

Moroni James George

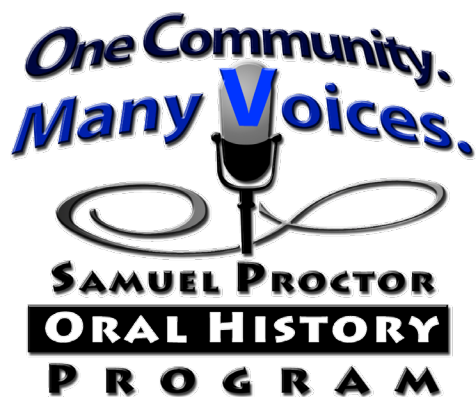
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)

CAT-090

Interview by:

Edith Frances Canty Wade

March 26, 1974



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27 minutes | 17 pages

Abstract: Moroni George, described as “the oldest living Catawba Indian” at the time of the interview, describes his various aspects of his long life, with some input from his second wife, Haddie Millins. He begins by speaking about his family history, early education, and the churches in the area. Then, he moves onto the various jobs he has held over the course of his life, some of which he held when he lived in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Next, he moves to his more recent family history, talking about his children and his many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He ends by speaking about some of the changes over the years and mentioning that he has been an active voter.

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

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
P R O G R A M
University of Florida

CAT 090

Interviewee: Moroni James George

Interviewer: Edith Frances Canty Wade

Date of Interview: March 26, 1974

W: —Francis Wade. I live on Route 3, Box 304, Rock Hill, South Carolina, and I am gathering oral history of the Catawba Indians for the University of Florida. Today is March 26, 1974. I am visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. George. Uncle Moroni is the oldest living Catawba Indian. Uncle Moroni, what is your full name?

G: Moroni James George.

W: When were you born?

G: 1884.

W: What was the month?

G: August 21.

W: August 21. Who were your parents?

G: Taylor George and Emily George.

W: Taylor George and Emily George. What is your address?

G: Here?

W: Yes.

G: **York Route**—I can't think of it.

W: Thirty-two McClean Street, yes. You have lived here how long?

G: Oh, I couldn't tell you.

HM: Something like two years.

W: About two years, your wife says. Uncle Moroni, can you tell us something about your parents? What do you remember about your parents?

G: In what way?

W: Did they live until you were grown?

G: Oh yes.

W: What did your father do for a living?

G: Well, he cut cord wood and worked in the field. After I come back home, he stayed with me all the time.

W: Where were you at?

G: I was in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

W: Oh, you went to the Carlisle school? Oh! Well, we'll talk a little bit about that later on. Did your mother work?

G: No ma'am, **around these parts she only worked in home working cotton and staying at home.**

W: She made pottery?

G: Yes.

W: How much Indian would you say that your mother and father had in them?

G: I do not know.

W: Were they nearly full-blooded Indians?

G: No. My mother was a Cobb, and I am not sure what my daddy's daddy was ...

W: Well, do you think that they were at least half Indian?

G: No.

W: They were not that much?

G: My mother wasn't, I know.

W: Well, what brothers and sisters did you have?

G: Davis Eric was my half-brother.

W: Davis Eris.

G: Hallie Sarah was my half-sister. Minnie, Dover, Billy and Nancy, that's all my folks.

W: And did you have any other brothers?

G: Well, I had my half-brother.

W: Are any of your brothers and sisters still alive?

G: No.

W: You are the only one that's left?

G: Yes.

W: When you were little, or small, did your parents ever tell you any old stories that you could tell us?

G: No.

W: You know, when I was growing up my mom always told us that the wild Indians would get us, and I really thought they would.

G: No, mine never told me that.

W: Well, uh, when it came Christmastime—

G: I was wild myself.

W: Oh, you were?

[Laughter]

W: Well, if you can remember that, that's real good. When it came to Christmas or Thanksgiving or the Fourth of July, did y'all do any kind of celebrating then?

G: Yes, we had different kind of parties, dances, things like that.

W: Could you dance?

G: Could I?

W: Uh-huh.

G: I reckon I could!

W: Well, that's real good—

G: We were tall, wild Indians. Some mornings, the whole weekend at the Dr. Hill's place, I believe. And they had a dance up there right out from Davis's old place. What is the name of that farm?

W: Lineberger?

G: No.

HM: I don't know what you're sayin'.

G: Talkin' about dances, said did I ever dance, and I told her yeah.

W: He said he went to dance somewhere when they lived near the hill, on the hill place.

G: We lived at Dr. Hill's place, that hill up there. But I don't remember the name of the place. It was just a little old house just out from Davis Eric's little place. Just below where Curly and them live, come there to dance one night. Of course, I used to dance all of the time.

W: What kind of dances did you all do?

G: Well, we had reel dance and we never had any Indian dances.

W: You didn't do any Indian dances?

G: No.

W: But you did something like the Virginia Reel?

G: Yes.

W: And all of that. When you were little did you have any work to do around the house?

G: Plenty of it.

W: What kind of work did you have to do?

G: Well, I tended the cows, mules, and different things.

W: And you lived on a farm, then you were more fortunate than some Indians, you had animals.

G: Yes.

W: Well, do you remember what kind of a house you lived in when you were growing up? Was it a log house? Was it uh—what kind of house was it?

G: I lived in a log house right up in front of where the little schoolhouse used to be up on the hill.

W: Oh.

G: And I built a house up there above the schoolhouse where you walk through in order to cross the route.

W: I remember, I remember where that was.

G: Yes.

W: Do you remember how many rooms it had?

G: I don't remember whether it was three or four.

W: Did you have much furniture in your house?

G: No, not too much.

W: Did your parents buy it, or did they make it?

G: No, they bought it.

W: I know that you went to church, all the time. I remember when you were branch president. I remember that in Sunday school. Do you remember in what year you were baptized?

G: No, not even that.

W: Do you remember who baptized you?

G: No.

W: Well, do you remember anything about the first church that was down there? Was it a building or was it a brush arbor?

G: It was a brush arbor.

W: And where was it at?

G: Well, one of them was right there where the old church used to be and the other one was down by the cemetery.

W: Well, Uncle Moroni, can you tell me how that brush arbor was made? I would like to know.

G: Well, it was just the poles in the ground, with rope and sticks. You just lay pieces across and cover it with grass and stuff like that.

W: Then what did you sit on?

G: Slabs made out of old crossties.

W: Did you go to school?

G: I went one time down on the Indian Nation.

W: Do you remember where the school was at?

G: It was right above the church there on the same road coming up now—

W: How many rooms did the school have?

G: Only one.

W: Do you remember who your teacher was?

G: Mrs. Dunlap.

W: Mrs. Dunlap. Do you remember any other teachers?

G: Well, Ben Harris, he teached in a little log or plank house down by old Sam Boozly there.

W: I know where you are talking about.

G: Ben teached there.

W: Do you remember any schoolteachers named **DeVores**?

G: No, I do not.

W: Why didn't you go to school any longer than that Uncle Moroni?

G: Well, I left here and went to the Carlisle, Pennsylvania school.

W: Oh, you left and went to Carlisle. How old were you when you went to Carlisle?

G: I don't remember exactly how old I was. I was twenty-four though, when I come back up here.

W: How long did you stay there?

G: Five years.

W: You stayed five years. While you were there do you remember any of your teachers?

G: No, I don't.

W: Do you remember how you got to Carlisle?

G: Well, there were two girls, Lottie Harris and Rosie. They were Cherokee and stayed there 'til they finished up. They went to **Qualla**. When they came home, they come and ask me to go.

W: Well, who is Lottie Harris? Who is she kin to?

G: She was kin to that gal that lives up there, Andrew's wife.

W: Doris Blue?

G: Yeah.

W: Was she full-blooded Indian?

G: Yeah.

W: Well, I have heard the name Lottie Harris before and that's why I was asking. Do you remember some of the things that you done while you were in Carlisle?

G: Well, I took up carpenter work.

W: Oh, you took up carpenter work! Did you enjoy that?

G: Yes, ma'am.

W: Did you enjoy living in Carlisle?

G: I liked it! Been there until I could finish the carpentering. I went in the dairy business when I finished there.

W: And that's still at Carlisle?

G: Yeah. I was still in Carlisle. See, that is the Carlisle School of Dairying where I worked. Of course, I worked out in the country at dairies at different places.

W: Do you remember, did you live with families up there too?

G: Yes, out in the country on farms.

W: Do you remember any of the families that you lived with?

G: Well, one of the families was the Martindale.

W: Martindale?

G: Let's see, there was a fellow over there in town. Well, I can't get his name on my mind.

W: Well, how did the people treat you?

G: Treated me fine.

W: When you first left Catawba and went to Carlisle, how did things change for you?

G: Well, I don't suppose there's much change about it.

W: Did you take part in any sports or anything at school?

G: Yes, anything that come up I would take part in it; football, baseball.

W: I was going to ask if you played football. Did you ever go on the sleigh?

G: On the what?

W: On the snow, did you ever go skiing or ride the sleigh?

G: No, I never did go skating or nothing like that. I used to sleigh ride a lot, when I was out in the country and with the country people.

W: Did you have girlfriends while you were there?

G: Plenty of 'em.

W: I didn't want your wife to hear that one.

G: The girls would have fusses over me.

W: Oh, they had fusses over you! My, you must have been a dashing Indian! Do you remember Jim Thorpe? He went to school when you did?

G: Yes.

W: What—do you remember anything about him that you could tell me?

G: Nothing in particular that I know of more than he was a good ball player.

W: When you came back, came back from school, how long after that did you get married?

G: Oh, I couldn't tell you.

W: Well, maybe I better ask you something else, and let you be thinking about it. When you were young—I realize you can't get around now and do all of the things that you once did—but when you were young, did you like to hunt or fish?

G: Oh, yes.

W: Could you use a bow and arrow?

G: Oh, yes.

W: You could. Were you good with the slingshot?

G: Pretty good.

W: I know lots of the younger people were good with the slingshot, not so good with the bow and arrows because they could not afford to buy them. But they were good with the slingshot.

G: I made my own slingshot—

W: Oh, you made your own?

G: —Bow and arrows.

[Break in recording]

W: I'm still talking to Moroni George. Uncle Moroni, were you ever in service?

G: No.

W: Why did you not go to service?

G: I couldn't go on account of I broke my arm.

W: You broke your arm, and you couldn't straighten it out anymore, is that right?

G: That's right.

W: You told me you went to try and join the service.

G: Yeah, I went there.

W: But you couldn't pass.

G: No, they said they wouldn't let me in.

W: Oh, they did. I know that—you've told me already that you know how to carpenter, and you farmed. Before you retired, what was the last job you worked at?

G: Carpenter.

W: You was carpentin' then? What kind of pay did you get? Did you make a good salary?

G: Yeah, I made a good salary.

W: Could you buy more with what you made then than you can today?

G: Yeah.

W: Now, we've talked about lots of things. Now we're going to talk about your family. Who did you marry?

G: Well, my first wife was Maddy Price.

W: Maddy Price. Did you have any children?

G: No. Didn't have one.

W: Alright, your second marriage?

G: Haddie Millins.

W: Haddie Millins. Now is Haddie an Indian?

G: Well, I think she might've been part-Cherokee.

W: Where did you meet Haddie?

G: Let's see, I met her in 1912, I believe.

W: You married her in 1912 too, didn't you?

G: Oh yeah.

W: Did she live in the reservation?

G: No, she lived in Charlotte, and I worked on the railroads.

W: Oh, you worked on the railroads.

G: And 'fore she boarded that, this man had a brother there. They'd come out on the job, I get my job. Tryin' hard and it wasn't watchin' nothin'. So, I had to stay all night, this wasn't nothin' much but books and old chatty cars and things and reckon you could get a good bid so you could bid on the other things, so I was **tied to goin' up there.**

W: Did she work?

G: Oh yeah, she worked at the mill.

W: At the cotton mill? What kind of work did she do?

G: Spin—what'd you do spin or spool?

HM: Spin.

G: Spin.

W: And how long after you met her was it before you married her?

G: I don't know exactly ...

W: Do you remember the year and the date that you married her?

G: No.

W: I believe she told me it was August 5, 1912.

G: Yeah.

W: So that means you've been married to the same woman for 62 years! Does it seem like a long time?

G: Nope. Don't seem long.

W: Well, that's good. Now, I found out something about the records that you kept. That you keep real good records, and I found out that you joined a church, many, many years ago. What church do you belong to?

G: Mormon church.

W: You belong to the Mormon church. Where were you baptized?

G: Let's see, I think I was baptized back over there on Edmond.

W: That was a branch then.

G: Yeah.

W: According to the record that you showed me, you was baptized February 24, 1894. Can you remember how cold it was when you were baptized?

G: Well, it didn't seem cold to me.

W: You were probably used to being out in the weather, and maybe it didn't seem too cold. But, in February is usually a cold month. There was something you told me just a few minutes ago about your arm. How did you hurt your arm?

G: Wrestling.

W: Wrestling. Did very many Indians wrestle?

G: No, not very many of 'em. Wasn't more than about four of us, two of us. That was me and Bill Sanders.

W: You and Bill Sanders. Were you a good wrestler?

G: Yes, I said I was. Last time when I was in school, out there, there was nobody could beat me.

W: Oh, well you must've been real good then. How many children do you have?

G: Nine.

W: Nine children. Are they all alive?

G: No.

HM: [inaudible 23:20]

G: [inaudible 23:22]

W: Can you remember their names?

G: There's Bertha, and Artie, and Rena, and Leola. Who else then ...

W: Missouri.

G: Missouri, and Hardy ...

W: What about Margaret?

G: And Margaret.

W: And Edda. And you had sons.

G: One.

W: You had two sons, didn't you?

G: Yes, two sons.

W: What were their names?

G: Well, one of them is named Moroni, and the other one's named Cod.

W: And Moroni, according to the records I have, is the first Indian from around here that has become a policeman. Isn't that true?

G: Yup.

W: Do your children live close around to you?

G: Some of 'em. Some of 'em don't. He's the closest there is.

W: They come to see you real regularly, your wife says.

G: Yeah.

W: Your wife also told me you had sixty-three grandchildren, sixty-four great-grandchildren, and three great-great grandchildren. Now, I realize that it wasn't easy for Indians when you were growing up as it is for them today. Can you think of any opportunities today that the children have that you didn't have?

G: No, I never paid much attention to it.

W: Well, it seems that you had a great many opportunities since you were got to go to Carlisle. You had that advantage over a lot of the Indians.

G: Uh-huh.

W: I know that you've been confined to your home for several years now and that you can't go to church, but I remember when you did go, real, real regular. And I know that you mingle well with other people outside the reservation because you've lived off the reservation for a long while. Are you proud that you an Indian?

G: Yup.

W: When was the last time you've been on the Reservation?

G: I don't remember it was back in the day.

W: Has it been very long?

G: No, not too long.

W: Who took you down there?

G: My grandson.

W: Your grandson took you. Had it changed very much?

G: Huh?

W: Had the reservation changed very much?

G: Well, I see they put up a lot of buildings. I mean, trailers and stuff all down there.

G: The roads are better than it was.

W: They've got paved roads down through there now, don't they?

G: I don't remember the last time. I used to go there right smart. My grandson, my little **Gavin** always wanted to go down there

W: Idle has lots of things to tell, didn't he? I enjoyed visiting Idle myself. Uncle 'Roni, did you ever vote?

G: What?

W: Did you ever vote?

G: Oh yeah.

W: You did? I just wondered if there's so many of the Indians who didn't vote and who are not now voting, and I wondered if you voted?

G: Yeah, I voted

W: Did you think that would—

G: Still vote.

W: You still vote. Well, that's real good.

[End of interview]

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