

ALEXANDER LAWRENCE POSEY

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cone he acted as librarian on Sundays and set type after school on week days. In 1896 he was Superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum at Okmulgee.

The same year he was elected to the House of Warriors, the popular branch of the Creek Legislature. He was sent to every conclave concerned in the Indian Territory on behalf of the Indians until this Territory became a part of the State of Oklahoma.

In 1896, Posey married Miss Minnie Harris of Fayetteville, Arkansas. Posey's account of their meeting and marriage is a romance within itself, and to her, and his two children, Wenema and Yahola, are dedicated many of his beautiful poems.

In 1897 he resigned his position at the Orphan Asylum and was soon after appointed Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Creek Nation. He resigned this position to go to his farm, which consisted of several hundred acres. While on the farm he contributed to the Indian Journal, and as he had such executive ability and was the most learned of the Creeks, the High School at Eufala, being in need of competent management, he very reluctantly, after much persuasion by his people, accepted the superintendency. He put the administration of the Eufala High School on a satisfactory basis; he was urged to do the same for the Wetumpka National School, which he did. He then returned to Eufala and took editorial charge of the Indian Journal, which he edited a little more than two years. He then was employed by the Muskogee Times. At this time there was so much work to be done by the United Indian Agency and for the good of his people and the Five Civilized Tribes that Posey resigned his position with the Muskogee Times. The Dawes' Commission, (named for Senator Dawes of Massachusetts) needed him to settle their affairs. In each tribe were many that refused to accept their allotments of land and to surrender their tribal authority. Chief Crazy Snake was the leader of this faction in the Creek Tribe. Posey saw the future, and that if any Indian failed to take his allotment that he would be the loser, as this land would go to any one who might choose to have it allotted to himself. Many of the Creeks were "lost Indians"—married into other tribes, wandered away and settled elsewhere. They were to be found and enrolled. Many babies were born after the rolls were closed. They were to be found. Posey was prevailed upon to do this work. There was a great opportunity for Posey to be of service to his people. Outside of the reward that every man must feel from service to their fellowmen Posey sacrificed much (for his compensation was

small) to do this important and necessary work.

When the work of the Dawes' Commission was completed Posey left Muskogee and set out for Eufala, intending to buy the Indian Journal. "Alas! it was a fatal journey," for a part of the railroad had been washed out and he and friends attempted to cross the North Canadian River in a boat and he was drowned May 27, 1908. His death was not only an individual tragedy, it was a tragedy to his people, his work, his day.

"Chinubbie Harjo," was Posey's pen name. It had a peculiar significance. It was the same to the Creeks as Hiawatha was to the Iriquois, and Manabozho was to the Algonquins. It meant a man endowed with supernatural powers but burdened with many of the foibles, limitations and weaknesses of humanity.

The tenderness of Posey's lyrical moods is exquisitely expressed in the following poem, "Come."

Above,
The stars are bursting into bloom,
My love;
Below, unfolds the evening gloom;
Come, let us rove the long lane thru,
My love, just as we use to do.
The birds
Of twilight twitter, sweet and low,
And fly to rest, and homeward go.
The herds,
Come, let the long lane lead us as it will,
My love, a winding thro' the evening still.
Behold,
How now the full-blown stars are spread,
Like large white lilies overhead!
But fold
They must, and fade at gray daylight,
My love; they blossom but at night.
The moon,
My love, uncurls her silv'ry hair;
And June
Spills all her sweetness on the air.
Come, let us roam the long lane thru,
My love, just as we used to do.

William Elsey Connelly closes his "Memoirs" of Oklahoma's Indian poet with this fitting tribute: "He was the apostle of nature. As long as men are moved by the beautiful in nature they will read the words and bless the memory of this bard of the Creeks—the poet of America's aboriginal people."

In significance to the tragedy of this Indian poet, his poem, "Fancy," makes it a kind of epitaph, or elegy:

Why do trees along the river
Lean so far out o'er the tide?
Very wise men tell me why, but
I am never satisfied;
And so I keep my fancy still,
That trees lean out to save
The drowning from the clutches of
The cold, remorseless wave.