

Harris, Caroline (Carrie) Aiken Jenkins ^[1]

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By John Macfie, 1988

27 Mar. 1847–1903[?]

Caroline (Carrie) Aiken Jenkins Harris, writer and editor, is believed to have been born at Buena Vista, the Jenkins family plantation on the edge of Williamsboro, a then thriving village in what is now [Vance County](#) ^[2]. Her father, Robert Alexander Jenkins, was the owner of the Jenkins Tobacco Factory, which began by making "plug" and eventually expanded to regular smoking tobacco. Her mother was Elizabeth Tatum Hicks Jenkins, "a fine school teacher and an excellent musician." Elizabeth's great-great-grandfather, William Hicks, came to North Carolina with two brothers from Westbury, Long Island, N.Y., prior to 5 Mar. 1749, when he bought two parcels of land totaling 502 acres at Tabbs Creek from the estate of Earl Granville. The Long Island Hicks were well established, at least in the nineteenth century, when one of them gave a considerable grant to Swarthmore College.

Carrie, the oldest of ten children of Robert's second wife, probably attended the Henderson Female Academy, opened in 1855. A younger sister, Elizabeth, was graduated from the [Salem Academy](#) ^[3] and a brother, Thomas Leoline, attended the [U.S. Naval Academy](#) ^[4] and became a civil engineer in the Philippines.

In 1873, Carrie taught "Music, Drawing, Painting and Waxworks" at the [Wilson Collegiate Institute](#) ^[5]. That year she appeared, one suspects in a leading role, in a play, *Lady of Lyons* ^[6], at the Mamona Hall. In the fall she found time to dash back to Henderson, where she had a booth at the county fair. The *Henderson Tribune* of 2 Oct. 1873 noted that "Miss Carrie Jenkins will have an exhibition at the Fair, several paintings, executed by her own artistic hands, besides other articles of beauty."

She married Cicero Willis Harris on 1 July 1874, most likely at [St. John's Episcopal Church in Williamsboro](#) ^[7], to which the Jenkins family belonged. Members of the Harris family were long residents of the area, and a mutual interest in writing may have been a factor in the marriage. However, Carrie's talents lay in the area of the dramatic, whereas Cicero's were in economics and government, especially in connection with the South. Accounts survive of strong divergent Whig and Democratic party loyalties held in local families. Lucilla R. Harris, a strong Whig supporter of Henry Clay, made a silk vest and presented it to him when he appeared at Raleigh during one of his presidential campaigns. Towards the end of the century, when Carrie and her husband appear to have separated, Cicero published such works as *A Glance at Government* ^[8] and *The Sectional Struggle* ^[9]. In any case, in September 1874 the Harrises were living in Wilmington, where Carrie from January to December 1875 was a regular contributor to *Our Living and Our Dead* ^[10], a journal of memories of a lost cause, with other items of general interest and some poetry.

Carrie's major literary contribution was *Margaret Rosselyn* ^[11], a romantic novel set in her native Williamsboro. It opens with a lament on the state of decay in the vacated old colonial St. John's Church: "Wicked men and women, straying sheep and goats wandered at will up and down the broad, bare aisle," while horse jockeys settled bets in the churchyard. *Our Living and Our Dead* ^[10] ceased publication in 1876.

Next came *The South Atlantic* ^[12], "a monthly magazine of Literature, Art and Science," begun in November 1877 with Carrie as editor. Among the articles included was one by Cicero on "Corrupt Use of Money in Elections" and Carrie's "Omeroh," a biographical account of a Moslem "prince" [Omar Ibn Said] captured by slavers on the Senegal River and eventually owned by Governor [John Owen](#) ^[13]. Converted to Presbyterianism, he spent some time at [Fayetteville](#) ^[14]. His Bible was said to have been given to [Davidson College](#) ^[15]. An 1880 issue, one of the last, ran a half-page advertisement: "WANTED for Prof. T. A. Edison, One Million Ounces of Platinum. I will pay cash for all the platinum in North Carolina. Mrs. Cicero W. Harris, Wilmington."

[James Sprunt](#) ^[16] observed that the Harrises "were conspicuous in Wilmington for their literary attainments." Cicero was both editor of the [Wilmington Star](#) ^[17] and the short-lived *Sun* at different times. Of the latter James Sprunt said, "it left a pleasing memory in the community, which held in the highest esteem its editor, Mr. Cicero W. Harris." Of Carrie, Sprunt remarked, "she was a woman of most attractive personality and remarkable energy" who but for the financial depression of the time might have prospered.

In 1881, *The South Atlantic* ^[12] was being published in Baltimore with C. A. Harris listed as editor. In January 1888 she was living in Washington, D.C., from which she wrote to Colonel Walter Lenoir of [Watauga County](#) ^[18] about the possibility of her building a "stone castle" set in the "shadow of the splendid peaks." This was to be named "Leolyn." The Jenkins were of Welsh extraction, according to family tradition, and Sir Leolyn Jenkins of Jesus College, Oxford, England, was regarded as an ancestor. Carrie was then contributing to the New York papers, receiving \$8 a column. *Harpers* ^[19] had offered her \$100 for an article to be called "The Southern Portrait Gallery." She seemed confident of earning her living as a free-lance writer from her contemplated mountain fastness. In 1893, she published *A Romantic Romance* ^[20] and in 1899, *State Trials of Mary Queen of Scots, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Captain William Kidd* ^[21]; the latter was a condensation of Francis Hargrave's work (London, 1776), written under her pen name, Charles Edward Lloyd.

Carrie Jenkins Harris possibly died in Baltimore, a Celtic romanticist to the last.

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