ancestors had resided since 1784 [29].



Notes

1. [Benjamin B. Albritton Family Bible](#) (Pitt County Genealogical Quarterly, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1998, pp. 19–20). Harris-Albritton Cemetery (Greenville, Pitt County NC), tombstone of “B. B. Albritton, A.F.W.B.P.” (4 Dec 1816–20 Sept 1899). “Kings Weekly” (Greenville, NC), 28 January 1898, p. 3, column 4. Benjamin’s birthdate was recorded among the births of Samuel Albritton’s children on p. 2, while his death was recorded on p. 4:
Ages of Samuel Albrittons ch_
Benjamin B. Albritton was Bornd December the 4 day 1816
Eld B. B. Albritton departed this Life Sep 20th 1899
 The “Eastern Reflector” of Tuesday, September 26th, stated that Elder Albritton “died at 2:30 Thursday morning,” putting his death on September 21st. However, his own Family Bible and tombstone recorded his death as occurring on September 20th. The abbreviation on Albritton’s tombstone, “A.F.W.B.P.,” stands for “A Free Will Baptist Preacher.” In January 1898, a newspaper article stated that Albritton had “been preaching fifty-five years,” indicating that he had become a minister about 1842.
2. Pitt County NC Deed Book II [double I, not eleven], p. 293 (Robert Hatton to Howell Albritton, 8 February 1839); Deed Book KK, p. 38 (Howell Albritton to John S. Daniel, 8 February 1842). [James Albritton’s 1784 Purchase on Grindle Creek](#). The 1839 deed described the 150 acres owned by Benjamin B. Albritton, part of the “undivided” part of the lands left in Samuel Albritton’s will to James B. and Benjamin B. Albritton. The fact that this included the 250 acres purchased in 1784 by Samuel’s father, James Albritton, is documented in the article on James’ 1784 purchase. By February 1842, Howell Albritton had acquired 300-acre tract
...known as the Lands whereon Samuel Albritton lived and died on and that Tabbitha [sic] Albritton have a life estate in a part of it given to her in the Last Will and Testament of the said Samuel Albritton decd.
3. [Benjamin B. Albritton Family Bible](#) (Pitt County Genealogical Quarterly, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1998, pp. 19–20). Harris-Albritton Cemetery (Greenville, Pitt County NC), tombstone of “Catharine Albritton, Wife of Elder B. B. Albritton” (29 May 1818–11 Feb 1888). Pitt County NC Deed Book II [double I, not eleven], pp. 330–331 (Benjamin B. Albritton mortgages to William Clark, 30 January 1841); Deed Book KK, pp. 7–8 (Pitt County Commissioners divide the lands of Robert Hatton, February 1841). The Albritton Bible includes these entries:
Ages of Robert Hatten Children
Cathron [sic] Hatten was Bornd May the 29 day 1818
Cathron [sic] C. Albritton Departed this Life the 11 of February 1888
Benjamin B. Albritton and Catherine Albritton was Marred [sic] August the 16 day 1834
Robert Hatton was Bornd in the year 1763 and the 2 of October
Robert Hatten Departed this Life April the 1 day 1840
Mary Hatten Departed this Life January the 15 1845
 On 30 January 1841, to secure payment of a note to his brother-in-law, Henry Harrington, Benjamin B. Albritton mortgaged to William Clark
...all the said Benjamin B. Albrittons interest in the Estate of Robert Hatton decd. both real and personal property which was given to the wife of the said Benjamin B. Albritton in the last will and Testament of s^d Robert Hatton decd....
 This same document identifies Mary Hatton as the Executrix of Robert Hatton. Nothing further is known about Mary, who we presume is Catherine’s mother, given that her death date was recorded in the Albritton Bible. On February 1841, the Pitt County Commissioners appointed to divide the lands of Robert Hatton among his heirs allotted a portion worth \$190 to “Benjamin Albritton and wife Catharine.”
4. “The Eastern Reflector” (Greenville, NC), 26 September 1899, p. 2, column 1.
5. “The Daily Journal” (New Bern, NC), 6 October 1883 (p. 1, column 3) and 6 April 1886 (p. 4, column 3). In early October 1883, the New Bern newspaper announced that “Elder B. B. Albritton will preach at Piny Grove church on the first Saturday and Sunday in October.” The Piny Grove Church was near Vanceboro, in Craven County outside New Bern.
6. “The Wilmington Messenger” (Wilmington, NC), 25 September 1889, p. 5, column 1.
7. “Kings Weekly” (Greenville, NC), 28 January 1898, p. 3, column 4.
8. “Kings Weekly,” 22 July 1898, p. 3, column 2. “The Eastern Reflector,” 26 September 1899, p. 2, column 1. At the revival held at Parker’s Chapel in July 1898, the newspaper reported that, “There were several additions to the membership.” At his death, Albritton’s obituary stated that he had baptized a total of 3,460 members, up four from his total in January 1898. Presumably, Albritton baptized four additional members at the July 1898 revival.
9. Pitt County NC Deed Book HH, p. 481 (Benjamin B. Albritton to Robert Hatton, 28 April 1838).
10. Pitt County NC Deed Book II [double I, not eleven], pp. 330–331 (Benjamin B. Albritton mortgages to William Clark, 30 January 1841).
11. Pitt County NC Deed Book II, p. 362 (Benjamin B. Albritton to William Clark, 7 April 1841).

12. Pitt County NC Deed Book LL, p. 78 (Benjamin B. Albritton to Calvin Moye, 15 December 1843). Albritton sold a 21-acre tract of land bounded by James Albritton and Cason's corners and *"the Cypress Pond,"* the identical land that Albritton's grandfather, James Albritton, had purchased from Henry Cason in 1784; see Appendix C: James Albritton's 1784 Purchase on Grindle Creek.
13. 1850 Pitt County NC Federal Census, Parkers District, p. 57b, Dwelling #932, line #9: Benjⁿ B. Albritton (age 34, *"Free Will Baptist Clergyman"*). 1850 Pitt County NC Federal Census, Slave Schedule, Falkland District, p. 449, column 2, line #16: Benjⁿ Albritton (owner of one female, aged 12, black color). 1860 Pitt County NC Federal Census, P.O. Pactolus, N^o Carolina, p. 26b/51, Dwelling #433, line #22: B. B. Albritton (age 43, *"Babt. Free Will Min,"* Real estate: \$200, Personal estate: \$1160). 1860 Pitt County NC Federal Census, Slave Schedule, p. 518a/25, column 2, line #28: B. B. Albritton (owner of male slaves aged 70 and 60, both of black color). Albritton's slaves lived in one *"slave house"* on his farm.
14. 1870 Pitt County NC Federal Census, Greenville Township, P.O. Greenville, N.C., p. 159a/22, Dwelling #216, line #1: B. B. Albritton (age 53, *"Farmer,"* Real estate: \$600; Personal estate: \$200); #2: Catherine Albritton (age 52); #3: Martha Harris (age 2). 1880 Pitt County NC Federal Census, *"Greenville Township N. Side of Tar River,"* ED #127, p. 381a/32, Dwelling #289, line #27: Patsy Jones (age 65, widowed); #29: B. B. Albritton (age 64, *"Farmer"*); #30: Catherine Albritton (age 62, Wife, *"Keeping house," "Maimed by a fall"*); #31: Martha Ann Harris (age 13, G.Daughter); Dwelling #290, line #32: H. C. Harriss (age 35, *"Farmer"*); #33: Henrietta Harress (age 40, wife).
15. Pitt County NC Wills & Testaments Book 1, pp. 128–129 (Will of Tabitha Albritton, written 8 April 1857, probated November 1865). Pitt County NC Estate Files, Tabitha Albritton, 1865, LDS Film #7384012, Images #744–748.
16. 1880 Pitt County NC Federal Census, *"Greenville Township N. Side of Tar River,"* ED #127, p. 381a/32, Line #30: Catherine Albritton (age 62, Wife, *"Keeping house," "Maimed by a fall"*).
17. [Benjamin B. Albritton Family Bible](#) (Pitt County Genealogical Quarterly, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1998, pp. 19–20). Harris-Albritton Cemetery (Greenville, Pitt County NC), tombstone of *"Catharine Albritton, Wife of Elder B. B. Albritton"* (29 May 1818–11 Feb 1888).
18. Pamlico County NC Marriage Register (1872–1925), p. 2 (B. B. Albritton, of Pitt County, to Sarah F. Ives, 24 February 1889). North Carolina Death Certificate #156, 1931, Sarah F. Albritton, Pamlico County. Swan Cemetery (Maribel, Pamlico County NC), tombstone of *"In Memory of Father & Mother, C. V. & Susan Swan and Their Children, Sarah, Sue and Charles. Given by their daughter Jennie Swan Ives, 1931."* Sarah's death certificate listed her father as Constantine Veran Swan and mother as Susan Schley.
19. *"The Daily Journal"* (New Bern, NC), 1 March 1889, p. 1, column 3. *"The Eastern Reflector,"* 26 September 1899, p. 2, column 1. The New Bern newspaper reported that, *"On the 24th inst., at the residence of Mrs. Sarah E. Ives, on Chapel Creek, Elder B. B. Albritton and the lady named were married."* The Greenville newspaper stated in September 1899 that, *"About ten years ago Mr. Albritton moved to Pamlico county where he married a second time, and that county had since been his home."*
20. *"Kings Weekly"* (Greenville, NC), 28 January 1898, p. 3, column 4.
21. *"Kings Weekly,"* 22 July 1898 (p. 3, column 2) and 14 March 1899 (p. 4, column 3).
22. *"The News and Observer"* (Raleigh, NC), 23 September 1899, p. 3, column 1. *"The Eastern Reflector"* (Greenville, NC), 26 September 1899, p. 2, column 1. *"The Wilmington Messenger"* (Wilmington, NC), 27 September 1899, p. 3, column 1. *"The North Carolinian"* (Raleigh, NC), 28 September 1899, p. 5, column 2. [Benjamin B. Albritton Family Bible](#) (Pitt County Genealogical Quarterly, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1998, pp. 19–20). Harris-Albritton Cemetery (Greenville, Pitt County NC), tombstone of *"B. B. Albritton, A.F.W.B.P."* (4 Dec 1816–20 Sept 1899). In his family Bible, Benjamin's death was recorded on p. 4: *"Eld B. B. Albritton departed this Life Sep 20th 1899."*
23. Harris-Albritton Cemetery (Greenville, Pitt County NC), tombstone of *"B. B. Albritton, A.F.W.B.P."* (4 Dec 1816–20 Sept 1899).
24. [Benjamin B. Albritton Family Bible](#) (Pitt County Genealogical Quarterly, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1998, pp. 19–20). The birth records of their three daughters is given on p. 2 of the Benjamin B. Albritton Bible:

Ages of Benjamin B. Albritton Children
Marthan Elizabeth Albritton was Bornd the 8 day of January 1836
Mary An Tabitha Albritton was Bornd March the 20 day 1837
Henrietta Lewesor Albritton was Bornd January the 20 day 1839

The death dates of their children are recorded among other entries:

p. 1: *Henrietta Harris Died Jan. 8 - 1918 age - 78 years 11 mo. 18 days*
p. 3: *Mary An T. Albritton Departed this Life Sept the 25 1843*
p. 4: *Martha An Elizabeth Albritton Departed this Life February the 1 day 1836*
25. [Benjamin B. Albritton Family Bible](#) (Pitt County Genealogical Quarterly, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1998, pp. 19–20).
26. Pitt County NC Wills & Testaments Book 1, pp. 128–129 (Will of Tabitha Albritton, written 8 April 1857, probated November 1865).
27. Harris-Albritton Cemetery (Greenville, NC), tombstone of *"Henry C. Harris"* (28 Mar 1844–26 Mar 1913).

28. 1870 Pitt County NC Federal Census, Greenville Township, P.O. Greenville, N.C., p. 175b/5, Dwelling #40, line #36: Henry C. Harriss (age 26, "Farmer"); #37: Henrietta L. Harriss (age 30, "Keeping House"). 1880 Pitt County NC Federal Census, "Greenville Township N. Side of Tar River," ED #127, p. 381a/32, Dwelling #289, line #27: Patsy Jones (age 65, widowed); #29: B. B. Albriton (age 64, "Farmer"); #30: Catherine Albriton (age 62, Wife, "Keeping house," "Maimed by a fall"); #31: Martha Ann Harris (age 13, G.Daughter); Dwelling #290, line #32: H. C. Harriss (age 35, "Farmer"); #33: Henrietta Harress (age 40, wife). 1900 Pitt County NC Federal Census, Greenville North Side Tar River, ED #92, p. 212a/13, Dwelling #228, line #12: Henry C. Harris (age 56, born Mar 1844, "Farmer"); #13: Henrietta L. Harris (age 60, January 1840). 1910 Pitt County NC Federal Census, "Greenville Township North Side of Tar River," ED #98, p. 17b/5, Rams Horn Road, Dwelling #91, line #71: H. C. Harriss (age 67, "Home farm"); line #72: H. L. Harriss (age 72, Wife).
29. Harris-Albritton Cemetery (Greenville, NC), tombstone of "Henrietta L., Wife of H. C. Harris" (20 Jan 1839–8 Jan 1918). North Carolina Death Certificate #268, 1918, Henrietta Louisa Harris, Pitt County.

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