



**Clarinda Bradford
Fishnet Maker**

Clarinda Bradford was a native of Nebo, Louisiana and had been making fishing nets since the early 1930s. At the time of her death, Mrs. Bradford was one of a few remaining net weavers in Louisiana. She learned to weave nets after she married John Breland, "one of the Breland boys from the Catahoula homestead." She says she married the boy next door, although she pointed out that the doors were a little farther apart then than they are today. Her husband continued his family's tradition of making a living by commercial fishing in Catahoula Lake and Little River. After their marriage, she became the net weaver while her husband made the wooden frames for the nets and did the actual fishing.

There were several kinds of nets to be made for different fishing conditions. For example, the dip net had to be large because it was used to catch catfish up to 65 or 70 pounds. The hoop nets were another type of net used, especially in Little River when the current was strong. The hoop nets were funnel shaped with a large wooden hoop made of white or basket oak at the top, and a series of smaller hoops down to the end. The nets also had flues so the fish could swim in but couldn't swim out. Among the other nets woven by Mrs. Bradford were trammel nets and seine nets.

Sometimes, nets would get torn or have to be cut if they got snagged on hidden logs. Mrs. Bradford would then have to repair the net by weaving in a patch. The weaving was usually done using cotton or linen. The cotton nets had to be dipped in tar so they wouldn't rot. Later, nylon was used so the nets no longer had to be dipped. The Brelands got their net making supplies from nearby Jonesville.

After John Breland's death in 1976 she married Spencer "Pete" Bradford in 1984. Mrs. Bradford didn't make the nets to sell anymore. Her one child, a daughter, didn't learn to make the nets, so it will likely become a lost art. Mrs. Bradford made nets for demonstration at folk festivals and craft shows.

Mrs. Bradford participated at the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival, the Catahoula Lake Festival, the Louisiana Folk Festival, and at local schools and museums. In 2000, the Louisiana Folklife Center happily announced that Mrs. Clarinda Bradford was inducted as one of the Hall of Master Folk Artists. Mrs. Bradford died May 9, 2012.

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