

## **Gatling, James Henry** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Gatling, James Henry**

by E. Frank Stephenson, 1986

**15 July 1816–3 Sept. 1879**

James Henry Gatling, inventor, farmer, businessman, and wine maker, was born in Maney's Neck Township, [Hertford County](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, the son of Jordan Gatling, an inventor and farmer, and Mary Barnes Gatling. He and his brothers William, Thomas, and [Richard](#) <sup>[3]</sup> were educated at Buckhorn Academy in Maney's Neck Township. Gatling grew up in a very inventive and tinkering family. His father was a self-taught blacksmith and carpenter who taught his sons the same trades as well as the principles of sound business management. [Richard Jordan Gatling](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, brother of James Henry, received international recognition for his invention of numerous farm implements and his most famous device, the [Gatling gun](#) <sup>[4]</sup>.

James Henry Gatling spent much of his life trying to solve the mysteries of manned flight. Throughout his childhood and into early manhood he was known to have devoted many hours to building model "aeroplanes." Before the [Civil War](#) <sup>[5]</sup> he became seriously involved in an attempt to construct a "flying machine." He received a severe setback in 1865, when a band of "[Buffaloes](#)" <sup>[6]</sup> or robbers raided his plantation and stole over \$1,700 that he had saved for the project. Nevertheless, Gatling was determined to build and fly an airplane. Approximately seven years later he nearly accomplished his objective. The machine was launched from the roof of his cotton gin but crashed into a nearby tree on its maiden flight. Having suffered a broken leg in the crash, Gatling did not rebuild his flying machine. He died a violent death when he was murdered near his hogpen. Gatling never married and spent all of his life on the family plantation in Maney's Neck Township where he was buried.

#### **References:**

- F. Roy Johnson, *The Gatling Gun and Flying Machine of Richard and Henry Gatling* (1979), and with T. C. Parramore, *The Roanoke-Chowan Story* (1962).
- J. R. Parker, ed., *The Ahoskie Era of Hertford County* (1939).
- T. C. Parramore, "The North Carolina Background of Richard Jordan Gatling," *North Carolina Historical Review* 41 (1964).
- A Preliminary Document of the Characteristics of the Murfreesboro Adaptive Restoration and Community Development Program and the Severe Cultural and Educational Deprivation of the Roanoke-Chowan Region of North Carolina* (1977).
- E. Frank Stephenson, *Renaissance in Carolina*, 2 vols. (1971, 1973).
- B. B. Winborne, *State and Colonial Political History of Hertford County, North Carolina* (1906).

#### **Additional Resources:**

"James Henry Gatling." North Carolina Centennial of Flight. State Archives of North Carolina. [http://exhibits.archives.ncdcr.gov/ffc/Flight/Aviation/James\\_Henry\\_Gatling.html](http://exhibits.archives.ncdcr.gov/ffc/Flight/Aviation/James_Henry_Gatling.html) <sup>[7]</sup> (accessed November 1, 2013).

James Henry Gatling in WorldCat: <https://www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n79-134707> <sup>[8]</sup>

Parramore, Thomas C. *First to Fly: North Carolina & the Beginnings of Aviation*. UNC Press Books, 2003. [http://books.google.com/books?id=zrpb67qFXUIC&dq=James+Henry+Gatling+1879&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=zrpb67qFXUIC&dq=James+Henry+Gatling+1879&source=gbs_navlinks_s&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false) <sup>[9]</sup> (accessed May 3, 2013).

#### **Subjects:**

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#### **Authors:**

[Stephenson, E. Frank, Jr.](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

#### **Origin - location:**

[Hertford County](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

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