

# CELEBRATING 95 YEARS

MORE THAN NINE DECADES AFTER IT'S FOUNDING, DIXON CONTINUES TO  
PUT A PREMIUM ON HONESTY, RESPECT AND STRONG CHARACTER

BY SUE DE PASQUALE

### ON A MONDAY MORNING IN SLEEPY CHESTERTOWN, MD.,

Dick Goodall, CEO of Dixon Valve and Coupling Co., is sealing the deal with a handshake.

But he's not standing with a client in the company's headquarters. He's several blocks away, in the second-grade classroom at Garnett Elementary School, and the recipient of his outstretched hand is a wide-eyed, 7-year-old.

"When you meet someone for the first time, shake their hand firmly, like this," he instructs the boy and the schoolchildren seated around him. "And always be sure to look the person directly in the eye."

Each week Goodall—and two dozen other employees at Dixon—make visits to school classrooms around the Chestertown area, to promote the "Character Counts" curriculum and its "Six Pillars": trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

For Goodall, the man responsible for a company that employs 1,200 people, with distribution centers spread across four continents, these classroom visits are the highlight of his week. That's because the values he and his colleagues share with these children are the bedrock upon which Dixon was founded 95 years ago—values that continue to infuse every level of the company today, from the factory floor in Chestertown to a far-flung distribution site in China.

"My grandfather, Howard W. Goodall, was well respected by everybody. He set the stage for Dixon, building on the 'Six Pillars,'" says Dick Goodall. "It's so important to treat people the right way: with honesty and integrity. A great IQ [intelligence quotient] is one thing, but it's the Character Quotient that really makes the difference."



Dixon CEO Dick Goodall (center) and Bill Hollingsworth (top) enjoy a lighter moment with second-graders at Garnett Elementary School during their weekly visit to promote lessons in good character.





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HILE DIXON VALVE AND COUPLING Co. was officially launched on March 21, 1916, founder H.W. Goodall actually began laying the groundwork nearly three decades earlier.

It was in 1887 that Goodall, then just 15 years old, quit school to begin working for Philadelphia rubber distributor Latta & Mulconroy Co. The inquisitive Goodall, whose father was a cabinetmaker, was an inveterate tinkerer. Before long he was designing hose couplings and clamps as accessories for the company's rubber hose line. Mr. Mulconroy, recognizing the sales potential, encouraged Goodall to promote his couplings to several clients. But when Goodall asked permission to expand his efforts to include the region's leather tanning industry, company co-owner Latta refused—and fired the ambitious young man.

Goodall saw the setback as an opportunity. He went on to found the Goodall Rubber Co. and the Knox

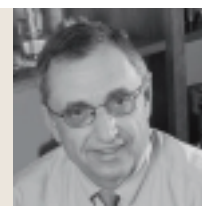
Manufacturing Co. to both manufacture and sell hose and couplings.

H.W. Goodall was more than an astute inventor and engineer—he was a savvy salesman, who recognized the importance of asking leaders of different industries what products they needed to do their jobs better. In an age before airplanes made travel easy, Goodall—impeccably garbed in his trademark suit and tie—tirelessly crisscrossed the country, visiting construction sites, mining operations, oil drilling companies and railroads.

His countless face-to-face visits laid the groundwork for the launch of Dixon Valve and Coupling, in 1916. Based in Philadelphia, Pa., the company would develop, manufacture and sell the myriad valves and couplings that had become so necessary to America's burgeoning manufacturing industries.

As Dixon grew over the next several years, the fledgling company moved locations, eventually settling downtown at

"I **REMEMBER** walking down the street to **meet** my dad after **WORK**. He'd have his lunch pail in one hand. We'd walk **HOME** and have dinner." —Lou Farina Jr.





From left: H.W. Goodall at Hoover Dam; assembling parts, ca. 1940s; distribution trucks prepare to head out from the Philadelphia warehouse; in 1940, Dixon purchased the Mulconroy Co. and incorporated its products into the Dixon line.



Hancock and Columbia avenues in 1929.

It was here that Louis Farina Sr. came to work as a mail clerk in 1931. Farina, who passed away recently at the age of 95, shared his memories of those days in an interview shortly before his death. Early in his tenure, with the post office several blocks away, he would deliver packages back and forth in a small wagon. With Schmidt's Brewing Co. just around the corner, the spicy aroma of hops often filled the air, he recalled. Another nearby neighbor, Stetson Hat Co., was a popular stop-off for visiting celebrities. When legendary cowboy film star Tom Mix came to town, hundreds lined up outside to get a glimpse.

Farina was soon put in charge of the shipping room. "As the company grew, I grew with the company," said Farina. He would go on to work at Dixon for six decades.

Throughout the 1930s and into the war years, workers on the factory floor remained busy. During this period, the largest selling item in the Dixon line was rotary hose couplings—a high-pressure fitting used in oil drilling. Other sought after products, which remain Dixon products today, included: Boss couplings, King single

## Ties That Bind

### MANY WHO WORK AT DIXON STAY THEIR ENTIRE CAREERS

When Louis Farina Sr. started work as a mail clerk at Dixon in 1931, he probably couldn't have imagined that his family connection to the company would last more than 80 years.

"Howard Goodall was like a father to me. He would sit at his desk and explain things—he was as kind as can be," said Farina Sr., shortly before his death this spring at age 95. The hard-working Farina had a sharp mind for numbers and it didn't take long for him to get promoted. "Mr. Goodall said, 'You're pretty good with figures, we should be moving you up!'"

During his first years with Dixon, Farina made his home nearby with his wife and three young sons. "We lived just four or five blocks from the factory," recalls eldest son Lou. "As a little kid, in the summertime, I remember walking down the street to meet my dad after work. He'd have his lunch pail in one hand. We'd walk home and have dinner."

By age 17, in June 1959, Lou Farina Jr. was ready to follow in his father's footsteps and join the Dixon payroll. Following his father's advice, he says, "I mostly did the jobs no one else wanted to do"—from filing, to running errands to washing the company cars. He recalls that one task was particularly unpopular. "It was hot all over the factory but the top floor was especially hot. They couldn't get anybody to do the filing—it must have been 150 degrees up there. So I went in there and did it for four days straight."

By the time Farina Jr. started with Dixon, his family had moved out to the northern part of the city, about 10 miles from the factory. Most days, he and his father took a bus and train to get to work. In the winter, when the snow piled high, there were times when the buses couldn't run. The younger Farina said he was often tempted to call in absent, citing the lack of available transportation. But he couldn't. "My dad would walk the whole way to get to work. So I couldn't get away with it," says Farina Jr., who went on to become company president.

For Farina Sr., the reasons for his loyalty were clear. "The Goodalls were very good to me. Dixon always treated me like family."





From left: The Buck Foundry, 1951; Dixon's new factory in Chestertown, 1976; Richard B. Goodall, the company's second president.

and double bolt hose clamps, air hammer couplings, suction couplings, Air King universal couplings and King combination nipples.

On Oct. 12, 1934, the company opened its first international distribution center, in Canada.

Never content to rest on his laurels, H.W. Goodall and his son R.B.—who had joined the business in 1929—continually pushed for Dixon to develop new products. Among the Dixon “firsts” over the ensuing years: ground joint Boss and air hammer couplings; steel hose menders and Boss-Lock cam and groove.

In 1940, some half a century after he had launched his career at Latta & Mulconroy Co., H.W. Goodall led Dixon’s purchase of the company (at that point known as the Mulconroy Co.) and incorporated its products into the Dixon line as Holedall couplings.

With brisk sales and ongoing innovation, the future for Dixon looked bright. But trouble brewed on the horizon. The advent of World War II, which transformed the business landscape across the country, would throw a wrench in the wheel of the company’s expansion.

**T**HE JAPANESE BOMBING of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, pushed the United States into war—and launched a voracious need for industrial products to support the efforts of American troops on multiple fronts.

Many of Dixon’s products fell under the federal government priority system, and before long the company’s manufacturing facilities were being used almost entirely for military contracts.

As Louis Farina Sr. remembered it, the nearby Frankford Arsenal could not keep up with the demand for fuse plugs for anti-aircraft shells. So the government turned to Dixon to produce 380,000 fuse plugs, which were run on a six-spindle automatic screw machine—only one of two in Philadelphia at the time.

“We sure were busy,” recalled Farina. Because so many young men were called up to serve on the war front, Dixon turned to the women in the community to lend a hand on the factory floor. Both Farina’s mother and sister spent time running the machines, he says.

With so many resources devoted to government contracts, the company was

not able to keep up with supplying products to its commercial hose distributor base. A former Dixon sales manager, sensing an opportunity, created a partnership and started the Hose Accessories Co. (later known as Le-Hi Valve and Coupling), which made huge inroads into Dixon’s distributor business.

Then, when the war ended, all the government contracts dried up—seemingly overnight. Thousands of Dixon couplings sat gathering dust at the Columbus Depot and would eventually be disposed of for commercial use.

It would take fresh energy and vision to rebuild Dixon’s customer base. Fortunately, R.B. Goodall was up to the task. The Virginia Military Institute graduate, who also held a degree from Babson College, gradually assumed more leadership in the company as his aging father slowed down.

In 1951, after returning from a business trip to California, H.W. Goodall fell ill—and died 10 days later. With the death of Dixon’s founder, the company’s leadership officially passed to R.B. Goodall, who assumed the title of president and chief operating officer.

“His door was always open,” recalls Dick Goodall of his father, R.B., who



Co. in nearby Lancaster, Pa., thereby ensuring a plentiful source of malleable iron, brass, aluminum and ductile castings for hose couplings.

Seven years later, in 1959, Lou Farina Jr. joined the Dixon payroll, at age 17. After his first week on the job, Farina was approached by the vice president of sales. "He said, 'Mr. Goodall saw what you've been doing and he's going to start paying you \$5 more per week.' That meant I'd be earning \$50 a week. I felt rich!" says Farina.

R.B. Goodall's faith in him would pay off. The teen who started out washing cars and delivering packages to the nearby Greyhound bus station steadily climbed the company ladder. In 2001, he was named president—the company's first non-family member ever to hold that position.

The late 1960s and 1970s saw innovation in the way Dixon distributed products to its thriving client base.

Until that time, it could take days, sometimes weeks, to ship products to customers across the country. The Dixon management team recognized the wisdom of establishing distribution centers—warehouses that could be stocked with products—at locations across the country (and later around the world). With this breakthrough, customers could be assured of prompt and efficient delivery of whatever they needed to keep their businesses rolling.

During these years, Dixon leaders also began forging partnerships with other manufacturers, a move that enabled Dixon to offer its customers important products—such as worm gear clamps—that weren't being made in-house. Though Dixon would continue to manufacture most of the products it sells, it did begin marketing a limited number of hose fittings and accessories made by other manufacturers.

With steady growth came the need for a larger work force. Dixon began to outgrow its Philadelphia headquarters, and R.B. Goodall started the search for a new site for the factory.

One day, while returning home from a visit to Maryland's Eastern Shore, he found just the facility—and the town—he was looking for.

led the company through several decades of growth and prosperity. "He would always listen and encourage," Dixon employees, whether high-level administrators or machinists from the faculty floor, felt comfortable stopping by to share with R.B. Goodall any issues that were bothering them, says his son.

In 1952, Dixon leaders made the wise decision to purchase the Buck Iron

In 1952, Dixon leaders made the **WISE** decision to **PURCHASE** the Buck Iron Co., thereby ensuring a plentiful **SOURCE** of malleable iron, brass, aluminum and ductile castings for hose **COUPLINGS**.





JIM BURGER

On the warehouse floor: Today's Dixon corporate support staff includes (top row, l to r): Taylor Goodall, Scott Jones, Mike Coakley, Mark Vasant. Bottom row: Jim McColigan, Mary Price, Bob Grace, J.C. Canalichio.

**F**OR MANY YEARS, VITA Foods, a pickling operation, had been a major employer of residents living in and around Chestertown, Md.—a small waterfront community that gained fame during colonial times for hosting its own “tea party” against the British (see “At Home on the Eastern Shore,” p. 21).

When Vita (now headquartered in Chicago) consolidated operations in New England in the early 1970s, it left empty a spacious plant with 10 acres of land. R.B. Goodall, with sons Dick and Doug, didn't have to think long before making a move to purchase the property and its facilities. Chestertown leaders were thrilled by the prospect of new jobs.

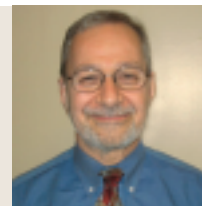
Renovations began in earnest in 1975, recalls Doug Goodall. Equipped with a degree in engineering, he had spent his first years with the company,

in the late 1960s and early 1970s, learning everything possible about the manufacturing end of things. He was thus well equipped to lead the setup of the new plant and train the new work force.

“Converting a pickle plant into a factory was a challenging job,” recalls Goodall. “We lived in a motel and worked every waking hour during the week—then we'd go home to our families on the weekend.” Despite the hectic

Dixon in 1970, was one of just 15 employees who moved with the company to its new location. “We saw it as a real opportunity,” says Canalichio, whose son, J.C., is today director of information technology at Dixon. “It had gotten very difficult in Philadelphia to find the workers we needed. In Chestertown we were able to attract people from a broad range of backgrounds.”

“In **CHESTERTOWN** we were able to attract people from a **BROAD RANGE** of backgrounds.” —Jim Canalichio



pace, he says, “It was a labor of love. It was more fun than you can imagine.”

By 1976, Dixon was ready to say goodbye to downtown Philadelphia and establish headquarters in Chestertown.

Jim Canalichio, who had joined

The early hiring process was fast and furious, recalls Doug Goodall. “Once we had a new machine up and running, we'd install a light over it, interview someone to work on it, and by the end of the day, they'd be making

**DIXON'S LEADERS** are known for their longevity. Over the company's 95-year history, just five men have held the post of president:

Howard W. Goodall  
Richard B. Goodall  
Richard L. Goodall  
Louis Farina Jr.  
Bob Grace

parts." Though few employees arrived with the precise skill set needed, Goodall says, the company set up an extensive training program, including an apprenticeship for machinists that is still going strong. Participants spend four years on the factory floor and in class, accumulating 2,000-plus hours of training (in areas such as machine shop programming, blueprint reading and drafting), ultimately earning the coveted



The *Dixon Driller* is the longest continually running corporate advertising publication in the United States.

ed status of "journeyman" in a particular manufacturing specialty.

In addition, nearby Washington College, a small liberal arts school, graduated a steady stream of broad-thinking innovators—some of whom would become key players on Dixon's executive leadership team.

With both of his sons now playing an important role in the company, R.B. Goodall led Dixon through a prosperous period of expansion. In 1980, Dixon entered the cam and groove market by applying for a patent for the "Boss-Lock"—a fitting with a safety-locking handle. The cam and groove line further expanded in 1985 with the purchase of the Le-Hi Andrews Division of Parker Hannifin.

Dixon's international footprint also broadened, with the opening in 1981 of Dixon Adflow Ltd. (now Dixon Group Europe) in Preston, United Kingdom. (Today the company's European locations also include a facility in Troisdorf-Spich, Germany, which was established in 1998.) Dixon further expanded its mix of products into the hydraulic and pneumatic quick disconnect coupling market, in 1993, by purchasing the Perfecting Coupling Co. (now Dixon Quick Coupling).

The following year, R.B. Goodall passed away, after 65 years with the company. Sons Dick and Doug—the third generation of the Goodall family—stepped in to lead, without missing a beat.

In 1996, Dixon made a significant move by expanding its footprint to the Land Down Under, with the purchase of Australian manufacturer Minsup. Now known as Dixon Asia Pacific, the company has expanded its fire protection products and has grown to incorporate six locations across Australia.

Other acquisitions quickly followed: in 1999, American Coupling Co. (now Dixon Brass), which added sophisticated manufacturing of pneumatic brass hose fittings, couplings and adaptors; and Bayco Industries, which was merged with the already present Dixon operation in Canada to become Dixon Group Canada. Dixon Bayco U.S.A., the U.S. segment of Bayco Industries, is now known as Dixon Bayco. The pur-

## A Start-Up Sampler

With the American economy strong, the period when Dixon launched was a promising era for entrepreneurs. A sampling of other companies that were established around the same time:

**GENERAL TIRE AND RUBBER:** The company that made its brand famous with the slogan, "Sooner or later, you'll own Generals," was founded in 1915 in Akron, Ohio, by William F. O'Neil. Branching out into broadcasting in the 1940s, it went on to acquire radio and TV stations and networks across the U.S. Later reorganized into holding company GenCorp, General Tire was then sold to German tire maker Continental AG—and still exists as part of Continental's American operations.

**CURTISS CANDY CO.:** Founded by Otto Schnering in 1916, near Chicago, Ill., the company debuted with its Kandy Kake, refashioned in 1921 as the Baby Ruth bar. Next came the popular chocolate-covered peanut butter crunch, Butterfinger. Curtiss was purchased by Standard Brands in 1964, which merged with Nabisco in 1981; in 1990, NJR Nabisco sold the Curtiss brands to Nestle.

**NASH MOTORS:** The automobile manufacturer that pioneered seatbelts (1950) and the compact (1950), subcompact (1970) and muscle car (1957) categories, was established in Kenosha, Wis., in 1916, by General Motors president Charles W. Nash. The Nash Model 671, which debuted a year later, was the first in a long line of vehicles to bear the Nash name. In 1954, Nash merged with Hudson Motor Car Co. to become American Motors Corp.—which was ultimately acquired by Chrysler Corp. in 1987, becoming the Jeep-Eagle division.

**THE BOEING CO.:** The multinational aerospace and defense corporation was founded in 1916 by William E. Boeing in Seattle, Wash. (See p. 10 for more.)

**PHILLIPS PETROLEUM:** Founded in 1917 by brothers L.E. Phillips and Frank Phillips, the company headquartered in Bartlesville, Okla., would go on to gain fame for its Phillips 66 brand, named in part to honor the historic U.S. highway, Route 66. Phillips merged with Conoco Inc. in 2002 to become ConocoPhillips.





Goodall family members in Dixon's employ include (l to r) Doug Goodall (an employee of Buck Foundry), his father Doug Goodall, Dick Goodall, Kate Gray (daughter of Dick Goodall), and Taylor Goodall, son of Dick Goodall.

chase expanded Dixon's product line to include petroleum and dry bulk fittings.

Dixon extended its reach into the food and beverage market in 2000 with the purchase of Bradford Fittings (now Dixon Sanitary), which offers a full line of 304 and 316L stainless steel fittings for use in the food, dairy, beverage, cosmetic, pharmaceutical and industrial markets. Four years later, the company created Dixon Fire to serve the fire protection industry; and in 2006, added more brass fire hose fittings to its line with the acquisition of Powhatan.

"When I started as a sales trainee in 1989, we had a catalog that was 112 pages long that included all the products we sold," says Scott Jones, today vice president of sales and marketing. "In the 21 years since then we have had nine acquisitions that we've assimilated into our product mix and our distribution system. The Dixon catalog is now 720 pages long! Today we're able to take a lot more products to our customers."

With the vast increase in product offerings has come a strategic decision to establish sales offices and distribution sites in locales all over the world: In addition to Australia, Dixon has a presence in Europe, Mexico, Russia, China and India.

"We've set ourselves apart in delivery by getting things quickly to our customers. They've come to rely on Dixon to carry the inventory they need, and in most cases they can get what they need the same day or the very next day," says Bob Grace. He started as a distribution manager in 1989 and today is Dixon president.

Grace, like Jones and other key members of Dixon's management team, spends a significant amount of time traveling to the company's far-flung sales offices and distribution sites; he spends about one week of every month on the road.

"While we do a fair amount of videoconferencing, you can't replace the face-to-face," Grace says. "It's so

important to spend time with Dixon's people, going over their business plans, letting them know just how important they are to the company."

And that personal connection is extended to Dixon's customers, says Jones. "We want Dixon to be the easiest company to do business with and we're not going to compromise," he says. "When a customer dials a Dixon phone number, they'll get a live person who picks up the phone within the first two rings. It all goes back to our core mission: We

#### DIXON DIVISIONAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Boss:** Wayne Spurrier

**Dixon Bayco:** Bob Koeninger

**Dixon Brass:** Jim Jablonsky

**Dixon Powhatan:** Hazen Arnold

**Dixon Quick Coupling:** Scott Clark

**Dixon Sanitary:** Sally Besgrove

**Dixon Specialty Hose:** Ron Athey

## At Home on the Eastern Shore

When Dixon pulled up stakes from gritty, downtown Philadelphia and moved to serene Chestertown, Md., in 1976, the contrast couldn't have been more stark.

Described as “a treasure hidden in plain sight” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Chestertown is located on the banks of the Chester River—a riverfront lined with historic 18th-century homes. With some 5,000 citizens, the town is proud of its rich colonial heritage, which it celebrates each year with the Chestertown Tea Party Festival. Its highlight is a re-enactment of the May 1774 protest, during which defiant residents, angered by British taxation, purportedly boarded a schooner and dumped its tea into the sea. The event came five months after the better-known Boston Tea Party.

Chestertown is also home to Washington College, the nation's 10th oldest college, established in 1782. A small liberal arts school of about 1,300 students, Washington College is perhaps best known for its Sophie Kerr Prize, awarded each year to a graduating senior with the greatest literary potential; the prize is the largest undergraduate award in the country, currently valued at about \$60,000.

Dixon employees who make their homes in and around Chestertown treasure its beautiful rural setting—its rolling farmlands and Chesapeake Bay estuaries. They enjoy strolling a main street lined with bed-and-breakfasts, small restaurants and shops. And they find comfort in the small town atmosphere, where everyone seems to know each other, and children can play safely and happily in the surrounding parks, fields and streams.



BERNADETTE VAN PELT

are ‘wrapped around’ our customers.”

Under the direction of human resources vice president Mary Price, Dixon now offers an extensive leadership training program; at various points during the year, promising employees from all over the world come to Chestertown for several intensive days of workshops and seminars. In addition to being immersed in Dixon's customer service model, they also discover firsthand that the “Six Pillars” of character remain key to the company's success.

“We have a very unique culture; it's a culture of people wanting to work together. There's a spirit of cooperation and a sense of family,” says Grace.

Agrees Jones, “We treat all of our employees with mutual respect. We don't have any big shots sticking their chests out and making all the decisions. There's a culture of working together.”

One key indication that this approach works is Dixon's low employee turnover rates. In an age when most people can expect to change jobs—and employers—eight or nine times throughout their

working lives, Dixon stands out for its employee retention, at every level.

With the company's 100th birthday just around the corner, what will the future hold? Dixon leaders are currently involved in a strategic planning process aimed at setting goals for the next 10 years.

CEO Dick Goodall is pleased to see the family-owned business grow to include the fourth generation: His son,

the United Kingdom. Like his father, Taylor Goodall sees continued expansion in international markets.

Says Bob Grace, “In the United States, Dixon has a very strong brand recognition. We're hoping to build that overseas, by gaining strongholds in places like India, China, Russia and Singapore. We want to expand the Dixon name and footprint across the globe.”

“H.W. Goodall **WOULDN'T** have **DREAMED** of how far Dixon has come.” —Richard “Flats” Flaherty



Taylor, who has worked in many different areas of Dixon's operations, has now been with Dixon for seven years. He recently joined the management team as vice president for distribution, a role that encompasses all the company's domestic branch locations. “I travel about one week out of each month,” he says, including “benchmarking” trips to Dixon distribution sites in Australia, Canada, Mexico and

“H.W. Goodall wouldn't have dreamed of how far Dixon has come,” says Richard “Flats” Flaherty, who retired as vice president of sales and marketing in 2010, after 40-plus years with the company. “Dixon has always strived to be easy to do business with—and at the same time, to be better at it than anyone else. For some companies that's lip service, but at Dixon, that's what we do every day.”