



# The Chatham Historical Journal

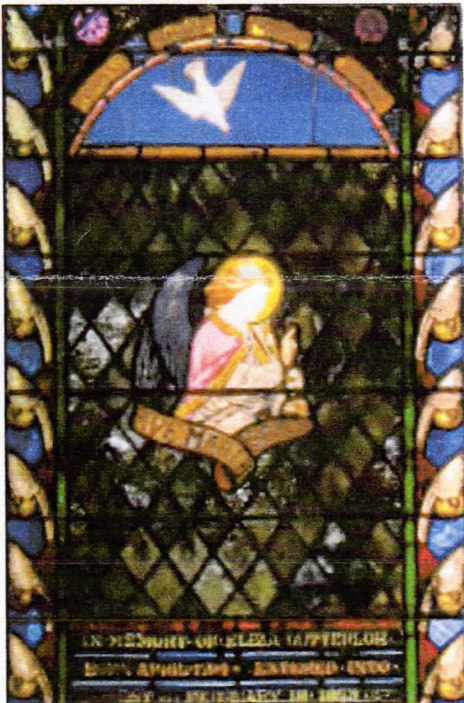
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## A Nineteenth-century Soap Opera: *Eliza Lutterloh's Memoir*

Transcription and comments by Jane Pyle\*



*In memory of Eliza Lutterloh  
born April 1794  
entered into rest February 18, 1875  
(St. Bartholomew's Church, Pittsboro)*

The oldest stained-glass window in St. Bartholomew's Church in Pittsboro commemorates the life of Eliza Lutterloh, 1794 to 1875. She has no grave or tombstone in the churchyard, no listing in the church register. Her life takes form with a faded document in the Washington Lutterloh file in the Southern Historical

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Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Unsigned and undated, the papers seem to be a memoir by Eliza Comerford, Washington Lutterloh's mother. It reads like a soap opera with no ending.

In the transcription below, I insert minimal punctuation and provide paragraph indentations and section divisions to relieve the reader from the tedium of a page of solid type. I leave spelling, sentence structure, crossouts, and dangling words unchanged where the meaning seems clear. My additions are enclosed in brackets. Following the transcription, I add comments about some of the people she mentions.

At the close of the Revolutionary War the economic and social focus of Chatham County was toward Fayetteville and Wilmington. Chatham County had been formed only in 1771, from Orange County, and Pittsboro was not incorporated until 1787. The focus toward the south began to decline only after the selection of Raleigh as the state capital in 1792.

### [Beginnings. . .]

As my life has been checkered with some curious events I think I will write down a few of them, which may serve to account to my children for what they may consider great faults or excentricities. I was by the death of my dearly beloved Mother left an Orphan at 5 Years old together [with a] little half-sister whose Father Mr. Anderson died three months after my Mother, we were in consequence I suppose of the prevalence of Yellow Fever changed about untill we had lived with five families. Our health being bad we were then sent to the Sound 6 miles below Wilmington at which place I entered a little School. The master was a good teacher but a very severe one, I had memorised Popes Universal Prayer and all the Multiplication table before I was 7 years old, I recollect very well the excitement that prevail when Genl Washington died.

As Mr. George Hooper took the guardianship of my little property in Wilmington Mr. Edward Jones took us



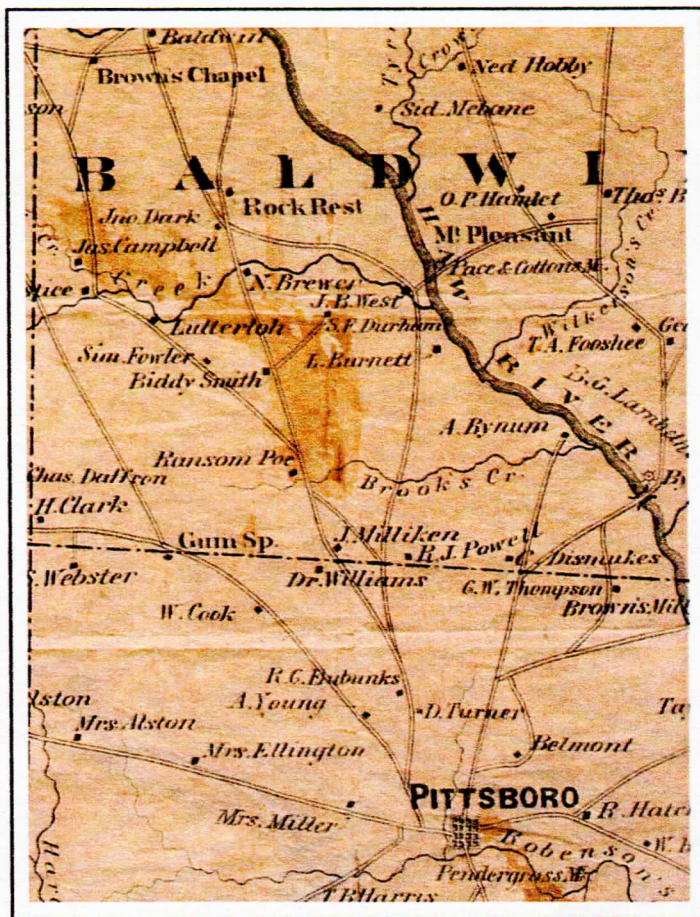
to live with him so after remaining a short time in Wilmington while the Court was proceeding he brought us up to Fayetteville to Mr. Peter Mallett. There I became acquainted with Miss Eliza Mallett one of the most beautiful, good kind and affectionate young Ladies I ever knew[,] she seemed to take a particular kindness for me[,] made me several pretty little presents and had me to read to her occasionally. I became so fond of her that I could not bear the thought of leaving her untill she assured me repeatedly that her sister Mrs. Jones would be very kind to me. Mrs. Jones had previously come up to Chatham so I left dear Miss Eliza and then began my troubles.

[Arrival in Chatham. . .]

I will remember the day I arrived at Mr. Jones's[,] I had in a few days to undergo a kind of examination, wheather I could read or sew or do any other useful work I answered in a way that astonished them all so that I was formally installed in the Office of house-keeper and seamstress and you may safely believe that I worked as Steadily and as faithfully as many grown persons, there were some some young Ladies, nieces of the Jones's staying at that house at [that] time and indeed others at different times[,] The Misses deBernier very delightful young Ladies very kind and even affectionate to me. I loved them very much[,] they were highly educated and of the most delicate and refined manners and deportment.

I soon found that I was not a favorite with the heads of the family[,] they always treated me us as if we were inferior[,] seldom speaking to me but with most decided authority quite regardless of feeling or compassion. Fanny then the oldest child was a nice little girl became as fond of my little sister Ellen as she was of her sister Betsey[,] indeed they were then and ever after as great friends and pleasant children as I ever knew[,] Mr. Jones used to call Ellen after she became large enough to sit at the table "Save all" frequently taking a few pieces off the plates of others and putting them on hers. I never remember his whipping her. but once when she was about 13 and that was for neglecting to shut the upstairs windows on the approach of a storm[.]

[B]ut I seldom passed a day without experiencing a little faultfinding and that of a very severe nature[,] indeed he was so cross and illnated to me that I was always afraid to say a word, so that I was glad when he was absent at court. It was one of the greatest troubles of my life to ask for a frock or pair of shoes. When he brought dresses for us altho he was quite tasty in the selection of patterns for his own family but for me anything was rather too grand, One frock he bought for me was so ugly and dirty looking that I cut it in three



Detail of Pittsboro-Rock Rest vicinity, from Map of Chatham County, 1870, by Capt. N. A. Ramsey

pieces and gave it to the black women for their children[,] If I ever remarked that anything was unfit to wear they would immediately turn it into ridicule and say "really we must send North and try to obtain something for your wardrobe.[""] I never had any decent clothing, always ashamed of my appearance[.]

[E]very person that visited at the house treated me as kindly and politely as they could treat any person. Mrs. Jones was a very sickly delicate woman and was ever was often confined to her room for weeks. I had then to entertain company that would come and in that way I made many agreeable acquaintances, the house-keeping being my management I was obliged to be very economical for if there happened to be two biscuit left at breakfast Mr Jones would charge me with the greatest wastefulness, every night in the year I had to sit up untill everyone else had retired and I fastened up the house, I did every stich of the family sewing Mrs. Jones did not even darn her own stockings but when I left, her Eyes recovered and became quite strong and useful. I had many pressing invitations to visit but was obliged to decline for want of suitable clothes and ever kept insuch fear and dread of scolding and scoffing that I could never tell any one the reason.



[Visit to Fayetteville. . .]

Mrs. Mallett once on a visit up there insisted on my going down to Fayetteville with her, I told her I did not wish to go but she would not take a refusal so as I determined not to go I took a dose of Laster Emetic [?] and was really sick for a day[.] but as she would not be put off she waited untill she thought I was quite well and then I was obliged to go[.] so I got what few clothes I had and went with her and I think no poor girl ever suffered as much as I did during 7 weeks, this was in 1812. When I became acquainted with Miss Lucy Ann Winslow[,] Miss Harriet Harrington and Sally Pierson and many others that you have heard of, all the Young people in Fayetteville were very polite and attentive to me, much more so than I wished them to be because it drew me more into Company but I was obliged to go through it. I would many a time much rather go into the kitchen than sit in the parlor. I sat upstairs generally so that many times Mrs. Mallett would call out, "Eliza why don't you come down, here is Miss so & so". The night before I left Mrs. Mallett gave a little Party and then you may believe I was in misery[.] for when I left Mrs. Jones She never said ["have you got a change of clothes,["] as for giving me a shilling I suppose she would hardly have done it if my life were at stake. The truth was Mrs. Mallett and Mrs. Jones and Mrs everybody else loved me very much but not quite enough to give anything to enable me to appear decent, Oh! How thankful I was to come away,

[Flight to Salisbury. . .]

Well I arrived at home and got into my old routine of work and my old Foe Mrs Lutterloh died for she had been trying her best to get a sick wife for her son, but never succeeded and she was violently opposed to me so we waited untill after her death which happened in Octo /12. Charles got his Commission in July but was allowed to remain with his Mother as it was evident she would could not live long, so after Oct' he was ordered to Salisbury to join the Regiment to march to Washington, Mr Jones was up at Salisbury and just came home, his servant a very good trusty boy brought me a letter saying that he had applied for a Furlough but was refused[.] he said however that he would be down in ten days as they expected to go to the city in three weeks, I recieved the letter on Friday and determined in my mind not to wait three weeks[,] made all my arrangements on Saturday[,] waited untill about 3 oclock on Monday morning the 15<sup>th</sup> of April and Started on foot for Salisbury,

[T]hat day I walked 32 miles not being able to hire a horse[.] called at a good looking house[,] got supper[,] had a good room[,] Stayed all night[,] and felt

so much refreshed in the morning that I determined to leave before breakfast altho the man invited me very kindly to Stay[.] being afraid to delay as one of the neighbors called to see Mr Jones about some claims that Charles had against him Saying that he presumed Mr Jones had the charge of his property during his absence[,] that he heard that Charles was to be married. Mr. Jones told him that the property was in the hands of Mr Snipes and that Charles had no more business with a wife than a wagon had with a fifth wheel. Well I started again altho I was almost afraid to look back fearing I was followed[.] my greatest comfort was to step aside and offer up most humble and heartfelt prayers to my Heavenly Father for protection and Success,

[I]n one of my withdrawals from the road I left my little parcel and when I looked it was gone, here was a new trouble, I looked round and at a short distance saw two little black boys Sitting down with it attempting to open it, I Steped up to them and beged them to give it to me, as I had left it where they had found it, they said that they thought some one had lost it and gone on, I was thankful to recover it, I then walked on about two miles and Stoped at a house to get breakfast, they were poor people but gave me something to eat refusing to take any payment. I succeeded in my endeavors to hire a horse and after paying him a a dollar I Started with his little daughter behind me on a very gentle horse, I went on 16 Miles[,] Stoped at a crossroads and getting a cake for the little girl She returned, She was about 14 or 15 Years old[.]

I then went on about ten miles and as the sun was nearly down I Stoped at a poor looking house to ask for accomodations, there was no one there but a young woman and two boys as their Mother they said was gone to Stay that night with her sick daughter about two miles off. She gave me two eggs and some Corn bread as I told her I would pay her liberally if she would let me Stay, She consented[.] I asked some questions about travelers as it was a public road, the largest boy Said some Soldiers had passed some weeks or two ago and called and one Letlow tried hard to persuade John to go, but he would not[.] he said "I hope that Letlow will be killed and never get come back" I suppose John was a brother or Cousin, the house had two little apartments So I Slept with the young woman[,] rose very early[,] gave her a Silver half dollar and left. I then walked about 4 miles. Got some breakfast and hired a horse but only to go about 10 miles[,] took a little boy behind me, the man charged me only ½ dollar. I then walked on to about within 4 miles of Lexington where I stayed with an old widow Lady who had two Sons and one daughter, She had great curiosity to know all about me. I told them



all that my mother had died and as I had a brother in Salisbury I was trying to get there, She tried to persuade me not to go but to Stay with her. When I got very near a respectable looking public house I Saw a fine looking horse tied at the gate, this was just before breakfast time, now I said to myself that may possibly be Charles[.]

#### [A Threatening Situation near Lexington. . .]

So I Stopped a little while thinking I would try to see one of the Servants but while I was meditating a gentleman in Officers dress came out into the Piazza[.] I saw it was not him So I hurried on, I passed through Lexington and had proceeded about a mile when the Officer overtook me[.] I was very much scared[.] I held my head down and hurried on, he came up and asked if I would not ride behind him. I told him no I would rather walk, he then asked me if I did not want some money. I told him no I had no use for money. (I thought to myself[.] I reckon I have got as much money as you have)[.] he then pointed forward to a pretty Shade and said "its very warm[.] suppose you and I go and sit under that tree and talk" I told him I had not time. I tried to walk as Slowly as I could so that he might feel obliged to go on, So I took out my little Knife thinking [" if you do put your hand on me I'll try to make you feel it.""] I heard when I arrived that he was a Donnahugh from Wake County[.]

#### [Finding Charles. . .]

When I got in sight of Salisbury I began to Study I could possibly find out where Charles was[.] so walking on I Saw several respectable looking houses and thought I would try to make some enquiry at an humble dwelling[.] but looking up I espied 3 gentlemen approaching all in Officers Uniform[.] they were too far to discriminate their features but I soon Saw that he was one of them. I passed him[.] gave him a look and he immediately turned round excusing himself to the Gentlemen (one was his Capt<sup>th</sup>) and joined me[.] he took me out to his quarters and prevailed on the 2<sup>d</sup> Lieutenant to go over to town[.] get a Licence[.] and return with a Magistrate. The Clerk would not give the Licence to anyone but the man who was to be married so he had to go himself, he asked the Clerk what was to pay[.] the answer was 80 cents[.] he gave him a dollar saying he would not have a wife that cost less – this his Security told me; – The Magistrate's name was Krider and there were a number of Officers and Soldiers in the house at the time,

Genl Steele wealthy gentleman resident of Salisbury came in Shortly after and addressing Charles wished him much joy saying that if he had known it he would have taken in having had company and given him a

wedding[.] this was the 18<sup>th</sup> day of April 1813. At night there came a number of Officers and I was prevailed pressed to sing which I did and was much cheered and complimented[.] they came again the next night so I sung again[.] at which they all appeared much pleased. Charles obtained a horse and old fashioned chair and we came down to the old family mansion[.]

The day after our arrival he went over to Rock Rest[.] Mr Jones was absent[.] none of the family came out: Mr Jones got home the next week and came over immediately bringing Mr Murphy (afterwards Judge) with him[.] Mr Jones was cool and ceremonious to me but Cordial to Charles. Good deal old Mrs Williams and several others of the best neighbors came to see me, The Furlough being for only three weeks my dear husband had to leave me on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of May and repair to Hillsboro where he was most Kindly treated by our dear friends Mr and Mrs Bingham[.]

#### [Charles Returns to Duty. . .]

He wrote every week untill he got to Washington City where he had an interview with our member of Congress Mr Stanford and sent me \$50. I moved up to his place after his mothers property was divided, had this house built and had my sister Ellen and my little Charles with me untill his return. I was making [illegible] some linen and Kniting Stockings for him and the people in the neighborhood would say [" well if I were you I would not make anything for a man that has gone to the war for you don't know that he will ever come back.""] At the time that we came from Salisbury Lewis Lutterloh was about 20 years old and was a clerk in the Store of a Mr Hargrove in Lexington, he came up to the house where we were to dine and appeared quite pleased with his brothers marriage and quite friendly, but I could see venom in his looks,

[S]ometime in the summer there was a report that the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>d</sup> Lieutenants in a company of the 10<sup>th</sup> Regt were both killed and many that saw the account said they were Lutterloh & Bird of Capt Mitchells Company. Of course it was circulated in our neighborhood and was generally believed[.]

*[Part I of Eliza Lutterloh's memoir ends on this alarming note. The story will conclude in Part II, in the next issue of the Chatham Historical Journal.]*

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