

[http://www.millercountymuseum.org/bios/bio\\_d.html](http://www.millercountymuseum.org/bios/bio_d.html)

## **WILLIAM POWELL DIXON**

William Powell Dixon was born May 11, 1812 in Roxburg, Person County, North Carolina. I have not been able to learn the name of his parents. William was an early settler of what is today Miller County, but when he arrived in central Missouri, the county had not been formed. As early as 1833, he had made a land entry on the northern prairie near Spring Garden (then Cole County).

While still a young unmarried man, William was elected as Miller County's first Circuit Clerk and Recorder on August 6, 1838. He held this office from 1838 to 1856. During the same period of time he also served as Clerk of the County Court. The two offices were combined during those years. In 1844, William asked to have a building constructed on "Village Square" near the first courthouse (built of logs). The old courthouse was so cold during the winter months that William said he would build his own public office if the Court would provide the funding. They gave him \$75 and he put up a new one-room building and moved the county records into it.

Earlier, before being elected to the public office, he had a general store and trading post at Pleasant Mount (Mt. Pleasant) and was one of the first businessmen of the county. After his election in 1838, out of necessity, he moved to Tuscumbia to be near the courthouse. It has been said that "it's almost certain the name Tuscumbia was suggested by William P. Dixon". He was also given credit for naming Spring Garden, but I can't confirm these claims since it seems to be legend and not fact.

On May 21, 1839, William married Nancy Minerva Wilkes in Miller County, a daughter of Edmund and Cynthia (Houston) Wilkes. His parents married in Maury County, Tennessee on 8 December 1819. Edmund Wilkes was also in the political history of Miller County, serving as the first Miller County Representative in the Missouri State Legislature during 1838 to 1840. Nancy Wilkes Dixon was born in Maury County, TN on July 10, 1822 and was one of five children born to her parents.

**They were:**

1. Albert Gallatin Wilkes 1820-1880 m. Lucy Adcock 1842
2. Nancy Minerva Wilkes 1823-1869 m. William Powell Dixon 1839
3. Lanceford Bramlett Wilkes 1824-1901
4. Peter Singleton Wilkes 1826-1900
5. Benjamin Franklin Wilkes 1828-1847

William P. Dixon and his wife, Nancy Minerva, spent part of their married life in Tuscumbia while he held public

office and later moved to Mt. Pleasant, Saline Township. They were members of the Methodist church in Mt. Pleasant where William served on the board of trustees. In 1859, William was a partner with John Sullens in a general store in Mt. Pleasant called Dixon & Sullens.

**The children born to William and Nancy were:**

1. Levonia Josephine Dixon 1840-1919 m. Dr. William Rufus Kennard
2. Marion Dixon 1842-1848
3. Thomas Edmund Dixon 1845-1922 m. Frances Jane Norfleet
4. Elizabeth Dixon 1848-1852
5. Mary Louella Dixon 1849-1932 m. #1-David M. Barnett #2-George Golden
6. Nancy A. Dixon 1853- m. A. Spake
7. William Price Dixon b. \_\_\_ d. \_\_\_

William P. Dixon was a slave-owner who owned three slaves in 1860, valued at \$1400. His father-in-law, Edmund Wilkes, also owned nine slaves the same year with a value of \$5400. Both men were Southerners, having come to Missouri from North Carolina and Virginia and probably brought slaves with them when they came to central Missouri.

When the Civil War moved into Missouri many Southern sympathizers were rounded up in the Mt. Pleasant area. William Dixon and Edmund Wilkes evidently were able to avoid capture for quite sometime and hid out in a cave in the Saline Creek area. Nancy and her young daughter,

Mary Louella, were able to keep in touch with the men and probably supplied them with food to survive.

In 1864, William was arrested and sent to a military prison at Jefferson City. I do not know what happened to his father-in-law, Edmund Wilkes, at the time. I know that Edmund eventually lived at California, Moniteau County, MO where he died in 1869. Nancy Wilkes was quite a determined lady....after the arrest of William, she wrote a letter of protest to President Abraham Lincoln and the president issued an order to have William released from the prison.

William, Nancy, and their family left Miller County and never returned. She became ill in 1869 and traveled to Lexington, Kentucky for some medical treatment. Her brother, Lanceford Wilkes, was living there and she died at his home.

William Powell Dixon lived for 24 years after the death of his wife. In 1893, he died at the home of his daughter and her husband, Dr. William R. and Josephine (Dixon) Kennard in Rockdale, Milam County, Texas. He was survived by 5 children: Josephine Dixon Kennard of Rockdale, Texas; Thomas Edmund Wilkes of Vernon County, MO; William Price Dixon of Kansas City, MO; Mary Louella Dixon-Golden of San Antonio, Texas; and Nanny/Nancy Dixon-Spake of Johnson County, MO. Two children had died many years before and were buried somewhere in Miller County (Marion 1842-1848 and Elizabeth 1848-1852).

I have seen the signature of William P. Dixon on many old records at the Miller County courthouse where he served in the Circuit Clerk, Recorder, and County Clerk offices for many years in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s.....The name becomes so familiar that one feels as though you knew him personally.