

DIXON'S ROWDY RAILROAD DAYS!

by VAN BEYDLER

Dixon had to go through wild times in its settlement and expansion period. Stories from area newspapers as early as 1870 describe events in the town like railroad strikes, school meetings, mysterious deaths, and new buildings.

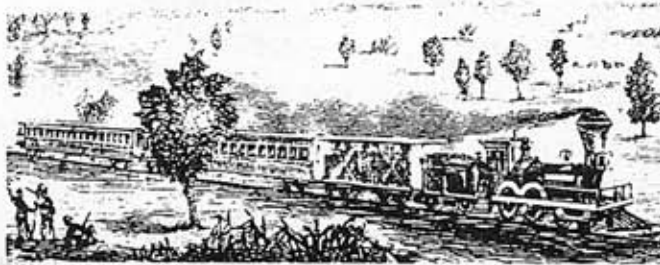
A reporter from the Rolla Herald submitted a story dated April 16, 1870. He wrote, permit me again to address you from our new and fast improving town, where from "early morn 'til dewy eve" is heard the sound of the carpenter's hammer, rapidly hurrying to completion, the many buildings now underway. It reminds one of the rapid building of houses at Rolla and other military posts during the late war. Truly we cannot tell today who may be our neighbor tomorrow. Many mechanics, tradesmen and businessmen have located here since my last communication, and yet we wish a lively competition, and invite those looking for a location not to fail in visiting Dixon.

Our merchants are doing a very active business and many of them (are) making large additions to their houses in order to accommodate a larger stock, and increasing trade. We notice that Messrs. Franklin and Co. are refitting their store in a very becoming style, and that Jas. Crismon has another large house looming up, under the supervision of our enterprising carpenters, Messrs. Eaton and Tibbs, while Mr. Tracy is working a full corps of carpenters upon his new hotel and eating house, in order to accommodate the public and the railroad employees.

We had a school meeting here a few days ago, the intention of which was to organize under the late special act of the legislature; but some persons we are sorry to say, who were active in getting up to the meeting, were more active in defeating its purpose; hence the project was defeated for the present. But a few more accessions of intelligent, progressive and true friends of education will drive the much to be hated and evil spirit of old fogysm beyond the pale of civilization, or cause it to yield to the enlightenment of the nineteenth century.

On the 3rd, the coroner held an inquest on the body of an unknown man, found in the woods about three miles

west of Dixon, and a one-half mile south of the railroad. A verdict was rendered that he came to his death from causes unknown to the jury. He appeared to be a man of middle age, small in stature, had light or sandy colored hair and whiskers and a very intelligent looking forehead. No marks of violence were found upon his person, but a portion of the body had been carried away or devoured by wolves or dogs. (He) was dressed in rather common clothing, which was mostly torn from his person but no papers or memorandum was found by which he could be



identified. He had been dead about two months and the body was in the last stage of decomposition.



SEPTEMBER 10, 1874 — Edward Cavanaugh, a brakeman on the through freight, lost his life on last Saturday morning near Dixon. As near as we can gather the facts are as follows: The through freight after passing Dixon came to what is known as the "slide," where the brakes are set to keep the train from running at a rapid rate down the grade. Cavanaugh, it seems, was passing from one car to another and making a mistep, fell between the cars, the wheels passing over his legs, crushing and severing them just below the knees. Dr. Glenn, of this city, was sent for on Saturday morning, and amputated both legs above the fractured parts, but the shock was too great, and Cavanaugh died a short time after suffering the amputation.

MAY 29, 1877 — Since my last communication, I have some pugilistic affairs to mention. We trust the public will not think Dixon worse than other railroad towns, as it is generally very civil, but some of its citizens and

others living near have been on the warpath recently.

First on the list come the operator, Mr. Drake, who bombarded Pat Crow on the ear, resulting in a broken finger and a bandaged arm for Drake. Next in the arena comes Johnny Cass, and by a sudden and powerful movement attempted to annihilate Mr. Oliver Bumpass, who in turn planted a stunner over Johnny's eye which sent him spinning around the room. Several rounds were fought when the combatants were separated.

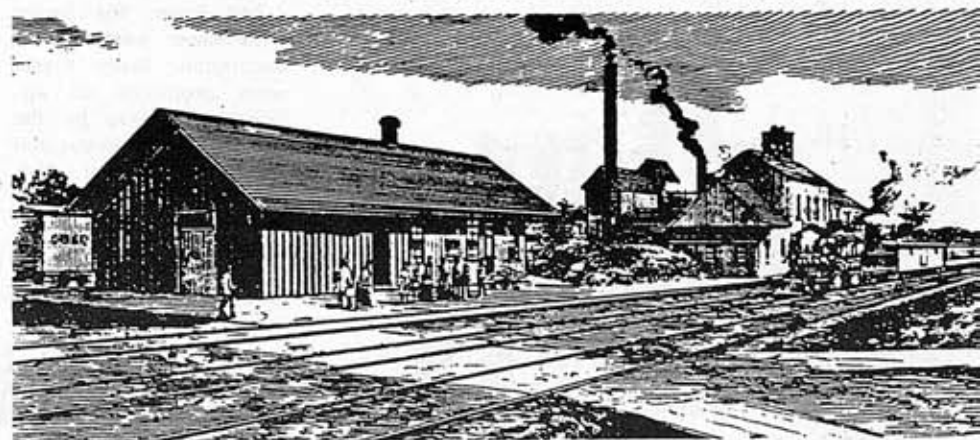
Next on the list is Al. Kanada, a conductor, who

was badly "demoralized" by the Murphey Brothers of Dixon. Last but not least, come Mrs. Keough, who administers to one Miss Malvina Reed (a school marm) a shaking up that she says will not be forgotten soon, nearly denuding Miss Reed, tearing and destroying her clothes. We expect soon to be incorporated, so we can accommodate those who will fight with a chance to pay for the luxury.

Last night Prof. Powers entranced us with some more of that splendid music at a dance at the Dixon Hotel. He will probably play one more night in Dixon before he takes his departure to New York to visit his mother and friends, we trust he will soon return. Prof. Tice's weather card is being fully realized here for this month, we trust a better one for the next.

JULY 11, 1877 — We are having a very quiet time, every one trying to keep cool. The health of our town never was better. Dixon still continues to improve, many new houses have been built since my last communication and several more will soon be underway.

The crops are good, wheat especially, and the farmers are endeavoring to save every bushel by stacking and threshing early. The only trouble they find is in getting plenty of reliable help at the right time, though we can



utilize the great number of tramps that always infest Dixon. We would have help to spare but they will not work and invariably beg their way. What shall we do with them? For they still come.

Uriah McGee was yesterday arrested and taken before Squire Lilly. He was committed to jail on a charge of grand larceny, stealing \$108 in gold and silver from Mrs. Norcissus Riddle. The grand jury today indicted McGee and he plead guilty; but his honor Judge Hill withheld sentence until he could hear the facts in full, and when he does your correspondent feels safe in saying that McGee will go where "the woodbine twineth."

The trainwreckers are in the Waynesville jail, and up to this time, nothing as yet has been done in their cases. The citizens of Pulaski County desire to see them prosecuted, and if found guilty punished to the full extent of the law. Certain newspapers have made free to intimate that the people of Pulaski County did not want these men prosecuted. I will here take the occasion to say that such is not the case, it is false and libelous upon the good citizens of this country, and the future will prove it. Newspaper reporters are not correctly informed of what they write, and had better know what they write to be true before they undertake to stigmatize, and cast this foul blot upon the citizens of Pulaski County, from the fact that this deplorable affair occurred in our county.

AUGUST 6, 1877 — The great strike being about settled, business is resuming its proper channels, and everything is on the move again. We are indeed glad to see it, and trust it may be a long time before we are cursed with another such mob. The mobites claim they have

established a precedent and that it may be even worse the next time. If such is so we trust the authorities may be better prepared for such an emergency, and as suddenly crush the conspirators.

The Texas fever is among the cattle in Dixon and vicinity. Dr. McGregor, Isaac Crismon and Mr. Needler, each lost two milk cows. 'Squire Lilly lost a pair of work oxen worth at least \$100. Many other have sick stock, and persons say that



the woods are full of dead cattle, and so putrified that the owners can't tell whose they are. The disease is supposed to have started from

some Texas cattle that broke out of the cars here last spring, and was bought by some persons and left to run on the range; and as the stock are sick only where Texas cattle have been, as far as we can hear of, proves the supposition to be correct as to the cause of the disease.

On last Thursday the citizens of Dixon were almost panic stricken, caused by a cavalcade of men, women and children, approaching Dixon from the north, all mounted, some on gay chargers and others on mules, while one of the party was perched on an antiquated gothic shaped steed with his girl stuck on behind him, and all moving toward the depot. We thought it might be the remainder of the strikers on their way to annihilate Dixon. Our excitement soon relaxed when we were informed that the party had two couples who were hunting someone to join them in the holy bounds of wedlock. There was no one in town at the time who could do this job, and they marched on. From whence they came, where they went, or who they were, was not learned.

