

Dixon, Simon ^[1]

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by Frances Osborne Gust, 1986; Revised December 2021

1728–1781

Simon Dixon, [quaker](#) ^[2] pioneer and miller, was born in Lancaster County, Pa. He was the grandson of William Dixon who moved to Pennsylvania from Ireland circa 1688. His father, Thomas Dixon, a Pennsylvania Quaker, married Hannah Hadley on 20 Aug. 1727 at New Garden Meeting, New Castle, Del. At a public sale, Thomas bought a cradle in which a baby had died of smallpox. He brought it home on his horse, resting it in front of him. A short time later he developed smallpox and died in 1734 at age thirty. His widow was left with three small children: Simon, seven years; Rebecca, four years; and Ruth, about one year. On 13 Aug. 1742 Hannah Dixon married John Stanfield.

In the general Quaker migration from Pennsylvania into Virginia and the Carolinas, Simon Dixon—now age twenty-one—arrived in the spring of 1749 in the vicinity of Cane Creek, [Orange](#) ^[3] (now [Alamance](#) ^[4]) County, N.C., and unloaded his wagon on the north bank of the creek. (Today, this area is the community of Snow Camp.) He cleared some land, built a typical pioneer cabin of logs cut from the virgin forest, and planted a crop of corn. He then returned to his native Pennsylvania in the spring of 1751.

In 1752 Dixon married Elizabeth Allen. The following year, he returned to North Carolina accompanied by his wife and other settlers including two sisters and his mother, Hannah Hadley Dixon Stanfield. In 1751 he had purchased a vast tract of land from [Earl Granville](#) ^[5]. Dixon's tract, combined with that of a friend, surrounded what is now Snow Camp and Cane Creek. On this land he and his family constructed a house of native stone, cutting and splitting logs by hand for flooring and doors. In 1753 he also built a rock dam across Cane Creek using a team of oxen to haul the rock. The creek provided waterpower for grinding grain in a mill that he soon built. Inside was a set of millstones brought from Pennsylvania. Known through the years as Dixon's Mill, it was repaired and partly rebuilt several times and served the community well. In 1946 the aged structure was torn down, but the millstones had been rescued earlier. At a reunion of Simon Dixon's descendants in 1925 at Cane Creek Friends Meeting, one of the millstones was placed at his gravesite as a memorial to him and his family for their contribution to the community and to the meeting.

By industry and economy Dixon accumulated a good deal of property. The countryside along Cane Creek filled fast with immigrants mostly from Pennsylvania. Their need for goods other than what they produced themselves was met when Dixon built a store. Each spring and fall he traveled by wagon to Philadelphia to replenish his stock. Entries found in his old account book indicate that he sold his goods for something above cost and carriage.

A week after the [Battle of Guilford Court House](#) ^[6], probably about 20 Mar. 1781, British troops stopped at Snow Camp and took over the Dixon house as headquarters. Dixon and his family were forced to take refuge elsewhere. Tradition emphasizes that Lord Cornwallis kept himself warm before an open fire in the Dixon home, sitting in a straight armchair. It is thought that the soldiers tried to run the [gristmill](#) ^[7]; they failed because Dixon had jammed the mill wheel, making its operation impossible. According to another legend, some of Cornwallis's men, believing that Dixon possessed a money box, tortured him with red hot iron tongs to make him reveal its location.

The British resumed their march to Wilmington on 25 Mar. 1781. A few days later Dixon, about sixty years old, died from so-called camp fever contracted from some of the soldiers. Death came while he sat in the same armchair that was much used by Cornwallis. He was buried in the cemetery of the Cane Creek Friends Meeting, of which he had been a charter member.

Simon and Elizabeth Allen Dixon had eight children: Thomas, John, Naomi, Jesse, Simon, Solomon, Benjamin, and Elizabeth.

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