

## **Once Upon a Time in North Park:**

### **History of the East Side of Ohio Street between University and Lincoln**

By Steve Hon

In 1913, the North Park Lumber Company began operations on the east side of Ohio Street between University and Lincoln Avenues. In 1915, this lumber yard was renamed the Dixie Lumber and Supply Company. Since 1912 the Dixie Supply Company had been operating in downtown San Diego specializing in plaster and lime as the authorized agent for Golden Gate Portland Cement products. By the early 1920s, it had become a major business in the North Park community, employing more than fifty people with an annual payroll in excess of \$100,000. Bulk shipments of lumber for the Dixie Company as well as the Klicka Lumber Company on the next block were transported at night from the harbor on rail cars using the Street Car lines coming up 30<sup>th</sup> Street and University Avenue. Today Dixieline (the successor to Dixie Lumber and Supply Company) continues to operate in San Diego County but has grown to have stores located throughout Southern California and has over 1,000 employees.

In 1927, the Dixie building at 3913 Ohio Street first appeared in the City Directory. It is not clear regarding the origin of the name of the Dixie Building and whether it was a project of the Dixie Lumber and Supply Company. The Dixie Building contained private offices including a dentist, physician and two chiropractors. The Dixie Building was a large two-story building that extended both north on Ohio Street and east on University Avenue. A photo from the period indicates brick facing, tiles along the roof on an overhang, windows with arches or architectural elements suggesting arches, and decorative tile in a checked pattern along the bottom of the building next to the sidewalk reflecting an overall Spanish influence. A photo from that same time showed a McCoy Paint and Wallpaper store occupying the corner bottom floor location. The Dixie Building was given a “modern” facelift many years later and no longer exhibits any of the original Spanish influence.

In 1931, the Dixie Lumber and Supply Company built a new two story building at 3925 Ohio Street with a steep pitched hipped roof to the street with two gabled dormers facing the street. Total square footage of the building was 7,645 square feet. Next to that building was the lumber milling building and lumber storage building.

Lumber firms sold only lumber, plaster, cement, nails and shingles in the old days. In an interview with Arthur Jensen, former President of Dixie Lumber, in the San Diego Union dated December 8, 1949, Jensen recalled, “We never dreamed of handling paint, building hardware or any of the merchandise now carried by a building supply firm.”

The City Directory continued to list the Dixie Lumber and Supply Company on Ohio Street through 1957. Starting in 1958 a variety of businesses operated at 3925 Ohio

Street including: 1) Allen's House of Carpet (1958-1964); 2) Side Pocket Pool Hall (1969-70); 3) the Jack LaCoste TV store (1975-1984); the current occupant of the building is Max's copy shop.

With the exit of Dixie Lumber and Supply in the late 1950s, other businesses developed on the newly vacant land north of 3925 Ohio Street. The first building to occupy the area was Mathews Cleaners at 3935 Ohio in 1960, and retains that name to this day even though the business has changed owners several times in the past 47 years. In 2003, the Gensler Report prepared for the City noted the Mathews Cleaners site as follows:

"The one-story building was designed in the Exaggerated Modern Style and features a flat roof, a cantilevered angled canopy that wraps the corner of the building, a storefront with plate-glass windows, and a combination of brick and stucco exterior... Based upon a conversation with the current owner, Matthews Cleaners was the first drive-through cleaners in San Diego County."

Over the next several years, other buildings were erected north of Matthews Cleaners. In 1963-64, a new office building address shows up at 3969/3977 Ohio Street listing several tenants including the local offices of the Internal Revenue Service. Various businesses also operated in that building until the early 1970s when the County of San Diego took over the entire building as an office for Adult Probation Field Services, which remains there today.

In 1965, a Sizzler Restaurant was opened at 3935 Ohio Street and remained there for over 20 years. Today, the Lumberjack Restaurant operates at the location.