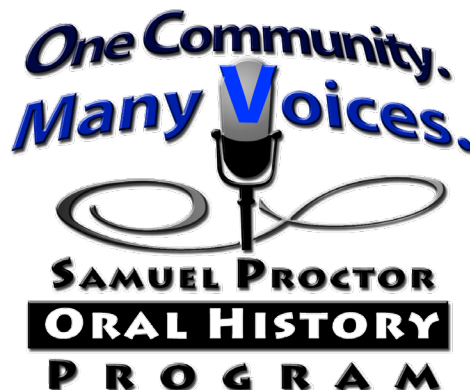


# **Kelley Harris and Unknown**

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)  
CAT-109**

**Recorded by:**

**Edith Frances Canty Wade  
December 29, 1974**



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**30 minutes | 14 pages**

**Abstract:** Kelley Harris gives a speech about his involvement in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the Catawba ward. Harris shares a short parable about unity and acceptance between peoples, where three peasants are given plants and look first at the ugly parts before learning from their philosopher teacher that they should see beauty in even the unsightly. He then shares some stories from his time at Brigham Young University, where he is a student. A second speech on this tape, on the same day, from an unnamed, male member of the parish, chronicles his time as a missionary, gives some history of the Catawba, and calls the members of the ward to accept the obligation of baptism.

**Keywords:** [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Religion; History]

**SAMUEL PROCTOR**  
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CAT 109

Speakers: Kelley Harris and Unknown

Producer: Edith Frances Canty Wade

Date of Interview: December 29, 1974

H: I am sitting here trying to look at that clock to see if I can see the hands, so I can time myself—I can't exactly see the hands there. [Laughter] Thank you. I would like to apologize for not having a tie on tonight. The only tie I brought home kind of got wrinkled up in the suitcase, and I didn't think it looked too nice, so I decided not to wear a tie at all. When I walked through the door, Gilbert grabbed me and asked me to come up here, and I said, "Well, my goodness, I don't have a tie on!" I kind of felt bad about that. Well, I am thankful to be home, especially with my family and with the ones I love at this Christmas time. I know I didn't get to stay as long as I'd liked to stay **in**, and be able to be here, but the time that I have been able to be here has been choice for me—it has been happy moments. I enjoy being home. There is no greater place, or, no greater word that I think I could ever hear than the word Catawba. I have heard the word Catawba in many strange places in my life; **it starts when I was** on my mission in places where I thought people had never heard of it. I heard stories of this place from the pulpits of many different places. It always gives me great pride and great joy in my heart to know that I am a part of a great people and a great place as this. I was thinking tonight of what I would speak on. I thought about a lesson that I had learned, and had studied a few months ago, and this lesson was on unity, and it started out with a story that I thought was quite unique. You've probably heard it before, but knowing me, I'll tell it a little different from any way that anyone else has told it before. It's a story about the days when Japan was great. Many philosophers and religion teachers of their times came down from the mountains

and taught the poor people—the people that worked in the fields in the daytime and did the work. Each morning all the workers from the field would go to this hillside, where a philosopher would come down from this beautiful garden. One morning, the philosopher taught the people about beauty. He taught them about the beauty of a rose and how beautiful the petals were. How beautiful the color of the rose was, and all the beauty of this rose. After he finished talking about the rose, he talked about a hawthorn twig. The beauty of the grain of the wood, and its color, how it was shaped, and how this was a great thing of beauty to study. Then he talked about a lily; he talked about the way it was shaped, and it was colored, and how much the people could learn from the beauty of these three plants. Well, three of his pupils were really impressed, and they really wanted to know more about the beauty of the rose, of the hawthorn twig, and of the lily. So, they approached the philosopher after he finished his sermon, or his teachings, that morning. They said, this afternoon when we come home from our fields of work, could you come down from the gardens and present us—or give us—each with a rose, a hawthorn twig, and a lily. The philosopher said that he would be glad to do this for them. So, they went off to work. Soon came the evening, and they came to the hill, and he came down from the garden. To the one that asked for the rose, he presented a rose. To the one who had asked for the twig, he presented a twig, and to the one who had asked for the lily, he presented a lily. Immediately, the one who got the rose looked at the rose and said, "Well, my rose has a thorn on it." And the other one, who had the hawthorn twig, picked up the twig and said, "Well, my hawthorn twig has a dead leaf on it." And kind of

spurred on from the other two, the man with the lily looked over, and said, "Well, look at my lily, it has dirt on the roots." So, the philosopher took the rose, and broke the thorn off, and he gave the thorn back to the man who asked for the rose. He said, "Of all the beauty that I have ever seen in the rose, and that is here for you to see, the only thing that you saw first was the thing which was displeasing to you: the thorn. Therefore, I will give you the thorn that you might study it and that you might learn from the thorn." He took the hawthorn twig and he broke off the dead leaf, and he gave the dead leaf back to the second man. Again, he said, "Of all the beauty of this twig, you chose to look at the ugly part first, the dead leaf. Therefore, that's the part which I will give you to take home to study." He took the lily, he brushed the dirt off the roots, and he handed the man the dirt. He said approximately the same to him, that that is what he had noticed first, therefore that is what he should be given to study and to look at. Now you know, brothers and sisters, a lot of the time you and I are like those three men. We meet a new brother and a brethren in the church, we meet people that we've never known before, and the first thing we see is that little thorn sticking out. Or maybe they have a dead leaf hanging on, or maybe they have dirt on their roots. And we say, "I don't want to be associated with them," or "I don't like them, because of this thorn" or, "because of this dead leaf." But, brothers and sisters, those individuals have much more beauty, much more to offer, much more to give, than that little thorn could ever matter, or that little dead leaf could ever make noise, or that little bit of dirt on the root could ever cause harm. If we could magnify upon the good parts of our brothers and sisters, and the good things that

they can do for us, then they themselves would get rid of that little bit of dirt, that thorn that sticks out, or that dead leaf, and eventually, we will see nothing but good in them. Hopefully, they will begin to practice what they see. Hopefully, they'll look at the good in others and they will bring out the beautiful part that each and every one of us has in our lives. This, to me, is a great part of unity. Being able to find the good that exists in each and every one of us. No matter how bad we think we are, or others might think we are, there's a lot of good, and there's a lot of talent, in each and every one of us, because we're God's children. We're his very personal children. He loves us, and he wants us to succeed, and he has a very special plan for us. We, as other individuals, have a very special part of that too, by helping them bring out their good points. I think of the prayer that Jesus Christ prayed—and I believe it was before he went out to the garden of Gethsemane. He prayed for unity, and he was praying for his twelve—or his eleven at that time. And he said, "Make them one, even as you and I are one." He often referred to him and his father as being one, and this confuses the Christian world. But, because we have modern day revelation, and we have modern prophets and modern interpretation of the scriptures, we know that that oneness he talked about was oneness in purpose. Oneness in love and understanding toward all the children of God, in the desire that they might be able to obtain eternal life. When Moses saw God and talked to him, face to face, and the Lord showed him all the earth, and all the universe, as it tells us. Moses fell upon the ground and he says, "I know from what I have seen that man is nothing but a speck of dust in the great universe." But the Lord came back to him

and he says, "Man is not nothing. It is my purpose and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of mankind with man." The Lord wants it for us. He wants us to be unified. He wants us to be strong, and we can only be as strong as we are unified. I do not know where the statement exactly came from. For some reason, in my mind, I think it came from one of the World War periods, in which the nations of the world were struggling against other nations of the world to keep freedom in the world. The statement: "United we stand, divided we fall." We are the same way, brothers and sisters. As individuals, it is hard to stand up for the things that we need to stand up for. But strength comes when we all stand together, not as just individuals, but individuals with strong testimonies of Jesus Christ. Strong testimonies that the Lord lives and this is his kingdom, and his church, and that it shall not fail, but that the hour and the time is being prepared when Jesus Christ will receive his own, in this day and in this dispensation. Unity is important in our times. Not only in our church, but in our families. We need to be unified in our families. We need to be able to get together, and to be able to express to each member of that family that we love them, and that we care, and that we understand and that we are willing to help, and spend a little bit of time with each other. I think that is important, to show our love by spending time, unifying ourselves, becoming strong families. I once heard it said—and I cannot quote the source, because I don't know who said it, but "The church is no stronger than the families that make up that church." That is true, brothers and sisters. If we are strong in our individual families, indeed, then the large family of the Church of Jesus Christ will be stronger because of the love and the unity we

have for each other. I know that unity is an important part of us being here. It is an important part of us coming to church each Sunday, so that we get to see each other. We get to know each other, what we are like and we will be able to find the good points in each other. That we will be able to strengthen each other in our testimonies. It is my testimony that I know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true. I know that Jesus Christ lives, and that He is my savior and redeemer. I know that in the Garden of Gethsemane, he suffered for my sins, and that upon the cross, he died, that I might be able to resurrect someday. I know that we are living in the last dispensation. I have read the scriptures and I have studied under men that, I feel, are inspired men of the Lord. I have seen that hand of the Lord in our time, and the preparations that He is making for his second coming. I know that we can all be a glorious part of that second coming. That we can give to the Lord, and His kingdom, of our time and our efforts and our love and our abilities. That if we would strive together—not apart from each other, but together—to do those things which the Lord has set down here for us to do, then we shall obtain eternal peace which Jesus Christ offered everyone who joined His kingdom. The peace that comes from knowing him, and knowing that this is His kingdom. That there is no harm that can be done to us by others. I bear witness that Spencer W. Kimball is a prophet of the Lord. I have been in assemblies when the prophet walked through the door, and I have stood with thousands to sing "We Thank Thee, Oh God, For a Prophet" as he stood before us. I know the spirit bore witness to me, that he is the divine leader which the Lord has set forth for each and every one of us to follow at this time. If we follow the prophet of the Lord and



his divine leaders, which he has sent for us and prepared for us so specially in these times, I know that we can never go astray. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Lord. I know that he truly did see our Father and Jesus Christ. And I am thankful that he stood up for what he knew was right. I am thankful that he was able to translate the Book of Mormon. That we, especially, might have this record. That we might know the greatness of the past and the glories of the future. I am thankful that I am a member of this branch or this ward. I am thankful that I know that Jesus Christ lives and he is my savior. It is only a small knowledge I have, but yet, it is one of the greatest things in my life to know that Jesus lives, and that my Father loves me, and cares for me, and guides and directs me as I listen to His voice within my own heart and within my own soul. I am thankful that Dean and Vickie have decided to come out to school with me. Sometimes it is a lonely place without people from home. My first year there, Kenneth and I were together and Vivian was with us, and it was nice. I am really looking forward to the opportunity of being there with them and sharing some of the experiences that we have there. Brigham Young University is one of the greatest places on the face of the earth. I know the Lord set that place up for divine purpose, that his young children might come and educate themselves, and might mingle with people with strong testimonies, or to meet professors with strong testimonies. Not to stay for eternity in that situation, but, after they finish their work there, to return to their homes and to strengthen others and to guide others and help others in the Gospel. I'm thankful that they have decided to come there and study there and be a part of the many wonderful opportunities there. It

is indeed a blessing for me to have Dean as a friend, and to see his humility and the love he has in his heart. I am thankful for all the blessings that my Father in heaven has given me, for my parents and my family. I am thankful that I am able to live here now and be a part of this, **and I say this** in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

W: You have been listening to a talk given by Kelley Harris, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, December 29, 1974. Kelley has served on a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is now at BYU University, studying to be a physical therapist. He will be gone for quite a while, and in the near future, when he comes home again, I will get a tape of Kelley and send it. he's a very remarkable young Catawba Indian, and we are very proud of him. This is Francis Wade, this is December 30, 1974, I live on Route 3, Box 304, Rock Hill, South Carolina, and I'm gathering oral history of the Catawba Indians for the University of Florida.

U1: My dear brothers and sisters, it's a sincere pleasure for me to be here with you tonight. I was very much impressed as Kelley was speaking. Some of the things he mentioned I can testify of also. I was just thinking about nearly four years ago, where I was sitting in a home in Arizona on the Tapaco Reservation. I was talking to a lady and a man—these were Tapaco Indian people—about a little child there that needed to be adopted. I knew before I went to the home that these Indian people were members of the church, and in talking with them, they were very proud of the fact that they were members of the Mormon Church. They also were proud of the fact that they, the members of the Tapaco Ward, were the second

Indian group in the church to have a ward! And I questioned them as to who was the first Indian group in the church to have a ward, and they said, "Well, it's the Catawba Indians in South Carolina," and they were quite proud of that fact. I recall, about seven years ago, I was up in New Mexico—a place called **Dulce**, New Mexico, among the **Hickory Apache** people—and I was standing behind a pulpit very similar to this one. The branch president was talking to some missionaries at that time, and there was a seminary manual on the pulpit. This was not on a Sunday. And I was just standing there, thumbing through the seminary manual. As I thumbed through the seminary manual, I stopped, because I saw some lesson material in that manual about the Catawba Indians. For those of you who don't recognize this fact, the church educational system, especially the church seminary system, has a special course for teaching Lamanites the Gospel. These particular stories were stories of people we all know, stories that we learned as we were growing up. Some years ago, as a missionary, I had an experience that I was reminded of today. I was in the church building one night- this was after a meeting had been held- and one of my companions came up to me and said, "Elder, there's a man downstairs"—we lived upstairs in a church building—"There's a man downstairs whose looking for a house." I said, "Well, can't you help him?" And he said "No, I can't help him, because I don't understand what he wants." So, I went downstairs, and there I found a little man who was smaller than my dad. He was a very little man, but a very spiritual man. He commenced to tell me that he was looking for a house, and certainly I was confused, too, because I didn't understand what he wanted,

and I asked him to explain what he was looking for. He said he was looking for the house of the Lord. Well, of course, I told him that he had found the place, and very shortly, he and his family were baptized. Today, my mother reminded me of a young man who was in the branch in Rock Hill. Many of you know this young man, but I won't mention his name. A few years ago, this young man, through his own steady, without any contact from the missionaries, without any influence from any friends, he came across the name "Mormon, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" in some literature. And it drew his attention. Consequently, he found out all he could about the church, and he joined the church, and I'm happy to say he's a very faithful member, a very faithful member of the church. Because of his own enquiry, his own desire to serve his Heavenly Father. Some ninety-one years ago, the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was not known in this area of the South. To my knowledge, almost no members of the church lived in this particular part of the south, within a radius of approximately a hundred miles of Rock Hill. At that time, the people who lived here, the Catawbas, were on the downs. There were very few people who lived—something like eighty people living on the reservation at that time. Historically, the Catawbas had been a large group, a very powerful and influential group of Indians for many years. Around the beginnings of the 1800s, they declined in numbers, because of smallpox and wars and a number of different things, but somehow or other, they revitalized themselves and increased in numbers. In about 1840, because of something that President Andrew Jackson did, the Catawbas, as most Indians, were asked to leave their home here, and to be relocated elsewhere. Along that

period of time, the people declined in numbers again, till we get down to about the year 1881 or [188]2. But during all these years, the Catawbas historically have been a group of people who have had consistent contact with the White people. You know, incidentally, have had good relationships with White people in general. During the almost two centuries of contact with so-called "Non-Indians", the Catawbas were never converted. There's not a historical record of a Catawba ever being converted to any Christian faith. In the 1880s, apparently, the Catawbas had retained very little, if any, religion of their own. Traditional religion, Indian religion. The story goes that in the 1850s the Catholic people had sent a priest to this area, to establish a church, and he was unsuccessful. Along this same period of time, the Methodist people had tried to establish a church in this area, they were unsuccessful. In this particular era, the Presbyterians were proselyted among the Catawbas, attempting to establish a church here, but were really unsuccessful. But in about 1881 or [18]82, two Mormon missionaries came into this area, and they found the people—to a great degree a degenerate people, who had very little—very poor, very, very poverty-stricken. Very poor homes, people who were really on the down, and had almost nothing to look forward to. In 1883, the church records show that one man was baptized, and some of you know him: Robert Harris. Amazing thing happened when Robert Harris was baptized: in less than ten years, fifty percent of the Catawba Indians joined the Mormon church. By 1920, over ninety percent of the Catawba Indians had joined the Mormon church. A historian and anthropologist who was here at one time, a Mr. Speck—some of you people may remember him—he made the

comment that in his studies of Indian groups, he was amazed to see that the Catawba Indians, first of all, converted themselves to Christianity as rapidly as they did—you know, in a period of ten years. He was further amazed to see that these people had joined one church, almost exclusively, in such a short period of time as the Catawba people had. Because this had never been done by any other religious organization in America. No religious organization had ever gone to any group of Indians and had a massive conversion as the Mormon Church had with the Catawbas. But what I'm getting at here, brothers and sisters, is the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has had an impact on this part of the south. And I might say, at the same time, that the Catawba Indians have had an impact on the Mormon Church in this part of the South. A couple months ago, I acquired a new job, and I was visiting with a number of people, and these people were not very religious people. When I say that, they were very much like many people we know in other churches; they talk about religion, but as far as practicing it, upholding their beliefs by their everyday actions, these kinds of things did not happen. They asked me about Catawba Indians, and if the Catawba Indians, you know, were religious people. And I told them they were! In fact, I told them that I was convinced, and had been convinced many years ago, that had it not been for the Mormon Church, the Catawba Indians would have ceased to exist, and I firmly believe that. My brothers and sisters, I've often wondered why the Lord has allowed this people to be here now. I'm not sure, **but what** he has allowed the Catawba people **to be here** for a purpose. And I'm reasonably sure that the Catawba people are here

because of a relationship with the Church. Now, what Kelley said in the beginning is very true. Many people throughout the church, many people in other countries, know of your heritage here. They know of the spirituality that has existed here, the strength that does exist now. The kind of examples that can come from here. I can honestly say, over the years I've known many, many spiritual giants. Some of the greatest spiritual giants I've ever known have come from this branch. Some of the greatest teachers I've ever known have come from this branch. Now I know some of the younger people—I used to sit where you're sitting now, in the same branch—and I know some of you might not understand what I'm saying. In the church, we believe very strongly that we, as members of the church, when we accept baptism, we accept certain obligations, and I emphasize the word obligations. We accept, first of all, the obligation to live the Gospel. That simply says that when we accept baptism, and enter into the waters of baptism, very honestly and very clearly, we forfeit our right to make mistakes from then on. Now that does not mean that we do not make mistakes, but that means that we have made a promise to our Heavenly Father, that we're gonna do everything in our power to live the Gospel. We're human beings, we're not perfect, and simply being baptized does not make us perfect—don't misunderstand. But it does mean that we have obligations—have a obligation—to set the example for the Gospel in our life, and in the way that we live. Now, when we become members of the church, we also have a secondary obligation, and for those of you who have not yet entered the Holy Temple, you can learn that you as a member of the church make a promise to your Father in heaven

that you will serve him. That when an assignment is given to you, that that assignment will be accepted, that we will not find excuses—because the world is full of excuses, believe me. We will not find excuses or reasons to turn down opportunities of serving the Lord's church. I've often wondered what would have happened to me had those two missionaries declined to go on missions ninety-one years ago. What would have happened, eighty years ago, had my grandfather and your grandfather declined to accept the Gospel. What would happen to us now? You people may not realize, but simply because of those two missionaries ninety-one years ago in this area of South Carolina, there are approximately 1,000 plus members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And if we were to examine the products of those two missionaries who came to this part of the world, ninety-one years ago, I dare say we'd probably find 2,000 people who are members of the church. The question is: is baptism in and of itself good enough? Baptism in and of itself is not good enough, because brothers and sisters, we have to accept the obligation to serve the Lord. If we do not accept the obligation to serve the Lord, in effect, we have committed blasphemy against the obligation of baptism. Now, I was looking in Mormon Doctrine by brother Bruce McConkie, and we was talking about service, and he pointed very dearly to the fact that as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we, more than anyone else in the world, have only one of two choices—

[End of Interview]

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