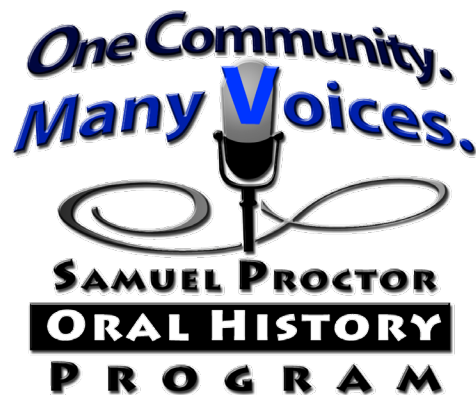


Missouri George Brindle

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-126**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
September 1, 1976**



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Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols on September 1, 1976
15 minutes | 10 pages

Abstract: Missouri Brindle reflects on her childhood on the Catawba reservation before moving to York. She discusses her family; her father was the oldest living Catawba at the time of the interview. She remembers her mother's pottery and her trips with her father to cut pulpwood. She recalls her teachers on the reservation and remembers her school years. She describes her family's garden and cooking techniques. She remembers a White nurse who visited the Catawba school. She talks about her husband and their children. She shares some of her work history as well as her affiliation with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She discusses her return visits to the reservation as an adult. She remembers her family's old grocer. She expresses her pride in her history and reflects on the region's progress.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Pottery; Mormon Church]

ORAL HISTORY

P R O G R A M
University of Florida

CAT 126

Interviewee: Missouri George Brindle

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: September 1, 1976

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Rock Hill, South Carolina, Route 6, Box 260. I'm working on the oral history of the Catawba Indians. I'm visiting in York, and I will let my friend identify herself. Will you tell me your name?

B: Missouri Brindle.

E: And Missouri, you were George before you married. Is that right?

B: Yes, ma'am.

E: Now, where were you born? On the reservation—?

B: On the Catawba reservation.

E: And how long did you live there?

B: 'Til I were fifteen, then moved just outside of **York**.

E: And when you were fifteen, you moved outside of York. Is that right?

B: Yes, ma'am, 'tween York and Rock Hill.

E: Now, tell me your father and mother's name.

B: My father's Moroni George. My mother's Hattie Millage George.

E: How old are your parents?

B: My father is ninety-two, and Mama's eighty-three.

E: Now, I believe your father is the oldest living Catawba Indian. Is that right?

B: Yes, ma'am. That's right.

E: Does he say he's a full-blooded Indian?

B: No, I don't think exactly. He has a—his mother wasn't quite full.

E: Now, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

B: I have two brothers and six sisters.

E: Are they all living?

B: Yes, ma'am.

E: Your mother made beautiful pottery; I've seen some of hers. Tell me about what you remember about her pottery making.

B: Well, she used to make the pottery. She learned us to make some. I used to could make 'em, and we would take 'em up to the college and sell 'em or trade 'em, you know, for clothes or food, things like that.

E: Did you sometimes get money for them, too?

B: Yes, ma'am, we sold some. When I moved away to York, I used to go with my father to cut pulpwood—my brother and myself and my daddy. And my brother and me took pottery and traded it for food, and we stayed two or three nights out in an old house and cut cordwood.

E: You were mighty smart to do that; not all girls could do that kind of work.

B: That's right, but we did things like that, you know—clean up the woodpile when Daddy'd cut it. Fall down, clean it up again.

E: What special kinds of pottery did you make? Any certain pot, or animals, or birds?

B: Sometimes we made little duck ashtrays and turtles. Mama could make big pottery, like vases with—sometimes she'd put Indian heads on 'em, and sometime handles, and make loving cups, different kinds.

E: Did she have a mold, or did she make her own pottery?

B: She made most of her pottery. She had this mold of an Indian head, and she also used to have a mold of a boot that my grandmother on my daddy's side had gave her.

E: And I believe she made some of those boots, didn't she?

B: Yeah. I used to have one, but my house burnt **several** year ago; it's been quite a while. Mine, I believe, burned; I'm not sure. I did have the remains of it, but I don't know where it's at.

E: How did you fire the pottery after you made it?

B: Well, Mama usually would heat it sometime in the stove and burn it in the fireplace. We'd get pine bark and wood and burn it in the fireplace.

E: And you never knew what colors you were going to get, did you?

B: No, sure didn't. No telling what kind.

E: Now, you went to school on the reservation until you were fifteen?

B: Yes, ma'am.

E: Tell me what you remember about those school days.

B: Well, Elder Davis was our teacher when I first started school, and he taught me. And he used to have a lot of good programs about Catawbas, you know, and they'd do the Indian dances and all. He put on some real good **parties** down there.

E: You'd have those at Christmas or Thanksgiving?

B: Different times like that, uh-huh. And we would, you know, plays in a school or something like that at different times.

E: Did he have anyone to help him while he was teaching?

- B: Well, there for a while, Elsie George helped some, and Samuel Blue. They were students, but they were up high enough to teach the lower grades some for him. I believe he's the one let you teach. See, I only had two teachers down there: Elder Davis and Elder Hays. Elder Hays is in Gaffney.
- E: Yes, and you remember him, too, don't you?
- B: Yes, ma'am. He was my last teacher down there.
- E: Was there any problem teaching all of those grades—from one through seven—in one little room?
- B: Well, it didn't seem hard back then. Sometimes we sit together, you know. Had benches big enough to sit together, and a couple studied together. Seemed like we got along fine.
- E: Did you girls help by cleaning up the schoolroom or bringing water?
- B: Sometime. Different ones, you know.
- E: Now, where did you get your water?
- B: You know, I can't even remember.
- E: Sometimes they used the well, and sometimes they used a spring nearby. I don't know which one you used.
- B: Yes, I can't remember everything. It's been a long time. [Laughter]
- E: Now, what did you do at recess time?
- B: We'd get out and play together, you know, and play drop the handkerchief or something like that. They don't play things like that anymore.
- E: Well, the boys, I'm sure, loved to play ball and things of that kind.
- B: Yeah, they'd play ball and things like wrestling. They'd play things like that.

E: Did you have a garden at your home to help provide vegetables for the family?

B: Yes, ma'am. We raised a garden, and we also farmed. We raised our corn and had our own cornbread. We'd shell our corn and take it to the mill, grind up **bread**. I've seen my mother take a can, make a lot of holes in it, and make cornbread with the ears of corn—like we'd do, say, slaw, now or something, cabbage or something. Mama grated. She'd grate that corn into meal and make bread.

E: Now, would you cook over an open fire, or did you have—

B: We did sometime, but then some we had a stove; but we cooked a lot on an open fire—with the skillet and a lid, you make good biscuits.

E: What about the meat? Did the men have to provide some wild birds for the meal?

B: Yeah, Daddy went hunting. I went along with him a lot of times. He'd go hunting, and then we raised hogs, and we had our own cow, and we did all that. I've hayed and picked cotton many a time.

E: Now, how did you travel? Did you have a horse and a buggy?

B: A horse and a wagon.

E: Horse and a wagon.

B: Uh-huh. Daddy's stayed with it, too, uptown. You know, cut a lot of wood and take it to town and sell it to buy flour and meats—whatever we needed.

E: It was a great day when you got to go to Rock Hill with your daddy, wasn't it?

B: Oh, yeah, always a good time.

E: I guess you remember Rock Hill when it was a small town, not like it is today.

B: Yes, I do. I remember it.

- E: What about the White people? Did you find that they were friendly to you all at that time?
- B: Well, I never did get out too much, but what few I met, you know, was pretty friendly. There used to be a lady come down and visit our school, and that was real sweet.
- E: Do you remember her name?
- B: Seem like she was the county nurse or something—Miss McKline or something.
- E: McKuen. Yes, she was the county nurse, and she was very much liked.
- B: She was real sweet, a real sweet lady.
- E: I'm glad you remembered her because no one else had told me about her visiting you.
- B: Is that right?
- E: What would she do when she visited the school?
- B: She came down, and sometimes she'd bring us different things—maybe cloth or something like that. She was real nice.
- E: Now, you moved to York when you were about fifteen?
- B: Yes, ma'am.
- E: And tell me, did you go to school in York?
- B: Yes'm, I finished the sixth grade in York and went two months in seventh.
- E: And then you fell in love and got married?
- B: Yeah, I off and got married.
- E: Now, how old were you, and how old was your husband?
- B: I was seventeen, and he were nineteen.

E: And you married a White man, I believe?

B: Yes, ma'am.

E: Now, your husband's full name?

B: Frank Henry Brindle.

E: Frank Henry Brindle. Now, did you all have any children?

B: Yes, ma'am.

E: Where are they?

B: We had four children. Well, my oldest son got killed three years ago in a plane crash, and I have two in Rock Hill and one in Greenville.

E: What kind of work are they doing?

B: Well, one delivers pictures and picks up film for GAF out of Charlotte. The other one does some kind of painting work down around Bowaters. And my daughter in Greenville delivers film and picks up.

E: Now, you were able to just go through the seventh grade. Did your children get more of an education than that?

B: Well, they didn't try to. They could have. Well, now, my oldest son—he quit in about tenth or eleventh grade, but he finished high school and went to college, and he went into service. He went to high school, finished his schooling, and then he went to college over in Spartanburg. Then just about a year, I reckon, before he died, he had took ministry and was a Baptist preacher.

E: Oh, yeah. Your husband died a number of years ago—twenty years ago, I believe. That right?

B: No, it's been ... he got killed in [19]45.

E: [19]45. And where have you been working since then?

B: Well, I didn't work for a long while, and I did a little bit of everything. I've sold Avon, I've sold Tupperware, Sarah Coventry, **worked for a big twice** and worked in the mills, worked in the laundromat. Then I was working at Wayco's for about a year. I've been laid off for about a week, Wednesday past, so two weeks.

E: So you have a nice little home here. It's just a comfortable home for you, and you're making payments to own this little home yourself, are you not?

B: Yes, ma'am.

E: Well, I hope you'll be able to do that. Now, where do you go to church? Do you go back to the reservation?

B: I go to Rock Hill branch.

E: Rock Hill branch of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, right?

B: Yes, ma'am.

E: Now, who is your bishop there?

B: President White.

E: I know you enjoy doing that, and you see lots of your Indian friends when you go back, don't you?

B: Yes'm, there a few comes up there. Of course, I go to visit some, you know. Take Mama and Daddy maybe sometimes to visit his sister's children. They're down at Catawba.

E: Do you have any reunions or any picnics as a whole Tribe of Catawbas that you organize?

B: No, they don't; but me and my brothers talked a lot about it, and we would like. Wouldn't it be nice if they would? Only time we meet now is when they have their little Indian meetings. You know, it'd be nice if we could get them all to have—maybe, say, Fourth of July—have a big picnic. Let everybody come. They used to when I was a child. We used to have one all the time.

E: That's right.

B: And had our Christmas programs, too.

E: And your brother—he, I believe, is a policeman.

B: Yes, ma'am. He's city police—I guess some sergeant or something.

E: Now, do you have any other brothers or sisters close by?

B: I have one sister lives out on Route 1 from York. Leola Brown.

[Break in recording]

E: I was interested in your name. Where did you get your name, Missouri?

B: I was named after Martha Jean Harris's sister. She had left the reservation and went out west, and she got Mama's name there after her sister.

E: That's a very unusual name. And when you moved to York, you and your brother used to come into York to get groceries. Tell me how you used to do that, and how far was it?

B: It was about four or five mile. We'd ride the horses across the Sharon highway over to Number Five, to Mr. **India's** place. He would supply every farmer with groceries on the weekend, and we always led a horse back and picked up our groceries in our tote sack and put it on the horses.

E: What kind of groceries would you buy, the things that you did not have at home?

B: Well, he had different things, like meat and lard and coffee; and he supplied just about everything a home would need: flour—of course, we raised a good bit of meat and stuff like that.

E: Did you pay cash, or did you wait 'til the end of the year?

B: Well, they always waited 'til the end of the year and settled up when we gathered the crop.

E: All the Catawba Indians that I have met are proud that they are Catawba Indians and proud of your history. How do you feel?

B: I feel proud of mine, I really am.

E: And do you find that many people have written about them or have stories about them, or do you have difficulty in finding anything about your people?

B: No. Seem like now, there's quite a bit. You know, they're really popular right now to what they used to be. I remember when my oldest sister's children first started school, and they didn't want them to ride the bus on the reservation to Rock Hill. Now you don't have any trouble at all.

E: They're welcome, then?

B: Yes'm, they welcome them now. Of course, I had school here in York, and they treated me fine.

E: York's a very friendly town.

B: Yes.

E: And you have quite a number of Indians here, don't you?

B: Well, I have a sister and brother and my mother and my daddy, and a cousin at Filbert—she has a little beauty shop up there. Maryanne Gibson.

E: She was a Harris before she married. The Harris family is well known down there, too. Well, you've come a long way from the time of making pottery or cutting pulpwood or farming to the kind of jobs you have today, haven't you?

B: Yes, ma'am, sure have.

[End of interview]

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