

James Albritton's 1784 Grindle Creek Land Purchase

by Timothy Dean Hudson

On 18 April 1784, a “younger” James Albritton paid £100 in “*Currant Money*” to Henry Cason for a 250-acre tract of land that lay on the north side of the Tar River, and on the south side of Grindle Creek, land that adjoined the plantation there owned by the man modern Albritton researchers uniformly refer to as James Albritton Jr. [1]. Identifying precisely which younger James Albritton made the purchase is critical to a thorough understanding of the Pitt County Albrittons from the early 1780s through 1900. Due to the destruction of Pitt County wills and probate records, we must rely on land descriptions given in North Carolina grants and Pitt County deeds to determine the precise identity of this younger James Albritton.

Four adult men by the name of “*James Albritton*” lived in modern Pitt County, North Carolina between 1745 and 1800. Our use here of “*Sr.*” and “*Jr.*” conforms to what has become standard among modern Albritton researchers. It is important to keep in mind that county clerks of the eighteenth century used these suffixes to distinguish older from younger, not necessarily father from son as in the modern usage. Thus, the designations can be fluid, sometimes changing throughout a man’s life as he ages from the younger man by that name in a locale to the elder one:

1. [James Albritton Sr.](#) (17 Sept 1705–c1773) – he first moved his family to what is now Pitt County in 1745 and settled near Grindle Creek, north of the Tar River. He left by 1750 but returned in 1755 and obtained an extensive plantation on Cow and Cross Swamps, on the south side of the Tar.
2. [James Albritton Jr.](#) (1728/1738 – c1795) – the son of James Albritton Sr., during this man’s early life, he was known as “*James Albritton Jr.*” to distinguish him from his father. Whereas his father settled on the south side of the Tar River after their 1755 return to eastern North Carolina, this James settled on the north side of the river, on both sides Grindle Creek near Hunting Run, the same general location where his father had lived when he first arrived in North Carolina in 1745. Beginning in 1784, Pitt County officials began referring to him as “*James Albritton, Senr.*” to distinguish him from the younger men by this name. He remained active into the mid-1790s, and evidence suggests that he died about 1795.
3. [James Albritton, son of Peter Albritton Sr.](#) (2 July 1761–c1797) – this grandson of James Albritton Sr. served in the North Carolina Militia during the Revolutionary War. He died soon after February 1797, either later that year or in early 1798, for his heirs received his share of Peter Albritton’s lands in the division made on 1 July 1799.

4. **James Albritton, son of Matthew Albritton** (13 July 1765–29 Sept 1827) – he is believed to be the son of Capt. Matthew Albritton, making this James another grandson of James Albritton Sr. Matthew Albritton appears to have died in the 1780s in Onslow County, North Carolina. By the latter 1780s, this James settled among Matthew's relatives on Cross and Cow Swamps in Pitt County, North Carolina. James bought land that adjoined that of his uncle, Peter Albritton Sr. After the death of his first wife, James remarried about 1800 to a woman from Snow Hill, in neighboring Greene County, North Carolina. In 1800, James sold his Pitt County land and settled in Greene County [2].



By 1784, the man that modern Albritton researchers common refer to as "*James Albritton Sr.*" had been dead for a decade, and the Pitt County clerks sometimes began using the suffixes "*Sr.*" and "*Jr.*" to distinguish between the elder and younger men named "*James Albritton.*" It is clear in the April 1784 document that the man they list as "*James Albritton Sen^r*" is the longtime resident of Grindle Creek, the man described above as #2: James Albritton Jr. The confusion is whether the "*James Albritton Jun^r*" in this document refers to the son of Peter (#3: James Albritton) or the son of Matthew (#4: James Albritton). The latter two "*James Albrittons*" were both born in the 1760s, and either could potentially be the man who bought the tract on Grindle Creek in April 1784 beside his uncle.

The April 1784 document clearly states that the 250-acres sold was a part of a 600-acre grant made to Henry Cason in 1783. Below we list the land descriptions from the original 1778 warrant and 1783 survey, two April 1784 documents, and those from later documents in 1838, 1839 and 1842. In the italicized land descriptions quoted verbatim from the original records, the relevant portions critical to identify the land are underlined:

5 May 1778 – The Pitt County Entry Officer issued a warrant to the County Surveyor to prepare a survey for Henry Cason of a 600-acre tract of land in Pitt County, North Carolina [3]:

*Begining [sic] on **James Albertsons** line Joining **Mathias Moors** line **John Leggetts** line **Keley Tuckers** line **John Hattons** line then a Cross to **John Casons** line.*

13 Oct 1783 – The State of North Carolina grants to Henry Cason a tract of 600 acres of land in Pitt County, North Carolina [4]:

*On the North side of Tar River and South side of Grindal [sic] Creek. Beginning at a pine **James Abertons** [sic] corner then South two hundred pole to a pine in a pocoson **Matthew Moores** line then with his line **Legets** line North eighty three degrees West two hundred & ninety two*

*pole to a pine **Legats** corner then his other line South sixty four pole to a pine in a pond then South Sixty two degrees West sixty eight pole to a Red oak then South Sixty five degrees West thirty two pole to a Red oak then North eighty degrees West one hundred & twenty pole along **Tuckers** line to a corner not mark [sic] then North thro [sic] the pocoson one hundred & ninety pole to a pole to **John Casons** corner then with his line East one hundred & eighty Six pole to a corner in the Cypress pond then North thirty Eight pole to a pine **James Albertons** corner then with his line East to the Beginning.*

18 Apr 1784 – Henry Cason sells “James Albrittain Junr” a 250-acre tract of land, [5]:

*...a Certain Plantation and Parcel of Land lying and being in Pitt County on the South Side of Grindal [Grindle] Creek. Beginning at a pine on **James Albritons Senr** Line thence Runing [sic] a line of markd Trees to a pine on a branch on the South Side of the s^d [line] and Runing [sic] up the Agreed upon by **Henry Cason** and the s^d **James Albrittain** s^d [James Albritton Senr] to a pine thence a line of markd trees to a Gum on **Henry Casons** line thence along the s^d Line to **John Casons** Corner tree and along the s^d Line to **James Albrittans** Corner tree and down the s^d line to the Beginning...being part of a Tract of Six Hundred Acres of Land Granted to **Henry Cason** by patent bearing date the 13th Day of October 1783...*

18 Apr 1784 – Henry Cason sells John Legate [Leggett] a 50-acre tract of land, [6]:

*...a Certain Plantation and Parcel of Land Lying and being in Pitt County on the South Side of Grindal [Grindle] Creek. Beginning at **John Legates** line at a red Oak thence to **James Albritains** Corner a pine thence along the s^d line to a Gum on **Henry Casons** line and along the s^d line to **John Legates** line a pine a Corner tree thence down the s^d line to the Begining [sic]...being part of a Tract of Six Hundred Acres of Land Granted to **Henry Cason** by patent bearing date the 13th day of October 1783...*

28 Apr 1838 – Benjamin B. Albritton sells to Robert Hatton (his father-in-law) [7]:

*...all right title and interest in an undivided moiety or piece of Land on the north side of Tar River adjoining the Lands of the said **Robert Hatton, Benjamin F. Fleming** & others which land descended to me by the death of my Father Samuel Albritton decd. To have and To hold the aforesaid undivided interest in the aforesaid tract of land to him the said **Robert Hatton** his Heirs & assigns forever. I the said **Benjamin B. Albritton** for myself my executors admrs. assigns do covenant to and with the said **Robert Hatton** his Heirs and assigns to warrant and forever defend the aforesaid undivided interest in the aforesaid tract of land formerly owned by **Samuel Albritton deceased** my father against the awful claim or claims of my and all persons whatsoever...*

24 Dec 1838 – Jacob Harris sells Howell Albritton a tract of fifty acres [8]

*...of land situated Lying and being in the County of Pitt and on the south side of Grindal [Grindle] Creek and known as the upper part of the **Legget** Lands and bounded as follows towit, Begining [sic] at **John Leggets** line a read [sic] oak near the path thence to **James Albrittons** corner a pine thence along his line to a Gum on **Henry Casons** line thence along the said line to **John Leggets** line a pine a corner tree thence down the said Line to the Beginning [sic]...and it being a part of a Six Hundred Acre tract of land Granted to **Henry Cason** by Pattent [sic] bearing date the 30th day of October 1783...*

8 Feb 1839 – Robert Hatton sells to Howell Albritton [9]:

...a certain tract or parcccl of land sittuated [sic] lying and being in the County of Pitt & on the north side of Tar River and Known as a parte [sic] of the lands whereon Samuel Albritton

*Lived and died on and it being the undivided share that **Benja^a B. Albritton** was in title [sic-entitled] to by the will of his father and is bounded by the Lands of **Benjamin F. Fleming**, **Luke Ward** and the Heirs of **Mathas More** [sic-Mathias Moore] & others and the undivided piece or parcel of lands descended by Will to **James B. Albritton** & **Benja^a B. Albritton** and is at this time undivided and the said **Robert Hatton** conveys all the right title & interest that the said **Benja^a B. Albritton** had in aforesaid premises containing of one Hundred & fifty Acres be the same more or less...*

8 Feb 1842 – Howell Albritton sells to John S. Daniel [10]:

*...on the north side of Tar River and on the south side of Grindall [sic] Creek and known as the Lands whereon **Samuel Albritton** lived and died on and that **Tabbitha 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.** and being a part of a patten[t] [sic] Granted to **Henry Cason** and bounded as follows, Beginning at a pine **James Casons** corner now **Rippon Wards** corner thence with his line to the heirs of **Mathias Moores** thence with there [sic] line to the **Legget** thence with the **Legget** Land to the to the Lands of the heirs of **Joshua Tucker** thence with **Tucker** line to the Lands of the heirs of **Robert Hatton** thence with **Hattons** line to **Benja. F. Flemings** line thence with his line to the beginning containing three hundred Acres be the same more or less...*

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A comparison of these land descriptions allows us to make the following observations:

1. The land that Henry Cason sold on 18 April 1784, tracts of 250 acres and 50 acres, adjoined each other, as both were bounded by “James Albritains Corner a pine thence along the s^d line to a Gum on Henry Casons line.”
2. The 50-acre tract sold by Henry Cason on 18 April 1784 to John Leggett (Legate) is the same 50-acre tract sold by Jacob Harris on 24 December 1838 to Howell Albritton.
3. The descriptions of the land that Benjamin B. Albritton sold to Robert Hatton on 28 April 1838, and that Hatton sold to Howell Albritton on 8 February 1839, are exceedingly vague, with virtually no distinguishable features given. However, the fact that both deeds specify that the land was the former plantation of Samuel Albritton, who passed it to his sons, James B. Albritton and Benjamin B. Albritton, is crucial.
4. The 250 acres sold by Henry Cason on 18 April 1784 was part of Cason’s 600-acre grant obtained the previous year. That land adjoined the existing plantation of James Albritton Jr., Matthew Moore, “Legets line,” “Tuckers line,” and John Cason’s corner. The 300 acres sold by Howell Albritton on 8 February 1842 is clearly a combination of the 50 acres he purchased of Jacob Harris in December 1838, the Samuel Albritton lands, specified at 150 acres by Robert Hatton in 1839, plus another 100 acres. But the description of the land that Howell Albritton sold in 1842 clearly identifies the Samuel Albritton lands that he is selling as having come from land granted to Henry Cason and adjoining the heirs of Mathias Moore, the “Legget Land,” and

the "*heirs of Joshua Tucker*," the same adjoining land as that purchased by "*James Albrittain Junr*" on 18 April 1784. The one unclear aspect is that the 1783 grant identifies "*John Casons corner*" as a boundary, whereas the 1842 deed identifies "*James Casons corner*" as the boundary. The latter document must be in error, as James Cason died about 1769, whereas John Cason lived until 1815.

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Conclusions

A separate article shows that [Samuel Albritton](#) (1783–1831) was the son of [James Albritton](#) (1761–c1797) and the grandson of [Peter Albritton Sr.](#) [11]. The fact that the 250 acres that “*James Albrittain Junr*” purchased on 18 April 1784 is the precise land on which Samuel Albritton lived his life indicates that it was his father who purchased the land from Henry Cason. Samuel’s father probably had warning of his premature death, for he wrote a will even though only about thirty-six years old at his death [12]. In it, James presumably left his 250-acre plantation bought in April 1784 to his eldest son, Samuel, who spent his life on the property, and in his own will, conveyed it to his sons as described in the deeds of 1838 and 1839.

This identification of James Albritton, son of Peter, as the man who made the purchase of 250 acres that adjoined his uncle, James Albritton Jr. on Grindle Creek on 18 April 1784 has several implications about the relationship between James Albritton Jr. and the children of his brother. It tells us that about 1783 or early 1784, Peter Albritton’s son, James, left his father’s plantation on Cow and Cross Swamp south of the Tar River, and moved across the river to settle beside his uncle. A few years later, Peter’s next-oldest son, Adam Albritton, also moved across the Tar and settled near the two James Albrittons, Peter’s son and brother [13].

The 1790 Federal Census shows this disjointed family structure, with the two James Albrittons, uncle and nephew, living along Grindle Creek north of the Tar River near their neighbors John and Henry Cason, Samuel and James Barrow, Archibald Adams, Thomas Daniel, Colston Adams, and Adam Albritton [14], while Peter Albritton Sr., his son and nephew, William and James, lived adjacent to him on Cow and Cross Swamps south of the Tar near their neighbors Amy “*Robeson*,” the widow of James Albritton Sr., Edward and Abraham Dixon, Joshua Kemp, Moses Moore, Isaac Brooks, and Peter’s youngest brother, Henry Albritton [15].

A final piece of evidence provides further confirmation that it was Peter’s son, James, who bought the Grindle Creek land in 1794 and lived near James Albritton Jr. in 1790, while the James Albritton who lived in the household adjoining Peter’s was his nephew. A separate article showed that the eldest son of Peter’s son, James, was Samuel Albritton, whose birth occurred on 23 April 1783 [16]. The 1790 Pitt County Federal Census shows three households headed by men named “*James Albritton*,” none of which are identified by a suffix. The households of these three, together with Adam, Peter, and William Albritton are given in the table below, grouped by their region, as verified by their neighbors as shown on the census:

1790 Pitt County NC Federal Census							
Pg.	Column		Line#	Name	Males 16 and above	Males under 16	Females
452/29	2	Grindle Creek	18	James Albritton	3	2	1
			33	James Albritton	1	1	4
453/30	1	Grindle Creek	17	Adam Albritton	1	--	--
458/35	4	Cow Swamp	51	Amy Robeson	--	--	1
			58	Peter Albritton	4	1	1
			59	James Albritton	1	--	1
			60	William Albritton	1	1	3

The James Albritton living in the household that adjoined Peter had no young males in his household. This matches the family structure of Peter's nephew, James Albritton, son of Matthew, whose eldest known son was John Hodges Albritton, born about 1793. On the other hand, the James Albritton household #33 on Grindle Creek includes one male under sixteen and four females, and this matches the known family structure of the son of Peter Albritton Sr., whose documented children included one son, Samuel, born in 1783, followed by four daughters. The James Albritton household #18, with three males sixteen and above, two under sixteen, and 1 female, is undoubtedly the elder man by that name, i.e., James Albritton Jr., brother of Peter Albritton Sr.

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Notes

1. Pitt County NC Deed Book I, pp. 268–269 (Henry Cason to “*James Albrittain Junr*,” 18 April 1784).
2. Albritton Graveyard, Snow Hill, Greene County NC, tombstones of James Albritton (13 July 1765–29 Sept 1827), “*son of Mathew & Susan Albritton*,” and Pattie Albritton (5 Mar 1773–10 Nov 1835), “*dau. of Benjamin & Polly May and wife of James Albritton; Age: 62 yrs., 8 mos., 5 days.*” Pitt County NC Deed Book O, pp. 155–156 (Peter Albritton Sr. to “*His Sun James Albritton*,” 6 February 1797); Deed Book O, p. 469 (Pitt County Commissioners divide lands of “*Peter Albritton, Decd*,” 1 July 1799). McSwain, p. 104. The gravestone transcriptions were made on 14 March 1971 at the graveyard, “*located in a field beside Highway 13 between Snow Hill and the county line, near a small run.*” The information on this tombstone conflicts with the John William Pope Grimsley Family Bible, which contains the entry, “*James Albritton the son of Peter Albritton by Susanna his wife was born July 13, 1765.*” The referenced Pitt County North Carolina documents prove that Peter Albritton had a son by the name of James Albritton, but the latter man died between February 1797 and July 1799, and so could not possibly be the man who moved to Snow Hill about 1800 and died in 1827. While both tombstones and Bible records frequently contain mistakes since neither need be recorded contemporary to the events they purport to document, in this case we have verification that the names of James’ parents in the Bible record is incorrect. The Bible also states that James Albritton died on 27 September 1828, whereas the date copied from his tombstone still standing in 1971 was 29 September 1827. It is unclear if his tombstone remains standing today.
3. Pitt County NC Warrant #130, File #095, Entered 5 May 1778, Surveyed 6 Oct 1782 (Henry Cason, 600 acres).
4. Pitt County NC Deed Book K, p. 358, Grant #448 (State of North Carolina to Henry Cason, 13 October 1783).
5. Pitt County NC Deed Book I, pp. 268–269 (Henry Cason to “*James Albrittain Junr*,” 18 April 1784. James Albritton also witnessed the document, although no “*Sr.*” or “*Jr.*” was attached to the witness’ name. Clearly, the witnessed was the elder man.
6. Pitt County NC Deed Book I, pp. 259–260 (Henry Cason to John Legate, 18 April 1784).
7. Pitt County NC Deed Book HH, p. 481 (Benjamin B. Albritton to Robert Hatton, 28 April 1838).
8. Pitt County NC Deed Book II, p. 318 [the book is “double I,” not eleven] (Jacob Harris to Howell Albritton, 24 December 1838).
9. Pitt County NC Deed Book II, p. 293 (Robert Hatton to Howell Albritton, 8 February 1839).
10. Pitt County NC Deed Book KK, p. 38 (Howell Albritton to John S. Daniel, 8 February 1842).
11. [Children of James & Joel, Sons of Peter Albritton Sr.](#)
12. Secretary of State Records, State Archives of North Carolina, New Bern District Criminal Action Papers, DSCR 206.326.5 (State of North Carolina vs. James Hopkins, 1803). This case involved James Hopkins’ alleged theft of a slave, Tony, who belonged to “*Adam Albritton Executor of the last Will & Testament of James Albritton, deceased.*”
13. Pitt County NC Deed Book M, pp. 114–115 (John Cason to James Albritton, 19 January 1789; witnessed by Adam Albritton). 1790 Pitt County NC Federal Census, p. 453/30, column 1, #17: Adam Albritton. It is not entirely certain when Adam Albritton settled on Grindle Creek, as his witnessing his uncle’s land purchase on 19 January 1789 need not necessarily prove residence there. However, his living in his own household on the 1790 Federal Census lends support to the belief that had followed his brother to Grindle Creek and settled there near the two James Albrittons by 1788.
14. 1790 Pitt County NC Federal Census, p. 452/29, column 2, #18: James Albritton; #20: Samuel Barrow; #21: James Barrow; #22: Archibald Adams; #33: James Albritton; #62: John Cason; #67: Thomas Daniel; #70: Colston Adams; #71: Henry Cason Senr.; p. 453/30, column 1, #4: Robert Hatton; #14: Jacob Little; #15: John Cherry; #16: John Whichard; #17: Adam Albritton. Based upon their land ownership and involvement with land transactions there, these households lay along Grindle Creek on the north side of the Tar River.
15. 1790 Pitt County NC Federal Census, p. 458/35, column 4, #51: Amy Robeson; #52: Edward Dixon; #53: Abraham Dixon; #58: Peter Albritton; #59: James Albritton; #60: William Albritton; #61: Joshua Kemp; #62: Moses Moore; #63: Isaac Brooks, and p. 459/36, column 1, #21: Henry Albritton. Based upon their land ownership and involvement with land transactions there, these households lay along Cow and Cross Swamps on the south side of the Tar River.
16. [Benjamin B. Albritton Family Bible](#) (Pitt County Genealogical Quarterly, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1998, pp. 19–20). Rev. Albritton’s Bible gives the date of birth for his father, Samuel Albritton, as 23 Apr 1783. The article referenced earlier, [Children of James & Joel, Sons of Peter Albritton Sr.](#), gives documentation showing Samuel was James’ son.

