Georgia Harris. Tape 2; side 1. March 19, 1980. Rock Hill, SC.

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GH [00:00:01:000] I remember, ah, we’d always have a big picnic, and, ah, John Brown used to live way up the river. Sometimes he’d have it at his house, you know. He was terrible to, ah—he loved to have picnics around where he was anyway sometimes.

GH [00:00:16:000] I remember going way up the river one time to a picnic up there, up the river, where he lived up the river, and we had a good time. They’d clean off a great big place, you know. I think they had a ball game. They used to have a picnic, then they’d have a ball game.

GH [00:00:33:000] The white boys from the outside would come in and play the Indians, and they’d have a big time! They’d play that morning, and play another game in the afternoon.

TB [00:00:44:000] And they would do this at John Brown’s house?

GH [00:00:47:000] Sometimes, uh huh.

TB [00:00:47:000] He liked to party?

GH [00:00:49:000] Yes, he loved a party.

TB [00:00:50:000] So he had a good side, too?

GH [00:00:52:000] Oh yeah! He was good. If you knew John Brown, you’d love to talk with him! He was a great talker. Yeah, he was a great talker. You would have enjoyed talking with him.

TB [00:01:05:000] I can imagine! He was probably—was he a lot like Roy?

GH [00:01:09:000] Some, uh huh.

TB [00:01:13:000] Least that was my impression.

GH [00:01:15:000] Yeah. Until he got mad.

TB [00:01:17:000] Oh, did he have a temper, too?

GH [00:01:18:000] Yeah.

TB [00:01:19:000] Oh my, I didn’t know that. I guess everybody’s got a temper.

GH [00:01:23:000] Yeah, everybody has a—but we’d have a good time at a picnic! And we’d have an all-day thing, you know? Take it in for the whole day.

TB [00:01:38:000] Fish?

GH [00:01:39:000] And soup. And all the fried chicken, cakes and pies, you know—everything that people would just cook.

TB [00:01:45:000] Would they ever have Indian dances at that time?

GH [00:01:48:000] No, not that I know of.

TB [00:01:53:000] When would they do that? Only for tourists, or—

GH [00:01:57:000] I guess. Because I don’t remember any Indian dances. Only what Chief Blue, you know, worked up around here. That’s the onliest one I know of with Indian dances. But, ah, I remember when they used to have square dances; we used to have square dances.

TB [00:02:13:000] Where would they have those?

GH [00:02:14:000] In the houses.

TB [00:02:16:000] Oh, really? Well tell me about that.

GH [00:02:16:000] Yeah, they’d open up their houses—

TB [00:02:19:000] Who?

GH [00:02:20:000] Well, whoever would. They’d have one here one night—if somebody would say, “Well, you can come to my house the next time. We’ll have one.” And that’s the way they have the square dances.

TB [00:02:29:000] Oh. And who would do the calling?

GH [00:02:33:000] Different ones that they know. Who knew how to call.

TB [00:02:36:00] Like who?

GH [00:02:37:000] Let’s see. Who used to do the calling? I’ve forgotten. Irvin Gordon used to call some.

TB [00:02:43:000] Is that right?

GH [00:02:44:000] I think Early Brown called some. Let’s see, who else? There was somebody who was real good about calling I used to love. When I was growing up, I used to go to square dances; we used to have them when I was growing up.

TB [00:03:00:000] For heaven’s sakes! And where did they get the music?

GH [00:03:04:000] They had one old colored fellow, and he’d pick the banjo, and they’d pass the hat to get the money to give him, to pay him. And that was the onliest way they paid him. Oh, he’d come—he enjoyed it! He’d get the biggest kick out of it, I think.

GH [00:03:17:000] He was a good old colored fellow, and he ain’t been long dead either. I think he just died here a couple—his name was Charlie Crawford. I never will forget him! But he would come certain places, and he’d play for us to dance.

TB [00:03:30:000] So if they were going to have a dance, they’d just go and get Charlie Crawford?

GH [00:03:33:000] Yeah. They’d let him know ahead of time if they were going to have a dance. If they were going to have one tonight, and they’d have one the next Saturday night, and they’d usually do it. It wasn’t on Sundays now; they had it on Saturdays until 12 o’clock.

TB [00:03:46:000] Right.

GH [00:03:50:000] But I never will forget--! I told you about Davis Ayers; he was an old fellow. And after his wife died, he was terrible to want to go to a dance! He always wanted to dance with the young girls! [All] of us would run, because if he got near you and you didn’t have a partner, he’d ask all the girls!

GH [00:04:09:000] And all of us knew that. We’d have a partner if we could, but, ah, but our parents always told us not to mistreat him. We were always taught if he asked us to dance with him, you know. We hated to dance with him because he was so old, and he’d stand right in the middle of the floor.

GH [00:04:27:000] And he wouldn’t hardly go around, but he’d pull on you, swing you! Swing you, you know, almost, you’d almost have to fight, you know, to get around with him.

GH [00:04:37:000] He always liked to dance. But we wouldn’t hurt his feelings, you know? But, ah, my husband said, he said one night Davis was there, and somebody called time, and he said “I’ll tell you what.” And I think he was the one that had the watch. And they said, “Ah, let’s set the watch back!”

GH [00:05:01:000] And he went and set it back. And my husband told me after we got married, he said, “You know, that man set the watch back.”

TB [00:05:06:000] Did he really? He liked it that much?

GH [00:05:08:000] He was that way.

TB [00:05:13:000] What were the—do you remember any of the songs they used to play on that banjo?

GH [00:05:18:000] No, I don’t.

TB [00:05:19:000] It was all bluegrass? It was all country?

GH [00:05:20:000] Yeah.

TB [00:05:22:000] All country music?

GH [00:05:23:000] All country music.

TB [00:05:23:000] And would you have something to eat?

GH [00:05:27:000] I think somebody brought something. Brought something to sell around a place. Like that, sometimes.

TB [00:05:33:000] Well how many people would crowd into a house like that?

GH [00:05:36:000] Oh, gosh, we used to have, oh, about a houseful! Everybody went, you know. We didn’t have no outlet to go out and go nowhere. We, we just made—

TB [00:05:44:000] You made your own fun?

GH [00:05:46:000] Yeah. Everybody would go; everybody would take part.

TB [00:05:49:000] Everyone on the reservation?

GH [00:05:50:000] Yeah, all of them that liked to do them things would, sure. A lot of them didn’t do anything. Just watched some of us, just sat around and watched and enjoyed that. Everybody’d have a good time and go home.

TB [00:06:04:000] But it was all square dancing?

GH [00:06:06:000] Square dancing.

TB [00:06:07:000] No lindy? Fox trot? None of that? It was all square dances?

GH [00:06:11:000] All square dances. Now, if anybody knew it they might get and dance a lindy, but—I used to be able to dance a little bit then. I used to fox trot and two-step and go over that waltz, too. But, I don’t know. I liked that when I was at school, though. But I could do all of that.

TB [00:06:31:000] What else would they do for recreation?

GH [00:06:34:000] That was the biggest thing, I guess, they did, I guess—have square dances. And ball games on Saturday, you know. Through the summer time.

TB [00:06:42:000] And then the picnics.

GH [00:06:43:000] And picnics.

TB [00:06:46:000] How about the movies?

GH [00:06:47:000] Nobody went to the movies very much, just once in a great while.

TB [00:06:53:000] Tell me about when you went to the movies the first time.

GH [00:06:56:000] Really I don’t know when I went to the movies for the first time. I don’t. But, you know, I went before the talking movies ever came on. Silent movies. But I don’t know, I guess I was a kid, a pretty good size, before I got to a movie.

TB [00:07:15:000] But you would have to come into Rock Hill?

GH [00:07:17:000] Uh huh. We went to the movies sometimes. I never was a moviegoer until after I got, until after I was married and took my grandkids to a movie. Used to, all the kids, ah, my kids, you know, a lot of children’s movies would come to town, and, ah, my oldest son, his kids wanted to go to the movies.

GH [00:07:43:000] And they’d berate me into going. I never did go with them and stay with them because they never would have no patience! I used to take them—they talk about it now; Billy talks about it. “Remember? I took you to see such-and-such a story, I believe.

GH [00:07:58:000] That *Old Yeller*. Do you remember that I took them to?” And they said, “Yeah, Grandma, we remember that.” And I went to the movies, mostly I guess I went to the movies more with Floyd than I did with my husband. My husband never did care for movies.

GH [00:08:14:000] He just never did care nothing about them, so we never did fool with movies. But Floyd, when he was growing up, he would want me to go with him to the show. And I went.

TB [00:08:23:000] How about the fair?

GH [00:08:25:000] Well used to be, everybody went to the fair! We’d go to the fairs. That’s something I haven’t been in in a long time.

TB [00:08:33:000] When you were a girl did you go to the fairs?

GH [00:08:35:000] Uh huh! We went—

TB [00:08:35:000] When you were a youngster?

GH [00:08:36:000] Yes.

TB [00:08:38:000] Do you remember any stories about the fair?

GH [00:08:41:000] Not too much. But I remember, let’s see. The first time I went to the fair, I thought my grandmother was along, and I believe she was, she was just about in everything! But that’s been so long ago.

TB [00:09:10:000] In the early days did they have pottery at the fairs?

GH [00:09:13:000] No.

TB [00:09:14:000] Just after you were married.

GH [00:09:18:000] Yeah. First I’ve known of, except the expositions in Columbia and Charleston. You know, things like that.

TB [00:09:27:000] Now, your grandmother didn’t go to the Corn Exposition?

GH [00:09:31:000] No, my granddaddy did.

TB [00:09:33:000] Oh, did he go?

GH [00:09:35:000] He went to the Columbia one, I know. I don’t know if he went to the Charleston one or not, but I know he went to the one in Columbia.

TB [00:09:40:000] That was the corn exposition. But she didn’t go along? Did he tell you about it?

GH [00:09:50:000] I remember him having on an Indian suit; I remember that. Seeing him dressed up, you know; that’s about all I saw. He had a picture of hisself taken, you know, taken down there. But I don’t know what my grandmother ever did with that picture!

GH [00:10:05:000] I know she had it, unless Furman got it. Furman stayed with her a long time. But I don’t know what became of that picture. But he went down there and stayed two or three days a week, I guess I don’t know which it was.

TB [00:10:32:000] It was a long time. I don’t remember. About 20 people went. I know that Doris went.

GH [00:10:40:000] Did Doris go?

TB [00:10:40:000] Yeah, she was only—

GH [00:10:42:000] She went with her mama and daddy, with Rosie?

TB [00:10:54:000] What was the nigger’s name?

GH [00:10:55:000] Hence Henbrick.

TB [00:11:00:000] And they found Hence Henbrick chopped up in the river?

GH [00:11:02:000] Yes, down at the bank of the river, cut to death. And she was—her hands and feet was tied behind her and throwed in the river, and I guess she just drowned.

TB [00:11:12:000] This happened in York County, not in—

GH [00:11:14:000] That was in Gaffney.

TB [00:11:15:000] That was up in Gaffney, up there on the Broad River. Do you know a name “Bolware?”

GH [00:11:27:000] Bolware?

TB [00:11:28:000] Yeah. Nellie Bolware.

GH [00:11:32:000] No.

TB [00:11:34:000] I found her mentioned in the school play, and I was wondering. Tell me what happened with the Ayers family, that whole episode with all those deaths. That must have been awful. The mother died—

GH [00:11:51:000] The mother died with pneumonia.

TB [00:11:55:000] Who was she?

GH [00:11:56:000] She was Aunt Sallie Gordon’s daughter. She was my, she was Irvin’s sister.

TB [00:12:04:000] And what was her name?

GH [00:12:05:00] Ruthie Gordon.

TB [00:12:07:000] Ruthie Gordon Ayers. And she married Johnny?

GH [00:12:10:000] She married Johnny Ayers. And she died and left Hazel, oh, five kids, I guess. There was Johnny, Ruthie, Mary—that was four children.

TB [00:12:27:000] There was four children.

GH [00:12:29:000] Ruthie was just six months old when she died.

TB [00:12:32:000] Nothing to do with influenza?

GH [00:12:34:000] No, she just up and had pneumonia and just died with it. You know, it seems strange. You hear a lot of people having pneumonia now, and—

TB [00:12:45:000] Nothing.

GH [00:12:45:000] Nothing. But now, back then it was fatal.

TB [00:12:49:000] Just like influenza. Now, you get the flu and you just go to bed, unless you have other problems.

GH [00:12:57:000] Yes. And Six months later, you see, he died.

TB [00:13:02:000] What did he die of?

GH [00:13:03:000] With pneumonia, too.

TB [00:13:05:000] Oh, really? Oh, wasn’t that a mess!

GH [00:13:09:000] It was.

TB [00:13:11:000] Oh! And what on earth happened? What did they do? Well what did they do? What did he do when she died?

GH [00:13:17:000] Well, I believe Aunt Sallie went up there and stayed with them. You see, that was her daughter, and she stayed with them.

TB [00:13:25:000] Tended the baby?

GH [00:13:26:000] Taking care of the baby. And then when he died, there they was.

TB [00:13:33:000] So she had them all.

GH [00:13:34:000] She had them all. And she wasn’t able, so Irvin, you see—

TB [00:13:38:000] She was old by this time.

GH [00:13:40:000] Yeah, she was old. And they brought them home there after the funeral. My sister had them, helped them up.

TB [00:13:49:000] So actually, Eliza Gordon raised—

GH [00:13:54:000] Helped to raise—

TB [00:13:54:000] Helped Sallie Gordon raise all these children.

GH [00:13:58:000] Yes. They all stayed there at the house.

TB [00:14:02:000] Oh my goodness! But no Social Security?

GH [00:14:06:000] No.

TB [00:14:07:000] Nothing?

GH [00:14:09:000] I think he had a little bit of insurance, but it didn’t last too long. A little, but it wasn’t too much.

TB [00:14:18:000] That was a tragedy.

GH [00:14:19:000] It was. It was a tragedy.

TB [00:14:22:000] She didn’t—there’s no obituary for the wife, but there is an obituary for him.

GH [00:14:28:000] Ruth Gordon?

TB [00:14:30:000] I don’t think so. But there was one for him, and it said he left four small children. But then, that didn’t explain exactly what happened. So Sallie Gordon and Eliza Gordon actually raised those children. So you were pretty close to them also. Did you help?

GH [00:14:57:000] Oh, I was over there from time to time. All them kids liked me. To this day, they all call me “aunt.”

TB [00:15:06:000] Fox does. He’s very fond of you, very.

GH [00:15:09:000] Yes, he does, too. And also Ruth. They all call me aunt.

TB [00:15:19:000] That must have been really rough at that time, when people had no—

GH [00:15:23:000] Yeah, no income or nothing.

TB [00:15:25:000] Of course, they had to turn to each other.

GH [00:15:28:000] Yes. Everybody helped them out a little bit here and a little bit there.

TB [00:15:37:000] Sallie Gordon must have been a very good person.

GH [00:15:39:000] She was, she was. Ah, now they said she was like John Brown. Now she had a temper when she was young, but when I knew her, she was just as humble an old woman you ever wanted to know!

GH [00:15:50:000] She thought a lot of me; she always treated me good, and I always liked her. I thought a lot of Aunt Sallie. I helped them take care of her when she died—right up there—and my sister took care of her, and I’d go over and help her with her.

GH [00:16:11:000] I sure did hate it when she died. She was a good old soul. Now talking about telling stories, she could tell you stories from way back! She could just sit and talk. Yeah, she could sit and tell you things; and I enjoyed talking to her.

GH [00:16:38:000] I was telling Billy, my grandson, the other day, “You want me tell you a story about your granddaddy, your great-granddaddy?” And he said, “What is that, grandma?” “Well, that was when your granddaddy had to wrestle with the devil one time.”

GH [00:16:54:000] He said, “What?” And I said, “Yeah, he went way up the river somewhere, but I don’t know whether he. . .” You know he played a fiddle?

TB [00:17:03:000] This was Epp?

GH [00:17:04:000] No, this was Billy’s granddaddy, Peter Harris. You heard them tell of Peter Harris?

TB [00:17:08:000] Yes. Okay.

GH [00:17:10:000] And I said, “He went off. He played over until Sunday morning.” But I believe he was playing for white people. But anyway—“It was somewhere way up the river, and he was coming home. And he said he met a man.

GH [00:17:26:000] And he said, ah, and the man said, ‘Let me see your fiddle.’ And he said he handed him the fiddle. And he said that he played it; he played the same thing that Peter Harris could play.

GH [00:17:44:000] It was ‘The Devil’s Dream,’ that’s what it was called, and he said that man played it just as good as he could! And then he said before he left, he said he grabbed him and said, ‘Let’s wrestle!’

GH [00:17:59:000] And he throwed him down, the man throwed him down, and he said, ‘I was a stout man,’ and he said, ‘I was a big man myself, and that man throwed me down!’ And he said, ‘When I got up, I looked at his feet, and he had one foot like a cow or a horse hoof and the other one was like a man!’

GH [00:18:21:000] And he said the man got up and left, and he went on home.”

TB [00:18:26:000] And this is Peter Harris?

GH [00:18:27:000] Yeah. And they always said it was the devil that he wrestled with.

TB [00:18:36:000] But he played? So a lot of people played music?

GH [00:18:38:000] Yeah. I told Bill it looks like he’d have some musical abilities about him.

TB [00:18:44:000] Your husband’s grandfather on that side of the family? Isn’t there a story about a watch, about a man that couldn’t tell time?

GH [00:19:01:000] That’s Davis Ayers.

TB [00:19:02:000] Yes.

GH [00:19:03:000] Well, he had a pocket watch, and he couldn’t tell time. And if anybody asked him, “What time is it?” he’d say, “See for yourself,” and he’d let you look at it. That’s the way he had to do you, because he couldn’t tell you!

TB [00:19:19:000] He didn’t want for you to know that he couldn’t tell time?

GH [00:19:21:000] Yes. He’d say, “See for yourself,” and pull that watch out, and then let you see it. But he carried that watch.

TB [00:19:27:000] Always had that watch with him?

GH [00:19:28:000] Yes.

TB [00:19:30:000] Do you remember Billy George?

GH [00:19:33:000] No. I was just talking to Billy, my grandson, about him the other day, and he was asking me, “Well, what was the people like?” And I said, “One thing, they were honest people.

GH [00:19:44:000] You didn’t have to lock your doors. And one thing I can tell him about Billy George—Landrum George’s—I said, “One time he got drunk, of course.” I said, “And he got so drunk! He was in a barroom somewhere, and this man couldn’t wake him up and couldn’t get him out the door.

GH [00:20:03:000] So they just locked him up and just left him in the barroom, you know, all alone. And he said sometime in the night or in the morning, Billy George woke up. And you know how people is—he had the, I guess, something like the DTs, you know.

GH [00:20:21:000] He was trembling and needing another drink. And he just sit there until that man come to open up, and all this whiskey around there, and he could have got it, but he didn’t bother a thing. And when he come in, he asked that man could he have a drink. And he said he looked at him.

GH [00:20:39:000] Now, this white man was the one that told him; Billy George didn’t tell. The white man told it. And he said, ‘Do you mean to tell me that you have been sitting here like this, and with all this whiskey around here, and you haven’t touched none?’

GH [00:20:51:000] He said, ‘No, sir. I was waiting for you to come in and so I could ask. I wasn’t bothering what you had unless you give it and let me have it.’ And he could have got it, you see. He was in there with it, but he wouldn’t touch a thing until he got. . .”

TB [00:21:06:000] I wonder—would you say that Mormonism has done the Catawbas a great service by stopping the drinking?

GH [00:21:15:000] Well, I think so.

TB [00:21:16:000] At least slowing it down.

GH [00:21:18:000] Oh yeah.

TB [00:21:19:000] It’s decreased.

GH [00:21:19:000] Oh yeah.

TB [00:21:21:000] Do you think it’s decreased?

GH [00:21:22:000] Oh yeah, I think it has. It’s helped people, I think.

TB [00:21:31:000] It’s helped with education too?

GH [00:21:33:000] Oh yeah. That’s one thing the church believes in: people get an education.

TB [00:21:42:000] Do you remember those early Mormon missionaries?

GH [00:21:44:000] No, I don’t. I guess that was before my time, before we were affiliated with the Mormon people; I don’t know too much about it. You know, my people belonged to another church, and they just stayed with what they had, you know, and didn’t go to another church.

TB [00:22:04:000] They didn’t pay any attention to the Mormons? Do you remember any weddings?

GH [00:22:11:000] Well, I remember some after I got up a good size, I guess. Going to church where they had them in church.