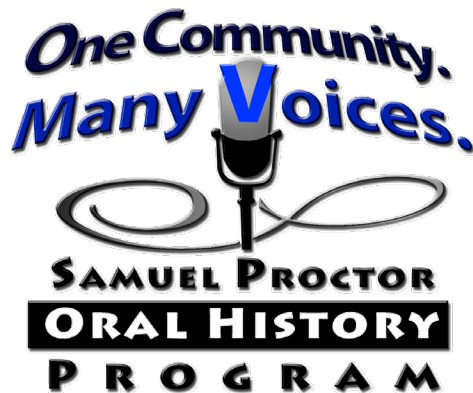


Fred Nelson Blue

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-018**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
December 31, 1971**



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CAT 018 Fred Nelson Blue
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Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols on December 31, 1971
33 minutes | 16 pages

Abstract: Fred Nelson Blue discusses his relatives, his home life, and his experiences going to school, including the teachers and classmates he remembers. He talks about working at the bleachery and how his wife was adopted into her family. He briefly talks about the government's allocated land and his children's education on the reservation. He discusses going to church and instances of racism. Blue goes on to mention celebrations during Christmas, his travels to Salt Lake City, and his familiarity with the Catawba language.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; Chief Samuel Taylor Blue; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Education; Family histories]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 018

Interviewee: Fred Nelson Blue

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: December 31, 1971

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina, December 31, 1971. I'm visiting in the home of Mr. Blue, and he was the oldest son, I believe, of the Chief Sam Blue. But I'll let him tell you his own story. Will you tell us your name and your address?

B: Well, my name is—full name is—Fred Nelson Blue. And I'm living now with my daughter out there at Route 3, Rock Hill.

E: Tell us the name of your father and your mother.

B: My father was Samuel Taylor Blue, and my mother was Minnie George.

E: Do you know who their parents were? Do you remember your grandparents' names?

B: Well, my mother's parents was ...

E: Well, that doesn't matter. We'll get something of that later. You were born on the reservation and lived all your life on the reservation, haven't you?

B: Well, yeah. I was born on the reservation, raised up there.

E: Now, were you the oldest son of Chief Blue?

B: That's right.

E: What other ones did you have, full brothers and sisters?

B: I don't have no full brothers.

E: Right, he's dead, isn't he now?

B: Yeah.

E: You had one?

B: Uh-huh.

- E: But you have quite a number of half-brothers and sisters, haven't you?
- B: Well, I have Herbert and ... I'm thinking ... Andrew and Guy is my half-brothers.
- E: What do you remember about your early days on the reservation and the home of your father and mother? Your father was such a respected man. Everybody in the community liked him. What do you remember about your home life with your father and mother?
- B: Actually, my mother died when I was small.
- E: Yes, sir.
- B: So, my home life—might say I was raised in my grandmother's home. Of course, I helped my father on the farm until I got old enough to take care of myself.
- E: Your father had fruit trees, and he had cattle, cows, and he also farmed, didn't he, raising crops?
- B: Yeah.
- E: Did you sometimes share the milk you had with needy families around you?
- B: Well, of course, I don't know. I'm not sure.
- E: Where did you go to school first? Where was the schoolhouse?
- B: Schoolhouse was there on the reservation. Was built by Presbyterian.
- E: And it was a very small, little, one-room schoolhouse?
- B: Just one room was all there was to it.
- E: Who was your teacher?
- B: Well, the teacher I remember first, third year, was Mrs. Dunlap. As I said, the Presbyterians built a home down there for the teacher and then built the school building. And I guess they paid it off with teaching, I don't know. It seemed like to

me that, well, as she was there, the state started appropriating money for the Catawba Indians, and they also appropriated money to pay the teacher.

E: Was she a good teacher? Did you like going to school?

B: Oh, she was a fine teacher.

E: I bet you remember some of the ones who went to school with you. Your father gave this list of school pupils many years ago. Let us see if you remember these.

In 1899, Mrs. Dunlap's pupils were: Sarah Brown. You remember her?

B: No, I don't remember.

E: Lucy George?

B: Who?

E: Lucy George.

B: Lucy.

E: Yes. Moroni George. And then your name, Nelson Blue. Early Brown. Mr. Early's dead, isn't he? Wade Ayers. Annie Ayers. Sally Brown. Sally Harris. Lily Blue.

Edith Harris. Vinya Harris. Leola Watts. Artemisia George. And Arzada Brown.

Any of those were your special friends?

B: Most all of 'em was some relation to me. That Leola Watts, that's my wife, you know. We got married in 1910, I think it was.

E: And where did you go to live?

B: Huh?

E: Where did you go to live? Where was your home after you married?

B: Well, we lived in a old building there that my wife's father and mother built. We lived there a long time.

E: Your wife lived across the river and had to cross the river to get to school, didn't she?

B: For a while, yeah.

E: How'd she come across the river?

B: Oh, in a little canoe they built.

E: Did she paddle her own canoe?

B: Oh yeah, many times.

E: By herself? Do you remember any of the games you played? Did you play ball at recess time, or what did you play around the school at recess time?

B: Yeah, we played ball. I don't know what else. I don't remember.

E: And you went home for lunch? Or did you bring your lunch to school?

B: Oh, they'd bring the lunch with 'em, those that had some distance to go.

E: And did you have a bell in that school to tell you when to come to school?

B: Yeah, they had a bell that teacher always rang in the morning and then just 'fore school time.

E: Now, what was the year in which you were born? When's your birthday?

B: 1890.

E: 1890. Well now, do you remember any of these teachers who taught in school? You remember Mrs. Sparks?

B: Yeah.

E: She taught there for a while, didn't she?

B: That's right.

E: Did she teach you?

B: Huh?

E: Did you go to school to Mrs. Sparks?

B: No, Ms. Sparks didn't teach school until after I was grown up and married.

E: Oh, yes. Then do you remember Reverend J. N. Lesslie? Taught there. And Mr. Sep Lesslie? Taught there. You remember those or not?

B: That's right.

E: Did you go to school with any of them?

B: No.

E: Then, who did you have besides Mrs. Dunlap for your teacher? Did you have Mrs. Hoke?

B: I don't remember Mrs. Hoke teaching.

E: Some of your children remember Mr. Willard Hayes, don't they?

B: Yeah, I remember him, but he taught school after I started a family.

E: Yes, after you started a family. He had a team of Boy Scouts, I believe, and played ball with the boys.

B: Yeah.

E: Now, I bet your children would enjoy that. Do you remember any of the medicines that your father used to make?

B: He made what?

E: Medicines. Your father used to make medicines—from bear root and things like that?

B: No, I don't remember any. I remember him making, but I don't know what he made with it.

E: Do you remember going to church with your father?

B: Oh, yeah. We had a little church down on the reservation.

E: He had a big family to take to church, didn't he?

B: Huh?

E: He had a lot of children to take to church with him, didn't he?

B: Well, some of 'em did. Oh, about then, you know, I was just—when I was starting a family of my own.

E: That's right. And what did you do for a living after you started a family? Did you work at the bleachery for a while?

B: No, I was on the reservation up until ... Oh, I don't remember now.

E: And then were you a night watchman at the bleachery for a while?

B: What was that?

E: Were you ever a night watchman at the bleachery?

B: Yeah.

E: How long were you there? I heard you were a mighty good watchman.

B: I think I stayed at the bleachery, with a different job that I was on, 'bout eleven years.

E: I guess you know Mr. Grier at the bleachery, don't you?

B: Yeah.

E: He's a good friend to you, I expect. Tell me about your wife. She was adopted into the family down here—into the Watts family. Do you know where she came from?

B: Huh?

E: Do you know anything about where your wife came from?

B: No. It was in the factory. Well, I was about two years older than she was. And I couldn't tell that this girl I don't know and I didn't know. My wife was nothing but a baby, this girl brought her to the Watts family and told her—see, the Watts at that time didn't have any children. And she told her—Mary Jean Watts, that was it—well, she just told her husband. But this here woman told her that that baby that she had belonged to the Watts family. She give her over to her, and she raised her.

E: Well, she's a very lovely-looking lady. She learned to speak some of the language, didn't she?

B: Bit some, yeah.

E: And how many children do you and your wife have?

B: We had five girls and two boys.

E: And how many of 'em are living?

B: The girls are all living, but the boys is dead.

E: Can you tell me the names of your girls?

B: Huh?

E: Can you tell me the names of your girls? The names of your children?

B: Well, the oldest one was ... she was Mammie. We named her Mammie, and after she growed up, she married a fella, Adams, in Lancaster, South Carolina.

E: And you've got one daughter living here, one daughter living in Tursa, one daughter living in King's Mountain, isn't that right?

B: That's right.

- E: Now, who were the two boys that you had that are not living? What were their names? Well, it doesn't matter. We'll pick up some of that a little bit later. They tell me the oldest Indian here now is Mrs. Mary Harris. Do you remember her?
- B: Yeah. She's my aunt.
- E: She's your aunt? And her husband? What was his name?
- B: He's Ben Harris.
- E: Ben Harris. Where did Ben ever go to school? He couldn't read and write at first. When did he ever go to school, do you remember?
- B: Well, from all I know, he does his own studying at home.
- E: Some White lady gave him a book, a newspaper, and he began to learn from that? Do you know who that White lady was?
- B I don't know whether it was Mrs. Dunlap or not, but he would study at home while they had—as long he could. And then, at night, he would go take study according to Mrs. Dunlap.
- E: Yes. And then did he teach other children?
- B: What was that?
- E: He become an elder and taught other children, didn't he?
- B: He became an elder, but I don't remember him teaching any down on the reservation.
- E: When you say he's an elder, what would he do in the church? What did Ben Harris do in the church as an elder?
- B: He helped to carry on the Sunday School programs and things like that.

E: Do you remember the Indian who came down here from New York? They call him Grave Owl?

B: I remember of him, but I've never seen him much.

E: And I believe he has a daughter that lives in New York?

B: Yeah.

E: You remember any other things that you used to do on the reservation? Did you hunt or fish as a young boy? Did you do any of those things?

B: Well, when I had the time, yeah.

E: One man that would interest me is a man named Thomas Stevens. The man who—an old Indian who froze to death, and they brought his body back here to bury. Do you ever remember your father you telling anything about him, where did he come from, anything about him?

B: No, he didn't. He had no relatives on the reservation that anybody knowed of.

E: And where did he live?

B: Just among the different ones.

E: Some people call him Thomas Stevens Harris. Have you ever heard him called the Harris on his name, or just all hearing him called Thomas Stevens?

B: Yeah, Stevens was all I ever heard.

E: Did you ever see him?

B: Oh, yeah.

E: What did he look like?

B: Like a Indian.

E: Was he very tall or just average?

B: Just average.

E: He spoke the language well, didn't he?

B: Far as I know.

E: He used to go out in the woods with the children and teach them songs and games. Did you ever hear him sing any of the songs?

B: Yeah.

E: He must have been an interesting person. He was going up in North Carolina to visit some relatives, he said, when he left here. Do you know who he was going to visit?

B: No, I don't. I heard the names called, but I don't remember.

E: Ms. Polly something, but I never hear the name either. They seem to have forgotten about that one.

[Break in recording]

E: Now go ahead.

B: Little small tract of land down there that was set aside by the state government.

E: It wasn't good farming land, was it?

B: Oh, it was 'bout nine rocks, one dirt.

E: I don't see how you made a living down there.

B: Well, I guess it's a mystery to some people. We lived, and the White people around us wouldn't allow us to visit the church at the time when they had meetings. The government wouldn't allow us to go to any school off the reservation, except just what we had there.

- E: So the only school you ever went to was the school right there on the reservation?
- B: Well, I went to a small one. **Turn** and Carlisle [inaudible 21:21]
- E: Did your wife go there, too?
- B: No, no. I went to school there before we was married.
- E: And your children, did some of them go to the high school here in Rock Hill?
- B: Some of 'em went for a while. They didn't finish. After we moved to town, why, I sent 'em to school.
- E: Did you have to get a private teacher for them when they wouldn't let them go to school in Rock Hill? Or did they go to school in Rock Hill?
- B: Yeah, they went to school in Rock Hill. But there wasn't no private teacher at that time because the state government had done passed a law that they could go to school.
- E: Did the bus come by your house to pick up the children—your children—or how did they get to school?
- B: We lived in Rock Hill when they started to go to school up there, and they had to walk it from where we was living. There wasn't no such thing as a school bus back then.
- E: That's right. I guess you remember those Depression years, and you remember the flu epidemic of 1918, too, don't you?
- B: What was that?
- E: You remember those hard years of the Depression, and you remember the flu epidemic of 1918? That was hard times for us all, wasn't it?

B: Yeah, I remember. [Telephone rings]

[Break in recording]

E: Do you remember some of the feasts and parties you used to have on the reservation? At the end of the year, when you got your money, would you all have a big beef stew, a barbecue, something of that kind?

B: No.

E: Now, this is your daughter's home. She got this when the land was divided up, and she got her six acres up here, is that right?

[Break in recording]

E: Do you get to go to church pretty often?

B: Not often, no.

E: Who are the Mormon elders or Mormon preachers, do you remember?

B: [Laughter] Oh, I couldn't name 'em.

E: There were lots of 'em, weren't there? What people in the community were especially friendly to the Indians? Did you have some good friends among the Qhite people down there?

B: Well, pretty fair.

E: Do you remember the Gryders? Mr. and Mrs. Roy Gryder?

B: Yeah, I remember the Gryders, the Culps, Neelys ...

E: Mrs. Gryder used to cook great big pots of soup, I understand, and go down and take it to the Indians when they were sick. Do you remember that?

B: No, I don't.

E: Did you ever attend any of the White churches down there? Or did you always go to the Mormon church?

B: We'd go to the White church, they had church right there.

E: Friendship?

B: Yeah. Back then, you know, they'd have a big revival, last about a week, night and day. And they never did invite us to attend the Monday service. Sometimes, several of 'em would get together and go up to the night meeting, at least probably one.

E: Did you enjoy the singing in the churches?

B: Very good. You see, the people didn't have any way to travel, they went on it by horse and buggy. The White people around the community would always go to church in wagons and buggies, and they'd take a colored person along, look after the team while the meeting was going on. When the team was took care of, these colored people would go in and take the back seat. And if any Indian went there, well, they'd move the colored people up toward the front and put the Indian on the back seat.

E: It made you feel bad, didn't it?

B: Well, we've been used to rough treatment all our lives, so we know that when the time come that we've got to meet that man above, why, there won't be no separation like that then unless there's people that have been mighty sinful.

E: Well, most of you Indians have a wonderful faith, a wonderful faith in God. And you know Jesus Christ is your savior. I've been very much impressed by that as I've visited around among you. And you're good church members. You're loyal to

your church. Do you remember any of the celebration you used to have at Christmastime? Did you ever do anything special at Christmas or get any special presents?

B: We never did have any special presents at Christmastime, just what we was able to buy five samples for the children was all we'd got. Probably would get one orange, an apple, and maybe a stick of candy around during the Christmas ... You know, these people down here miss coming out to other places, especially here. I wish it was so that they could visit Salt Lake City and go to some of those meetings out there the Mormons hold.

E: Did you get to go to Salt Lake City?

B: Been out there four times.

E: Well, that's wonderful. Tell me about going out there. You went by train?

B: Huh?

E: You went by train?

B: No. We went by—let's see. We went by car, two trips. Then after we were out there, I went two trips out there on a plane.

E: They treated you very nice out there, didn't they?

B: Oh, yeah.

E: Do you remember when your father and mother went out to Salt Lake City?

B: Well, I remember when my father and stepmother was out there—

E: That's right, father and stepmother.

B: I believe it was the year [19]50.

E: I remember the *Evening Herald* had pictures of him, all dressed up down at the train, ready to go. And I understand they gave him a wonderful welcome in Salt Lake City. Did he tell you about that when he came back?

B: Well, he told us about what happened. I don't remember all that. You see, since I got old, I tell you, I wouldn't have such a tick, it would have worked. My memory ain't as good as back when I was young.

E: Do you remember any of the language at all? You remember any of the words of the Catawba language? Any words for foods, for instance?

B: Well, not too much.

E: You remember the word for corn? For milk?

B: No.

E: Who's the oldest man in the Tribe now that you know of? You're a young man compared to some of 'em, I expect.

B: Huh?

E: I expect you're a young man, compared to some of them.

B: I don't think there's anyone living that belongs to the reservation that's any older than I am at the present time.

E: Now, is Landrum George still living?

B: Who?

E: Landrum George.

B: Yeah.

E: Is he the one that fell off the Catawba River trestle?

B: Huh?

E: Is he the one that was crippled when he fell off the Catawba River trestle?

B: No.

E: Who was that? Now, Richard Harris, he's one of the older men, isn't he?

B: Huh?

E: Richard Harris. Where does Richard Harris live?

B: I don't know.

E: Herbert Blue is your son—is your brother?

B: Yeah.

E: Half-brother?

[End of interview]

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