

(Copy)

Sept. 8th, 1927

Mr. Thomas H. Battle,
Rocky Mount, N. C.

Dear Mr. Battle: I thank you for the address on presenting the portrait of your grandfather, Hon. William H. Battle. I knew him intimately -- that is, as intimately as a young fellow of my age could well be with one so much my senior. I recall several things that he told me. One was that when he was on the Superior Court Bench he sentenced a man to the stocks. The sheriff informed him that there were no stocks in that county. It was a new county and the act creating it provided in case of being sentenced to jail the prisoner should be confined in the jail of the nearest county. The act made no provision as to stocks. Judge Battle told the sheriff to lift up the rail fence that surrounded the barn in which the court was held and put the prisoner's feet under it in such a way as not to hurt his legs. The lawyer for the prisoner made a great speech arguing that no such punishment was authorized by law. Judge Battle struck out his judgment and sentenced the prisoner to be confined for thirty days in the jail of the nearest county, which jail was twenty-five or thirty miles distant. Whereupon, the prisoner was very indignant at his lawyer making the point as to the stocks. Thereupon the lawyer got up and said he withdrew his objection to his client's having his feet put under the fence. Judge Battle said that the lawyer had convinced him the punishment was unlawful and the judgment must be stricken out. The lawyer then began to beg Judge Battle to put his client's legs under the fence. Judge Battle said he could not order the prisoner to be so punished but if he would go out of his own free will and accord and get somebody to lift the fence up and stick his feet under, he would strike out the judgment altogether. This was done. A procession of the sheriff and pretty near all the attendants at the court escorted the prisoner to his voluntary imprisonment in the improvised stocks amidst the laughter of the crowd.

Another story he told me was that when he was practicing law in Louisburg he was appointed by the Supreme Court to state an account between some parties, one of whom was a very brusky man. When the Judge filed his report, the Supreme Court confirmed it, and allowed Judge Battle ten dollars for his services. When Judge Battle met this brusky party, he said to him: "You owe me ten dollars." The brusky defendant said "What for?" Judge Battle explained that the Supreme Court had allowed it to him for stating the account. "The Supreme Court is damned liberal with other people's money", said the brusky party, and paid the ten dollars.

Another thing I remember is that he used to hear his father say to his mother, "Look sharp, look alive, look like the devil, look like yourself".

I've no doubt you have heard these tales but I think it can do no harm to repeat them.

Sincerely yours,
S. F. Mordecai

SFM/MLM

Dear Mr. Spruill: I send you copy of a letter I wrote to Mr. Thomas H. Battle, which may prove of interest to you. I was very much interested in your letter.

Sincerely yours