

Family Had Just Come From Arkansas In Covered Wagon

His Father a Country Baptist Minister and Lost 100 Slaves
as Result of War—Mother a Great Reader and Lover of
Literature—Brother a Great Preacher.

Charlotte Observer 2/6/31
BY CHARLES H. DICKEY.

"Mr. Dixon," I suggested, "would you mind telling us how it feels to have the favorable attention of so many millions of people?" I was interviewing Thomas Dixon, famous author, playwright, actor and former minister, son of a Cleveland county Baptist preacher.

"In the main," he said, "I lose consciousness of it entirely. It is just a question of personal living and study and work with me. The fame and the outside glow is a thing that I enjoy subconsciously, but it really does not affect my life one way or another. I absolutely, in the main, ignore it and go right on as if I were a student just starting out."

"But it probably affected you differently," I chimed in, "on your first burst of success?"

"Yes. The greatest excitement that I ever had in my life was the launching of The Clansman. Then I made a great deal of money, and made it quickly. Of course, I can see now that I was a success, and I got a certain exhilaration and punch out of it. However, as the years have come and gone, I have thought less and less about whatever fame I may have achieved and more and more about the work I have in hand."

At this point, Mr. Dixon seemed to be working into a reminiscent mood. His mind had gone back through the decades to the time and place he was born in Cleveland county. He said:

FROM ARKANSAS IN WAGON.

"I was born near Shelby, North Carolina, on January 11, 1864. Earlier my father had moved to Arkansas. The family were living in Arkansas during the Civil war.

"My father removed, with his household and slaves, back to Cleveland county during that war. That long journey was made in covered wagons. That was only a short time before I was born, and on that journey my mother slept in the old covered wagon each night with a rifle by her side.

"I recall that the stories they told me about this journey afterwards made a great impression on me. I used to ask my father

about the slaves and all. He had sold his farm for gold and got a big price. He also had a hundred slaves.

"I said to him, 'Why didn't you sell your slaves, and we would all be rich today?'"

"He said, 'Son, I couldn't sell a slave. They were my people, and I had to take care of them, and I would not have left them with strangers in Arkansas any more than I would have left your little brother.'

"After the war was over, they came back to him and tried to get him to take them back. He told them that he couldn't do that—that it was against the law. But they wanted him to place them on the farm and look after them as he had been doing in the old days.
BORN ON FARM.

"At the time of which I speak, we were living on a little farm just out of the town of Shelby. I was born in that farm house. I was the only child born there.

"It was a farm house on the main road. Soldiers streamed by in lines every day—hundreds of them, hungry and thirsty—and they burned up all the fences around the buildings; but my father did everything he could to provide them with certain comforts.

"They took all the corn and meat. When they got past our place, the farm was striped of all the fences, and we did not have anything to eat. At this time, my father went back to Shelby.

"My father's ministry was very interesting to me. As a little boy I used to go with him, for he always wanted to take me along. I went to his church every Sunday. I sat in the pulpit behind him.

"He was a wonderful preacher. I was too small then to understand his powers, but he did have a wonderful power over his audi-

ences. He always preached the Bible and never used anything else. Of course, I think his great power over the people was not so much his ability to reason, or his scholarship, but his realization of the presence of God. That was the thing that carried the people.
TRIED FOR HERESY.

"My father was once tried for heresy. That heresy consisted in his having invited a Methodist preacher into his pulpit to assist him in one of the services.

"That was one of the greatest tragedies of his young ministry. An old deacon in the Baptist church in Shelby was an intense old-timer, and he did not like Methodists at all.

"He called a council when my father had invited this minister, and my father attended the trial, of course. The deacon who gave them the use of the church did not know what it was being used for, and when old Deacon Hoyle found out they were going to try my father, he nailed every window and padlocked the door and locked it, and then he went to meet my father and wanted to apologize to him and told him that he had been called pastor of the New Prospect church.

"He became pastor then of that church—New Prospect Baptist—and remained there in that capacity for 50 years.

"I joined that New Prospect Baptist church when I was 11 years old.

"My mother was a very remarkable and lovable woman. She was the daughter of a rich southern planter named Abner McAfee.
**SLAVES WERE MOTHER'S
DOVER.**

"She had lived in South Carolina and had grown up in luxury. When she married my father, her dower was the slaves. That is how my father came to be a slave-owner.

"My mother had once gone to school in a little female seminary in Rutherfordton. She lived to be 71 years old.

"I was in the north and did not get back to the funeral.

"After she died, the widows of the church set their caps for my father.

"He was a Baptist preacher, and the people thought it was a great thing to marry a preacher."

"One day my father said, 'Son, I will never marry again. There is no other woman for me.' That was the way he looked at it.

"My mother was a romanticist. She was a great reader—a reader of novels and everything else.

"That is where I came in.
"My father used to worry over her reading so many novels. Out of one of these novels, she got my brother A. C. Dixon's name, which was Clarence; and my