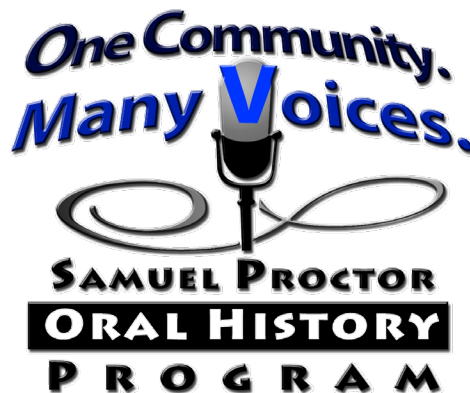


# **Peggy Elizabeth Thatcher Harris and Alice Harris**

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)  
CAT-028**

**Interview by:**

**Emma Reid Echols  
January 19, 1972**



University of Florida • Samuel Proctor Oral History Program • Paul Ortiz, Director  
P.O. Box 115215, 241 Pugh Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-5215  
(352) 392-7168 [www.clas.ufl.edu/history/oral](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/history/oral)

**Samuel Proctor Oral History Program**  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Program Director: Dr. Paul Ortiz

241 Pugh Hall  
PO Box 115215  
Gainesville, FL 32611  
(352) 392-7168  
<https://oral.history.ufl.edu>

**CAT 028 Peggy Elizabeth Thatcher Harris and Alice Harris**  
**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)**  
**Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols on January 19, 1972**  
**13 minutes | 12 pages**

**Abstract:** Peggy Harris speaks about her family, six children, and their current occupations. She then speaks on her educational experience on the reservation and in high school. Mrs. Harris then speaks about receiving land deeds and loans, and the amount of land allowed for each of her children. She discusses current church attendance and activities before moving onto education on the reservation and lessening of discrimination towards Indians. Finally, she speaks about her husband's job and how they built their house. Alice Harris, her daughter, speaks about her friends and activities at school. Peggy Harris ends the recording by describing the big pines that used to be on her land and which still are on the old reservation.

**Keywords:** [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Oral biography; Education]

**SAMUEL PROCTOR**  
**ORAL HISTORY**  
**PROGRAM**  
**University of Florida**

CAT 028

Interviewees: Peggy Elizabeth Thatcher Harris and Alice Harris

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: January 19, 1972

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina, January 19, 1972. I'm working on the oral history of the Catawba Indians. I'm visiting in the home of Mrs. Harris. Mrs. Harris, will you tell me your full name?

PH: Peggy Elizabeth Harris. Thatcher Harris.

E: And where were you born, Mrs. Harris?

PH: I was born on the old reservation.

E: Have you lived all of your life here on the reservation?

PH: Yes, ma'am.

E: You went to school **then**, your first school was here on the reservation?

PH: Yes, ma'am, up through the seventh.

E: Now, who were your father and your mother?

PH: My mother was Edna Wheelock and my father was Alfred Thatcher.

E: Do you remember your grandparents?

PH: [Telephone rings] Yes.

[Break in recording]

E: Your grandparents, you were just telling me your grandparents, let's pick it up there again. Who were your grandparents?

PH: Rosa Wheelock and Archie Wheelock.

E: That was your grandparents. Now, you married who?

PH: A Thatcher—I mean, a Harris.

E: A Harris?

PH: Uh-huh.

E: His given name is?

PH: Alfred Harris.

E: You all have built this home since you were married, haven't you, and lived here?

PH: Yes, ma'am.

E: How many children do you all have?

PH: Six.

E: Six children. Tell me about things you remember when you were a little girl down on the reservation. What did you do and how 'bout your schooling?

PH: We went to school down at the one-room schoolhouse down here on the reservation. We walked back and forth to school no matter how cold it was, all kind of weather. Back at lunchtime, most the time, then back and forth.

E: Who was your teacher? The first one.

PH: My first teacher was a Hayes, Willard Hayes.

E: I believe he's living now in [inaudible 1:52] Mr. Willard Hayes. Now, do you remember the next teacher you had?

PH: He taught me [inaudible 1:57] through the seventh. Then I went to high school.

E: How many years were you in high school?

PH: Two.

E: What did you do when you left high school?

PH: Went to work down in one of the textile mills.

E: You already knew your husband?

PH: Well, vaguely. He'd been away from here for quite a while. He'd been up in New York and in the army and everything. I didn't know him real well, not 'til he came back.

E: When you went to high school, how did you find the teachers and the pupils treated you in high school?

PH: I thought we got along real well. We wasn't allowed to ride the bus. We had to get our own way. We had to go back and forth in a car. But I had a good many friends in high school.

E: Was it the roads so bad, the buses could not come down here?

PH: It wasn't only that, they didn't want Indians to ride the buses.

E: How did you arrange your ride to go into the high school?

PH: Well, the government paid private people who had private cars. They would pay 'em so much, then we'd ride back and forth in the car.

E: Then you finished high school and worked in the mill awhile. What mill was it you worked in?

PH: The old Victoria.

E: The old Victoria Mill. Over near the old Arcade Victoria School, I believe, isn't it? Then you met your husband and were married, and you have six children. Tell me about your children. What are they doing?

PH: My oldest daughter's married now. She still works, she works at night [inaudible 3:24] at one of the department stores. She works at night, from six to ten, and I take care of her baby for her at night while she works. And then my next oldest son, he finished out at BYU and he's got a position with J.P. Stevens in a

management program. My next daughter, she finished high school and she's working in an office up at York General Hospital. She's been there for two years. My next son, which would be Kelly. He went out to Brigham Young for a year and now he's serving a Mormon church mission. He'll be gone for two years. He's in Stockton, California. When he goes back, I hope he goes back to school. He's planning on it. I want him to finish, too. Now, my next child is thirteen. He's in junior high school. My next one's seven. She goes to elementary school. She's in second grade.

E: And you've done a wonderful job educating those children.

PH: I hope so.

E: Give us the names of your children as you go along. The girl who's married is Mrs. who?

PH: Medlock, she's Kay Medlock.

E: And the one who works in the office at York Hospital is—?

PH: Vicky Harris.

E: She's not married?

PH: No, she's not.

E: And then the boy who works at the mill is—?

PH: He's Kenneth Harris.

E: And the one who is out in Stockton, California is—?

PH: Kelly.

E: Kelly. And the one in junior high school is—?

PH: Daryl.

E: And the one at Lesslie School is—?

PH: Alice.

E: How have things changed on the reservation today from what they used to be?  
Are they much better for you here?

PH: Yes. I think after they made the settlement and gave us deeds, well, that enabled us to get loans, where we couldn't before. There wasn't any way you could with the government land. We still can't get any loans put any buildings on or anything. Now, since they gave us this deed to our land, we got fifty-four acres here, and we got our new home that way. They put a new home on it. I think that helped a lot, because if you didn't have what we had, **go out and purchase the land in other words, never afford to have built a home.**

E: You got your acreage after you were married and had children, is that right?

PH: Yes.

E: That's the reason you got so much? You were allowed so much for each child?

PH: Yeah. We got five. My younger daughter didn't—my little girl wasn't on the rolls at that time. They closed the rolls at certain times and the ones that are on the rolls, the ones that got. And she wasn't on the rolls at that time, so we got for five.

E: So, you have enough land to share with your children—

PH: Yes. It's theirs whenever they want it. We'll take a notion to sell it or divide it up any way, it's theirs, and it's here for them to have their part of it.

E: Do you remember any of the Indian language at all?

PH: Chief Sam Blue used to come around to schools and we would have different schools come in, visiting us. He would come 'round and dance and talk for a while. I remember that, but I can't speak any of it.

E: Are there any Indians here that can speak the language?

PH: I don't think so, anymore.

E: Tell me about your relationship to the church. I know you're very active in your church work.

PH: Yes, ma'am, we are.

E: You go every Sunday?

PH: I try to, yes, ma'am.

E: With your children?

PH: Mmhm.

E: What activities does your church carry on?

PH: Well, they usually carry on a good activity for the young people. I think they have, really, a better program for the young than they do for the older. Course the younger need it more. They try to watch out for the young people, see that they're entertained and kept in some kind of different contests or different singing groups or things. They really do try to keep the young people active.

E: You have all those programs in the church, or do you use the old school building?

PH: The church is small and if they get ready to have any kind of social like, well, they usually use the old school building.

E: Do you all own the school building and keep it up yourself?



PH: Yes, the church owns it. The church keeps it up.

E: Then you have a kitchen and an assembly room and—

PH: Two classrooms.

E: Two classrooms now. What about your services on Sunday? How many people attend the services?

PH: There's a lot more attend Sunday school than they do night meetings, it's a good percentage. Most of the time you go in and you have a time trying to find a seat, if you go in kind of late. They have very good attendance in the mornings, I know. Fairly good at night, too, but not as many as the mornings. Most people come out in the mornings with their small children, 'cause they got a junior Sunday school where they take all the small children. More people come with their smaller children in the mornings than they do at night.

E: What do you remember about your mother and your father? Your mother is still—

PH: My mother is still living.

E: Mother is still living... Did your father go to school here on the reservation?

PH: No, he was White.

E: He was a White man. But your mother is an Indian?

PH: She's part [inaudible 08:42] must be my grandfather's side—part Catawba.

E: Do you remember anyone telling you stories about your grandfather? He was a famous athlete, I believe. What do you remember of the stories which are told about your grandfather?

PH: I mostly remember about this thing, that he played ball, he got his ribs broke, they wired him up with some kind of wire, and sent him back in. He won the

game for 'em, but he used to talk about it quite a bit. He played football. Pretty famous football player, played with that Jim Thorpe—played with him.

E: Do any of the boys here go away to school now or do most of them go to the high schools and colleges close by?

PH: There's been one boy, a Wade boy, that went to Clemson. But there's not very many of 'em. Most of 'em do finish high school now, there's very few boys that don't finish high school anymore. But now most of 'em, they'll go on to service, so not too many of 'em goes to college.

E: You spoke of years ago you were not allowed to ride the school bus. Don't you find there's a big change in the attitude of White people toward you now? Do you find any differences in that realm?

PH: Yes, I do. They don't seem to have any discrimination towards us anymore. They never did have **it** as far as the work goes, 'cause I can remember all the time that some of the Indians did work at some of the outside factories, or mills, or something. They didn't hold anything against us about working, anywhere, but they just wouldn't let us ride the bus. I think it mostly was with people that was on the Board of Trustees that live around close by. Every time they'd have a meeting' well, they'd **close down** [inaudible 10:32]

[Break in recording]

E: Mrs. Harris, this is just a home here, and you said you had fifty-four acres of land. Tell me, where does your husband work?

PH: Oh, he works for J.P. Stevens industrial plant.

E: What are his hours?

PH: He usually works anywhere from twelve to fourteen, sixteen, hours a night.

E: Tell me about how you built your home. Did you get a government loan to build your home?

PH: Yes, ma'am.

E: Then you're paying for it by the month or do you already have it paid for?

PH: Well, we made a good down payment, where we don't owe such big payments. We don't pay very much a month, and we're paying for it by the month.

E: I think that's wonderful. How many rooms do you have in your home?

PH: We have six.

E: They're very nice. Now, your little daughter has just come in from school and I'm going to ask her to tell us her name. What's your name?

AH: Alice Harris.

E: Alice Harris. Are you proud to be an Indian?

AH: Yes, ma'am.

E: And you look like an Indian, that pretty complexion and dark brown eyes, sparkling, and pretty dark hair with a pigtail in it. Tell me, can you run fast at school, and play games with other children?

AH: Yes, ma'am.

E: Who's your teacher at school?

AH: Miss Thompson.

E: Do you like going to Lesslie School?

AH: Yes, ma' am.

E: What other Indian friends do you have up there?

AH: Well, Lucinda Sanders and Angela **Towd**.

E: Oh, that's nice to have some friends to play with. What do you like to play at school?

AH: Jump rope.

E: Do you ever read books about the Indians and draw pictures about the Indians?

AH: One time I drew a picture in one of my classes.

E: Did you color it?

AH: Yes, ma'am.

E: I bet it was pretty, wasn't it? Did your teacher put it up on the board for everybody to see?

AH: I don't know. It was in a story.

E: Oh, it was in a story. What did you write your story about?

AH: It was in this book thing, and you had to read, and you had to write it.

E: Wrote it in a workbook and you drew the pictures. Well, that's very nice.

[Break in recording]

E: Mrs. Harris, you've cleared the land around your home and just have shade trees. What do you remember about the old forest that used to be here?

PH: Oh, it was great big pines, lot of pines here, great big wood. When we moved here, we cleared it completely, had the pines sawed.

E: I bet there's still some big trees on the reservation?

PH: Oh, the old reservation, yes, ma'am.

E: Are you allowed to cut that?

PH: No, ma'am. The state owns them. Nobody supposed to go in there. But a few people cut it for firewood. But they're not allowed to cut it for commercial use, for sale or anything.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Rayyan Merchant, August 26, 2021

Audit-edited by: Evangeline Giaconia, February 25, 2022

Final edited by: Indica Mattson, July 21, 2022