The cane used in the Hats & Canes ceremony is engraved with the inscription, “From the Pioneering Class of 1908.” The cane was given to Dean Joseph I. Kelly by the LSU Law student body.

Later, LSU Law “seniors” in Fall 1930 started the tradition of sporting hats and black canes. The canes had curved handles and a silver band engraved with the student’s name, year of graduation and the words, “The Louisiana State University Law School.” As the Reveille put it, “Walking canes will be carried, flourished and brandished” as a “badge to distinguish law seniors.”

The Class of 1931 announced that it hoped to lay the foundation for a Law School tradition, which indeed became the case. Under the leadership of Ward T. Jones, president of the law students for both the 1931-32 and 1932-33 terms, the seniors decided to wear derby hats and carry canes.

In 1934 when the canes arrived, the Reveille reported that several seniors were seen swinging them, “but not menacingly as their older law brothers sometimes do when they become infuriated.”

The Class of 1935 continued the practice, which Frank Purvis, president of the law students, indicated had been in disuse in America but was an integral part of European law school tradition. A photograph of seniors with the hats and canes continued to be de rigueur in the student newspaper.

The Hats 'n Canes tradition continues to today!

*The Louisiana State University Law School from 1906 to 1977 by W. Lee Hargrave.*