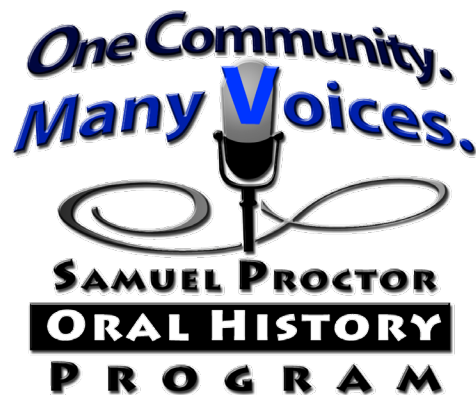


# Garfield C. Harris

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)  
CAT-157**

**Interview by:**

**Emma Reid Echols  
April 23, 1983**



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**12 minutes | 9 pages**

**Abstract:** Garfield C. Harris speaks to his life and education on the Catawba reservation. He then goes into his travels around Europe and North Africa as a member of the National Guard during World War II. He discusses how he got a job after he returned, and how he took care of his father and mother. Finally, he mentions how the relationship between the Whites and Catawba has changed compared to when he was growing up.

**Keywords:** [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Military participation; Communities]

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

CAT 157

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Interviewee: Garfield C. Harris

Date of Interview: April 23, 1983

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, April 23, 1983. I am recording the oral history of the Catawba Indians. I am visiting an Indian home. Will you tell me your name, sir?

H: Garfield C. Harris.

E: What is your address?

H: Route 3, Box 338.

E: How long have you been living here?

H: I built this place in 1947.

E: Were you born on the reservation?

H: I was born on the reservation.

E: Who were your father and mother?

H: **Therdal** Harris was my father, and Artemis Harris my mother.

E: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

H: I believe there was ten.

E: Did you have any trouble with your father making enough money to feed all that crowd?

H: That was rough.

E: What do you remember about what you had to eat in those times?

H: Well, we didn't have too much, but we got a living out of it. My mother—we raised a good garden during the summer, and she would can as much as she could. We did gather berries and can fruit and things like that. Out among the people, we would pick peas on havers and put them away for the winter. We

would have that, as well as sweet potatoes we would get from different places.

There were a lot of rabbits then, there was—

E: Did you kill squirrels too?

H: Yes.

E: Rabbits and squirrels?

H: That's right.

E: Did you ever have any bear or deer on the reservation?

H: No, ma'am.

E: You never caught them.

H: I never—

E: What about hunting birds? Did you hunt partridges?

H: They did a lot. But I never hunted any.

E: Tell me about your school days, when you went to school on the reservation.

H: It was a little small wooden building. One room. At first, we only had one teacher to teach about seven or eight grades.

E: Who was your first teacher you remember?

H: Elder Blair from out west. He was a missionary that was here to teach school.

E: He was a good teacher, I hear.

H: He was a good teacher.

E: He got all of you in that one room.

H: That is right.

E: What did you do for lunch?

H: Well, we had to go home for it.

E: And then came back.

H: That's right.

E: And where did Mr. Blair live?

H: He lived somewhere out west. I do not know exactly where he lived.

E: But on the reservation—

H: Oh, he lived with Chief Blue.

E: Chief Sam Blue.

H: That is right.

E: Then I guess you would get to school early and help make the fire and get the building ready?

H: He would go early. I was eight years old when I started to school.

E: You learned to read and write. Did you use a slate to write on?

H: Seems like to me we did. I am not sure, but I know one thing, we did not get any books until we learned our alphabet and learned to pronounce our vowels. They had a little old primer cloth book. We learned from that ABCs and different figures. That is the way we learned, and then they started us to reading after we learned all of that. And then we got what you call a little primer—I don't remember what the primer was now, but it was one before the big red book, if you remember that.

E: Yes, I remember that. Did you have a little blue-backed speller?

H: Yes, ma'am.

E: While the teacher was teaching you, what were the other children in the school doing?

H: They studied.

E: And he had good order? Good discipline?

H: He had good order, with good discipline.

E: And how many years did you go to school?

H: I went a part of the eighth grade. I never finished.

E: Then you got a job at Rock Hill?

H: No. I worked on the farm. And then when we were not farming ourselves, I worked out among the people around in the community—Mr. Sullivan, Nealys, the Sparkses, anybody that—Miss Lawrence.

E: You worked for a lot of White people then?

H: That is right. I did.

E: But now Mr. Sullivan was a—

H: Collins, too, I forgot about them.

E: Mr. Sullivan was the father—no, no, Mr. Simpson. Did you work for Mr. Simpson down there?

H: I never did work for Mr. Simpson.

E: Mr. Simpson was the father of the principal at the school, now. That's true. I do not know whether you remember him or not. Did your mother make pottery?

H: Yes, ma'am. We made our living like that. It filled in with a lot of other things we would have. Like gardening and day work and things like that. Mostly in the summer, she would make pots and we were able to go off and sell them in the mountains.

E: Would you sell them here on the reservation or take them to the mountains?

- H: Take them to the mountains. But a lot of times, people come through, and you could sell a few pieces in town.
- E: Did your sisters and brothers, all of you, help in making the pottery?
- H: They helped get them prepared for burning.
- E: When you finished school, you worked on the farm and then when did you start working for Brewster?
- H: After the war was over. See, I left here and went out West and went to work at the railroad shop in Pocatello, Idaho. And in 1941, I joined the National Guard, and was inducted in the service and went to Fort Warren, Wyoming. Then I stayed there until the war broke out and then we went to Fort Lewis, Washington.
- E: You were not sent overseas?
- H: I did. I was sent from Fort Lewis, Washington, to Patrick Henry and overseas. We went to Tunisia.
- E: Northern Africa?
- H: That's right. The town was deserted that we landed in. Then I stayed there until the fall of the year sometime. We went back to Oran, Algeria. From Oran, Algeria, to Italy—Naples.
- E: You've got a very good memory for all of that.
- H: That is right. Then from Naples, Italy, to Southern France and from Southern France back to Italy and home. We got here in November. I spent some time at home and then went back to Patrick Henry. It was after Christmas and on January 5, I boarded a boat to go back overseas. We landed in Naples and then went to a prison camp, to look after some prisoners. Then we went north, up into

Italy. In April, we left near Florence, Italy. I do not know what they call it in Italian, but we boarded a boat and went to Martinique, France. And from there, we took a convoy of equipment and trucks into Germany. We were in France when Roosevelt died. We had taken a load of supplies up to the airfield in Luxembourg. We came back that evening loaded up with equipment to go to Germany. We saw a flag hanging half-mast and asked who it was. They said it was the President. Well, the next morning, we lit out for Germany and we got onto Germany sometime during the day, or late in the evening, and unloaded our supplies.

E: Then after that you came home?

H: After the war was over.

E: Now what type of reception did they have here for you when you came home?

H: Well, I didn't see anything at all.

E: They should have given you a royal welcome. What other boys from the reservation were with you?

H: I was the only one in that group.

E: Oh, is that right?

H: That is right. There was no one with me.

E: I believe October's husband was in service also. October Harris.

H: That was my uncle.

E: That was your uncle.

H: That was World War I.

E: That was World War I and you were in World War II?



H: That's right.

E: You remember a lot of things about that. When you came home, then, you got a job here?

H: I went to work at the [inaudible 9:24] I went up to the Selective Service Department, and they asked me if I wanted the job, they said they could put me to work right away if I wanted to go, so I went to work at the [inaudible 9:34] and I worked there for thirty-four years and eight months, to be exact. I am not positive but I think it is pretty close to that.

E: Then in the meantime, you were married and had a family?

H: No, ma'am.

E: No?

H: I did not marry until [19]59.

E: Yes. Do you have any children?

H: I do not have any children.

E: You have a lot of good memories of the past.

H: That is right.

E: Memories of your father and your mother.

H: That is right. I took care of them until they died.

E: Do you go to church on the reservation church?

H: That is right.

E: And your father and mother did too?

H: That is right.

E: Now are they buried in the old cemetery, or the one—?

H: She is buried in the old cemetery, down on the old reservation. And he is buried at the church cemetery, the new cemetery.

E: You have had a lot of friends among the Whites as well as among the Indians.

H: That is right.

E: Tell me some of the White friends you have got in this community. They all seem to know you.

H: H. L. Nealy, I have come pretty closely acquainted with him. He is in York. And Ben Field, and I cannot think of a lot of the rest of them.

E: Roy Nealy, of course?

H: Roy Nealy, yes. I traded with Mr. Nealy.

E: And Jessie **Gorman**?

H: That's right.

E: Where did you do your shopping? Up here at the **corner** store?

H: I did then, but now I go in town, because they are limited and we can get things a lot cheaper than what you can buy at a local store.

E: Well, what do you see, you see the children growing up in the community and the relationship with the Indians and the Whites. Don't you think it has improved over the years?

H: It has, it has improved tremendously. It does not seem that there is any distinction anymore, like there used to once was when I was growing up. When I was coming up, an Indian couldn't go to school in town. What education they got was here on the reservation, that was all.

E: I am so glad to talk to you and I am so glad to hear what you have said about the relationships of the Indians and the Whites because we were all friends, aren't we?

H: That is right.

[End of interview]

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