

King Haglar, Catawba Indian chief, Honored with Statue

by Beckee Garris, Catawba Indian

On December 06, 2014—a cold and wet day—over 200 people were in attendance to watch the unveiling of bronze statues honoring Catawba Indian leader King Haiglar¹ and the English settler, Thomas Spratt II, that were erected on the campus of the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. This was to commemorate the early history of the Charlotte, North Carolina region during the 1700's. But the event also represents the respect both men from different cultures and background had for each other during this time in history.

Haglar had become the leading spokesperson and war Sachem for the Catawbas when he was in his early 30s in the period from 1749 until 1763 when he was ambushed and killed in a battle with a Shawnee warrior party during the war between France and England for control over the Ohio Valley (also known as the French and Indian War from 1753-1763). He allied himself and the Catawba with the English Crown, the Cherokee, and the Caughnawaga Mohawk against the French and her allies the Wabanaki Confederacy, Algonquin, Lenape, Ottawa Shawnee, and Wyandot. When the Americans began to battle England for independence and as they began to assume a more dominant influence along the Atlantic Coast the Catawba allied themselves with the Americans against the English.

Spratt, an Scottish settler, befriended the Catawbas and especially Haglar after he inherited plantation land from his father in 1757. The land he acquired through inheritance was part of Catawba territory and despite the land having been purchased from North Carolina Spratt and his descendants leased the land



Kirk Johnson, Park Ranger for Andrew Jackson State Park, Lancaster, SC gets credit for taking the photo of me [Beckee Harris] during of the King Haglar/Thomas Spratt II ceremony.

from the Catawbas in recognition of their original ownership. Nicknamed “Kanawa” from the name of a river in West Virginia where he and Haglar with Catawba warriors battled the Shawnee to their defeat.

Several Catawba Indians were a part of the commemorative event. Beckee Garris did a smudging ceremony to cleanse and bless

¹ Other sources spell the name “Haiglar.”

the ground where the statues stand. Ronnie Beck sang an honor song while beating a hand drum. Wenonah G. Haire, DMD, the director of the Catawba Cultural Preservation Project, spoke about the legacy of King Haglar and his major role in helping not only his people but the early settlers, such as Thomas Spratt, II.

To know how important this event was you also have to know some of the history of the Catawba Indians. The Catawba Indian Nation now is located in north central South Carolina in the center of an area which once comprised Catawba territory, about 8 miles east of Rock Hill, South Carolina. Over 2,800 Catawba are listed on the official tribal role. Of these 2,800 persons, the majority lives either on or within 20 miles of the reservation. Although the Catawba have no word in their own language for the meaning of "Catawba," it has been thought for many years to be a Yuchee Indian word. It has been established that the Yuchee did indeed have a phrase "Catawba Ge Na Ge Ha," which translates to strong people standing together. The Catawba called themselves "Yę Waterą Iswą Tók," People of the Washed Away River Bank. It wasn't until European contact that they became known as the Catawba.

The earliest mentions of the Catawba in written accounts were made by Spanish explorers of the mid-sixteenth century. A member of the Juan Pardo expedition recorded a number of names of villages and peoples of the area as they traveled up the Edisto and Santee River complexes. "Katapa" or "Kataba" and "Yssa" or "Esaw" are among the names easily recognized as designating Catawba peoples. It is likely that the Catawba were a loosely associated confederation of villages speaking related dialects of language or languages distantly related to Siouan. There were also speakers of Algonquian, Iroquoian, Yuchee, and Muskogean languages present in the area, people

with whom they had contact. John Lawson who visited them in 1701 wrote the most complete early description of the Catawba.

At one point in Lawson's writings he listed the number of Catawba at 10,000. It highly speculated he did not visit all of the villages and some wonder if he only counted the warriors of fighting age, as was the custom during his time. According to Hudson (1701), the early Catawba occupied an area where two cultural traditions met—the tribes of the piedmont and those of the southern chiefdoms of the lowlands. Their mode of subsistence was typical of the piedmont area. The Catawba were known as warriors and, except during the Yamasse War of 1715, were allies of the British, against both the Spanish and the French. They also feuded with and made retaliatory attacks against the Cherokee and the Shawnee, Delaware, and Iroquois to the north. Situated at the intersection of trade routes, they occupied a prominent position as middlemen in the trade with the British mostly for furs, and for which both Virginia and South Carolina competed. In the end, most of the Catawba's dealings were with the South Carolina government, which also needed them as a buffer politically and militarily. Their numbers were decimated by the French and Indian War and by a smallpox epidemic, and although they sided with the states during the American Revolution, they were no longer a strong military force by that time. And despite that fact, fifty Catawba served during the Revolutionary War. (During the unveiling of the statues it was pointed out the clothing King Haglar is wearing were articles he requested. And the list was written and signed by none other than a Coronel George Washington who later became the first president of the newly formed United States of America.)

It was another American president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, in the 1960's who had a major

impact on the Catawba and another 109 federally recognized tribes when he signed the Termination Act, which took federal recognition from these nations. The government forced many of these tribes to take them to court to regain this recognition. According to Claudia Y. Heinemann-Priest, Instructor of Catawba and Native American Literature, University of South Carolina, Lancaster (1999), after lengthy court battles the Catawba were among the few who successfully had their federal recognition reinstated through a new treaty settlement with the state of South Carolina and the Federal Government.

Today while the Catawba Indian Nation is vastly smaller in their numbers and in the size of original ancestral lands they are still a people who continue to take pride in who they are and their part in history of this country. We are still Catawba Ga Na Ge Ha.

Cite this article as

Garris, B. (2015). King Haglar, Catawba Indian Chief, Honored with Statue. Fourth World Journal, 14(1) 13-15.

About the author



Beckee Garris was born and raised on the Catawba Indian Reservation in Rock Hill, SC. She is the granddaughter of former Catawba Indian Chief Albert H. Sanders and the great-granddaughter of former Chief Samuel T.

Blue. She works part-time for the Tribal Historic Preservation Office for the Catawba Indian Nation and part-time for the Native American Studies Center in Lancaster. She is also a part-time student at USC Lancaster Region campus working towards for her BLS in Native American Studies. She was selected to be among 21 Native American storytellers to be part of the book "Trickster, A Native American Trickster Tales". In 2012 this book earned the Aesop Award for Children's Literature.