



12-10-1980

## Interview with Bessie Garrison

Bessie Garrison

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview #104  
GARISON, Bessie**

**GARISON, Bessie**

Winthrop graduate, class of 1912; former Winthrop faculty

*At Winthrop:* 1908-1912

*Interviewed:* December 10, 1980; December 14, 1980, April 21, 1981

*Interviewer:* Anne Ledford, Susan Rippy

*Index by:* Rachel Hooper

*Length:* 01:31:24 | 01:02:31

**Abstract:** In December of 1980 and April 21, 1980, Anne Ledford and Susan Rippy interviewed Winthrop alumni and former faculty member Bessie Garison. Garison describes student life at Winthrop from 1908 until her graduation in 1912, as well as her memories of Winthrop's training school. Garison discusses her memories of Winthrop's founding, campus life, buildings, uniforms, and professors. Garison offers insights on changes made at Winthrop between her years as a student and when she began teaching in 1937. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

**Keywords:** Anne Ledford, Bessie Garison, Winthrop, alumni, faculty, 1980, 1900's, Rippy

**Interview Session I (December 10, 1980; December 14, 1980): Digital File**

**Time      Keywords**

00:00:00 *Start of Interview*/Interviewer's Introduction

00:00:23 *Question:* Tell us about when Winthrop first opened *Answer:* First heard of Winthrop at age 3; Garison describes childhood in Ridgeway, SC; discusses memories of Winthrop moving from Columbia to Rock Hill, all Clemson students came to Rock Hill to see the cornerstone laid; Garison moved to Rock Hill in fall of 1895; no homes, but people lived in dorms and buildings previously used by Presbyterian church/Davidson college; Garison describes town's excitement about Winthrop; describes childhood; began kindergarten in 1899, discusses memories of kindergarten including memories of hearing many stories/folktales including Uncle Remus stories and Hans Christian Anderson stories; finished kindergarten at the end of summer, did

- not get to go back to school on time because Garrison and her eldest sister had typhoid fever, did not start school until latter part of October 1899; Garrison describes training school; Garrison discusses memories of first grade, favorite teacher; Garrison went to training school after this until 1908; describes training school grades
- 00:06:18 *Question:* First buildings on college campus? *Answer:* Main building which is now Tillman hall, and North dormitory; Garrison describes layout of North dormitory and Tillman
- 00:07:10 *Question:* Who built Winthrop? People from Rock Hill? *Answer:* Not sure, contractor was from Rock Hill; Mr. W.H. Stewart; Garrison discusses President's home, Dr. Johnson; next building was Carnegie library added in 1906
- 00:08:35 [no question] Garrison talks about seeing South dormitory built in 1901 and 1902, later became McLaurin hall; Winthrop student population growing, needed more dining space, built Johnson hall in 1908 and 1909, later became Bancroft hall, second floor was called senior hall and only seniors lived there; during summer of 1910 added new dining room; fall of 1910 had new dormitory and new dining hall
- 00:10:07 *Question:* Is this new dining room McBryde? *Answer:* No, McBride was added later
- 00:10:13 *Question:* Where was the dining hall located? *Answer:* It was where it is now; dining hall built in 1910 was in the front part of Tillman, McBryde was a wing added later
- 00:10:36 *Question:* What was it like living in a dorm? *Answer:* Do not know, do not get to spend much time in dorms, especially during study hours; girls had strict rules; Garrison describes a typical daily routine of a Winthrop student; discusses student's smoking habits and continues discussing daily routine
- 00:15:23 *Question:* What about the week? Go to school Monday through Friday? *Answer:* When Winthrop was open Saturday was a holiday, in 1900 and 1901 Rock Hill decided that farm hands and mill workers had to come into town on Saturday, made streets crowded; Dr. Johnson decided that Winthrop would have a holiday on Monday and go to school on Saturday, from that time until 1923 or 1924; Garrison discusses boys going to training school
- 00:17:30 *Question:* Students from Winthrop college taught at training school? *Answer:* Yes; when first went to Winthrop had "practice teaching;" Garrison discusses Johnson, school in Columbia; when Garrison first went to school, had student teachers from sophomore, junior and senior classes; Garrison discusses student teaching
- 00:19:57 *Question:* When you went to Winthrop, live in dorm? *Answer:* No, lived "within running distance of chapel," lived about a block away; lived in same place from

- kindergarten until graduation from Winthrop and also 2 or 3 years after also when she was teaching at Winthrop
- 00:20:46 *Question:* Issued a uniform? Make uniform? *Answer:* Garrison describes her enthusiasm about uniform, describes making uniform; first Sunday of fall semester all girls marched to church; Baptists and Presbyterians in different groups, one group whose church was farthest away led the line, usually the Presbyterians, Dr. Johnson led the line with the head matron
- 00:23:23 *Question:* Is this the Blue Line? *Answer:* This was the Blue Line
- 00:23:26 [no question] Garrison talks about uniforms; making uniforms; Garrison describes hat; liked uniform; when teaching at Winthrop, Garrison used to tell girls not to discard uniform; Dr. Johnson said that important people considered Winthrop girls well dressed; even though girls are dressed similar, every girl is unique; governor Burns discarded uniforms when Garrison was teaching at Winthrop
- 00:25:36 *Question:* Mr. Johnson was first president? *Answer:* Yes; Tatler was decided to Dr. Johnson, describes dedication
- 00:25:55 *Question:* Did he live on campus? *Answer:* Yes; when Winthrop first opened, Johnson lived in North dormitory, corner room in northern corner; after house was bought, lived in house with mother and half-sister Margaret Nance; Nance married Paul Workman in Rock Hill; Garrison liked Johnson's mother, used to deliver her packages; Johnson's mother was a Nance, had remarried; Johnson fell in love with secretary Miss May Smith from Charleston, married in Fall 1901; president's house built by Mr. Stewart (overseer of Winthrop); Garrison discusses house renovations, carriage house, horses, streetcars used until 1911; Streetcar barn where Joynes Hall is now, streetcar barn owned by Dr. Joynes, gave to Winthrop to be used as home for teachers
- 00:29:19 *Question:* Where Joynes Hall is now? *Answer:* Yes
- 00:29:23 *Question:* Girls that went to Winthrop all from South Carolina? North Carolina? *Answer:* No, had students from any state; school was established for SC girls, SC girls did not pay tuition unless father owned valuable property; out of state girls paid tuition
- 00:29:55 *Question:* So this allowed mill workers' daughters to come to school? *Answer:* Yes
- 00:30:04 [no question] Garrison talks about Dr. Johnson; Johnson stated that with Winthrop's uniform, could not tell a queen's daughter from a slave's daughter; Garrison talks about scholarships, entrance exams

- 00:31:01 *Question:* Remember any teaching experiences from training school? *Answer:* Yes; taught last week of first term in January, assigned to teacher that was her 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, scared of her, realized this teacher had asked to work with Garison specifically, teacher left Garison in charge of class one day, no children showed up because of snow
- 00:33:28 *Question:* How many times did you attend training school before teaching? One quarter? *Answer:* Second semester taught first grade, discusses teacher with whom she taught
- 00:33:45 *Question:* Did people graduate and not become teachers? *Answer:* Yes; had many classes on special music, millinery, sewing, cooking, stenography; could get diplomas/certificates; Garison talks about Ms. Withers
- 00:35:10 *Question:* School began in August and go through May? When did it start? *Answer:* No, began in mid-September; training school began a week before; discusses holidays, commencement ceremonies
- 00:38:03 [no question] Garison discusses commencement ceremonies, graduation, Joe Riley; class of 1912 first class to wear graduation caps and gowns
- 00:40:02 *Question:* What color were caps and gowns? *Answer:* Black
- 00:40:05 *Question:* Do you still have yours? *Answer:* No
- 00:40:23 [no question] Garison discusses graduation
- 00:40:36 *Question:* School lasted about 9 months? *Answer:* Yes
- 00:40:41 *Question:* Girls did not leave campus to go home between semesters or for holidays? *Answer:* Parents had to write the president a letter if they wanted girls to come home
- 00:40:56 *Question:* Where did the professors live? *Answer:* Dorms at first—especially female teachers; rented homes and rooms
- 00:41:36 *Question:* Were tunnels under Winthrop already established? *Answer:* Never knew of tunnels, maybe a myth
- 00:42:15 *Question:* Did they have swimming pool in Tillman? *Answer:* Yes, pool was small; town girls stayed on first floor, gave town girls room near pool; Garison discusses room decorations for town girls

- 00:43:50 *Question:* Did Carnegie library have large selection of books? *Answer:* Not sure, but seemed to have wonderful selection, library was enlarged after Garrison's graduation
- 00:44:22 *Question:* Did Winthrop have clubs? *Answer:* Yes; tennis, music, art, home ec clubs; no sororities
- 00:45:10 *Question:* Professors or students oversee clubs? *Answer:* Mostly students, but professors were affiliated
- 00:45:34 *Question:* All the classes taught in main building, Tillman? *Answer:* Yes
- 00:45:43 *Question:* Where were classrooms located in Tillman? *Answer:* Classrooms in Tillman first, second, third, fourth floors; shared first floor classrooms with training school; describes Tillman layout, second floor library, third floor dining room, third floor rooms for literary society; art classes used to be in Tillman, moved to third floor of South Dormitory; kindergarten, pool in basement; all classes in Tillman until South Dormitory and another building was built
- 00:54:07 *Question:* Where did the paintings and statues found in Tillman come from? *Answer:* Dr. Johnson's trip to Europe—brought objects and prints back; Garrison describes objects and prints, mostly replicas of famous works
- 00:55:33 *Question:* Scholarships for girls? *Answer:* Yes; each county could give as many scholarships as people in house of representatives; girls took exams, one who made highest grade got scholarship; no scholarships in this manner when Garrison came back to teach around 1937; dining room scholarships—24 girls could work in dining room and earn tuition money; service scholarships—girls could help teachers in exchange for tuition money
- 00:57:53 [no question] Garrison talks about scholarships from donors
- 00:58:55 *Question:* Did it cost a lot of money to come to Winthrop? *Answer:* Not sure; was a "town girl," believed deposit was about \$25-\$50; Garrison discusses what deposit covered; out of state girls paid more
- 01:00:18 [no question] Garrison discusses Dr. Johnson, uniforms
- 01:01:03 *Question:* What kind of social events on campus? *Answer:* Usually girls organized events; discusses German club; clubs could meet with people in town at "receptions;" Garrison discusses receptions; discusses mock circus girls organized; Saturday night two societies met, girls performed; girls could have music or chorus recitals, Cecilia Chorus performed; Garrison discusses plays, debates, football games

- 01:05:43 [no question] Garison discusses dining hall seating; Dr. Kinard and wife, pranks played in dining room; discusses memories of Winthrop; discusses Dr. Kinard's career and life, discusses death of Dr. Kinard's wife and children in a fire, talks about Dr. Kinard's wife and interactions she had with her
- 01:12:34 *Question:* Did Winthrop have anything special for junior/seniors? *Answer:* Yes, every spring had a junior/senior reception; after Kinard became president, wife decided that seniors could bring boys to junior/senior reception
- 01:13:30 *Question:* What happened at junior/senior reception? *Answer:* Banquet, dance—girls would dance with girls, orchestra; discusses orchestra
- 01:14:20 *Question:* Would you describe dining room set up? *Answer:* Rows of tables, dining room under the auditorium; never allowed town girls to go in dining room, discusses memories of event held in dining room
- 01:15:42 *Question:* Was it cafeteria style? *Answer:* No; had 10 people to a table, head of table would be senior or teacher; food served on long tables; describes serving food
- 01:17:03 *Question:* Did Winthrop have their own silver? *Answer:* Yes; later sold
- 01:17:32 *Question:* What about the security system? *Answer:* Garison discusses housekeepers at Winthrop; discusses night watchman, locked doors; night matron in dorms—slept during the day; Garison discusses rules for girls
- 01:21:23 *Question:* Could you change out of Winthrop uniform off campus? *Answer:* No, but town girls could
- 01:21:46 *Question:* You always wore uniform? *Answer:* Yes, liked to wear uniform
- 01:22:00 *Question:* What about college farm? Always a part of Winthrop? *Answer:* Yes, it was always a part of Winthrop; describes farm, overseer, dairy cows, vegetables
- 01:22:48 *Question:* What about the meat? *Answer:* Farm is still there; Garison discusses buying meat
- 01:23:07 *Question:* Did people in the town work at farm? *Answer:* Yes
- 01:23:17 *Question:* State employees? *Answer:* Yes
- 01:23:37 *Question:* Did some of the classes give gifts to the college? *Answer:* Yes, every graduating class gave something to Winthrop; discusses some gifts from various

- classes; clock tower/chimes; discusses Richardsons
- 01:28:16 *Question:* What about the alma mater? Did they have one then? *Answer:* Yes, sang it on occasion; discusses old and new alma mater
- 01:29:04 *Question:* It was sang a lot? *Answer:* On special occasions, like daisy chain
- 01:29:18: *Question:* All the girls knew the words? *Answer:* Yes, but does not remember them now
- 01:29:29: *Question:* Did they have “classes nights?” Junior follies? *Answer:* No, came after she graduated, but before Garison came back to teach; discusses basketball games
- 01:31:24 *End of interview*

**Interview Session II (April 21, 1981): Digital File**

- | <b>Time</b> | <b>Keywords</b>   |
|-------------|---|
| 00:00:00    | <i>Start of Interview</i> /Interviewer’s Introduction   |
| 00:00:33    | <i>Question:</i> When did you first come to Winthrop? <i>Answer:</i> Summer of 1899 in Kindergarten; discusses Kindergarten teacher, class, students, Kindergarten activities; Garison discusses going to training school afterward   |
| 00:04:23    | <i>Question:</i> When was the new training school opened? <i>Answer:</i> Started work in 1911, finished in 1912; discusses Robert Winthrop’s birthday   |
| 00:05:24    | <i>Question:</i> What was public’s reaction to Winthrop’s opening? <i>Answer:</i> Happy, especially those that went to public school; discusses Presbyterian High School; A.R. Banks’ school for boys, city manager; Catawba Military Academy; discusses buying land for Winthrop training school; Garison discusses training school, move from Columbia to Rock Hill, layout of training school  |
| 00:11:08    | <i>Question:</i> Do you remember anything about dorm life? <i>Answer:</i> Did not know much, only heard from friends; discusses love for Winthrop, uniform; Garison was a “town girl,” did not live in dorms, lived in basement of Tillman with other “town girls;” Garison describes typical daily routine of girls in dorms, bell/bell schedule, electric clocks, chapel—describes chapel schedule/routine; continues to describe daily routine |
| 00:19:56    | <i>Question:</i> Did you think classes were difficult? <i>Answer:</i> Garison discusses   |



- “classifications/sections” based on seniority at Winthrop; discusses advisors; Garrison discusses love for Winthrop, past experiences
- 00:22:12 *Question:* Did you do any student teaching? *Answer:* Yes, “one miserable week;” Garrison discusses her week of student teaching in 1912
- 00:25:26 *Question:* How did the students like Dr. Johnson? *Answer:* Students loved him; Garrison discussed Dr. Johnson’s nickname, accident involving arm; Garrison discusses Dr. Johnson’s love for students; different majors, feelings about women’s colleges, different clubs at school
- 00:31:15 *Question:* When did you come back to teach at Winthrop? *Answer:* Fall of 1937, graduated in 1912; Garrison discusses her past employment; Winthrop summer school, back to school at Pratt; Garrison discusses experiences in New York; graduate school at Columbia, teaching in Michigan; then taught at Winthrop, discusses experiences teaching at Winthrop
- 00:39:39 *Question:* What types of things changed? *Answer:* Schedule, chapel, students had more free time/less restrictions, less strict on uniform, students had more contact with teachers; Garrison discusses student government
- 00:41:43 *Question:* How do you think student government affected students? *Answer:* Students looked forward to it, student government helped; Garrison discusses past experiences with student government
- 00:43:51 *Question:* How did the curriculum change over the years? *Answer:* Followed popular educational trends, new subjects; Garrison discusses home economics, “practice home” at Winthrop; music program, clubs; Dr. Johnson kept up with new trends
- 00:48:46 *Question:* Were there other faculty that made important contributions to Winthrop history? *Answer:* So many of them; Garrison discusses important/memorable teachers and staff
- 00:53:29 *Question:* What do you think about President Sims? *Answer:* Garrison knew him before she taught at Winthrop, discusses memories of him; thought he was a good president; Garrison discusses head of art department
- 00:56:24 *Question:* What was her name? *Answer:* Ms. Annie Dillon; Garrison discusses Dillon
- 00:56:45 *Question:* Do you remember any students that were outstanding? *Answer:* Sarah Harriett, first president of student government; cannot recall other students, discusses Olympics/former Winthrop student who competed

00:59:08 *Question:* What kind of committees did you serve on while you were teaching?  
*Answer:* None, there were not any committees; had advisees; discusses committees when she taught in Michigan

01:00:13 *Question:* Is there anything that you would like to talk about? *Answer:* Afraid that Winthrop is losing prestige; Garrison discusses beliefs about Winthrop as an all-girls school

1:01:47 [no question] Garrison discusses love for Winthrop, Rippey discusses Garrison's yearbook inscription

01:02:31 *End of interview*