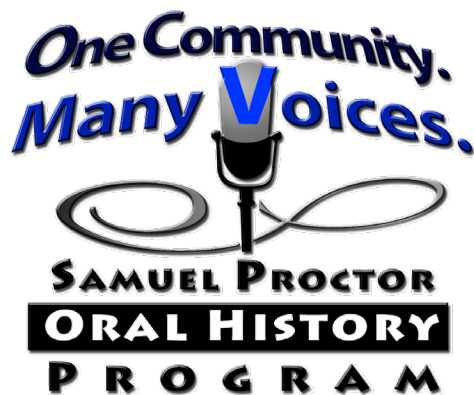


Emma Reid Echols

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-189**

Presentation by:

**Emma Reid Echols
November 20, 1992**



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CAT 189 Emma Reid Echols
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Recorded on November 20, 1992
23 minutes | 13 pages

Abstract: Emma Echols visits two first-grade classes at Belleview School in Rock Hill, South Carolina, where the teachers have requested that Echols come in and teach something about the Catawba Indians. Echols talks about the history of the Catawba, providing some basic facts about their culture, before speaking about how educational facilities came to Catawba. Then she gives a description of the culture and process of pottery-making among the Catawba, using some examples that she has brought to talk about different pottery-makers in the community. Finally, she tells the story of Thomas Stevens, the supposedly 110-year-old man who lived among the Catawba for years and later froze to death.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; Chief Samuel Taylor Blue; Thomas Stevens; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Storytelling; Religion]

ORAL HISTORY

P R O G R A M

University of Florida

CAT 189

Interviewee: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: November 20, 1992

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, 5150 Sharon Road, Charlotte, North Carolina, and I'm recording the oral history of the Catawba Indians. And today, I'm visiting in a school that I like very much. I'm visiting in Belleview School, and I'm visiting in a first-grade class, and there're two first-grade classes here. And here are the two teachers, and they'll tell you their names and where they live.

D: My name is Sally **Doger**, I live in Rock Hill at 807 Milton Avenue, and I'm here with my first-grade class.

C: My name is Cynthia Collins, and I live in Rock Hill, on Main Street, and I'm here with my first-grade class.

E: And I think maybe they'd like to have their names on this tape, and so when I hand this tape to you, you say "my name is." Will you do that way?

M: My name is Matthew—

E: Say it loud.

MG: My name is Mark Green.

LW: My name's **Lavincia Williams**.

E: You have to say it loud.

TW: My name's Tony Wallace.

E: Now loud.

JW: My name is **John Wynn**.

E: You have to say it loud.

A: My name's **Anette**.

ST: My name is **Sharina** Thompson.

E: [Whispers] Say it loud.

CW: My name is Chelsea Wallace.

TP: My name's **Tamika Pierce**.

TD: My name's **Tom Dee**.

E: [Whispers] Say it loud.

CM: My name is Charlie **Morton**.

E: Loud.

U1: My name is [inaudible 1:33] And I [inaudible 1:36]

E: [Whispers] Say it loud.

CD: My name is Christopher Michael Dickenson.

D: My name is Dorothy.

E: Loud.

D: My name is Dorothy.

E: Say your name.

D: My name is Dorothy.

S: My name is Shirley [inaudible 1:38]

IH: My name Ida Hayes.

BS: My name is Brittney Joanne Sanders.

SR: My name is Sarah Wayne Roberts.

S2: My name is Stephanie.

JE: My name is James Edward.

MC: My name is Mathew Craig.

U2: My name's [inaudible 2:08]

U3: My name's [inaudible 2:12]

E: [whispers] Say it loud.

EH: My name is **Erica Harris**

AB: My name is Ashley **Baker**.

U4: My name is [inaudible 2:20]

R: My name is **Ron**.

U5: Say it loud, Ron.

R: My name is Ron [inaudible 2:26]

[Break in recording]

D: Well, right now in school, we're studying about the pilgrims and about how when the pilgrims came over here and they met the Indians—and so we have been discussing the Indians in our class, and Ms. Echols had substituted for me some years before, and I knew she had a great interest in the Catawba Indians, and also recently, I showed the children a newspaper article in the paper about Ms. Echols, and we wanted her to come and tell us some things that we couldn't just read about in the book about the Indians.

E: And tell me about your class.

C: Well, we're doing the same. We're studying about the pilgrims and their coming to America, and the Indians being the first ones here. And we wanted to learn more about it, not just from the book, from what I had to say, but what somebody with more experience knew about 'em.

E: Well, it's a joy to be here with you today! And so, I picked up some of the things and tell you about them years ago. A long time ago, the Indians lived on both

sides of the Catawba River. They were called “people of the river” because they lived close to the river, they hunted, and they fished, and they went out in the woods to find nuts and berries and fruits that they could use. They were noted for their blowguns, to shoot these big—for the big animals like deer, and they were known for the bird points, the arrows as we think of the bow and arrow, and they were a wonderful people. They were not a warlike people; they were friends always to the White people. They wanted an education, but you know they didn’t speak the same language you did; they had their own Catawba language for a long, long time. And then they began to have teachers on the reservation, and they began to learn. There’s a little boy—I believe his name was Ben—who lived on the top of the hill on the reservation, and he worked for a White lady up on the top of the hill. He swept the yard for her, and he brought in the wood, but he couldn’t read or write. And so—her name is Ms. Collins—so she took interest in this little Indian boy, and she taught him, “pick out this word, pick out this word” from a newspaper, and when he’d finished his chores, he would sit in the corner of her living room or her porch, and try to learn to read. And then he went down on the reservation, and he taught his brother to read, and he had a little, tiny, tiny school. I have no picture of him—nobody’s ever seen a picture of that, but that’s what he did. And then, the school got bigger, and a White people, or lady, came to teach—Mrs. Dunlap came—and the people—parents—built a little schoolhouse, it was made of just slabs of wood. It was not concrete, it was not brick, like you have. And so, there were about fourteen or fifteen children there. Across the river, there was a little girl that didn’t have a chance to come to school

because she couldn't get across the river. She had been adopted into this family, and her name was Leola. And so, her father said, "I'm going to make you a little canoe so you can paddle across the river," and so he made a little canoe and here it is, just like that. And so, she would sit there and paddle her way across the river. Now, the boys didn't have canoes like this, they made themselves a raft, and they paddled across the river too, to go to that school, and there were just fifteen children in that school. In that school was the son of the Chieftain. And do you know, this little girl and the chieftain's son fell in love, and they got married. And I have followed for a number of years, the picture, the pictures of their family and what they did. And this is a picture of them, of an old person, by this time they had children, and probably grandchildren. But this is Nelson Blue and his wife, and that is a true story. Now all of these Indians on the reservation made pottery. They made it because they needed the money, first of all, and then second, they needed it because they needed to put things in. For instance, a little basket like this. They had big baskets, and they could carry nuts, or fruit, or berries in that. They could also store in that. They'd make great big pots, much bigger than this, and they could store things in that. They made 'em even so big they fold up their clothes and put 'em in there. They were noted for making the pots that they needed. They also needed things to cook in. And so, they made a pot like this. And this is called a gypsy pot. It has handles on it so they can pick it up from the fire. It has little legs on it. Now, this is just a miniature one, but they make a great big one, this big, so they could put it on the fire and cook from that little gypsy pot. They also would need little pitchers that they could pour and keep

milk in, or water in. They never knew what color that pitcher was going to be until they had loaded it and fired it. And look! This came beautifully. Black, and a tip of black there. And then on this side, almost entirely yellow. This is one of the oldest ones that I have, and there's no name on this one. Oh, there's just a tiny little one. This could be used for a little vase. Sometimes they began to—somewhere down the line, they began to decorate these. They would take a tiny nail, or a little pencil, and draw little fern-like decorations on them. I'm not sure whether I brought one like that today or not. Before they—yeah, hand it to me—here's one that has the decorations on it. Now, look at this one. This is a very beautiful one. I got a call the other day from a friend of mine on the reservation—not on the reservation, she lives in Rock Hill! And her husband was firing her pottery that day, and I went and came down to see it. And they had a great big oil drum in the backyard, and the fire was going, and in that was this piece of pottery and a whole lot of others. And this is a wedding bowl. The groom drinks out of one side, and the bride out of the other side, and the funny thing is they say—it's just a story—that they throw it over their head, and if it breaks, that's how many children they were supposed to have. [Laughter] Of course, that's just a story. Well, I saw this being fired, and see the little decorations she put on hers? This is Arzada Farrell, and she's one of my good friends and a very talented musician. Her name is on it, and the date. Recently, they've put their names on the bottom, and that's a very, very good thing. One day I said, "I wish I could make an Indian pot, and I'm gonna try." But here's a little boat just like they made, and someone gave me this, and this is the way it looks before it's fired. And so, I sat on my

back porch, and I, with a knife, and with a knife and a ruler, I scraped and scraped my little bowl. They had a little nick right there and I tried to repair that little nick. And then, I did what they did, I put inside my electric stove, and I cooked it, for about several hours. Well, I went off to my next-door neighbor, see if I could find some wood, and he gave me some wood and I came back and I had a great big dishpan that would just suit this one. I built my fire inside the dishpan; I had the hot coals going. I went and took this out and laid it down in the hot coals. Then I went off to take a nap, and I was so anxious to see what it would turn out. When it came out, this is what it came. And so, mine is black almost—but look at my pretty color that came on that side! The other little one that I fired was totally black, and I didn't bring it with me today. You never know the colors they're going to be until they finish firing. Now these Indians made all kind of things. They made things that they used, they made things that they sold, and they made things just for the fun. I was teaching school at Northside, a little girl named Marcia came, and she made me that tiny little thing. I could put a pencil across it, see there? And on her name—back of it, is "Marcia 1961."

[Gasps]

[Children exclaim]

E: That's a long, long time. And I know Marcia. She's working at Piedmont Medical Hospital right now. And then she also found this little bowl down in the river, somebody had made it years ago and there's no name on it, it is very, very old. So, those are some of my older ones. Then they loved to make different animals. Look, they loved to make little ducks like this. Now, I can look at those and tell

who made that. I don't have to look at the bottom. I know Doris Blue made that, I'm sure if it has a name on it, Doris Blue 1983. She used a little hook, like you use the shoe, to make the little eyes for that one, and I saw hers. And look what she did. She took another stick and put the decorations on for the little wings. And I think that's a very pretty one. You keep on handing them to me. Then, here's another one. Right off the bat that's different wasn't it, from the other ones. Look at this one, this is different. A little boy made this one, and he made that one in 1988. I'll have to look him up and find what his name is. Then they made turtles. Look at this one. [Laughter] With his head sticking up and the little decorations on his back. And here's another, but look, he's different. There'll be a little difference in the way their head is done, the little way that their tail is turned. There'll be a whole lot of little different things. And here's one that's a new one, that's a new one. This was made not long ago by Alberta Farrell. And look! The little turtle has holes in the back. What for? What could you use it for? What for?

U6: [inaudible 12:56]

E: Yeah! Stick your pencil in there. So that's a new modern one, and the name is on the bottom of this one.

U7: You could put a [inaudible 13:05]

E: Sometimes they come out like this, and look at this one. I think a little boy made this one, and look it's here now, a solid almost gold. Now, I've seen them make it—to make these little one, they just take a ball and slap it down, that would make the bottom of it right there. Then they stick their fingers and go round and round to make it real carefully like that. And so that's a very, very old one. Here's

a little one, that was made like that—oh by the way, a little boy did make this one, I believe. And look, they took their fingers round the top of it to make a little decoration at the top. And when they fired it, it's all those pretty, pretty colors. Now, sometimes they make one that they call their peace pipe. And here is the peace pipe. They put straws around each side of that, and they pass it around one to the other, and they smoke their peace pipe. Now, I got this one broken one day when I came to school. But it's still a very, very good one. The first friend I made on the reservation was Arzada, and her husband Idle Sanders. When I went to see them that day, Arzada was sitting like I'm sitting here, and the whole corner over there was filled with pottery, pottery, pottery, that she had made, and all of it was like this, it had not been fired. And every now and again she would say, "Idle, let me have your knife a little bit, I need it to scrape this little pot," and so he would hand the knife to her. And they became my very, very good friends. And lots of the pottery that I have at home is made by Arzada Sanders. One day she told me, that years ago, they used to make a pot with a snake on it like this. But they had lost the pattern; they didn't know how to make them any longer. She said her mother had made it, and she had one that was broken, and she went back and got me the broken pottery and showed it to me. Later on, the Cherokees came down from the mountains, and they showed the Catawbas how to make this. And so, this is made by Arzada's daughter, Catherine Canty. I'm so glad to have a next generation here. Maybe you can look at this way. When I saw her making this, I said, "Ooh that's going to be beautiful, let's see what colors it comes out," and when it came out it was that beautiful colors. Now they don't

have any very bad snakes on the reservation, there are only two kinds. There's a water moccasin, and there's a copperhead. And can you look at this and tell me which this would be? What do you think?

U8: Copperhead.

E: No, this is a water moccasin. I didn't bring one—this is the water moccasin—and I didn't bring the one that I had—I do have one of the others like—oh, I told you that. One day Arzada was talking to me, and they told me about the man that froze to death on the reservation, he lived to be 110 years old. [Gasps] I had never heard a story like that! And so, everywhere I went, I'd say to some of the old people, "Tell me about that man that froze to death and lived to be 110 years old!" And so, they told me. And this is what they told me. A long time ago, in the early 1900s, there was a young boy that came on the reservation. They didn't know where he came from. He said that—he told his name, he said his name was Thomas Stevens, and so he lived with one family for a month or so, and he'd help them chop wood. He lived with another family down the road, and he'd help them hoe the corn. He would live with another family on down the road, and they all learned to love him. One of the old ladies, Edith Brown, said, "He went out into the woods and get persimmons and wrap them up in leaves and give them to me." And Arzada Sanders said, "I saw him out in the woods one day, and he had a log and a stick, and he was beatin' on it," [Makes beating sound] like that, "and he was singing in the Catawba language." And so, lots of these people remembered him, and he got older and older. He never had a home, he lived with the various families. He loved the children. All of the children he loved. They

never saw him have any money, but sometimes he'd have in his pocket a sweet potato or something like that. Well, he got to be a hundred, hundred and five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. [Gasps] And by this time his hair was down on his shoulders, and I said to some of 'em, "Was his hair white? Or was it grey?" And they said it was all mingled, and he looked just like a Catawba Indian. But every year, every, every year, he would say, "I've got to go across the river to visit my wife's grave." Now, nobody knew what had happened to his wife. Did she die of smallpox, or did she have a little baby and die then? No one knew. But every year, he would go across the river, and one day he came by Idle Sanders. It was cold, freezing in December. And Idle Sanders said, "Oh, please don't go today. It's going to be so cold." He said, "No, I must go!" And he went on down the road. And down the road was a little boy and a little girl that were his good friends. He had a sweet potato in his pocket, and you know what he did with that? He broke it in two, and gave them his sweet potato, and then he told them good-bye, and he walked on down through the trees, down towards a ferry where he would cross over. It was called Cureton's Ferry. Down there was a man named Brown, and he's a good friend. And so, they begged him not to go, but he said "I've got to go across the river. I'm going to my wife's grave." And so, they must have given him some hot soup or something, and then they ferried him across the river on a barge. And he started up the river, and by this time it was cold and his hair was freezing. He looked back and wished that he could call back to John Brown to bring the ferry back, but John Brown was back in his home! And you could see the smoke coming out of his chimney. And so, he went on up the hill. And there

was a White man's house. And so, he knocked at the door. He knew not to go to the front door 'cause he was an Indian, and the man came to the door, and there was the firelight. There was a little girl, just about your size, and two little boys. It's so warm in there. And he said, "Could I please come in and spend the night?" What do you think they said? No. They said, "Well, can I come in and get warm?" They said no. And the door was shut. And he went on downhill. The next morning, the sheriff of Lancaster County was riding around to see if everything was all right, and he found a man in the ditch, and he was standing straight up like this. He had red clay in his fingers through his clawing to get out, and he was frozen solid. The sheriff knew who to call, so he called Sam Blue, the Chieftain at that time. And Sam Blue came with a wagon, some warm blankets, to pick up the body. And he brought a man from the Indians, sit on the front seat, and two little girls on the back seat. And one of them is Sally ... one of them was—I forgot the other's name, and they sat in the back of the wagon, and they said they took the blankets and they made themselves a little tent, and they sang on the way down. I said, "What did you sing?" and they sang the song for me. And then they came through the long way, they found where the body was, and the men got the body and they laid it across the wagon, and they covered it up with blankets, and then the little girls, they didn't stay back in the back of the wagon, they got up close to their fathers then, and when they came home, the women prepared the body, and they carried the body all the way up to the top of the hill, the old ancient cemetery where it was buried. Now he's a mystery! We don't know where he came from, why he came. We don't know where his wife is buried, what

happened to her. We don't know why he goes across the river every year to his wife's grave. And so, he's a mystery man. And I took my Kodak, and I went up to the top of that ancient cemetery, and I found his grave. And then I found the end of my story. His name all along has been Thomas Stevens, and there was a sign, froze to death, 110 years old. But his name was not Thomas Stevens, with an 's' on it. His name was just Thomas Steven, no 's' on his name. And that's the end of my story of the mystery Chieftain. But down on the reservation today, there's a road, and it's named Thomas Steven Road, and they remember him.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Rayyan Merchant, January 13, 2021

Audit-edited by: Callum Karoleski, March 25, 2022

Final edited by: Evangeline Giaconia, August 4, 2022