

Dixon, Howard Briten ^[1]

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by Douglas Denatale, 1986

19 June 1903–24 Mar. 1961

Howard Briten Dixon, millworker and musician, attained recognition with his brother Dorsey ^[2] as a country musician ^[3] and recording artist. Born in Darlington, S.C., to William McQuiller (1875–1939) and Mary M. Braddock Dixon (1874–1939), he began work in the cotton mill there at the age of ten. In World War I ^[4], by concealing his age, he found work with his brother as a railroad signalman. In 1920, he married Mellie Barfield of Darlington; their children were Beatrice Smith, Elizabeth Pratt, Larry, Howard, Jr., Gordon, Alfred, and Hayden.

After the war, he returned to mill work, and followed his brother to East Rockingham in Richmond County ^[5], N.C. Here the brothers formed a singing partnership and enjoyed local success. Influenced by the country musician Jimmie Tarlton, Howard took up the Hawaiian guitar, and the Dixon brothers achieved a measure of success on Charlotte radio ^[6] and in recordings made for RCA Victor. His instrumental ability was in demand by other musicians, and he also recorded several songs with Frank Gerald as the Rambling Duet.

When his brother moved to Greenville, S.C., Howard remained in East Rockingham to raise his growing family. A skilled loom fixer, he eventually acquired land in an area of Hamlet, N.C., which became known as Dixonville. There he was active in the Church of God of Prophecy, and with Lloyd Harris, Norman Walts, and James Collins performed gospel music as the Reaping Harvesters. Occasionally aided by his brother Dorsey, he continued to play with the group until his death from a heart attack at work. His work in religious music was carried on by his children in the Hamlet community.

References:

Sources cited under Dorsey Murdock Dixon ^[2].

Additional Resources:

Huber, Patrick. "A Blessing to People: The Dixon Brothers, Howard and Dorsey." *Linthead Stomp: The Creation of Country Music in the Piedmont South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2008.
<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=5EBWZHSNTccC&lpg=PP1&pg=PA216#v=onepage&q&f=false> ^[7] (accessed February 6, 2014).

Huber, Patrick and Kathleen Drowne. "I Don't Want Nothin' 'Bout My Life Wrote Out, Because I Had It Too Rough in Life: Dorsey Dixon's Autobiographical Writings." *Southern Cultures* 6, no. 2 (2000): 94-100.
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Image Credits:

Dixon Brothers-The School House Fire. YouTube video, posted by BBYMRLCCOTN, December 27, 2009.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F32yPBIr_U ^[11] (accessed February 6, 2014).

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Denatale, Douglas^[14]

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