

Abram vanWyck Budd — Chatham's dedicated doctor

Dr. Budd, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, came to Chatham County in 1855 as a surgeon for the Egypt Coal Mine. At the start of the Civil War he enlisted in April 1861 and after serving as a hospital steward and assistant surgeon, was assigned to the Thirty-third North Carolina Regiment. He was captured twice but rebuffed inducements to leave the Confederate Army and to offer his medical services to the Union Army. His last release from imprisonment occurred after hostilities had ceased. Dr. Budd walked home for the last 30 miles, and resumed his medical practice.

The coal mines where he practiced before the war were now operating at a reduced level and the doctor was compelled to seek a living elsewhere. In 1881, he moved his private practice to Lockville and continued to reside there until his death ten years later.

At the age of 45, Dr. Budd fooled all his relatives and acquaintances, who believed that he was a confirmed bachelor, by marrying a local girl, Anna C. Bryan. They had four children, one girl and three boys. In 1890, the doctor's health had begun to fail. He had fallen from his horse the year before and had complained of back pain ever since. By January 1891, Dr. Budd went to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to discuss his personal medical problems with a friend and classmate from medical

school. His friend, Dr. John Packard, as well as another consulting doctor, told him that he had heart disease. Dr. Budd, although having no grounds for his opinion, insisted that it was a kidney problem. He died six months later.

The doctor was apparently a handsome man when younger his schoolmates tagged him with the moniker "Pretty Budd." His dress was often very casual, often without a coat or collar, but always spotless. Dr. Budd loved baths, considering them as a tonic. He also was a hearty eater and a constant smoker, and although said to be amiable in disposition, the doctor was also described as being rather forceful and blunt in expressing his opinions. The good doctor once told a professional acquaintance that he cured hysterical hypochondriacs by "cussing them."

Dr. Budd performed surgery in his patient's homes and sometimes in his own home. Before his marriage

Chatham's Historical Heritage

by Fred J. Vatter, Jr.



he had four rooms in his house for keeping patients. He did not dismiss his patients until they were either well or beyond his ability to help them. Dr. Budd successfully performed what was the first appendectomy, without realizing what he was doing, in 1880. The African-American patient endured the surgery without an anesthetic and was hale and hearty when she described the surgery some 28 years later.

Dr. Budd was described by his contemporaries as a "Good Samaritan", who sometimes gave his coat away to poor patients in frigid weather, returning home in his shirt sleeves. Another doctor, P.E. Hines, recalled that Dr. Budd, finding one family of poor patients living in one room and all having Typhoid Fever, had the whole house thoroughly cleaned and white-washed, had another room added to the house, and bought beds, bed-clothes, clothing and food for the whole family. They all recovered. Years later one of the young sons had grown up and offered to repay the doctor, who refused to take one cent.

Dr. Abram VanWyck Budd was an unselfish and benevolent friend of his fellow citizens in his adopted home in Chatham County.

Fred J. Vatter is past President of Chatham County Historical Association and a Board Member.

ADAPTABILITY

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states the USDA, "because agricultural productivity is driven largely by environmental conditions during critical threshold periods of crop and livestock development."

Fruit trees are a particularly illustrative victim: Insufficient cumulative hours below freezing in winter prevent buds from forming; warm springs provoke buds to bloom early and make the crop more vulnerable to normal or late-season frosts; drought-weakened trees become easier prey for pests and fungus; tornadoes and hailstorms in summer and autumn damage trees and make crops unmarketable. Being an orchardist south of New England may soon become an act of extreme faith... or folly.

For rain events, volatility means less frequent, more intense rainfall. The USDA notes that "shifts of rainfall intensity have begun to occur in the United States with more extreme events expected in the future." This is a condition we have experienced in the Carolinas in recent years, with recurring spring and summer droughts punctuated by intense tropical rain events. Getting more rain in less time dramatically increases soil erosion. High levels of organic matter in soil combat erosion, but the rate of organic matter accumulation decreases as soil temperature increases.

Pollination is a critical step in the life of most perennial crops and grains, and high temperatures during the pollination stage of a plant's growth reduces fruit and seed yields. Warm nighttime temperatures also reduce yields, and warmer temperatures generally cause havoc in the relationship between plant growth and the availability of water. And while carbon dioxide fuels the photosynthesis that makes plants grow, it turns out that weeds outcompete crops under high-CO2 conditions, further reducing food, feed and fiber productivity.

Livestock production as we know it is also vulnerable to climate volatility. The USDA report notes that livestock are relatively able to withstand over-the-season adjustments in average temperatures, but that intense heat waves reduce meat, milk and egg production. Of course, contemporary confinement farming of livestock has brought swine and chicken production indoors and insulated the animals from the effects of temperatures

through expensive ventilation systems. But those confinement systems are highly sensitive to fluctuations in energy prices — prices that could escalate rapidly and permanently as this century progresses. As Chatham County has experienced in the last five years with the collapse of its confinement poultry industry, this capital-intensive method of farming is already subject to economic instability, to say nothing of the way it restricts animals from expressing their natural behaviors.

Under these kinds of conditions, there is no magic bullet that will ensure agriculture's productivity. We became quite enamored of magic bullets in agriculture over the 20th Century, and it seemed to drive prosperity for a while. Synthetic chemical fertilizer production allowed us to boost crop production exponentially. Toxins kept weeds and pests at bay, especially when combined with GMO crop seeds genetically altered by the addition of foreign DNA. Ever larger tractors and water pumps took the labor out of much of farming.

But all the time there were signs of trouble. Buying fertilizer and pesticides and seeds, and the equipment needed to maximize their efficiency, required ever more capital accumulation, and ever more land against which to borrow to finance production. The trend forced more and more family farms out of business, leaving larger and larger farms in control. The luxury of synthetic nitrogen led to consistent waste of the resource, resulting in massively polluted waters. The luxury of chemicals and 'biotechnology' led to overuse that bred rampant superweeds adapted to survive pesticide applications. Rural America today is poorer and sicker than the rest of the nation.

According to the USDA report, we must move away from magic bullets towards adaptation: Whether farming in the US becomes "climate-ready" in the 21st Century will hinge on "soil, crop and livestock management practices that enhance agricultural production system resilience to climatic variability and extremes." And it turns out those practices look a lot like what is happening today on organic farms right here in our community.

DEVELOPING BETTER CROPS AND BREEDS

Drought, pest and heat stress-resistant varieties give farmers greater margin for

error in the face of weather volatility. The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy is working with farmers across the country to tap the genetic inheritance of domestic animals bred to deal with more stressful environments. Piedmont Biofarm in Pittsboro is pioneering vegetable seed production tailored to this region. NC State's Breeding for Organic Production Systems project is testing grain crops that are adapted to the Carolinas, instead of giant grain farms of the Midwest and Plains.

DIVERSIFYING CROP ROTATIONS.

Soils are depleted of key minerals and nutrients, and pests given a chance to build virulence over time, when the same crops are planted year after year. The land that is now Perry-winkle Farm in northeast Chatham had long been only used for growing silage to feed dairy cattle, which lead to ever more applications of fertilizer and toxins, until the dairy finally closed. Now the farm produces a rich variety of flowers, vegetables, eggs, chicken and pork, and the soils are restored and vital.

INTEGRATING LIVESTOCK AND CROPS

Animals on crop farms are a natural source of fertilizer, breaking up insect pest and weed cycles, and help a farm diversify its income. Sunset Farm in Snow Camp raises cattle, pigs, chickens, vegetables and fruits year-round, and wins statewide recognition for its soil and water conservation achievements.

IMPROVING SOIL QUALITY.

The 'organic' in organic farming comes from the focus on sequestering carbon into the soil, and for this reason widespread adoption of organic practices supports not just adaptation to, but mitigation of climate change. In the soil, carbon becomes a medium for beneficial microbes and fungi that promote healthy plant growth, and a store of moisture in dry conditions. Peregrine Farm near the Upper Chatham/Lower Alamance line grows cover crops that are incorporated into fields without tilling, reducing erosion and enriching the soil.

MINIMIZING NUTRIENT FLOWS OFF THE FARM

Fifty-three percent of the nitrogen in synthetic fertilizers is wasted, running off the land and into our waters instead of being absorbed by plants. Lindale Dairy in

Silk Hope is leveraging the natural capacity of certain crops to suck nitrogen out of the air and 'fix' it in the soil, eliminating the need to apply synthetic fertilizer.

Those activities will characterize prosperous farms in the 21st Century. The question will be whether enough farms adopt these practices to ensure not only their prosperity, but ours. And even today's organic farms will be tested by the duration and intensity of climate change impacts. So it is in our interest to invest public resources strategically and significantly in research on crops and livestock adapted to the new climate reality; in more precise assessments of climate change impacts in agriculture; in better understandings of how crops, livestock, soil, water, microbes, weeds and insects interact; in management practices and decision-making tools that improve farmers' ability to react to weather extremes; and in a financial safety net that protects our farmers from catastrophe and encourages them to make adaptive choices, instead of chasing magic bullets.

Making these changes in farming and in our investments in agriculture will not be quick or easy, especially in a political environment that thrives on theatre, false choices, and corporate financing. There are entrenched agribusiness 'haves' that benefit so greatly from the system that exists today that it appears worth the risk to them to ignore the emerging agricultural reality. Restoring democracy to our food system must be part and parcel of adapting our community, region and nation to a new vision of prosperity in the 21st Century.

Roland McReynolds lives in Chatham County and is Executive Director of the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA), a Pittsboro-based farmer-driven non-profit that helps people across the Carolinas grow and eat local, organic food. CFSA's 28th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference will take place in Durham, Nov. 15-17. To learn more about local food and organic farming in our region, visit www.carolinafarmstewards.org.

This article is the seventh in a series designed to highlight what we must do to create widespread prosperity in the 21st century. The series is sponsored by CONNECT — a Chatham based network of civic groups (see ConnectChatham.com). These articles emphasize one main point: prosperity is the product of natural and environmental resources, population, technology and work. It is up to us to make the right choices to achieve this goal.



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