

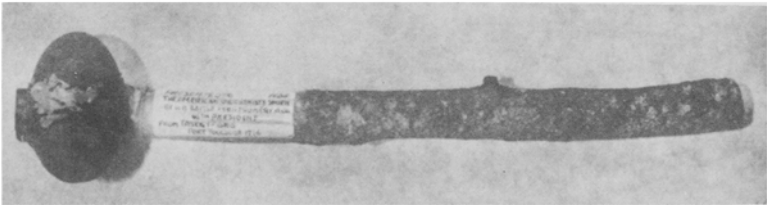
**PRESENTATION OF A GAVEL AT THE 15th ANNUAL BANQUET
OF THE A. O. C. S.**

New Orleans, May 6, 1924

BY H. B. BATTLE, 14TH PRESIDENT

I have heard it said in days gone by that "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." There must be something behind these words, or else they could not have gotten so well impressed upon the minds of so many people. There can be different kinds of crowns, worn by Czar, Kaiser, King or Kaliph. During recent years all three of these KKK's have been toppling over, and a Czar or so in addition. The crown is lost, the throne torn down, and the ruler himself dethroned, banished, or killed in cold blood, as the fury of his people may dictate.

When thinking on these things I am most forcibly reminded that a little elevation, as well as a great deal, may bring distressing responsibilities, and in fact they came to me just a year ago. Tonight it is with a feeling



of relief that I pass to my successor such authority as I have had during the past 12 months together with its emoluments.....We have this afternoon elected a new President. We have in the past tried him out on various committees, and he has shown himself both willing and able. We have placed other duties on his shoulders and still he has proven himself ready for anything that we wished upon him. It would seem that our President should have some badge of office, some symbol of his Authority. If it cannot be a sceptre, a crown or an axe, we should give him something pertaining to the industry in which we work, and upon which our Society is founded.

You may not have thought of the great antiquity of this industry. It is rooted in the dim distant past, so remote that we do not know its origin. Also it is an American industry and existed ages before Europeans came to these shores.....The aborigines, far earlier than the Indian inhabitants the white people found here, knew the value of oils and fats, and systematically manufactured them into edible products. The First Explorers found them separating oils from native nuts, which early became a recognized product for export.....The wily buyers of these products secured for a few beads or bullets or a colored cloth, sufficient

oil to more than shame their inner conscience, if indeed they possessed any. The tanks used in those days were not exactly ISTX, ATL or SCOX, but skins of animals, appropriately tied at the corners. Lacking our steel highways, over mountains and through dales, the transfer of these oils from the interior to the coast required weeks of rough mule back jolting over almost impassable trails in all kinds of weather. I honestly believe the flavor of the oil was somewhat affected, and the free fatty acid and the refining loss must have been increased by such treatment. Their "flag settlements" in consequence must have carried disaster to the poor native sellers.

Investigations have shown us that native nuts, such as walnuts and hickory nuts and even acorns, were very extensively used in this oil manufacture. Not having a hydraulic press, the natives were perforce obliged to extract the oil in other ways. This they did by boiling the cracked nuts in water and skimming off the oil, which came to the top. The badge of office to be transferred to our new President, Mr. Morrison, is in fitting commemoration of these ancient oil crushers. The gavel which I hand to him is a product of these aborigines. The children were taught to crush the nuts, and a hammerstone was used similar to the one upon this gavel, only oftentimes of a larger size. The handle of the gavel is from the wood of a black walnut tree now growing on the ancient site of Taskigi-town, a settlement of the Upper Creek nation within a very few miles of Montgomery, Alabama. This tree was either planted by the Indians or else is a seedling from one which was, because the trees are growing in a straight line near the town site. Fort Toulouse was located there by the French in 1714 and remained under them until the treaty of 1760, when they withdrew their outposts and left the country in the hands of the English.

Indian chieftains, many of national fame, such as Osceola and Tecumseh, had their origin very close to this exact spot, for in fact in earlier days this region was the most populous in native inhabitants in all the broad country. We can but hope that the liquid golden oil which these primal people transmuted from native growth, and which supported them in their lives, and formed the basis of an important industry, may also continue to increase and multiply in this land of ours, and bring joy, happiness and prosperity in excess of that of the present or recent years. The aboriginal Americans were our first chemists and oil crushers, and I take pleasure in passing on to our newly elected President, this symbol which reminds us of them, and in fact was a part of their daily life.

I bespeak for our new President your close coöperation and assistance in making his administration the very best we have ever had.

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