

TA 400
April 15, 1969.

Index side B, second part, recording time 15 minutes; interview time 1½ hours.

Informant: Kermit Beck, 64-year-old Cherokee, of Flint Community
Delaware County, Oklahoma

Subject: On this visit Mr. Beck was found repairing a fence down by the creek on his farm. He stopped to talk freely about this old settlement.

Kermit, and his cousin Roy Beck, are of the fourth generation of the Beck family who established themselves along Flint Creek. These two live across the creek from each other, and are the last of the Becks living in this area.

Joseph Beck, born 1803 and died 1863, stemmed from the Arkansas-Texas Cherokees and came up into what was to become the Cherokee Nation before the forced removal of the Cherokees in 1838. Joseph and some others of his family are believed to have come to the Flint Creek country sometime about 1830. Joseph Beck and his wife, Cintha, lived out their lives in this community, where he died in 1863. ~~Joseph~~ and Cintha Beck, and others of their family are buried in the little Beck Family Cemetery on a little hill northeast of the old homestead.

The Becks prospered as they cleared and farmed in the rich valley. In 1845 Joseph Beck and Steve Hildebrand became partners in a sawmill, which they located and built a short distance upstream of the old homestead. At the same time they built a grist mill, and had the six hundred pound burrs shipped from France to New Orleans, then by steamboat up the rivers to Ft. Gibson, and finally to Flint by ox team. Except for the years during the Civil War the mill prospered, and for some reason was spared destruction during the War. Aaron Beck, a son of Joseph, learned the mill trade from his father, who in turn taught Thomas Beck, the father of Kermit the trade. Kermit owns the mill which is well preserved and could be put in operation, even though it has not operated for 25 years. In 1892 a flood washed the mill away at its original location. Kermit's father rebuilt the mill, which is the present three and a half story structure. The mill was relocated this time about 400 yards downstream on the east bank of Flint Creek. A very interesting part of this mill is the mill race. His father paid two Irishmen \$2000 in gold to construct this millrace which was eight feet square and over a thousand feet long. To reach the relocated mill the millrace was cut and blasted through solid rock. The workmanship on this race was excellent as the walls are almost perfect. The water powered mill ground wheat and corn into flour and meal. In connection was a sawmill and planing mill, as well as a section where shingles were manufactured. Long ago when there was lots of large timber in the area the Beck mill sold lumber to the Silliam Springs market. Also after seventy years the timber inside the present mill is in excellent condition. All of the lumber used in construction of the mill came from the surrounding hills and from the large pine trees that grew in those days. The joists are all 4x12s and the upright supports are 10x10, which tell of the size logs that were cut for the sawmills in those early days.