

756 Preston St. West Philadelphia, Pa.

April 11, 1891

Dear Dr. Brownson

The first time I visited the site of Vance's Fort, I stood on the fallen trunk of an old apple tree which I was assured had stood and borne fruit for one hundred years. Standing as the tree did within the palisade, I thought it very likely that under it my own ancestry had both sheltered from the Indians and lifted their glad songs of praise to the God of heaven.

With this thought in mind, I sent for an ax and cut from that fallen trunk a piece of as fine grained curly wood as I ever saw. I am satisfied that that old trunk, had it been sawn into lumber as veneering would have been worth more money than any half dozen crops of apples it ever bore.

Recently I had the part I took from the old tree made up into a number of relics. And as I shall ever cherish a peculiar regard for the body from which I received ordination vows--- under whose care I first preached the gospel--- and which taught my hands to war and my fingers to fight, I take the liberty of asking you, the oldest member, to present to the Presbytery of Washington, with my compliments, this little gavel. The making of this gavel was an after-thought and as all the good wood had been used, it had to be made of chips and refused pieces of the sap wood, so that, except slightly in the handle, the beauty of the grain does not appear.

However, if neither beautiful or very useful, it may be of interest to some because of the past associations. I have no thought that either the spirit of the Indian warrior who prowled around it or that of the early settler who, under its fruitful bows, worshipped God lingers with this bit of wood, but may I not entertain the hope that it may be so wielded as to promote the sweet spirit of unity, -- or if that be too much to ask, that it may preserve a decorous parliamentary calm during all the eloquent thrilling breezy Briggsy debates you may have over the new theology and revision questions.

With many kind recollections of the past,

Yours Truly,

W. H. McCaughey

Copy of the action of Washington Presbytery in receiving the gavel from
Dr. W. H. McCaughey:

I move this Presbytery accept this gavel, a relic of the early history of the Church in this region. It carries our minds back to the time of the planting of the gospel here and is replete with sacred associations. Vance's Fort was the spot where, in great danger, the gospel was preached, and is connected with _____ remembrances. It reminds us we in these times must stand firm for the truth, and if need be - - like the fathers, contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

We also tender our hearty thanks to the donor, Rev. W. H. McCaughey, a brother beloved, and once a member of this Presbytery for the gift.

(The one who made this motion can be assumed to have been the Rev. Dr. James I Brownson, to whom the letter was addressed but his name does not appear on the original paper from which this is taken. A D W)