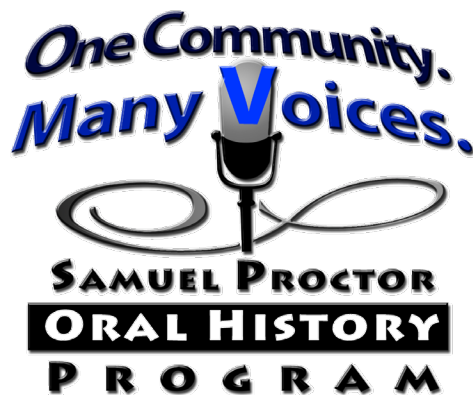


# **Sallie Brown Beck**

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)  
CAT-067**

**Interview by:**

**Emma Reid Echols  
October 5, 1972**



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**32 minutes | 18 pages**

**Abstract:** Sallie Beck reflects on various experiences in her life. She first lists the names of her relatives, and then goes on to talk about life as a girl on the reservation. She talks about her teachers and describes the school building. She recalls how her son later bought the school building and turned it into his home. Beck then talks about her old classmates and recreational activities she used to partake in as a child. She also talks about her children and their education and employment statuses. She goes on to talk about her husband, Fletcher Beck. She describes how she met him, got married, and moved into their home on the old reservation. She then talks about how she built the house she current lives in and the governmental division of lands. She also talks about how she makes pottery, although she notes she does not get a chance to nowadays because her husband is ill. The interview finishes with a discussion on the conditions for Native Americans at the time.

**Keywords:** [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Family histories; Education]

**ORAL HISTORY**  
**PROGRAM**  
**University of Florida**

CAT 067

Interviewee: Sallie Brown Beck

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: October 5, 1972

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina, October 5, 1972. I'm working on the oral history of the Catawba Indians, and I am visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher Beck. Ms. Beck, who were you before you were married?

B: Brown.

E: What was your given name?

B: Sallie.

E: Sallie Brown. Who were your father and mother?

B: John Brown and Rachel. She was a George before she married.

E: She was Rachel George and then she was Rachel Brown.

B: Brown, after she got married.

E: Rachel, your mother, was one of the pottery makers down here. She was famous for her pottery making, wasn't she?

B: She was.

E: Now, who was her mother? Do you remember?

B: Emily George.

E: And her father was?

B: Taylor George.

E: Taylor George. Emily and Taylor were your grandparents then?

B: Yeah.

E: Then, in your own immediate family, who were your brothers and sisters?

B: Well, I don't know. There was eleven of us kids, but there's just four of us living now.

E: Who are the four that are living, then?

B: There's Roy Brown and George Brown, and Arzada and myself.

E: Where do your brothers live?

B: Roy just live across the road over there behind my **notary**, on the mail route. He lives down the hill from Doris Blue, and George lives in Columbia.

E: How much Indian blood do you think you have? You're not full-blooded, of course.

B: Well, my daddy was three-quarters, and my mother was. His father was half White, and his mother was full. Same with my mother, her daddy was full, and her mother was half White.

E: On your father's side, who was your father's father? In other words, your grandparents on your father's side?

B: Well, he was named after his daddy, John Brown.

E: John Brown.

B: John William Brown, he was named after. His daddy died when he was about three weeks old. So, my grandmother raised him, and it was just two of them. He had a sister named Sallie Brown, and she was a Gordon when she married. They had a half-brother, Sam Blue, that's Lula's daddy.

E: That's right. So, your father John Brown, was a half-brother to Chief Blue, is that right?

B: Yes, that's right.

E: I don't know whether I'll ever get all the names straight or not. Now, you grew up down on the reservation down here and went to school down here. Tell me what it was like when you were a girl on the reservation.

B: Well, all the people lived here on the reservation then. There's not many down here now though. When the state give us land and we divided it out among 'em, well, some of 'em sold the land and stayed on, and others moved on their land and made another home. So, I don't know just how many there is now.

E: Where did you go to school when you were a young girl?

B: Right out here where this trailer is. But I lived over on the other road, the mail route, when we was growing up. William Sanders is living at the old home place now. He got the place when—after my mother died. My brother that lived in Columbia, it went to him, so he give it to William Sanders. That's Arzada's boy.

E: Yes. And that's your old home place?

B: Yeah, that's the old home place over there.

E: Now who do you remember as for your schoolteachers?

B: Well, Mrs. Dunlap was our first teacher. She lives where we used to live, and after she—she was a Presbyterian missionary. She taught school and done missionary work too. She had Sunday school out here at the schoolhouse after our service was over in the evening. We had Sunday school at the church. It was down around where Lula Beck lives, right across, her daughter lives at the old church place now. New church is up there on the old school building, too. The school building was right out here where this trailer is, when I was little and growing up. So, everything's changed.

E: Do you remember whether—did the church have a bell in the steeple?

B: For a while it did.

E: The school had a bell, too?

B: Yeah. They both had bells.

E: Now, there were two separate buildings for the church and the school, is that right?

B: Yes. The church was down where Lula Beck lived, just across the road where the—

E: Her daughter lives there.

B: Yeah, her daughter lives, and the schoolhouse was out here where my grandson's living. Now, he's got a trailer out there. That's where we went to school.

E: Now what was that school building made of? Was it slabs of wood?

B: It was made out of weather board.

E: And how'd they heat it?

B: With a heater and burn coal. I think it changed though before they done away with the school building, 'cause they added, made an addition, to the end of the old schoolroom. Then, later on they built another schoolroom. And then they give the kids—my kids was going to school then—and they give them lunch at dinnertime. They had their lunch at school.

U1: I don't feel good. I'm gonna lay down.

E: That was a big improvement, wasn't it?

B: Yes, it was, it was when we was going to school. And then after the state bought more land for us, then, they sold the school building. My oldest boy bought it. He was living up there next to Doris Blue. He moved in the school building, and he put partitions in it. Partitioned it off into a living room, and a kitchen, and a dining room, and then a little bedroom. He had two bedrooms 'cause he had to divide that long part of the old school building into three rooms. One was a bedroom, one was a living room, and the other part was a part of the kitchen, the dining room part. Then they had a bedroom off and the kitchen off to one side. But it burned down. Lightning set it on fire.

E: Oh, so that's—

B: And he was building his house up on a hill. They got that brick house up there in that back of the church and the school building.

E: When you went to school, there were just a small group, ten or twelve children, probably. Tell me who some of your friends were at school.

B: Well, there was more than that of us, that went to school when we went to school out here. There were girls and boys that were about my age. My brother that was older than me; Nelson Blue; Leola, his wife, she was a Watt; and Nelson's sister, Lily; his brother, Herbert, went to school some while we was still young, and ...

E: Was Arzada in that group, too?

B: Yeah, Arzada.

E: What about John Idle?

B: Yeah, he went to school a little bit, not much.

E: Now how did those—

B: Him and his brother, Ernest Sanders, they went to school and somebody else I was thinking, just left my mind that quick. Sallie Wade, and her brother, Robert Harris. He's dead, and Idle and Ernest both went to school. Well, that was his brother, his brother's dead, too.

E: There was quite a number of you. Some of these children were across the river and had to come across here to get to school. How did they get across the river to come?

B: Well, they used to have a ferry down there. Uncle Jim Watts was the one that lived across the river. Well, there's another family lived with them, too. Elisa George and her mother lived over there, and I think they were among the first students that started school. When Mother and Daddy went to school, we were small when they started school down here. Presbyterians got it started. Then the state took over after they got started and built a school for 'em. Then, when we got big enough to start school, they had the school building, and our parents didn't go after the kids got to going. Had to take care of the kids and get 'em into school. My daddy did learn to read and write a little bit. My mother could spell a little bit and read a bit, but she was slow. She had to spell words, and then pronounce them before she could—and she didn't try after the kids come on. She had so much to do, she just didn't try to learn any at all.

E: You spoke of Mr. Watts, you called him uncle. How were you kin to Mr. Watts, across the river?

B: Uncle Jim Watts and my mother's mother was half brothers and sisters.

E: Now, his wife was named Mary Jane?



B: Yes, his wife was named Mary Jane.

E: And did you hear the—I'm sure you've heard the story of how they adopted this little baby girl, Leola?

B: Yeah.

E: Tell me about that.

B: They was living over 'round Jackson. I've heard my mother tell it, 'cause Leola was about two years older than me. They lived over there, I think. Them and Uncle Jim Watts and Aunt Mary Jane lived over there, but they adopted Leola after they moved home. Her daddy lived over there. They worked out the people on the farm, and that's why they were over there. My daddy's mother, she stayed home—here at home—and raised her kids. After they got grown and my mother and daddy got married, well—and that's Sam Blue, his first wife was my mother's sister, so they moved home then after the kids started getting married from over there.

E: Leola Watts was just a little infant, a little tiny baby girl.

B: Yes, she was an infant when that—they say she was about three weeks old, I believe, when her mother gave her to her.

E: Have you ever heard anything about who their—her mother was?

B: No, I never did know, didn't ever hear anything.

E: She must have come from a very big family.

B: They said they thought her mother was from a big family, but I think she— like a lot of young people—she just went for the wrong kind of life. So, she wasn't living

with her parents when she gave Leola up to them, my mother told me. She was living with another family.

E: It was a very courageous thing that the Watts did adopting that little baby, wasn't it?

B: Yes, it was.

E: What did you do for sports and fun when you were going to school with these other children down here at this Indian school?

B: We used to jump rope, and we used to play hide and seek. Then, later on, the boys had 'em a ball place right down in the front of the old schoolhouse. It's all grown up now. I think they still played ball on it when my kids went to school down there. When they went as far as they could here, then they went to—well, for a long time, they wouldn't let 'em go to school. My oldest boy was the first to go in high school. He went about two or three months. Let's see, when the state fair come off, I think it was the last of October or something, and he wanted to go. Well, my mother went down there and sold pots whenever the fair was on. They give her a place, they furnished her a cot where she could sleep in, a little tent. She took my brother, the ones who can come, and she'd go down there, and she'd sell pots during state fair. He was going to school then. Then he started to school in town, to high school. He wanted to go, and I told him no, he couldn't miss school and go down there and spend the whole week. He went to school a while longer, so he just dropped out. He didn't finish. My other boy—no, the girl, Irene, she's next to him. She got married when she was sixteen years old. She didn't even go to high school. Then Eugene, when he come along, well, he

started high school and he didn't like it, so I told him, "Well, if you don't want to go to school, you can go to work. Get a job and help your dad." He was on that WPA work, I think, at that time. So, he got on that with his daddy a while, but Samuel was an electrician then and he came on that. He didn't like that, so he didn't stay long. So, he went from that to—it's Douglas Harris—him and Douglas went to Charlotte and got on a job. Was that pipe covering. I believe he's still in that same kind of work, only he's worked his self up. He's not a regular boss man that can get jobs for 'em, but he's under the man that get jobs, and he gets jobs for all the workers.

E: Now, where does he live? Here?

B: He lives in Rock Hill.

E: Now, that's Sammy?

B: No, Samuel lives up here near the church.

E: Sammy lives up here, near the church. This boy, I missed his name.

B: Eugene, he lives in town.

E: Whereabouts does Eugene live in town?

B: I can't think what the street is they live on now.

E: We'll get that later. Your children have come along and done well getting an education and working themselves into jobs.

B: Getting an education and working themselves up in jobs. Now, my baby boy, he went to high school, him and Heywood Canty. Heywood's mother had a car so he could drive, and he took all the kids to high school. The girls went to school, and the boys skipped and get out and ride around, have them a big time. So, I went

to town one day, and Early took me up there—that's my brother—me and him and Emma went. We went over on Black Street for something, I don't know what, why we went over—well, it rained, and we had to stay over there a while before we come on over in town. Got over there and we met somebody that had seen the kids up on the street. [Laughter] And I told 'em, the kids that I was in town. So, when he come home that night I told him, I said, "If you're not trying to go to school," I said, "we trying to put you through school, high school, where you stand a better chance of getting a good job than you would just running around here and not doing anything." But I said, "If you're not going to school, you're going to go to work and help your daddy to make a living." So, he said he'd rather do that, so he went with his daddy on this work, and worked with him a little while. But he worked his self up. Now he's got a good job.

E: I know you're proud of that.

B: Yeah, I am.

E: Tell me how you met your husband. You married Fletcher Beck, and he's a White man. Tell me how you met Fletcher, honey.

B: Well, Fletcher come from Cherokee when he come down here. His home was in Georgia. We drove there during the summer they had the Beck reunion, and we usually go. But this summer, I wasn't able to go. His mother—well, they was all up in Cherokee. They got a little Indian blood in 'em, and they was settling off timber with the Cherokees. They had to move them up there in order to get their share. So, they moved to Cherokee. There was a woman that was related to Doris Blue. She had married a man in Cherokee, and she lived with him. They

had a big family. They only had two girls and several boys, but her old man was bad about drinking. They say he was mean when he would drink. So, she come back home. But her oldest kids was in school, now they went to that school called Hampton in Virginia, the oldest ones did, after they finished school at that Cherokee. So, she come back home to live, and left her husband. He finally got killed. He was so mean when he got drunk, somebody killed him. They found him, and the kids was down there with her. My daddy went up with a couple of the boys when their daddy got killed, 'cause he had come back and forth down here and visited with her and the kids. My daddy learned to know him, and they both would drink. So, when he got killed, my daddy went with the boys up there for the funeral. Joe Sanders had went up there in the summer before. It's in March when this man got killed. Lily and George got married, well they come on down here and got married. So, when my daddy went up there, Fletcher wanted to come down here to see his mother. So, he paid his way, brought him down here, so he could see his mother.

E: He met you instead, and you got married. And where were you married?

B: Well, he was down here about four years before we got married.

E: Oh, really? Got a long time courting.

B: Yeah.

E: This home that you're living in now, it's on the old reservation, isn't it?

B: Yeah, it's on the old reservation.

E: Did you all build this home?

B: Yeah, we built this one. There was an old house that belonged to my grandmother. My uncle lived in it a while, but he had a place over on the hill and he built over there and went back. So, he sold this place to my daddy, and he give it to me and my husband.

E: When the land was divided up, how much land did you all get?

B: Well, this has never been divided.

E: Now, this is on the old reservation.

B: Yes, but we got our share in the other. I got the same amount of land as all the rest of them got, I sold mine. The ones that—lot of them didn't even take land. They said they'd take money. So, they had to sell the land to give 'em the money. But I took land, and then I sold mine my own self.

E: Are you glad the lands were divided up and you got some share of money?

B: Yeah. I'm glad they divided it up, 'cause a lot of them went ahead and took theirs and made homes, but I—

E: You can live on the old reservation as long as you want to.

B: Yeah, you can live here. Everybody that's out still got their share here. If they want to sell their place and come back, they can do that and come back and build down in here.

E: But you can't get a deed to your property?

B: You can't get no deed to this, 'cause the state still say they own it.

E: What did your husband do for a living, Mr. Fletcher?

B: Well, he worked in a cotton mill a long time. But before he went to the cotton mill, he used to cut and hollow saw wood. You know, a long time ago when people

used to burn wood stoves, and he used to sell the wood. We lived in town though, two or three years after we got married. He was living in town when we got married, and we was married at his mother's home when we got married. We was both twenty-one years old. So, we stayed with them. And then her husband got a big old double house, had two fireplaces in it and bedrooms. So, when he got that, we had to pay half of the rent, and we shared a kitchen together. We stayed that until—that's on Black Street, and we stayed there until we moved home. My daddy was living down there next to that—between them two trestles. He was running a ferry down there. He had given me the old homeplace, so we moved home and Arzada and Idle was living down there with them. So, they come home, and we let them live in one room, too. When he got sick, I give the old homeplace back to him, 'cause we was living here with his mother. Her husband had died. We was living with her when my daddy come home. So, she hadn't paid for the house. She went back to Cherokee after Joe died. Well, she got married again before she went back, 'cause she built a home over where—I don't know, I believe Pete Brown and Ruby lives in the house.

E: Some others have told me that your father and mother—well, 'cause you operated the ferry, but they also had a garden and fruit trees and raised lots of their own food, is that right?

B: Well, they had gardens, and they did set out some peaches and things 'round that old house over back where William Sanders has kept the old homeplace. George give him the old homeplace. But my grandmother, his mother, lived right below us. One of Albert's girls lives down there now, I think. I believe Pete Brown

lives on the hill where the orchard was. It was her orchard. She had a big apple peach orchard. So, Uncle Sam, **Willroes'** daddy, and my daddy, and Aunt Sallie, they could get fruit any time they wanted, 'cause she left it to the three of 'em. When she was still living, she'd give us some fruit. Well, we got all the fruit we wanted, too, as long ours produced anything. We was living up there then in the house that Pa gave us. She'd come up there, and Fletcher'd go and carry a bag of apples up. She'd help peel 'em and I would can, and I'd give her canned fruit. Then we'd cut 'em up and dry 'em. You know, the older people used to dry apples like that, and peaches, too.

E: That helped out a whole lot. Thank you.

B: Yeah, it did.

E: Your mother made pottery, and your sister Arzada Sanders makes pottery. I've seen some of yours. Do you still make some pottery?

B: I make some when I can get a chance to. But since he's been helpless, like he is, I haven't been able to make any. My boys—I've got just a little bit of clay—but they were planning to get me more clay so I could keep on making and sell, but I'm just tied down with him.

E: I know you are. When you make your pottery, where do you do your firing or baking of your pottery?

B: I had a little old pan out there. I burn trash in it now. I built me up a pan about that high, high enough where the air wouldn't hit the pots when they heating. Then I had a big old piece of tin, and I had an old tub that leaked. I piled my pots all 'round and built a fire in the center. When they got hot, I just had a long, old iron



with a hook on it, a poking iron is what's called. I believe Fletcher's mother used it, that's why I come to get it. Whenever they got hot enough, they'd smoke and get right black. Where the fire fell against them, it'd look right reddish looking, like they'd done been partly burned. I'd take that iron and just put 'em over in the middle of the firebed. Then I'd pile chips on, big old chips of wood. Build where I let it come up gradually and then when it got up and I knowed the pots wouldn't break, well, I'd just pile green wood down on 'em and burn 'em. If you don't burn 'em real good they won't hold water, but if you burn them good they will hold water. We learned that from our mother, me and Arzada.

E: Do you have any pots that your mother made?

B: No, I don't have anything, I don't think. I had a big old pot, well I call 'em gypsy pots. One night my daughter was here. I had it sitting in here. I did have a little peace pipe, but I don't believe I've got that. I believe she got it—that my mother made.

E: I know you'd cherish something that your mother made because she—

B: She wanted it, and I was afraid that it might get broke. I think I give it to her, Rachel.

E: What people do you know on the reservation that are making pottery now?

B: Well, I don't know if Lula Beck make any. She could make small pieces. She couldn't make big pieces. Doris and Edna, they made pipes mostly, but I think they did make small pieces. But I don't think any of 'em—

E: Now, Doris and Edna are sisters?

B: Yes.

E: And their father was?

B: Wheelock.

E: Wheelock, that's right.

B: Edna's my sister-in-law, and Doris is Lula Beck's sister--in-law.

E: You're all married up in here.

B: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we're just related all the way around, all over the reservation.

[Laughter]

E: Do you get a chance to go to church up on the reservation?

B: No, we haven't been able to go lately.

E: You can't with your husband so ill, I know.

B: But my oldest boy said he was gonna arrange so we could go—  
provide a way for us to go. He could go to church. We went some at night before  
we went off down to Columbia with our daughter. Down there in Columbia, the  
church that we used to go to when—was called Save House. All the branches  
and wards when they had their—when they had monthly meetings, but they'd  
have—they'd call it Save Meeting. All the branches and wards would go to  
Columbia. But it got so many 'til they—I think they put us onto Charlotte for a  
while. I don't know what they do now, where they go.

E: I know you enjoyed getting with a group like that.

[Break in recording]

E: Mrs. Beck, are you proud to be an Indian?

B: Yes, I'm proud I'm an Indian.

E: Do you think the life of the Indian is much better today than it was?

B: Yes, it's a lot better than it was when we was growing up, 'cause the kids can go to school now anywhere. They can go on and get a good education if they want to.

E: And the roads are better too, aren't they?

B: Yeah, the roads are better.

E: I hope they keep on improving the conditions here for everybody.

B: Yeah, I hope they do, too.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Sabina Boddupalli, October 27, 2021

Audit-edited by: Easton Brundage, March 24, 2022

Final edited by: Evangeline Giaconia, July 19, 2022