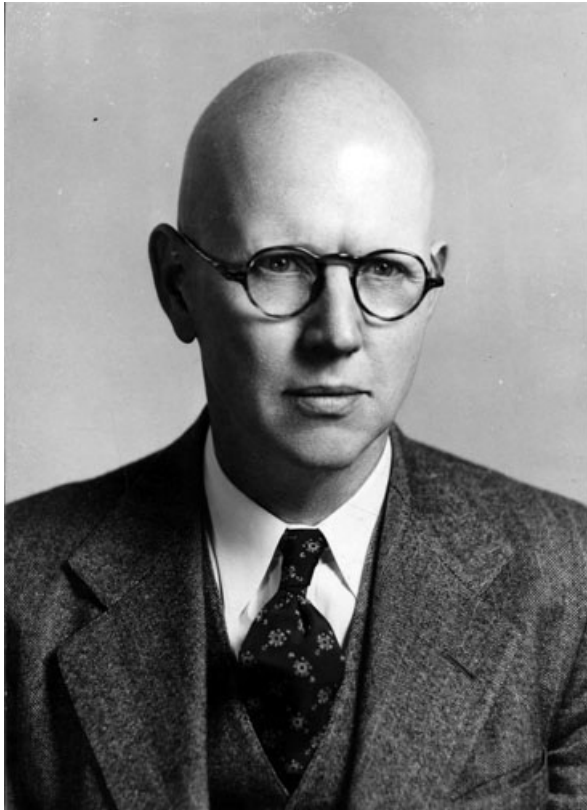# Patton, James Welch [1]

Patton, James Welch

by J. Isaac Copeland, 1994

28 Sept. 1900–17 May 1973

Photograph of James Patton, 1942. "James Patton,"
Item 0227052, Special Collections Research Center,
North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh,
North Carolina. Used by permission from NCSU
Libraries. [2]James Welch Patton, educator, archivist, and historian, was born
in Murfreesboro, Tenn., the son of James Wesley and Elizabeth Welch Patton. He received his college preparatory
training at Hawkins School in nearby Gallatin and attended Vanderbilt University [3], from which he was graduated in 1924
with a bachelor of arts degree and membership in Phi Beta Kappa. The University of North Carolina [4] awarded him a
master's degree in 1925 and a Ph.D. in 1929.

Patton began his teaching career at Georgia State Woman's College (nowWaldosta State College [5]) (1925–27), then
spent a year as associate professor of history at The Citadel (1929–30) and as a member of the faculty of Wittenburg
College [6] in Springfield, Ohio (1930–31). From 1931 to 1942 he was chairman of the Department of History ofConverse
College [7] in Spartanburg, S.C. In 1942 he accepted the chairmanship of the Department of History and Political Science
at North Carolina State College (now North Carolina State University).

In Chapel Hill, Patton's interest in southern history and record of scholarship brought him the respect and lasting
friendship of J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, his major professor. Upon Professor Hamilton's retirement in 1948, Patton was
invited to succeed him as director of the Southern Historical Collection [8], the manuscript repository at The University of
North Carolina. For many years thereafter Patton canvassed the southern states in search of manuscripts, and through
these travels he became familiar with the entire South, but especially with North Carolina, South Carolina, and
Tennessee.

Patton also held a professorship in The University of North Carolina's Department of History, and during his later years
with the Southern Historical Collection he taught one class in North Carolina history each term. On retiring from
administrative duties in 1967, he joined the Department of History and for four years taught a full load of courses in North
Carolina history. At age seventy, still active and vigorous, he continued to teach for two additional years on a reduced
schedule. His full retirement began in May 1973, less than ten days before his death.

As an archivist James Patton was a man of established reputation. He delivered papers at several meetings of the Society of American Archivists [9] and in 1959 was elected a Fellow of the society. He also was known as a conscientious teacher and a careful scholar. His mastery of detail and his extraordinary memory were marvels to colleagues and students alike, and the quality of his scholarship is evident in his writings. *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee* was published by The University of North Carolina Press [10] in 1934 and *Women of the Confederacy* [11], written jointly with Francis Butler Simkins, appeared in 1936. In addition, he contributed numerous articles and reviews to professional journals and was a contributor to both the *Dictionary of American Biography* and the *Dictionary of American History*. He was editor of the three-volume *Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers of Governor Luther H. Hodges* and of the *Minutes of the Greenville Ladies' Association in Aid of the Confederate Army*.

Few historians have invested more of their time and talents in their professional associations. When the Historical Society of North Carolina was reorganized in 1945, Patton became a charter member and was elected to its first Executive Council; in 1966 he was chosen president. Three other associations profited from his presidential leadership—the South Carolina Historical Association in 1939, the Southern Historical Association in 1956, and the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association [12] in 1964. He was also an active member of the American Historical Association [13] and the Organization of American Historians.

It can be said of James Welch Patton that he was a loyal son of his native region and of his adopted state. His mind was filled with the history of the South and of North Carolina, and he shared this knowledge willingly. As an individual he was a kind and devoted friend to those who knew him. His work as a scholar, particularly in providing scholarly resources for others, stands as a lasting contribution to historical research.

Patton's death came quietly in his sleep during a visit to Charleston, S.C., with his wife, Carlotta Peterson Patton, a native of that city. The Pattons had married in June 1930. In addition to his wife, a daughter, Emilie Patton deLuca, and two grandchildren, Anne Randolph deLuca and James Patton deLuca, survived him. Patton was an active member of the Episcopal church [14]. Funeral services were held at the Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, with interment in the New Chapel Hill Cemetery.

References:

Anna Brooke Allan, "James Welch Patton," *Journal of Southern History* 39 (August 1973).

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Raleigh *News and Observer*, 10 Sept. 1967.

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Additional Resources:

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"Patton, James Welch, 1900-." Photograph. Rare & Unique Digital Collections, NCSU Libraries. http://d.lib.ncsu.edu/collections/names/2347-patton-james-welch-1900 [16] (accessed August 5, 2014).

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Subjects:
Biographies [17]
Educators [18]
Historians [19]
Authors:
Copeland, J. Isaac [20]
Origin - location:
Orange County [21]
Chapel Hill [22]
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill [23]
Wake County [24]
Raleigh [25]

North Carolina State University [26]
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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.[27]

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