

The Dixie Cafe and New Dixie Cafe in Ringgold

An Historic Downtown Restaurant

July 10, 2023

By Roger Bowman

Ben R. Harris, Sr. and his wife Hazel Shell Harris opened the Dixie Café in downtown Ringgold in 1935. It was located in the easternmost two-story building on the north side of Nashville Street (just behind the utility pole with transformer in photo below).



This early interior photo below shows an unidentified cook, Mr. Harris and Mrs. Harris.

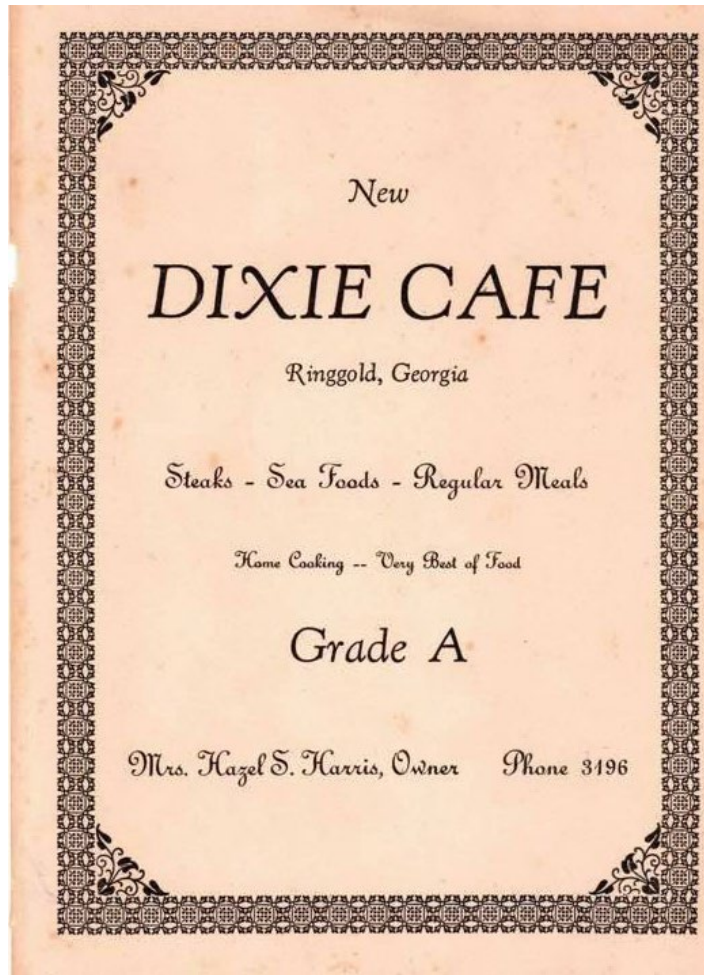


This later interior photo shows Mr. & Mrs. Harris standing in the center, and unidentified customers seated.



Mr. and Mrs. Harris operated the Dixie Café until late 1945, when they sold the business to Mr. John. G. Williams. Mr. Williams operated the restaurant until July of 1948, when he listed it for sale in the Chattanooga Times. Apparently, sometime shortly thereafter, the restaurant was closed.

Shortly after Mr. Harris' death in 1949, Mrs. Harris decided to open another restaurant in downtown Ringgold which she named The New Dixie Café.



This enterprise was located on the north side of Nashville Street, about halfway between Cleveland and Depot Streets as shown in the following two photographs.



Mrs. Harris' timing to reopen a restaurant in 1950 in downtown Ringgold was good, because US 41 passed directly in front of the restaurant and this traffic would continue to grow until Interstate 75 opened in the mid-1960s. By the late 1950s there began an influx of workers associated with the construction of I-75 as well.

This family dinner in The New Dixie around 1950 shows, Left to Right, Glenda Kay Harris (Mrs. Roger Bowman, Jr), Louise Mitchell Hornsby, Mary France Mitchell Harris, B.R. Harris, Jr., Lucille Yates Emberson (Mrs. Gail Emberson) and Mrs. Hazel Shell Harris



Mrs. Harris continued to operate the New Dixie Cafe until the early 1960s, when she sold it to Verlin Pierce who operated it for a few years before closing it for good.