

December 20, 1968

T-360

Index side #2, first half. Recording time 15 minutes.

Informant: Henry Longtail, 65-year-old full blood Shawnee,  
Vinita, Craig County, Oklahoma.

Subject: Jake Abraham Longtail (1847 - 1941)  
Longtail Shawnee Indian Cemetery.  
Removal of Shawnees from Kansas,  
and other history of Indian Territory

Henry Longtail is the only one living of the twelve children of the Jake Longtail family. Henry farmed his old homeplace for many years eight miles northwest of Vinita on Pawpaw Creek, but left the farm and worked as a carpenter in Vinita until he retired. Henry married Mary Chambers, a Cherokee, and they have raised six children. Both he and his wife are in ill health and spend their days in the quiet and comfort of their little home north of Vinita.

All of the children of Jake and Amanda Longtail were born and raised at their homeplace on Pawpaw Creek. The Longtails were the only Shawnees living in a large Cherokee community. The respect and esteem in which Jake Longtail was held by his friends and neighbors is seldom attained by the average man. Jake was born December 28, 1847 at what is now Shawnee Mission, Kansas, and lived to be over 93 years old.

From this interview with his son Henry, a part of the story of Jake Longtail is revealed. The history of the Shawnees parallels the well known story of other Indian tribes. After prior moves, the Shawnees had established themselves in eastern Kansas in what is now Shawnee County sometime early in the Nineteenth Century. This was one of the tribe's last efforts to live in peace with his white brother, but again their efforts met with miserable failure. That old Shawnee country must have been rich in fertile lands and wonderful streams to so excite the want and greed of their white brothers that they would want to take their land from them. So bent were the white men that they burned Indian homes, stole their livestock, and herded cattle through their fields of corn and wheat. The Great White Father in Washington had turned his back on the Shawnees, and left them to the mercy of a few bureaucrats. In that day when might seemed to be right, the Shawnees were flatly told to move to Indian Territory where the Cherokees would take care of them. They did leave Kansas to travel the only avenue of home left to them. They left in small groups starting as early as 1860. Little is known of Jake Longtail's father, but it is believed that he was killed by whitemen at his Kansas home. Jake Longtail and his mother came south with one of the first groups in 1861, when he was 14 years old, in a wagon pulled by oxen. His group of Shawnees camped one night on Pawpaw Creek in Indian Territory. He and his mother liked the place and here they put up their teepee and stayed. They immediately set about building a log house, while the other Shawnees moved on a few miles farther south to settle in what is now known as Shawnee Hills.