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Carolina Folklore

By F. W. Bradley

The State & Record, Feb. 2, 1964

Everyone knows what the Governor of N.C. said to the Governor of S.C., but most of us ask: "Where, when, why?"

Answers to those questions are now at hand, thanks to the kindness of Mason Gibbes, who has sent a copy of a clipping from the Western N.C. Tribune of Dec. 12, 1963, from which I quote:

"One version has been handed down in the family of John Motley Morehead, Minister to Sweden, who died in 1933. His grandfather was Governor of N.C., 1841-1845. During that time, J. H. Hammond was Governor of S.C. Morehead was a Whig, Hammond was a Democrat.

"The two Governors had quite a lengthy correspondence relative to the extradition of a political offender, a South Carolinian who was being held in N.C. Governor Morehead refused to turn the man over to S.C. officers. The two Governors decided to meet near the state line and talk over the matter. Accompanied by their staffs, and legal advisers, the conference took place. The discussion became quite heated, and neither Governor got very far with his argument. Finally Governor Hammond lost his temper. He told Governor Morehead that unless the prisoner were released, he would send a military force into N.C. and seize the fugitive.

"'Now, sir,' he shouted, as he crashed his fist upon the table, 'what is your answer to that?'"

"Governor Morehead regarded him somewhat quizzically, then he spoke up and said:

"'My answer to that, sir, is that it's a d— long time between drinks.'"

"The answer was so unexpected that Governor Hammond was unable to say anything for a moment. Then he burst into loud laughter, which was joined in by everyone else in the room. The tension was relieved and drinks were passed around. Afterwards the two governors continued their conference and succeeded in reaching an agreement that was satisfactory to both."

From 'Down Home' by Goerch

In a later article from the same Western N.C. Tribune, further light is thrown on the case, and I quote as follows:

"Senator J. H. Hammond of Columbia, S.C., who is a grandson of Governor J. H. Hammond, saw the article through a friend, Mrs. Annie L. Huezeel of Arden, who requested that a copy be sent him. Senator Jim Hammond is a well-known and colorful, as well as loved personality of the Palmetto State. Former State Senator, historian, humanitarian and humorist, his estate in Columbia, S.C. is a veritable mecca for political, professional and business leaders far and wide, and an evening with 'Senator Jim' is an unforgettable experience.

"In his letter to the publisher Senator Hammond sets a part of the record straight:

"The incident, according to my father, was based on the fact that the N.C. Governor wouldn't re-

turn a runaway slave for the reason that the slave owner had no title to the slave, but had captured him and put him back into slavery when the slave ran away before, and under the law at that time, anybody who captured a runaway slave, and kept him for a number of years, became the owner.

"My father used to say that grandfather would become embarrassed when it was mentioned to him, because the Governor of North Carolina disarmed him in such a manner, and left him without ability to respond."

Versions

The item above refers to this story as a version, seeming to imply that there were other versions.

The essence of this story is the factual fact, where Senator Hammond tells of his father's statement about the Governor of South Carolina's embarrassment when the incident was mentioned to him. The Senator's words establish the essential facts of the story.

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If you read the story about the governors of North Carolina and South Carolina on Feb. 2, you will be interested to read what Mr. Maben Jones writes about this incident and the famous quotation.

Mr. Jones sends two clippings about the governors, but gave an earlier date:

"Both clippings agree as to the year, 1838.

Both agree as to the name of the N. C. governor, Edward Dudley. Both agree as to the place of the meeting: home of Nancy Jones."

One of these clippings will be enough to record here, since the two substantially agree.

"The mahogany table at which the governor of N. C. sat when he made his famous remark to the governor of S. C. is still in existence, and is in the possession of Mrs. G. Trenholm McClenaghan of Raleigh, N. C.

"The house in which they met to slake their thirst is still standing on the road between Raleigh and Chapel Hill, and was occupied by the Widow Jones, great grandmother of Mrs. McClenaghan.

"The story was handed down to Mrs. McClenaghan by her father, Joel D. Whitaker, who made his home with his grandmother.

"In the parlor of Mrs. Nancy Jones' house stood a mahogany table on which always stood decanters of peach and apple brandy. Water fresh from the well, and mint, grown just outside the back door, were handy together with a cone of sugar and a handy maidservant to serve the travelers who were wont to accept the hospitality of this well known house.

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"One June day — believed to be in the year 1838 — the arrival of not one but two governors caused an undue flurry in the household, and Laney, dean of the maidservants, hovered about the two distinguished visitors, eager to do the slightest serv-

ice, while the hostess repaired to the kitchen to supervise the preparation of dinner.

"Suddenly Laney sought her mistress in the kitchen much horrified that "Massa Dudley (Edward Dudley, then governor of N. C.) say "it's a d... long time between drinks! "Miss Nancy, he say "d...!"

"Fresh juleps were prepared, and the governors drank, ate and departed."

So! When Governor Morehead several years later used that famous sentence speaking to Governor Hammond, he was merely quoting his predecessor in office.

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