

DOWNING, HENRY

INTERVIEW

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The Proctor and Beck Fight  
In the Going Snake District.  
As told by  
Henry Downing, of Nowata, Oklahoma.  
Written By Alfred F. Hicks,  
Field Worker.

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This fight was, as near as I can remember, in the year of 1870, and it all started because Proctor killed an aunt of the Beck boys by the name of Polly Hilderbrand. But Proctor claimed that he killed her accidentally, that he was after a man by the name of Kesterson, and this woman (Polly Hilderbrand) run in between them and he shot her instead of the man. Now this was Proctor's story.

Now the Beck boys claimed he intended to kill the woman because he was angry at her. She was the cause of Proctor being put out as Sheriff of the Going Snake District just before this happened and he (Proctor) was angry at her.

The Proctor trial was going on at the time the fight started. The Beck boys knew that Proctor was going to come clear, so they went there to kill him. The trial was held in the Court House in the Going

Snake District on a small Creek by the name of Baron Fork, near what is now Christie, Oklahoma, on the Frisco Rail Road.

White Sut. Beck went to the door of the Court House and had a Double Barrel Shot Gun of an old fashioned type loaded with Buck Shot. He put the gun right against Zeke Proctor's breast and said to him: "Now, old man, I have got you". Mr. Proctor was standing near the door at the time that Beck put the gun on him, and his brother, Johnson Proctor was sitting on a seat near his brother Zeke, and he grabbed the gun and pushed it down; then Sut Beck pulled it off, and the shot went off and hit Zeke Proctor in the lower parts of the legs. Johnson Proctor, Zeke's brother still held on to the gun, and Sut Beck said he hated to have to shoot him, but he had to, to get him lose from the gun; so he pulled a pistol out of his pocket and shot him dead.

After all this happened, Beck turned around to see where all the boys were that were with him when

the fight started and he saw most all of them were killed, so he took out his knife and made a run for his horse. When he got to where his horse was tied he did not wait to untie him; he just cut the rope and jumped on him and made a run to get away. He, Mr. Beck, was never hit in all the shooting, until he was a long ways from the shooting, and a bullet hit him, but he was far enough away that the shot did not have enough force to hurt him. This is what they called a spent bullet.

These men did not meet again until Joel B. Mayes was elected Chief of the Cherokees at Tahlequah, Oklahoma, when both men were there, and their friends got them to make up, and shake hands, which they did, and they walked along about twenty or thirty feet, and parted, and that was the end of the Proctor and Beck Fight.

There were eleven men killed in the fight at the Court House, I did not know four of them.

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Two of them were United States Marshals, and the other two were Indians. The seven I knew were: George Selvedge, Willie Hicks, Johnson Proctor, Andy Pelone, Sam Beck, Bill Beck, and Black Sut. Beck.

This story I learned when I was a small boy from my parents as both the Beck's and the Proctor's were relatives of mine. And many a time I was made to sit in a corner in a room at our home and listen to the story.

This story was never written before.