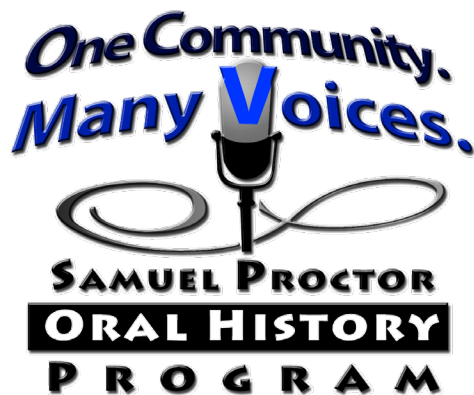


Annie Walton Brock

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-033**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
June 1972**



University of Florida • Samuel Proctor Oral History Program • Paul Ortiz, Director
P.O. Box 115215, 241 Pugh Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-5215
(352) 392-7168 www.clas.ufl.edu/history/oral

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Program Director: Dr. Paul Ortiz

241 Pugh Hall
PO Box 115215
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 392-7168
<https://oral.history.ufl.edu>

CAT 033 Annie Walton Brock
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols in June 1972
21 minutes | 10 pages

Abstract: Annie Brock discusses her experiences as a schoolteacher on the Catawba reservation in South Carolina. She explains her motivations for accepting the job, and she shares stories about her fellow teacher and their students. She outlines the day-to-day routine at the school, and she reflects on her efforts to allow her students to learn through art. She shares some stories from Christmastime, including Chief Blue's dancing. She remembers details about the homes on the reservation, and she reflects on how things have changed for the Catawba people.

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

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

CAT 033

Interviewee: Annie Walton Brock

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: June 1972

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina, and I'm recording the oral history of the Catawba Indian people. I'm visiting in the home of Mrs. Brock. Mrs. Brock taught for a number of years in the Catawba Indian school, and she has many happy memories. Mrs. Brock, will you give me your full name and your address?

B: My name is Annie Walton Brock, and I live at 125 Reed Street, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

E: Now, according to the records, I believe you taught in 1947-[19]48, [19]48-[19]49, [19]49-[19]50. Will you tell me how you happened to begin teaching at the Catawba Indian school? I believe Mrs. Faye Cornwall called you up, is that right?

B: Yes, she did. She was a friend of mine. I had known her in school, and she'd been teaching there for several years, and she called me one afternoon late in the summer and asked me if I'd be interested in teaching at this school. I told her I would see about it later, and she called back several times to let me know that she was really interested and that there was a place there if I would like to have it, so I went down one day to visit and see what the situation was. It was such a good chance for me to do, I'll say, a missionary type of work that I accepted right away. This school is located down on what we call the old Indian reservation. It's a natural setting—the trees have never been pruned—and I enjoyed this little touch of the natural countryside that we don't see in the city. The roads were very, very bad, especially in rainy weather. We had to go out and pick up our children in the morning. Mrs. Cornwall had a pickup truck, and she loaded the

back of it with as many children as she could. Then I came along behind her and picked up the rest of the children. And I would say ... let's see, she had the first, second, and third grade, and I had fourth, fifth, and sixth. She had more children than I did at the time I started. I guess I had around a dozen in a classroom of mixed grades.

E: The roads then were nothing but red clay with puddles of water all over them.

How did you ever have faith enough to go through those puddles?

B: Well, the rural mail carrier asked me that once when I had a chance to talk with him. He said, "Mrs. Brock, I've seen you go through roads that I wouldn't attempt myself." He said, "I don't see how you got back. Could you tell me?" I said, "Yes, through prayer." And that really carried me through with a lot of situations, you know, in working with these people.

E: Was this mail carrier Mr. Ernest Patton?

B: Yes.

E: I believe his wife had taught there several years before you, so he knew quite well the condition of those roads. Tell me how your classroom looked in that school and where you got your provisions—your books and supplies.

B: Well, to begin with, this was an old three-room type of building: a main entrance, which was one classroom, and sort of a T-shaped building formed the other two rooms. One on the right-hand side was my classroom, and on the left was the little kitchen. Inside, it was very—well, let's say shabby. It was unpainted boards on the inside, desks that had been there for years and years before I came, and no heating arrangements except a big stove that we had to make a fire in in the

morning when we arrived. The older boys were very good about helping us, you know, get the wood and get the fire started. And we had our little chores to do before we could ever start class. We had to plan what we were going to have for lunch that day, and some of the older girls would take charge fixing lunch while we went ahead and worked with the younger children. And then, when they were free, we would work with them.

E: Were you cooking on a little oil stove in that little kitchen there?

B: Yes, a little oil stove.

E: And I suppose you'd have things easy to prepare, such as soup and sandwiches, that sort of thing, would you now?

B: Yes.

E: Maybe some hot chocolate?

B: Yes.

E: There was very few cows on the Indian reservation at that time, so I imagine the children would enjoy anything you would give them in the milk line?

B: Yes.

E: Mrs. Brock, I've heard from many of the Indians how very talented you were in the art and how much they enjoyed the things they did in art in your classes. Can you tell me some of the things you did, or do you remember?

B: Well, I'm not sure that I remember. I know that I did love to work with art. I was an art major in Winthrop, and I always tried to stress that line. And I felt that these boys and girls should have some chance to express the talent of their race because they are wonderful with their clay work. But the boys and girls in the

class that I worked with had no interest in carrying that on, so at times I was trying to stimulate an interest and get them going in that line. Later on, after we moved—let's see, we stayed in that school two years, I believe it was, and then they built a new school for the Indians. And in that school, we had Arzada Sanders—I believe the last name was Sanders—and she took over the cooking, the lunchroom for us, and that gave us a little more time with the children. And she herself is very talented in her pottery work and has, I believe, carried it on more than maybe any other Indian woman on the reservation. We would get her to come and try to work with the boys and girls and show them the old methods that she used. And—

E: She would bring her own clay and her own smoothing stones, things of that kind?

B: Yes. She would work with the children and show them. You know, these children didn't have a great deal of the pleasures of life. I had a friend of mine who was teaching in North Carolina, and she was working with third grade, and they were carrying on a project about the Indians. We got together, and she was teaching very rich children at the time, and she asked how could they be of help to our school. I said, "Well, I think they would like to have a piece of the Indian pottery." So, she went back and talked to her children, and they were thrilled to buy a piece of pottery. We got Arzada and one of her friends to help make, oh, thirty or forty pieces of pottery, and these children in North Carolina bought them, which helped Arzada. And then, at Christmastime, they wrote and said that they had had such a wonderful experience, they wanted to send the children something on the reservation. So, we always had a Christmas program and a gathering, you

know, at the schoolhouse. I had bought a good many things myself for the children, and I told my husband about it. At one time, he was in theatrical work, and so I said, "Well, I hate to ask you this, but would you be Santa Claus?" And that thrilled him to death. He was a rather heavy-set man, and he could play the part real well, so he got makeup and fixed his face and bought a mustache and fastened it on. At the last of our program, he came out, and the children were just so thrilled they didn't know what to do. He looked so real in this, one child said, "I know he was the real thing because when I pulled, his whiskers didn't even come off!" They were very pleased to have all these gifts, and they were much nicer things than these children could have afforded. We had a real nice Christmas then, and we had Chief Blue down to talk to the group. We asked him about Christmas long ago. He said, "Well, maybe you won't believe it, but we used to have our Christmas gathering right on the grounds where the schoolhouse was." And he said it was different from the way they have it now. Said the Tribes would get together, and the men would have contests—of hunting, you know, shooting with the bow and arrow—and there was dancing. He said that they believed in a supreme being—not so much as we believe in God, but someone supreme and more powerful. He said they had their different dances, and he would show us, and he was very fond of doing the Bear Dance, sort of a shuffle that he would do. And that was all so interesting to the young Indian boys and girls as well as the teachers and all the others that were gathered there to see him do these things.

E: Did the boys and girls pick up any of those dances from Chief Blue or any songs, chants?

B: Not a great deal, which to me was a disappointment. I wanted to see them do those things, but they did not seem to.

E: Did all the children and their families respect and revere Chief Blue, did it seem to you?

B: It seemed to me they did, uh-huh. When you say the head of—Chief of the Tribe, I believe that's the way he stood in their opinion.

E: What about the discipline of these children? Did you have any difficulty in winning the confidence of the children?

B: Well, now, as far as discipline, I found them real well to work with. There were no discipline problems like, say, we have in the schools today. They were pleasant children after they got to know you. Before they were really acquainted with you, you got the feeling that you were there, and they respected you, but they did not accept you. You had to work hard to be accepted, and when you were accepted, then everything went smoothly.

E: Do you remember any special names of the Indians you taught? They seem to remember you so well.

B: Well, I'm sorry that I might let them down. I haven't forgotten them, but I don't remember all the names. But, of course, the Chief Blue, and then there were several families of Browns and Sanders that I remember. I can't remember all of the names of the students. I wished I had. I remember a Louis Sanders and a Vivian Sanders and Mohave Sanders. I always liked the name Mohave. It seemed very Indian to me.

E: Do you have any idea where that name came from?

B: Well, I do not know. Of course, the Mohave Desert ... I have an idea that—you know, the Latter-Day Saints came into the community, and most of the Indians worshipped with that faith, and I believe some of it came through them.

[Break in recording]

E: What did you think about your visiting in Indian homes as you remember them? Was there a great deal of poverty and lack of fuel and foods in those homes?

B: Yes, the homes were very, very meager, sometimes only two rooms. Maybe if they were a little better off, they had three rooms. Furniture was very scarce, and everything was scant in the homes. One particular home I remember did not even have windows. They had openings cut into the side of the house with hinged wood for closing in bad weather.

E: Then did they heat with an open fireplace?

B: Sometimes they did. Some few had their little stoves, and they had plenty of wood around, but they had to do their own cutting and collecting of the wood.

E: Very few had any gardens or fruits or anything of that kind, did they?

B: No, not too much.

E: And they had very few cows, chickens, those kind, at this time?

B: Mmhm.

E: Years ago, I believe, they had had those, but they do not have now. Now, as you have seen the changes in Rock Hill and the school systems, and these Indians have been completely integrated, and they're working now in industries, what do you think of the future of these, the new Catawba Indians?

B: I should think that the future **for** the new Indians is very, very good. A few years back, I was being admitted to a hospital myself, and after one of the girls took down the admittance information, she turned and she says, "I don't believe you remember me." And I said, "No, I don't." And she told me that she was one of the girls that had been quite young when I was there and had grown up. And I said, "Why, I'm so glad you spoke to me. I would never have known you." And I asked her how long she'd been at the hospital, and she says, "Oh, this is just during the summer that I'm working here in the office." She said, "I'm going to the university, getting my degree." They went to Salt Lake City, the majority of them that could went there for their college degree. She was a very charming and attractive person. And I have heard that some of the boys have finished and done real well. We had one boy that was such a great ball player on the team here in Rock Hill.

E: Did you know any of the boys who went to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to study?

B: No, I do not remember of any of those.

E: Do you remember the name of the girl at the hospital who was a former student of yours?

B: I'm sorry, I cannot recall.

E: Well, we may find her name later.

B: I hope so.

E: I believe you're working in the Fort Mill schools. Are there many Indians in that area living there, as far as you know?

B: No. I have been over there in that school—this is my sixteenth year, and I haven't come across any so far.

[Break in recording]

E: Do you think the people have changed in their attitude toward the education of the Indian now?

B: Yes, I do. When I first started to teach, I had my friends to tell me that if they had to teach an Indian, that they would give up, that they wouldn't teach anymore. The idea was almost like the race situation of the present day. They felt the same way about it. I'm glad to say I did not.

E: You felt that what you were doing was real missionary work, didn't you?

B: Yes, I did, and I loved it for that reason. I wanted to be of service to these people. I felt very close to them. Maybe the fact that when I was child, there was a great open field behind our house, and I loved to play Indian. I had an Indian costume—my daddy made me a bow and arrow, and I was quite a tomboy. We would spend all day Saturday in the fields, and we would cook our lunch over an open fire. So, there was something that I had from the very beginning that made me want to be with these people.

E: Well, I can see how they would love you, and I see why you love them, too.

[Break in recording]

E: Did the children ever talk about their own race or anything about their own people? Were they proud, or were they—what happened?

B: No, they didn't seem to talk about it. They did not seem to really know too much about it. They seemed to be a downtrodden sort of people, and they had lived that way for so many years, and I think that's where they got this attitude that they had.

[End of interview]

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