

COMMENTARY

King Hagler's reign ends in murder

■ White settlers benefited from Catawba chief's unwavering loyalty to royal governor.

On S.C. 5 in Lancaster County there is an official South Carolina historical marker that reads: "On the Catawba path near here, King Hagler, Chief of the Catawba Nation (1750-1763), was slain on August 30, 1763, by a raiding band of northern Indian braves as he journeyed from the Waxhaws Settlement on Cane Creek to a Catawba town on Twelve Mile Creek."

King Hagler (also spelled Hagler, Haglar, Hegler, Heiglar, etc.) has often been called the greatest of Catawba leaders. At least, this is the viewpoint of whites who benefited from Hagler's unwavering friendship and loyalty to the South Carolina royal governor upon whom Hagler depended to keep peace among white settlers, enemy tribes and the Catawbas.

Hagler believed his tribe was destitute until the white man came in and raised the standard of living. This is a generous assessment on Hagler's part considering the white man also brought the plagues of alcohol and smallpox, both of which in less than 100 years helped reduce the Catawba population from 6,000 to about 1,200.

Royal Gov. James Glen, for his part, found the Catawbas "as brave



Nearby
history

LOUISE
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fellows as any on the continent of America, and our firm friends."

Hagler's name frequently crops up on the pages of the South Carolina Council Journal. The council regularly paid Catawbas for tracking runaway slaves, bounties for scalps and for the services of doctors, gunsmiths and tavern keepers.

In addition, Hagler regularly petitioned the government for gifts. Not only did he ask for corn, horses and ammunition but also for fancy "cloathing" (velvets and laces for his headmen) and saddles for his daughters.

By 1759 Hagler was so skilled at soliciting favors that he was able to send this rather eloquent request to Glen: "Formerly I walked fast, but now am old and unable to walk home, therefore must beg the

favour of a horse from your Excellency and as my sight is fail'd shall be obliged to you for a good gun."

The raiding band of Indians who slew Hagler were seven Shawnees out of Virginia, longtime enemies of the Catawbas. Six bullets killed Hagler instantly. His only companion, a slave, escaped to spread the word. Catawba drums made of deerskin stretched over clay pots spread the message quickly.

There was immediate panic on the frontier. Many of the Scotch-Irish settlers had come to the Waxhaws to escape the French and Indian War rampages and torchings in Pennsylvania and Virginia. They had thought themselves safe among the Catawbas, so the loss of Hagler was a severe blow.

The location of Hagler's burial place is not known. The Catawbas say there were two locations; the second one they never divulged to any non-Catawbas.

Maurice Moore describes King Hagler's grave as 10 feet wide, 10 feet long and 10 feet deep. Along with Hagler's body were buried his silver-mounted rifle, power flask, gold and silver money, pipes, to-

bacco and other personal possessions.

According to Moore, for one month there was a guard of 16 warriors. Then a band of Virginia gamblers got the guards drunk and rifled the grave.

The Camden militia investigated the murder of Hagler, and the N.C. government sent a lieutenant with 30 men to pursue the Shawnees. Their search was unsuccessful.

Later, according to Robert Mills, the Catawbas captured some Shawnees, including one of the murdering band. These Shawnees were tortured until almost dead and then turned over to young boys for target practice. The Catawbas took the scalps to the governor at Charleston, who told them to take the scalps back to the Nation and display them and "make your boys into men."

King Hagler was killed four months before the Treaty of Augusta awarded the Catawbas an area 15 miles square as a reservation. It had been a dream of Hagler's and something for which he had long worked. His Quaker friend, Samuel Wyly, who surveyed the reservation, put Hagler's name on the map to do him honor.