



That's The Way It Was in '91

by Gary Knehans

With the 1890 election a matter of history, political maneuvering slackened in the following year. Because of the Democrat party's sweep of Pulaski County offices, recriminations were heard from local Republicans concerning the causes of their defeat at the hands of the voters. In a letter to the editor of the "Rolla New Era," the county's leading Republican, Judge W. H. Murphy of Crocker, charged Democrats had employed dirty tricks in their conduct of last year's campaign. He warned members of his party to be alert to the deceptions of the Democrats.

Crocker, Mo., Jan. 12th, 1891.

To the Republicans of Pulaski county, Mo.: As chairman of your committee feel it my duty to warn you of any approaching danger, or any design on the part of our political foes to trap or lead any member of our party within the enemy's camp. Such an attempt is now being made, and I am sorry that some of our friends are being hoodwinked and persuaded into the "parlor" of the Democrat "spider" through its political ally. I refer to the organization known by the name of the Farmers' and Laborers' Union.

What ever good purpose this organization might have had in its early organization it now is in the hands of the political bosses of the Democratic party, and is being used by that party as a recruiting office to recruit Republicans with the free trade or Democratic party. There was a circular came out from Democratic Headquarters of this State just preceding the last campaign, signed by the chairman of the Democratic State committee of this State, addressed to the chairman of the several Democratic county committees, requiring these men to run all their influential men into the Wheel and Farmers' and Laborers' Union. "Run in enough to control these organizations in the interest of our party," said the circular. Immediately after the receipt of this circular I saw a general rush of all the leaders, and politicians of the party that were eligible to membership, to join. About this time all of our county officials, that were eligible went in, and about that time I was in Phelps county, and all the Democratic officials of that county, and I learn the same was true in Camden county, and so there was enough went in to control the organization in the interest of the Democratic party and they did most effectually control it, as the result of the state proves. They did not get the Republican members to vote the Democratic ticket, but in Republican counties they induced them to put out a third party ticket and thereby divide the Republican vote so the Democratic candidates could be elected. In Democratic counties there were no "side shows" or third party tickets. Democrats never vote any ticket but straight Democratic tickets unscratched as it came from the press.

As Judge Murphy was the county's top member of the GOP, County Clerk Edward G. Williams was one of the

leaders of the Pulaski County Democrats. He was well respected not only in this part of the state, but throughout Missouri as well. Williams, who had lost a leg in the Civil War, campaigned tirelessly for support and funds for a Confederate soldiers' home, which was eventually constructed and put into operation in Higginsville. His efforts caught the attention of regional Democrat party officials, who in 1891 began to propel him into a bid for the office of State Railroad Commissioner. Several newspaper dispatches tell of these events in the life of Williams, who served as clerk for 36 years, longer than anyone else in county history.

(Rolla Herald, Oct. 29th, reprinted from the St. Louis Republic)—Mr. E. G. Williams of Waynesville, Mo., an ex-Confederate soldier, who lost a leg at the battle of Gettysburg, was found by a Republican man at the Laclede Hotel. Mr. Williams, who is one of the present promoters of the movement recently put on foot to establish an Ex-Confederate Home at Higginsville, Mo., when approached by the reporter said: "For some years, as you know, we have made a custom of building cottages on the farm of 360 acres which the institution owns, to provide homes for ex-Confederate soldiers, their wives and children who find it necessary to ask our aid. Sixteen cottages have been built and are now occupied by forty men, women and children. We have now stopped building cottages, and instead will raise \$40,000 for the erection of a permanent home made of brick and sufficiently large to accommodate all who are entitled to its benefits. We have at present; \$16,000 surplus in our treasury, which will be applied to the work. The rest of the money we are now raising, and hope to soon have the building under way. When it is completed we propose to endow it with a \$100,000 fund, but it is not our present intention to ask the State Legislature to appropriate a cent towards it. We do not want the place to become in anywise a State institution, as, according to our present State laws, State subjects are paupers and subject to disfranchisement. We do not consider those who become charges at the home paupers, nor do we want them to lose any privileges because of being there. You can say that the ladies of St. Louis are doing noble work for us and that the old soldiers will be well cared for in Missouri as in any State in the Union."

(Rolla Herald, Nov. 26th)—Ed. G. Williams, the well-known county Clerk of Pulaski county, is being urged by friends from every section of the State to allow his name before the people as a candidate for the office of Railroad Commissioner. After mature deliberation he has decided to make the race, and we are confident he will win the prize. In all probability, Mr. Williams will be the only candidate for a State office from the 11th Congressional District. Now let South Central Missouri pull for Eds.' nomination.



E. G. Williams

Background information provided in an 1892 "Waynesville Democrat" dispatch tells us that Williams was born in Bedford County, Virginia, in 1843. He enlisted on April 16th, 1861, in Company E, 11th Virginia Infantry, Confederate Army. At the Battle of Drewry's Bluff, Williams lost a leg and was discharged from the army on May 16th, 1864. Moving to Missouri in 1866, he lived in Rolla until 1869, when he settled in Waynesville.

In 1891, Williams was vice president of the Ex-Confederate Association of Missouri, a member of the executive committee of the Missouri Confederate Home, a member of the congressional committee of the 11th congressional district, and a member of the judicial committee for the eastern district of the court of appeals.

The 1892 dispatch stated that Williams also had served as Pulaski County Circuit Clerk and Recorder of Deeds and as Probate Clerk. He served as County Clerk through 1914.

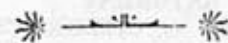
Another prominent name in the local news one hundred years ago was that of a law enforcement official from Dixon, T. V. Imboden. Imboden was listed in several dispatches, which tell of his bringing a Kentucky outlaw, Wilson Howard, back from California to face trial for the murder of a Maries County deaf mute several years earlier. He also collected a bounty for transporting the outlaw's brother to Kentucky to face criminal charges there.

Early in 1891, Governor Francis appointed Imboden an agent of the state and instructed him to go to California to bring Howard to Missouri to face trial on a murder charge. Howard had been located in San Quentin prison, where he was serving time under an alias on a robbery charge. After working out the complex details of extradition with the governor of California, Imboden secured custody of the outlaw and successfully brought him back by rail to Missouri.

On February 6th, Imboden stepped off a train at Dixon with the closely guarded prisoner. The tense scene at the platform there was described dramatically in a "Vienna Gazette" news article that was republished February 12th in the "Rolla Herald."

We are told that when Wils Howard arrived at Dixon last Friday and saw the large crowd assembled at the de-

pot to see him, he was as near being scared as he ever was in his life, and it was evident that he expected to be lynched. There were numerous expressions from the crowd of what he deserved, but no one offered to molest him. Two or three of the deaf mutes, companions of the one Howard is charged with the killing, were on the platform, and it is said that he was immediately recognized by them, as was shown by their excited motions and gestures, explaining little details of the deed.



Later in the year, Imboden pursued and captured Howard's brother, an event that was chronicled in the following dispatch.



(Rolla Herald, Jul. 9th, reprinted from the Dixon Echo)—John Howard, brother of Wilson Howard, who was recently taken to Lebanon, has been convicted and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in the Kentucky penitentiary. He was captured in Arkansas by T. V. Imboden of this city, who took him to Kentucky and received a reward of \$500.



The ensuing publicity about Imboden's exploits in capturing such tough characters as the Howard brothers undoubtedly served as a springboard for his political ambitions. According to records, Imboden was elected Pulaski County Sheriff in late 1892, and served four years in that position.

Outside of the public and political arenas, life went on at a more relaxed pace in Pulaski County. Still, there were events that captured the attention of the residents of one hundred years ago, events that we can view in the dim light of existing newspaper dispatches from that period of time.



(Rolla Herald, Jan. 15th, reprinted from the Waynesville Democrat)—W. C. Kerr has been appointed postmaster at Waynesville, Mo., vice Geo. Brucher resigned. This demonstrates that an old soldier, pensioner, veteran and G. A. R. man's only rights in the Republican party is to vote. That is all the use they have for him. The offices are reserved for the other fellow. The old soldier, wounded in the line of duty, has no show with the Republican party.

(Rolla Herald, Jan. 15th)—The Frisco is in great luck. Passenger train No. 4, east bound jumped the track a short distance this side of Richland yesterday morning, every car going into the ditch. Some of the coaches went outside of the right of way. About 45 passengers were on board and not one of them was injured. The porter of the chair car had three ribs broken. The other trains were delayed several hours.

(Rolla New Era, Jan. 17th, reprinted from the Waynesville Democrat)—We have recently heard whistlings of a



bank to be organized in our little town. The last legislature provided for the depositing of all of the county funds with the banking institution paying the largest premium for them. As there is an average balance in our treasury of about \$10,000, our wise financiers think it a fat plum which they would like to handle, hence the recent frequent meetings of our citizens with long purses.

(Dixon Doings, Vienna Gazette, Jan. 22nd)—A lovely day Sunday. Winter seems to be bending.

W. L. Wilson has sold a half interest in his drugstore to Doctors Mc Comb and Grempe.

Prof. Stewart's school still increases. Students who know the Professor will follow him up.

Our night operator deserves the praise of every parent in town for keeping the boys away from the depot of nights.

Mr. Leighton, of St. Louis, has been in our city this week making a deal with T. A. Murphy for the onyx mines near here.

Dixon will ere long be celebrated for her fine onyx mines. So mote it be.

A collision between two freight trains occurred on the Frisco Sunday night. The engineers were bruised up considerably and some hogs killed.

Our little town was given a tremendous scare last Friday night by the alarm of fire. Hatless men and bonnetless women rushed to the Central

House and stood around awhile to watch the office flue burn out and then quietly returned home. No damage.

(Vienna Gazette, Jan. 22nd, reprinted from the Lebanon Rustic)—"Uncle Wash." Raines, who lives about half way between Stoutland and Richland, was in Lebanon Tuesday and took the midnight train Tuesday night for home. The old gentleman wanted to get off at Stoutland but as the train does not stop there he said he would have to go on to Richland, expressing some regret at the inconvenience. But he got on and an hour later the train was wrecked between Stoutland and Richland in sight of the old man's house and within half a mile of his door, dumping him out on his own farm, almost. It was a very accomodating accident to him but he would prefer getting off at the regular stopping places to crawling out of a wreck.

(Rolla Herald, Feb. 5th, reprinted from the Waynesville Democrat)—Miss Nora Hill, having resigned her position in the Crocker school, on account of ill health of herself and mother. Mr. W. A. Mitchell has been employed for the remainder of the term.

(Rolla Herald, Feb. 5th, reprinted from the Richland Cyclone)—Rev. Davidson who has been laboring in the meeting at the M. E. Church for the past week left for Houston last Monday. While here he made many friends



Cruising down the river, an early Pulaski County pastime, enjoyed by Durand Brock and three lady friends, which included Monta Mehew. (Photo courtesy of Gordon Warren)

and preached some very fine sermons. He will long be remembered by his Richland friends.

(Rolla New Era, Mar. 7th, reprinted from the Maries County Gazette)—We

understand there was a big crowd at the race at Dixon last Saturday and that betting was lively, at least a thousand dollars changing hands on the result, besides considerable property of one kind and another. Small Bakers



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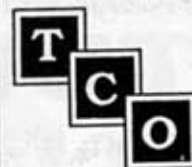
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roan mare won the heat by twelve feet. It was an interesting event to local sports.

(St. Louis Post Dispatch, Mar. 12th)—The papers for the incorporation of the Ozark Onyx company of St. Louis, were sent to Jefferson City last Saturday, and as soon as the official certificate of incorporation has been received the company will elect officers and otherwise complete its organization, and the expectation is that within sixty days St. Louis will have the largest plant for the manufacture of finished onyx in the whole world.

The company owns the famous onyx beds and caves of Pulaski and Crawford counties, this state, embracing 232 acres in Crawford, which were purchased from Mr. Rood, and 213 acres in Pulaski county, which were purchased from Messrs. Rood, Leighton, Broderick, Biscumb and others.

The Crawford county beds, partly on the hillsides and partly in caves, are within six miles of the Frisco road and within an eighth of a mile of the Meramec river, while those of Pulaski county are only a mile from the Frisco railroad and about the same distance from the Gasconade river. The cost of transportation to St. Louis will therefore be comparatively light and the cheapness of soft coal here will materially reduce the running expenses of the plant which we propose to establish here in St. Louis for finishing the raw material.

(Dixon Dotlets, Rolla New Era, Apr. 4th)—Dixon now has two licensed saloons, since local option was so knocked out so prettily by Judge Bland a few weeks ago.

W. R. Foster, former agent of this place died in Salida, Colo., on Friday, the 27th inst., after quite an illness. His remains were brought to St. James and interred in the Kern burial lot. His many friends here, regret to learn of his death.

The wife of Ben Branson died of pneumonia and measles on Sunday last. She was about 25 years of age and left three small children.

W. W. Howard, one of Dixon's enterprising merchants shipped 44 cases of eggs last Saturday.

The St. Louis parties interested in the onyx deposits were up last week.

(Rolla Herald, May 7th, reprinted from the Waynesville Democrat)—A young man by the name of Jacobson, near Swedeborg, while convalescing from a severe case of the grip attended the meetings of the Salvation Army, at Springfield, and the exercises so worked on the young man that his mind became unbalanced, and he returned home a raving maniac. His condition was inquired into at a special term of the County Court last Thursday, and an order made sending him to the Asylum at Fulton.

(Rolla Herald, Jun. 25th)—The Onyx mine near Frank Switch in Pulaski county is now running in full blast with 40 men employed. The Onyx is shipped to St. Louis where it will be polished and prepared for the market.

(Rolla Herald, Jul. 2nd)—Dixon, Mo., has a newspaper. It is called the "Echo" and is edited by E. D. Tingle. It will tingle for Democracy.



Dixon residents at the river in a postcard from around 1910. (Courtesy of Bill and Georgia Beydler)

(Rolla New Era, Jul. 4th, reprinted from the Richland Cyclone)—On account of the big crops Richland's population will be greatly increased this year. Some of the new comers will be of a very tender age but will be welcome nonetheless.

Hon. J. B. Rackliffe was seen on our streets last Friday. Rack and Judge Murphy are doing some good work for Pulaski county. A number of parties have been located here by them of late.

(Rolla Herald, Jul. 9th, reprinted from the Dixon Echo)—The prospectors for silver, who have been working in a cave 7 miles S. E. of Dixon, have sent to St. Louis for analysis some fine specimen of ore.

A valuable mare and mule belonging to Wes Robinson, were killed by lightning last Sunday, 5 miles north of Dixon. A little boy had been standing under the tree with the animals, but had left just before the fatal bolt struck.

(Rolla Herald, Jul. 16th, Relfe correspondent of Waynesville Democrat)—It is with sorrow that we chronicle the death, by drowning, of Mr. S. W. Freed, our artist. On the morning of the 4th, Mr. Freed, James Freeman, Dr. Cowan, Robert Hamilton, Lorra Freeman, Wm. Peterson, John Freeman, John Pillman, and others, went to the Stone Spring, on Piney, to have a fish fry. Intending to sein the river just above the spring, the deceased and three others started across the river with one end of the sein. When about half way across deceased let go of the sein and cried for help, but as he was a good swimmer, the others at first thought he was joking, but in a moment they saw he was not, and Robert Hamilton swam to him, and in trying to save him came near drowning himself, so that he had to brake loose from him. The water was deep and very cold, and it is thought he was taken with cramp. The body drifted down the current a few feet and was taken out about half an hour after drowning. The remains were laid to rest in the Freeman cemetery, near Relfe.

(St. Louis Republic, reprinted in the Rolla New Era, July 18th)—State Senator J. B. Rackliffe, of Waynesville, Pulaski county, Mo., was accosted by The Rambler as he sat in front of the Laclede Hotel. "I have nothing worth relating," said Mr. Rackliffe. "You are off in your calculation that I am a Gubernatorial candidate. I leave that to Dick Dalton of Ralls county and U. S. Hall. Right here I would remark that I do not believe the State of Missouri wants the Farmers' Alliance to dictate who shall be its candidate, and I think Hall has had enough in securing Hickman for Railroad Commissioner. I think Francis will hardly aspire to the Senate, at least openly, for some time to come. Dockery or Bland would make good Gubernatorial timber, but I scarcely think either one will consent to make the race. I'm not in politics myself; I am trying to make some money selling real estate down on the Frisco road, an occupation which is not compatible with statesmanship."

(Rolla New Era, Aug. 8th)—J. H. Prewitt, charged with the murder of Samuel Wood in Pulaski county, on the 5th of October, 1889, has been on trial in our court since Thursday last. So far there has been little or no evidence connecting him with the killing. Our readers will doubtless recollect that this is the case in which Dora Prewitt, the wife of J. H. Prewitt, claims to have done the killing in defense of her honor, during her husband's absence from home. The theory of the prosecution is that Prewitt himself did the killing and compelled his wife to assume the responsibility in order to shield himself. Over a hundred witnesses are in attendance. The case came here upon a change of venue from Pulaski.

State vs. J. H. Prewitt. Since the above was put in type, the prosecution closed its evidence, the judge instructed the jury that there was not a particle of evidence convicting J. H. Prewitt with the killing of Samuel Wood and to return a verdict of not guilty, which was immediately done and the prisoner discharged.

(Rolla New Era, Aug. 22nd, reprinted from the Waynesville Democrat)—S. Q. Chamberlain of Rolla, who has formerly taught at Crocker, has accepted the principalship of the Crocker school for the ensuing term. We understand the primary school is still vacant.

(Rolla New Era, Aug. 29th, reprinted from the Waynesville Democrat)—One day last week a mover passing through the county, either intentionally or unintentionally permitted a colt of Mr. Coppock's to follow with a loose horse of his. It was reported to Mr. Coppock that the mover or his children was driving the colt with their stock, which caused him to procure a warrant for the parties, and in company with a deputy sheriff he went after the parties, overtaking them at St. James, Phelps county. He was brought back here and on Monday was arraigned before Esq. Mc Donald. On account of the old man's impoverished condition, the fact that his wife and children were left alone by the roadside, Mr. Coppock refused to prosecute, and the case was dismissed.

(Rolla Herald, Sep. 17th, reprinted from Waynesville Democrat)—From Judge Murphy we learn that at Crocker last Sunday evening or night, an unknown man, apparently about 40 years of age, was found on the railroad track a few hundred yards west of the dept. with his foot and ankle badly crushed. He was removed to a room adjoining Mr. Lawson's hotel, when Dr. Ragan, of Richland, was called to see him. The foot was amputated just above the ankle. It is supposed the accident was caused by the cars, yet the crew of a freight train that had passed just a little while before he was found, say they saw nothing of him or knew anything of the accident. The man seemed to be rational, but declined to state how he got hurt, or where he had been for the past year, or give any information other than that he had relatives living at Newwood, Mo. He may be all right and may be a fugitive from justice, as there has been several jail deliveries in Southern Missouri recently.

(Rolla New Era, Sep. 19th, the article datelined Sep. 11th)—Three years ago Thomas Hendricks shot and instantly killed James O. Manes, about two miles from this place, at a dance. Mr. Hendricks fled the country, and William Green was indicted at the next term of the Pulaski Circuit Court charged with aiding and abetting Hendricks to escape. The case was tried yesterday at Waynesville, and Mr. Green convicted and fined \$100 and three months in the County Jail. Hendricks has never been apprehended.

(Rolla New Era, Sep. 26th, reprinted from the Waynesville Democrat)—In the course of business one occasionally comes in contact with a man who gives evidence of his true character. Our collector, Mr. T. J. Christeson, met such a one, during our last term of circuit court, in the person of Mr. J. S. Rhea, of Dixon. John had neglected to pay the taxes on some real estate which he owned near Dixon, and suit was brought to foreclose the State's lien. By a technical error or omission of the assessor it was found that these taxes could not be collected by suit, and an attorney so told Mr. Rhea, and

proposed to appear for him and have the case dismissed. The collector also told Mr. Rhea that he had discovered the error, and that the suit would be dismissed. But Mr. Rhea declined to do it, saying that he owed the tax and was morally bound to pay it. That his neighbors had paid their taxes, and he ought to pay his, and would not take advantage of any technical error to shirk his part of the expense of government. John paid his taxes, and certainly feels better than if he had shirked behind some official's unintentional omission. Such occurrences shows what a man is, and proves the true character.

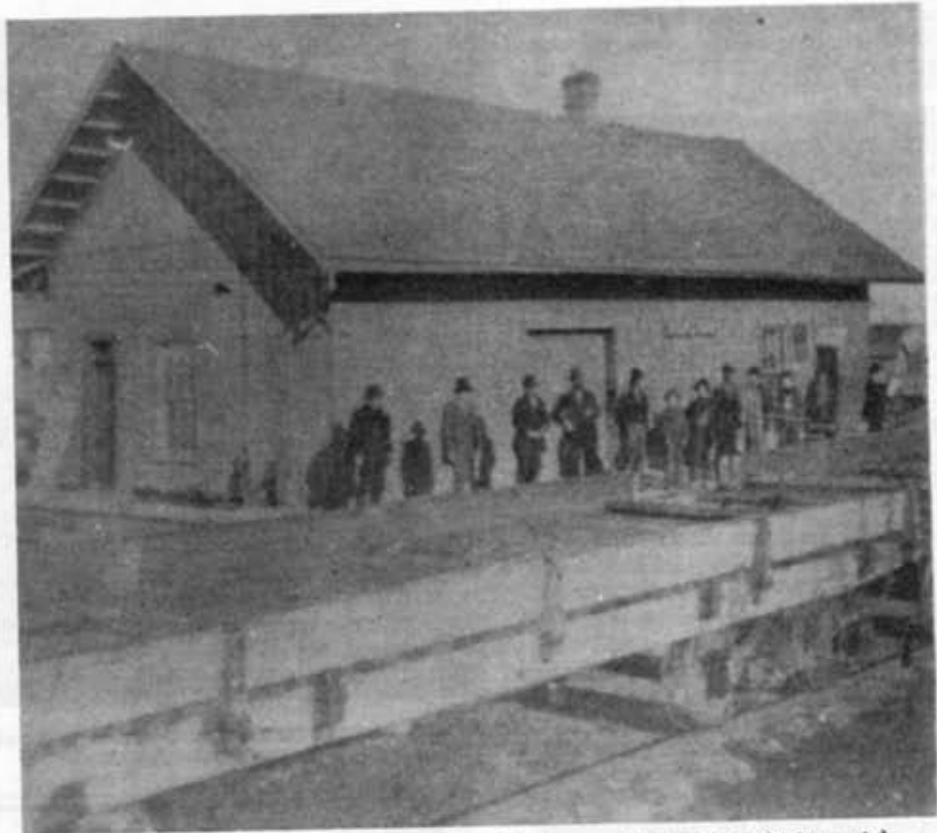
(Rolla New Era, Sep. 19th, reprinted from the Waynesville Democrat)—Miss Kate, the accomplished daughter of Judge W. H. Murphy, of Crocker, was selected as the Court stenographer to take the testimony in the Wm. Greene case last Monday. She was rapid and correct and greatly facilitate the trial of the case. This is the first stenographic notes ever taken in our Circuit Court.

(Rolla Herald, Oct. 8th)—J. V. Parker, the popular operator and agent at Crocker, spent Sunday in the city. He says that now since the telephone line has been built between Waynesville and Crocker and Iberia and Crocker he

stands like Barthold's statue, between the glitter of brass buttons on the north and the gleam of rebel repentance on the south, but thanks a good constitution he is still alive.

(Rolla Herald, Oct. 15th, datelined Hancock, Oct. 12th)—Lucretia Elkins, daughter of R. J. Elkins, a farmer, living 3 miles from this place, committed suicide this afternoon at her home by shooting herself with a pistol. She was about 20 years old, and was a bright and beautiful girl. No cause is known for the act.

(Rolla New Era, Oct. 31st, reprinted from the Richland Cyclone)—Chas. Dean, of Bailey, was in the city Tuesday. He was on his way home from Springfield where he had been serving on the U. S. grand jury. He informs us that three of Pulaski county's citizens were sent to the Pen for passing counterfeit money—one of the three was Frank Sullivan. They had been making Bland dollars and a considerable number of them, together with molds, were found on the persons of the accused when arrested. Their operations were confined to passing bogus dollars on the street car conductors. They would hand a dollar to the conductor and receive 95 cents in change.



Dixon's first depot was built in 1869. (Photo courtesy of Carol Muennig)



Postcard from Dixon, circa 1915. "Grandpa" Richardson holding Pat Wells and Eunice (Riddle) Sooter; Bill, Nora, and Lillian Wells; Chester and Luther Riddle and Lillie Riddle reaching over. (Courtesy of Bill and Georgia Beydler)



Apantha and Pat Wells, Lillie and Eunice Riddle, and Rose Richardson of Dixon on a postcard from the early 1900's. (Courtesy of Bill and Georgia Beydler)