

◆◆◆◆◆ NORTH CAROLINA ENTREPRENEURS ◆◆◆◆◆

THE INVENTIONS AND LEADERSHIP OF PARKER DAVID ROBBINS

- ◆ **Learning Outcome:** *Students can describe Parker David Robbins' achievements as an entrepreneur, an inventor, and a political leader.* ◆



Parker David Robbins

Parker David Robbins was a free black man who served in the Union Army during the Civil War and became a political leader in North Carolina in the years immediately following the end of the war. However, Mr. Robbins is best known for his inventions.

Mr. Robbins was a farmer and a **mechanic** (someone who builds and repairs machines). He invented a special kind of **cotton cultivator** (a tool to plant and weed cotton) for which he received a patent in 1874. He also invented a device for sharpening saws, which he patented in 1876. A **patent** is a paper issued by the United States government that gives an inventor the right to produce something he or she has invented. No one is allowed to copy it (without permission from the inventor) for a certain number of years.

Parker David Robbins was born in Bertie County, North Carolina, in 1834. In 1862, during the Civil War, Mr. Robbins went north and joined the Union Army in Virginia, where he served in a black **regiment** (large group of soldiers). As a soldier, he was

promoted many times. He could have stayed in the army after the war, but he left the army because of health problems and returned to farming.

After he returned home, Mr. Robbins entered North Carolina politics. He was one of 15 black **delegates** (men who had been elected) at the North Carolina constitutional convention in 1868. In the same year, Mr. Robbins was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives.

After leaving politics in 1872, Mr. Robbins focused his attention on inventing and building. In addition to his two patented inventions, he built many houses and a sawmill in Bertie County and Duplin County. He also built a steamboat. He became the **pilot** of the steamboat (the person who manages it and guides it in the proper direction). The steamboat took people and goods up and down the Cape Fear River.

Mr. Robbins lived a long life. He died at the age of 83 in Magnolia, North Carolina, in 1917. His life shows us that people can have many talents. Mr. Robbins worked with other people in government, farmed, built useful things, and thought up new inventions.

VOCABULARY WORDS

- ◆ Mechanic
- ◆ Cotton cultivator
- ◆ Patent
- ◆ Regiment
- ◆ Delegates
- ◆ Pilot

READING REVIEW QUESTIONS:

Describe Parker David Robbins' two patented inventions.

How did Parker David Robbins represent and serve the people of North Carolina in the years immediately following the Civil War?

Describe three types of things that Parker David Robbins built in the years after he retired from politics.
