

## History of the "D" on the "Black Hill" and the "Dixie" on the Red Hill

This is the story of Dixie College "D" Day as told by Mathew Bentley in 1962.

During the years of 1912-13 and 1913-14, there was much rivalry between the classes that would graduate in 1913, 1914 and 1915, from this new institution, the Dixie High Academy. When the school opened its doors in September 1911 there were many rather mature young men and women who registered for instructions. Many of them had been out of school for a few years because there had been no local school for them to attend after finishing the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Woodward High. Because of this mature element among the students, it was not difficult for the principal, Mr. Hugh M. Woodward, to establish a full-fledged system of student body government.

Having this mature group of young men and women in the student body also gave rise to some projects that might not have been promoted had all the students been in their mid-teens. During the year 1912-13, the class of 1913 went to the Sugar Loaf rock on the Red Hill north of St. George and painted the numerals "1913" in large white letters on the face of this prominent landmark.

This move created considerable attention both among the students of Dixie and many of the townspeople; but most concerned were the students of the class of 1914. This class was three times as large as the class of 1913 and this younger class, known as the Dolphins (named out of respect for their president, Dolph Atkin) decided that 1914 would look much better on the face of the Sugar Loaf than 1913. As a result, it was only a few days until the original numeral "3" had been obliterated with red paint and a new figure "4" appeared in its place. After this, it was not unusual to see a change in the figures every few days. In fact, it became customary to look toward the Sugar Loaf each morning to see who had been on the job during the night shift.

The change of ownership was not so bad in and of itself, but quite often there were some rather serious encounters with bare fists before it was determined which class would be represented with numerals greeting the public. After the class of 1913 graduated, the member of the class of 1915 sprouted wings for ambitious projects and took up the challenge where the class of 1913 had left off. The encounters were not confined to the Sugar Loaf on the Red Hill, but on some occasions a dummy representing one of the two upper classes would be seen securely anchored to the top of the famous old two-section flag pole in front of the area where the brick gymnasium erected in 1916 stood for many years.

During these years, the Friday devotional assemblies were held in the Stake Tabernacle. On one occasion, it was planned by the class of 1915 to have a few of its members remove a dummy from the top of the flag pole during the devotional program. Clinton Larson, the famous high jumper of the period, had been working part time for the local power company. He was using his pole-climbing spikes and had just started up the second section of the flag pole when someone in the Tabernacle looked out the window and saw what was going on. A signaling shout was given and

with no further announcement the students rushed from the Tabernacle to the vicinity of the flag pole. At this point, a general skirmish took place between the students of the class of 1914 and those of the class of 1915. Some physical features were blacked out, some clothes were badly torn and the large class, the Dolphins, was generally considered the victors.

It was<sup>it</sup> long after this encounter until the school and the student body officers met together and began talking of the possibility of a program that would bring all the students together and do away with this heavy class rivalry. It took some time to achieve the desired results, but out of this effort came the idea of building a school letter on one of the surrounding hills, and writes the word "Dixie" on the Sugar Loaf in place of any class numerals.

Soon after school began in the fall of 1914, it was decided by the interested students, faculty and many of the townspeople, that the proper place to build the school monogram, the "D" on the face of the Black Hill west of town and that the exact location should be on the steep slope between the first and second ledges and at a point directly in line with Tabernacle Street which extends east and west through the main section of St. George. It was also decided that the "D" should be built during the spring of the 1914-15 school year.

Leo A. Snow, a young civil engineer living in St. George, was engaged to survey the location of the "D". This included not only spotting the letter on the hillside, but also laying out the border of the letter as well as determining the height and width of the "D" so that it would look symmetrical when placed on the slope of the hillside. I suppose I should go to the "D" with tape measure and check the details, but my memory tells that the "D" is 100 feet high and 75 feet wide, and that the lettering itself is 13 feet wide. The width of the lettering may have increased a foot or two during the 50 years that it has been whitewashed because students sometimes become a little careless with the liquid coating material. Also, the rocks from which the "D" was constructed are large and very rough, being laid together without mortar and forming a surface much more uneven than anyone who has visited the immediate area would believe. Personally, I think that Mr. Snow did a good job on this occasion and as far as I know, his only pay was the "thank you" that he received during the luncheon program held the day the "D" was built, and the satisfaction of knowing that he had contributed to the fine project.

Before the construction could start on the "D" it was necessary to put into usable condition the old road built on the Black Hill during the 1870s when the St. George Temple needed rock for wall construction and which the road had long since been abandoned except that it was used as a cow trail for those who herded milk cows on the Black Hill or as a horst trail by St. George farmers who wanted a short cut to their fields south and west of the hill. The boys of the class of 1915 - there were 12 of us - were given the preliminary assignment of restoring the old road, making it fit for wagon travel. Our biggest piece of equipment were hand picks and shovels, but with plenty of teenage energy and by scheduling work assignments after school hours, we were able, in about three weeks, to drive and wagon to the area immediately below the site of the "D".



Friday, February 19, 1915, was a great day for Dixie High School, later Dixie College. That was the day set for the actual building of the "D". It was our school's own holiday and was to become the first regularly established holiday for Dixie High School.

In 1915, transportation facilities were very limited in this locality, except for those who had a team or a saddle horse. Most of the students walked to work this day, going directly up the slope of the hill and climbing the first ledge without giving a thought to the easier and longer route traveled by road. Arrangements were made to haul water and lime to the building site with teams. Four horses that would work together could pull a wagon loaded with five forty-gallon barrels full of water. Empty barrels were set on the ground at the unloading station and the water from the load was transferred to these so that more trips could be made with the teams and thus insures a good supply of water when it would come time to apply a liberal first coat of whitewash. Actual construction of the "D" consisted mainly of gathering rocks, as large as could be handled, from the area immediately surrounding the outline of the new letter, and placing these rocks in between the rocks that were already within the outline of the monogram so that when completed, the "D" would have a completely filled-in surface of black rock. This turned out to pretty heavy work, but here, again, youthful energy coupled with a lot of interest in the project was equal to the task. My memory is not definite on this point, but I think that the work progressed so well that one coat whitewash may have been applied before noon lunch and that in the afternoon some of the noticeably rough areas on the "D" were filled with rock and another liberal coat of whitewash applied to the entire letter. No holiday, especially this initial "D" Day would be complete without a good lunch. About 11:30 am, wagons loaded with prepared food began arriving and the girls of the school began climbing over the ledge below the "D". The usual preparation for serving a meal took place at 12 noon. Work was halted and everyone joined in for the picnic and short program. There were no pop bottles in 1915, no paper napkins, cups or plates, but there were lots of ordinary household dishes and lots of good food including, sandwiches, pan after pan of baked beans and home-baked pies and cakes, sufficient to satisfy any hungry boy's desire for things to eat.

I do not remember the details of the short program that followed the lunch, but one could almost guess that it would include a few remarks from the administration and some of the more prominent visitors who may have been on the hill that day.

During the 50 years that have checked off the calendar between 1915 and 1965, many things have happened that have become a significant part of the "D" or with the annual celebration that takes place on the day the annual coat of whitewash is added.

In 1915, the area of ground on which the "D" was built was public domain and no one gave any thought to subsequent private ownership that might take place as affecting this location. But this did come when William Prince homesteaded the main portion of the Black Hill. However, Mr. Prince, after proving title to this property and before disposing of it, gave a deed to Dixie College Alumni Association for the area where the "D" stands and to the land immediately below

it. I have been unable to find out what became of this deed, but according to the Washington County Recorder's Office, it was never filed. I did find at this office that on December 13, 1949, Rudger C. Atkin, who had acquired the Black Hill property from Mr. Prince, gave a right-of-Way to Dixie College Alumni Association for 2.59 acres of property which includes the "D" and some ground below it. This deed has been properly recorded in the Washington County Recorder's Office. With Jim Lundberg as president of the student body in 1950, a cement floor and several rows of rock seats in the form of a semi-circle to provide a small amphitheater was built to allow after lunch program and skits. This part of the "D" Day activities draws a good crowd. Many of the programs range from hilarious to the ridiculous, but not including very much sublimity. Sometimes faculty members receive a little more ribbing than would be permitted on other occasions.

Even though the application of the annual coat of whitewash is sufficient justification for a "D" Day, there are many other facts that have become a part of the program and contributes to the day's success. These include the downtown parade in the afternoon, the lunch and after-lunch program on the hill, and the mid-afternoon sports on the campus, the lighting of the "D" about 9 pm, and closing events of the day, the "D" Day dance. This feature has become very prominent during the course of the "D" Day history. At the dance, the "D" Day Queen and her attendants receive appropriate honor, participation of the floor show, and everyone present is made to feel that the "D" activities are an integral part of Dixie College and the Dixie Spirit!

Soon after 1941, when the City of St. George began producing municipal power, the Dixie College Alumni Association in cooperation with the St. George City Utilities Commission, took electric power to the "D" and from that time to the present the "D" has been flooded with light each and every night.