

James F. Hart: Teacher,

STATE & LOCAL

THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

lawyer, politician, war hero

Civil War buffs will recognize the name "Hart's Battery" as probably the most famous artillery unit in the Confederate Army.

The battery was named for James F. Hart, who spent most of his life in Yorkville but was born Feb. 13, 1837, in Union County, S.C.

Hart's father died when the boy was 7. With a widowed mother, two brothers and a sister, ordinarily there would have been little likelihood of higher education. But James was so bright and ambitious that he was awarded a scholarship to The Citadel.

Following graduation in 1857, Hart taught school for two years and then began studying law under



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History

B.F. Arthur of Union. In May 1860 he was admitted to the S.C. bar and opened a law office in Union. Seven months later, South Carolina seceded from the Union and the governor, Gen. Francis Pickens, appointed Hart as lieutenant of engineers in the state's military service.

In November 1861 Hart was given command of the battery that

became known as Hart's. In 1861 he was under the command of Gen. Wade Hampton, future S.C. governor and U.S. senator.

Hart's Battery was encamped at Lightwood Knot Springs (now the site of Fort Jackson, southwest of Columbia) for what was called a "general overhauling" before going to Virginia, following the secession of that state.

Most of the men attached to Hart's Battery were from Orangeburg, Barnwell, Colleton and Beaufort Districts. At this time Hart was promoted to the rank of captain.

In July 1862 the Confederate secretary of war selected Hart's Battery to be converted into "flying artillery" to accompany the cavalry

in the Army of Northern Virginia under Gen. Robert E. Lee as part of Pelham's battalion and J.E.B. Stewart's horse artillery. In this capacity, Hart's Battery was in more than 150 actions during the four years of war and fired more than 30,000 rounds of ammunition.

In 1864 Major Hart was so severely wounded in action at Burgess' Mill near Petersburg, Va., that his right leg had to be amputated.

Hart came home to recover but in 1865, in the last months of the war when Gen. Wade Hampton was retreating before Union Gen. William T. Sherman, Hart reported to Hampton. Hampton was grateful and wanted to promote Hart

from major to colonel, but conditions prevented the promotion.

Hart married Janie Ratchford (there were six children before her death Aug. 26, 1883) and became a citizen of Yorkville. In postwar Yorkville, Hart took the only job he could find, as teacher. Determined to return to the practice of law, two years later he joined the partnership of C.D. and Sam Melton and when financially able, opened his own office.

In 1881 Hart, along with Judge Simonton and William H. Parker, was appointed to collect and codify the statutes of South Carolina. The following year Hart filled the unexpired term of state Sen. I.D. Witherspoon.

In 1888 Hart, no doubt remembering his experiences as a teacher, sponsored a law providing for graded schools for students in Yorkville. Over time, other school systems were to embrace the concept of grades to replace the old nongraded system that simply left it to the teacher to decide whether the pupil had advanced as far as the pupil could (or reached the limits of the teacher's ability to teach).

Maj. James Franklin Hart died April 20, 1905, and is buried in York's Rose Hill Cemetery.

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