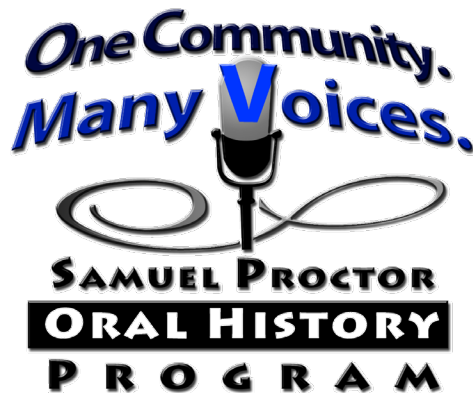


Nancy Cornelia Harris

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-092**

Interview by:

**Edith Frances Canty Wade
April 1, 1974**



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15 minutes | 12 pages

Abstract: Nancy Harris describes her family and what life was like growing up on the reservation. She describes the house that she lived in growing up and remembers the events surrounding a storm that damaged it. She mentions that she used to work at a cotton mill and expresses that she did not have the opportunities her son has now when she was growing up. Harris speaks about her friends of different races and says that she stays home most of the time now because of her health. She ends the interview by remembering that she received piano lessons when she was young and saying that she is glad to be a Catawba.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Family histories; Communities]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 092

Interviewee: Nancy Cornelia Harris

Interviewer: Edith Frances Canty Wade

Date of Interview: April 1, 1974

W: This is Frances Wade. I live on Route 3, Box 304, Rock Hill, South Carolina. I'm gathering the oral history of the Catawba Indians for the University of Florida and today is April 1, 1974. I'm in the home of Richard and Nancy Harris. They live on a hill within seeing distance of the Catawba River. It's quiet and peaceful down here too. Nancy, what is your full name?

H: Nancy Cornelia Harris.

W: When were you born, Nancy?

H: October 17. I can't think of the year. I [Inaudible 0:51]

W: Well, that's all right. Who were your parents?

H: Mary George Harris and Ben Harris.

W: Who were your grandparents?

H: Emily George and Taylor George and **Max** Harris.

W: How many brothers do you have?

H: Three.

W: Are any of 'em alive today?

H: No, they're all dead.

W: How many sisters do you have?

H: Oh, six, I believe. [Laughter]

W: Five. I believe you've got five.

H: Living.

W: Yes. What are the names of your living sisters?

H: Sally Wade, Ida Harris, Martha Johnson, and **Minnie** Harris.

W: And your fifth sister is the one that's dead, Emiline.

H: Mmhm.

W: What kind of work did your father do?

H: Well, he didn't do much work, you know, when he was coming up.

W: How did he make a living for you all?

H: Well, we'd draw money back then. Do you remember that?

W: I can remember.

H: [inaudible 2:15].

W: I can remember when we drew money. You know, I didn't know when it started.

When you talk about you drew money, did every member of the family draw?

H: Mmhm. Yes, **ma'am**.

W: Once a year?

H: Mmhm. My **papa** told us not to—

W: And who paid that?

H: Hm?

W: Who paid that to us?

H: South Carolina.

W: The state of South Carolina?

H: Mmhm.

W: Did your mother do any work?

H: Unh-uh. Just making pots.

W: Did she have a good place to sell her pottery?

H: Not all the time. Sometimes she'd take them to the college, and we'd sell them pretty good up there **for top price**.

W: You're talking about Winthrop College?

H: Mmhm.

W: Could she make small ones?

H: Make all sizes.

W: Make all sizes, and all kinds?

H: Yes, and all kinds of pipes too.

W: At Christmastime what kind of celebrating did you all do?

H: None. [Laughter]

W: You didn't do any?

H: No.

W: Did you have a Christmas tree?

H: No, we never put up a Christmas tree. [Laughter]

W: Did you get any toys?

H: Well, the little ones did. The big ones didn't.

W: Did you get fruit?

H: Mmhm.

W: Who gave that?

H: Papa bought that.

W: Somebody told me that the state of South Carolina or somebody gave fruit to you. Do you remember anything about that?

H: They might have did but I don't remember it.

W: When you were a child, what were your duties?

H: Well, getting water, help to get the wood, you know, things like that around the house.

W: Where did you get the water from?

H: Down at the bank at the spring.

W: How far away was your house from the spring?

H: Oh, it wasn't no distance I just can't tell you just how far. But it was just a little piece uphill, that was all.

W: Did you have to wash dishes?

H: Mhm.

W: Did you have to wash clothes?

H: Oh, yes. We done all that. Mama was sick for a long time, 'til like she got older when she got healthy. We used to do all those things.

W: I would like to ask you, when you got sick, did the Catawbias have a doctor, or did somebody else just come in and just help take care of 'em? What happened?

H: Oh, they had a doctor for 'em.

W: The state paid for a doctor?

H: Yeah. I guess it was the state, but I know they had a doctor.

W: Do you remember the first doctor that we had?

H: Oh, what was that doctor? I don't believe I can call his name, but I remember him. I know I can't call his name now.

W: It wasn't Dr. Hill.

- H: Unh-uh. It was one of them [inaudible 5:07] doctors, named [inaudible 5:10]
[Laughter] Good doctors there were. **Goodness**, Dr. Hill was a good doctor.
- W: Well, maybe you can think of his name a little later on. I'd just like to know the
doctor's name if there was any here in Catawba. What kind of house did you live
in?
- H: Plank house. Oh, we lived in a log house first. [Laughter] Used to live in a little
wee old log house on the side of the road. [Laughter]
- U: [inaudible 5:37]
- H: Yes.
- W: How many rooms did it have?
- H: It didn't have but one because it was just a small log house.
- W: Your whole big family lived in that one room?
- H: Mmhm.
- W: And then you moved into another house?
- H: Yeah, later on.
- W: Did your daddy build the other house?
- H: No, Mama [inaudible 5:59] John Brown.
- W: Is this the house that the storm turned over?
- H: Unh-uh, no that isn't the one. It was just a small little house.
- W: What happened? Wasn't there a terrible storm?
- H: Oh yes, I guess **that is the one**. It was so tall, was made for upstairs. But it didn't
turn it over. It just turned it lopsided.
- W: Did it fall off of its pillar?

H: Mmhm.

W: What kind of pillars was it? Were they rocks or what?

H: No, they was wood because [inaudible 6:38] and he didn't even put 'em in the ground whenever he—

U: Just set 'em on the **floor**.

H: Yeah. [Laughter] Just set 'em on top of the ground. It's right funny what people will do, ain't it?

W: And the storm came and blew it off of the blocks?

H: Turned it over like that, you know. It didn't turn it that bad, flat or nothing, but it turned it out.

W: Could you live in it anymore?

H: Mmhm. Fixed it up and lived there. Church people went there and helped straighten it up.

W: I like that you say church people. Did church people help each other very much in those days?

H: Well, sometimes, but not all the time.

W: Did anybody get hurt when your house fell off of the—

H: Momma. She [inaudible 7:27] and the baby died. It didn't die right then, you know.

W: Did your house have shutters on the windows, or did you have glass windows?

H: No, we had shutters.

W: What do you remember about church when you were growing up? Did you go to church?

H: Mmhm, I went to church.

W: Were you a member of the church?

H: Yes.

W: What church did you belong to?

H: Mormon church.

W: Where was the first church at, that you remember?

H: Down at **Lula Beck's**.

W: You didn't ever go into **brush arbor**?

H: No, I don't believe I did. I might have did too. It was at a graveyard, wasn't it?

W: Well, that's what everybody tells me.

H: Yeah. I know I did go there too.

W: Were you ever active in church? Did you take part in church?

H: No, I'd just go as a member.

W: Did you remember any of the people who was over the church at the time that you were growing up?

H: Uncle Sam's the only one I can remember, **at least**.

W: Do you remember any of the mission presidents that came here, that was over the church?

H: I can't think of them now, but I know them all for a while.

W: Do you know Charles A. Callas?

H: Mmhm.

W: Did you remember him?

H: Yes.

W: Did you remember Elder Richards?

H: Mhm. Yeah, I remember Richards.

W: Did you go to school?

H: A little bit. Not much.

W: Where did you go to school?

H: On the reservation.

W: And how big was that school?

H: Oh, I don't know just how big it was, but it was a pretty good size.

W: Was it where the old school was standing, or was it down near where the old church stood?

H: No, I believe it was at where the old schoolhouse was, wasn't it?

U: **Yes.**

W: How big was it? Was it one room?

H: No, that there was another **little church**, like for a kitchen room. Do you remember?

U: Mhm. But that one [inaudible 9:40]

H: Yeah, I know.

W: How did you keep warm?

H: Well, we used a wood heater then.

W: Who got the wood?

H: Oh, I don't know. I can't remember who got the wood. [Laughter]

W: Do you remember what y'all did for water?

H: Yeah. [Laughter] Go to the spring and get the water.

W: Who went to the spring?

H: **Dear Lord!** [Laughter]

W: They'd [inaudible 10:03] didn't they?

H: Yeah.

U: [Laughter]

W: Do you remember any of your teachers?

H: Let's see. I remember but I can't remember now. [Laughter]

U: [inaudible 10:14]

H: [Laughter]

[Break in recording]

H: I dated a small schoolteacher, but I don't remember the others.

W: Do you know how far in school you went?

H: I guess I went to my ABC's. [Laughter] I went a little further than that, but—

W: Can you read?

H: Yes.

W: You can read?

H: I can read a little bit.

W: Can you write?

H: Mmhm.

W: And can you add and do arithmetic?

H: I don't know whether I can or not. [Laughter] I doubt I can write now because I can't see good now. My eyes are bad.

W: You've never worked, have you? Have you worked?

H: Mmhm. I used to work at the cotton mill.

W: Oh, you did. What kind of work did you do?

H: I **steamed** at the cotton mill **then**.

W: And how did you get backward and forward to work? Did you live off of the reservation?

H: Well, **at the moment** I lived down the mill hill and I was **boarded there, I guess**.

W: When you were young were there any sports that you liked to take part in?

H: Unh-uh, nothing. Only did play. [Laughter]

W: Was there anything that you particularly liked to do? Like sew or, you know, or any—

H: Oh, yeah. I'd like [inaudible 11:34]

W: Did you ever make quilts?

H: Mmhm. But I'd rather make pots than **anything else**. [Laughter]

W: You'd rather make pottery. Well, that's something special that you like to do and it's a real art, I realize that. Where were you married? Do you know where you was married?

H: In York.

W: Do you know when you got married?

H: No. [Laughter] I won't think I'd be like Sally Beck, now, she said that's something she'd never forget, and I told her, "Well, I can't never think of when I got married."
[Laughter]

W: Who did you marry?

H: Richard Harris.

W: Do you have any children?

H: Well, me and him ain't but I got one.

W: What's his name?

H: Alfred Harris.

W: When you were growing up you didn't have a lot of opportunities. I know you didn't. But do you see opportunities that your son has today that you didn't have?

H: Yes.

W: What are some of the opportunities that you think that he's got?

H: I mean he works, you know, in the mill. Well, I did work in the mill a little bit too, but not much. And he works in the mill all the time.

W: He's got a nice home?

H: Mhm. He's got six children.

W: Yes. He's got a good car. He's got a lot of the almost luxuries that you never had.

H: No, I never did have.

W: I know that you don't go to church now and I know that the reason you don't go is because you're not well. And because of that your social life— you don't really go anywhere.

H: Anywhere.

W: Just right around your own house. Have you ever voted when it was time to vote?

H: Mhm. I did but I ain't lately.

W: Did you think that it was a good thing to vote?

H: I guess I must have, at that time. [Laughter]

W: Do you have friends among the Whites?

H: Yeah, I've got a few friends among the Whites.

W: I know that you have because I know that they used to come down and see you and still do. Do you have any friends among the Blacks?

H: I used to.

W: What do you think about being an Indian?

H: Oh, I'm glad I'm Indian. I'm like, **AI**. [Laughter] I'd say if he wasn't Indian, he'd paint hisself and pass hisself off as an Indian anyhow. [Laughter]

W: I've been talking to Nancy Harris. She's not well, but she's able to get around and do her own work, and just sort of fiddle around her own house. She's not quite sure how old she is, but we think it's in the seventies. Nancy just told me that she was one of the young ladies who took piano lessons. She said she took them from a Miss Gryder, Roy Gryder's sister. What did you say her name was?
Freddie?

H: Yes, Freddie.

W: Freddie Gryder.

[End of interview]

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