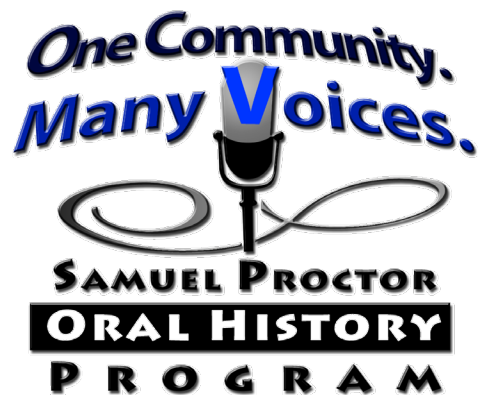


# Hattie George

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)  
CAT-128**

**Interview by:**

**Emma Reid Echols  
September 1, 1976**



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**CAT 128 Hattie George**  
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**17 minutes | 10 pages**

**Abstract:** Hattie George speaks about making and selling pottery. She shares that one of her daughters teaches pottery making to children on the reservation. George describes the kinds of pottery she would make, such as vases with clay animals. She also shares a unique method for making cornbread. She speaks about life on the reservation, including going to church and not speaking the Catawba language. George tells about her children, some of whom have moved away from the reservation. She speaks about her friends on the reservation.

**Keywords:** [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Pottery; Oral biography]

**SAMUEL PROCTOR**  
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CAT 128

Interviewee: Hattie George

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: September 1, 1976

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Rock Hill, South Carolina, Route 6, Box 260. This is September 1, 1976. I am visiting with a friend in York, an Indian friend. I'm visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. George. Mrs. George, tell me, what is your name?

G: My name is Hattie.

E: Now, your husband's name is—?

G: Moroni.

E: Moroni George. And you all have raised nine children, that's right?

G: That's right.

E: Now, you used to live on the reservation, and I know those were hard times. First of all, tell me about that pottery. Who taught you to make pottery?

G: Emma George, his mother.

E: His mother. Did she have molds to make it?

G: Yes, she had molds to make the heads.

E: But everything else was made by hand.

G: The rest of it, all by hand.

E: Did the men go to the river and bring you the clay?

G: Most of the time we went. [Laughter]

E: You went yourselves! Well, you were real smart to do that. And you had two kinds of clay, didn't you? You had the pipe clay, and you had the pottery clay, is that right?

G: Yeah.

- E: Tell me exactly how you made your pottery.
- G: I made them with my hands, cut 'em, rolled 'em [inaudible 1:22]
- E: And then what did you scrape it with?
- G: I chilled 'em 'til it got dry. When it got dry, we used a knife.
- E: You used a knife. Did you put any decorations on your pottery? Any little leaves or decorations?
- G: Some of them had a little bit.
- E: Did you like to make the little animals like the frogs, and birds, and turtles, or did you like to make the big pots?
- G: I made the big things. I made squirrels—
- E: Oh, you made squirrels!
- G: And I made turtles.
- E: Squirrels! Nobody ever told me they made squirrels except you. Squirrels, and turtles, and ducks. And frogs, different ways of frogs, like that? And where did you go to sell that pottery?
- G: I sold some up here at the college in Rock Hill and sold some up at Asheville.
- E: That'd be Rock Hill—that'd be Winthrop College. How long would it take you from the time you began making that pottery until you had it all fired and ready to sell?
- G: Sometimes, it'd take three or four weeks.
- E: Three or four weeks?
- G: And I had to scrape 'em, rub 'em, and burn 'em.
- E: Yes, and the burning was the final process, wasn't it?
- G: Burn 'em in the fireplace.

E: Yeah, and you burned 'em in the fireplace.

G: That's right.

E: Were you disappointed sometimes when you rake the ashes away and find some of 'em had broken?

G: Yeah, you can count up the broken when you take 'em out.

E: That's right. I saw some of your pottery and all of yours is beautiful light colors. I want to know how you kept that pretty light golden color.

G: Just burnt that way.

E: Just burnt that way. Well, you've got some beautiful pieces. Do you still make some now?

G: No, I haven't in a good month.

E: You are eighty-three years old?

G: Eighty-three.

E: Eighty-three. But you could make it, couldn't you?

G: Oh, yes, I could, but I don't have time. [Laughter]

E: [Laughter] You're so busy looking after this husband and so forth. But I hope you will. Do you think the younger persons are learning to make pottery today?

G: Gon' do what?

E: Are any of the young people learning to make pottery?

G: Well, I know I tried to teach my young'uns and— [Laughter] I don't know. I tried to teach one of my granddaughters and she [inaudible 03:39] [Laughter]

E: [Laughter] But you still want them to learn.

G: Yeah.

- E: I believe down on the reservation they have regular classes that they are teaching that now.
- G: Yeah, I got a daughter down there building pots.
- E: You have! Now, what's that daughter's name?
- G: Bertha Harris.
- E: Bertha Harris! And Bertha Harris, your daughter, is teaching on the reservation. I know there's a big crowd of those youngsters that are down there learning, that's wonderful. Now, do you think there'll be a place for them to sell that pottery?
- G: Oh, I think they will. Cause the people don't quit makin' 'em and them that can make 'em can teach how to make to show the younger ones.
- E: Yeah.
- G: And she's down there making pots.
- E: Where do they fire the ones down on the reservation, do they have to dig a pit to fire them in?
- G: I don't know how they're gonna do 'em, I think they burn 'em in the fireplace.
- E: Did you ever make a piece of pottery that had a snake coiled around that pot?
- G: Yeah.
- E: You did! Now, who taught you to do that?
- G: I just made the vase and then put a snake on it.
- E: You did! What kind of a snake was you doin', a copperhead?
- G: [Laughter] I don't know what kind it was, I just made it.
- E: Well, that's a very, very old kind of a pottery. And you made a gypsy pot with the little legs on it?

G: Yeah.

E: And you made the little, long vase.

G: Yeah, I made all kinds of 'em.

E: All kinds of those. Now, they tell me that you're a real good cook and that one thing you liked to bake down at the reservation was cornbread. How did you make that good old cornbread?

G: [Laughter] [inaudible 05:24] I got and put me about ten spoonfuls of flour in there, and I put my eggs in there, and I put my **onions** in there and I put my meal.

E: Meal. Now on the reservation, you grated that corn. How did you grate that corn?

G: **It's been many years, but I'm gonna check the tape.**

E: Sometimes, did you take a tin can and cut holes in it and nail it to a piece of board and you'd grate your corn there, is that right?

G: Yeah.

E: You're the first one that I ever heard tell that.

G: [Laughter]

E: That's very interesting.

U: Tell her how you did that.

G: I just take the can, cut it open and cut the holes in it and then the end over the bowl to where it stands and we'd rub the corn over that, just like you'd grate the cabbage.

E: Just like you'd grate cabbage for slaw. Are you the only one that had that kind of a grater?

G: [Laughter] I imagine. I made that!

- E: You made that. [Laughter] Now, what else did you like to have to eat on the reservation. Did your husband bring you any fish or birds?
- G: No, he didn't, but he should. [Laughter]
- E: But you had some meat of some kind, wouldn't you? You had a garden?
- G: Yeah, sometimes we worked one.
- E: You lived down on the reservation most of your life. Tell me about when your babies were born. Who was your doctor?
- G: Dr. Hill was there when the oldest of them were born.
- E: He would come in a horse and buggy?
- G: Yeah.
- E: Sometimes, if necessary, he'd just spend the night there, wouldn't he? Did he ever spend the night at your house?
- G: No.
- E: Were the other children all born at your home?
- G: I had midwives.
- E: Midwives, yes. And where did you go to school?
- G: I didn't go to school; I got married. [Laughter]
- E: [Laughter] Your husband went to Charlotte to marry you and then he brought you back to the reservation, and you—
- G: He was working there when I met him in Charlotte.
- E: You met him in Charlotte. You went to church with him, at the old church, didn't you?
- G: Yeah.



E: Tell me about that old church. Did they ring the bell when you were supposed to come?

G: Yes. They rang the bell every morning. And in the evening, when time for the meeting, they'd ring it.

E: What did they sing? Did they sing the same old hymns we sing today?

G: Well, not much.

E: Did you ever hear them talk the Indian language?

G: Yes, I have.

E: But you didn't learn any of it yourself?

G: I couldn't talk it.

E: Could your husband say any of it?

G: No, he don't know none of it.

E: He doesn't know any of it, either. Well, we're sorry that that has gone away. Your children went to school on the reservation, didn't they?

G: Yes. They went to school in Columbia down there and some of them went to school here on the reservation.

E: You moved up here to York and some of them went to school up here.

G: Yes.

E: They didn't have any lunch program at the school then. Did your children all come home for lunch?

G: No.

E: They had lunch there for them? I believe Arzada Sanders cooked lunch for a while.

- G: She did down there but didn't none of mine go then.
- E: Oh yes, that was later that she did. You're real proud of what your children have done now. You've got a policeman in town that helps you keep straight. Where are your other children? You got a daughter here, I believe?
- G: Yeah, and I got one over in the country.
- E: And they're all good to you, aren't they?
- G: I got one, David, down below, David.
- E: Don't forget. Nine children, how many are living?
- G: I got one out in Spartanburg, I got one over at Matthews.
- E: You're scattered all around, aren't you?
- G: Yeah. One at **Gaffney**. No, she don't live there anymore. And I got one down at Greenville now.
- E: All of your children have gotten a good education, haven't they? And made their way in this world. Are you proud of what they're doing?
- G: Yeah, I'm glad they got it because I didn't have the chance.
- E: Didn't have a chance. Well, I'm sort of proud of what the Catawba Indians are doing. Are you so proud to be married to a Catawba Indian?
- G: Yes.
- E: All of you ought to get together and have a big reunion sometime and then you can remember about all of these things. I noticed that you remembered the names of the old people on pictures of the church and the school. When there was a death on the reservation, would they ring the bell?
- G: Well, finally, they got to where they'd ring it.

E: Yes, and would they designate how old the person was by tapping the bell?

G: I don't think so. When I first went down there, they'd walk around and tell who was dead, somebody would come walking and tell you who had died.

E: Your husband used to help Chief Blue, Chief Sam Blue, with the Bible. Things that he didn't know about the scripture, he'd explain it to him. Tell me what you remember about Chief Blue.

G: Well, I couldn't tell you. [Laughter] I don't remember. He seemed to be a good man.

E: Yes.

G: He was always around there; he'd come to the house one time.

E: What special women friends did you have down on the reservation?

G: Well, I didn't.

E: You kept busy lots of times, I know.

G: I just didn't have special ones. I was around with all of them now and again. I stayed down there among 'em probably about forty-nine years.

E: Forty-nine years, that's a long time, isn't it?

G: Then we dipped in and out.

E: That's right, in and out.

G: I like them all, they didn't bother me.

E: You liked them all. I can tell that. This was a most interesting visit in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Moroni George, in York. They lived in a small, neat white painted house along the side of a small street not far from their son and daughter. It was interesting to see how graciously I, the stranger, was received. Mr. and Mrs.

Mack George and Mrs. Brindle, the daughter, went with me to introduce me. But they need not have gone because I was very graciously received. Mr. George, the father, is a fine-looking man with Indian features weathered by the years. He showed a kind spirit and a keen sense of humor. Mrs. George is White, but she has completely entered the life of the Catawba Indians. Although she does not read at all, she identified persons in the oldest pictures I had, talked about the old church and school with a great deal of enthusiasm and had a vivid memory of the old days. It interested me that she, a White girl, had learned to make all kinds of Indian pottery, and because of hard times, this pottery was most often exchanged for food instead of money. This is Emma Reid Echols, September 1, 1976.

[End of Interview]

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