

Dixon, Benjamin Franklin ^[1]

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by Frank Salter, 1986

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A photograph of Benjamin Franklin Dixon. Image from the North Carolina Museum of History.

^[2]Benjamin Franklin Dixon, soldier, teacher, minister, and physician, was born in Cleveland County ^[3], the son of Thomas Dixon, a successful farmer in the county. He had one brother, Edward. When the Civil War ^[4] broke out he enlisted on 25 Apr. 1861 at the age of fifteen. He was assigned to the Fourteenth North Carolina Regiment, commanded by his brother, Major Edward Dixon, who was killed at Richmond in 1862. Despite his youth, Benjamin Franklin Dixon received his commission on 9 June 1863. As a captain, he participated in such campaigns as Yorktown, Williamsburg, Seven Pines, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Drury's Bluff, and the nine-month siege of Petersburg. He was captured at Five Forks on 1 Apr. 1865.

When the war ended Dixon, at age nineteen, returned to his native county and began a teaching career. Two years later he passed the examination to enter the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal church. His first charge was in Sumter, S.C., but he transferred to Monroe in the North Carolina Conference. Later he went to his old home in Shelby; here he was allowed to stay put and resume his study of medicine. In 1874 he was graduated from Charleston Medical College and practiced at Kings Mountain, where he remained for ten years.

On 7 July 1877 Dixon married Mrs. Nora Catherine Tracy Durham, widow of Plato Durham ^[5] and daughter of Dr. James W. Tracy of Kings Mountain. They had a daughter, Pearl, and twin sons, Benjamin Franklin, Jr., and Wright Tracy. In 1883 Dixon was named superintendent of Oxford Orphanage. In 1890 he was elected president of Greensboro Female College by unanimous vote of the trustees; he resigned four years later and returned to Cleveland County. In the fall of 1896 he was elected to a seat in the state house of representatives.

On 8 May 1898, at the age of fifty-one, Dixon was commissioned as a major in the U.S. Army when the war with Spain ^[6] erupted. His sons also joined the Second North Carolina Regiment but none saw action. The elder Dixon was discharged on 25 Nov. 1898.

Dixon was nominated by the state Democratic convention for the office of state auditor in 1900; he was elected and then reelected to a second term in 1904. He was a member of the Masons ^[7], Odd Fellows ^[8], Knights of Pythias, and the Junior Order of United American Mechanics.

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"Portrait of Benjamin Franklin Dixon, member of the State Board of Education who cast the tie-breaking vote to locate East Carolina Teachers Training School in Greenville, N.C." 1908. University Archives. East Carolina University, Greenville, NC. <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/21392.2> [13] (accessed August 23, 2013).

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