

# Joseph Ogee is tending ferry. The year is 1829. John Dixon, frontiersman, arrives on the Rock river. He barter with Joseph, son of a squaw and a French trader. For a small cash payment and a note Ogee's Ferry, as the crossing is known, becomes Dixon's Ferry.

That is the beginning of Dixon, Illinois. Come with me and we will visit for a while under the roof-tree of George C. Dixon, of Dixon & Dixon, Dixon, Ill. George C. Dixon is of the fourth generation of Dixons. John, his son, is of the fifth. This room is brightlit for it is night time—a pretty hour for conjuring up the past. George C. Dixon calls it his museum. Walls are lined with old books and mementoes; an Indian bow, antlers, ancient pictures, yellowed parchments. We sit around, a little group of us, and draw mental pictures of days gone.

Old John Dixon must have been a man of education. His ancient account books which come out from some nook are kept in a firm hand and the entries are well spelled. The ink of the oldest is clear and plain after these 96 years. We find that whiskey sold then for fifty cents a gallon. That "food for man and horse" is billed at twenty-five cents; a bed cost a quarter.

Gave Credit to Indians. We find that John Dixon gave credit to the Indians. Among his customers are Old Grey Headed Potawatomie, Old Grey Head's Fat Son, Man-with-a-Sick-Squaw, Mother Flat Face, Blinky, Lumpy, Sour Eads Ox, Squirrel Cheeks, Long Sober Man! They bought beads and blankets, coffee and powder, knives.

Two years pass. Black Hawk is bitter and his hand restive. Militia is sent in to help the regulars when Black Hawk starts his rampage. We find among John Dixon's customers Abraham Lincoln, soldier; Jefferson Davis, who is later to guide the Confederacy; Albert Sidney Johnston, who is to head Davis' armies and die in battle; William S. Hamilton, son of Alexander Hamilton who was killed by Aaron Burr in a duel; Zachary Taylor, who is to precede Lincoln by a few years as president of the United States.

Zachary Taylor's account shows that he ran up a bill of \$11.50 at John Dixon's store, that he paid \$5.00 in advance and gave his note for \$6.50. The account does not show that the note was paid. We will presume that it was. I'd like to linger here but I must be brief.

Midnight finds me in the Nachusa Tavern. It is a hotel, originally built in 1837, later remodeled and then rebuilt. Nachusa was the Indian name for John Dixon. The word means Old Grey Head. John Dixon had a flowing white mane and smooth-shaven face.

An Old Legend. Legend has it that the old Nachusa Tavern once caused the United States government to remodel its financial laws. Nobody seems to know the story exactly. What I get is that someone conceived the idea of issuing greenbacks, backed by the United States treasury, to develop the new west. This was to give the money standing.

These greenbacks, it was presumed, would be held against the property, redeemable when presented to the owners. So much money, the story goes, was issued against the Nachusa Tavern, that officials in Washington grew panicky and stopped the whole scheme. The political upheaval was such, according to old clippings, that jobs were lost in Washington.

Old bills, two, three and five dollar bills, are to be found in Dixon today—but nobody seems to remember just what the story was.

Picture Today. Let us go visiting about Dixon and see what the picture is today. First we will travel to the milk condenser, owned by the Borden company. Another Civil War romance. Charles Page, newspaper correspondent, found that the federal soldiers liked the newfangled milk that Gail Borden had developed just about 1860. The war over, Page went to Switzerland as ambassador. Something of a step-up from the job of war correspondent.

While there he organized the Anglo-Swiss company and began making a condensed milk. Page was born a few miles out of Dixon and when he became wealthy and influential it pleased him to come back to his homeland and build a plant. It was sold later to the Borden company. That plant today—

Here are manufactured 100,000,000 cans a year of this and other Borden plants. Great machines, everything automatic, slice tin plate into thousand of pieces. Ends for the cans are cut, a dozen at a time. Bang, bang, bang, with amazing speed. Machines bend the cans to shape, machines put in the ends, machines solder them, machines test them for air-leaks, machines, machines, machines. Always speed with a few people watching here and there that all goes well.

Huge Output. From this plant go out 20,000,000 cans of milk each twelve months and 3,500,000 pounds of candy. The plant gets the milk of 7,000 cows and averages 200 employees; payroll and run in cash about \$350,000 a year;

value of the product, against which must be charged tin plate, sugar, overhead and other costs, about \$3,000,000.

Dixon was early a shoe manufacturing center. Illinois today has about seventy shoe factories making 20,000,000 pairs of shoes a year, value about \$50,000,000 wholesale. The Dixon plant of the Brown Shoe company employs about 500 people and makes about 1,000,000 pairs annually.

We find also in Dixon a corset steel plant—and learn something of corsets. More corset steels are being made than ever. How this seeming paradox? Well, they tell me, women used to wear a pair of corsets for a year or more. The surgical elastic corsets now worn are thrown away at the rate of four to six pairs a year. Corset steels go out of Dixon at the rate of 3,000,000 a month. The plant belongs to the Gossard company.

Makes "Screen Cloth". Dixon is also the home of "screen cloth," the screens that go on our windows to keep insects out. H. G. Reynolds came into Dixon from the east many years ago. He possessed little more than a patent, machines for making wire cloth in a rather simple way, and hope.

The plant today employs 300 people and is working 24 hours a day six days a week. The company manufactures its own "rods," as the wire from which the screen wire is drawn is known in the trade. It also owns an interest in the hydro-electric plant at the Dixon dam.

Dixon's electric power is one of its major assets. Dixon boasts that it is the largest "low-head" hydro-electric plant in the world and that it is without peer in its class for effectiveness; that 78 per cent of the energy passing through its five 800-horsepower units is converted into electricity. Steam plants of the Northern Illinois Utilities company, at Dixon, which controls the dam, have capacity for 25,000 horsepower more. Ninety-two towns can be supplied with current from Dixon.

Other Products. Silica sand and portland cement are other products. The Dixon plant of the Sandusky Portland Cement company has a capacity of 3,700 barrels a day. The plant was built here because shales and clays and other products for the manufacture of cement are all found in close association. The company has materials to keep the plant running another 100 years.

Deposits of silica sand, a couple of miles east of Dixon, are among the purest and best to be found anywhere in the world. The same formations of St. Peter sandstone that outcrop between Ottawa and LaSalle come to the surface here along the Rock river.

And I learned something about milk bottles.

Silica sand for the manufacture of milk bottles must not contain traces of iron. If it does the glass has a blue or green tinge. That would make the milk look weak, like skimmed milk. The proper milk bottle is made by adding a bit of lead to the silica. That gives a slightly pinkish tint which means that the milk looks rich. Pink netting does the same to peaches.

More history. Once upon a time the three important trading posts on the Illinois frontier were Peoria, Galena and Grand Detour. It is legend that the first steel plow and the first iron stove made in the Mississippi valley were turned out at Grand Detour. John Deere got his start there with the Grand Detour Plow company.

This company was organized in 1837 and "has never missed a payroll" from that day to this. Grand Detour is five miles up the Rock river from Dixon. The river here makes a big curve, four miles around, and comes back to within about a quarter mile of the same spot. Early canoe-men used to portage here to save the four-mile trip.

Railroad Arrives. The railroad missed Grand Detour but touched Dixon. So, after the Civil war, the plow company moved to Dixon and occupied old army barracks, built of stone, walls three feet thick. Many enlargements have been made. Today the plant, a division of the J. I. Case company now, employs 200 men and has a capacity of \$2,500,000 worth of implements a year. Its specialty is tractor drawn implements and labor saving farm machinery.

Dixon also makes lawn mowers, motor car differentials, auto truck and wagon bodies, musical supplies; has a poultry cold storage plant and a wholesale print shop. The Dixon Evening Sentinel was started as a weekly in 1851 by B. F. Shaw and has issued continuously ever since. Mr. Shaw, long since passed to that realm where good editors go, was one of the thirteen men who met in Decatur and founded the Republican party which straightway went out and elected Abraham Lincoln president.

Dixon has 300 acres of parks, including an 80-acre island park in the river. Lowell park, outside the city limits, is owned by the city. It covers 200 acres with a half mile of river frontage. It is a nature park, no man-made rustic stuff, no penned animals, no statues or ornamentations; a park of hills, gulleys, primeval forest, flowers, ferns; a park that God made. The land was owned by Brig. Gen. Charles Russell Lowell,

killed in the Civil war, and was given to Dixon by his daughter.

An "enabling act" was passed by the Illinois state legislature to allow cities to own parks outside their limits, at Dixon's request, so that this park could be taken over. Many other towns and cities have taken advantage of this law. If your city today owns such a park, thank Dixon. For in this evolution of park development Dixon led.

One nice thing about this field spring weather is that if you don't like it, all you have to do is to wait a few minutes and get something else.

NOTICE OF LETTING CONTRACT. ASSESSMENT NO. 306. BOARD OF LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that bids will be received for the construction of a proposed system of water mains in Deerfield Avenue, Eldorado Avenue, Elmhurst Road, Northland Avenue, Garland Avenue, Midland Avenue, Richfield Avenue, McCraney Road, Arbor Avenue, Fernside Avenue, Edgewood Avenue, Glenwood Avenue, Eastwood Avenue, Cloverdale Avenue, Sunnyside Avenue and Ridge Road, all in the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois, as a whole in accordance with the ordinance therefor.

Said bids will be received by the Board of Local Improvements at its office in the City of Highland Park, Illinois, until 5:15 o'clock p. m. on the 22nd day of August, 1937, at which time and place they will be publicly opened and read.

The specifications and blank proposals will be furnished at the office of the Board of Local Improvements in the City Hall of said City.

The contractor will be paid in bonds, which bonds will draw interest at the rate of six (6) per cent per annum.

The successful bidder for the construction of said improvement will be required to enter into bond in a sum equal to one-third of the amount of his or their bid with sureties to be approved by the President of the Board of Local Improvements when entering into the contract for the construction of said improvement.

All proposals or bids must be accompanied by a certified check payable to the President of the Board of Local Improvements of the City of Highland Park for the sum of not less than ten (10) per cent of the aggregate of the proposal.

Said proposal must be delivered to the President of the Board of Local Improvements in open session of said Board at the time and place fixed herein for the opening of the same.

No proposal or bid will be considered unless accompanied by check herein provided. The Board of Local Improvements reserves the right to reject any or all bids if they deem it best for the public good.

BENJAMIN F. LEWIS, WM. J. BROWN, LYLE GOURLEY, WM. M. KEAY, JULIUS ZIMMER, Board of Local Improvements, City of Highland Park.

23-24

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