

Did You Know?

King Datha...a giant among men?

In 1520, two Spanish captains from Santo Domingo landed near Dataw Island and captured an Indian, whom they named Francisco Chicora. Chicora correctly assumed that in order to guarantee his survival he had to amaze and amuse his captors. He bought time by weaving fantastic stories of his native area. One of the most fascinating stories was about a giant Indian king named Datha. Datha, Chicora maintained, grew to enormous size by eating special herbs. The Datha legend caught fire among the sensation-seeking nobility of Europe. By the time the English arrived as permanent settlers of the area, the local legends held that Datha Island was the ancient home of the legendary Indian King Datha.



For many years, an "Indian Hill" near the village of Frogmore on St. Helena was believed to be a burial site of a native Indian chief, perhaps King Datha,

Dataw has had at least eleven spellings: Dataw, Datha, Dawtaw, Dathaw, Datah, Datau, Data, Daltah, Dattach, Dauhe, and even Dalho. The most common spelling has been Datha. A 1702 document transferring ownership of Datha Island is the first recorded document to specifically use the name "Datha Island". The name "Dathaw" dates back to the 1825 Mills Atlas of South Carolina. The island was sold for non-payment of taxes after confiscation during the Civil War in 1863 and was listed as "Dathaw". Kate Gleason referred to the island as "Dawtaw" Island.

A story relates that ALCOA planned to rename the island to "Sunset Island". Noted historian Dr. Larry Rowland intervened, convincing ALCOA that they had a treasured name with nearly 500 years of American history. ALCOA then selected "Dataw" from the list of spellings. Newspaper articles skeptically stated that it was one thing to "officially" rename an island and another thing to get people to accept it. Today, "Dataw" is very much accepted but there are still holdouts for the name "Datha".