

THE OLD STAMPING GROUNDS:

Some Notes on the Quaker Dixons of Chatham County, North Carolina

By Ben F. Dixon, 1934.

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Notes from Submitter: The Old Stamping Grounds, written by Ben Dixon in 1934, has been used by Dixon researchers for years. Mr. T. W. Rubottom lists Mr. Dixon's book in his bibliography in *The Rubottom Family in America: Volume 1*. In June 1997, I finally located a copy of *The Old Stamping Grounds* in the Kathryn B. Rees Collection, Wren Memorial Library, Siler City, Chatham County, North Carolina. The following provides a retyped, but unchanged, transcription of Mr. Dixon's work.

I have always wondered whence my father's people came. Losing him in 1900, when I was but eight years of age, I never knew any of his people: except his mother who visited us three times within my remembrance; and a niece who, when I was three years of age, had come with her on the first of these visits that I could recall.

I know that he was born in Ohio; that he had spent his boyhood days on a farm adjacent to my mother's childhood home in Stark County, Ill.; and that Grandfather Elisha Dixon had been a soldier of the Civil War. Vaguely I recalled the name of his brothers and sisters, and some of his uncles and aunts: David and Jane Ray; Joe and Frankie Nicholas; Wayne and Harrison Dixon. But from the time of his death in 1900, until Thanksgiving Day, 1931, I knew little more than this.

On the latter date, with my family, I was at my mother's home at Kahoka, Mo., the town where I was born and reared. I was regretting the fact that I knew nothing of the P. N. Dixon's family, when mother said, "If you will get out your father's old ledger, you will find a record of the Dixon family that he and his mother set down there years ago." We found the old ledger, and located in my father's handwriting six or eight pages of family records that had been entered there 40 or 50 years before. It was an open-sesame to a vast acquaintance (sic) with his people and their history.

Letters to his living brothers and sisters brought me to names of many cousins I had never heard of, One of these, Jesse Johnson, a lawyer of Milwaukee, found in the library there a volume called "Kith and Kin". It was published in Los Angeles in 1922, by Willis Wilner Dixon. And it set forth the records of the family of William Dixson, son of Henry and Rose Dixson of County Armagh, Ireland. In 1688, William Dixson, a Quaker, came to Delaware with Penn's immigrants, and married in Newcastle County, Ann, a daughter of William Gregg,

Working out the lines from both ends of the chain, it was my good fortune, in less than three years, to trace the line of descent accurately, from William Dixson the Quaker Immigrant, to Pearly Nicholas Dixon, my father. The ends of the chain, one traveling

from Pearly backward, the other from William forward, met in Chatham County, N.C. And on the afternoon of August 3rd, 1934--131 years after my father's people had left Chatham County --I had the pleasurable thrill of stepping back over the county line, the first of the many cousins, so far as I know, to return to the land of their fathers. (The occasion was celebrated by a loud explosion, just as the Ford that was driven by Tommy Dixon--a cousin, six generations removed--blew out a tire as it crossed the line!)

"THE THREE NUTS"

In the car with me were three North Carolina farmers whom their neighbors call "the three nuts". They are Prof. R. H. Hutchison, and Harvey Newlin, of Snow Camp; and Prof. E. P. Dixon of Graham. They live on neighboring farms near Saxapahaw, in Alamance County. In addition to being farmers, two of them are veteran teachers. The oldest, Mr. Hutchison, was born in 1877. He has been teaching since 1898-- the year the writer of these notes first enrolled in public school under Miss Lutie Lahew at Kahoka, MO. Ernest Dixon was born in 1879, and has been teaching more than 30 years. For 14 years he has taught in the Eli Whitney consolidated school of Alamance County. Seven years ago Prof. Hutchison came there, and since then those two have been closely associated, not only professionally, but manually as farmers, and avocationally as historians and genealogists. Their farms are four or five miles apart. Midway between them is the farm of Harvey Newlin, the third and youngest of the "three nuts". He was born in 1888. Mr. Hutchison is a Baptist. Mr. Dixon is a Quaker of the modern school. But Harvey Newlin is an old school Quaker, a genuine Hixite (sic), who wears his coat collarless, and his Quaker hat in church.

These three neighbors have during the past ten years become intimately associated in the matter of monumenting the local history of Chatham and Alamance Counties, and in searching at the sources for history and anecdote of their early pioneers. They have organized the South Alamance Pioneer Association, which fosters annual reunions of historic pioneer families, and which from time to time erect monuments to the founders of these families and markers for historic spots. They inaugurated the organization half a dozen years ago with a play depicting the history of the pre-revolutionary Regulator movement. From Virginia to South Carolina they travel, in search of probate, court, church and cemetery records that will give them information on the pioneers. It was on an excursion of this kind that they found in Napton Burying Ground below Siler City, the weather-worn gravestones of my great-great-great-grandparents, Joseph Dixon and Mary Pusey, who went from Delaware to North Carolina in 1764.

No one else in the whole of two counties is so vitally interested in this matter as those three farmers. Many people wonder what indeed they can see in this business of digging out records of births, baptisms, marriages, deaths, bequests and legacies. Who is interested in learning of such stuff? When our Ford stopped at the Hutchison homestead to pick up the professor, Hutch Jr. was scrubbing up his neck on the back porch. "Where you-all goin', Tommy?" he asked of my cousin. "Oh, we're headed for Chatham, to look for a bone," replied Tommy nonchalantly. So the neighbors have slyly dubbed the three

local historians "The Three Nuts." And when I made one of the crowd, someone suggested, "Now we have four nuts!"

These three investigators receive inquiries from all over the country, for information about the old families, churches, schools, cemeteries, mills, etc., of the pioneer days of Orange, Chatham, and Alamance counties. For no recompense or reward, and in the face of a great deal of local discouragement, they continue their researches, and they feel amply rewarded when some long-lost unknown cousin turns up suddenly to worship a moment at the pioneer shrines they are trying so hard to authenticate and mark. Hard times have overtaken them along with the rest; but still they keep plugging away. "We used to get a dollar bill with our mail once in a while," said Professor Hutchison, "but the last year or so we haven't even had our postage bills paid."

EARLY SETTLEMENTS

The early settlement of western North Carolina was effected principally by three tides of immigration which swept southward from Pennsylvania. The central was Quaker. The western was German. The eastern most was Presbyterian. These did not intermingle, but carried three distinct types of civilization southward, through Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and had penetrated as far south as Georgia by Revolutionary times. Westward movement from the seaboard brought: other elements, Episcopal, Baptist, etc., and these infiltrated in places with the southbound tides of population.

In Orange County, N.C. (from which Chatham and Alamance were taken off) the Cane Creek Monthly Meeting (Quakers) was set up October 7, 1751. Thirty some miles to the north and east the Hawfield Presbyterian Church was organized in 1753. To the southward the Sandy Creek Baptist Association was established in 1755. Shortly afterward the Rocky River Baptist Church was organized ten miles east of Cane Creek. From the latter church were formed various other Quaker meetings of the locality.

To the Cane Creek Church came the Allens, the Coxes, the Dixons, Greggs, Hadleys, Newlins, Stuarts, and many other Quaker families from Delaware and southeastern Pennsylvania--progenitors of many illustrious names; among others: Herbert Hadley, former governor of Missouri; Joseph Dixon, former governor of Montana, and Assistant Secretary of Interior under Mr. Hoover; and Herbert Hoover himself. These, and many other great men, trace their Quaker ancestry back to the Cane Creek Meeting of North Carolina.

At least one son and two grandsons of William Dixson, the Quaker immigrant, settled in Chatham County. Two other sons settled in Virginia, and later went on into Anson County, S.C. One son, at least, went west into Fayette County, PA, whence his descendants migrated to eastern Ohio. Descendants of two North Carolina branches went about 1800 into southern Ohio. To get a picture of this dispersion of a fine old Quaker family, permit me to present my immigrant ancestor:

WILLIAM DIXSON

He was born, about 1662, in County Armagh, Ireland, a son of Henry and Rose Dixson; and married there, Isabelle Rea. She must have died in Ireland, for he was single when he came to America in 1688. On the ship with him were his mother, Rose Dixson, widow; and two sisters, Rose and Dinah. In the year 1690, these three younger Dixons were married in Newcastle County, Delaware; William to Ann, daughter of William Gregg; Dinah to Michael Harlan; and Rose to Thomas Pierson. William died in 1708, leaving the following children:

Henry Dixon m. April 4, 1715 Ruth Jones
William Dixon m. Feb. 5, 1718 Hannah Hollingsworth
Dinah Dixon m. April 3, 1721 William Hicklin
John Dixon m. August 28, 1724 Sarah Hollingsworth
Thomas Dixon m. August 25, 1727 Hannah Hadley
George Dixon m. October 29, 1725 Ann Chandler
Ann Dixon m. 1730 Robert Cane

Of the above family, William and John Dixon, with their wives and Thomas Hollingsworth, their father-in-law, migrated to Winchester, VA, where Mr. Hollingsworth died. Later, the two sons migrated to Anson Co. (then North but now South Carolina) and entered land: John, 244 acres on Fair Forest Creek, in 1753: William 300 acres on Brush Creek, below John Dixon's, May 17, 1754. Apparently, no genealogist has picked up these Dixons and traced their descendants.

SIMON DIXON

About 1750, the southward bound stream of Quaker emigration from Delaware and Pennsylvania began to reach Chatham (then Orange) County. In this stream came Simon, the first Dixon to settle in North Carolina. His mother was Hannah Hadley, daughter of Simon Hadley; and from her family came the greatest of Missouri's Republican Governors, Herbert Hadley. His father was Thomas Dixon, a son of the immigrant William. Simon was born in Pennsylvania, in 1728; he bought lands from the Lords Proprietors of N.C. in 1751; and erected Dixon's Mill on his land in 1753-- a mill which is still grinding. When the Pioneer Association erected a monument to Simon's memory in the old Cane Creek Burying Ground in 1929, a millstone which the pioneer Simon had once ground corn was used as a fitting marker for his grave. It was from Simon's branch that the late governor of Montana, Joseph Dixon, came.

When Cornwallis's troops were fleeing from Greene's armies, they encamped a day and a night at Dixon's Mill. Cornwallis commandeered Simon Dixon's house for his headquarters. About 20 of his sick and wounded soldiers died at this encampment, and were buried in the Cane Creek Cemetery. When the Lord General took over the Simon Dixon house, the family took temporary quarters in an out-building nearby. That night the good old Quaker lady, Mrs. Dixon (who was Elizabeth Allen) wanted a smoke. She remembered that she had left her pipe in the house. But when she went to retrieve it, a hardboiled sentry barred the way and refused permission to enter.

"But I want my pipe!" said Aunt Lib.

"You cawn't 'ave yer bloody pipe!" said the sentry, "An 'ow do I know yer not a bloody spy? Away an' begone, ye rebel!"

The General heard the argument and came outside the house. He had recognized Mrs. Dixon's voice. "What's this! What's this!," he called to the sentry. "Trying to keep a lady out of her own house! Of course she can have her pipe. Come on in, Mrs. Dixon, and get what you like."

JOSEPH DIXON

In 1764, another Dixon came into Chatham County. This was Joseph, a son of Henry and Ruth Jones. The majority of this family went into Fayette County, Pa., and thence westward. John Dixon, Joseph's brother, married Rebecca Cox--the first of the Dixon--Cox marriages which have since occurred all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific. John and Rebecca were the ancestors of Willis Milnor Dixon, who in 1922 published the book "Kith and Kin." He is a fine old man, hale and hearty at 88. It was our pleasure to make his acquaintance a few months since, when with my family I drove up to his home in Los Angeles from San Diego. The great Mark Hanna, whom my old dyed-in-the-wool Republican grandad, E. S. Kinkade, of Clark Co. Mo. almost worshiped, was a descendant of John Dixon and Rebecca Cox.

Joseph Dixon was a great land trader in North Carolina. The records show that he was constantly buying or selling tracts or parcels of land. His home tract was on Tick Ridge, three miles south of the present Siler City, in Chatham County. In 1781 his estate was inventoried at 1095 pounds sterling; and Joseph, staunch old Quaker that he was, cited for a four-fold tax for refusing to render military service.

The stretch of country immediately south of Siler City was the old stamping grounds of many pioneer Quaker families who later went into southern Ohio and Indiana. Wilkinson and Roubottom land lay along Love's Creek. Simon Roubottom, a famous gunsmith of those days, had his shop just south of the present site of Siler City. Three miles further south was Tick Creek, where Dixon land stretched for several miles. Still further was Brush Creek, where the Rays, Hadley, and Coxes flourished.

Three of the sons of Joseph Dixon and Mary Pusey went into Ross County, Ohio: Jesse, Samuel and Joseph. Another son, Soloman, has been lost in the shuffle. Two boys died young. Nathan, the oldest, married Sarah Winters, and raised a family of eight in Chatham County. He and his wife lie in the Dixon plot in the old Napton Burying Ground on Tick Ridge. Near by are the graves of pioneer Joseph, his wife Mary, and the widow Mary's second husband, Daniel Winters.

NAPTON

The Napton meeting was set off from Cane Creek in 1780. The Dixons, Roubottoms and Dowds were its pillars. Many local names in that area are Indian names, but Napton is English. It is an old-time Quaker name carried by English Quakers from Worcestershire into Ireland, and thence brought to Pennsylvania. The Quakers were great people for

carrying with them the names that had grown dear to them in persecution. Many a Quaker meeting in this country is the namesake of some parent meeting of the early Pennsylvania and Delaware settlements, or of the English and Irish days of the persecution. So with Napton.

A part of this cemetery is still in use, the latest burials having been Dowds, in 1928 and 1931. In one corner there is a whole colony of Roubottoms and Dowds. Apart from them a little way, is a marble shaft, overshadowed by a 75- year old boxwood tree. On the shaft is the following inscription:

DOWD'S GEORGE

"In memory of Dowd's George. Dec'd 1858. George was an excellent hat maker."

And therein lies a story. Samuel Dowd married Hannah Roubottom, a sister of Simon, the famous gunsmith. Their parents were Thomas Roubottom and Phebe Dixon, daughter of pioneer George and granddaughter of immigrant William. Samuel Dowd was an administrator of estates. In the early days, this was a distinct profession. A man skilled in this sort of litigation would travel from one end of the country to another, taking depositions, quit-claims, notices, and the like, in the closing of estates. Samuel's son, and his grandson, were also administrators of estates. It was his grandson, then an old man, who made one of the latest burials at Napton.

Samuel Dowd was also a manufacturer of Quaker hats. These old hand-pieces were made of a felt made from macerated sheep's wool. They were of such masterful manufacture that some of the Dowd hats are still in circulation. Harvey Newlin has one of them, and still wears it to Quaker Meeting. It is more than 75 years old, and has been used in many a prairie fire and backwoods fistfight. The Dowd hat could be thrown into a tub of water, and it would, sponge-like, absorb several quarts. When saturated with water it would make an excellent fire-fighting weapon. When rolled up into a solid roll it could be used as a weapon of defense against the bodily persecutions sometimes inflicted upon the peace-loving Quakers by the more boisterous hoodlums of the Scotch-Irish element.

Samuel Dowd had an old Negro slave name George, especially skilled in the manufacture of Dowd's hats. He was such a clever artisan that Samuel made provision for him in his will, that he be taken care of by the estate. When Samuel died, however, the heirs were not interested in hat-making or good old darky slaves. All they wanted was to get their fingers on the several hundred dollars that George was worth, so they advertised him for sale.

NOTICE

"Will be held on Monday, the 3rd of January next, at the late residence of Samuel Dowd, dec'd, a negro man belonging to said estate. Persons desirous of purchasing such property will do well to attend, as George is an excellent hatter and otherwise a valuable slave. Terms made known on the day of sale. December 6th, 1852"

Thomas Dowd
Aaron Emerson, Executors

But on the day of the sale, nobody would purchase George. The neighbors all knew his value. They know, too, the provision of old Samuel's will that George be provided for. And every one was afraid of buying property to which a flawless title could not be given. Time after time was George offered for sale, but never was he sold. At length the 'Highest Bidder of All Sales' took George, and he went to sleep the long sleep in the Dowd plot at Napton. While now, almost hid by the 75-year old boxwood tree, the little marble shaft declares to posterity that "Dowd's George was an excellent hat maker."

And when for a little while the writer wore Harvey Newlin's Dowd hat, fashioned the better part of a century before by the deft and cunning fingers of the faithful George, he felt indeed that he was in the presence of some Holy of Holies.

GEORGE DIXON

Another George, who no doubt lies at Napton, but whose grave has not yet been located, was George Dixon, born 1706, the youngest son of immigrant William. He married Ann Chandler, and they followed the other Dixons to North Carolina in 1767.

On the evening of our visit to Napton and the Dixon lands on Tick Ridge, Prof. E. P. Dixon brought me an old paper, saying as he handed it to me: "I have had this paper for quite a while. It means more to you than to anyone else I know. So I am going to give it to you." The paper reads:

"This indenture made the fourteenth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty seven, between Harmon Gregg of Christiana Hundred in the County of Newcastle upon Delaware, Yeoman, and Mary his wife, of the one part, and George Dixon, late of the county aforesaid (but now of Orange County in the Province of North Carolina" -- and proceeds to describe and convey title to George Dixon of 300 acres of land on Tick Creek which had formerly belonged to the Earl of Granville.

This proved to be the original purchase of Dixon land on Tick Creek. Later on Joseph Dixon, Samuel, Nathan, Caleb, Joshua and other Dixons purchased land along the ridge for several miles. It was in the middle of this land that the Napton meeting was established, and the Napton Buryng Ground laid off. On the creek moreover was an eleven-acre millsite, where one of the Dixons built a saw and grist mill. It was operated until 1879 (since which time it has fallen into ruin), when the last owner was accidentally killed by his own buzz saw. Near by, on the same Dixon tract, was on Old Tory Fort of Revolutionary times -- a relic which now, if I am correctly informed belongs to the estate of John J. Raskob.

THE REGULATOR: CALEB AND JOSHUA DIXON

George Dixon had five children: Enoch, Caleb, Phebe, Joshua, and George. Of these, Caleb and Joshua were leaders in the Regulator movement. Caleb managed to retain his standing in the Quaker community. But Joshua, with a number of other rabid Regulators, was kicked out of the Quaker Meeting.

The most of us, in studying colonial history in our school days, did not catch even a glimpse of the Regulator Movement, which was really our first abortive revolution. It was inaugurated by the Quaker community of Orange County, N.C., as a peaceful protest to Governor Tryon against excessive taxes. The Quakers purchased a printing press, and published and circulated far and wide, petition after petition to the Governor against existing ills. One of the first calls for a meeting of peaceful petition was signed by 12 leading Quaker citizens, including Simon Dixon and William Cox.

But what was intended to be a peaceful protest soon became a violent outbreak against the colonial government. The movement began about 1767, and it was wiped out in 1770 when Governor Tryon sent troops against the Regulators. He defeated them in an open battle on the Alamance, May 16, 1770, took a number of prisoners, and hanged seven of the leaders at Hillsboro. The other leaders were indicted by the Crown, but the cases (which by the way are said to be still open cases in the British Courts) were never tried. The indictments were held as a threat against them, many were forced to swear allegiance to the Crown, and the Quaker Meetings had to publish denials against those of their number who would not recant from their position as Regulators.

When the regulator movement got out of control, the older conservative Quakers, who were averse to bloodshed, and militarism, disavowed it without waiting to be forced to do so. Simon and other Dixons withdrew. Not so such hotheads as Joshua Dixon, Harmon, Isaac and Samuel Cox, and the latter's two sons, Samuel and Harmon, Jr. They were all churchd at one fell swoop, and became religious as well as political rebels. From that time on, Joshua Dixon had a hard time in the community. Everything seemed to work against him. One day, years later, he heard the Lord speaking to him from the loft of his log house.

"It's no use, Joshua," Jehovah said, "You can never do any more good in this country. You must seek out a new land." So, in 1797, Joshua Dixon left Chatham County, the first of the Quaker Dixons to wander on in search of a better land. Being now a freelance, he needed no letter from his church, so he could go where he pleased. The last heard of him he was in Moore County, further west. But in 1836 old Samuel Dowd wound up his estate, and by the records we see that Joshua's heirs were established in Ross and Hocking Counties, Ohio; in Orange and Parke Counties, Indiana; and in Clarke County, Ill.

ROSS COUNTY PIONEERS

The aftermath of the revolution, and the gathering stormclouds of a great national struggle over the question of human slavery, started a new Quaker migration to the

westward. The Quakers would not subscribe to the institution of slavery, and many of them sought homes in the Northwest Territory where slavery was to be non-existent.

Shortly after Joshua Dixon left the old stamping grounds, Caleb's three sons, Daniel, George and Jonathan migrated (1800) to Ross County, Ohio. They followed another Chatham pioneer, Hugh Moffitt, who had gone into Ross as early as 1798. He had there spied out the choice lands, had carried the news back to Chatham and had brought his family thither in 1799. The three Dixons took out land in Liberty Township. Daniel built a mill on the Scioto River--and it is still grinding.

Three years later (1803) three more Dixons came from Chatham to Ross. They were Jesse, Samuel and Joseph, sons of Joseph, sons of Joseph Dixon and Mary Pusey. Joseph, following the Dixon custom of building mills in new country, located a saw and grist mill on Salt Creek, and it played an important part in the development of that country. Anne, the wife of Samuel Dixon, was a daughter of Caleb and a sister of Daniel, George and Jonathan. Samuel and Anne were second cousins, and great-grandchildren of William Dixon and Anne Gregg. My father, Pearly Nicholas Dixon, was a great-grandson of Samuel and Anne.

About 1807 another Dixon came from the Alamance Country. He was William, and he settled in what is now Vinton County, Ohio, leaving there a numerous progeny. There has always seemed to be a vague cousin ship between his family and the other Ross and Chatham Dixons. It was at the instance of "Old Lem" Dixon, William's son, that Samuel Dowd undertook to wind up the affairs of the estate of Joshua Dixon, the Regulator. To date, however, this William has not been fitted into the genealogical scheme.

The Quaker migration into southern Ohio, which was led by Hugh Moffitt and the Dixons, swelled into a veritable tide, and almost threatened to deplete the population of some of the Quaker Meetings of Chatham County. It included pioneers of the staunchest of Ross County families: Cox, Dixon, Graves, Rains, Ratcliff, Ray, Wilkinson, and others.

It is the writer's hope to be able to pick up this group of Ross County Pioneer Families, and trace them out in a genealogical study.

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NOTE: The author is indebted to a variety of sources for information contained in the foregoing sketch, including, in addition to sources mentioned, a group of Dixon and Wilkinson notes collected by late Simeon Wilson Dixon, of Chicago

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