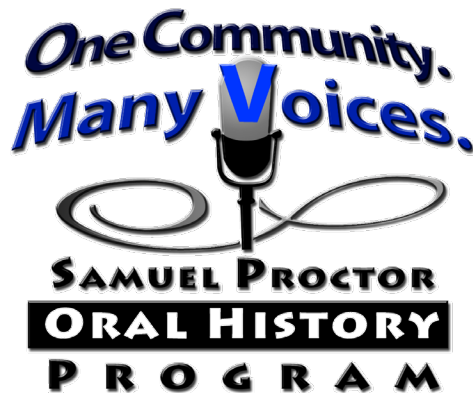


Doris Bulock Blue

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-130**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
September 7, 1976**



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10 minutes | 8 pages

Abstract: Doris Blue speaks about her pottery making. She recalls learning from her mother when she was young, and she notes the individualism of each maker's pottery. She reflects on making pottery for the Carowinds and shares that she now makes and sells her pottery from her home. She discusses other Catawba women who make pottery. She remembers the University of South Carolina visiting the reservation and creating a traveling museum of the Catawba pottery. She explains the process of heating her pottery. She contextualizes settlers' influence on the use of pottery. She speaks about her children and grandchildren as well as her mother and father. She details the Catawbas' relationships with families that offer them clay.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Pottery]

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CAT 130

Interviewee: Doris Bullock Blue

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: September 7, 1976

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Rock Hill, South Carolina, Box 6, Box 260, September 7, 1976. I'm visiting in the home of Mrs. Doris Blue, and she's one of the famous makers of Indian pottery among the Catawbas. Mrs. Blue, give me your full name and address.

B: My name is Doris Bullock Blue, and I live on Route 3, Box 309, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

E: And you learned your pottery making from your mother?

B: That's right. I worked with my mother when I was small and on up through the years while I was growing up.

E: And I suppose you still have some of her rubbing stones?

B: I have her rubbing stones and also her pipe molds that she used when she made pottery.

E: That's wonderful. And then you add your own little talent to making different kinds of things, don't you?

B: That's right.

E: I noticed that you and your sister make beautiful pottery, but there's a difference even in you and your sister's pottery.

B: That's right. It's all Catawba pottery, but no two people make it alike. We all have our own way of making it, and none of it looks just alike.

E: I'm glad to see that you're signing your names to your pottery; that means a lot. Sometime recently I was here, and you were telling me at that time that you were

making pottery for Carowinds. How long did this job last, making it for the Carowinds?

B: It lasted just about one year, and then they began to get pottery—or imitation pottery—from somewhere else.

E: Well, it was good it lasted that long for you. You at least sold what you had on hand, didn't—?

B: Yes, it was good.

E: And then you've been making it in your home since that time?

B: Yes, I make it right here in my home, and I sell from my home. I don't have to go out of my home to sell it.

E: You do not even have a sign out in front of your house?

B: No, ma'am, I don't.

E: Or anywhere around? In fact, there's not a sign on the reservation for pottery, I don't believe, anywhere—is there?

B: There may be one or two. I believe there's one up at Mrs. Sanders's, and I think there's one down here at my sister's.

E: Tell me, if you will, who is making pottery now among the new age or what.

B: Georgia Harris and Nola Campbell, though she is a little bit younger than I am, and Sally Beck, Arzada Sanders—that's about all of the older ones. Edith Brown.

E: I was at the meeting in January of this year in the trailer down on the reservation near the school, and all of you brought samples of your best pottery, and it was a most interesting thing. The members of the University of South Carolina Art Department were there to see the pottery and to purchase certain pieces, and

each and every one of you had certain articles there. Was some of your pieces bought by this University of South Carolina group?

B: Yes, they selected about five of my pieces.

E: And a number of others, too, didn't they?

B: Yes, each person had just about the same number of pieces that they selected to take with them.

E: Now, tell me what happened after that.

B: Well, after they selected these pieces, they took them back to Columbia, and they started a traveling museum. They fixed the pottery and took it from town to town and put it on display. And as they went through each town and put this pottery on display, one of the potters went to that town and demonstrated pottery while the museum was there.

E: That's splendid. I hope they didn't get any of those beautiful pieces broken.

B: No, they carried well.

E: And you went, I believe, to Gastonia. Is that right?

B: Yes, I go to Gastonia once a year and demonstrate pottery making.

E: Now, where is this located?

B: I go to Shield Museum on Garrison Boulevard.

E: And you stay in Gastonia for those two days and nights?

B: No, I come home at night. I go over there in the mornings and come back home at night.

E: Do you find a number of people interested in this?

B: Oh, yes. There's just a lot of people interested.

E: Do any of them try making the pottery? Do you have enough clay to let anybody try?

B: Yes, they try! Take enough with me when I go to let anybody that wants to try. They're real interested in trying.

E: And then do you also sell your pottery?

B: Yes, I take a good supply when I go, and I sell every bit of it.

E: Well, that's wonderful. Now, tell me where the other people have been going to do this same sort of demonstration.

B: Well, Nola Campbell has gone to Greenville and to Laurens. Georgia Harris went to Abbeville, and the lady that lives in Columbia, Sarah Ayres, came to the museum here in Rock Hill, and I went to Sumter.

E: Now, do you have any other engagements? Will you be going again?

B: No, I don't think so—not this year. That was all of the engagements we had for this year.

E: And you're waiting to see what they'll do for another year?

B: That's right.

E: Well, now, is the summertime the time when you make pottery, or do you wait for wintertime?

B: Well, it's mostly made in the summertime, but we do make it in the winter, too. It's just a little hard to make it in the winter because it's easy to freeze if you don't take real good care of it.

E: And every person seems to bake theirs or fix theirs a little different way. And you do yours, and you have an oven fixed out in your yard, I believe, where you live here.

B: I just take mine out in the yard and make my fire right out on the ground, but I heat mine in the oven of my stove so that they'll all heat evenly and all heat at one time. I start putting the pottery in the cold oven, and I turn it on slowly, a few degrees at a time, until it reaches 500 degrees. Then I take these pieces of pottery out in the yard and put on the coals where I've already made a fire—start putting wood on it, and I'll put wood on it, pile it up for about two hours; just keep wood burning on it. At that time, it's fairly burning.

E: Then you never know what colors you're going to have?

B: Never know what colors are coming out. It's a surprise to us what colors have all come out of it.

E: And sometimes you get light and sometimes dark?

B: That's right. Sometimes they're red and mixed-up colors, and sometimes they real dark, all black.

E: Are the black ones any more waterproof than the lighter-colored ones?

B: No, they're the same. They're all the same; it's just the difference in the color. There's no difference in the waterproofing or anything.

E: These pots were really used by the Indians to cook in and to use in their homes?

B: That's right. When the pottery was first made, it was made because we had to make it to cook in and for carrying water—vessels for carrying water. Then a little later, when the settlers came and started to bring the Indians other cooking

vessels, well, they started then making it for trade. Ever since the settlers came, it's been just made for trade, for sale.

E: I know you're interested in what's happening up at the schoolhouse—the summer classes for pottery. Have you visited the school and seen what they're doing?

B: No, I haven't been up there. I didn't teach in any of the classes, and I haven't been up there this summer.

E: But I believe that's going on now.

B: Yes, it's going on. I think those classes will close the thirtieth of this month.

E: Now, you learned pottery making from your mother; you and your sister both did. Are you passing it on down to your children?

B: Well, I have two daughters, and one of them is interested in it. She will probably make it after I'm gone, but the other daughter is not interested, so there will be one that's left to make it. And I hope some of my grandchildren will make it.

E: And your grandchildren started making it yet?

B: Yes.

E: Do you find that your grandchildren are more and more interested in the heritage and the history of their people?

B: I believe so.

E: But do they find it difficult to find material in their schools or the libraries about the Catawba Indians?

B: No, I don't think so. I think there's quite a bit of material around that they can find.

- E: That's good, and it's good that they're interested in it. Did you hear your mother speak any of the language?
- B: No, she couldn't speak it.
- E: And so, you don't know any of the language?
- B: No, ma'am, not at all. My father was a full-blood Oneida Indian. Now, he could speak his language, but he never did because there was nobody to talk with.
- E: Well, I noticed such a difference in the roads on the reservation and the schools, especially, Mrs. Blue. And I'm sure you notice that, too, didn't you?
- B: Whole lot. There's quite a bit of improvement.
- E: Mrs. Blue, I understand that you get your clay over from the Nesbitts in Fort Mill. Now, from your house, will you tell me how we go to get that clay?
- B: From my house, you go down towards Catawba and cross the river at Bowater bridge. Go to Van Wyke and turn left, and then go up the old Van Wyke road 'til you get to Nesbitts' home place. Then from there, you turn left to go down there to the river bottom to get to the clay.
- E: Now, I understand that Mr. Nesbitts always say the clay is for their friends, the Catawba Indians.
- B: That's right. They don't want anyone else to go down in there. At one time, about five or six years ago, the Cherokee started to go down in there. They don't have clay up there like we do, and they started to taking it away by the truckful, and they objected right away when they found it out. They just put a stop to it right away because they were taking it away like that. They stopped them.
- E: And do you get both kinds of clay there?

B: No, we have to go one place for one kind of clay and another place for another.

E: And you get both kinds of clay from the Nesbitt family?

B: No, one clay is on a farm that belongs to a Black family, but they've never objected either. They let us go down in there and get the clay.

E: Well, I hope there'll be enough clay to last you for a long time.

B: Well, I hope so.

[End of interview]

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