

# "My dear I ha'n't forgot you"

Elizabeth Watson to James Watson, October 29, 1861.

## As you read...

James Watson served in the North Carolina 25th Infantry Regiment, Company B. This letter from his wife Elizabeth, written October 29, 1861, gives a glimpse of life in Jackson County, North Carolina, early in the war.

— Hunter Library, Western Carolina University

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Because of the dialect and Elizabeth Watson's spelling, you may want to read this letter aloud.

1. What did Elizabeth tell James about herself and their children?
2. What did Elizabeth tell her husband about food, money, and their finances?
3. What events in the community did Elizabeth include in this letter?
4. What was the weather like? Why do you think Elizabeth included this information in her letter?
5. How often was Elizabeth able to write? How might the lack of news at home affect soldiers fighting on the front lines?
6. How wealthy do you think Elizabeth and her husband were? What do you learn about her social standing from this letter? (Consider her grammar, writing style, and penmanship.)

Oct 29 1861

North Carolina Jackson Co

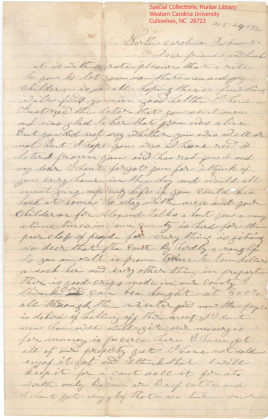


Figure 1.

Dear friend and husband

it is with grate pleasure that i rite to you to let you now that mea and my children is well hoping these few lins will find you in good health I have Just red the leter that you sent mea and was glad to her that you was alive But you did not say whether you was well or not But I hope you was I have red 4 letters from you and has rot you 2 and my dear I hant forgot you for i think of you every hour in the day and would all most give up my life if you could bea back at home to stay with mea and your children for Alexand talks about you a many atime times in our county is hard for the poor class of people for every thing is giting so deer that tha cant By hardly a naught to gan an salt is from nine to ten dollars a sack her and every other thing is proportion thier is good crops made in our county I think corn can bea bought at 50 cts all through the winter and now this people is debarde [?] of halling off thir meet I dont now how wee will git our nessaryes for money is scerce here I have got all of our property yet I have not sold eny of it yet and I think that I will keep it for i cant sell it for its worth only Bacon or Beef catle and I hant got eny of that so turn over

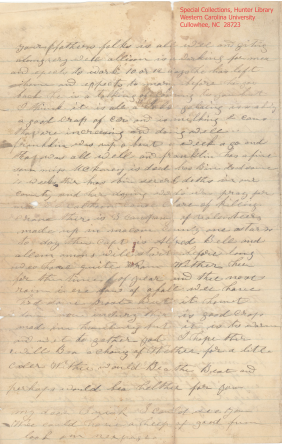


Figure 2.

your fathers folks is all well and giting along very well allison is a working for mea and epects to work 10 or 12 [?] days he has left home and expects to marry before he gos back he is a talking of coming to you but I think it is all a Joke [illegible] is making a good crop of corn and is milking 2 cows thar are increesing and doing well franklin was up a bout a week a go and tha was all well and franklin has a fine son miss Mckiney is deed has Bin dead some 4 weeks thir has bin several deths in our county and her dying words was pray for mea S I Calhoun came clare of killing crane thir is 3 company of volenteers made up in macon county one starts to day thir capt is Alfred Bell and allen amons will start before long wea have quite wram [sic] wither her for this time of year and the most rain i ere saw of a fall wee have had some frost But it hanet done now inJury thir is good crops made in hamburg but it is to warm and wet to gether yet I hope ther will Be a chang of Wether for a litle cooler Wither would Be the Best and perhaps would bea helther for you my deer I wish I could see you Wee could have a heep of good fun look on nex page

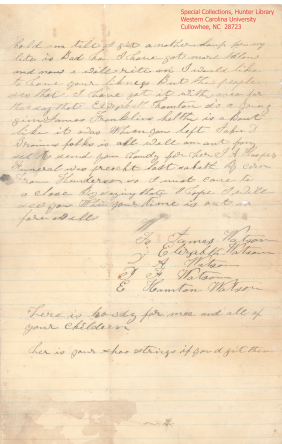


Figure 3. There is howdy for mea and all of your children

hold on till I git a nother lamp for my lite is Bad har I have got more talow<sup>1</sup> and now i will rite on I would like to have your likeness<sup>2</sup> But the people ses that I have got it with mea for thae saz that Elizabeth hamton is a young gim James Franklins helth is a Bout like it was When you left John T [illegible] folks is all well an ant fany sed to send you howdy for her F..A. Hoopers Funeral was preecht last sabath By Corn From Henderson so I must come to a close By saying that I hope I will see you When your time is out so fare well

To James Watson  
 Elizabeth Watson  
 T.A. [?] Watson  
 J.F. [?] Watson  
 E. Hamton Watson

her is your shoo strings if you a git them

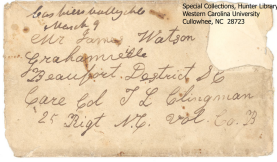


Figure 4.

From top to bottom: pages 1, 2, and 3 of the letter and the envelope in which it was mailed. Click the images to enlarge.

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## Notes

1. Tallow is beef fat that has been rendered — simmered down and then solidified to purify it. It was used in making candles and soap.
2. Elizabeth did not have a photograph or sketch of her husband. In the 1860s, photography was a fairly new invention, and photographs were expensive.

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### Figure 4 (page 3)

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