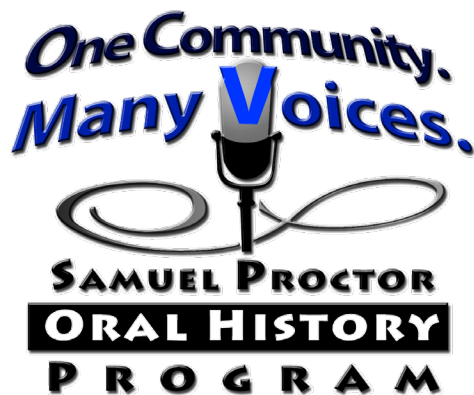


Marion Baker Hoke

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-017**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
December 30, 1971**



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CAT 017 Marion Baker Hoke
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26 minutes | 16 pages

Abstract: Marion Baker Hoke is a former teacher at the Catawba Indian School on the old reservation. She describes what a day at the school was like and what she remembers of the children she taught. She shares how the Great Depression and World War II affected her students and the Catawba community. Throughout the interview, Hoke discusses her relationships with different members of the Catawba community, mainly speaking about Chief Sam Blue, Nettie Owl, Fletcher Beck and their families.

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

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
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CAT 017

Interviewee: Marion Baker Hoke

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: December 30, 1971

E: This is Emma Reid Echols. I'm working on the Catawba Indians' oral history. I'm visiting in the home of Mrs. Hoke, who was a teacher at the Catawba Indian School. Mrs. Hoke, will you give me your full name and your address?

H: I'm Marion B. Hoke, and I live on Route 3, Rock Hill, South Carolina, about three miles from the Indian reservation, the old Indian reservation.

E: I know you remember very vividly those years you taught at the Indian school. Would you tell us anything that you remember about those years?

H: Well, I guess the thing that struck me most when I taught there was that the people were so very poor. Of course, that was the Depression and everybody was poor at that time. But they were especially poor because almost none of them [inaudible 1:06] poor and just a very few of them worked in industry.

E: When you visited in their homes, what were their homes like?

H: Well, Sam Blue's home was a very comfortable home. He was a man that was different from my idea of what an Indian was. He used to help his wife hang out clothes when she'd wash, and he helped around the house, and he was a man that had family prayers every morning. He was a devout Mormon and he said he couldn't read, but he knew large portions of the bible from memory, and I wondered how he learned it. I never did know. His wife was a very, very smart woman, I thought. She kept her house nice, and I have been invited to eat with them though I never did.

E: She made a great deal of pottery and sold it, didn't she?

H: I believe so, though I don't remember any pottery that she made. The pottery that I remember people making were made by Nettie Owl and Arzada Sanders. There was an old woman, and she may have been the same woman that you mentioned a little bit ago. They used to take pottery to the campus at Winthrop and sell it. When I first came to Rock Hill, I went to two summer schools at Winthrop and these women were always sitting on the campus. Certain times every week they came and sold pottery on the campus.

E: What other Indians do you remember except Chief Blue? There were other fine Indians that were your friends, I'm sure.

H: Well, Major Beck and his wife, who was a daughter of Sam Blue, and Fletcher Beck, and I can't remember who his wife was. I believe she was a sister of a Mr. Brown. What was his name? Do you remember? He ran the ferry at Catawba.

U: Early, Early Brown.

H: She had a brother whose name was Early Brown, but I don't know who her parents were.

E: You often visited in the homes of these Indians, and you saw the real poverty there? Was there anything like it in this community, that utter poverty you saw in the Indians?

H: No, not in this community.

E: In your school, was it difficult to find materials—pencils and papers and books for those children?

H: Yes, it was. Someone told me when I went there not to ever let them get in debt to you, because they wouldn't pay you or they wouldn't be able to pay you. But I

know that when I went to **York** to get books for the children, I got all the workbooks that I wanted them to have, and I let the children have them. Some of 'em were not paid for until the last day, but every single one was paid for. And I was always real glad to find that that wasn't true about them. That they would pay if they possibly could, and they did love their children. I think they spoiled their children as much as any people that I know.

E: What was a typical day like when you went to the school? I'm sure you had to have someone to make the fire, and to start having the room swept and ready for school. Tell us what a typical day was like.

H: [Laughter] I usually went real early. I rode with Mr. **Turney** who drove the school bus, and I got out at the corner and Helen met me there. Now was that the first year? At least one year, Helen met me there at the corner and we went on down together. I always made the fire, but I usually had some help by some of the little boys that came real early too. And one of the chores that the boys had in the afternoon, while the girls swept the room and got it straight for the next day, the little boys picked up twigs in the woods to start the fire. And that was the first time that I'd ever seen fire started with little twigs, but I found out it worked real well. And we had—I believe we had coal. I think that was always there, I think so. I don't think we burned wood.

E: Now you taught what grades?

H: I taught the fourth through the eighth. [Laughter] That was a big schedule. It's a wonder we ever did anything at all. But I had at least one girl who left there in the eighth grade and went through high school and finished. And that was, that was

Rachel Beck. Lots of the other children started. There was no bus at that time for the children and Rachel went with her father when he went to work. I think he went to work at seven o'clock, and she stayed with somebody that she knew until time to go to high school. And then her father brought her home in the afternoon. I think he took other children too.

E: The equipment of the school. Did you have modern desks, or did you have old-fashioned two children to a desk?

H: Oh, we had two children to a desk, and we had a big old heater that kept the room nice and warm.

E: What about your food? What did they do about the food?

H: Well, they didn't have lunches. I was awfully sorry about that. I tried to work that out, but I never was successful.

E: They'd go home for lunch?

H: They went home for lunch, or they brought a biscuit and something in it for lunch or something like that. Some of the children just didn't have lunch.

E: Who rang the school bell? You had a big bell up in the top of the school building?

H: Oh, some child I would let ring the bell that was tall enough to reach the rope.

E: I'm sure they'd enjoy that. And they'd ring the bell and come back for lunch too?

H: Yes, they did. They were always back before time for the bell to ring. We had an hour's lunchtime. I came home with my husband who worked at the bleachery at that time and he got there at 3:30, so we had plenty of time for an hour for lunch. We started real early, about eight o'clock. And when I went with Mr. Turney, we

took up at eight o'clock because I believe we had daylight savings time during the war, didn't we? So, school started early and it went on 'til 3:30.

E: What do you think about the pride the Indian children you taught took in the history of their people? Were they proud that they were Catawba Indians, or were they ashamed?

H: I think some of them were right proud. I don't think they all were.

E: Did they do any art things for you? Did they like the art?

H: No, I wasn't very artistic myself, but I let them draw sometimes. I took a course from Western Carolina Teachers' College when I was there in children's literature, and one of the things that we did was to have the children write poems and I sent them in. The teacher, I can't remember her name, I thought she was very good. I enjoyed that as much as any extension course that I've ever taken. And she was right impressed with some of the poems that the children had written.

E: Would you have a copy of any of those poems now?

H: No, I'm sure I wouldn't.

E: That would be most interesting to have.

H: It's been quite a long time. I wish I did have.

E: Do you remember certain of your pupils who have gone out and made good now in the business world?

H: Well, a great many of them work in Rock Hill in industry. I don't remember any of them that have done anything, well, really outstanding. Some of the children went to the University of Utah, one of Arzada's daughters and her granddaughter. I

can't remember her name. It wasn't—oh, I just can't remember. Arzada can tell you this child's name, but I'm sure she went to the University of Utah. I think it was the University of Utah. Anyway, it was a school in Salt Lake City.

U: [inaudible 10:10]

E: When you were teaching all those different children what would you have them doing? While you were having one class what were the other ones doing? Would they be well-behaved and orderly?

H: Well, they were right well-behaved. I don't know, I guess I had never known any Indians, and even though I had lived in this neighborhood for twenty years before I taught there—more than twenty years—I was a little bit afraid. I didn't know how they would behave, but I found them very nice children, and they behaved well. Of course, I had to give them seat-work while I was busy with the other children.
[Break in recording]

E: Do you remember a Mrs. Dunlap, one of the early teachers here, and her helping the students to go away to school?

H: Yes, I do remember Mrs. Dunlap. I met her at Winthrop summer school in 1912, the summer of 1912, and she told me about these children that went to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to school. There was an Indian school there at that time. It isn't there now. It's a **role** college now. I think Mrs. Theodore Harris was one of the people who went to this school, and I can't remember the others. I remember Mrs. Dunlap telling me and we stopped at Mrs. Gryder's house on the way back to Winthrop College that day. We hired a carriage and two horses and came to

the Indian reservation. I was so interested in going there. I didn't realize that I'd be teaching at that school the very next year, 1912 to 1913.

E: I'm sure you got some information from Mrs. Dunlap about that school because she was so interested in it, wasn't she?

H: Well, she had encouraged these children to go away to school. She thought it would be so good for them. She was a Presbyterian missionary there and she and her husband both taught there, I understand. I guess her husband maybe was the preacher. I just don't remember too much about that.

E: Where was the Baptist church and where was the little Presbyterian mission on the reservation?

H: I don't remember where the Presbyterian mission was, but the Baptists built a church right down in the corner. There's a house there now. I never did see the church. It was moved before I came in 1912, but I think it hadn't been moved very long. It was moved to Red River, I understand.

E: You mentioned the Owl family a few moments ago. I noticed that some of the Owls are buried in the ancient cemetery, but there're no Owls left here now. What do you have about the Owl family?

H: Well, I think Nettie Owl had two sons who went away to college somewhere. I understand they became very prominent men where they lived, in New York state, I think she told me. She married a second time, and her husband was a Harris who lived in Rock Hill. He lived down there until she died and then he married again and lived in Rock Hill.

E: Do you remember the flu epidemic of 1918, when so many died down in the reservation?

H: I remember that, yes. People died everywhere and almost everybody in this community had the flu too. I don't remember anything that happened at the reservation at that time.

E: You went to the home where there was a death one time and you saw an Indian from New York State. Will you tell me about that Indian, what he looked like?

H: Well, he looked exactly like the pictures of the ones that I had seen in history books all my life. I was so impressed with his looks. He looked different from the Catawbas and I think he was from the **Onondaga** Tribe. I think that's the Tribe. But I think his granddaughter still lives in the reservation, and you could probably talk to her.

E: You don't know his name or her name, do you?

H: No, I don't. I can't remember. I think his daughter, though, was a Mrs. Brown.

E: You've attended funerals, I'm sure, at their church. Could you tell us how the funerals of the Indians are different from those of the White people? Are there long eulogies, or what sort of funerals do they have?

H: Well, I remember attending a funeral at the Indian church. It was a Mormon church and Sam Blue recited **scriptures**, passages from the bible. He had learned them from memory because he said he couldn't read.

E: There'd be a large crowd at those funerals, would there not?

H: Yes, the churches would be full.

E: Were you present when they made a tape recording about Chief Blue at the church that time?

H: No, I wasn't.

E: Did you attend Chief Blue's funeral?

H: No, I didn't. I don't know why, but I didn't. I had been to see him just a few weeks before that, but I did not attend his funeral.

E: What was your impression of Chief Blue as a leader among his people? They seemed to have respected him a great deal, didn't they?

H: Yes, they did. I remember him as a—I thought he was a very good man. He impressed me very much, and his wife did, too. I remember once I stopped there. I had started to school, and Helen hadn't come. I rode with her in the morning, so I walked on down to Chief Blue's house. It began to sprinkle rain a little bit and I stopped there, and he was having family prayer. And then, after prayer, he had told me about milking the cow and he said that he sent milk to two babies who didn't have milk at home. And he sent them milk each day from his own cow.

E: Do you know anything about the medicines that Chief Blue used to make and sell, and people would come from miles around to get his medicines?

H: No, no, I didn't know about that.

E: I believe that they still make some of the medicines like that in the community. I'm sure you've heard him sing and dance on programs, did you not?

H: Yes, I did.

E: And you heard him give his war whoop?

H: Yes, I've heard that, too. [Laughter]

E: Did you know any of his children very well? He was married twice, I believe. His first wife had three children, and the second wife had twenty.

H: Twenty! Well, I knew he had a great many children, and I have met Milton Blue. I was there once when he was sick, and Milton Blue was there. And I knew Mrs. Beck, of course, and Ms.—who was the lady that had the **crops** and knew our **friends**?

U: **Carol Sanders.**

H: Mrs. Sanders, I knew her. I know them. And I knew Lillian. That was his daughter-in-law. His youngest son was a diabetic, and his wife was named Lillian. I knew her. I taught her brothers and sisters. I can't remember their father's name, though.

E: Now, after Chief Blue's death, did you ever see Mrs. Blue again after that, or where did she live?

H: Yes, she lived with Albert Sanders and I went to see her there. And I went to the home when she died. I met a Mrs. Rogers who was one of the Blue daughters too.

E: Well, they're scattered so now, it's hard to find where they're all living. Do you know of any that are living outside of the reservation now in other cities?

H: Well, I just can't think. I think **Mrs.** Harris has two sons and both of them live away from Rock Hill, but I don't know where they live.

E: Did you ever have any entertainments at the end of school?

H: Yes, we always had entertainments at the end of school, and also at Christmastime. I remember the first year I was there I invited my preacher, who was Mr. Duckworth, to have a devotional at the Christmas program. My daughter was going to Winthrop at the time and she played the piano right well, so I always took her to play for the songs. And the children sang beautifully, they really did. I always enjoyed that.

E: Tell me about the entertainment. What would you do? Were there any gifts for the children and Santa Claus or would they have poems or stories? What would they have?

H: Oh, well there were gifts. And I always used the little teachers' magazines: *The Instructor* and—what was the other one? I can't think of the name. But anyway, I took two teachers' magazines and I got little poems and things out of that. And of course, we'd use the Christmas songs at Christmas. In 1942, during the war, I remember at commencement they sang all the war songs—the infantry, the navy, and the air force songs—all the war songs that everybody was singing right then. The people seemed to like them so much, and so many of the Indian boys were in the war, were in the armed forces at that time. I think Major Beck's sons, two of them, were in the armed forces. And Fletcher Beck's son, I can't remember his name right now, young Fletcher Beck, was in the armed forces.

U: Buddy.

H: Buddy? Oh, Buddy was Major's son, wasn't he? Buddy Beck was in the army. I remember the Harris boy was in the army.

U: **Garfield.**

H: I remember he came down to see me—

U: **Oh, yeah.**

H: And I remember going to the door to shake hands with Garfield, wasn't it?
Garfield. I was so glad to see him back.

E: Now you lived in the community with these Indians all your life. Did you have any difficulty making friends with them or did they love you from the very beginning?

H: Well, it was a separate community, really. It wasn't the same community. They were rather clannish. They went to church together, socialized together, and they were not a part of this community, really, never were. Though Sam Blue always came to our protracted meetings that we had at our church, and he was always asked to pray. And he prayed very beautiful prayers. I wish you could have heard it.

E: Do you remember any of the Winthrop girls or the Winthrop professors who would come down in the reservation and do things for the Indians? Dr. Goggins, Mrs. Lockhead, or any of those?

H: No, that was not during the time that I was there. I was there during the war and immediately after the war and gasoline was rationed and almost nobody came. The county superintendent of education came about once a year after we got in with the county system.

E: Wherever did the Indians do their trading? Would they go to the local stores in the community, or would they go into Rock Hill to do their buying?

H: Well, during the war, almost none of them had cars. They traded with Mr. Neely, right here in the neighborhood.

E: Did the children ever tell you any of the superstitions that they had, or about spirits or about diseases that were caused by spirits? Did they tell you any of the superstitions that they had?

H: Well, I guess they did. I don't remember very much about it. We had such a busy day. We didn't have time for as much talk as we would have liked.
[Laughter] They loved to play. They liked to play as well as any children I've ever seen, and the minute the bell rang at dinnertime, if they had any lunch, they ate it quickly because they had to play ball the rest of the time.

E: Did they have any ball teams that they would play against a White team of a surrounding school?

H: No, I don't believe so. When Mr. Hayes was there, he had an Indian troop. I remember when my son went camping, this Indian troop camped close to them. Of course, they knew the boys because they lived close to them. But ... I don't remember. I don't remember that they went out to play other teams. I believe they did.

E: Now when the boys were playing ball, what would the girls be doing?

H: They were playing ball, too. They were real tomboys; all the little Indian girls were.

E: They could really run fast, couldn't they?

H: Oh yes, they could.

E: You remember Nettie Owl? Did she make pottery for any special purposes?

H: Yes, I do. I think her pottery was better than that made by any other person down there. She was asked to make the pottery that's in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

E: Now they're no Owls left in the reservation. Did they all go up into the Cherokee Nation?

H: Well, I understood that they went to school in the north and just lived there after that.

E: What did you find about the Indians helping each other in time of illness or trouble? Were they kind and help each other?

H: I think they did. Yes, I think they did. I think they helped look after each other when they were ill. And they often had children in their homes that they had adopted. Several had adopted children.

E: Adopted from other Indian families or from Cherokee or from where?

H: I think that most of 'em are Indian children. I know one of 'em was a White child.

E: Were there any white children at all in your Indian school when you taught there?

H: No, I don't believe so. They all lived in the reservation.

E: And did all of these children came **to** your school go to the Mormon church? Were they faithful to their church?

H: Yes, they were.

[End of Interview]

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