

## The "Duplin Insurrection" and beyond

Nat Turner led the 1831 slave uprising in Southampton County, Virginia, but few know of the "Duplin Insurrection," its follow-on in North Carolina. My mother-in-law, curator at Liberty Hall, home of the Kenan family in Kenansville, found an undated description of it, five and one-half pages long, written (upside down) in the back of an accounts ledger used by two members of the Chauncey Graham family (related to the Kenans by marriage). Dr. Stephen Graham, the second son of Chauncey Graham, Jr., studied medicine with his father in Murfreesboro but moved to Kenansville before 1810. He married Ann Dixon Williams, turned Baptist, and helped incorporate Wake Forest College. His interests were varied, and, unlike his father, who kept medical records in the ledger, he used it principally for the work of his blacksmith shop.

Using a perpetual calendar to resolve such references as "the 1st Sabbath in Sept. (4th)" and researching newspapers and other sources, I eventually ran the year/incident to ground and published "Dr. Stephen Graham's Narration of the 'Duplin Insurrection': Additional Evidence of the Impact of Nat Turner" [American Studies, Cambridge UP, 12.3 (1978): 359-367.]

The Duplin Insurrection belonged to the general hysteria. Letters and dispatches to Governor Montfort Stokes and press accounts suggest the general plan: slaves, led by "Dave" and "Jim," were to kill their masters in Sampson and Duplin Counties; march south to Wilmington, where they would be joined by 2,000 more



insurrectionists; march northwest through Fayetteville; and turn north to take the capital. A 12 September 1831 warning to Raleigh reported Wilmington burned, half of the White population massacred, and nearby counties under attack. The uprising was bogus, but the consequences included extracting information by "whipping and paddling," the shooting of "General Dave" and "Colonel Jim" ("their heads severed from their bodies and elevated in the air"), the hanging of "Pompey" and "Pizarrah," and the Governor's pardoning "Jerry."

The narration of Dr. Graham is remarkably dispassionate. He labels the event "meditated" and points out unsubstantiated rumors. The only inflammatory references are to "the dreadful plot" and the plan to "commence the horrid work of murder of all the whites without respect to age or sex" (as Nat Turner and his followers had done in Virginia). So carefully does he record dates (e.g., "Tuesday evening the 13th Sept."), times (e.g., "4 o'clock in the morning"), places (e.g., "Island Creek meeting"), and numbers (e.g., "five magistrates," "embodied to the number of 200") that he appears to have worked from notes. One of the magistrates at the original hearing in

Kenansville, he possibly was writing a draft of an official record. Alternatively, he may have wanted to provide a balance to the extravagant reports in the newspapers or to record the exact extent of his own involvement in the illegal executions. He may simply have been following his own bent of meticulousity.

My first play, *Gnat* (Temple Theater, Sanford, NC, 25 January-4 February, 1996), spun from the Duplin Insurrection. Its title is the slaves' code for "Nat" Turner. Samuel Wesley's father has sent him away to medical school at Harvard to disrupt his relationship with the mulatto slave, Amaryllis, who, he will learn, is his half-sister. He has returned home but has been "in exile" for two years on another family plantation, Freedom Hall, in Kenansville. Dissatisfied with his life, he spends much of his time in his study reading and painting and puzzling about ways to prove the intelligence of the Negro race. At play's end, he recognizes that the right thinking of one is not enough to change the world. It can be changed only when a thousand-thousand right thoughts issue in a thousand-thousand small deeds that unite to cleanse and redirect us all.

The conspiracy is led by the slave Moses, who directs the Wesley household. He teaches his son the stories of the important figures who have combatted slavery. Among them is George Moses Horton, born a slave in Chatham County. The "Colored Bard of North Carolina" helped support himself by selling poems (\$.25 each; \$.50 for one with great emotion) to the

students at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where he was a janitor for 30 years. The best-known of his volumes is *Hope of Liberty* (1829), which was published by friends to raise money for buying him out of slavery and sending him to Liberia, but the plan failed. He moved to Philadelphia after the Civil War.

In another wonderful coincidence, I learned that one of the students working as waitstaff at Galloway Ridge, where we now live, is directly descended from George Moses Horton! Darius Horton traces his link through his grandmother's mother.

The road from my mother-in-law's discovery has been amazing: scholarly article; play; short story ("Needin' Mista Sun"), poems ("Ole Nat Be a Worrisome Thing," "Songs Nat Turner Sang") with their own life; and the coinage, "The Novel of Slave Unrest," for the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for College Teachers I taught. Then came the chance to share all of these in PowerPoint presentations with my husband on the Duplin Insurrection [as well as North Carolina in the Civil War, Henry ("Light-Horse Harry") Lee in North Carolina, Duplin County during the American Revolution, and Louis Froelich and the Civil War Sword Factory in Kenansville] with North Carolina teachers participating in Sanford's Provisions Academy Workshops (2009). What will follow this column?

*Dr. Lynn Veach Sadler, of Galloway Ridge, a former college president, is widely published in academics and creative writing and works as a writer and an editor. As Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet 2013-2015, she mentors student and adult poets.*

## Discover your roots at the Chatham Mills Farmers' Market

By Adrienne Bashista

In central North Carolina we are lucky to experience the growing season all year long, but that doesn't mean we get all the fruits and vegetables year round. It means that in the summer, vegetables and fruits like tomatoes, peppers, berries, eggplant and corn are available, and in the cooler months, greens and root crops are prevalent.

Root crops are anything that grows in the ground, and while no doubt you're familiar with carrots and potatoes, both white and sweet, as well as beets, but turnips, parsnips, rutabagas, and daikon radish may not be in your weekly diet.

Granite Springs Farm and Dutch Buffalo Farm are offering a wide variety of root crops this winter market, which will run all the way until the end of January. Winter hours for the market are 10-1, and if you'd like to try these

root crops there are several ways to prepare them, but a roasted medley of various roots is a sure-fire winner.

### Mixed Mashed

- 6 white potatoes, peeled and cut into 1" cubes, more or less
- An equivalent amount of at least one of the following: sweet potatoes, rutabagas, turnips, beets (pink!), or parsnips
- Butter
- Salt and pepper
- Milk

Boil potatoes and other root vegetable in a pot of water until they are soft. Remove from pot, drain, and mash them. Add butter generously and milk until desired texture is reached. Enjoy!

### Carolina Roasted Roots

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Directions say to chop roots "roughly" – this means they should be in fairly large chunks, longer in length than in width. They do not need to be uniform.

- 3 carrots, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 parsnips, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 turnips, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 large rutabaga, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 red onions, peeled, cut in half and each half cut into quarters
- 1 head garlic, peeled
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme, minced
- 2 teaspoons fresh rosemary, minced
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted
- 5 tablespoons soy sauce
- salt and pepper to taste

Mix soy sauce, butter and herbs together then pour over vegetables and toss. Spread vegetables in a pan in a single layer and cook until done, 30-40 minutes. About halfway through, stir. Serves 6-8.



## Tired of Waiting?

Most prescriptions filled within 10 minutes.

### PITTSBORO DISCOUNT DRUGS

628 East St, Pittsboro • M-F: 8:30 am to 6:30 pm • Sat: 9 am to 1 pm • 542-7283  
Closed Sunday • Hablamos Español • FREE DELIVERY! Call for select delivery areas.



## Come get Fresh with our Farmers

Winter Hours: 10 am-1 pm

Produce, Meats, Cheese, Flowers, Chef Demos, Kid's Activities, Live Music, More!

**Chatham Mills Farmers' Market**

480 Hillsboro Street - Pittsboro  
www.ChathamMillsFarmersMarket.com



# THE BEST Holiday MEALS

BEGIN AT

## CLIFF'S MEAT MARKET

POULTRY • LAMB • PORK • BEEF • FISH

We also can order specialty meats such as  
Alligator • Bison • Rattlesnake • Venison

100 W. MAIN STREET, CARRBORO • 919-942-2196 • MON-SAT: 9 AM-6 PM



## LOCALLY OWNED SINCE DAY ONE

\*SINCE 1982\*

**Weaver Street REALTY**

Weaver Street Realty  
116 E. Main Street, Carrboro (919) 542-7122