

Judge Guilford Courthouse Budd

By Lisa Wheeler

In 1866 Judge Guilford Courthouse Budd arrived in Pueblo, a newly freed slave and hotel porter from North Carolina by way of Fort Union, New Mexico. His geographic name was taken directly from his birthplace, Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina, scene of the Revolutionary War battle.

He and his wife Anna took up residence on the lower end of Santa Fe Avenue. He found work as a barber (one of the first in Pueblo) and immediately became an active citizen of his new city. Just three years after his arrival, he was nominated to run for justice of the peace. He ran against John Stokes, a local cabinet maker and previously defeated nominee for the position. The September 10, 1869, issue of *The Rocky Mountain News* proclaimed that "Budd's election is quite probable."

He lost the race but continued to be known as "Judge."

While Budd was making news as the first African American to run for office in Pueblo, his antics kept his name in the paper. On March 14, 1872, it was reported in the *Chieftain* that Budd had "absorbed an unlimited quantity of benzine and while in this interesting condition mounted a fierce, untamed bronco and galloped up and down the street. The result was that Budd soon landed on *terra firma*. The horse fell upon him, smashing his hips and fracturing two or three ribs. Budd was quite badly hurt and will be confined to his room for some weeks."

Ever the entrepreneur—despite his questionable horsemanship—he advertised his cow herding services. "Budd is prepared to take the town herd of cows. The herd will be driven out each morning at 6 o'clock and returned each evening at 6. Terms are \$2 per month per head, payable at the end of the month. He will also herd horses at \$2.75 per head, per month," the May 17, 1874, *Chieftain* story noted.

Meanwhile, his wife Annie made a name for herself, opening the Delmonico Restaurant at the corner of Santa Fe and 2nd Street.

Giving politics another try, on August 29, 1874, he announced his intention to run for Congress on the Lone Star ticket. "I am just in receipt of your favor of date, soliciting my name as a sixth independent

Delmonico Restaurant.

Corner Santa Fe Avenue and 2d Sts.

Mrs. ANNIE BUDD, PROPRIETRESS.

Meals at all hours and table supplied with the best the market affords.

July 14, 1874

d.t.f

candidate to congress from Colorado. I need not assure you that I feel greatly flattered that you should distinguish me among so many for so responsible a position. A few years since when defeated for justice of the peace, I determined to disintegrate myself from the treacherous debris of political infamy and retire to my private life and the bosom of my family. However, as your solicitations are marked by such unanimity, I feel it a duty *pro bono publico* (for the public good)

JUDGE BUDD ON THE STUMP.

He Enlightens the Voters of Pueblo on the Political Questions of the Day.

to reconsider my former resolve. I am willing and I accept."

Budd's run was covered extensively in the statewide press. His political rallies were filled with fanfare and packed crowds, as reported in the September 3, 1874, issue of the *Chieftain*. In a headline "Judge Budd on the Stump," reporters wrote, "The largest concourse of people ever seen in this city assembled on Santa Fe Avenue for the purpose of hearing Hon. Guilford Courthouse Budd, candidate for congress on the Lone Star Platform. Music by the Pueblo Cornet Band."

But the event was interrupted when someone set fire to bales of hay behind Budd. "Some enemy of free speech, civil rights and the colored race fired the straw with which the rostrum was filled, and the fire blazed up behind the orator. Budd was thrown to the ground."



Pueblo Chieftain Cartoon

His campaign was often plagued by those who didn't want to see an African American man hold office in Pueblo. Rumors began to circulate that Budd was going to drop out. The paper reported that if President Grant ran for a third term, Budd would be named Minister of Haiti. On Sept. 8, 1874, the paper issued an apology for not checking its facts. "The statement made in our issue Sunday morning to the effect that Judge Budd had withdrawn from the Congressional race was incorrect. He proposes not only to run for the position, but to hold an election of his own at the old courthouse today. We have seen the ballot box to be used on the occasion. It is about sixteen by twenty-four inches in size and has the words 'Lone Star' painted on the top. We feel satisfied that the Judge will have a larger majority today than any candidate who ever came before the people of Pueblo."

Independent candidates for office could hold their own elections and on September 9 Budd printed 2,500 ballots and set his Lone Star ballot box inside the courthouse, awaiting the results. "He had 2,500 tickets printed and before eleven o'clock in the morning they were all in the ballot box. Our independent, Lone Star candidate will in all probability poll the largest vote ever given to any aspirant for office in Colorado," the *Chieftain* reported.

His win was considered a shoo-in, but a series of

events would keep him from making history.

On September 11 he was arrested for fighting with a man over a horse. His detention kept him from taking his ballot box to Denver where it could be officially counted. While Budd was incarcerated, someone took the ballot box from its safe keeping in the First National Bank. In an elaborate crime, the box was put on a train, then armed thieves highjacked the train and stole it. It was alleged that T.M. Patterson, another candidate, used a forged signature to remove the box from the bank. "When the train arrived at a secluded spot on the divide, it was waylaid and stopped by several Patterson men who were masked and armed with 64-pound columbiads (cannons). The box was taken from the cars and carried off, no one knows where. We cannot too strongly deprecate this attempt to deprive Judge Budd of the exalted official position to which he has been elected by an almost unanimous vote of the people. Are these miserable opponents of civil rights never to be stopped in their endless crusade against the colored race?"

A one-hundred-dollar reward was personally offered by Budd to find out who forged his signature and stole the ballot box. Budd was so adamant that Patterson had done the deed, he challenged him, not to a debate, but to a duel. "As I understand that Mr. Patterson has paid to the First National Bank of Pueblo \$5,000 for my ballot box. I hereby challenge Mr. Patterson to fight me with any weapon he may see fit," he announced in coverage of the ongoing *Chieftain* story on September 16.

The following day, T.M. Patterson was declared delegate elect. "Owing to the mysterious disappearance of Judge Budd's ballot box, the world will never know how many votes that illustrious statesman received," the paper reported.

Budd's ballot box mysteriously reappeared just days later.

Patterson's term was short-lived, lasting only 17 months, as Colorado became an official state of the union, thus eliminating the need for territory representatives.

Budd decided to go back to work as a barber and cattle herder. He announced that he had given up politics. The paper reported that he was going to take on work as a house painter.

In 1875 Budd opened a saloon. However, the popular establishment would be known more for its



Budd on His way to Denver with the Ballot Box.

Pueblo Chieftain Cartoon

brawls than its beer. He would be arrested for running a gambling establishment. "Budd, like all great men, has his enemies. He is not as popular as he might be among the dark-complexioned citizens of Pueblo for the reason, we presume, that he is to some extent purse proud and given to putting on airs," the city's newspaper noted.

On April 14, 1875, it was reported that while driving his horse wagon on Santa Fe Avenue, his horse broke loose from its wagon, and forced Budd to leap off, to avoid death.

The following year, Budd opened a gun shop, on Santa Fe Avenue and Third Street. "It is the best place in Pueblo to get guns, pistols, sewing machines, locks, etc.," the paper reported.

In 1877 Budd was being groomed as a candidate for Pueblo mayor. He refused to be considered for the job. "Notwithstanding the repeated solicitations of my numerous friends, I am necessarily compelled to refuse them the privilege of voting for me for the office

of mayor of Pueblo, as I positively decline serving, if elected."

The decision didn't last long. On April 1, 1877, Budd agreed to run for the city's highest office. "Through the urgent, earnest and persistent demands of many friends, I have reluctantly consented to allow my name to be used as candidate for mayor. I am not ambitious and do not crave and yearn for political honors. Yet, if elected, will serve the best interests of the property holders of Pueblo with the best of my ability and ask all who believe in water works, reform, economy and an honest and competent administration of city affairs to vote for me."

His candidacy was looked upon favorably, even receiving a glowing endorsement from the *Chieftain*. "It is hoped that in this race that fortune may change, and that the name of Judge Guilford Courthouse Budd may be perpetuated in the history of Pueblo as its best mayor."

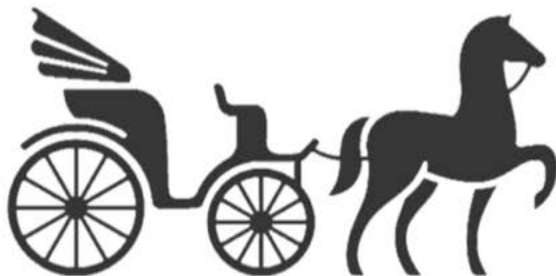
He would go on to again lose another political race.

Budd's personal drama often eclipsed his political aspirations. On Sept. 12, 1877, he attacked his son-in-law with an ax handle. He would receive two black eyes in the fight and was later arrested. Two days later, he was arrested again for speaking in a "vile and opprobrious language to one of Pueblo's maidens."

His run-ins with the law continued throughout the later part of his life.

In 1879 in an attempt to offer a horse-driven taxi service, he was fined for violating the town ordinance requiring a license. That same year he again found himself in front of a judge for throwing a chair at a man after verbally attacking him. The other man in the fight, Benjamin F. Harrison, was also arrested for throwing a spittoon at Budd.

While he had given up running for another elected office, his name was still being considered as an authority on the plight of minorities in Pueblo. While it had always been believed that he was a former African American slave, it was reported that he was, in fact, a full-blood Cherokee. "It has been suggested to us that it would be a good idea to send our respected fellow citizen, Hon. Guilford Courthouse Budd to Washington to be interviewed on the Indian question. Almost everybody else has been questioned by the newspaper men there and Budd's opinions are worth far more than those of many of the parties interviewed. Judge Budd being a full-blooded Cherokee, his ideas



regarding Indian matters ought to be valuable.”

By 1880 it appeared that Budd was positioning himself for another run at political office. He was named treasurer of the Sun Lodge A.F.&A.M. (Ancient Free and Accepted Masons). But once again, his personal actions overshadowed any civic ambitions. On May 5 he was again involved in a traffic accident when his carriage collided with a streetcar. On July 27 he was involved in another verbal altercation with a fellow resident. “Judge Budd amused himself yesterday morning on the avenue by calling another man a liar. The other man retaliated with a viler epithet, and for a time the air was blue with profanity and obscenity.”

Budd's last run for a government office happened in 1881 when he submitted his application for Pueblo postmaster. According to reports, he included a petition “signed by 200 politicians.” The position was awarded to Irving W. Stanton.

Budd's legal troubles continued to resurface. On November 15, 1883, his son-in-law was tried for assault with deadly intent for shooting at him three weeks prior.

Word started going around town that Budd was mentally unstable. His verbal altercations were reported in the paper almost daily. People began to speculate that his political losses were driving him mad. On February 13, 1886, he was charged with hitting another man.

While he continued to run his express transport business, by November, it was reported that he had been judged insane and committed to the state hospital. Just a few months later, he died on February 25, 1887, and was buried in an unmarked grave.

“It is believed he had been demented ever since he ran for congress in 1874, which by the way, proved to be a very serious joke so far as the old man is concerned and cost him many a hard-earned dollar. His mind seemed affected after that event and his property soon dwindled away and was lost. He was possibly 75 years of age and leaves a wife and one daughter,” his *Chieftain* obituary noted.

Even after he passed, Budd's notoriety had continued to intrigue the public. On June 1, 1890, the *Chieftain* ran a massive one-and-a-quarter page story on his rise and fall. To add more mystery to his story, the paper mentioned that he was of African descent, “but must have been of noble lineage.”

“Politically he was considered a modern African Moses who possessed in his own person the power to lead the people out of their existing state of political bondage,” the lengthy tribute read. “Every town has its characters and Budd will long be remembered as one of Pueblo's celebrities. He crossed the dark river and has gone to a better land, where the wicked cease from troubling.”

