



SUGARLOAF CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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"Protecting our rural legacy"

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The Story Behind Linden Farm

In **1996** (eighteen years ago!) Sugarloaf Citizens' Association and Montgomery County entered into an agreement to settle litigation pending since 1994 in Montgomery County Circuit Court. This lawsuit had been filed by Sugarloaf because of actions taken by Montgomery County. The fascinating story behind this litigation is the following.

In **1980** a working dairy farm (Matthews Farm) in Dickerson, Maryland comprising some 277 acres with a large farmhouse, barns and numerous outbuildings was purchased by Montgomery County on an expedited basis for the construction of a sewage sludge compost facility. The County immediately constructed a 45 acre asphalt pad, ponds, and a maintenance building. In order to ensure that this large and unexpected facility would not result in adverse health risks for the community Sugarloaf decided to start administrative proceedings.

However, with an assurance from Montgomery County that the sludge compost facility was to be temporary, Sugarloaf entered into settlement negotiations and a **1981 agreement** provided for closure and a "reuse" plan which included removal of part of the asphalt pad while the remainder was to be used for composting leaves during four months in the fall.

By the 1990's the area outside the compost facility had been severely neglected by the County, the farmhouse had burned and other buildings had deteriorated. Although the remaining buildings had been recommended as a historic resource, no action was taken by the County.

In 1993 the compost facility was recommended by the County as the site for all yard waste in Montgomery County. The asphalt pad was expanded and the facility's capacity was increased from 40,000 tons to 70,000 tons per year and the County anticipated further expansion. **Thus, what had been seasonal leaf composting was now rapidly becoming a major industrial activity.** Sugarloaf was alarmed since such expansion would violate the 1981 agreement but its pleas to the County were neglected.

In 1994 Sugarloaf filed a breach of contract action against Montgomery County but in 1995 the court proceedings were stayed to facilitate settlement negotiations. After nearly seven months of discussions a written agreement was executed which **included restrictions on future changes to the facility, a limit to the volume handled by the facility (77,000 tons), the conveyance to Sugarloaf of original farm fields, and the long overdue restoration of those remaining farm properties which could be saved.** Sugarloaf is now responsible for managing the restored properties which have become headquarters of the Association under the name of **Linden Farm.**

(With thanks to Jane Hunter, Sugarloaf's President at the time)
(In memory of William J. Roberts, Esq., who administered the litigation)

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