



ALAMANCE COUNTY'S AGRICULTURE

then & now

Photography by Sam Roberts | Text by Brent Lancaster

Alamance County Farm Bureau's project of two years is complete. This book documenting agriculture past and present is available for purchase for \$20.00. All proceeds will be donated to charity.

The book will be available for purchase at any of the Alamance County Farm Bureau offices.

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The year is 1910. Agricultural census records show that there are 2508 operating farms in Alamance County. The number drops to 1758 in 1959. It then plummets to 821 in 1987, reflecting the decade many farmers featured in this book began farming. The last recorded figures in 2012, report that the number of farms presently operating in the county has been reduced to 732.

It is this decline in the Alamance County agrarian society that inspired the Alamance County Farm Bureau Board to capture its history in photos past and present as well as the energy and satisfaction described in the interviews of those presently farming.

These are the stories of 61 farming families that have met and overcome the challenges of their era. Some are farming land passed down through families for over a century. Others have more recently answered the call to a life centered in agriculture.

We meet those who grow tobacco, raise cattle, sheep, goats or are in the poultry business. Those who produce fruit, vegetables, grain, or even grapes for the wine industry and foresters who plant, log and saw timber. All fields of endeavor that rely on weather conditions, constantly changing commodity values, and increased prices of inputs and none over which the farmer has any control.

Yet, it becomes clear through this collection that those who have persevered carry no regrets about their chosen occupations. Throughout their stories you hear statements like "It's a good life."... "The farm is a good place to raise kids." And as one farmer puts it "...I guess you could say that we're living the American dream." These farmers express a fulfilling way of life that should encourage the future of agriculture in Alamance County.

It is our hope that these stories of tenacity as well as satisfaction with a chosen life in agriculture will inspire future young farmers... we'll be watching for the operating farm numbers to increase in the near future!