

The Dudley's Driving School Family Business History

Established in 1959, Dudley's Driving School (A Family Tradition) gained recognition within the community in 1971 in Newport News, Virginia, on Main Street, later expanding into Hampton in the early 1980s. Founded on the biblical principle, "I can do all things through CHRIST that strengthen me" (Philippians 4:13), it was the brainchild of Mrs. Sadie Belle Howell-Dudley, a native of Wayne County, North Carolina.

Despite facing challenges such as interruptions in her education to support her family, Mrs. Dudley persevered, eventually becoming a driving instructor. Using makeshift materials including a wooden board crafted by her husband, Clarence Edward Dudley, she taught adult students Virginia state driving laws, using wooden clothespins and toy cars as visual aids. Initially conducted at her home's living room and later in a converted garage, her classes attracted students from various states, drawn by her reputation for excellence and her famous sweet potato pies.

Mrs. Dudley's dedication extended beyond driving instruction; she actively served her community for over three decades, even after her retirement from the driving school due to illness. Her legacy of service included roles as a traffic guard, school bus driver, and Auxiliary Police Officer. She was a familiar presence at local events, directing traffic and motivating youth to become positive role models.

Her commitment to safety earned her recognition from organizations such as the American National Red Cross and the National Safety Council. Meanwhile, her son, Thomas E. Dudley, Sr., continued her legacy by commercializing the driving school, expanding its reach, and certifying family members as independent contractors.

In 1973, Sadie Dudley received Certificates of Completion and Appreciation from the National Safety Council Defensive Driving Campaign sponsored by the Virginia Highway Safety Division and from Thomas Nelson Community College for completing a Community Service Program in Defensive Driving Course. Graduating from Delaware State College with a Bachelor of Science in Distributive Education Degree, Thomas E. Dudley, Sr., assisted in bringing Dudley's Driving School to commercial status to satisfy DMV requirements in 1984. The school continued under his management and supervision for over 30 years.

Today, under the leadership of Thomas E. Dudley, II, Dudley's Driving School remains a cornerstone of the community, inspiring other businesses and promoting driver safety and awareness. The establishment of Dudley's Driving Center Inc. further solidifies its role as a hub for promoting safe driving practices, honoring Mrs. Dudley's enduring legacy.

Her son and daughter, Thomas E. Dudley, Sr., and DeEtta Gilliam-Dudley, commercialized the school in 1984, ensuring compliance with DMV standards in Virginia and Georgia. Now led by her grandson, Thomas E. Dudley, II, Dudley's Driving Center Inc. continues the family legacy, prioritizing driver safety and community service for over 65 years.

The "Dudley's Driving School" trade name has been a mentor in the Hampton Roads community and has inspired other businesses just to name a few: Star Driving School, L & L Driving School, Al Blackley, Dee's, Risk Management, Universal, Professional, TSB, Advanced Driver Concepts, Dominion Driver Inc, A & E Driving School, and others. Dudley's Driving School was also known for helping many customers in the past who could not afford to pay for driver services in the Hampton Roads community.

DUDLEY'S DRIVING SCHOOL

"WHERE VISION AND HARD WORK CANNOT BE DENIED"

"LEARN TO DRIVE AND SMILE"

"WE MAKE YOUR DRIVING DREAMS COME TRUE"

DUDLEY'S DRIVING CENTER INC.

"CONTINUING THE LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE"