

DIX

Dixon story has a publishe

name listed in the acknowledgements.

Cook became a Dixon expert working on his dissertation at Emory University. Originally, he planned to write about 19th-century Georgia humorist Bill Arp but learned someone else had already laid claim to the subject. A professor recalled reading about Thomas Dixon and told Cook no biography had ever been done of the author.

One by one, Cook plowed through Dixon's novels — a very unpleasant experience. "His books were sub-literary," says Cook. "It was the literary version of the type of thing you see in TV programs today. They were fairly sensational and broke every canon. They reflected the reading tastes of the time."

Much as Cook detested Dixon's writing, he found the man's personality fascinating. "The thing that interested me was his drive, his verve and energy," says Cook. "In his own way, he had very high principles."

Mary Gauthier, 68, of Arlington, Va., remembers her great-uncle Thomas Dixon as "rather self-centered." The last time she spoke with him "he was living in the past," she says. "We weren't allowed to read his novels. He gave Mother a complete set of his works bound in leather. They were racist and vulgar."

Mrs. Gauthier's mother, Clara Richardson, is the daughter of Dixon's equally famous brother, the Rev. A.C. Dixon. She is 96 years old and lives in Black Mountain. Mrs. Richardson attended Oxford University while the Prince of Wales was there and studied the Montessori teaching method in Italy.

Mrs. Gauthier's brother, Howard Richardson, 66, of New York City, is a playwright, best known for "Dark of the Moon."

"I got a nice letter from him (Dixon) when 'Dark of the Moon' was published in 1942," says Richardson. "I didn't know him too well. Our families weren't close. He and Aunt Pink (Dixon's first wife, Harriette Bussey) would come by Black Mountain and spend the night."

Richardson vaguely remem-

bers the Dixon's daughter, Louise, but never met Tom Dixon III whose tragic life was very hush-hush. He died, apparently an alcoholic, in California.

Recovering from an illness, Richardson is off to Norway this summer for a production of "Dark of the Moon" and is looking forward to the off-off-Broadway opening next fall of a play set in a North Carolina textile town.