

Robert Scott Hudgins II

Two parcels of the land that became Langley Field (Lamington and Bloomfield), and one parcel that became part of the NASA complex (Chesterville) were either owned or worked by one man--Robert Scott Hudgins II (1842-1928). His great-grandparents, William and Mary Ann Houlder Hudgins, were natives of Liverpool, England. In 1743 William, having secured a large land grant, brought his family to Gloucester County, Virginia. The family prospered and amassed a fortune in shipbuilding and land. William's grandson, Robert Scott Hudgins I, married Harriet Jones of Kennington, a plantation in Prince William County, and began construction of Lamington (originally referred to as Lambington or Leaminton). Robert moved his family there at an unknown date. His youngest child, Robert Scott Hudgins II, was born there on 28 May 1842.ⁱ

With the outbreak of the Civil War, 19 year-old Robert Scott Hudgins II enlisted in the Confederate army as a private in Company B, 3d Virginia Cavalry. He was present at or witnessed many of the battles in Virginia including the Battle of Big Bethel, the burning of Hampton, Chancellorsville, the evacuation of Richmond, and the epic-making duel of the *Monitor* and the *Virginia* (the former USS *Merrimac*).ⁱⁱ Most of the Hudgins family fled to Williamsburg or Richmond, and Lamington Plantation was largely abandoned.ⁱⁱⁱ

Returning to Lamington after the Civil War, Robert Scott Hudgins II found the fences down and the fields overgrown with weeds and saplings. The house was in disrepair--its shutters were gone, its windows were broken, rain had damaged the interior; then too, furniture and livestock were gone as well as most of the former slaves. Hudgins struck a deal with those remaining to work the land so that all might survive the coming winter. He then entered into an agreement with the steward at Fort Monroe to supply birds for the garrison's commissary. This arrangement provided Hudgins with enough money to purchase chickens and turkeys. As fate would have it, he also located some of his livestock in the woods and had a successful first crop.^{iv}

Hudgins continued to prosper. By 1870, he had successfully restored cultivation to a large part of Lamington and a "goodly portion of Bloomfield." Hudgins married Mrs. Fannie Causey, a widow, in 1876. As a wedding gift, her father, Antoine Schmeltz, gave the couple George Wythe's Chesterville house and farm, which totaled 400 acres. The couple lived at Chesterville until it was destroyed by fire in 1911. The family then moved to Hampton.^v

In 1916, Robert Scott Hudgins II witnessed the establishment of Langley Field on lands that included his birthplace, Lamington, portions of his Chesterville farm, as well as the Bloomfield fields he had cultivated, all of which were part of the original tract of 1,659 acres. In 1950, the government added to its original purchase by condemning the remaining 304.88-acre parcel of land from Chesterville farm for the NASA portion of Langley. Robert Scott Hudgins II died on 28 February 1928 at the home of his son, Robert Scott III, in Richmond, Virginia. He was buried next to his wife in St John's Cemetery in Hampton.^{vi}

ⁱ Garland C. Hudgins and Richard B. Kleese, eds., *Recollections of an Old Dominion Dragoon: The Civil War Experiences of Sgt. Robert S. Hudgins II, Co. B, 3rd Virginia Cavalry* (Orange, VA, 1993), p 10.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, pp 23-98.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p 41.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, pp 105-06.

^v *Ibid.*, pp 13, 107-110, 115

^{vi} *Ibid.*, pp 10-15.