



COMMISSIONERS OF SUDLERSVILLE

200 South Church Street

P. O. Box 116

Sudlersville, MD 21668-0116

Phone: (410) 438-3465

E-mail: townoffice@townofsudlersville.org

<http://www.townofsudlersville.org>

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Sudlersville

Sudlersville is a town made up of a rich history. Joseph Sudler, of Kent Island, purchased Rousby Land approximately 800 acres from Walter Smith, of Calvert County, on April 16, 1740. At that time, Rousby Land was a part of Sledmore. The Sledmore house, built in 1713, still stands today, as a private residence, and is located behind the Sudlersville Middle School. It is unlikely that Mr. Sudler ever moved his family to Rousby Land/Sledmore. Any one of three of his sons is likely to have been the first Sudler to do so.

According to a June 23, 1755, last will and testament of Mr. Sudler's, he had six (6) children. They are named throughout his will: Emory, Joseph, John, Thomas, Benjamin and Mary Ann. In this will, he bequeaths "...to Three of my sones Joseph John & Thomas Sudler All that tract of land lying up Chester which I bought of W Walter Smith called Sledmar containing Eight hundred acres..."¹

I could find no record of how and why this became a town, rather than remaining a private estate; but, by 1856, there were 10 houses (one of which was operated as a hotel) and a post office (established July 1811). By 1880, the town known as Sadler's Cross Roads and Sudler's Cross Roads had grown to 39 houses, a school, three churches, and a few businesses. The name was officially changed to Sudlersville on October 21, 1839; nearly 100 years after Joseph Sudler purchased the land. Sudlersville became an incorporated town in 1870.

Sudlersville, through the years, has been, and is, a farming community. In the 19th century, it's crops consisted mainly of corn, tan bark (mulch) and tobacco. Tobacco was a source of money for the early settlers. Farmers were given certificates for their tobacco crop and those certificates were used as money. Today, the crops are mainly corn and soy beans.

In 1868, the railroad was started to be built in Millington. The railroad, when completed, ran from Massey to Centreville. The railroad opened up a new source of crops for

¹ "Last Will and Testament of Joseph Sudler," acquired from <http://www.ilpalio.org/testament.htm>

farmers . . . fruit; mainly peaches. By 1875, thousands of acres peaches were planted. By the 1880's, peaches, apples and pears were Sudlersville's main economy.

Over time, the railroad's service was expanded to allow Sudlersville and other area residents along the Massey to Centreville line to travel by train to other parts of Maryland (including Baltimore) and to other nearby states, such as Pennsylvania and Delaware. It ceased passenger operations in 1939, but still continues to be used for Perdue farms in the area.

In 1918, the Sudlersville Betterment Club (SBC) was established. The SBC exists to this day and is comprised of members who live and have lived in the town. The SBC, among many activities, maintains a train museum, located in the former train station building, with Jimmie Foxx memorabilia also on display there.

In 1923, Mr. Alan Chance established The Emma Chance Library, in honor of his late wife, Emma Pierce Chance. That library served the town for 23 years. In 1946, The Emma Chance Library was merged, with the permission of Mr. Chance's family, with the newly formed Memorial Library. The Sudlersville Memorial Library was a branch of the Queen Anne's County (QAC) Free Library until 1973, when in May of that year, it became a private one. The QAC Free Library, in 1973, added Sudlersville to be a regular stop for its bookmobile service. As a result, the QAC Free Library felt it was duplicating its services and chose to close the Sudlersville branch. On July 1, 1973, the town received the deed for the library and assumed financial responsibility for it. Since that date, the library has been supported by its patrons (those who register with the library to borrow materials from it) and the town.

The Sudlersville Volunteer Fire Company was founded on February 19, 1927. For more on the fire company, visit their "About Us" page at their website: <http://www.svfc6.com/quarters.html>. A pictorial station tour is also available on that page.

Sudlersville's history is not just about its groups and buildings. There have been numerous people who have contributed to its place in history; some of whom have become nationally and internationally known. Some were born here; others moved here. The founding family, the Sudlers, as already mentioned, first came to own 800 acres, which eventually became Sudlersville, in 1740. Since then, the Sudler family remains a part of this town; though many, because of marriages through the years, have last names other than Sudler. Many descendants of Joseph Sudler have chosen to keep the Sudler name in some fashion, such as one family, some of whom currently live in the town, whose name appears on a pedigree chart² of the Sudler family line as "Sudler Willis".

Aside from the Willis family, others whose surnames appear throughout the history of Sudlersville (not all are descendents of the Sudler family) are Sadler, Seegar, Chance, Elliott, Thompson, Goodhand, Glanding, George, Roe and more.

² Prepared by Louis C. Sudler, Jr. of Chicago, IL in April 1976.

One gentleman, Dudley George Roe (March 23, 1881 to January 4, 1970), served as a Democrat for the State of Maryland in the House of Delegates from 1907-1909, as a Maryland Senator from 1924 to 1933 and 1939 to 1941, delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1928, and as a U. S. Representative for Maryland 1st District from 1945 to 1947. After his public service years were ended, Mr. Roe returned to Sudlersville and supported his family as a farmer, grain dealer and banker. He was the Director and later became President of the Sudlersville Bank of Maryland. He resigned the presidency in 1967 but remained as Chairman of the Board of Directors until he died on January 4, 1970. Mr. Roe is buried at the Sudlersville Cemetery. He still has descendants living in and near Sudlersville.

In 1916, John E. George, of Sudlersville, was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. I could find no other political service record, nor professional, for that matter, for Mr. George. There have been several John George's through the years; some, I am told, having served the community as physicians.

Mr. Simon Newcomb, noted astronomer and mathematician, is purported to have been the founder of The Academy, a school that at one time existed in Sudlersville; I believe in the 19th century. Mr. Newcomb was originally from Canada, but came to the U.S. as a young man; and from the brief biographies I did find, he came to Maryland and taught for a year in Massey's Cross Roads (probably the town known today as Massey) and a year in Sudlersville. None of the biographies stated he founded a school here.

Mr. James "Jimmie" Foxx (born in Sudlersville, Maryland, October 22, 1907; died July 21, 1967, in Miami, Florida) is a former major league baseball player. He was drafted by the Philadelphia Athletics (A's) in 1925 and his contract with the A's was sold to the Boston Red Sox. He played with the A's from 1925 to 1935 and the Red Sox from 1936 to 1942. He had a prolific baseball career, setting many records. He was a three-time American League Most Valuable Player (1932, 1933 and 1938) and several times during his career he led the league in home runs, runs batted in (RBIs), runs scored and batting average. His career statistics are: lifetime batting average – .325; home runs – 534; RBIs – 1922. Tom Hanks' character in the movie "League of Their Own" was loosely based on Jimmie Foxx, who, after retiring from baseball around 1945, later became a coach in the All-American Girl's Professional Baseball League. There is a monument to Jimmie Foxx at the corners of Route 300 and Route 313, the heart of Sudlersville.

There is much to see and enjoy here in this historic farming town. We look forward to showing it to you!

Laura Stahl
Clerk/Treasurer

(Many of the historical materials I obtained for this article were provided to me by Ms. Lucille Villabona-Kuntz, Head Librarian of Sudlersville Memorial Library.)