

Hagler (Arataswa or Oroloswa) ^[1]

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by Jerry C. Cashion

d. 30 Aug. 1763

Arataswa or Oroloswa Hagler, king or head man of the Catawbas ^[2] (ca. 1749–63), lived and died in the region that was in bitter dispute between the two Carolinas. Upon the murder of The Young Warrior (Yanabe Yalangway) by northern Indians, Hagler was recognized by provincial authorities in Charles Town as king. Governor James Glen ^[3] of South Carolina and his counterpart in New York attempted to end the ancient feud between the Catawbas and the Six Nations composing the Iroquois Confederacy ^[4] by arranging a meeting in Albany ^[5] in 1751. Hagler, accompanied by Lieutenant Governor William Bull ^[6], led the Catawba delegation to New York. Although an agreement was reached, the Catawba chief complained in subsequent years of continued harassment of his people by members of the Six Nations.

Although Hagler remained a stalwart ally of the British, he was not above attempting to play upon the rivalries among the southern provinces for the best interests of his nation. As early as 1752 he informed the Charles Town government of the encroachment of whites on Catawba lands. A similar complaint was made to North Carolinians at a meeting in Rowan County ^[7] in 1754. The frequency of white encroachments increased as settlers fled south after General Edward Braddock ^[8]'s defeat in 1755. Hagler became involved in the controversy between Virginia's Governor Robert Dinwiddie ^[9] and North Carolina's Governor Arthur Dobbs ^[10] on one side and Glen ^[3] on the other. Virginia had requested Catawba braves to accompany Braddock's army and accused South Carolina of preventing the Indians from participating by calling a meeting with them at the time they were supposed to march to Virginia. Also, at about this time Dobbs sent a captain's commission to Jimmy Bullen, a Catawba head man. Some have interpreted this as an attempt by the North Carolina government to establish a rival leader among the Catawbas.

During the early spring of 1756 Virginia commissioned William Byrd III and Peter Randolph ^[11] to negotiate with Hagler at a site on the Broad River ^[12]. North Carolina was invited to participate and Captain Hugh Waddell ^[13], then commanding the frontier rangers in that province, was appointed commissioner. Hagler agreed to send forty Catawba braves at once to aid the Virginians. This assistance was not forthcoming. The Catawba king later claimed that Glen had instructed him not to go.

In mid-May 1756, a group of Cherokee ^[14] braves returning from service on the Virginia ^[15] front terrorized and pillaged the North Carolina backcountry. Hagler and his band, along with some Rowan settlers, captured the offending Indians and delivered them to authorities in Salisbury ^[16]. On 26–27 May the Catawba king met with Peter Henley ^[17], chief justice of North Carolina, at Salisbury. At this meeting he requested gifts, ammunition, and a fort to be built to protect his people while his warriors were away fighting for the British. Dobbs and the North Carolina Assembly reluctantly agreed to this. A site was selected and subsequently purchased for the tribe. Hugh Waddell, who had just constructed Fort Dobbs ^[18], was sent with a group of rangers to build the Catawba fort. For some reason relations between the Catawbas and North Carolina cooled, perhaps due to continued white settlement from that colony within Catawba lands. Hagler requested that the North Carolinians cease work on the fort as he wished the stronghold to be built by South Carolinians. In August 1757 Dobbs ordered the work suspended.

From 1756 to 1759 the Catawbas journeyed north to aid the British in their campaigns against the French and their Indian allies. In the fall of 1758 about twenty-five Catawbas took part in General John Forbes ^[19]'s expedition. When these braves returned home, they brought with them the dreaded smallpox which decimated the nation during the winter of 1759–60. It was estimated that between one-half and two-thirds of the tribe died. Hagler withdrew to the Camden ^[20] area while the disease ran its course. Later the principal settlement of the nation was established at Pine Tree Hill, away from white incursions.

During 1760 Hagler was ill and unable to make trips to Charles Town in May and October. Nevertheless, he participated in the negotiations for the Treaty of Pine Tree Hill (July 1760) with Edmond Atkin, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern District. By this agreement the Catawba tribe was restricted to a fifteen-square-mile territory. This boundary was not established until after the Augusta Congress of 1763 due to the objections of Arthur Dobbs.

South Carolina finally built the oft-promised Catawba fort in the winter of 1760. The following year Hagler met with Chief Silver Heels of the Iroquois at Charles Town to reaffirm the peace between the two tribes. Also, in the spring of 1761 a number of Catawbas joined Colonel James Grant in his expedition to crush the Cherokee. Although peace was achieved with the Cherokee in December 1761, sporadic fighting continued among the ancient Indian rivals. Two years later, while out hunting, Hagler was ambushed and killed by seven Shawnee ^[21] braves. One tribal tradition states that his grave was looted by whites, whereas another story contends that his remains were secretly buried. No likeness of Hagler is known to exist. A weather vane in Camden is said to be an effigy of the Catawba king; however, the artisan who made it did not arrive in the area until over a half century after Hagler's death.

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