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Finding Charlotte's soul in tales of early rebellion

Statue unveiled today illustrates feisty spirit of earliest settlers.

Posted: Thursday, May. 20, 2010

"If you don't know where you're from, you'll have a hard time saying where you're going."

- Wendell Berry, Kentucky farmer, poet and writer

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Chas Fagan's 3-ton bronze, "The Spirit of Mecklenburg," to be unveiled today, ought to help Charlotteans better understand their city, where it came from and, just maybe, where it's going. The statue depicts Capt. James Jack, a tavern keeper in pre-Revolutionary Charlotte - a rebellious hamlet founded where two trading paths crossed and named for the queen, to curry favor with King George III.

Jack, a captain in the local militia, in June 1775 rode to Philadelphia to deliver to the Second Continental Congress some treasonous Mecklenburg documents - a Paul Revere-like tale of courage that many modern Charlotteans have never heard.

There's long been local disagreement about which specific papers Jack stowed in his saddlebag. Was it the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence - the Meck Dec - a document many believe was signed May 20, 1775, but unverifiable from historical evidence? Or was it the May 31 Mecklenburg Resolves, which indisputably existed but which weren't outright declarations of independence?

Hence the unveiling date - May 20. The \$525,000 statue was commissioned by the local May 20th Society, a private group that believes the Meck Dec was real and whose members will eagerly explain to you the evidence that persuades them.

The statue is intended as the first in a series of monuments, to be called the Trail of History, along the Little Sugar Creek Greenway. No 2 is to be early settler Thomas Spratt and King Hagler, a Catawba Indian chief and ally of the settlers.

For all of us, the story of James Jack's daring can be a reminder of the risks Charlotte's earliest residents took to secure freedom from an oppressive crown. In a place where so many remnants of the past have been destroyed, it's a way to reconnect with the city's deepest roots. "James Jack is a symbol of Charlotte's role in the revolution, but also the future," says May 20th Society chairman Charles Jonas.

Capt. Jack risked much for something important. His tale can guide us today, as we look to

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[AINTMISINPHILY](#) wrote on 05/24/2010 09:18:22 AM:

Will that statue fit in the back of a full sized pickup? How much does it weigh? How is it secured ? Just wondering. ha ha

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[DanaD](#) wrote on 05/22/2010 08:20:25 AM:

How much of this independent spirit is left in Charlotte today? Too many of us are satisfied with the status quo like ostriches with our necks in the sand or too dependent on others to care.

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