St. Martinville Unveils Attakapas Indian Statue

Folklore Historian Does the Honors

ST. MARTINVILLE, La. — Sunday this small French community momentarily was given back to the Indians when a statue of an Attakapas Indian was unveiled and dedicated on the St. Martin church square.

Andre Olivier, Acadian-French descendent and noted folklore historian unveiled the statue, as the highlight of the day long ceremonies honoring the long ago conquered Indian tribes of the area.

Ironically in this peaceful village in front of a Catholic church, a statue of a savage was erected. History reports that of the many Indian tribes which were in possession of the Louisiana Territory prior to its domination by both Spanish and French, and later the United States, the Attakapas was said to be warlike and cannibalistic.

Offshoot of the Opelousas to the north, the Attakapas was overpowered and sought refuge in the fertile areas of what today is known as St. Martin, Lafayette, Vermilion and Iberia area.

The Attakapas long since vanished from Southwest Louisiana has left little behind to be remembered by with the exception that they are credited with the naming of the slow-moving but navigable stream known as Bayou Teche.

The legend goes that the Indians of this area came upon a monstrous serpent and they set out to kill it. In its death throes it beat a tortuous path which later filled with water. Teche was the Indian name for snake.

After the unveiling by Olivier, the Honorable deLesseps Morrison, Ambassador to the Organization of American States addressed the crowd at 2:30 p.m. on the St. Martin church square.