

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
OF THE LATE HON.  
THOMAS H. DUDLEY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649273867

Biographical Sketch of the Late Hon. Thomas H. Dudley by William John Potts

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**WILLIAM JOHN POTTS**

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
OF THE LATE HON.  
THOMAS H. DUDLEY**





Thomas H. Dudley

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE LATE

HON. THOMAS H. DUDLEY

---

BY

WILLIAM JOHN POTTS  
CAMDEN, N. J.

---

A PAPER READ BEFORE

THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

APRIL 19, 1895

REPRINTED FROM THE PROC. AMER. PHILOS. SOC.,  
VOL. XXXIV, JUNE 4, 1898

---

PHILADELPHIA  
PRESSED BY MACGALLA & COMPANY INC., 237-9 DOCK ST.  
1898

*Biographical Sketch of the Hon. Thomas H. Dudley, of Camden, N. J.,  
who Died April 16, 1863.*

*By William John Potts.*

*(Read before the American Philosophical Society, April 19, 1895.)*

Thomas Haines Dudley, born 10th mo. 9, 1810, died 4th mo. 15, 1893, elected a member of the American Philosophical Society 10th mo. 15, 1880, was descended from Francis Dudley and Rachel Wilkins, his wife, a member of the Society of Friends who came from the Parish of St. Peter, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, about 1730. Francis Dudley was the son of John Dudley and Mary Arney, of that parish, who were married in 1708. Another account says the name of his mother was Jane Dudley. John, the English ancestor of this New Jersey family of Dudley, died in 1746. In the parish register of St. Peter's he is named as "singing man and clerk."

Francis Dudley, the eldest son, so tradition says, came over with Nathan Middleton, and shortly after married Rachel Wilkins in 1733, settled at Evesham (the "Vale of Evesham," as the early settlers called it in memory of their old home in England), Burlington county, N. J. This progenitor of the name in this State died in the early part of 1783 at Evesham. We find his will on record in the Secretary of State's office at Trenton, and that of his widow Rachel a few years later, in 1786. He leaves his three sons goodly farms, upon the metes and bounds of which he dwells minutely with all the pride of a Saxon landholder. In this connection we are reminded of the eloquent words of Mr. Blaine in his oration on President Garfield, which are equally applicable to Mr. Dudley. Mr. Blaine says he "was born heir to land, to the title of freeholder, which has been the patent and passport of self-respect with the Anglo-Saxon race ever since Hengist and Horsa landed on the shores of England."

Thomas Dudley, son of Francis, married Martha Evans, 11th mo. 27, 1762, of an old and respectable family among Friends. They had ten children. Evan Dudley was the ninth child; he was born 1st mo. 1, 1782, married Ann Haines and died 3rd mo. 31, 1820, aged thirty-seven years.\*

\* We are indebted to Miss Henrietta Haines, of Moorestown, N. J., and to Miss Martha Evans Bellangee, of Ashbury Park, N. J., for valuable genealogical data, and regret that limited space does not permit us to give other details.

Thomas Haines Dudley, the subject of this biography, was the youngest child of this marriage. His early youth was passed in Burlington county, where he was born, working upon his mother's farm. She was early left a widow with four children. She was a descendant of Richard Haines, of Aynhoe, Northamptonshire, whose children came to Burlington county, N. J., in 1688; thus we see Mr. Dudley had a claim to early American ancestry on both sides of his family. For some years he taught school in the vicinity and saved sufficient money to begin the study of law under William N. Jeffers, a lawyer of good standing in Camden. During this period, while he was returning from a night school late in the evening, an incident happened which we have often heard him relate without any thought of our application of it to himself. It showed the same determination and courage which was the ruling trait of his life and the cause of his success. Passing at twelve o'clock at night over a lonely road by a graveyard, he saw in the grounds what seemed to him, the more he gazed upon it, to be the figure of a human being in white, moving and bending toward him. Though so frightened that his teeth chattered and his knees fairly knocked together, he determined to go forward and examine it. Climbing the fence, he was strongly tempted to go back; he shook with fright, the thing seemed so supernatural in the moonlight, but reasoning strongly within himself, "there is no such thing as a ghost," he determined to push on, and conquering all his fears, pressed forward and found that the weird figure was a sheep with its horns caught in the bushes, moving up and down in its efforts to get free.

Between fifty and sixty years ago there was more belief in ghosts than now, and when we consider Mr. Dudley was then a young man, brought up in an atmosphere in which this belief was not uncommon, the circumstance was one that few—alone at such an hour in the middle of the night, in a lonely country graveyard—very few, indeed, would have stopped to investigate. His description was much more graphic and awe-inspiring than we can give, and was related to the writer as an instance that we must not be influenced by groundless fears in what reason tells us is untrue.

Among Mr. Dudley's papers is a draft of a short article by him, signed "Many Citizens," probably one of his first political efforts. It was published in the *United States Gazette* during the year 1842. This concerns the removal of Judge Philip J. Gray from the office of Surveyor of the Port of Camden. He was a man of character, highly respected, and was afterwards reinstated by Zachary Taylor. President John Tyler is taken to task for this removal as being inconsistent with the views expressed in his inaugural address to the people of the United States, April 9, 1841, where he says, "I will remove no incumbent from office who has faithfully and honestly acquitted himself of the duties of his office, except in



such cases where such officer has been guilty of an active partisanship, or by secret means, the less manly and therefore the more objectionable, has given his official influence to the purposes of party, thereby bringing the patronage of the Government in conflict with the freedom of elections."

In 1848 Mr. Dudley held the two offices of City Clerk and City Treasurer of Camden when aged twenty-three.

When twenty-four years of age we find him taking an active part in the Clay campaign as Secretary of the Clay Club of Camden; August 29, 1844, drawing up the minutes of the District Clay Club Convention, held at Bridgeton at that date, as its Secretary; Dr. Ephraim Buck, President, associated with men some of whom were to become famous in the State, namely, Abraham Browning, A. G. Cattell, Dr. E. Q. Keesbey, Charles P. Elmer and others.

Among his papers is a rough drawing of a "Clay Cabin," a curiosity to the present generation. It was located at Fourth and Market streets, Camden, and these few details are worthy of being recorded for the history of politics in this vicinity in what was a very exciting campaign. This "cabin" of those primitive political days of half a century ago was "46 feet deep and 25 feet front," with, of course, a flagpole, made in the early part of the year 1844 for the Camden Clay Club. The building came to a little more than the contract, costing in all \$155. "32 benches at 50 cts. pr. seat," the carpenter's bill calls for, which gives an idea of Clay's political following in the neighborhood. Allowing five persons to a bench, we may conclude "the cabin" held 160 persons. Mr. Dudley seems to have been active in all of this organization. A good speech of his, made on the occasion of a flag presentation to this organization, has been preserved. It will be remembered he was then but twenty-four, and at that youthful age he takes strong ground for the protection of American industry. His first child, who died in infancy, was named for Henry Clay. This was the early school of one who was afterward to have a much more enlarged sphere.

With his hard-earned savings and the money he had obtained by mortgaging his farm to study law, he at last passed his examination in 1845, and having been admitted, retired to his room at his boarding house in Camden, shut the door, threw himself on the bed greatly depressed, wondering where his bread was to come from without a single client, when there came a knock on the door and a client appeared in the person of Mr. Benjamin Cooper, of Camden county, engaging him for a case of which there were perhaps few men able or willing to undertake, from its difficulty and danger, in which all the instincts of humanity required a speedy action. A free colored family of Burlington county, personally known to Mr. Dudley, had been kidnapped into slavery, a mother and three children, and had been rapidly driven away on the road South.

Members of the Society of Friends of Burlington county hastily met together and subscribed, it is said, a thousand dollars to buy back the woman and her children. The difficulty then arose, who was to pursue the fleeing kidnappers and their victims and redeem the captives, a most dangerous task in those days for a Northerner to venture across the border on such an errand of mercy and of justice.

Mr. Cooper informed his coadjutors that he knew such a man, who had just passed the bar, whose sympathies were with the Abolitionists, and, above all, possessed the energy and determination necessary; who knew, besides, the captives, as the woman had often worked on his mother's farm when he was a child. Disguising himself in the character of a slave trader, who were often Northern men from the borders, Mr. Dudley procured a large broad-brimmed hat, a whip, and taking a pair of pistols he followed the track of the fugitives and was so fortunate as to discover them near the Head of Elk, in Maryland. He gave out that he was from a distant part of the country buying slaves to take South. The sale was not accomplished without its dangers, for presuming he must have a large sum of money with him, he overheard a plot to rob him, and sat up all night in the hotel with his pistols before him on the table. Keeping up the character of a slave trader, he had behaved so roughly to the woman and her child that they did not recognize him and took him for what he pretended to be. He ordered them to be locked up safely until he could take them away in the morning. The poor woman, overcome with fear, reluctantly followed. Making a detour south to deceive the kidnappers, it was not until on the boat at Wilmington, Del., that he asked the poor creature if she did not know him, and received for a reply, "All she wanted to." Her fears turned to joy when he said, "Don't you remember Nancy Dudley's little boy, Tom, who used to play pranks on the cows you milked at Evesham and make them kick the pail over?" And when he told her she was going home, her happiness can be imagined.

We give below a copy of the deed of sale,\* with a feeling of earnest thankfulness that a bill for a slave is no longer a possibility in this coun-

\* Know All Men by These Presents that I, William K. Chance of the county of Caroline, State of Maryland, for the consideration of one hundred and fifty dollars current money, to me in hand paid by Thomas H. Dudley of the State of New Jersey, the receipt whereof I hereby acknowledge, have granted, bargained, sold, aliened, and delivered, and by these presents do grant, bargain, sell, and deliver unto the said Thomas H. Dudley my negro slave Maria Johnson and her child Susan about 16 months old, which said slaves Maria and Susan I will warrant and defend to the said Thomas H. Dudley, his executors and administrators and assigns against me, my executors and administrators and against every other person or persons whatsoever. In Witness Whereof I have hereunto set my name and affirmed my seal this eighteenth day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-five.

In the presence of  
I. M. BERNARD,

} Signed,      WILLIAM K. CHANCE. (Seal)

try. Of the other children, a boy and a girl, it is said the boy was advertised for sale in Baltimore, and was bought by Mr. Dudley for ninety dollars, before the sale came off. The girl was purchased by a lady in Baltimore.

*The West Jersey Mail*, a weekly paper of Camden, records his marriage in its issue of Wednesday, March 11, 1846, as follows: "In this city, on fourth day evening last, 4 inst. by Friends' ceremony, Thomas H. Dudley to Emmaline, daughter of Seth Matlack."

She was a faithful and devoted wife, the mother of three children, who survived infancy—Edward, Mary, and Ellen. Mrs. Dudley died at Madrid, Spain, February 9, 1884, regretted by all who knew her as a woman of a happy disposition and kindness of heart, with many qualities serviceable to her husband in his career.

In July, 1848, he was admitted a counselor-at-law. While practicing law and engaging in politics his acquaintance began with such men as the late Henry C. Carey, David Davis (afterwards Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States), Judge Ephraim Marsh, and others active in political life, which acquaintance ripened into friendship and lasted to the end of their lives.

In the beginning of the decade of 1850 we find among his correspondence, numerous letters in the minute hand of the eminent writer on the tariff, Mr. Carey, above mentioned, largely upon this subject, of whom he was an apt pupil.

In 1851 he was elected City Treasurer of Camden, and in the years 1856 and 1857, City Solicitor; in 1858, Chairman of the Republican State Executive Committee of New Jersey.

Mr. Dudley was one of the number of those saved in the burning of the ferryboat *New Jersey* on Saturday evening, March 15, 1858. This calamity was one of the most terrible which had ever occurred in this vicinity. It was brought prominently before the inhabitants of the two cities, Camden and Philadelphia, by the drifting of the steamboat in flames, in full view of thousands of spectators from both sides of the river, who could see the unfortunate passengers when near Philadelphia leap one by one into the water, driven over by the fire, and could distinctly hear their cries. The solemn sound of the State House bell, the ringing of the firebells in both cities, and the lurid glare which lighted up the Delaware, added to the horrible scene, of which the writer was one of the eye-witnesses from the Camden shore. The pilot box was the first part of the vessel to catch, and consequently the boat soon became unmanageable. Loaded with heavy wagons and a hundred passengers returning to their homes in Camden, nearly fifty persons, it is said, were lost. Finally driven by the flames, Mr. Dudley, throwing away his overcoat to