Lutterloh, Thomas S. [1]

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by Percival Perry, 1991

16 July 1816-15 July 1900

TERRIBLE STEAMBOAT ACCIDENT! MANY LIVES LOST! Our community is intensely shocked this morning by intelligence that the Steamer Magnolia, Captain John M. Stedman, burst her boilers and ank in deep water, near Whitehall, on the Cape Fear River, yesterday morning. A brief letter from one of the passengers sent by private hand 10 Mr. W. H. Lutterloh, gives us all the reliable news as yet received. The letter is dated Wednesday I o'clock, and a the time of writing the bodies of seven persons had been found. The only names mentioned surug the killed are those of Captain Stedman and a negro man Charles, one of the boat's crew, belonging to Mrs. John Murchison. Thos. S. Latterlob, Esq., the owner of the Magnolia, was 00 board and severely hurt. It is supposed, from the location of the disaster, that there was, as usual, a number of way passuccess, and it is feared that some, ladies and chibiren among them, went down with the boat. Capt. Stedman leaves a large and helpless family, (his wife the daughter of the late Judge Petter.) We learn that he had a Life Policy of \$3000 in the Greensborough Mutual Company. In addition to the above particulars, we have sen a letter from the Rev. A. Paul Repiton, of Wilmington, who was a passenger on the Magpolis, and who writes from the W. & M. Rail Read, (9 miles from the scene of the disaster,) which he had reached on his return to Wilmington. He says .-"By request of Mr. Lutterlob, of your place, I write to inform you that the Magnolia burst her beller last night about 12 o'clock. Some 12 or 15 passengers are dead. Capt. Stedman is also among the missing, and had not been found up to the time I left White Hall, where the accident happened. Mr. Lutterlob has sustained no injury except in his left shoulder, which it is thought may be dislocated. I left him at White Hall, where he requested me to write from this point, for the sake of his family."

"Terrible Steamboat Accident! Many Lives Lost," February 18, 1858, the *Fayetteville Observer* (Fayetteville, NC). The "Magnolia's" owner, Thomas S. Lutterloh, was on board at the time of the accident and was seriously

injured. [2]Thomas S. Lutterloh, commission merchant, steamboat owner, turpentine distiller, and political leader, was born in <u>Chatham County</u> [3]. Little is known about his family or education except that as a youth he moved to <u>Fayetteville</u> [4] and lived for several years with James Kyle, a merchant. Subsequently he clerked in the store of Charles T. Haigh until he entered the mercantile business for himself about 1840. In the two decades before the <u>Civil War</u> [5], Fayetteville, at the head of navigation on the <u>Cape Fear River</u> [6], and with a network of plank roads radiating from it, increased in importance as a trading center. Goods brought upriver from <u>Wilmington</u> [7] by steamboat were forwarded in covered wagons to merchants in the Piedmont and western regions of the state. Lutterloh operated a local store and a commission and forwarding business specializing in heavy commodities, such as Swedish iron, salt, brown sugar, and molasses.

He soon entered the <u>river transportation</u> [8] phase of the business and was reputed to have been the first man in Fayetteville to become sole owner of a <u>steamboat</u> [9]. In 1847 he was one of the organizers and chief promoters of the Merchants Steamboat Company. In about 1850, when the <u>naval stores</u> [10] industry began to develop in the upper Cape Fear region, Lutterloh built and operated the first turpentine distillery in Fayetteville. By 1853 his interests included a store and forwarding agency, distillery, cooper's shop, drayage service, and major steamboat line on the river. With a total of four boats, he inaugurated daily service between Fayetteville and Wilmington. Two years later he participated in the

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organization of the Bank of Clarendon. With fifty-nine slaves, he was the largest slaveholder in Fayetteville in 1860. The Civil War brought the destruction of his steamboat line and the end of slavery. Unable to recoup these losses, he adjusted his business interests to changing times and became one of the largest cotton [11] merchants in the area.

Lutterloh also played a role in local and state politics. He was appointed a town commissioner in the 1840s, and when the office became elective in 1847, he was elected from Ward 6. Originally a member of the Whig party [12], he was elected mayor on the American, or Know-Nothing [13], party ticket, serving from 1855 to 1857. By 1860 he was prominent in the movement to organize a "Southern Rights" party for the defense of the South. During the Civil War Lutterloh served on various committees concerned with the welfare of Fayetteville and its people. In the postwar period he became a leader in the Republican party [14] and served in the House of Commons [15] in 1866–67, 1872–74, and 1879–1880.

Contemporaries regarded Lutterloh as an eminently successful businessman, "honest, fearless, . . . very quiet in all his ways, but determined in all his acts." In his later years he was addressed with the honorary title of "Colonel." An Episcopalian [16], Lutterloh married Mary Frances Buxton, daughter of the Reverend Buxton [17], rector of St. John's Episcopal Church (1831–51), and they had nine children: Jarvis B., Harriet Ann, Thomas C., Ralph B., Frances, Edward, Elizabeth, Anna, and Herbert. He died from the infirmities of advanced years and was buried in Cross Creek Cemetery.

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John A. Oates, The Story of Fayetteville (1972).

Additional Resources:

"A Terrible Steamboat Accident! Many Lives Lost!." *Fayetteville Observer* (Fayetteville, NC), February 18, 1858. http://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/newspapers/id/67625 (accessed June 20, 2014).

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1 January 1991 | Perry, Percival

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