
1909: Let’s meet at the Jockey Club
AOCS founding has roots in upscale fairgrounds bar

George Willhite

It was May 17, 1909. Forty-three-year-old Felix Paquin was making a home-coming of sorts to Memphis, Tennessee. He had left his Memphis home at 492 McLemore Ave. earlier that year after buying an analytical laboratory in Galveston, Texas.

Paquin, a native of Canada, had strong ties to Memphis. The partner in his former Memphis lab, G. Worthen Agee, had continued the analytical consultancy Paquin had founded in 1900. Paquin had been the official Memphis city chemist, a half-time position, as well as the official chemist for the Memphis Merchants Exchange. Trading rules specified Memphis as the settlement point for cottonseed oil trading disputes. Paquin conducted analyses, when needed, for arbitration cases and thus was a key person in the cottonseed industry.

Paquin was returning to speak at the 13th annual meeting of the Interstate Cottonseed Crushers Association that was to begin on Wednesday, May 18. Chemistry was becoming increasingly important to the cottonseed industry.

In May 2009, AOCS will celebrate its 100th anniversary. During the next 12 months, inform will publish a series of articles as to how an organization begun by nine men 99 years ago in Memphis, Tennessee, USA, has grown into an international organization with more than 4,000 members. The story has its beginning in May 1909 at the 13th annual meeting of the Interstate Cottonseed Crushers Association, probably with the arrival of a Cotton Belt Line train at Memphis Central Station carrying the Texas delegation to the crushers’ annual meeting.
had scheduled chemistry-related talks by Paquin and two Memphis residents, E.R. Barrow and E. Leman Johnson.

“The programme of the convention this year, that is the papers which are to be presented by the different delegates and chemical experts, is regarded as one of the most technical of any convention previously held. They are replete with interest to the crushers, but to the average layman they are as so much ancient Greek or Sanskrit,” the Memphis Commercial Appeal reported on May 19. Chemistry papers represented about a fourth of the total presentations at the meeting.

The crushers “enthusiastically received” Paquin when he was introduced on Thursday, May 19, to present “The Valuation of Cottonseed Products with Special Reference to Moisture in Meal and Cakes,” according to the Commercial Appeal.

“He brought out the full value of analytical chemistry in the cotton seed product industry to the manufacturer, the buyer, the seller, and the trader, showing how the best price could be secured for such products in the open market,” the report continued, noting that Paquin’s paper was “ably prepared, well-delivered, and he was roundly applauded at its close.”

Barrow, an early member of the crushers’ organization who had been named official chemist for the Memphis Merchants Exchange earlier that year, spoke on “The Uniform Moisture Basis for Reporting Analytical Results.” Johnson’s paper was “Suggestions for Promoting Accuracy in the Sampling and Analysis of Cottonseed Products.” Other chemistry papers included “Effect of Moisture in Cottonseed Meal as Affecting Settlement on Basis of Analysis” by George O. Haskell and “Estimation of Cottonseed Hulls in Cottonseed Meal” by G.S. Frapa.

Paquin, Barrow, and Johnson were three of the 15 analysts among the approximately 700 persons attending the convention at the recently refurbished Tri-State Fairgrounds in Memphis. Interstate Cottonseed Crushers Association members appreciated the increasing importance of chemical analysis to their industry. In the crushers’ first rule book, issued in 1897–98, “no methods of analysis were specified, and there were no definite standards (for) prime crude oil, prime summer yellow (oil) or prime meal, etc.” C.B. Cluff wrote in a 1945 issue of Oil & Soap. “Prime crude oil, for example, was required to produce ‘prime summer yellow
Remembering the Jockey Club
AOCS’ founding site survived until 1950

After many years as the Tri-State Fairgrounds clubhouse, the Jockey Club underwent several metamorphoses before its demolition in 1950.

For a while, it was home to Memphis’ Bachelor’s Baby Hospital, one of the first charity baby hospitals in the mid-South. Eventually it became the office for Memphis Park Commission’s Recreation Department. The recreation department moved out in 1947, but continued to use the structure as a warehouse.

Before the building’s demolition in 1950, recreation department workers removed bales of costumes—clowns, little girls’ princess outfits, etc.—from the basement, which once had been the Jockey Club barroom. The fairgrounds area became “Libertyland,” a recreation-themed area that includes the Mid-South Coliseum, where such acts as Elvis Presley and the Beatles appeared. The nearby Liberty Bowl stadium is home field for the University of Memphis football team and site of the annual Liberty Bowl college football game.

One historical Memphis figure who had visited the Jockey Club was Edward H. (Boss) Crump, who ran the dominant political machine in Memphis until he died in 1954. A newspaper article on a fairgrounds’ grandstand fire in 1945 noted that:

“Memphis society, then as now, has always been attracted to the Fairgrounds and the old clubhouse . . . . Society itself centered around the Jockey Club. Mr. Crump said that when he was only 25 (in 1899) he was a steward in the club.”

Crump survived the club by four years. Felix Paquin died in 1951, one year after the Jockey Club was torn down.

For further reading:

- Procter and Gamble, in Person, JAOCS 46:4
- Atlanta and the cottonseed processing industry, INFORM 5:10–19
- Pioneer oil chemists: Allbright, Wesson, INFORM 5:94–100
- Giants of the past: David Wesson (1861–1934), inform 14:744–745
- Giants of the past: Hippolyte Mège (1817–1880), inform 17:264
- Cottonseed oil’s rise to prominence, INFORM 9:100–106
- Julius Lewkowitsch—a memoir of a pioneer in fats and oils technology, INFORM 7:1130–1136

Articles from inform volumes 13–20 (2002–2009) may be viewed at no charge by AOCS members through their member page at the AOCS website. Articles from JAOCS and its predecessor publications are available at no charge to current JAOCS subscribers via their AOCS member page. There is a fee for non-JAOCS subscribers to view such articles online.

History in brief

Paquin as city chemist
(from the Memphis Commercial-Appeal, April 30, 2006): 100 years ago: 1906

Seven milkmen were arrested yesterday on charges of City Chemist Felix Paquin that the milk they were selling failed to test the required 3.5% butterfat. The arrests were made by Sanitary Officer H.L.P. McGee.
grade by the usual refining methods with a normal loss of weight.’”

But there was no guidance as to what “usual refining methods” were, or what would be a “normal loss of weight,” Cluff noted.

Since 1903, the crushers had been appointing refining chemists from manufacturing firms to prepare a standard refining test and give pointers to arbitration chemists on how to refine crude oil. But at the 1909 Memphis meeting, the crushers appointed a chemists’ committee (Paquin, Barrow, Johnson, R.C. Warren, and F.N. Smalley) to prepare official methods of analysis for adoption by the association’s rules committee.

The analysts attending the 1909 meeting worked for private analytical laboratories or for firms that produced, used, or traded cottonseed oil, cake, or meal. Their task was to evaluate product quality. When a seller said he sent prime summer oil to a buyer and the buyer said it was second-rate, some objective method was needed to determine who was right. The analysts were being asked to reach agreement on which methods should be used to determine product quality. At that time, U.S. cottonseed production was about 4.4 million tons annually and it sold for about $24 a ton. If companies had a better indication of the potential value of their cottonseed, the expectation was that they could increase their income.

The fairgrounds’ Jockey Club, also known as the Clubhouse, was adjacent to the fairgrounds hall where the convention business sessions were held. The Jockey Club was a showplace of the refurbished fairgrounds with a cool basement bar that provided an appealing place to gather for conversation and refreshment at the end of each day’s program.

On Friday, May 20, after the formal meeting had concluded, some of the analysts were discussing their mutual problems—including how to develop a standard refining method—in the Jockey Club’s basement bar. Those attending included Agee, Barrow, Johnson, Thomas C. Law, Paquin, R.W. Perry, Smalley, Warren, and David Wesson, who in 1887 had opened the first private U.S. laboratory for systematic analysis of cottonseed products. Those nine men—most in their 20s—agreed they should form a cottonseed oil analysts’ organization to “promote social feeling, permit close cooperation in developing uniform analytical methods, and provide a means for research,” their future constitution would say.

Paquin was elected president of the unnamed fledgling group. Barrow and Agee were asked to draft a constitution and by-laws for adoption by analysts attending the next year’s Interstate Cottonseed Crushers Association in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The first steps had been taken. What would be the reaction of other analysts to the proposal? What name should the group have? How should they determine which analytical methods merited adoption by the Interstate Cottonseed Crushers’ Association?

George Willhite, who is preparing this series of articles as AOCS’ centennial historian, retired from AOCS in 2002 after 27 years as a member of its publications staff. He is an honorary member of AOCS. He can be contacted via e-mail at: willhite@aocs.org.

Next month:
1910–1918:
Getting started

---

For Gentle Distillation of Heat Sensitive, High Boiling Products

Short-Path Evaporation

With our broad line of thermal separation solutions, LCI is your best resource to design, deliver, and support your next short-path evaporation system.

Benefits of Short-Path Evaporation include:
- Minimum pressure drop permits high vacuum operation, down to .001 mbar, and low product temperatures
- Evaporates heat sensitive products with short residence times
- Wiped heat transfer areas avoid fouling
- Excellent heat transfer at a highly turbulent product film
- Efficient droplet separation for outstanding distillate quality
- Testing and support available in Charlotte, NC

See us at the AOCS Annual Meeting & Expo in Booth 114

Email info@lcicorp.com or phone 704-394-8341

www.lcicorp.com