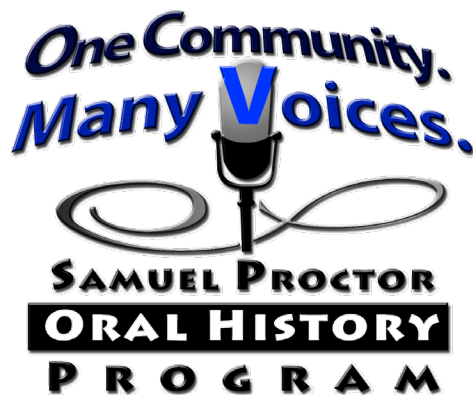


Florence Harris Wade

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-182**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
November 30, 1992**



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17 minutes | 10 pages

Abstract: Florence Harris Wade is the daughter of David A. Harris Sr., Chief of the Catawba Nation from 1905 to 1928. She was married to Rowell Wade and has three children. In this interview, she discusses growing up and farming with her mother and father, her teachers on the reservation and at public schools, demonstrating pottery-making at area schools, and the legal settlement with the federal government. She also talks about her nieces and nephews, mainly Alberta Ferrell, Frances Wade, and the deceased Kevin Ferrell. She ends by speaking about the herbal home remedies her father used to make, including a cough syrup, and a medicinal tea for bruises made from red oak bark.

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

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 182

Interviewee: Florence Harris Wade

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: November 30, 1992

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Charlotte, North Carolina, 5150 Sharon Road. I'm working on the oral history of the Catawba Indians with the University of Florida, Dr. Sam Proctor. I am visiting in the home of a very interesting person. I know about her because I was teaching at Oakdale school, and I saw her picture on the bulletin board. She had been over there doing pottery demonstrations with the children and they were very excited about her visit, and I'm going to let you meet her yourself. What is your full name and address?

W: My name is Florence Harris Wade, and my address is 2081 Wade Harris Road, Rock Hill, SC, 22930. My road is named after my married name and my maiden name, Harris.

E: And what is the name of the road?

W: Wade Harris Road.

E: Wade Harris Road. That's very interesting. Now, what family do you have?

W: What family do I come from?

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

W: My father was David A. Harris Sr., a full-blooded Catawba who had served for many years as Chief of the Catawba. He served from 1905 through 1928, and he had two sons that were Chiefs, also, later on down the years.

E: Who were they?

W: Richard Jackson Harris, who is now deceased, and the second brother was Chief Floyd Raymond Harris, who is now deceased. My mother was from Spartanburg, which was a White lady. She came here from Spartanburg with her mother, so

she married my father later on down the years after she came to Catawba to the reservation.

E: Did she learn to make pottery like the rest of them do on the reservation?

W: Yes, she did.

E: Now your own family, who did you marry and how many children do you have?

W: I married Rowell Wade, which was the son of Sally Wade, and we had three children, Connie Steve Wade, Freida Alan Wade—which is now **Sraight**—and Joy Magoon Wade, which is now Porter.

E: Now, you went to school here on the reservation?

W: I went to school on the reservation until 1936, which was the first year they let the Indians enter into public school, and I went to high school for three and a half years. Of course, I didn't graduate because I went for three and a half years.

E: What teachers do you remember?

W: I remember Mr. Ernest Jones and Ms. Arabelle Gille.

E: You are telling me the high school ones, aren't you?

W: Yes.

E: You remember the principal at that time?

W: Mr. R.C. Burts.

E: Oh, he was?

W: Yes, and then later I was under Mr. Sullivan.

E: Mr. Sullivan, yes. They were the superintendents at that time. Do you remember—were you under Evan Reid as principal of your high school?

W: Yes, the last year.

E: That was my brother.

W: Oh, really?

E: Yes, that's my brother.

W: Well, great!

E: So, we have a real connection, have we not?

W: Yes.

E: What teachers do you remember down here on the reservation, in your early days?

W: In my early days I remember going to school to J.C. Davis. He was a member of the Mormon church, and he was also a schoolteacher, and he was from in the West. Then my last year in school I went to Willard Hayes, who—

E: Oh yes, from over near Gaffney,

P: —was from Gaffney, South Carolina, and from there into the high school.

E: How did they treat you when you came as an Indian into the high school? Were they good to you or were they a little bit wary and scared of you?

W: Well, they seemed to be—I have always been a person that tried to get along with people. I try to be real kind and understanding. Of course, they treated me in that same respect. I had quite a few good friends in high school.

E: Then you have lived on the reservation all of your life, haven't you?

W: I have lived on the reservation all my life.

E: Well, you have a lovely home here. What acreage do you have here?

W: I don't—you just build, they don't set [inaudible 5:50]

E: What kind of work does your husband do?

W: My husband is now deceased. I have been a widow for thirty years.

E: Oh really? I didn't know that. So, you carried on here, some of your family lived with you?

W: When my husband died, my baby was eight years old. My second child, Freida, she was twelve, and she was in grammar school. Connie, my oldest, was a junior in high school. When he finished high school, he had won [Inaudible 6:11] scholarships for football, so he went into Clemson.

E: He followed in the footsteps of Buck George, I believe. I saw him the other day. You've raised a wonderful family, and I am interested in the fact that you are getting back, demonstrating your pottery-making to the school. What schools have you been in?

W: I have been to Oakdale, I have been to Northside, and I have been to the one near York.

E: York Road Elementary, maybe.

W: Right, exactly.

E: The children are so interested in what you are doing. Is there a sale for the pottery now?

W: Yes, and also, I have visited many schools in Columbia, South Carolina.

E: That is very good. People are so interested in seeing it and at Winthrop I saw a number of pottery makers out in front of the building, demonstrating their pottery. The times have changed from when it was so inexpensive. Now it is difficult for you to get the clay and difficult for you to do it.

W: Exactly, right.

E: Do you fire your own in your backyard?

W: I do.

E: When we get through talking, you going to have to show me one piece.

W: I will.

E: What do you think about the future of your group, since you're having new buildings built here and the old schoolhouse is being fixed over for classes in pottery making, and basket weaving. What do you think about the future if this new grant goes through for you all? How will it affect you?

W: Well, I think it will be very good, and I think it will be good for our young generation that is coming along, and it will give the older generation a great delight in seeing what the young people can do, knowing that they are following tradition and generations from years ago.

E: Of all the people in your life, who has influenced you the most you think?

W: Concerning my pottery?

E: Anything.

W: Well, I always thought that my mother was a good influence on me. She always taught me, "As you sow, so shall you reap." So, she has always said to be honest. That is the procedure I have followed all the years. She was a great influence into my life.

E: And of your teachers, who has influenced you?

W: I loved Mr. Jones. He was such a kind teacher, he was a very—

E: Mr. Jones?

W: Mr. Ernest Jones. He was a very good teacher, but all my teachers that I had I got along well with. When I was in grade school, I didn't have any problems with any teachers and that is the thing that I taught my children. I didn't have to have problems with my kids coming home saying, "My teacher is giving me hard work," or, "My teacher is picking on me." I didn't have that because I had found out if it was my children's fault. That is one thing that I've always—would believe. A older person telling me something on my children, rather than for the children to tell me that "I didn't do this," or whatever that they did, I would try to find out from an older person before I started correcting or disciplining my children in any sort of way.

E: You have had an interesting life and a very worthwhile life, but you haven't told me how old you are yet.

W: I'm seventy years old.

E: Well, you are able to get around, doing all the things you're doing, and they appreciate you down here, so much down here on the reservation. Is there anything you would like to tell me about your home life, your mother and your father, that you remember?

W: Well, I remember that my father was a very industrious man. He did a lot of farming and he put all of his children to work. They did the farming work. I remember when I was about six years old, I carried a little small bag to pick cotton in. Of course, I didn't get to hoe the cotton, because I would chop it down, but my oldest sister, Sarah Ayers, did a lot of the hoeing of the cotton, and my older brothers that lived at home at this time, they were in the field and they did a

lot, and tended to the cows. We had several cows, horses, and we had hogs, and we had chickens. It was just a delight to get out, to roam around into the woods and to gather up the eggs and bring them in. I would carry a little small bucket and pick up the eggs, and it was very interesting to me. I loved to get out in the garden and pick the vegetables that were growing. And to this day I love to have a little garden. I always have a little garden every summer, and I enjoy seeing it grow. It just gives me a lift.

E: Is this the location of your old home?

W: No, the location of my old home is near across the road from the community center now. I lived there till I was six years old and then I moved over across the hill from where I'm living now, and then in [19]46 my husband had the house that I'm living in now built and I have remained in this house.

E: He made good provision for you in that respect.

W: My husband was real good. When my husband died, of course I was heartbroken, but the consolation that came to me was I had a home for my children. I didn't have to worry about not having to find a place to stay—that they have a place to live, or to be put out on the street. So that I was so thankful for.

E: What relation are you to Frances Wade?

W: Frances Wade is my sister-in-law. Her husband and my husband were brothers?

E: Now, are you kin to Alberta Ferrell?

W: Yes, I am kin to Alberta Ferrell. I am Alberta's aunt, and I am also Frances' aunt. My sister was their mother.

E: Oh yes. Do you remember—it was a sad day when Alberta lost her son?

W: Very sad.

E: What do you remember about Kevin and this experience? I remember that he was in the program at Winthrop, when Alberta and her family walked across the stage singing and I think I taught some of those children in school. It was a sad thing that happened to him, wasn't it?

W: It certainly was. I remember him going to seminary, or bible study class, that Frances Wade taught every morning, five days a week. They would meet at 6:00. She would pick the children up and take them to school, and Joy, my second daughter, she was in the group that Frances taught. And they had to pick up all the kids around the reservation. And Joy, which is my daughter I'm speaking of, was a very close friend of Kevin. She was just so upset when that happened, because he was such a good boy in the seminary class.

E: I believe he came home and found the man in his home with his wife, is that right? And shot him?

W: According to the papers.

E: Where is Kevin buried, do you know?

W: Yes, he is buried at our church cemetery.

E: Up here on top of the hill.

W: Yes.

E: I looked for his grave this morning and I didn't find it. The law enforcement officials were so concerned, and they loved him so much that they came in mass for the funeral service, I understood.

W: Yes.

E: I don't know how long he has been dead, a number of years is it now? Did he leave a family?

W: Two girls.

E: Two little girls? Are they still living?

W: Uh-huh. But I don't know anything about them, where they live or anything.

E: Is there anything else you would like to tell me before I turn off this machine, because there are just so many interesting things I have enjoyed hearing. Did your mother or father use homemade medicines?

W: Oh, yes.

E: Tell me about that.

W: My father always had homemade herb medicine for us to take for coughs. We had some kind of medicine that he mixed up with honey and soda, it was a cough syrup.

E: They have anything for bruises or sores on your body?

W: Yes, used red oak bark to make a tea out of a solution out of red oak bark, and then you bathe affected parts with that red oak bark.

E: What about that bear root that they found for arthritis? Did he make that too?

W: I don't remember about the bear root until later on in years. He may have made that, but I don't recall that.

E: You didn't often have a doctor on the reservation, did you?

W: That's right.

E: Well, I'm interested in those herbs and medicines, and your mother or your father kept them in a bowl in the kitchen somewhere?

W: Yes, after they would make the cough syrup, it would go in a little jar, covered—
one of them little fruit jars.

E: Well, it's been a joy to know you and I'd be interested in following up on that
pottery you're making. I will go to school and the children will be telling me about
that nice lady that came, and I was so glad to see you.

[End of Interview]

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