

# *Dixon History*



## *Volume I - Summer 1993*

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*Journal of The Dixon Historical Society*

## DEDICATION

Photo by Robert Riedel



*Ardeth Riedel*

We in the Dixon Historical Society dedicate this, our first booklet about the history of Dixon, to our most able and intensely committed City of Dixon historian, Ardeth Riedel. Ardeth started collecting and organizing historical facts and anecdotes long before the founding of the Dixon Historical Society. She has contributed generously to the information now stored in the Manuscript Collection at the Dixon Public Library; her sources have been the Dixon Tribune, biographies of early Dixon pioneers, and oral history recollections of many of the descendants of those pioneers. She willingly and enthusiastically participates in preparing programs for many organizations here in Dixon. Ardeth was the most determined sponsor of our Dixon Historical Society, and for all these immeasurable contributions we offer her our thanks, knowing she will accept them with her usual jolly good humor. Ardeth, we couldn't have published this booklet without your unswerving help. Thank you, Ardeth.



# Dixon History • Summer 1993

## 125th Anniversary of the Founding of Dixon

This publication is the first in a series on the history of Dixon and its surrounding areas. The material comes from the members' presentations at our quarterly meetings and their individual writings. Future issues will also include recording of our newly developed oral history program. Contributions for the financing of this issue have been received from: Dr. Edward Sedgwick of Los Angeles; Olin Timm, who has been hoping for many years that this publication would come to pass; and from a generous grant from the City of Dixon. A special contribution to fund our oral history program has been received from Mr. and Mrs. Cocklin in memory of her parents Ralph and Elsie Castner.

We hope that the re-telling of the events and anecdotes contained in this booklet will serve to stimulate perhaps forgotten memories in the minds of our readers. The members of the committee who selected and planned the compositions are: Olin Timm, Ardeth Riedel, Barbara Schulze, Marion Phillips, Colleen McKinney, Emily Rowe, Martha Pearson, Evelyn Seyman and Kathryn Orrell. We thank all of them for their time and efforts and hope they will feel rewarded when they see this booklet in print. We thank all those who donated photos to the Dixon Public Library in years past.

For information regarding membership in the Dixon Historical Society, or if you have questions or comments, please write to:

The Dixon Historical Society  
P.O. Box 814  
Dixon, CA 95620

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# Why Dixon?

by Olin Henry Timm

Several years ago, I wrote an outline of the story of Dixon. Today's presentation is a revised edition and includes information about Juanita Olivas, Elijah Silvey, and Thomas Dickson.

Much of what I say I learned growing up; much I have taken from those who have presented papers at our meetings of the Dixon Historical Society. Some information has come from personal correspondence and a great deal has come from Ardeth Riedel and the tapes which Jim Kilkenny made of Juanita Olivas. Juanita knew Dixon because she and her mother had lived here and served its people for many years. Here are their stories.

## Elijah Silvey

The town of Dixon was first populated by emigrés from the settlement of Silveyville, a settlement that developed on the stage coach road connecting Davisville with Vacaville. Silveyville was founded by Elijah Silvey who built a tavern, circa 1852, as a halfway house between Vacaville and Davisville. Subsequently, a



store, saloon, school, two churches, blacksmith shop, drug store, and, of course, the homes in which these people lived increased the size of the little settlement to 160 in 1860. The town's demise was caused by the construction of the California Pacific Railroad three miles to the east.

Elijah Silvey did not survive to see his hoped-for real estate development come to a crashing end. There are two tales of his death. One was that he fell off the tavern porch and was mortally injured; the other, told to me by Jim Kilkenny, was that while crossing from the tavern to his home on an overhead walkway built to avoid the ruts and mud of the road, he fell off the bridge, and landed in the mire below, and died of either drowning or a broken neck.

So the founder died and the town was moved to the new town which the Railroad called "Dixon". Thomas Dickson had donated ten acres to the Railroad Company to start a new town. "Dixon" was a misspelling of his name.

It was my grandfather Peter Timm, a cabinet maker newly arrived from Schleswig-Holstein, who, with another man, moved the buildings. I remember my grandmother showing me the rollers he used, stored in their barn. I did not see the flat cars and steel rails described by Helene Kirby Rohwer's aunt, Mary Little, that were also used. One of the buildings moved was the Methodist Church which held services on Sunday while on route to the new town of Dixon.

## Juanita Olivas

Juanita's mother was born of Mexican parents in Jackson, California on July 2, 1859. From the age of eight until she was twenty-two she stayed with an aunt and uncle who lived in the English Hills north of Vacaville. During this time she learned dressmaking in Sacramento. She met Juanita's father who had come from New Mexico and was running sheep in the English Hills, and they were married around 1881.

Since by 1893 he was getting along in years, he moved his family to Dixon, but not before he had a road named after him. Olivas Lane is just south of my ranch.

Juanita was two years old when the family moved to Dixon. Her father died two years later in 1895, leaving his thirty-six year old wife with a family to support. Her mother sewed and also sold tomatoes and enchiladas in a little tamale parlor next to the Capitol Hotel. She was a determined woman. Once after my father's dairy cook suggested that he make tamales and my father sent a man to buy husks from Mrs. Olivas, the man returned and quoted her as saying "You tell Henry Timm if he wants tamales, I'll make them."

Juanita worked for years as a bookkeeper for Rossi's Garage and then became an important member of the Senior Citizens. The town was fond of Juanita. About twenty years ago, I remember seeing Vernon Schmeiser in the spring mowing the grass growth in front of her house.

## Life in Dixon

The town was dependent on the needs of the surrounding farms. To the extent of their resources, these farmers attempted to be self-sufficient. Milk, eggs, chicken, ham and sausage were home products. Lard from the hogs mixed



with lye made the soap. But such soap does not emulsify in hard water, and, as you know, Dixon has hard water. Consequently, most farms drained the rain water from their housetops into cisterns so that soft water would be available for washing.

Each farm was a family unit, but extra help was needed. The renewable energy system that existed then was labor intensive. The sun, rain and soil produced grain and hay, but someone had to drive and care for the horses and mules that provided the traction energy of the system.

It was from these farms and their laborers that an increasing demand for goods and services developed. The town responded.

The center of Dixon was along what is now First Street and westward along A and B Streets.

The stores and shops of Dixon were connected by wooden sidewalks with awnings covering the walks. The streets were deep with dust in summer and mud in winter. Eppingers, later Schulzes, Department Store, sold plows, harrows, canned goods, meat, hardware, boots, overalls, saddles and yard goods. The yard goods selection was excellent. It is mentioned that Vacaville ladies bought their cloth at Schulzes. Jim Kilkenny, in his interview of Juanita Olivas, mentions that one of the Apperson

girls made his mother's first maternity dress. There were four Apperson girls. Two married the brothers William and Henry Petersen. The third taught school in Dixon for many years. Maggie always carried a ruler as she walked up and down the rows so that she might whack the hands of boys who were pulling the curls of the girl seated in front.

In addition to other stores selling groceries, there were usually two butcher shops. These shops did their own butchering in little sheds out of town. If there was any tender meat, it would be grass-fattened. There was little differentiation in the price of cuts. I remember when June and I came to town, round steak, sirloin steak, and T-bone steak were all 30 cents a pound. One of the butcher shops around 1900 was owned by Henry Timm, a first cousin of my father Henry Timm. The two solved mail mix-ups by my father taking a middle initial of R. and Henry Timm, the butcher, inserting a W. It has always seemed to me that the German people had a short list of first names.

Drugs were supplied by California Drug Store owned by W.A. Grafton, previously of Silveyville. Mr. Abraham Kirby later became the owner of the store. He had a partner for a time by the name of Roseberry, and then the apothecary was Kirby's again. The name was later changed to Dixon Drug Company. The store suffered a severe loss in the earthquake of 1892. The bottles tumbled off the shelves and Cousin Charlie (Charlie Kirby) told me of shoveling them into a wheelbarrow with a scoop shovel. The store also contained the first telephone exchange.

The Carpenters, who had a blacksmith shop in Silveyville, also moved to Dixon. Though there



Oscar Schulze

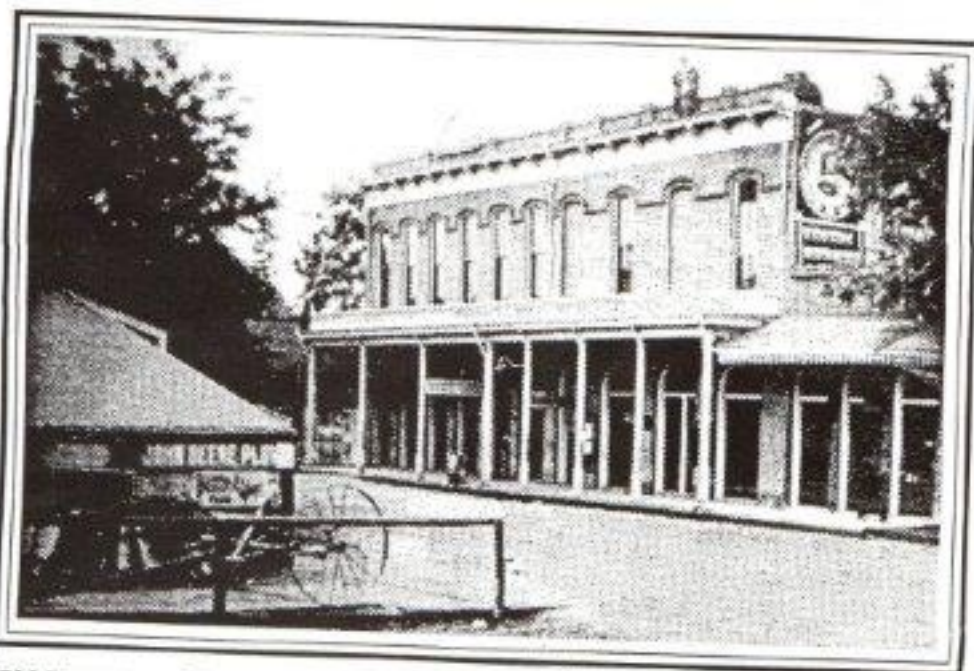


Photo courtesy of the Dixon Public Library

Old Downtown Dixon  
From the left: the Schulze store farm implement section, Dixon Hall (also called the Green Branch Dixon Hall), and the Knights of Pythias (a Catholic fraternal organization).





*Horse-drawn hearse*

were at least three other blacksmiths, their shop was the largest. In addition to shoeing horses, they shrunk tire irons onto wagon wheels, pounded out plow shares, fixed trace chains and did general blacksmithing. Later on they entered the embalming business, and during my youth their horse-drawn hearse was frequently found after Halloween on the high school steps.

Much equipment, as well as harnesses, required leather and canvas. During the 1890's the drapers and grain carriers, as well as the harnesses, were rebuilt at George Steinmiller's leather shop.

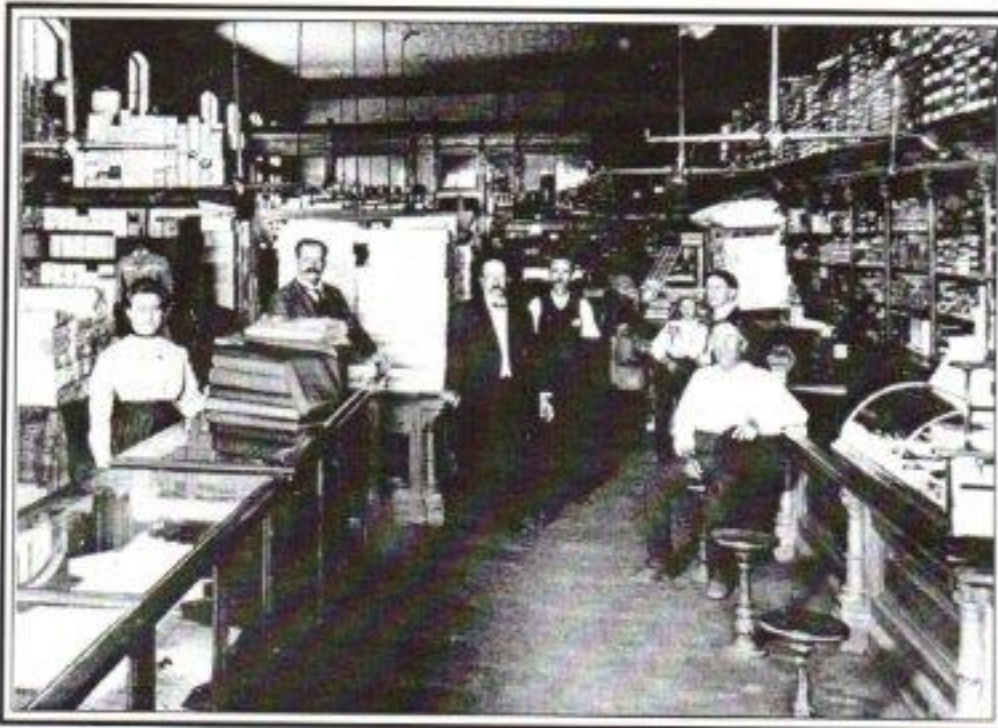
The source of credit for farmers came from the storekeepers, who billed annually. Stuart Grady tells the story that once when Eppingers failed to charge a customer for a saddle and that customer's

name was unknown, the store billed everyone for the one saddle. Eighty percent of those billed paid. Also during the Schulze ownership, the store bought grain. The balances were held by the store and it operated as a private bank.

Five years after the town was formed, the Bank of Dixon was chartered. In 1910, at the time when Schulze's stopped buying grain, a group of local businessmen chartered the Northern Solano Savings Bank, a state bank, which was later re-chartered as the First National Bank of Dixon.

Another source of credit was the Oddfellows Lodge. From the title searches on the hill ranch which my father purchased from the McCunes, I noticed that the individual land owners who eventually sold their land to the McCune-Garnet Partnership frequently borrowed from the Oddfellows Lodge.

Shomers Brewery was located on the north side of what is now the Women's Improvement Club Park. In the early 1900's beer was bottled in glazed clay bottles. Of course, I do not remember, but my mother told me that when I was a baby drinking from a bottle, I was in the habit of throwing bottles after emptying them over the edge of the crib, breaking many of them. One day, when I had broken the last bottle, my mother, much to her chagrin, fed me with a beer bottle. Another terminal use of

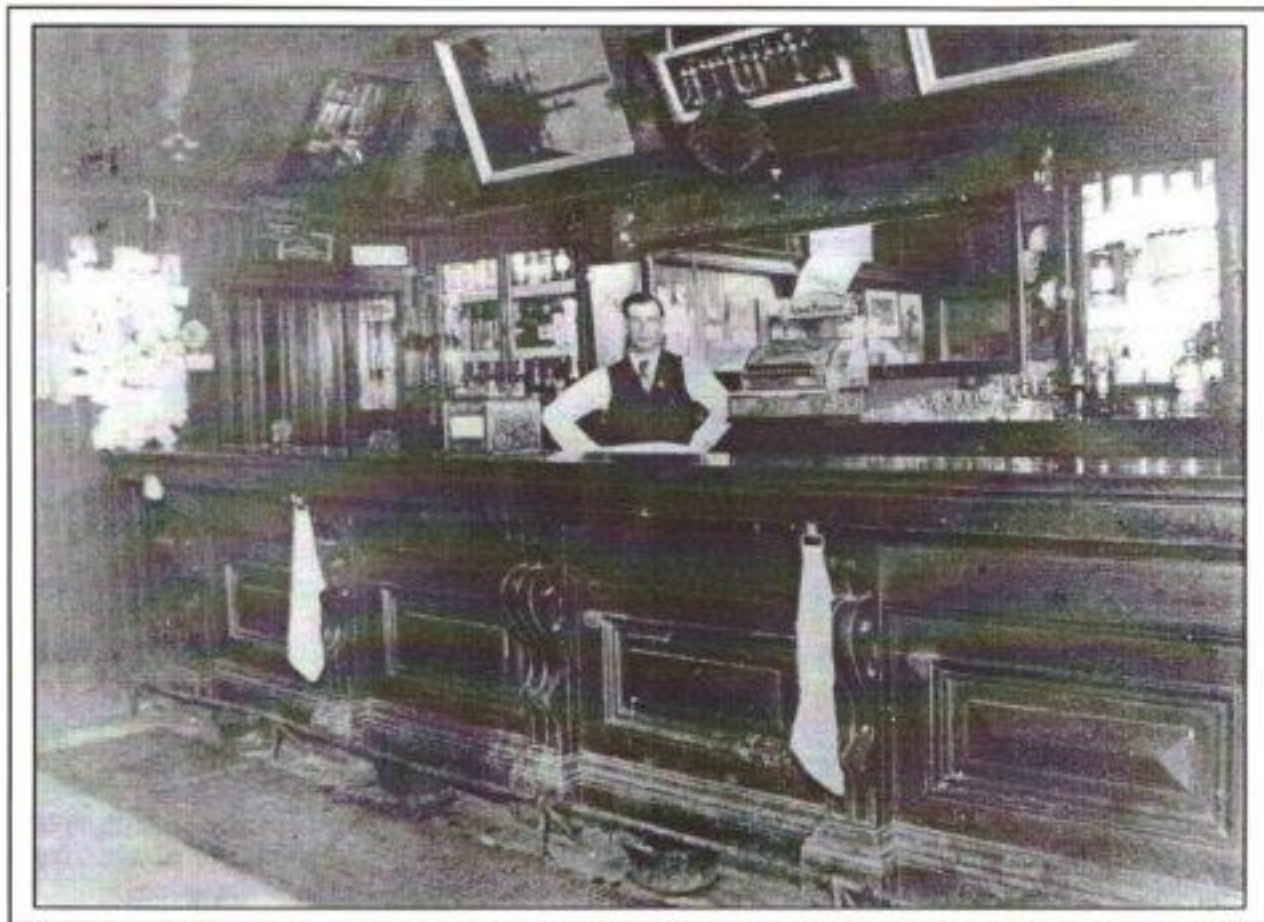


*Oscar Schulze's General Store.*

*From left: Phoebe Collier, Oscar Schulze, fourth from left is Eugene Ferguson*

*Photo courtesy of the Dixon Public Library*





*Stormy Connell tending bar at the Fly Trap Saloon about 1910.*

Photo courtesy of the Dixon Public Library

beer bottles was to edge walkways. I remember my grandmother had her garden edged with up-turned ceramic beer bottle driven into the ground.

Dixon enjoyed a thriving economy. In addition, the town provided well for the personal, social, and spiritual needs of its citizenry.

Let us begin with the barber shop, which not only shaved and cut hair, but also furnished rooms for bathing. On most ranches hot water was available only for coffee, washing clothes and scalding pigs to remove bristles. The single laborer needed a place to bathe and prepare for a stroll to a bar and a game of cards. Bars varied. According to Juanita Olivas there were thirteen saloons around 1900. George Steinmiller told me that when I was born, my father rounded up his friends and took them to Fischer's Saloon, one of the more quiet bars. My mother denied this story because she said my father did not drink.

McDermott's Fly Trap had a rowdier clientele. Juanita's mother had occasion to visit the establishment looking for her sons. She described the customers to Juanita saying that after much drinking,

they'd get in the watering trough and they'd float there, and then they'd go back into the bar. She said the Fly Trap was just floating with water.

Let us say our newly-bathed man wished other diversions. He might go to what Juanita called the "fast houses" which were located just west of the Carnegie Library. Juanita described them as follows: "Then, right around the corner (on Main Street) there were more fast houses. On the corner where the old Post Office stood was Mr. Kirsch. He was the second or third or fourth husband of Mrs. Moore. He had a saddle shop in there. Those women would watch us going to school (of course, we had to go to school that way) and they'd pull back their window shades. Gosh, they were the prettiest women we ever saw. And they'd wave at us. I came home one day and told my mother about it. She said, 'Well, you be nice to 'em sister.' She never said what they were and I wouldn't have known, anyhow. Mama always said to me: 'Sister, they might have had children of their own, you can never tell.'"

Oscar Schulze bought the property and the houses came down, but I assume the profession persisted in



Dixon because when the Hotel Annex which was across from the Baptist Church, then Dixon United Church, burned in the early 20's, I among others, was watching and I overheard a man say, "I wonder what Bessie and the girls will do now."



A more formal social life and spiritual necessities were furnished by the fraternal lodges and the churches. All three of the two-story brick buildings on the west side of First Street were Lodges. The churches were social units in addition to providing for spiritual needs. In Dixon by 1878, there were six denominations: Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, Congregational and Seventh Day Adventists.

The Baptist Church was located on the west side of First between A and Mayes. It was built in 1877 and had the more wealthy parishioners. Eight of the stained-glass windows in the present Dixon Community Church came from the old brick Baptist Church. Of these, two were donated by ministers one of whom was Dr. King, the minister at Silveyville and then Dixon; five were from farmers from Missouri; one from a farmer from Germany. It should be noted that these Baptists were more wealthy, probably, because they settled on the fertile Dixon ridge soil, rather than because of their superior farming ability.

I have already described the moving of the Methodist Church from Silveyville. The church was stopped on the west side of the railroad and settled down on the corner of B and Jefferson Streets. The original Catholic Church which became St. Peter's Hall was on Second Street between A and Mayes. The Lutheran Church, with the only pipe organ in town, was opposite the Catholic Church, and the Congregational Church, which has disappeared, was on the site of the present Post Office. Later, a Presbyterian Church was built on the corner now occupied by the Chamber of Commerce.

After the turn of the century, the Baptists, Presbyterians and some of the Methodists joined together into the United Protestant Church (now the Dixon Community Church), using the ivy-covered red brick Baptist Church as their place of worship.



For culture, one should mention the Opera House, located on the property occupied presently by the First Northern Bank drive-ins with the offices upstairs. Many of the programs were black minstrel shows, locally conceived and played. Lu Lu Evans, an opera star and daughter of Dr. Evans of Dixon also performed. Tiny Tim appeared once. But the most interesting of all was the performance of the two-headed woman who sang soprano with one head and alto with the other.

Summer Saturday night band concerts were a tradition. The bandstand was located across from the Library and people sat on the library steps or in their cars along the block. The all-brass band was led by Julius Wiegand. The players were local musicians. Though amplification techniques did not exist, none were necessary.

We should not finish without mentioning Dixon's May Day, with its parade, baseball games, track meet, the May Pole dance, and, of course, the May Queen. May Day was a community affair sponsored by the Dixon people. Before 1900, it was a harness racing event and the churches took their Sunday school classes on picnics to the Thompson Ranch south of Winters, or to the Agee ranch on Putah Creek to keep the children away from the evils of betting and beer.

It was not until automobiles became more numerous, and, more importantly, until after the construction of the causeway over the Yolo by-pass, which provided all-weather access to Sacramento, that Dixon started losing its importance as a service center.





# The Dickson Family

by Kathryn Orrell

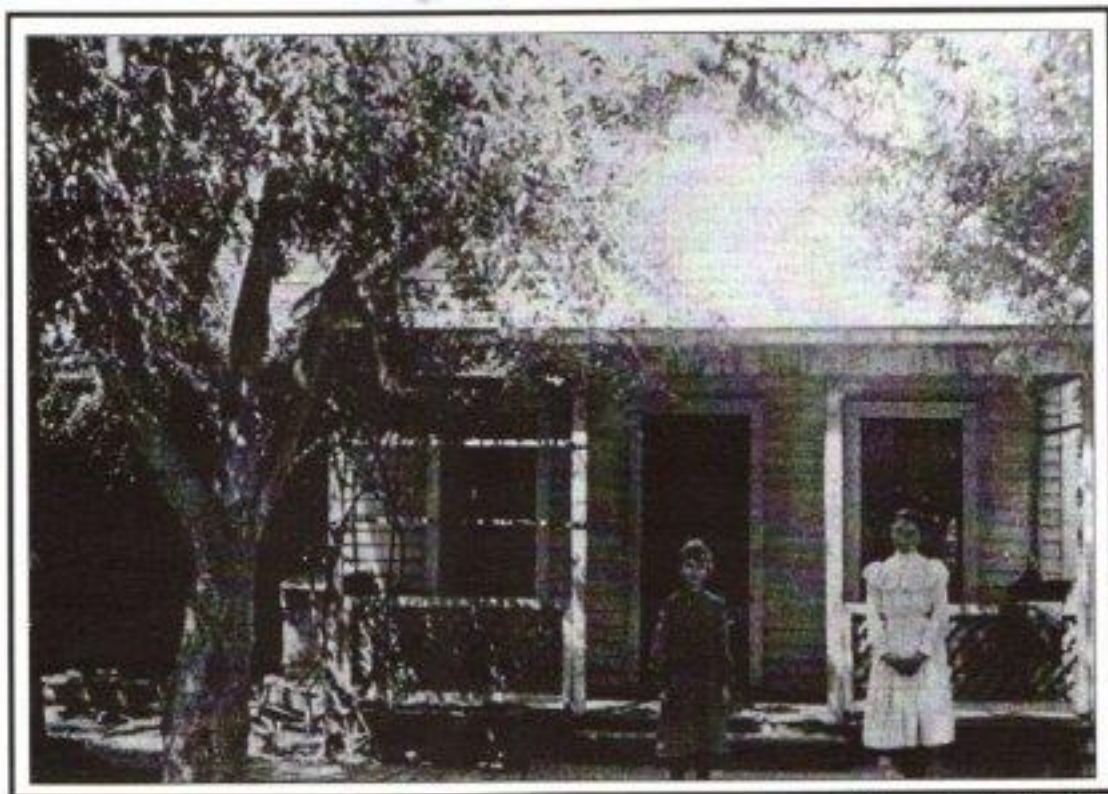
Thomas Dickson was born in 1800 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His parents were Scottish immigrants. Records indicate that he considered himself to be a minister and a farmer. Thomas' future wife Jane Parker Hood was born in Tennessee in 1813. Her German ancestors had also settled in the Philadelphia area. Her father, Carl Heinrich Hood III, was born in Philadelphia and legally changed his name to Charles Henry Hood. He was married twice and from each wife nine children were born. Jane Parker Hood was a daughter by his second wife.

Thomas Dickson met Jane Parker Hood in Philadelphia in 1829 and they were married in 1830, she was seventeen and he was thirty. Immediately after marrying they pioneered to Illinois by

covered wagon. While in Illinois in 1834 a daughter, Elizabeth, was born.

As land opened up in Iowa, they packed up again and moved to a place near Monticello, Iowa known as "Bowens Prairie". Five children were born to them there between 1838 and 1850: a daughter, Martha, and four sons, William, Henry, Nathan and James. James, born in 1849, may have died in Iowa. They had a very nice house for those times - a two-story house, all plaster inside! The Van Sants lived down the lane.

In April of 1853, Thomas decided to leave Iowa and come to California. He and Jane, who were expecting another child, brought with them twelve head of oxen, two or three cows, three wagons, some horses, five or six children ranging in age from seven (Nathan) to nineteen (Elizabeth). Thomas himself was age fifty-three and Jane was forty. The expected child was born on the trail on July 12, 1853 and was named Emaline (or Evaline). The very next day the entire group drove twelve



*The Dickson Home*

Photo courtesy of the Dixon Public Library

Built about 1858, the lumber for the house was hauled from Grass Valley. The underpinnings were stumps of manzanita from the hills. The house was lived in by members of the Dickson family until it was sold and destroyed about 1922. On the left is Pearl Monahan, daughter of Emaline Dickson Monahan (born in the covered wagon in 1853), and granddaughter of Jane Dickson. On the right is Ina M. Dodge, granddaughter of Martha Dickson Duffield, great-granddaughter of Jane Dickson.



miles, and in an old family diary it is stated that "water and food scarce for the cattle" - no mention of the welfare of the mother or child.

They arrived in Hangtown (now Placerville), California on October 13, 1853 and rented a place at Diamond Springs. Thomas did a little gold mining but found it unprofitable.

After a short time, still in 1853, they travelled down into the valley and settled on about twenty acres north of what is now Dixon. A second James was born to Thomas and Jane but died in 1855.

Young Martha, age 14 by this time, had an Indian pony which she rode over the plains. Where Dixon is now, the wild oats were as high as the pony's back. Thomas Dickson, on seeing the sight for himself, told his neighbors he was moving to that place to take up land. Before they could turn the soil they had to clear the land of elk horns, great piles of them, bleached white with age. The land itself was a patent from Ulysses S. Grant for Thomas' Civil War service.

When there was talk of a railroad to connect San Francisco and Sacramento, the survey showed it would come near "Dicksonville", as it was called then. The Dicksons, Van Sants and McFaddens had taken up land and had a General Store and a Post Office. Dickson gave land to the railroad, which was built in 1867. The Railroad Superintendent in San Francisco said, "Put a sign on that last new station. Call it 'Dickson'". He didn't say how to spell it, so the man spelled it "DIXON". It was several months before the Superintendent made a trip of inspection to Dixon, and when he saw the sign, he was disappointed, but by then the literature, timetables, etc. had been printed and all the trainmen knew it by that name, so Thomas Dickson said to let it stand.

Thus the railroad came to Dixon followed by the transfer of houses and buildings from Silveyville. Thomas was 67 years old at this time. He later lost his hearing and, while walking near the tracks one day, was almost killed - he couldn't hear the train coming. What irony in that the train he helped bring to town nearly caused his death.

## The Dickson Descendents

### Elizabeth Dickson:

Married J.M. Dudley in 1857 and they raised three sons and two daughters.

### Martha Dickson:

Married Chris Duffield in 1859 at age nineteen or twenty. They had three children, two of whom were still living when she died in 1919 at age seventy-nine. Martha was the grandmother of Ina Baldwin who contributed an article to the Dixon

From the Dixon Tribune August 22, 1919:

### MRS. DUFFIELD, PIONEER, IS DEAD

Mrs. Martha Ann Duffield died at her home in the north part of town on Friday morning of last week at the age of 79 years. The funeral services were held at the house on Saturday.

The deceased was born in Iowa, and in 1853 her parents started by ox team for California, the family joining the Edwards train. The usual hardships were encountered, but after six months they arrived at Placerville without mishap. Her father mined, but the returns were not sufficient to keep him searching for the dust for very long and the family moved down into the valley. Mr. Dickson filed on a quarter section, which is now part of the town of Dixon and the village itself was named after him, the S.P. Ry. changing the spelling. Miss Martha Dickson was married to Chris Duffield in 1859. Three children were born, two of whom, W. D. and Bert, survive. Other surviving relatives are three brothers, William, Nathan and Henry Dickson; Miss Inez Dodge, a granddaughter, and Mrs. E.D. Dudley, a niece.

Tribune for the 1968 Centennial (October 10, 1968) edition.

### William Dickson:

Ina Baldwin mentions that William settled in Shasta County in the late 1860's or early 1870's and became Deputy Sheriff, then Sheriff, of that County for about twenty years, when he returned to Dixon.

### Henry Dickson:

While still living in Iowa, at age four, Henry had contracted typhus fever and lost his hearing permanently. By age six he had forgotten how to talk and was therefore a deaf mute for the remainder of his life. He became an artist and studied in Europe. While in England he developed pneumonia, which later resulted in a shaking palsy and he could no longer paint. Henry registered in 1902 as a laborer, possibly a cobbler. Ina Baldwin remembers him as mending all their shoes.

### Nathan Dickson:

Nothing more is known of Nathan except that he was registered in 1902 in Silveyville Precinct #1 as: "age fifty-five, farmer, born in Iowa, 5 ft. 10 in."





# Sheep In Solano County



by Lucy Vassar with Olin Timm

Sheep raising has existed in Solano County for over a hundred years. From 1880 to 1930, sheep were run in the foothills on the western side of the county and in the overflow regions of the Sacramento River, and in conjunction with dry land grain farming in between. They were also on the non-farmed land south of Dixon to the Montezuma Hills. In these hills the sheep and grain rotation existed; this is the only area in the county where it still exists.

Before 1910, most of the sheep flocks were of Merino breeding. Though noted for wool, this breed muscled slowly and most of the wethers (castrated males) were carried over and sold as yearlings. Henry R. Timm's records reveal wethers sold to Washburn and Condon, a San Francisco commission house. This sale was before 1910.

By World War I, Shropshire rams were being crossed with Merinos for better meat production, and then, in the twenties, Rambouillet and Corriedale ewes began replacing the Merinos, again increasing meat production. The effort to increase size and muscling continued, and, we find, in the late twenties, Hampshire and Suffolk rams being put with the Rambouillet and Corriedale ewes.

Nancy Frost Campbell was the first importer of the Suffolk breed into the Western States. Bill and Nancy Campbell also had registered Corriedales, a white-faced wool breed, along with their black-faced Suffolks. They developed a good market for the rams in the hills of Texas, and would ship as many as nine freight car loads at a time to San Angelo. Ervin Vassar learned a lot about sheep by accompanying these railroad cars to Texas.

The shifts in breeding practices enabled the Solano County and California sheep raisers to market a slaughter lamb weaned directly

from its mother. From the Twenties on, the California spring lamb was the first lamb of the new season -- for the entire United States.

From the 1920's to the 1950's, the Grangers' Corrals in Dixon were full of lambs from mid-April to mid-May. Every grain farmer would bring in his lambs on a farm truck. The lambs would be weighed and shipped east by rail for further feeding or slaughter. Slaughter lambs, then, weighed 78 to 88 pounds, and were lighter than our current lambs which are sold at 110 to 120 pounds.

Bob Collier was the largest lamb buyer in Dixon for years. He became an institution. During the Forties, he drove a grey LaSalle coupe which he never washed. Bob also chewed tobacco. Although the car was always a dirty grey, behind the left side window the car was a solid reddish brown. Much of his trade was transacted at Dawson's. It was said that more sheep, wool and grain dollars were traded over Dawson's bar than in any office. When Howard Vaughn became the largest lamb buyer in Northern California, Bob became his buyer for the Dawson trade. Bob McKenzie was an early wool buyer. Later, as the sheep number grew, Watsie Kilkenny, Herb Brown, Hank Cagle, Martin Ehrick and Godfrey Priddy were active as well. The family names of early sheep raisers were Brown, Peters, Petersen and Glide. Later came Silvey, Grieve, Vaughn, Dally, Bulkley, Maxwell, Triplett, Campbell, Dawson, Parker, Vassar, Lewis, Phillips, Bowlsby, Schene, Emigh, Gill and Schmeiser.



Ervin Vassar - showing Championship Suffolk at the Cow Palace 1947.



After World War II, the land included in Reclamation District 2068, and other areas where water from the Sacramento River was available, developed into irrigated pasture. These pastures were planted in Ladino and Trefoil clovers and were especially good for the fattening of market lambs. During the 1950's and the 1960's, there were 150,000 to 200,000 lambs on pasture at one time in the Dixon area of Solano County. After the California crop was finished, feeder lambs were shipped to Dixon pastures from Oregon, Idaho and Nevada.

Then farming conditions changed. With the completion of Monticello Dam, water began being distributed throughout the Solano Irrigation District. Irrigated row crops replaced dry farming and the range sheep were displaced. This displacement began in the 1960's and was nearly complete by 1970. Even in Reclamation District 2068, row crops began replacing pasture in the 1970's. Coyotes and subdivisions replaced sheep in the western foothills, so that by the Eighties the only sheep areas were the non-farmed lands between Binghampton and the Montezuma Hills.

Irrigated pasture still exists south and east of Dixon. The largest present day lamb feeders are Schene Livestock and Dick Emigh.

Until three years ago there were two lamb butchering plants in Dixon. The first, the Monford Plant, was started by C. Bruce Mace in 1919, on the site of the Hutton Dairy. In fact, the dairy's milk cooler was used for carcass storage. The second, the Superior Plant, was started by George F. Livingston, a local butcher, to supply the local trade. The Livingston facility had a series of owners. Each one enlarged its capacity. Both plants began butchering lambs, and as the almost ancient slaughtering plants in San Francisco closed, the Dixon plants increased in importance. Much of the slaughter of these two plants was shipped to the Los Angeles market. Monford's Denver slaughter plants also shipped lambs to Los Angeles. In 1990 Monford decided to increase its slaughtering facilities in Denver and so closed the Dixon plant.

Now we have Superior Packing Company slaughtering lamb in Dixon, selling their high quality product under the Superior Farms label. The plant can handle 10,000 to 12,000 lambs a week.

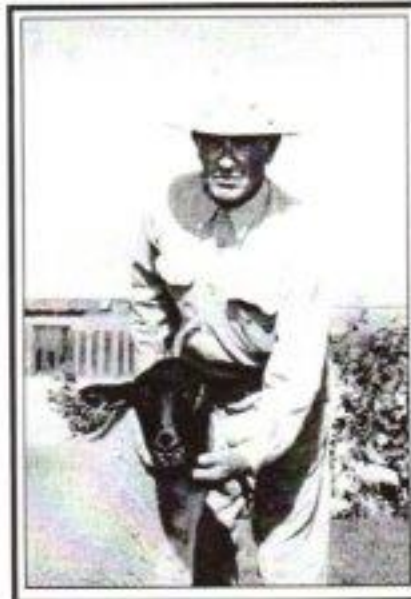
The breeders of purebred, registered sheep had smaller flocks than the range sheep operators, but they had the vital part in the Dixon sheep industry, for they provided the rams for the commercial outfits. Some of these local breeders, Vaughn, Priddy and Vassar became well-known judges at the county fairs in California and the largest regional shows. Ervin Vassar judged the black-faced breeds at the Calgary Stampede for several years. They also showed their best at many livestock exhibitions.

In the late Forties Howard Vaughn and Ervin Vassar made their first shipment of sheep by air to the Chicago International. The Flying Tiger Airlines (then still active flying freight after their "Burma Hump" war experience) was the carrier. They loaded in Sacramento, with many Dixon locals watching the process, as this was a "first" for flying animals to a livestock show. The sheep were put in pens in the plane, with Howard Vaughn and his brother-in-law accompanying them. Turbulence developed going east and when the plane would drop,

the lambs would be in mid-air

above the pens--- a very exciting trip! Ervin Vassar was in Chicago awaiting their arrival. A snow storm developed; the plane circled O'Hare airport for some time and, finally, had to land elsewhere, the animals being trucked to the show. The Arrival Board at the airport had the trip listed as "OPERATION SHEEP--late due to snow". Vaughn had a winning carload lot of Southdown-Suffolk Cross market lambs and Vassar had champion Suffolks. Howard also had the champion Suffolk ram at the World's Fair at Treasure Island in 1939.

"The Purple Circle" was envisioned in 1919 by Gordon H. True, Professor of Animal Husbandry at the University of California, Davis. He made a survey of the purebred livestock industry and found that there were over one hundred herds and flocks within a circle of ten miles radius using the



Howard Vaughn at World's Fair 1939.



University farm as center. Professor True claimed that no other area of like size in the United States could boast such a concentration of pure-bred animals. No one ever refuted the claim.

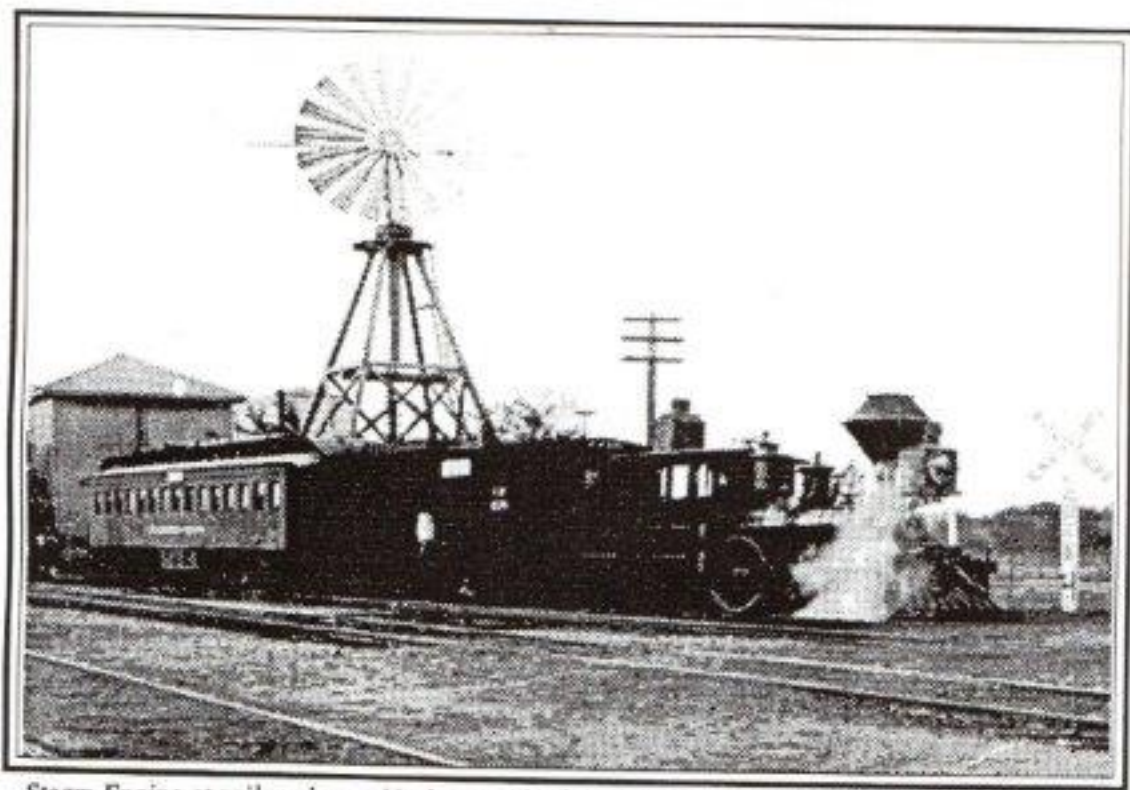
More important than mere numbers, however, was the fact that many of these herds and flocks had won for their owners an amazing number of prizes at the largest livestock shows in the nation. The great "International" in Chicago, the Pacific International in Portland, the Great Western in Los Angeles, the Golden Spike in Ogden and the Grand National at the Cow Palace in San Francisco had awarded the purple ribbon emblematic of championships to breeders of this area, time and again.

Dixon sheep breeders voted into the Purple Circle were J.D. Harper, Lyman Phillips, Howard Vaughn, William and Nancy Campbell, James Palmer, C.B. Phillips, Godfrey Priddy, Jack Phillips, Roland Buckman, Dan Priddy, Robert Shreve, Ervin Vassar, Charles Wood, Major Godsol and Buel Campbell.

Records show that presidents of the Purple Circle included Howard Vaughn, Godfrey Priddy and Ervin Vassar. The annual dinner meetings, usually held in February, were purely social with the highlights of the previous year's winnings being retold. The Purple Circle came to its demise in the mid-Sixties.

The sheep history of Dixon would not be complete without mentioning the working sheep dogs which are vital in moving sheep. Charlie Null, Jim Palmer and Greg Griffen are nationally known names. Null and Palmer dogs were stars in Hollywood movies.

Dixon has produced national leaders in the sheep and livestock industry. Howard Vaughn was President of the National Wool Growers Association. Lucy Vassar was President of the National Wool Growers Auxiliary. Olin Timm was President of the United States Animal Health Association. Solano County has furnished four California Wool Growers Presidents: Henry Petersen, Howard Vaughn, Henry's son Harry Petersen and Dick Emigh.



*Steam Engine at railroad crossing just north of A Street facing west. Windmill pumped water to fill the water tower.*



# Law 'n Order

by Ardeth Riedel

Constable, Marshal, Deputy, Sheriff and Chief of Police; Dixon had all of them and then some. The laws of the land and the ordinances of the Town Trustees were to be enforced by these officers, and the Justice of the Peace or the City Judge would decide the cases and designate the fine or jail sentence. Some officials were more inspired to carry out their duties than others, but for the most part law and order prevailed in this growing farm community.

As early as 1874, just six years after the founding of the town, reports in the first edition of the Dixon Tribune indicated the existence of one constable and a justice of the peace. A night watchman was hired by the Town Trustees and a jail was located in some area of town as the following story would indicate:

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**" FIRE** - Wednesday afternoon an alarm of fire was given and the engine company turned out with the Babcock and ladder truck, as well as citizens with small extinguishers. Before they could get to the jail - where the fire was found to be - it had been put out with a few buckets of water. It seems a fellow who was juggled shortly before for exposing himself in an indecent manner, had got tired of sweating in patience, and concluded to burn his way out. With that aim, he set the wooden door on fire, and before discovered, a hole was burned through. He was not fortunate enough to escape, and nearly suffocated himself to death for nothing. Perhaps it was this fact which made him so abusive to the officers when the excitement was over. "

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By 1879 Dixon had a town marshal. According to the minutes of the Town Trustees: "Marshal reports licenses collected for present quarter, \$224; town taxes collected, \$443.15. Above report accepted. Marshal's bill of \$40.12 on account of licenses and taxes collected, ordered paid by warrant on Treasurer."

Abraham Kirby assumed the duties of Sheriff of Solano County in 1883. A. Kirby also estab-

lished and operated the first drugstore in Dixon. It appeared that the law enforcement jobs co-existed or overlapped in duties performed as found in the 1884 edition of the Tribune. C.P. Brown was Justice of the Peace; Thomas Barnes, the constable and collector; B.F. Newby, the deputy constable and George Meader, the night watchman. It was also stated that William C. Rhem was constable and town marshal. Both Newby and Rhem were insurance agents, evidently to supplement the low salary paid to keep the peace.

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**" September 1889 - BRANCH JAIL:** The Board of Supervisors examined and accepted the branch jail last Saturday. The members expressed satisfaction with the arrangement and the cost. The building is of brick and two stories in height. The first floor is the branch jail proper. It is divided into two cells, and a kind of reception room, in which prisoners may be allowed during the day. The inside walls of the cells are four inches thick and the doors are of iron. The ventilation of the cells is hardly sufficient and it is probable that the iron doors will be perforated, or replaced with bars. The floor is cement. The second floor is used for an office for the Town Trustees and the Town Clerk and Assessor. It is very handsomely fitted up and our city dads will no doubt feel quite comfortable and at home in their new quarters. The upper story is divided into two rooms. The small one will be used for safe-keeping of books and papers, and the larger one will be used as an office. A railing is all that will separate the Trustees from their constituents. The cost of the building when completed will probably amount to \$1,800, and the ground cost \$500 more. The first jail birds broke in last Sunday night. "

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Ordinances passed by the Town Trustees were supposed to be enforced by the proper authority, but often, due to lack of evidence or inefficiency, little effect was made on the existence of prostitution and the sale and use of opium. Records of City Ordinances show examples:

*Ordinance #22:—Unlawful to keep a place where opium smoked; amended to include all smokers of opium. Charles Schinner, Pres. Passed May 3, 1881.*



*Ordinance #29:---Prohibiting building of wooden buildings in that portion of town of Dixon bounded on the west by Jackson St. and Central Pacific Railroad; on north by C Street; on east by Second Street; and on south by Mayes.*

*Herman Eppinger, Pres. Dec. 4, 1883.*

*Ordinance #36:---Indecent Exposure of Animals Used For Propagation Purposes;---any stallion or jack used to service any mare.... must be in an enclosed barn, the openings and seams between the boards of said barn must be perfectly close and secure from the public gaze.*

*N.B.S. Coleman, Pres. May 6 1884.*

*Ordinance #42:---Declaring Public Wash-Houses and Sink Holes, Etc. a Nuisance.*

*N.B.S. Coleman, Pres. Aug. 5, 1884.*

*Ordinance #49:---Unlawful to keep or sell opium in Dixon.*

*S.G. Little, Pres. July 6, 1886.*

*Ordinance #54:---To Prevent the Keeping and Maintaining Houses of Prostitution within the Limits of Town of Dixon, and to Declare same as a Public Nuisance and to Provide Penalties Therefor.*

*Wm. Van Sant, Pres. July 3, 1888.*

*Ordinance #58:---Unlawful to Possess or Sell Opium in Town of Dixon.*

*Wm. Van Sant, Pres. Nov. 5, 1889.*

Some of Dixon's better known law enforcement officers were:

**B.F. Newby**, deputy constable and constable, serving the community for twenty-eight years in that capacity;

**Dan McKinnon**, serving from 1903 until he was shot and killed in 1918;

**Constable Staton**, serving first as night watchman in 1895, promoted in 1889 to constable and served until 1903;

**William C. Rhem**, serving as deputy constable, constable and town marshal from 1884 to 1899.

**Marshal H.C. (Clay) Grove** makes his appearance as he shoots and wounds the killer of Dan McKinnon. Grove is kept very busy during the Prohibition years chasing down bootleggers.

As the use of the automotive vehicle increased,

more changes occurred in the area of law enforcement. The 1930 Tribune reported that John Kilkenny was elected Mayor or President of the Town Trustees by his fellow Board members, Clay Grove was re-appointed Chief of Police, Jerry Stearns was appointed to be the Traffic Officer, and Claude Rohwer the Town Justice.

When the new highway moved over to Adams Street from First Street, Carl Thunberg began patrolling the Dixon area as a member of the California Highway Patrol. An article from the 1934 Tribune "tells all" about our upstanding law enforcement men:

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**" OFFICERS GO ON LONG HUNT FOR MUSHROOMS - 'Come on, let's go get some mushrooms -- I'll take you.'** So Justice Hoyt and Constable John Gregg put on their overcoats, grabbed pails and accepted Carl Thunberg's offer. Gregg says that they hunted over fifty-two miles of territory. Carl found just two mushrooms, the Justice and Gregg more than half a dozen each, and were twice fired on from places for trespassing. "

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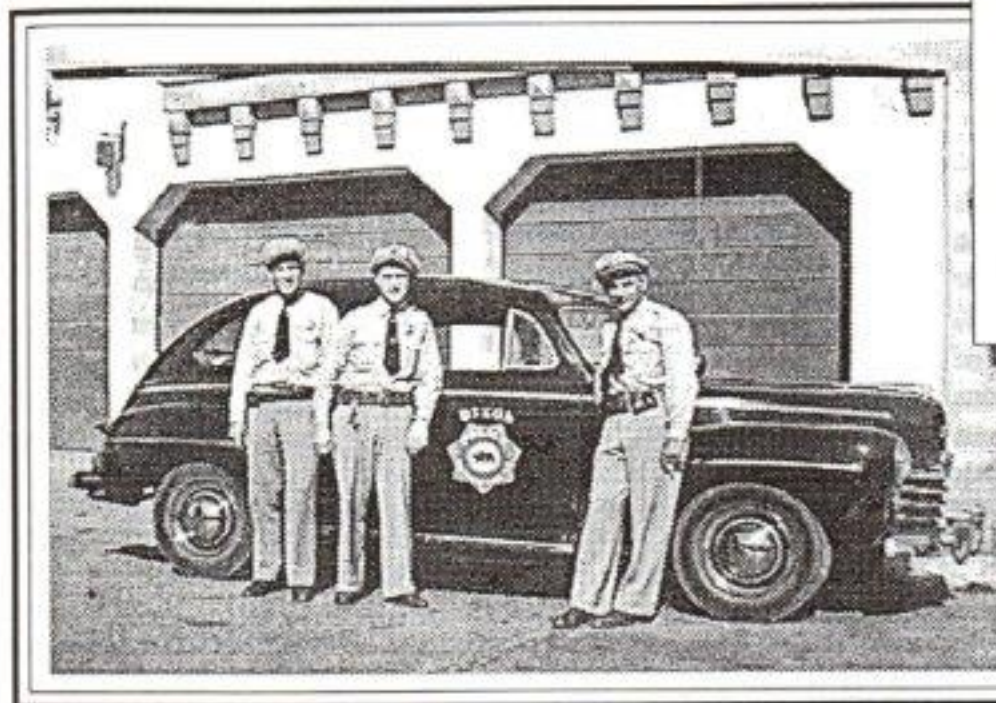
Clay Grove continued as Chief until 1944 when Lester "Bud" Peters, who was a police officer under him, succeeded him as Chief. At this time Bert Van Sant was the acting constable. Ray Crawford and Pete Murphy served under Chief Peters for several years, but this writer has read the Tribune only to 1946 and memory does not always recall correctly. The Justice of the Peace position was filled after Claude Rohwer by Judge Hoyt, Judge Beckley, Judge Sievers, Judge Raftery, Judge Gibson, Judge Rayn and Judge Raftery.

Needless to say, there have been some wild and woolly police stories since 1874. Major headlines adding spice to the weekly editions of the Dixon Tribune were:

#### 1894- An Ax Next Time

An exchange tells of a man who purchased a revolver for his wife and insisted on target practice so she could defend the home in case of his absence. After the bullet had been dug out of his leg and the cow buried, he said he guessed she'd better shoot with an ax.





The Dixon Police Force in late 1940's. From left: Chief Lester "Bud" Peters, Ray Crawford, Pete Murphy. Inset: Chief Peters.



### 1895 - Officers On Bicycles Run Down An Insane Man On Horseback.

Wednesday morning, shortly before 7 o'clock, N. Bisonette rode into town and tied his horse, a valuable animal, to a hitching post at the depot. While conversing with Section Foreman Pareri not more than 50 feet away, a stalwart stranger dressed in workingman's garb stepped up and unhitched the horse, which he bestrode and started to ride away, when he was accosted by Mr. Bisonette, who demanded his horse. "Oh, I only want to try him; I will bring him back," was the reply he received as the stranger dug his heels into the horse's sides and galloped away. Mr. Bisonette immediately informed Constable Newby of the theft of his horse and that officer, accompanied by F.A. Hutton, immediately started in pursuit on bicycles. Constable Duncan followed as soon as he could obtain a team. The horseman proceeded south on the Maine Prairie road and rode leisurely as though to save his horse yet keeping a safe distance between himself and his pursuers.

When the heavy trade winds were encountered near Binghamton, Hutton, who is the lighter and more expert bicyclist, forged ahead and overtook the horseman. He commanded the man to halt, but he refused to do so and became very angry, threatening Hutton with a knife. The latter persisted in

his attempts to stop the thief, who became frantic and turning his horse drove the bicyclist back at least half a mile flourishing his huge knife and threatening to kill him if he persisted in following him. Securing Constable Newby's pistol, the plucky

wheel-man again started in pursuit. As he approached the horseman he attempted to stop him by flourishing the pistol, but it had no effect and a shot served only to make him go the faster. In the meantime Newby went to George Lent's place, where he secured a Winchester rifle and a cart, with Mr. Lent as driver, and renewed the chase. When they approached the horseman he threw himself upon the horse's neck to escape a shot and urged his horse forward. The animal was nearly exhausted, however, and was soon overtaken, about 12 miles from town.

When the gun was leveled at him the man threw up his hands and surrendered. He refused to throw away his knife, however, and it was only when the officer threatened to shoot that he dropped the weapon and permitted Constable Duncan to handcuff him. In cocking the rifle Mr. Newby broke the spring in the lock and the gun was practically useless. If the man, who was thoroughly desperate, had been aware of it, he would probably not have been taken so easily. He was brought back to town and put in jail. Up to this time his actions had been those of a desperate man caught in the commission of a crime, but once behind the bars he began to rave and it soon became apparent that he was either insane or shamming. Constable Newby took the man to Fairfield on the afternoon train, where he will be examined for insanity as soon as Judge Buckles returns.



### Benson Kills Moore (1913)

Charlie Benson came into town yesterday noon and gave himself up to the officer McKinnon saying he had shot Tom Moore.

To the Tribune Benson said he was in the habit of going over to the ranch of his mother a mile away to care for her during her illness from pneumonia, and yesterday forenoon when he went to the place Moore rushed at him with a threat and took a shot at him with a 25-20 rifle. The shot missed and he rushed at Moore, knocking him down and took the rifle away. Moore came to his feet and rushed at Benson who pulled the trigger and his adversary fell. "And if he isn't dead he ought to be" said Benson. He drove to the ranch of his brother, told of the deed and was advised to give himself up.

On Dec. 30, 1913, the preliminary trial of Charlie Benson was held in Odd Fellows Hall in Dixon, before Justice R.H. Brown who held Benson over to the Superior Court on the charge of murder.

Benson was represented by attorneys N.C. Coghlan and F.C. Castlehume of San Francisco. Joseph Rains, District Attorney of Solano County, represented the people.

Benson was found not guilty. Benson testified that Moore had taken a shot at him previously with a shotgun and that Moore met him as he drove up to the ranch corral. This time Benson said Moore threatened him and took a shot with a rifle. Benson said that he rushed Moore, taking the rifle away and Moore ran for the house. Benson said that he then shot Moore at about 20 feet because he thought Moore was going to the house to get the shotgun.

### Marshal Grove Runs Down Dope Peddlers (1923)

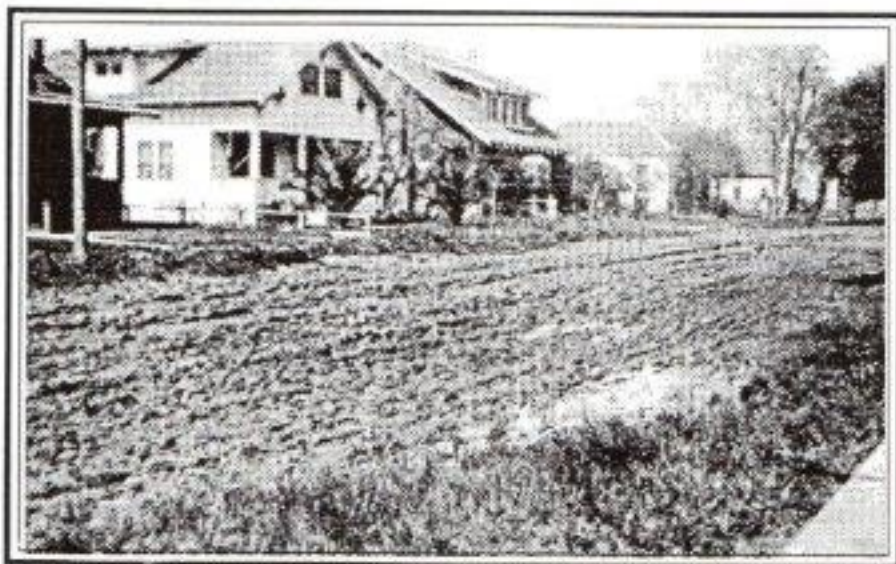
As a result of running down the man who stole the tire from the J.D. Johnson store on Wednesday and was seen selling it to a rancher at Vacaville by Arthur Cagle, three...(individuals) of the Vacaville community are under arrest and between \$500 and \$600 worth of narcotics confiscated. Fagle, the drug addict, told Grove, "If you go for the two...(individuals) at the Blum

Ranch on the north side of the highway at the foot of Bennett Hill, look out, as they are gun men." Marshal Grove and G.S. Johnson drove to Vacaville on Thursday and recovered the tire from a rancher. As he intended to operate in their field Grove obtained Vacaville Constable Jo Stadtfeldt and Marshal Hughes and first visited the...(individuals) in Vacaville. They found a young...(man) with drugs in his pocket, about \$25 worth of cocaine and some "jackass" liquor.

Search of the premises was made, and in a side room beneath some fruit boxes turned over for a bed they found cans of narcotics, opium, morphine, yenshi (ashes of smoked opium), pipes and scales for weighing out the stuff. Another hophead who was recently placed in jail at the county seat for thieving confessed to climbing through the transom of Dr. F. Stolle's office in Dixon one night in search of dope. He did not find any so he took a stethoscope, thermometer and package of cigarettes.

### Still and 135 Gallons Booze Burn (1924)

Dixon firemen hurried to a big smoke reported to be on the J. Scarafoni place Monday afternoon. Most of the old house was destroyed, but on the floor of the place were counted twenty-five 50-gallon barrels of cornmash. This might have been for fattening poultry or hogs, of course, but there was a lot of other apparatus of a rather suspicious nature, worm-like things and tanks and



*Travelling conditions on Jackson Street before it was paved circa 1915. Looking north from L. to R. the homes of: F.G. Dunncliff, Angus Madden, Mrs. King.*



an oil-stove, etc., so the poultry theory had to be abandoned. Local officers interviewed the owner of the ranch and he said that he rented the house to W. Silva and was much surprised to find the mash and the still on the place after the fire. The worm turned when the still blew up. The blaze west of the town on Monday demonstrated that where there's smoke there is liable to be fire-water.

#### **Miss Olivas Takes Truck from Driver (1926)**

Miss Juanita Olivas, who has been in the office of Rossi Bros. Garage for some time, did a he-man act on the highway west of Davis when she discovered a Dixon truck in the hands of a drunken driver. Leaving her car, she climbed onto the truck, took the wheel and ran the machine to the side of the road, where she left it after taking the ignition key. The driver was soon under arrest and is now serving a 90-day sentence. By doing what she did, Miss Olivas probably saved someone from serious injury, if not the intoxicated driver himself. She was highly commended by Justice Scott of Davis for her prompt and fearless work.

#### **Hogs Wreck Fence Getting To Mash (1929)**

Claus Haas, who lives northeast of Dixon, says that he regrets that the persons who dumped the mash near his fence following the barn last week did not throw the stuff clear over the fence. His hogs got to part of it and ate with much zest and nearly wore themselves out trying to get through to the rest.

#### **Still Causes Barn Fire (1929)**

The large, concrete-floored dairy barn on the Dr. Butler farm a few miles east of Dixon burned at 7:30 Wednesday night. It made an ominous flare, and there was no chance to save much when the Fire Department arrived. Chief Grove and the firemen found a large set-up of "home-brew" apparatus and the supposition is that, like the motor in the Tribune plant last week, it overheated and went off with a bang and a flame. Several barrels of mash remained as further evidence of brewery operation. A man who was on the place, which is rented by Dan Vanetti, was badly burned on the face. Chief Grove had Mr. Vanetti in town for questioning, and when he returned to the farm the still had disappeared, and no man knoweth whither it went.

#### **Bandit Run Down In Field (1930)**


When a man driving a car from San Francisco approached the Tremont intersection, he noticed a man jump from a car and run into the Timm field, and the good-looking woman in the car had a distressed expression on her face. Believing that something was not exactly right, the man from The City stopped and inquired of the woman if anything had gone wrong. "There surely has! I've been robbed by that man!", she exclaimed. She was told to drive to the Hess corner. The San Francisco man left his son, about 20, to watch the robber while he drove to Cypress Camp Grove.

Miss P. Anderson, Superintendent of Schools of Colusa County, said that the man stuck a revolver against her side and took her purse containing \$30. Karl Hess grabbed his 30-30 rifle, jumped into the stranger's car and they sped back to the corner, saw the man running in the distance, and the young man also in the field. He informed them that the robber had sent two or three shots in his direction to slow him up, so he kept a safe distance away.

Hess and the San Franciscan drove farther up the highway, entered the field, and drove helter skelter after the thief. Approaching the bandit, but out of accurate revolver range, Hess told him to stop and throw up his hands. "I haven't done anything," replied the man. "Throw up your hands anyway, and keep them there," he was commanded. Hess and his friend noticed some object drop from one hand to the ground, and the bandit exclaimed that he was going to fall to the ground (doubtless to recover his revolver and take a pot shot if he saw a chance). Hess told him to stay on his feet. His weapon was taken, and he was ordered into the car and taken to the service station. In the meantime, Chief Grove had arrived from Dixon and brought the culprit into town, where he was questioned and then delivered to jail at Fairfield.

#### **Ralph Moss' Car Stolen (1930)**

Ralph Moss had his Ford roadster stolen from the north side of the bank building on Tuesday evening. While he was in the library someone hopped in and drove away. The supposition of Chief Grove is that three women of the demimonde type who were picked up on the highway and brought into town were the ones who made off with the roadster.





J. H. Love

McBurney L.A.

Peter Timm  
W.A.

G.C. Mc Kinley

PROMINENT BUILDINGS	
1	CENTENNIAL HALL
2	SCHOOL HOUSE
3	M.E. CHURCH
4	CONG. CHURCH
5	BAPTIST CHURCH
6	GER. LUTH. CHURCH
7	CATHOLIC CHURCH
8	FLOURING MILL
9	CITY HOTEL
10	KINGS HOTEL
11	ARCADE HOTEL

W.A. Dashiell  
W.A.  
R. White  
W.A.  
Wm. M. Carr  
W.A.  
More East  
W.A.  
W.A.  
W.A.

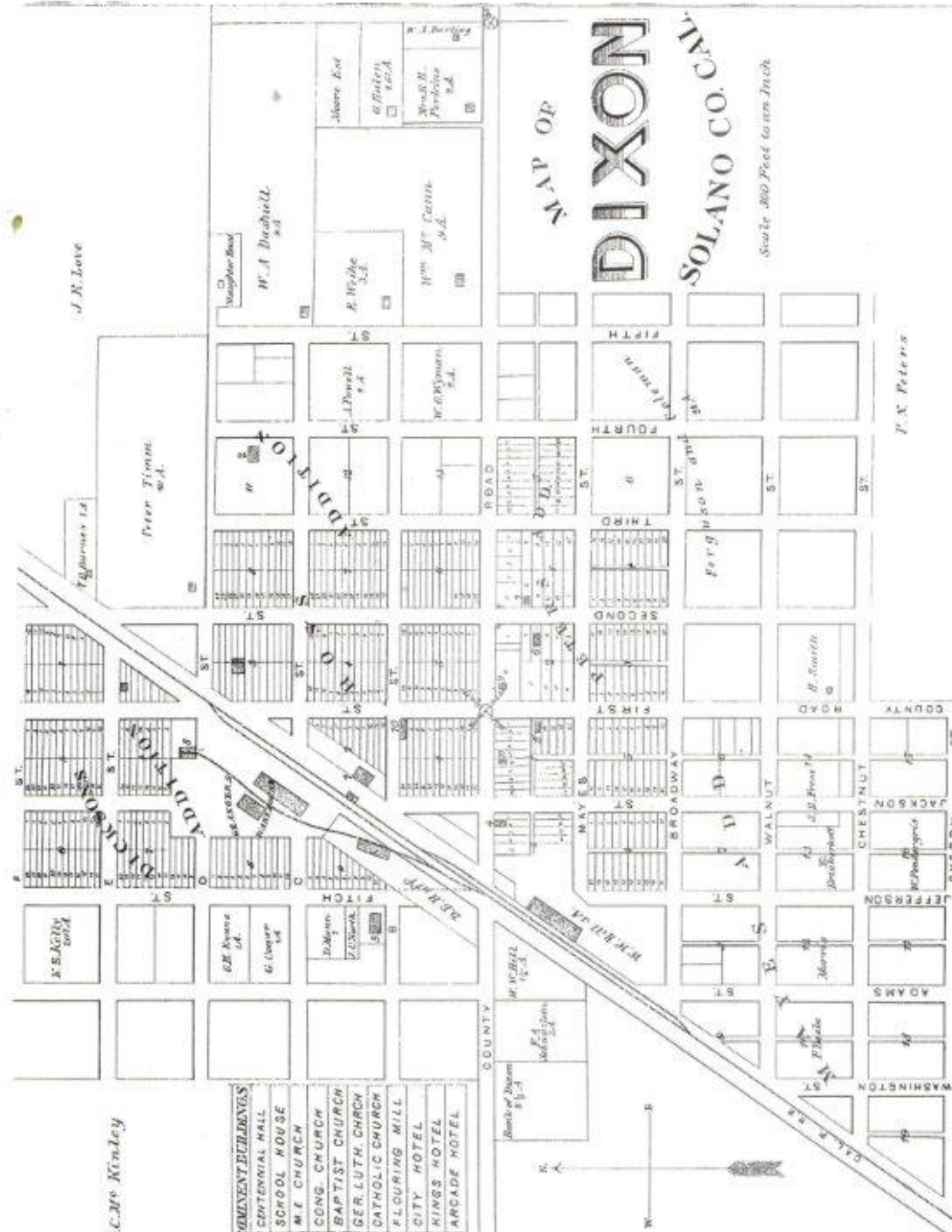
MAP OF

DIXON

SOLANO CO. CAL.

Scale 300 Feet to an Inch

P. N. Peters





**Opposite Page:**

Map of Dixon reproduced and reduced in size from the *New Historical Atlas of Solano County California Illustrated* by Thompson and West, 1877. It was reprinted in the April 1968 issue of the Solano County Historical Society "Note Book".

This map, drawn in 1877, shows that rancher Dickson's property holdings were correctly spelled. It was a railroad right-of-way agent who misspelled it "Dixon", and the name stuck. Most of Mayes, Ferguson, Coleman and Peter's additions were undeveloped at that time.

