

Consider background on 'Dixie' name

Douglas D. Alder

Southern Utah Voices

A few things to consider about the Dixie State College name change.

1. Early southern Utah: When the American settlers came to Washington County, they were almost all Yankees. A few southerners were sent to Washington City to experiment with raising cotton prior to the large group who came to St. George in 1861. The majority were northerners. There was no loyalty to the South during the Civil War. There were very few blacks or slaves. These people were living in the south of Utah, in oppressive heat, and they were sent to raise cotton, and they were Yankees. They adopted the name "Dixie" as a nickname for the area, including land beyond Utah in Nevada and Arizona, because of heat and cotton, not because of partiality to slavery. The Mormons were highly suspected by the southerners because they welcomed the blacks into their church and did not promote slavery in their communities.

2. St. George Stake Academy: When the Academy was founded in 1911, the students and faculty and community quickly called it "Dixie College." That meant it was to serve the wide area, not just St. George. Soon the students and faculty and community put the "D" on the hill and the word "Dixie" on the Sugar Loaf. The latter was for the high school and the "D" was for the college. Both schools were in the same building.

3. The word "Rebel" was not the mascot of the college until 1952, 40 years later. The teams of both the college and the high school were called "Flyers." Both the high school and the college were included in the same institution.

Pressure began rising from the State Board of Education (which supervised the school) to separate the high school from the college. The school newspaper, "The Dixie Sun" (November 30, 1951, p. 3), published a debate about whether the name should be changed. The next issue announced that "Rebel" would apply to the college teams and "Flyers" would remain with the high school.

4. People who object to the name "Dixie" cite its association with segregation and race discrimination. That issue was central to the southern United States, not Southern Utah. Lionel Hollings is symbolic of that. As a black basketball star at Dixie he was selected as "Most Preferred Man." He is still a local hero and is now a professional basketball coach.

The name "Dixie" has been a rallying point for students and the community. To insult the alumni and donors is not a wise idea. Weber State University retains its old original name. Hardly anyone even knows who Weber was. The Utah State Aggies proudly retain that name even though the great majority of the students and faculty are not in agriculture. An attempt to abandon the word "Aggies" several years ago was soundly rejected.

The issue of segregation has been a major national issue but it is not what the word "Dixie" means in Utah. Put the words "St. George, Utah" right under the university name so that all readers will know that Dixie State University is not in Mississippi. But keep the loyalty of those who have paid for the school and will continue to do so.

Dixie State University at St. George, Utah.

Douglas D. Alder is a former president of Dixie State College. He resides in St. George.