

# Virginia Moses Canty

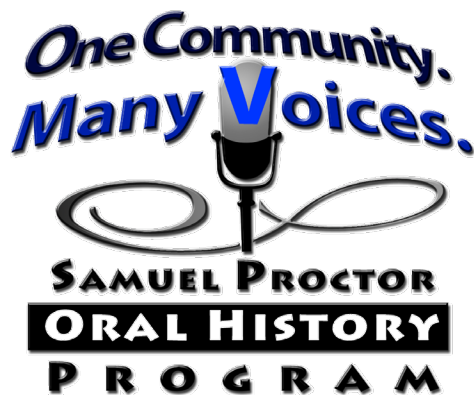
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)

CAT-062

**Interview by:**

**Emma Reid Echols**

**September 12, 1972**



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**CAT 062 Virginia Moses Canty**  
**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)**  
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**17 minutes | 14 pages**

**Abstract:** Virginia Canty shares that she met her husband, Alonzo Canty, through her brother, and moved to Rock Hill, South Carolina from York after getting married in 1942. She speaks about her husband's family and discusses living with them on the old reservation. She shares the names of her six children and whether they are working or in school. She says she is proud of her children and happy that some of them have graduated high school. She describes her children's experiences in school and mentions some of the teachers they had. Canty remembers her son doing a war dance as part of a local parade when he was in school. She speaks about her home that was built on the land her husband received when some of the Catawba land was divided up. She says she is happy with many of the changes that have happened in the years that she has been in the Catawba community. She discusses her church activities and the dances for young people held at the old schoolhouse. She describes life on the old reservation before the land was divided up and closes the interview by saying that she would rather live where she does now than on the old reservation.

**Keywords:** [Catawba Nation; John Early Brown; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Oral biography; Education]

**SAMUEL PROCTOR**  
**ORAL HISTORY**  
**PROGRAM**  
**University of Florida**

CAT 062

Interviewee: Virginia Moses Canty

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: September 12, 1972

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina. I am recording the oral history of the Catawba Indians. It is September 12, 1972. I am visiting in the home of Mrs. Canty. Mrs. Canty, tell me your full name and your address.

C: Virginia.

E: Virginia Canty. Who were you before you married?

C: Moses.

E: You were Virginia Moses.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: And you didn't live here. Where were you from?

C: York.

E: York, South Carolina. Now, you went to school, I suppose, in York, did you not? When you were a young girl?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: At the high school in York?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Did you work after you finished school?

C: No, ma'am.

E: Now, how did you happen to meet your husband?

C: [Laughter] Well, he came to our house one Sunday afternoon with his brother. His brother knew my brother. They worked together and so we got acquainted.

E: You got acquainted.

C: [Laughter]

E: When were you married?

C: 1942.

E: 1942. And then, where did you live then?

C: York.

E: In York?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: When did you move down here?

C: When I moved down here it was 1942.

E: Your husband had work in York, the reason you lived in York?

C: No, ma'am.

E: Where did your husband begin to work?

C: He worked in Rock Hill.

E: So, he drove from York to Rock Hill—

C: No, he lived in Rock Hill. Alonzo lived on the reservation.

E: Yes.

C: I stayed with my mother and my brother.

E: When did you get together to establish a home and begin raising this nice family of yours?

C: When we was married.

E: When you married. Where did you live when you first were married?

C: Oh, I stayed with his mother a while.

E: That was on the old reservation?

C: Mmhm, yes, ma'am.

E: Was this your first experience living with an Indian family?

C: That's right. It sure was.

E: Now, tell me who was his mother and father?

C: His mother was Emma Brown. She had been married twice. And his daddy was Henry Canty.

E: Who all were in the home when you came in as a young bride? Who all were else in that Indian home, the Canty home?

C: Nobody but his stepfather and mother.

E: His stepfather and his mother.

C: That's right.

E: His stepfather would be who?

C: Early Brown.

E: Oh, Early Brown. Now, there's your connection with Mrs. Edith Brown you were telling me a moment ago.

C: That's right.

E: Well, I know lots about that connection and that family. Early Brown operated a ferry for a number of years.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Was he operating the ferry when you were—

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Mrs. Brown loved flowers and she was a good cook. Did she teach you some of those things?

C: No. I wasn't interested yet.

E: You weren't interested that time.

C: **I guess.** [Laughter]

E: Now, you have six children. Will you tell me the names of your children?

C: Alonzo Jr.

E: That's your first one, and the next one?

C: Is Judy. Judy Canty.

E: She's now Mrs. Steve Driggers, is that correct?

C: That's right.

E: And your next one?

C: Edwin.

E: Edwin. He's married last Sunday to Jeannie Rutherford, I believe.

C: That's right.

E: That's correct.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: And your next one?

C: Is Betty.

E: Is Betty married now?

C: Yes, ma'am. Married to Marvin Driggers.

E: Then you have two more at home in school. Who are they?

C: Wallace Lee Canty and Eric.

E: One's in eleventh grade and one's in tenth grade, is that true?

C: That's right.

E: Now, your boys are working. Let's see what kind of jobs they have. Your husband worked where?

C: Well, he worked at **The Arcade** Cotton Mill.

E: And is he retired now?

C: Yes ma'am, he's retired, but he's still working part-time.

E: He's on social security and **part-time**?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: And Leroy, your son, is working—

C: Who?

E: Excuse me, Edwin is working where?

C: Edwin's working with Rayfield Electric Company.

E: And Alonzo's working where?

C: At the Rock Hill bleachery.

E: And is Judy working?

C: Celanese.

E: And Betty, is she working?

C: Winn-Dixie.

E: Which Winn-Dixie is she working at?

C: At the new one out at the mall.

E: At the mall. Now, you put your children, a number of them, through school. How many of them finished?

C: Oh, yes, ma'am. Well, I had two to finish and two quit in high school. Junior, he quit right in the middle of part of the twelfth. Like in **this school didn't** finish it. Judy, she quit in the tenth. And the rest of 'em's are going. Edwin finished.

E: I know you're proud of Edwin finishing.

C: Oh, I am.

E: Edwin was at school under Mrs. Robinson and I believe you remember her quite pleasantly, don't you?

C: Oh, I sure do. Very well.

E: What did your children think of the school in those days? Did they like to go to school?

C: Yes, ma'am. They really did.

E: Now, what other teachers do you remember they had?

C: Nobody but Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Cornish on the reservation. And then when they left from there, they went out to Lesslie. Then from Lesslie, Judy and Junior went up here to Sullivan. Well, I think Edwin did too. So, then they left from here and went on out to Rock Hill High after they built this new Rock Hill High School.

E: You're proud of their good records—

C: I sure am. I'm proud of my kids too.

E: Edwin was going to school to Mrs. Robinson the year they had the big parade in Rock Hill. We have a picture of him in that, leading the dance in the parade.

C: That's right.

E: Will you tell me about that?



C: Oh, Edwin, he could really do the war dance. That's not no joke, he could really do that. And he was on this here great big old long ...

E: You call a float?

C: Yes, ma'am. He done the war dance going through town. Is that the picture I gave you?

E: We have a wonderful picture of him doing that. Mrs. Robinson said that he was never particularly interested in school until they put on this big parade and the school furnished a big truck and built the platform for them to have their big float on.

C: That's right.

E: They had an Indian tent and Edwin here is dressed up in an Indian costume.

C: That's right.

E: She says that one day she said to the children, "We have everything ready for the float and for the parade, except we don't have anyone to do the dance." And Edwin spoke up. Do you remember what he told her?

C: No.

E: She said he said, "Mrs. Robinson, I can do the dance. And I can teach the other boys to do the dance." So, he did. After that he became interested in school. And then of course Edwin told me that when he went on to high school, he became more interested in high school because of his girlfriend, Jeannie.

C: That's right, he did. He was about to quit one time and go in service. I didn't want him to do that. I wanted him to go on to school.

[Break in recording]

E: Mrs. Canty, who helped to make some of the costumes that your boys wore in that dance?

C: Mary Ann Rogers made some of them and the parents.

E: Did you have any other sons that dressed as Indians at that time?

C: No, ma'am.

E: After this he went on to high school, I believe. Did he finish high school?

C: Oh, yes, ma'am.

E: Mr. Sullivan was very much interested in him, and he worked for a while in the schools, is that right?

C: That's right. He worked with the Rock Hill District Three for about a year and a half.

E: And then what did he do after that?

C: He went from there to Charlotte. What you call it? **Current with brights.**

E: Electronics shop.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: What did he do after that?

C: Well, he left from there and he came back to Rock Hill. Went to work with Rayfield Electric.

E: Rayfield Electrical Company. Is that right?

C: That's right. Yes, ma'am.

E: That's where he's working today?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Now, I believe your son, Edward, was married on Sunday, this Sunday.

C: Sunday the tenth.

E: His wife is a student at Winthrop College, who will finish soon.

C: Yes, ma'am. That's right.

E: You're real proud of the record that your children have made, and you have a right to be proud.

C: I sure am. I'm proud of 'em all.

E: I'm interested in this nice little home that you have. You're here on a paved highway, cars going past, you have trees around, you have a little space for a small garden at the front. Your house is nicely painted, it's attractive on the outside and inside. How did you come to get this little house? Did your husband build it?

C: Well, we had it built. Nationwide Company built it and we paid for it.

E: Is this a part of the land that you all got from—

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: When it was divided up?

C: Yes, ma'am. This is the land that my husband got.

E: Now how many acres are—

C: He got six.

E: Do you have it fenced in, or is it marked off anywhere?

C: No, ma' am. It's just marked off.

E: It would be large enough for one of your boys to have a lot and build if they want to?

C: Yes, ma'am. If they wanted to.

E: What do you think about the division of land? Are you glad when the land was divided?

C: Well, to my part I was, yes.

E: Now, why are you glad?

C: Well, I'll tell you. It gives them more rights to do things. It was good the way it was, but still yet they had more privilege of doing things, you know?

E: That's right. Since you first married and you went to live in an Indian home, in Early Brown's home, is that right?

C: That's right.

E: You have seen many, many changes. What do you think about the changes? Do you think it's for the better?

C: I believe so. I believe it is.

E: Better education for your children?

C: Yes, ma'am. Yes ma'am.

E: Better opportunities for your children?

C: Yes, ma'am. Sure is.

E: And your husband still has part-time work and that helps out, does it not?

C: That's right. Yes, ma'am.

E: What about your church activities? Are all your family involved in the church?

C: Oh, yes, ma'am.

E: What church do you attend?

C: **Living** Mormon.

E: That is a Church of the Latter-day Saints on the reservation?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: What social activities do you have down there for the children or your young people? Do you have any dances or musical programs?

C: Oh, yes, ma'am, they have dances. Well, they don't dance in the church, but they do have dances down there. They've taken the old schoolhouse and made them a place to go to have their parties and dances and things like that.

E: Well, that's good for young people.

C: It is.

E: Who plays for the dances?

C: Oh, just different ones. Gilbert Blue, Jean Blue. And then they have some outsiders comes in and helps 'em. Just different ones comes in and helps.

E: I'm interested in some of the older people. What outstanding persons do you remember? You mentioned that Nelson Blue brought up your husband. Tell me some of the older Indians that were outstanding leaders years ago.

C: I couldn't very well tell you much about 'em, because there's not much that I really do know. I've only been married thirty years—**not some** thirty years—and that's all, you know, that I could really tell you. But first I know about the old ones. Well, I know a little bit about Chief Blue. I don't remember whether he worked any or not, tell you the truth. I don't know too much about him.

E: Well, you wouldn't because you came from York to come here and live with them.

C: That's right.

E: But you've made a home here among them and you seem to enjoy it.

C: Well, yes, I do. Yes, I do. They were always kind to me. Always kind.

[Break in recording]

E: Mrs. Canty, when you were first married and you and your husband lived with Mr. and Mrs. Early Brown, did you ever cross the ferry that Early Brown operated?

C: Yes, ma'am. I rode across it a many a time.

E: Tell me, what did the reservation look like then?

C: Well, there were a good many houses down there and they were pretty well close. There was lots of trees. Later on, after the land was divided up, they all got to scattering out then, and some building new houses here and there and so it pretty well got thinned out.

E: And the water supply. Where did you get your water?

C: Oh, from a spring.

E: Spring.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: And some people got from the well, I believe at the time.

C: That's right. Well and spring.

E: Do you remember the schoolhouse?

C: Oh, yes. I used to live right beside of the old schoolhouse.

E: What did the old schoolhouse look like?

C: Well, it looked pretty good. They had school there when I lived there.

E: Now was that—

C: Mrs. Fay Cornwell teach school down there, you know.

E: Yes, I know her. Did your children have lunch in the school, or did they have to come home for lunch?

C: No, my children had lunch in school. It was twenty-five cent a week then for their lunches at school, which is two dollars now.

E: That's right. That makes a big difference, doesn't it?

C: It sure does.

E: So, you have two of them to buy lunches now at the high school?

C: Yes, ma'am. It's four dollars a week.

E: Mrs. Fay Cornwell was teaching when your children were there and later Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Cornish.

C: That's right.

E: And so, you remember, I'm sure, a lot of things about the school. Who was the cook for the school when they began having lunches there?

C: The cook when my children was going to school—that's all I can tell you about, the lunchroom there, then. When they were going to school, Mrs. Robinson—no, Mrs. Arzada Sanders was the cook.

E: I believe Mrs. Sanders not only cooked for them but she sometimes came in and made pottery in some of the classes and showed them how to make pottery.

C: Well, she did. She cooked for them and done that too.

E: Your children must have gotten a very good start in that school to go on ahead with their education.

C: They did, they really did.

E: Are you glad you live in this part of the community rather than down on the old reservation?

C: Oh, yes, ma'am. I'd rather live here anytime.

E: Because you own your property, you own your house.

C: Yes, ma'am. I couldn't own any myself down there. I couldn't claim any myself.

But my kids can, my children can, but I couldn't.

E: That's right. But your boys and your girls are getting out on their own.

C: All getting out on their own.

E: Do you think they'll ever go back to live on the old reservation?

C: No, ma'am. I don't think so.

[End of interview]

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