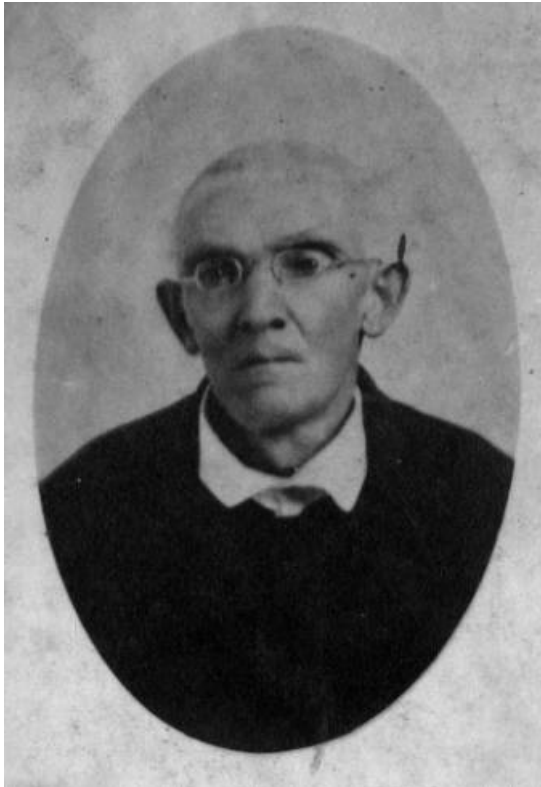# Eliot, John G. ("Ghost") [1]

Eliot, John G. ("Ghost")

by William S. Powell [2], 1986

24 Feb. 1800–13 Nov. 1881

John G. Eliot. Image courtesy of UNC Libraries. [3]John G. ("Ghost") Eliot, teacher, was the son of George Eliot of Ellerslie on Lower Little River, Cumberland County [4]. The father was born in Dumfriesshire, Scotland, in 1747, educated at the University of Edinburgh [5], and came to America as a young man. He had four sons, Henry, Alexander, George, and John, all of whom attended The University of North Carolina [6]. John, who acquired the nickname "Ghost" as a student in Chapel Hill, was a member of the class of 1820 but was away for a time and received his degree in 1822. He accepted the nickname and was known for the remainder of his life as Ghost Eliot, even using it in signing his name. He was very tall and thin with a disproportionately large head and short cropped hair. In later life he came to be regarded as an eccentric man but was described as the "oracle of the neighborhood."

He taught at various academies including one inWilmington [7] that had formerly been Innes Academy and Spring Vale Academy in Sampson County [8]. He also was a schoolmaster inDuplin [9], Pitt [10], Scotland [11], and Wayne [12] counties and often served as a private tutor in prominent families. Eliot was long remembered for his excellence in Latin, geometry, algebra, and surveying. He was also an effective teacher of chemistry, geology, mineralogy, and the classics. He returned to Chapel Hill in 1847, when his old classmate, President James K. Polk [13], attended commencement; it was said that Polk and Eliot were overheard on that occasion conversing in Greek. The good influence of Eliot as a teacher has been widely recorded in family correspondence, newspaper stories, and reminiscences.

Eliot never married, although a former pupil recalled that he once mentioned the death of a young lady to whom he had been engaged. In this connection he taught the student Robert Burns's song, "Highland Mary," and he wept when she sang it. Eliot died while visiting in the home of Dr. W. L. Best at Johnson Mill, Pitt County [10], and was buried in a community cemetery near Grifton.

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John A. Oates, *The Story of Fayetteville and the Upper Cape Fear* [22] (1950).

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Additional Resources:

John G. Eliot. North Carolina Miscellany, UNC Libraries: http://www.lib.unc.edu/blogs/ncm/index.php/2011/01/05/photo-of-a-ghost/ [3]

Jonathan Eliot Papers, 1799; 1817; 1876 (collection no. 01659-z). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/e/Eliot,Jonathan.html [24] (accessed June 21, 2013).

Image Credits:

John G. Eliot. Image courtesy of UNC Libraries. Available from http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/dig_nccpa/id/1850 [25] (accessed June 21, 2013).

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.[35]

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Links
[1] https://ncpedia.org/biography/eliot-john-g-ghost [2] https://ncpedia.org/biography/powell-william [3] http://www.lib.unc.edu/blogs/ncm/index.php/2011/01/05/photo-of-a-ghost/ [4] https://ncpedia.org/geography/cumberland [5] http://www.ed.ac.uk/home [6] https://ncpedia.org/university-north-carolina-chapel-hi [7] https://ncpedia.org/geography/wilmington [8] https://ncpedia.org/geography/sampson [9] https://ncpedia.org/geography/duplin [10] https://ncpedia.org/geography/pitt [11] https://ncpedia.org/geography/scotland [12] https://ncpedia.org/geography/wayne [13] https://ncpedia.org/biography/polk-james [14] https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/battle1/battle1.html [15] https://www.worldcat.org/title/-our-family-genealogy-including-the-nelson-johnson-roach-smith-little-cox-dawson-wooten-and-chapman-families-each-related-to-the-other-by-descent-or-marriage-or-both/oclc/1840219 [16] https://www.worldcat.org/title/southern-sidelights-a-record-of-personal-experience/oclc/1834760 [17] https://archive.org/details/03418948.emory.edu [18] https://www.worldcat.org/title/pitt-county-potpourri/oclc/5740108 [19] https://docsouth.unc.edu/true/grant/menu.html [20] https://archive.org/details/sketchesofpittco00king [21] https://www.worldcat.org/title/history-of-the-public-schools-of-north-carolina/oclc/2141533 [22] https://www.worldcat.org/title/story-of-fayetteville-and-the-upper-cape-fear/oclc/18028261 [23] https://archive.org/details/chroniclesofcapef00spru [24] http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/e/Eliot,Jonathan.html [25] http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/dig_nccpa/id/1850 [26] https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term [27] https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/educators [28] https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/powell-william-s-0 [29] https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--4 [30] https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--9 [31] https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--7 [32] https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-21 [33] https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal--0 [34]

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