Dixon's Beginnings:

A Railroad Town

The city of Dixon came into being in 1869 at the top of the Dixon Hill, and was born a railroad town. Milton Santee from Rolla was the original surveyor who laid out the town on a half square mile stretching on both sides of the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway. Santee is supposed to have suggested naming the new Missouri city after an Indian trader who had donated the land which became Dixon, Illinois.

John Dixon was an interpreter for local Indians and counsel to U.S. Army officers assigned to the southern Illinois area. The Winnebago Indians called Dixon "Nada-chu-ra-sak" due to his long flowing white hair. A photograph of John Dixon hangs in Dixon City Hall.

The South Pacific, the first railroad was attacked and destroyed during the Civil War. The Frisco ran only to Rolla before the war. In 1868 the Frisco Railroad Co. was organized and the line was completed to Springfield and ran through Dixon. The first large settlement near the town itself was a camp consisting of about 100 workers who were "working on the railroad" in 1867-68. Reportedly this camp was located on what is now the Bennett Jones property, west of Dixon. Later, the workers moved into town. The original town consisted of three stores, one grist mill, three hotels, one church, a public school and a few homes.

The fortune of the town at first depended on the railroad. Dixon became a railroad division point with a round house for four engines and a section crew and a residence just south of the tracks. A short distance east of the station was used for eating and sleeping facilities for four freight and three passenger crews.

In 1884, the division point was moved to Newburg. The move was a blow to Dixon's economy, but citizens in the surrounding area continued to bring wheat, hogs, cattle, sheep, furs, wild game and produce to Dixon to be shipped on the Frisco. Dixon was incorporated in November 1889. The village was made a fourth class city in 1906.

In 1913, fire destroyed most of the downtown business section, forcing the community to slowly rebuild. The recovery was speeded up considerably in 1940 with the construction of Fort Leonard Wood.

The Dixon area has continued to grow and prosper. Today, nearly 150 years later, it is a pleasant, hilltop community that is a "hometown place" to more than 1500 residents that offers a unique blend of modern lifestyles and old-fashioned country living.

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