

Aswell Peter Eller and His Descendants

(Jacob, Peter, George Michael) By Velma Eller Washington, 222 Lakeside Circle, Greenville, SC 29615-5323
(Corrections and Additions to Hook, J.W. , George Michael Eller and Descendants of His in America, 1957, p. 131-140)
[From the August 1997 "Chronicles"](#)

Much of what I know about my grandfather, Aswell Peter Eller, a farmer in Ashe County, North Carolina, was told to me and my brothers and sisters by our father, James Luke Eller, who was a great story teller. Aswell, also known as A.P. was born in Ashe county, the son of Luke Eller and Sarah King Eller on 21 November 1834; he died 5 July 1906 and is said to be buried in Ashe county. He married Nancy Dixon on 21 October 1857 whose death date is recorded as 22 January 1874. She bore him nine children with the first born dying in infancy.

He remarried that same year, 1879, a widow with three young sons. Her name was Mary Ann (Burkitt) Turner, also of Ashe county. To this union was born two daughters and one son. Her three sons by her first marriage to Hugh Turner were known as the "Turner Boys." I never heard of discord among the two sets of children, but it had to be difficult to mix so many children. She died in Portland, Oregon in 12 April 1925.

My father often referred to his family and their relationships, particularly the Luke Eller family. Aswell Peter was the third of ten children. He and his brother, Hansford Eller, were soldiers in the Civil War. Someone said A.P. was at Gettysburg but this is not borne out by the following records which was sent to me by my cousin Glenn Eller of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Eds. Glenn Eller apparently obtained the following Civil War material through A. William Eller, former president of the Eller Family Association, who probably received it from Dr. Byron Eller, Civil War researcher for the Eller Family Association .

On 8 Jul 1862, A.P. Eller enlisted in the Confederate Army. At that time he had two or three young children. He was mustered into Co. D, 5th Battalion, North Carolina Cavalry, at Jefferson, Ashe County, North Carolina, at age 28 years, for the duration of the war. His height is given as six feet. He furnished his own horse, valued at \$210.00 along with equipment valued at \$35.00.

Company D, 5th Battalion, North Carolina Cavalry was enlisted at Jefferson, Ashe County, North Carolina, beginning 8 Jul 1862, and A.P. was mustered into the Confederate into the Confederate service as 1st Sergeant on the same date. He and his brother Banford were among the young men from Ashe County who originally formed Company D. The exact movements of this company are not known until it was reported at Big Creek Gap, Tennessee, 27 October 1862. Although it is known that the company remained on outpost duty in eastern Tennessee through the winter of 1862/63 until June 1863. On June 22 Company D was ordered to pursue a Federal raiding party operating toward Knoxville, Tennessee. A.P.'s service record states that he deserted the Confederate army at Big Creek Gap, June 29, 1863. It is

not stated how long he was A.W.O.L., but he was present on August 3, 1863 when he with his company transferred into Co.B, 65th N.C. Troops (6th Regiment N.C, Cavalry).

This newly organized regiment was ordered to reinforce Confederate forces in the vicinity of Chattanooga, Tennessee, but as that place had been evacuated, it moved on into northern Georgia where the Confederate and Union armies would soon be engaged in a major battle at Chickamauga, September 19/20, 1863. However, A.P again deserted September 12, 1863 so was absent during the Battle of Chickamauga, but returned to duty September 30.

In November the regiment went to the relief of General James Longstreet during the siege and Battle of Knoxville, but serious loss was inflicted on it by the Federal cavalry. Many of the men in A.P.'s regiment, "dispersed, and in the loss of their horses, and being also practically in the enemy's country, made their way as best they could to their nearby homes in North Carolina." Again A. P went A. W. O. L. from December 10, 1863 to April 30, 1864, after which time he was reduced in rank to private.

One may question why A.P. deserted the army or was A.W.O.L. three times during his army enlistment. We may be able to account for some of the reasons he and so many other soldiers deserted. First may have been their age. He was twenty-eight years of age at the time and already had three children under the age of three. Surely he had reason to be concerned for the welfare of his young family, especially at the time of summer planting and harvest. His area of activity was close to his home and it would not have been difficult to make his way home for these periods of absences.

Secondly, he was in the cavalry and was required to furnish his own mount and equipment. Horses quickly wore out and were expendable. If a replacement was not found in the area of operation the soldier had to go where he could locate another horse, and that would no doubt be home.

The third existed at the reason to consider is the political time. Western North Carolina was the situation scene of that much rivalry among citizens - Unionists and Confederates , and "it was felt that since the regiment had been raised in this vicinity, there was a great feeling of disloyalty to the Confederate cause. The Colonel commanding the companies of the 6th Cavalry, felt his regiment should be entirely and permanently removed from the Army of the West. It is one of the Western North Carolina regiments raised after the passage of the Conscription Law and contains a large element of disloyalty. The counties from which it was raised may be considered within the enemy's lines, and not more than two days ride, or three at the most, from the position occupied by General Longstreet. During the whole time of its service, at least two thirds of its members were absent without leave, and the disloyalty of the country from which they were raised increased (as well as their facility for successful desertion), that the Colonel became satisfied from numerous circumstances, that he could never "move the regiment through that country without losing half of its numbers." (It was this time that A.P. deserted for the third time.) Re: Manarin: North Carolina Troops, Vol. II, p. 456. 11 The Eller Chronicles, Vol. XI:3, August 1997

Then the regiment was ordered to Eastern North Carolina where they remained until disbanded at the close of the war. A.P. did rejoin his company on April 30, 1864, and it is possible that he stayed with it until all the companies of the regiment disbanded near Salisbury, North Carolina, on or about 26 Apr 1865. A.P. held the rank of Corporal at the time of his release ... Dr. Byron H. Eller

Eds. we continue with Velma's account:

We were told that A.P. rode his horse well, and that the Union tried to pay him to join their forces. During the 1890's, I presume, A.P. and his family moved to adjacent Wilkes County, North Carolina which is on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains. His children had the wanderlust, three of them ended up on the Pacific Coast, Elizabeth to California, Rosa and Sarah to Portland, Oregon and the children of Mary Eller Campbell eventually went to the state of Washington.

William H. Eller, first son of A.P., never married. He was prospecting for gold in Cripple Creek, Colorado, about 1900, when a dynamite explosion nearby caused him to become blind in both eyes. He was about thirty years of age at the time, but managed his own care until his death in 1930. He had brought his brothers, James and Cleveland to Victor, Colorado, and according to the Cripple Creek and Victor City directories, the three of them were there for several years. According to the City Directory, Bill owned the "Last Chance Saloon" at 222 N. 4th St., Victor, Colorado, and his bartender was his brother, Cleveland A. Eller. After William lost his eyesight, he moved to Denver and owned and operated a grocery store, even though he was unable to see. He went to Virginia for a visit and while there died with a heart attack while at the home of his brother-in-law, "Uncle Ohe Hayes," in Bumpass, Virginia. He is buried in the Arbor Grove Methodist Church Cemetery, in Wilkes County, North Carolina. My father said, "I closed my eyes and wept when I heard Bill was blind."

Aawell Peter Eller was also known as a teacher of penmanship in the public schools of Ashe County, North Carolina. A letter he wrote to his sons in the West appears at the end of this account. It does indicate he was skilled in penmanship.

James Luke Eller, was my father and the sixth child of A.P. Eller and Nancy Dixon. He too went west and worked in the gold mines and other jobs at two different times. His experiences made grand story telling for his children. By 1909, he was ready to settle down. and at age 39, he married Bertha Tharpe of Ronda, North Carolina. He had built his own house in the Purlear Community in Wilkes County where they lived for a short while. In 1910 they moved to Bertha's home area, bought a farm and reared four children. They had lived there forty years at the time of his death. Bertha lived 26 years after his death. She died in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina in 1975. They lie buried at Pleasant Home Baptist Church Cemetery, in the Lomax Community, in Wilkes County.

Teaching in those days did not require a great deal of education, so my father taught. Schools were subscription, with salaries being paid by their patrons. He spoke of log buildings and even benches hewn from logs. Three or four months seemed the term lengths. Along the way my father learned Latin and English Grammar that was remarkable; we never had an algebra problem he could not solve. He never taught school in my life time.

There were two boys and two girls born to my parents, James Luke and Bertha (Tharpe) Eller. Frank William Eller was the eldest. By hard work and a little outside help, he graduated from Catawba College, Salisbury, North Carolina, and attended Duke University. He became a high school teacher in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public School system. After earning graduate degree from the University of North Carolina and a doctorate from Columbia University, he taught for about 20 years at East Carolina

University in Greenville, North Carolina. Frank was always busy finding summer jobs at other colleges as far away as Alaska. He was part of the organization of Charlotte College which became a branch of the University of North Carolina. He married Louise Bickett of Charlotte in 1936. She was a teacher and honor graduate of Queen's College in Charlotte, North Carolina. They had a son and a daughter. The son is a Presbyterian minister in Raleigh, North Carolina; the daughter, a teacher, in Enterprise, Alabama.

Note eds.: I met Dr. Frank Eller at a conference in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, about forty years ago. He was representing East Carolina University and I was representing Western Carolina University. We chatted very briefly and decided we must be related because we looked a bit alike - J. Gerald Eller.

Next was Patty Eller who worked in the textile industry. in Charlotte until her retirement. She married Robert L. Burns of Carthage, North Carolina. One son, Robert Jr., an only, lives in Charlotte and works for the State Employment Services. Bob is divorced.

Jacob Aswell, third child of James Luke and Bertha (Tharpe) Eller, never married. He mostly worked on the farm and lived at home. Just before World War II, he was working at the Edgewater Arsenal in Maryland and was drafted into the army. He served overseas for two years and was killed near Aachen, Germany, 19 Nov 1944. He was in the 29th Infantry Division that was hard hit during the war. He was a Technical Sergeant in the 175th Infantry, Company M. re-interred at Arlington National Cemetery. His remains were re-interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

I, Velma Eller, was the youngest. I was married to Willis Washington in 1945. I graduated from Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing in Charlotte, North Carolina and was working there doing operating-room nursing for a few years, when the Army seemed appealing. I joined, but had only stateside experience. After discharge, we lived in Charlotte. Our one son, Don, married Lennie Dahlman of New Orleans, Louisiana, where he is in Public Relations for an engineering firm. Lennie is employed by Tulane Medical School. They have two daughters and a son. Willis and I are retired and live in a retirement center in Greenville, South Carolina.

For the fifth child in our family, a baby girl was born and died on 17 April 1922.

Daughters of A.P. Eller were older and younger than my father. However, Aunt Lulu Nichols was the only one I knew. Originally they lived in Purlear Community in Wilkes County but later moved to Winston Salem, North Carolina, probably in the 1920's, then back to Wilkes for a few years. They then returned to Winston-Salem and died there.

Note: to Gerald and Juanita Eller, editors of the Chronicles, 8 Nov 1996, from Velma Washington: I am enclosing what I know about my father's family which is not much. His sister's lived so far away (even Ashe county seemed far) and as time went on contact became less frequent. Money was not plentiful on either side and that made a big difference. Frank, having a summer home in Blowing Rock often visited Ashe County Ellers. He never passed anything he collected and his children were not aware of it. I don't see that this is worthy of the Chronicles, but will let you be the judge. you may edit as you see fit ..

eda. Following genealogy compiled from data provided largely by Velta Eller Washington, but some came from information collected by A. William Eller for a revision of Hook (1957) when he served as President of the Eller Family Association. Also, Catherine Haregraves provided some data. When his revision project was abandoned A. William passed the material on to the Eller Family Association.

Sources:

- A.P. Eller Family Bible
- The Heritage of Ashe County, North Carolina, Vol. I, 1984
- Olivia McCluney, Houston, Texas
- Personal Knowledge and Stories of My Father
- Catherine A. Hargreaves
- A.P. Eller's Civil War Record, Dr. Byron H. Eller

Addresses:

- Violet M. Campbell, 102 N. Menatchee Ave., Wenatchee, WA 98801 (Granddaughter of Mary Eller Campbell.
- Glenn R. Eller Sr., 700 West Cheyenne Blvd., Apt 9, Colorado Springs, CO 80906-2411
- Catherine Hargreaves, 65 Knob Road, Pisgah Forest, North Carolina, 28768
- Betty Eller Russellavage, 3306 Soaring Bird Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.
- Velma Eller Washington, 222 Lakeside Circle, Greenville, S.c. 29615- 5323. (Velma, Glenn, and Catherine are members of the Eller Family Association) .