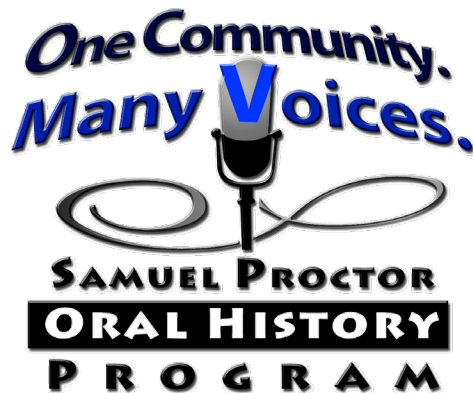


# Lucile Blue McGhee

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)  
CAT-016**

**Interview by:**

**Emma Reid Echols  
December 14, 1971**



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**CAT 016 Lucile Blue McGhee**  
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**19 minutes | 14 pages**

**Abstract:** Lucile Blue McGhee recalls her life at school, recreational activities, and preparing and selling pottery with her mother. McGhee then goes on to discuss old stories her grandmother used to tell her, words she knows in the Catawba language, and how food was prepared. She also discusses how doctors cared for people on the reservation and how members of the community assisted each. McGhee then talks about her memories of Christmastime on the reservation, completing chores, and how her father used to buy items in the store. McGhee finishes by discussing her current situation, mentioning that she obtained a deed to land when the lands were divided up.

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

**SAMUEL PROCTOR**  
**ORAL HISTORY**  
**P R O G R A M**  
**University of Florida**

CAT 016

Interviewee: Lucile Blue McGhee

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: December 14, 1971

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 620, Rock Hill, South Carolina, and I'm working on the oral history of the Catawba Indians. I'm now visiting, and I'll let the lady identify herself. Will you give me your full name and your address?

M: Lucile Blue McGhee. I live on Route 3, Box 77, Rock Hill.

E: Now you one time worked, but I believe you're helping your husband in his store now, where was it you worked?

M: Randolph Yarns. Twenty-one years there.

E: And now you're helping your husband in his store here. It's located in the Red River community.

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: What about your family?

M: I have one son. He's twenty years old. He's married, and they have a month-old baby.

E: And who lives with you?

M: My son and my father.

E: And your father is who?

M: Nelson Blue.

E: And I believe your mother died. When did your mother die?

M: In 1969, in July.

E: And what was your mother's name?

M: Lucy Leola Watts Blue.

E: And so, your father lives with you, and we'll be talking with him later. I believe you lived about fourteen years on the reservation, and you seem to have some good memories. Will you tell me about your early childhood and going to school, your teachers, anything you remember about your early life?

M: Well, the first teacher I can remember is Mrs. **Ernest Patton**, and then the next teacher I had was Mrs. **Hall Spencer**, and **Elder Bloward** was the next one, I believe. I wanted to tell you about Mrs. Hall Spencer, who used to catch frogs and put 'em in her desk and scare 'em.

E: How did Ms. Spencer come to school over the bad roads those days?

M: Sometimes they went by horse and buggy.

E: And I believe Mrs. Ernest Patton would travel the same way?

M: They did.

E: And her husband was the mail carrier?

M: Yes, ma'am, and he delivered the mail in horse and buggy.

E: Do you remember any of the books you used, anything your teachers taught you? You were in the school with three rooms, is that right?

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: And then you had another teacher, did you not, Jim Davis?

M: Elder Johnson was the next teacher.

E: Yes.

M: After Elder Bloward, it was Johnson.

E: And then after that who did you have?

M: James Davis and his wife. She taught a while until she got pregnant and so had to quit.

E: That school prepared you for high school? Or how many grades did you go through?

M: Yes, ma'am. I finished the ninth grade in there.

E: Do you remember how many children you would have in the classroom?

M: Oh, 'bout thirty-five, forty. Something like that.

E: That was a big crowd to have.

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: What sort of desks did you have? Were they homemade or were they nice desks?

M: Well, they were large desks. Two sit together.

E: And then, what about your lunch? Did you eat at the school or did you go home for lunch?

M: We went home for lunch.

E: You didn't live very far, did you?

M: No, ma'am. We lived just a short ways.

E: How did you know when the time was to come back to school?

M: They had a big bell they'd ring, up in a tower on the school hill.

E: And I suppose one boy would have the job of being the bell ringer?

M: Yes, ma'am. We also had to sweep the school and keep it clean. One class would have it one week, and another class would have it the next week. All of us was big enough here to clean then. We would have to clean it up.

E: Later on, they had a lunch program, but you were not there when they saw the lunch program in—

M: No, ma'am.

E: —in the school, were you?

M: No, ma'am.

E: And after you left school, what did you do after that?

M: We moved to Rock Hill, and I went to work at the industrial mill.

E: And that's when you met your husband, I believe, was it?

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: When you were a little girl, did you ever try to make pottery with your mother or with your grandmother?

M: Yes, ma'am, I used to help my mother. We'd go across the river to get clay, a lotta times, to make pottery out of it. And then we had another place—it wasn't too far from where we lived—to go get clay. And I helped her collect the pottery and—you have to have it soft to begin with. And you just have to build so much if you're going to build a large piece and let it kind of set up for when you build on some more to that. Then, after it got dry—not real dry, but dry enough that you could handle it—well then, take knives and trim it and scrape it, 'til we got it down even and got it shaped like we wanted it. Then we use what they call the rubbing rock. It was real slick rocks, and I still have two of those.

E: Were those your mother's or your grandmother's?

M: They were my grandmother's, my mother's mother's.

E: What'd you do after that? When would you fire it?

M: Well, we had to let it dry so many days. I had forgotten just how many days it would have to dry like that to get good and dry. Three, four days, probably. Then, we'd go out and gather up chips of different kinds of wood and burn 'em in the fireplace. Then we'd burn 'em so long, 'bout three or four hours. Then, Mama would take out a piece and she'd tap it with a little stick or a little paddle of some kind, so it wouldn't break. And it'd ring a certain sound and then it was good and dry and burning up then.

E: Then how did you sell the pottery?

M: We used to go up to the Winthrop College and spread down blankets and things, sit out there, and sell it. I went up there a lotta times with Aunt Sally Gordon. That was my grandfather's sister.

E: She must have made beautiful pottery. I heard that she did.

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: Then, what did you do for games or fun? Do you remember anything you did for entertainment?

M: Yes, ma'am, we used to have quilting parties. Or the ladies did. I was a child, but I can remember it real well. Now, quilting parties, sometimes they'd give the quilts to someone that was in need. A lot of times, they'd go to each other's houses and help one another quilt their quilts. Then we had box suppers, they called them. Everybody'd carry a lunch. Making up funds for something for the church or the school, something like that. And then we had cakewalks. We'd charge so much for the cakewalk.

E: You'd go around and around the table with the cake on it. Was that the way you'd do it?

M: Yes ma'am. And they have a little bell they'd ring, whichever one of us—because they'd have something touching you as you'd go by. Whichever one was there—touching a broom, now it was a broom they used—well that's the one that wanted to pay, the couple that wanted to pay.

E: Now, do you remember your mother or your grandparents speaking any of the Catawba Indian language?

M: Yes, I can remember hearing a lot of it, but I never did learn much about it. Aunt Sally Gordon used to tell me lots about—I used to spend a lot of nights with her. And she'd sit down and tell me stories about the Indians way back and tell me about the Indian language. But I guess I was small, just didn't take interest in it then, which I should have.

E: Do you remember any of these stories she told you at all? Were they about animals or were they about people?

M: She'd tell me about how they'd go out hunting and fishing, how they'd catch the game, you know, the food. Stuff like that.

E: What about the food? Do you remember any of the words for any of the foods you had?

M: Yes, ma'am. They called salt [Catawba word 8:22] and any kind of meat was [Catawba word 8:26]. But, now I—other than that, I don't remember.

E: Do you remember any of the words for apple, or peach, or any of those?

M: No, ma'am.



E: Do you remember the word they used for cornbread?

M: Yes, ma'am. They called it [Catawba word 8:43]

E: How were these foods prepared around the fireplace?

M: My mother would—she had a skillet. They called it a skillet, and it had three legs on it, and a lid, and a long handle. And she'd break out a lot of live coals, and sit that skillet on there, and put coals on the lid. And that's the way she'd bake us bread. And we'd bake sweet potatoes in the ashes in the fireplace.

E: How'd you prepare your meats?

M: She cooked a lot of meats into the skillet, too, same way.

E: She must have been a good cook of those few things that you had those days.

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: What do you think about the future of your people now? Things have changed so much, what do you think the future would be? Talking deeper now. Is it better than what it used to be?

M: In some ways, it is. I feel like back then, when I was growing up, that was the good old days.

E: You say you remember the good old days. Tell me something about those good old days that you like.

M: Well, I feel like the homes—condition of homes way back then was lots more healthier than what we have now. Because we had cracks that we could see through the floor, see the chickens walking around the house. And we didn't have any screens on the windows, we'd just have wooden shutters. And in the wintertime, we'd shut the shutters and all the light we had was lamps, and

lanterns, and things like that. And we had to carry our water from about a mile.

There and back, it'd be about a mile.

E: Did the mosquitos and flies bother you?

M: We didn't have mosquitos and flies like we have now. I guess that's one thing why we was healthy.

E: Do you remember many children being ill during your childhood, or were they healthy during the cold wintertime?

M: Most of them was, yes, ma'am.

E: What about the doctors who came down the reservation to see the sick people? Who were they?

M: Dr. Hill was the only one I could remember. And he was our community doctor, I guess you could call it, for years.

E: He delivered the babies?

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: I suppose he was you were one of his babies, were you not?

M: Yes, ma'am, I imagine so.

E: Then, Dr. **Blackburn**, I believe, was another doctor?

M: Yes, ma'am. He was the next doctor we had.

E: How did those doctors travel around in the reservation?

M: Well, I can remember. When a baby was gonna be born, then the father would always get the horse and buggy and go get Dr. Hill. And I have known him to spend the night. I have known him fixing a bed. And he'd just lie down, you know,

maybe be at the home all night or all day. And then they would take him back.

Most people would go after him like that.

E: Since your little homes were very small, were there enough beds for all the children to sleep in at night?

M: We had, yes, ma'am. We had three rooms in my house and all about six of them could go in there.

E: When there was need in your Catawba community, what would you do to help each other?

M: Well, just anything that needed to be done. We'd go and help shuck corn. We'd go to one corn house one day, and the next day we'd go to somebody else's. If we had hogs to kill, we'd kill hogs and give each other some of the meat that was needed. And I remember we'd even gather up sweet potatoes and go and help the next fella to get on his crop. You know, anything we had to do, that needed to be done.

E: What would happen when a person would lose their home to fire? What would you do then?

M: We always would go and help to rebuild. I remember when **Renee** Blue— Chief Blue's—home burned down. A lot of people went and helped out. If anyone was sick and their homes needed repair, they'd do that too. I remember an uncle I had that they put a new top on his home because he was down sick and unable to help himself.

E: Do you remember anything you used to as a child around Christmastime? Was it just like it is today or was it different?

M: It was very much different. We didn't know what fruit or toys was until Christmastime. And we'd get fruit and candy and nuts, and maybe a couple toys, sometimes just one. But we really enjoyed Christmas then. And after we got big enough, we'd went and have fireworks. It was most of the Roman candles and the sparklers.

E: What sort of Christmas celebration would you have at the church?

M: Oh, it was wonderful. We'd go and have singing and, lot of times, have the manger scene, and sing Christmas carols. They always have good programs for Christmastime.

E: What were some of the things you did to help your mother?

M: I always helped with the laundry, and we used to make our own soap that we washed with. We'd make it outdoors on a big pot, called it lye soap. And then we'd go out in the woods and cut bushes to sweep our yard with, dogwood tree bushes. We'd tie 'em together and kept our yard swept real clean. And we'd go out and gather broom straw to make our brooms out of to sweep the house with.

E: Did you also find nuts out in the forest you'd bring home for cooking?

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: Hickory nuts.

M: Yes ma'am.

E: And walnuts? Scaly bark?

M: Yes, ma'am. Scaly bark, walnuts, hickory nuts.

E: What sort of dolls did you have a little girl? Did you mother ever make you a doll?

M: Yes, ma'am. We had rag dolls.

E: And you'd get that one for Christmas?

M: We'd get one for Christmas, and an orange, and an apple, and some fruit and nuts. And we'd really enjoy Christmas back then.

E: Tell me about some of the people you used to know, friends down there? Some White friends or Indian friends?

M: Well, all the Indians here, of course, they kind of stuck together always, played together. We had one family that moved in down there, a Ms. Thatcher that had married Bob Harris, and all her children went to school with us. There were four boys and one girl who went to school with us. And—

E: They were White children?

M: Yes, ma'am. They were from Tennessee.

E: Then, what other white friends do you remember? Remember a Mrs. Lawrence?

M: Mrs. Fred Lawrence? Yes, ma'am.

E: Where would you go to—what store would you go to to buy your provisions when you needed them?

M: **Mr. Ed Liz.**

E: Now, that would be a couple of miles from where you live, would it not?

M: About three miles, I imagine.

E: Would you walk to the store?

M: Lotta times we would, sometimes we'd by go by buggy. And sometimes by wagon.

M: What things would you buy at the store and how you would your father buy those things?

E: Oh, he would always buy flour by the barrel. We usually raised our hogs for lard, shortening, and we made our meal. We'd raise corn and he'd carry the corn to the mill, and we'd shell it. He would carry the corn to the mill and have it ground for a meal. And we'd always buy big bulks of everything like rice, sugar, you know, we'd used to get maybe a twenty-five pound of each. We used to buy it up in the fall, and it'd run us through the winter.

E: Now, do you own your own home ma'am or—you're paying to own the home?

M: We're paying for it, yes, ma'am.

E: What part did you get when the Indian lands were divided up? Did you get a part of that?

M: Yes, ma'am. I got six acres right here.

E: Oh, that's wonderful. Now, I'm glad you gotten land.

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: Means you can hand it down to your family.

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: And you can buy your land and you can get a deed to this land?

M: Yes, ma'am. I have a deed for it.

E: Now on the reservation, they told me down there, you cannot have a deed to land, is that correct?

M: Not on the old reservation. No, ma'am.

E: Do you think many of your friends took the land instead of the money?

M: I believe there's more that took land than money.

E: The money soon disappears but—

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: You're so fortunate to have your home and to have your business here. What other Indians are living in this community around Red River, that you know of?

M: Well, the nearest family is the Robins.

E: And who is the oldest Indian that you know of—full-blooded, what full-blooded Indian do you know?

M: Aunt Elder Harris I think is the oldest, and the only one I know that's full, living.

E: Her father was a full-blooded Indian, and she's a full-blooded Indian.

M: And her husband was, too.

E: I think she's ninety-six years old.

M: Yes, ma'am.

E: And how old is your father?

M: Eighty-one.

E: Eighty-one. And he remembers many things too. We'll be talking with him a little bit later.

[End of interview]

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