



Dixon Public Library Local History Collection

Dixon College

Archive Box Collection Guide and Contents

Overview

“Early Institutes of High Learning: Dixon, Lee County IL”

Article researched and written by Karen Swegle Holt, c2009

History and Chronology

1855 – 1858: Dixon Collegiate Institute

1861 – 1880: Dixon Seminary [Name changed; chartered as Rock River University in 1875]. These buildings were located on Dixon’s south side, at East First Street and later at West Second Street

1881 – 1914: Northern Illinois Normal School and Dixon Business College; located on the west side of Dixon, at Hancock Street

1882 – 1906: Steinmann Institute; business college located near the Rock River in the Assembly Park area on the northeast side of Dixon; the grounds at Rock River Assembly served as the site of the Dixon Chatauqua; near the present Myrtle Avenue and Prescott Street

1905 – 1940s: Coppins Dixon Business College and Normal School, first organized following the closing of Steinmann Institute; located on the second floor at 215 First Street; later moved to unknown location

1911 – 1922: Strong’s College of Music

Book excerpt: ***History of Lee County, Illinois***, by Frank E. Stevens, c1914; Chapter XIII – *“The Dixon Schools”*

Book excerpt: ***Education History of Lee County Schools***, by H. W. Miller, Superintendent; Chapter XIV

City of Dixon Locations and Streets

Dixon Street Map: 1894 – Northern Illinois Normal School campus boundaries on southwest side of Dixon are shown as extending southward from the present West First Street up to West Third Street; east from the present College Avenue to the west at Van Buren Avenue.

Normal School buildings faced West Third Street; the rear of the complex was located on West First Street near Dixon Shoe Company, a factory (now a vacant lot) on West River Street.

Three small brick buildings (which could possibly be original to that time period) are still standing in the 1100 block of West Second Street and West Third Street; these have been renovated and are currently used by local businesses, one of which has been converted into an apartment building.

No college buildings remain in the northeast part of Dixon, but residential streets in the area still bear these names: Institute Blvd., University Street, Academy Street, Assembly Place, and Steinmann Street.

College Departments, Courses Offered, Degrees Conferred

Northern Illinois Normal School: Normal (Teachers') course; scientific course; classics course

Northern Illinois College of Law: Degrees – Bachelor of Law; Master of Law

Northern Illinois Conservatory of Music – Classics course; Degrees – Voice; Piano

Northern Illinois Conservatory of Music: Normal (Teachers') certificates – Voice; Piano; Violin; Public School Music

Northern Illinois College of Penmanship and Drawing: Degrees – Pen Art; Mechanical Drawing and Lettering; Public School Drawing

Northern Illinois College of Telegraphy

Northern Illinois College of Oratory: Degrees – Literary Interpretation

Northern Illinois College of Shorthand and Typewriting

Dixon Business College: Degrees – Business Arts, Graduate and Post-Graduate

Meetings, Activities, Events

Literary societies: Aurora Society, Vespera Society

Musical performances and recitals: Vocal, instrumental, orchestral, choral

Orations and addresses, Poetical and dramatic performances

Baccalaureate, valedictory and salutatory discourses

Commencement exercises: Speeches by the Hon. Solomon H. Bethea and the Hon. Sherwood Dixon

Sporting Exhibitions: Tennis tournaments

States and Cities Represented by Students

Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Missouri, Minnesota, Maryland, Nebraska, South Dakota, Florida

Illinois: Dixon, Franklin Grove, Mendota, Byron, Ottawa, Galena, Elizabeth, Litchfield, Mansfield, Kaneville, Georgetown

Collection Contents

Collection of programs and invitations: Commencement exercises, recitals, concerts, performances, and other events, dated from 1880s and 1890s; printed on cardstock with calligraphy and embellishments

Photographs: College buildings, portraits of faculty members, postcards, image of Lincoln statue, Dixon, IL, and Blackhawk statue, Oregon, IL

Correspondence:

Letter: From W. H. Ramsey, Hagerstown, MD, to L. W. Miller (former Lee County Superintendent of Schools and longtime president of Dixon College alumni association), Dixon, IL; date: 9/04/1951 -- memories of college years

Note: List of students of the class of 1883 at Dixon Normal (teachers') College; no names of sender or recipient, no photograph that matches names

Note: Text for article detailing founding and early history of the college, years 1879—1881; no date, author unknown [these facts do appear in a later *Dixon Evening Telegraph* article]

Letter: From Velma Swain, Long Point, IL, to L. W. Miller, Dixon, IL; date: 8/27/1946 – expressing appreciation for Mr. Miller's letter regarding college buildings, and for the gift of a piece of wood from a walnut staircase of a building which had been demolished [typewritten carbon copy]

Letter: From Joe D. Langston, Dixon Public Library Director, to a Mr. Snyder, no city or state given; date: 1/23/1947 – text of articles from *Dixon Evening Telegraph*, dated 9/01/1881; 10/13/1881; and 1/26/1882 – early history of Northern Illinois Normal School and Dixon Business College [typewritten carbon copies]

Letter: From Bernice Karraker, Dixon Public Library Director, to James B. Crone, Peoria, IL; date: 4/13/1950 – information concerning J. B. Dille, principal of Dixon College 1881—1902 [typewritten carbon copy]

Letter: From Abe Rubel, Jr., New York, N. Y., to L. W. Miller, Dixon, IL; date: 3/10/1950 – expressing appreciation for Mr. Miller's letter regarding college history; includes chronological summary [typewritten carbon copies]

News Article: "Edwards Takes Over Dixon College: Experienced Educator and Business Man Now President"; text from *Dixon Weekly Citizen*; date: 8/17/1911 – discusses background and qualifications of I. F. Edwards; end quote: "Every single requisite for success, Mr. Edwards brings to Dixon College; brains, experience and money as well as the good will of every friend of education." [press release]

Periodical: "The Educator: America's Only Handwriting Magazine"; newsletter of Zaner-Bloser company, Columbus, OH; Vol. 54, No. 1; date: Sept. 1948 – Featured article is obituary of L. M. Kelchner (1862—1948), professor at Zanerian College of Penmanship in Columbus until he accepted a position with the faculty of Northern Illinois Normal College; included are samples of his penmanship and artistic drawings

News clippings: Reunion announcements, reports, lists of alumni attending, with accompanying photographs -- *Dixon Evening Telegraph* [condition: fragile]

1938: *"Former Dixon College Students Gather to Renew Friendships"*: Master of Ceremonies – L. W. Miller, president of Alumni Association and Lee County Superintendent of Schools; noon luncheon – Nachusa Hotel; evening banquet – Dixon Masonic Temple; attendance – 150 (66 alumni and guests); photograph and list of alumni; date – 8/22/1938

1947: *"100 Attend 1947 Gathering Held at Nachusa Hotel"*: Master of Ceremonies – L. W. Miller, president; guest speaker – Lyle M. Prescott of Dixon, Representative to Illinois State Legislature in Springfield; location – Nachusa Hotel; attendance – 100; photograph and list of alumni; date – 8/1947

1954: *"Loveland House Scene of Dixon College '54 Reunion"*: Master of Ceremonies – Attorney H. C. Warner; guest speakers – Judge and Mrs. Grover Gehant; location – Loveland Community House; attendance – 100; list of alumni, no photograph; date – 8/24/1954

1955: *"Mrs. H. C. Warner Is Dixon College Reunion Speaker"*: Master of Ceremonies – Judge Grover Gehant; guest speaker – Mrs. H. C. Warner; location – Loveland Community House; attendance – 65; no photograph or list of alumni; date – 8/20/1955

Undated clipping: *"Years Fail to Dim School Spirit as Dixon College Alumni Gather for Annual Reunion"*: Master of Ceremonies – L. W. Miller, president emeritus; guest speaker – Miss Esther Barton, Principal of Lincoln School; location – Loveland Community Building; attendance – nine (9); photograph with list of alumni; caption for photo: *"Just as Young as You Feel"*, *Dixon College Alumni Claim*; referring to the six ladies pictured, caption states: "The Women would not disclose their ages"; article states: "Most alumni and students are past 60 and many are in their 80s." However, it was reported that a full slate of officers was elected for the coming year, including a reception committee for the next annual reunion.

Reunion programs and invitations: Dates – 1934; 1937; 1938; 1939; 1940; 1941; 1951; 1958

Reunion Roster: List of students registered at Dixon College reunions, 1937—1940 [2 copies]

Directory: Dixon College Students Association, 1916—1917 [condition: fragile]

Journal: Account Book listing names of alumni registered for reunions, notation of fees paid, current addresses and college years attended; reunion years – 1937; 1938; 1939; 1940; 1942 [condition: fragile]

Songs, Poetry, Meditations: List of Authors with dates of submissions:

Nettie May Burd, Wheaton, IL; Miss Clyde L. Carr, Chandlerville, IL, with accompanying letter (1948) Mrs. Augusta Kerch DeLhorbe, Oregon, IL John F. Dille, with accompanying letter [father, Jesse B. Dille, and grandfather, John C. Flint, were founders of the College] (1949)

Miss Adella Helmershausen, [class of 1891], Franklin Grove, IL, with accompanying letter (1951) and several compositions (1943, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1953) A. T. Hurst, Chicago, IL Mollie Hobart Kerch Prof. Frank E. Nurse (1902)

Leaflet: "Dixon College Reunion Songs", with Rules for Singing

Ancillary Materials

Block of wood bearing the legend, "Dixon College: Piece of old walnut stair railing"