

A reporter for The Lancaster Enterprise visited an island in the Catawba river before the damming of the river for electric power in 1904. The island was described as being somewhere between 75 and 100 acres. On the island was an "ancient mound" that covered an area in size around a quarter of an acre and stood about 20 feet in height.

The reporter could only guess that it was an Indian mound and that the Indians were Catawba (although it would have been closer to the area once occupied by the Waxhaw Indians).

Local memory had it that on the Chester side across from the island a number of Indian graves had been plowed and opened. The field hands found many relics—"beads, hatchets, mortars, pestles, and so on." These were given to Lancaster's "Judge Witherspoon" who, in turn, sent them to Dr. J. Marion Sims in New York. Dr. Sims (1813-1883) returned them to South Carolina, placing the relics in the South Carolina College Museum (now USC).

Publicity around the Sims' gift of Indian relics, prompted William Richardson Davie, Jr., a descendant of Gen. William Richardson Davie of the Revolutionary War and founder of UNC-CH, to write a letter to the State about his knowledge of the island.

Davie, Jr. wrote that the height of the mound was more than 30 feet. He thought that it could have been an Indian burial site but had also heard that it was built for "safety in times of great overflow, the island being subject [to] inundation."

Davie thought it most interesting that there was a pond about 75 x 50 feet from which earth had been moved to make the mound. A path, 3 or 4 feet wide, that stretched from the pond to the mound, was covered several inches deep with pieces of broken pottery. He said that he thought "these tons upon tons of earth were carried by men, or most probably women, on their heads and dumped upon the pile until it was raised to the height of forty or fifty feet, the action of the elements and the natural packing of the dirt having, brought it down to its present size."

Davie added that there were giant trees, mostly hickories and water oaks, from one end of the island to the other. Nor did he know of any Catawba Indian legends connected to the island but the pottery was ornamented in a Catawba style with what he called a "ziz-zaz" pattern.

A tenant farmer was remembered for unearthing a large pot in a field near the bank of a creek. Also, a Mr. Foreman Sprang, of Pittsburg, PA had taken from a smaller mound a jar of small charred bones.

There were many relics in the area—"arrowheads and beautifully shaped axes." In 1852 a Mr. Scroope Diaq, of the East Indian Civil Service, had visited and gathered up many of the finest pieces and presented them to the British Museum in London."

Davie thought "the finest collection of relics of this kind in the south, if not in America, is that of Dr. Babcock, of Chester, S. C., who has many thousands of most rare specimens. . . . Dr. Babcock has refused a number of tempting offers from the Smithsonian Institute and other like institutions, and positively declines to part with his Treasure. . . ."

Incidentally, Dr. S. E. Babcock was the father of Dr. James W. Babcock, a highly qualified psychiatrist who graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1886. In 1891, Gov. Benjamin R. Tillman appointed him to the post of superintendent of the State Lunatic Asylum. In that position, Babcock was struck by the number of patients, especially women, who suffered from pellagra. His work contributed to the discovery that diets heavy in corn products contributed to the onset of pellagra. But nothing was done about it until 1949 when the SC legislature finally passed a law making it illegal to sell or trade corn products unless the additives thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin D and calcium were present.