



LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc. BULLETIN

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A Letter of Eliza Yonge Wootten & The Rev. Edward Wootten from Anne Russell PhD (Ed.)

Wilmington N.C.
Nov. 8th 1898

My dear Edward:

As you have not had a letter from me in some time I will utilize this waiting time in writing to you. I will draw you a word picture of our household and how the evening has been spent.

It is now nearly 11 o'clock- perfect quiet reigns in the streets except occasionally a vehicle passes or a man or so walk by the house.

I am sitting in the big room. Your father lying on the bed -awake- Anna there too fast asleep.



Lucy & Amoret have gone up to go to sleep. Henry & Bradley are sitting down stairs in the dining-room with arms in readiness awaiting orders which may come at any moment.

H. did not go to work today but did go to vote before breakfast then worked among his flowers the rest of the day & such a beautiful day it has been.

Since dinner Mr. Orrell who is Capt. of this block called to tell the men to hold themselves in readiness for a moment call. Of course that sent a thrill of dread through us but as it was day we were patient & as we waited we calmed down as no call came. I got your father to go down & buy rolls & bread so if we had any trouble there would be something to eat. The girl cooked the supper & finished her work & went. Since supper Mr. Monroe came to tell us that if the Presbyterian bell rang the women & children were to go to the R. C. Church. I suppose others are to go to other places. But we all made up our minds it would be better to stay right here for the town is to be guarded by 4 or 8 men at each corner - so there would be little chance for anyone to sneak in lots & enter houses. B. has a beautiful pistol - H., a gun & pistol - then ours your father has - that leaves none for L. & me. **But I saw that the hatchets were handy.** Then I went down & made strong coffee for the boys & told them if trouble came I'd make more for some other guards.

Please continue to the third page

Eliza Yonge Jewett Wootten, C. 1898.
Courtesy Anne Russell

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The *Bulletin* Committee thanks
Mrs. Harpo Hutteman for reading the previous issue
Catherine Ann McKay Fulton (July 2002). We also
thank Merle Chamberlain for proofing the essay.

We our very honored to present this issue
which was provided by author Anne Russell, PhD.
The letter was written by Anne Russell's great
grandparents, to her uncle on the eve of November 8,
1898.

The Wootten letter provides considerable
insight into the mind set of some citizens during the
1898 political and cultural climate. They were people
of high moral character who practiced justice and
compassion, but they also were people of their time.

Dr. Russell supplemented the letter with her
notes and they are held for viewing in the Archives of
the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. Requested
photocopies may be mailed. Please send your request
with a \$5.00 check, to cover copy, materials used and
postage charge, in care of the *Bulletin* Committee.
Thank you.

Original written works and first person
accounts are welcome by the *Bulletin* Committee for
review. Articles should be three to eight pages in
length, of Lower Cape Fear historical interest, sited
and researched from primary sources. Please submit
manuscripts to the editor in care of the Lower Cape
Fear Historical Society. Enjoy.

Save the Ice House

The old Ice House at 123 South Water
Street is threatened by destructive forces
challenging the history of our community. In
Robert Fales, *Wilmington Yesteryear*, (Co.
1984) he mentions how the ice house played
an important role in the life of the city. It was
here that New England ice blocks were stored
in the days before ice was manufactured.
How many of you have seen structures from
your childhood torn down and become
another chapter in *Wilmington's Vanished
Homes and Buildings*? Contact Wilmington
City Council at 102 N 3rd St 28401, 910-341-
7815 and the Historic Preservation
Commission at 254-0900 to voice your
opinion and save this building.



I really do not believe the Negroes will dare start so terrible a thing but if they drinking they may do more than if sober & it would take a small match to set all on fire. I am truly sorry for timid women & the little children.

Amoret & Anna had gone upstairs & undressed - Then heard Mr. Monroe so came tripping downstairs to this second floor - in their nightgowns - So we told them to run back & put on their clothes which they did & of course were greatly excited. But after awhile - Anna dropped to sleep - Amoret would not so I sent Lucy & Amoret up to their room though they will not undress.

Lucy & Amoret have appeared on the scene. Anna too is awake but I have given them a dose of bromide & ordered them down & to sleep.

Imagine the uneasiness & here in free America & this nineteenth century. A great many of the businessmen turned off the colored men if they registered - that Stephen at Stevenson's had to go - Holmes & G. turned theirs off & have white drivers - nearly all did it.

You see by the papers how they have been robbing pantries. Your father has just come in again from a tour of inspection, says the walking was a man with his gun & cartridges rattling in his pockets - no Negroes are about where we can see them.

Well we have another piece of news to impart. Lucy & I have wanted a new machine for a long time as these are unsatisfactory with some kinds of work. We saw one advertised in a catalogue at \$13.80 so we talked it over & got your father to order it to come by the Clyde line. Lucy ordered some braid at the same time - making the bill come to 18.40.

The steamer generally leaves N.Y. on Sat. & we wondered if our order reached there in time to ship. Well on Tuesday morning the paper informed us that the Croatian - the one we lost on before was delayed for repairs & would not reach here before Thursday. So Lucy & I were greatly disappointed but hoped on - B. said he heard a steamer blow. When Henry came up to supper he asked if we got our machine - I asked if the boat had come - he answered: "No, & she's not coming." We asked what the matter was.

She was burnt at sea - all on board save except a colored woman for this place. We have heard no more of her but it is dreadful to hear of the losses & no insurance - our bill was \$18.40 - Poor Mrs. Warren lost \$800. All her Christmas fruits, baskets & c. Mr. Yates \$200. Mr. Huggins \$400. & there are lots of them. Oh, Mr. Whitlock \$300. Messrs. Edwards & Bridgeman

were here Sunday - said they lost about \$300.

George Crow was here Sunday night said they lost a pile of blankets & comforts they had ordered. Boatwright & Holmes & W. were insured.

Perhaps after the excitement blows over we may see fit to get another. Bradley milks now but the cow is not giving much. Sunday we had chocolate ice cream. B. got the ice - it was frozen nicely - put in a plenty of ice & it was just delicious.

I have a young girl who came last Thursday & who does very nicely I do hope she will stay. Amoret is doing nicely in her music but the piano does need tuning dreadfully.

I am so dreadfully sleepy that I take a nap & dream a little while trying to write one work. The two little ones are asleep again now & Lucy sitting in the big chair you put the darkey bottom in - I found I had dropped to sleep & wrote the wrong word.

Did you see that Annie Gause's father died out at the hospital? We have heard nothing more of his sickness or death.

I may add a line after daylight. It is after 12 - & all seems quiet - except just as I wrote that word I heard pistol shots - I hope it is only someone letting off steam - I dread it yet I feel we need it & that it must come before things are settled. The Romish priest said he found those horrid Syrians had been buying arms & selling at a profit to Negroes. Jim Lane said he did not intend to vote that times were too bad. Well I'll stop now for a nap.

Wednesday A.M. 9th

All quiet we lay by our arms all night for riot. All quiet this A.M. Democrats elect everything except 2 or 3 Congressmen in the state.

Bellamy elected by 4000 probably good Martin Willard & George Rountree both being elected. New Hanover all well. God keep you yr Father.

[Anne Russell, a Wootten descendent, earned her PhD in American Studies from the University of Hawaii and her MFAs from UNC Wilmington. She is the author of the recent republished work *Sea Biscuit, Wild Pony of the Outer Banks*. Russell also wrote *Wilmington: A Pictorial History* and *Carolina Yacht Club Chronicles* along with coauthoring *Cape Fear Memorial Hospital* and *North Carolina Portraits in Faith*. In 1998, Anne Russell's, *No More Sorrow to Arise* an original 1898 commemorative drama was performed in Thalian Hall. She lives in Wilmington., North Carolina.]

Rev. Edward, (1838-1925) and Eliza Wootten (1850-1942), their vital dates taken from Oakdale Cemetery Records, were by the late 19th Century living in their residence at 11 South Third Street, Wilmington, next to St. James Church.

The Hill-Wootten House, was a wood frame, four story, 20 room residence. The structure was built by Dr. John Hill in the early 1800's. According to the St. James Marriage Register, Miss Eliza Ann Hill married William Augustus Wright on December 29, 1830 and this became their home. Much later, the Woottens bought the house and lived there.

Eventually the property was sold to St. James Church and torn down by 1952, according to Mary Wootten, *Eleven South Third Street*, in Emma Woodward MacMillan, *Wilmington's Vanished Homes and Buildings* (1966) 45.

Rev. Edward Wootten, originally from Pitt County, North Carolina, was Archdeacon Convocation (Episcopal) of Wilmington. He married with Eliza Y. Jewett on October 27, 1875, as recorded in the St. James Marriage Register.

The Woottens' seven children, Bradley, Edward, Mary, Robbie, Lucy, Amoret and Anna, shared the 3rd Street home, along with members of the extended family.



Hill-Wootten House, circa 1950
Courtesy Emma W MacMillan's, *Wilmington's Vanished Homes and Buildings*