

DIXIE COLLEGE

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DIXIE COLLEGE. The historical marker identifying the site of **Dixie College, the forerunner of Tennessee Tech**, bears the following inscription: “This quadrangle was part of the grounds of the University of Dixie, commonly called ‘Dixie College,’ chartered November 18, 1909. Jere Whitson and other Cookeville citizens led the drive for the college; Whitson donated 12 acres for the institution. Construction began May 16, 1911. In September, 1912, high school and junior college classes began in a building where Derryberry Hall now stands. In 1915 the Dixie Board ceded its property to the State to endow the present University.” The marker commemorating Dixie College stands in front of Derryberry Hall on the north end of the main campus quadrangle.

According to Austin Wheeler Smith in his book *The Story of Tennessee Tech*, the drive for the new university, on the plot known as the ‘old Fair Grounds,’ was **spearheaded by Mr. Whitson and other members of the Broad Street Church of Christ, and the original Board of Trustees were members of that church.** During the four years Dixie University was in existence, it served many young people from Putnam and the surrounding counties; this University, however, never attained college status.

In August, 1914, Dixie University merged with the Putnam County High School and this arrangement continued until the properties were ceded to the state. At the close of the 1915-16 school year, **Dixie University became history and the Putnam County High School was merged with the Tennessee Polytechnic Institute**, Austin W. Smith was faculty of TPI, September 1, 1916.

(Source: *Putnam County, Tennessee, 1850-1970* by Mary Jean DeLozier, 1979: Organized Religion, pg. 277. Throughout the United States church attendance and membership grew rapidly after the war. Faiths long established in Putnam County added new members and started new congregations. **The Church of Christ** was probably the fastest growing church in the area in the forties and fifties. **In 1952 Cookeville’s Broad Street congregation divided and built Collegeside Church of Christ near the Tennessee Tech campus.** Other historic congregations helped found new churches. Cookeville’s First Baptist, for example, started a congregation in Algood in 1956, and Cookeville’s First Methodist sent out members to begin Parkview in 1957.

(Source: *Heritage of Putnam County Tennessee – 2008* by Putnam County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage Inc., pg. 41: **DIXIE COLLEGE – About 1909 a group of business men formed a committee, consisting of W. D. Boyd, James N. Coe, John B. Dow, Jesse C. Elrod, Robert L. Farley, Thomas D. Ford, Gideon H. Lowe, A. G. Maxwell, G. A. Maxwell, and Jere Whitson as chairman.** They applied to the legislature for a charter to establish a school of higher learning. On April 20, 1909 the charter was granted. On May 16, 1911 construction started on what was known as the administration building. This was the first one built and was located where Derryberry Hall is now located. The private school, called **University of Dixie**, opened its doors for classes on September 2, 1912 in an unfinished building. This housed the entire school, such as the business office, classrooms, and library. It consisted to two years of high school and two years of college. **The University of Dixie operated until 1915 when it was turned over to the State of Tennessee to become Tennessee Polytechnic Institute and to be operated by the State.**

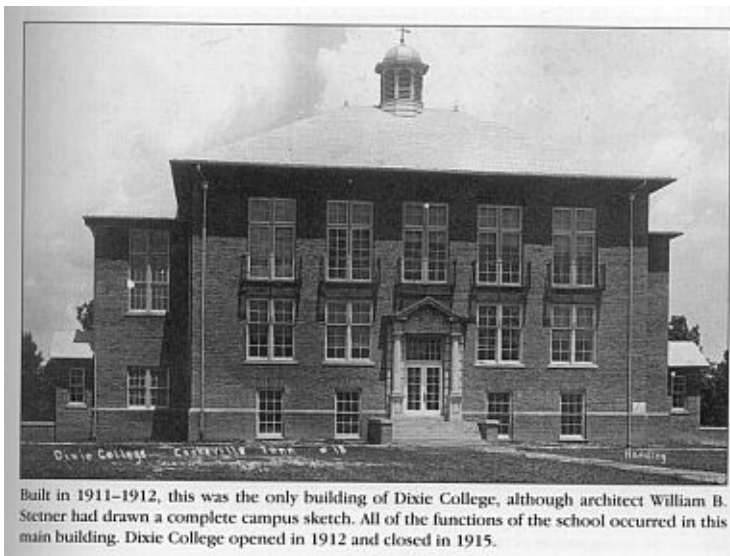
Story submitted by: Charlie Hunter, Cookeville, TN.

(Source: *Heritage of Putnam County Tennessee – 2008* by Putnam County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage Inc., pg. 49: **TENNESSEE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY** by W. Calvin Dickinson. TTU’s predecessor in Cookeville was the University of Dixie, more popularly called Dixie College. Established in 1909 by the Church of Christ in Cookeville, Dixie College never developed a college curriculum. It served as an academy of secondary education for Putnam County students. The school hoped to become the Church of Christ College for the Old South, but David Lipscomb in Nashville and other colleges prevented the Cookeville institution from achieving this status. Despite a school representative traveling throughout the South raising money and recruiting students. Dixie suffered from lack of financial support and students.

Cookeville had wanted to host one of the four teachers colleges created by the General Assembly in 1909, but Memphis, Nashville, Murfreesboro, and Johnson City won the schools. After much political lobbying by local state representatives in the General Assembly, the state chartered Tennessee Polytechnic Institute in Cookeville on the grounds of Dixie College in 1915. Dixie gave up its charter and donated its grounds to the state.

(Source: *Tennessee Technological University* (The Campus History Series) by Mancil Johnson and W. Calvin Dickinson, 2002, pgs. 7 & 8. INTRODUCTION: The genesis of the university was in 1909, with the foundation of a private college called the **University of Dixie**. Dixie was an institution created by the **Church of Christ** to serve the southeast region. **The parent of Dixie College was the Broad Street Church of Christ in Cookeville, Tennessee, and the primary leader of the church in the enterprise was prominent Cookeville businessman, Jere Whitson.**

The “university” never became a college, but acted as a primary school. The school never attracted



students from the southeast region, but only from the immediate Tennessee area. The school never secured adequate operating funds, despite hiring an agent to tour the south recruiting students and funds. **Dixie College opened in 1912 in temporary quarters, with W. G. Boyd as president and with a faculty of nine.** A 3-story brick building, with dimensions of 100 by 60 feet, was eventually completed in the center of the 18-acre campus.

In 1915, Cookeville leaders offered Dixie College to the state. Local legislators sponsored a bill in the legislature, and Gov. Thomas

Rye supported and signed it. An outcry from the University of Tennessee and other public colleges in the state, as well as from many high schools, did not deter the organization of **Tennessee Polytechnic Institute** in Cookeville. The state assumed ownership of the one building and several acres of Dixie College to operate the institute. For many years, TPI acted as a high school rather than a college because no public high school existed in the area.

Thomas Early of Mississippi was named the first president of the new state school, and he employed 11 faculty members to teach 250 students in the first academic year, 1916-1917. Most of the students were males, and all but 11 were elementary or high school students. In 1925 TPI enrolled 107 high school students and 265 college level students, and in 1927 the school awarded its first college degrees and closed the high school program. It developed curriculums in engineering and education and attracted an increasing number of students, mainly from the immediate area surrounding Cookeville. Quentin M. Smith (serving from 1920 to 1938) and James M. Smith (serving from 1938-1940) were the two presidents after Early. Austin Wheeler Smith was the history professor and dean/registrat at this time.

These three men were the namesakes of the later dormitory complex called “smith Quad.” Q. M. Smith’s administration was important in developing TPI as a college. He persuaded the Board of Education to grant four-year college status in 1927, he developed intercollegiate athletics in the school, and he recruited quality faculty members, many with doctoral degrees. Two faculty members who would bring fame to themselves and the school were P. V. “Putty” Overall as a football, baseball, and basketball coach, and Charles Bryan as an instructor and composer of music. Smith was also the first of two “building” presidents. During his presidency construction of a dormitory for women (1921), a president’s home

(1927) , a gymnasium (1929), a science building (1929), and an engineering building (1931) took place.....*Introduction continues....*

DIXIE COLLEGE CHARTER FOUND

[Heather Mullinix](#)

Herald-Citizen Staff, Cookeville, TN
Saturday, Mar 28, 2009



Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea
Dixie Murray shows the Dixie College charter she found in a 1919 Chancery Court file to Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones and her husband, Charlie Murray.

PUTNAM COUNTY -- Old records from Putnam County offer glimpses into the community's past. That's one of the reasons the county established an archives program to protect those records for future generations.

Recently, Dixie Murray, a volunteer with the Genealogical Society of

Utah, stumbled across the charter that established The University of Dixie in a 1919 Chancery Court file.

"We handle every document," Murray said. "I noticed it was a **charter for the University of Dixie** and said 'Here's my university.'"

Murray, who is from Alberta, Canada, mentioned the find to Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones who knew that was the predecessor of Tennessee Technological University.

"We find things like this all the time," Murray said. "If this were about my home town, I'd be excited."

The charter of incorporation for the University of Dixie was filed Dec. 1909 for a fee of \$3. It was recorded by S.F. Carr, register of Putnam County at the time.

The charter is signed by J. Whitson, R.L. Farley, Gid H. Lowe, G.A. Maxwell, J.C. Elrod, J.N. Cox, W.B. Boyd, J.B. Dow, A.G. Maxwell and T.D. Ford, who together formed the corporation to form the school.

"The particular purposes for which this charter is sought are to establish, maintain, manage and conduct a school or college or university at Cookeville, Putnam County, in the state of Tennessee, in which all branches of learning may be taught and in which the Bible shall be taught in a special or separate department, daily; and said university shall have full power and authority to confer degrees and to exercise all other powers which are usually exercised by schools, colleges and universities."

Dixie College, as the Church of Christ school was popularly know, opened its doors to student in 1912.

Derryberry Hall, Kittrell Hall and Bartoo Hall made up the college facilities. Today, those three buildings still stand on the TTU campus.

The college, however, had low enrollment and financial difficulties. It also never achieved college status,

serving instead as a secondary school. In 1915, the college deeded its property to the governments of Cookeville and Putnam County. Later that year, Tennessee Polytechnic Institute was formed after local leaders lobbied the state to establish a school in the Upper Cumberland region.

The charter was discovered in a 1919 court document for the case B.G. Adcock versus Jere Whitson, A.G. Maxell, J.N. Cox, Dixie University and the Tennessee Board of Education. Adcock was seeking payment of \$700 in legal fees for work he had undertaken on behalf of the school and its trustees.

A record of the court's finding had not yet been found among the numerous boxes of court documents.

Today, TTU boasts an enrollment of more than 10,700 students and offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees in numerous fields of study. It has been named one of America's 100 Best College Buys, at top public school in the South by U.S. News and World Report and as a best southeastern college by The Princeton Review.

TTU SET TO CELEBRATE CENTENNIAL OF ITS FORERUNNER – DIXIE COLLEGE

TTU – a marching band, faculty in period costumes and sealing of a time capsule all will mark Dixie College Day on Nov. 18, a day set aside for the centennial celebration of Dixie College, the predecessor of Tennessee Tech.



The public is invited to attend the day's festivities.

(Pictured: An early classroom at Dixie College).

“We’re delighted to share with everyone in the Upper Cumberland and across the state of Tennessee TTU’s rich history and

accomplishments. There can be no better way to mark this occasion than by inviting the public to the celebration to say “thank you for their many years of support,” said TTU President Bob Bell.

The University of Dixie, commonly called Dixie College, was founded on Nov. 18, 1909. Earlier that year, about 80 individuals signed financial pledges in amounts that ranged from \$25 to \$300 to establish a college to serve the people of Tennessee’s Upper Cumberland region. Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, now called Tennessee Tech University, was established by then – Gov. Thomas C. Rye on March 27, 1915.

From a humble college in temporary quarters to today’s comprehensive university, TTU’s storied history will be feted with a several activities on Nov. 18.

At 11:00 a.m. a time capsule will be sealed in front of Derryberry Hall, followed by a reading of an excerpt from the charter for Dixie College and the reading of a brief TTU history.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Sunday 8 November 2009, front page and pg. A-2.

TTU ALMOST DIDN’T EXIST

Proponents fought long, hard for Dixie College:

TTU – Tennessee Tech history professor emeritus W. Calvin Dickinson glances around his basement office in Henderson Hall, stretches back in his chair and admits something hard to believe.

TTU almost didn’t exist, here or anywhere else.

The University of Dixie, commonly called Dixie College, was founded on Nov. 18, 1909. Earlier that year, about 80 individuals signed financial pledges in amounts that ranged from \$25 to \$300 to establish a



college to serve the people in Tennessee 's upper Cumberland region.

(Pictured: Workers hoist a flag pole in front of the original Dixie College building, now Derryberry Hall.

Were it not for the tiny and precariously under funded Dixie College, it's doubtful TTU would be here.

The story of TTU's beginnings as Dixie College is a tale of persistence. Later, as Dixie College became the state-run Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, it became a tale of political cajoling. And at a number of points along the way early on, TTU's forerunner could have just ceased to exist.

Dixie College began as an idea. In the early 1900s, as the Church of Christ was becoming more established across the Upper Cumberland region, members of the Broad Street Church of Christ in Cookeville began exploring the notion of a school that would provide both general and Bible education.

"Cookeville had secondary schools already, so they wanted a college. One purpose would be to train and educate local people, and another one would be to train preachers," said Dickinson, coauthor of "The Search for Identity; A History of Tennessee Technological University, 1915-1985."

About the same time, the state government passed legislation to establish "normal schools" in the state's three grand divisions to train teachers. The mostly church-led Cookeville group placed its efforts on hold temporarily while it waited to see if Cookeville would be granted one of the three schools.

After losing out to Murfreesboro, the group in Cookeville began work again.

"They needed money of course. Two men went around the Southeast to collect money. They wanted this to be the Church of Christ school for the whole Southeast.

Well, they didn't get much and that was a big disappointment," Dickinson said. "Also, two banks in Cookeville failed in 1909, so there was economic hardship during that period of time. It was pretty severe."

Cookeville businessman Jeremiah "Jere" Whitson, a Broad Street Church of Christ elder, donated farmland for the college and took the lead to establish a school.

Next, they needed a name. Several names were considered, but the University of Dixie was selected to reflect the desire to serve the entire Southeast.

“that name never really caught on. But the nickname Dixie College did,” he said.

Whatever you called it – the University of Dixie or Dixie College – the school was neither a university nor a college. It was primarily a high school that operated out of temporary, rented quarters while plans for a building – what eventually became Derryberry Hall – began in 1911.

The school’s founders struggled on until 1915, unable to produce the financial sustenance needed to continue.

“By 1915 they were so discouraged that they decided the school was really not going to make it. So using all the political pull that they could generate, they persuaded the state to take over the school,” he said.

“So Dixie College didn’t really have a long life and I can’t even find if they ever graduated anybody,” Dickinson said.

Dixie College didn’t survive, but the idea that a college should be located in Cookeville did. Dixie College became Tennessee Polytechnic Institute as it was established by then – Gov. Thomas C. Rye on March 27, 1915.

There was quite a fight in Nashville, Dickinson says, to get the state to take over the school. Other schools in the state didn’t want to divide the funding pie further.

In 1965, the name was changed to Tennessee Tech University to reflect the institution’s expanding breadth.

Today TTU offers 44 bachelor’s and 20 graduate degree programs within six academic divisions” Agricultural and Human Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, and Interdisciplinary Studies and Extended Education.

Tennessee Tech has been named one of America’s 100 Best College Buys, earning designation several years in a row as one of the nation’s best college educations for the cost. US News & World Report was chosen TTU as one of the Top Public Schools in the South on multiple occasions, and the university has been chosen as a “Best Southeastern College” by The Princeton Review for several years.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN; Friday, 13 November 2009, front page.

DIXIE COLLEGE DAY ACTIVITIES

Don Foy
Herald-Citizen Staff, Cookeville, TN
Friday, Nov 13, 2009

A marching band, faculty in period costumes and sealing of a time capsule all will mark Dixie College Day on Nov. 18, a day set aside for the centennial celebration of Dixie College, the predecessor of Tennessee Tech. Festivities begin at 10:45 a.m. with the TTU band marching down Dixie Avenue from the Bryan Fine Arts Building to Derryberry Hall. At 11 a.m., a time capsule will be sealed and excerpts from the Dixie College charter and a brief history of TTU will be read.

Parking for centennial events is available at the TTU Intramural Field across Willow Avenue from the Hooper Eblen Center. Shuttle service will be provided to the activities. Parking also is available at Colleside Church of Christ, 252 E. Ninth St. Shuttle service will not be available from this location.

If you've got an interesting story to tell about Tennessee Tech University, history professor Michael

Birdwell wants to hear it. Audio and video histories of those who attended TTU will be collected Nov. 18 as part of Dixie College Day. The histories will be collected in Roaden University Center.

Herald-Citizen Staff, Cookeville, TN
Wednesday, Nov 18, 2009



Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea Wednesday was Dixie College Day, the centennial celebration of the predecessor of the current Tennessee Tech. From left, Sean Ochsenbein, Walt Carlen and Mayor Sam Sallee listen to Dr. Bob Bell, president of Tennessee Tech, address the audience.

Wednesday was Dixie College Day, the centennial celebration of the predecessor of the current Tennessee Tech. From left, Sean Ochsenbein, Walt Carlen and Mayor Sam Sallee listen to Dr. Bob Bell, president of Tennessee

Tech, address the audience.



Pictured: Staff members of the Dixie Derrick from the 1913-14 school year show their school spirit. The Dixie Derrick was Dixie College's yearbook and magazine. The editor was Robert Elrod and assistant editors were Cordell Goodpasture and Gretchen Boyd.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN:
Sunday 8 November 2009, front page and pg. A-2.

*Read more Schoolyard Tales at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>