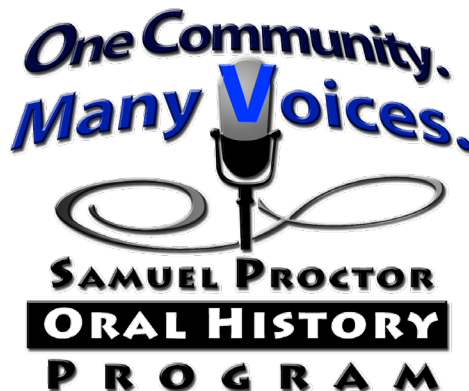


Sallie Hester Harris Wade and Nancy Cornelia Harris

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-061**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
January 3, 1972**



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CAT 061 Sallie Hester Harris Wade and Nancy Cornelia Harris
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Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols on January 3, 1972
18 minutes | 14 pages

Abstract: Sallie Wade and Nancy Harris share stories about their lives. Wade begins by talking about her family, including the ways her father and uncles taught themselves to read before school was available on the reservation. Wade discusses how people travelled around at the time and the prevalence of sports and farming when she was growing up. Then, she talks about music, recreation, and how she met her husband. She tells the story of Thomas Stevens' death and some information about his life. Harris then begins to talk about her family records and photographs that she keeps in a book. She talks about getting an education from her father and how she grew up farming more than making pottery. She ends by talking about her child Alfred Harris and her grandchildren.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; Thomas Stevens; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Agriculture; Education]

ORAL HISTORY

P R O G R A M
University of Florida

CAT 061

Interviewee: Sallie Hester Harris Wade and Nancy Cornelia Harris

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: January 3, 1972

E: Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina. I'm working on the oral history of the Catawba Indians. This is January 3, 1972. I'm visiting in sight of the Catawba River in the home of two full-blooded Catawba Indians. And these two women are sisters, and so both of them will be telling you something about themselves. Will you tell me your name?

W: I'm Sallie Wade. I was Sallie Harris before I married and I'm Sallie Wade now.

E: Who were your father and your mother?

W: My father is Benjamin Taylor Harris, and my mother is Mary Cornelius Harris—George Harris.

E: Do you know any of your grandparents' names?

W: I know, yeah. My grandpa on my mama's side is Taylor George and Ingrid George. And my grandpa on my father's side is John Harris and Sallie Harris.

E: Now, one of the—

W: Nancy Harris, I mean.

E: Nancy?

W: Yes.

E: One of your grandparents was in the Civil War, is that right? And did not come home?

W: Yes'm.

E: Which one was that?

W: John Harris.

E: John Harris. That was your grandfather?

W: Yes.

E: Now, what brothers and sisters do you have?

W: I've got Nancy, and I don't have any brothers living. Well, are we supposed to tell them too?

E: Yes, you can tell your brothers too, if you will.

W: I remember Robert and **Joddie** and John. And then Nancy and Martha and Ida and me are sisters. Brothers. My mother's three brothers.

E: Your father, Ben Harris, learned to read in a very unusual way. I believe he worked for a lady, for a Miss Sally Culp, and she taught him to read, and he also learned to read from picking out words from the newspaper.

W: Yes'm.

E: Well, did he have any other brothers that learned to read that same way?

W: Yeah. Robert.

E: Robert. And did any others?

W: He had another brother, and I guess he learned the same way. As far as I know, they all learned that way.

E: And there was no school at that time?

W: No.

E: Do you remember where the first school was?

W: Uh-huh.

E: Who taught in the first school?

W: Well, the first school I can remember is the schoolhouse right over here on the highway, you know, off of Route 6.

E: What did it look like?

W: Well, it was just a little building. Just a little wooden building, it was then, you know. It wasn't brick—a school like they does now. Most of that was built out of slabs, the first one we had. Then, later on they built one that was a little different, you know.

E: How did you heat it, with wood or coal, that first one?

W: The first one, we heated it with wood. Well, we heated all of them with wood. We never heated none with coal until later on, you know.

E: And who would get to school early in the morning to make the fires?

W: Well, Ms. Dunlap and Mr. Dunlap, they taught school about seven or eight years. And they had a nigger boy that worked for them all the time. Well, they always sent him over there to make the fire before Ms. Dunlap got there.

E: I believe you liked Mrs. Dunlap as a teacher, didn't you?

W: Yeah, everybody liked her.

E: Everybody liked her. Now, Mrs. Sparks and Mr. Sparks both taught here. Tell me what you remember about them.

W: Well, Mr. Sparks taught first, and he had to walk about four miles over here to teach school over here at this same schoolhouse where we at. But he walked it night and mornings, and taught school over here. And Ms. Sparks when she taught school then, after his two years, she taught a year. And well she'd come in a horse buggy then. But then when he taught the second time, well, he did too then. But the first time he walked. I remember that clearly.

E: Did he live at Catawba at that time?

W: No, he lived across over here next to Roddey. You know where Roddey is?

E: Yeah.

W: Well, he lived on here next to Roddey.

E: Did he teach you write, Mr. Sparks? Your beautiful handwriting, did he teach you a lot of that writing?

W: Well, he teached—well, all of them teached us. Ms. Dunlap did too. Ms. Dunlap had a nice handwriting.

E: Then another one—do you remember Mr. Sep Lesslie who came after Mrs. Dunlap?

W: Yeah, I remember.

E: How did he come over here?

W: Well, he'd come in a horse and buggy, 'cause he come from there.

E: He came from Lesslie. And Miss Macie Stevenson, did you remember her?

W: Yeah, I remember her good. She'd come in a horse and buggy when she'd come. She taught about a year, I think. You know, she was a nice lady. I liked her and all, but she couldn't hear good. That was all, but still she teached school. She used hearing aids as far as I can remember.

E: She loved to sing. Did she teach you music, do you remember?

W: Yes, she teached a lot of us. Well, she teached me music. 'Cause I know we—uh, excuse me. But I remember she'd keep me and Sally Blake and Lily Blue, that's Chief Blue's oldest daughter, there was three of us. Well, she'd keep each one of us in one evening, one of us the next evening, an hour after school was out to teach us music lessons.

E: Did she have a piano?

W: She had an organ. No, we didn't have no piano. We had an organ. Well, Miss Dunlap had that organ there when she'd come there, and I think she teached cornet and organ. I think they were the only ones that took music.

E: Now, that was wonderful that you learned to play the organ like that. Whatever happened to that other organ? I guess it's gone a long time.

W: Yeah, I imagine that thing has been gone for the longest, 'cause I think they've had two or three in there after that, you know.

E: And then, there's another Lesslie you had. You had Reverend J. N. Lesslie. They called him Mr. Than Lesslie.

W: Yeah. I wasn't here then. I was in Georgia, but I was still going to school. This lady I stayed in Georgia with, well she was a schoolteacher, too. Well, she helped me a lot with music and with my books. I still was going to school. But I know him too. I know that he teached here, but I didn't go with him.

E: Then, your children, I suppose went to Mrs. Hoke, and what other teachers did your children go to?

W: Ms. Hoke, and, I believe, Lineberger. Was it Ms. Lineberger?

E: Mmhm.

W: Ms. Lineberger. Then—

E: Mrs. Brock.

W: Then, we had other teachers, you know. We had the elders from out west that come and teached at different times, and then when they was off—see, they

were sent here to teach on the missions, and when they went back, then other teachers—Now, you know Mrs. Robinson and, Ms., uh—

E: Cornish.

W: Ms. Cornish was the last one that's taught here.

E: And what about Mr. Hayes? Mr. Willard Hayes?

W: He taught here about three years or four.

E: Some of the teachers started a ball team over here among the Indian boys. And Indian boys are very, very good ball players.

W: That was Will Hayes.

E: Mr. Hayes did that?

W: Yes.

E: And you used to play in with the Rock Hill team?

W: Yes, that was Will Hayes.

E: You used to farm a lot down here on the river—raise corn and vegetables. Don't do much farming now, do you?

W: No, there's nothing done now at all down here as I know of. Maybe a few of them. Makes just little small patches, but not no big ones.

E: Who are the Indian families used to live across the river?

W: Well, I think an aunt of mine—No, she's my great-aunt lived across. Peggy Jane George was my mama's mama's sister. And Jim Watts, and Betty Lou Harris, and Ed Harris, and—let's see—

E: Now, how did all those come across the river? On a flat?

W: Yeah, they had a flat and **barrels**, canoes, whatever you want to call them.

E: And they'd pole the flat across the river?

W: Yes.

E: Or paddle the canoes?

W: Yes.

E: And then go back in the evening the same way?

W: Yes.

E: Now, how far do you think they'd have to walk to come down the river, come across the river, and then walk to school?

W: Well, seemed to be about three miles from where they come from, and then across the river and that [inaudible 9:27] for about three miles.

E: Do you remember many of the good old times, any of the parties or feasts or Christmas celebrations you would have?

W: Yeah, I remember all of them.

E: Tell me—

W: We used to have, I remember when I was a small kid, now that's way back when I was small, they couldn't get out off of the reservation to most all the places they had then. So, they had their own recreation what they would make up. I've known some to go out in the fields after it would get cold, you know, and pick the cotton balls off and bring them in the house at night and pick the cotton for whoever they was picking for, you know, and after that was over, they'd clean up so they have a big square dance, and that was beautiful. I just wish them days was now.

[Laughter]

E: What kind of musical instrument did you have, a fiddle?

W: Yeah, they had fiddles and guitars and things.

E: I think you all liked music, didn't you?

W: Yeah, that was a get up.

E: How did you meet your husband? Did you go to school along with him?

W: No, I met him in **cotton field**. He's a White man. [Laughter]

E: But you're a full-blooded Indian—

W: I'm a full-blooded Indian.

E: And he's White.

W: And he's full White. [Laughter] No, he's not full White. He ain't like his grandma.

He tell me his grandma was a Cherokee from out west. There's a bunch of Cherokees in western states in the Dakotas somewhere, that she was from there.

E: I believe the Watts family across the river adopted a little White girl, didn't they?

W: Yeah, she's dead now. She wed Nelson Blue.

E: She's Nelson Blue's wife?

W: Yeah. Well, he's still living. He lives out there with his daughter. I guess he does.

E: There's an old Indian that I hear stories about called Thomas Stevens—the most interesting stories about him. He is the man that froze to death when he was 110 years old. Did you ever see him?

W: Oh, yeah. He passed me a million times. The very day he left here and went off and froze to death, he come by our house to see us, you know, before he left. His wife was buried way on yonder in the Indian town way across the river over yonder. Way down next to or somewhere, and he was going to see her grave. He

made it a habit to go see that grave every year in January some time. Well, that was in January when he froze to death. So, he come by there that morning, and he told us he was going to see his wife, and he was going to stay all night at Jim Harris, who was running that ferry down where the Bullwater is, maybe you know, there's a ferry there too, an Indian ferry down there. And so, he was going down there and stay all night with them people and then go on the next day to his wife's grave, you know. But he didn't wait to go down there, I guess. He must have gone down there real early. Then that Indian, he took off running and thought he could make it back. Well, he didn't because it commenced raining, and you know what a cold rain comes in January and freeze with it. Well, he was in that. He was in that freezing rain and he got into the side of the road, and back then you know how muddy roads would be. He couldn't never make it on down. His hands were froze up right up against the bank. In the cold he was standing up. But he was going to freeze to death. I can remember that, 'cause me and the Baker girl and the Blue girl went to come and get him, you know. They had to go get him in a wagon. Some man over there found him because they knowed him. They knowed him, but they had people from here, you know, that could go get him.

E: You're the first one who's told me about his wife. When he lived here, he didn't have any people and he lived around with various families, didn't he?

W: Yes. His wife had been dead for quite a while, I guess. But he had a wife, and that's where he was going—to her grave, you know. She was buried in that Indian town across the river. Indian grave. He was Catawba, yeah.

E: Now, do you know whereabouts that cemetery is that she's buried?

W: No, I don't know right where it's at now, because I think there's a lot of it that's been cleaned up since then, but Bill knows where it's at, because it's on their place.

E: Did he ever mention her name?

W: Yes.

E: Do you know her name?

W: He called her Sarah Becker, or something like that.

E: They say that he was a fine-looking person. What did he look like?

W: Well, he was real old. He was nice looking, but he was real old. 'Cause he had long whiskers, you know, and long, grey hair. His hair had turned colors.

E: Now, Mrs. Sanders tells me that he used to go out in the woods and he'd take a stick and beat on the log and sing songs to the children. Did he ever sing songs like that to you? [inaudible 14:44]

H: In a way, he'd rather have been around children than grown people like us. And I can see his point. Now, I couldn't then, but I do now, because I have—

E: He loved to play with children.

W: I'd rather be in the company of children anytime than grown-ups.

E: He's buried in the ancient cemetery, I believe.

W: Yeah. 'Cause his tombstone has the age and everything like that, where he died, and his age—110.

E: And he had no children?

W: No.

E: Now, he was Chieftain for a short time, but we don't know the time, the dates.

W: No, I don't remember that either, but he had been Chief at one time.

E: What else do you want to tell me about the old time? You got so many things to tell me, so interesting things.

W: [inaudible 15:40]

E: Let me talk to your sister for a while.

W: There ain't nothing I can tell you. [Laughter] I don't know.

H: I don't feel like talking too much right now, to tell you the truth.

E: Well, let me get your name in. What is your full name?

H: Nancy Cornelia Harris.

E: And your mother?

H: Mary Harris, you know that.

E: And your father Ben Harris?

H: Yes.

E: Your mother is ninety-seven years old?

H: Mhm. Mama will be ninety-eight in May, and so I've got her age down over yonder in my book. I've got a record of all of those.

E: You have?

H: Yes. I've got a book about that thick.

E: But do any of you have any pictures?

H: I've got, you know, just about the full reservation roll.

E: You have? Would you let me see it sometime?

H: I'll let you see it, but I can't let you take it off.

E: I won't take it off. Your sister told me so many interesting things about the schools. Maybe you remember some things that she didn't think of.

H: I can't remember nothing about the schools. I didn't go to school too much.

E: But your father taught you, didn't he?

H: Well, I would pick up—I was born in route.

E: And did you use a slate to write on?

H: Uh-huh.

E: You had blackboards, I guess, for the teacher to write on?

H: Yes ma'am.

E: What about your school lunches?

H: We'd go home for lunch way back then. They let you out at dinnertime. It's just way off from school.

E: You had a good long distance to come home?

H: No, not all the time, we didn't, 'cause we didn't live that far from the school.

E: Did you go to Rock Hill very often?

H: No.

E: And your mother used to make pottery. Did you make pottery?

H: Oh yeah, I used to make pottery. I never cared for my pots though. I worked in the field lots. I was a farmer. I farmed from way up here to way down there.

E: What kind of crops did you raise then?

H: We raised corn and cotton, peas, beans, any kind of grain so, you know, we could feed the mules.

E: Just everything you'd need, you'd raise here?

H: Uh-huh.

E: Do you have any children?

R: One.

E: Well, who's your child?

H: Alfred Harris.

E: Now, where's Alfred live? In what city?

H: He lives way up at the top of the hill.

E: He works in the cotton mill.

H: He does.

E: Does he have any children?

H: Yeah, he's got six. I had one; he's got six. [Laughter]

E: He caught up?

H: Yeah, he furnished me six grandchildren, three girls and three boys!

E: Now, that's very good.

H: Sure is! And he's got some good boys.

E: Are they married?

H: No, they ain't but one married. That's their oldest girl. And the other little girl, I don't guess she's married. Not **about to marrying much Indians**, you know.

[End of interview]

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