

SONG OF THE OKTAHUTCHE: THE COMPLETE  
JOURNALS AND POEMS OF  
ALEXANDER POSEY

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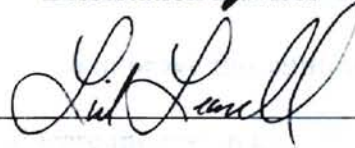
SONG OF THE OKTAHUTCHE: THE COMPLETE

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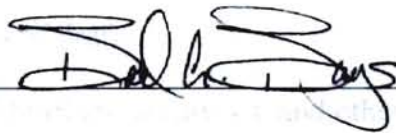
ALEXANDER POSEY

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Alexander Posey, 1900. From Minnie H. Posey, comp. *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey* (Topeka: Crane, 1910).

### September 27, 1905: Alexander Posey Visits Chitto Harjo

It was a fine day in Indian Territory, a day marked by “beautiful weather” and “Autumn leaves falling.” At least that is how Alexander Posey describes it in his journal, and as he had spent much of the day riding in a wagon through the Brush Hill region of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, he of all people would know. Detailing his trip in his journal Posey writes, “Cross the North Canadian at the Rock Ford—I prefer the Creek name Oktahutche to North Canadian—The river falls over a stone bottom at Rock Ford and its roar can be heard afar off.”<sup>1</sup>

The Oktahutche River meanders through both Posey’s poems and journals, and as a muse even rivaled his wife, Minnie. Posey’s entire life was tied to the Oktahutche, and as Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. writes, the young man “had grown up near the river, swum in it, fished in it, written about it and taken float trips to observe the plants and animals along its banks.”<sup>2</sup> Posey so loved this river that in his poem, “Song of the Oktahutche,” he gives it voice, allowing the river to speak through the young poet’s words. One stanza reads:

O’er shoals of mossy rocks and mussel shells,  
Blue over spacious beds of amber sand,  
By cliffs and coves and glens where Echo dwells—

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Posey, September 27, 1905, “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party,” folder 38, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *Alex Posey: Creek Poet, Journalist, and Humorist*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 2. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

Elusive spirit of the shadow-land—

Forever blest and blessing, do I go,

A wid'ning in the morning's roseate glow.<sup>3</sup>

This stanza reveals the character of Posey's literary imagination. His poetry—drawing heavily upon romantic, European and Euro-American influences such as Robert Burns and John Greenleaf Whittier—becomes a sort of Indian Territory pastoral. Posey's verse describes a world in which the Greek nymph Echo shares a river with Stechupco, the "Tall Man" spirit of the Muscogees.

Such is the weakness and the strength of Alexander Posey's poetry. It arises from Muscogee cultural tradition and the landscape of Indian Territory, but then is filtered through a screen of thoughtful, yet problematic, emulation. Posey wrote the largest catalog of American Indian poetry of his day, and at that time it represented some of his most popular work. As Littlefield points out, many of Posey's "poems are marked by...sentimentality, halting lines, and weak endings," but at moments they also reveal "striking, sometimes brilliant images" (105). Such images also fill Posey's journals, which are fascinating accounts of the life of a remarkable American Indian figure in turn-of-the-century Indian Territory, a land in many ways darkened by the looming shadow of Oklahoma statehood. Often poetic themselves, Posey's journals and other works of life-writing in some ways represent his best and most important work. His journals, less encumbered by artificial forms and conventions, allow a clearer view of the man and his concerns.

Yet, little did Posey know, as his wagon forded his favorite river in 1905, that in a little over two years when again crossing the Oktahutche, he would drown. The untimely

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Posey, "Song of the Oktahutche," *Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine* 1 (1906): 92.



death of the famous Muscogee would cause some local newspapers to reprint another of his river poems, "Fancy":

Why do trees along the river

Lean so far out o'er the tide?

Cold reason tells one 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.<sup>4</sup>

Those with more of a penchant for sensationalism than accuracy would falsely claim that Posey had recently written the poem after a premonition of his own death (5), but he actually penned it years before. Some Muscogees saw Posey's ironic and early demise as a sign he had been punished, possibly by figures from the Muscogee spiritual world, for what they saw as his betrayal of his own people. In an obituary for Posey, his friend, Muscogee writer Charles Gibson states, "He loved the old river that in a moment of rage extinguished his young life."<sup>5</sup> Contemporary Muscogees, such as Craig S. Womack, still echo these sentiments: "some say, Posey was drowned by Tie-Snake, swallowed up by the very river he loved, the Oktahutche."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Posey, "My Fancy," manuscript dated June 29, 1897, folder 83, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Gibson, "Gone Over to See," *Indian Journal*, June 5, 1908.

<sup>6</sup> Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 133. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

While in the years since his death scholars have defined Posey as a poet, a politician, a journalist, an orator, a humorist, an educator, and even a gentleman farmer, but as he rode along the rural roads of his beloved nation in September of 1905, his official title was that of interpreter for the United States government's Dawes Commission "Creek Enrollment Field Party." Beside him in the wagon sat a Euro-American stenographer and notary public named Drennen C. Skaggs, and as Posey writes, their job was to:

secure additional evidence in applications for enrollment, search for "lost Creeks" and conciliate the "Snakes". We were detailed for this work in October of last year; and though we have labored steadily and strenuously ever since, the end is not yet. There is more evidence to be secured, more "lost Creeks" to be found and more "Snakes" to be conciliated...the work must be done on the roadside, at the hearthside and in the cotton patch.

(Posey, "Creek Enrollment Field Party," September 27, 1905)

Posey and Skaggs were working to find as many unenrolled Muscogees as possible, many of them children, and to sign them up for the 160 acre allotments of land the United States government designated, under its own laws, as the right of all individual Muscogee tribal members.

Indian Territory politics were rarely simple, and while some tribal members looked forward to the private allotment of land, another group viewed Posey's work with the Dawes Commission as treachery. So-called "progressive" Muscogees, like Posey, saw the allotment of land as the best way to survive the encroachment of Euro-Americans. However, another group, the "conservatives" or "traditionalists" that boasted

a large membership of full-bloods, recognized the allotment of land, along with the dissolution of tribal sovereignty that came with it, as a policy that would prove disastrous for the Muscogees and their traditions. At various times in his life Posey seemed to agree with this “conservative” assessment, but while he highly admired the traditionalists of his tribe, he still viewed them as a backward remnant of a fading world (Littlefield 9).

Nevertheless, it was a world filled with figures and traditions that Posey still cherished. After describing their fording of the Oktahutche, Posey writes, “In the olden days the Indians used to poison fish here, and on such occasions the people gathered in great numbers from the country round about to participate in the sports.” In referring to the age-old Muscogee practice of the fish kill—during which pools of water were treated with root extracts from the honey locust to catch stunned fish—Posey hints at how the influence of his own Muscogee culture permeates every level of his experience.<sup>7</sup> At times his reverence for the people and practices he saw as cultural relics crosses the border into romanticism. For him the conservative Muscogee full-bloods were misguided yet admirable people, and perhaps no single figure better represented this for Posey than Chitto Harjo.

One of the most influential Conservative leaders, Chitto Harjo’s name roughly means “Crazy Snake.” This was the name Euro-Americans frequently called him, dubbing his followers “Snakes.” In 1902 Harjo became locally famous for leading what was termed the “Crazy Snake Rebellion” when he and his followers formed their own government and began harassing Muscogees who had agreed to receive allotments (Littlefield 143). Harjo and about one hundred of his followers were subsequently

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<sup>7</sup> David Lewis, Jr. and Ann T. Jordan, *Creek Indian Medicine Ways: The Enduring Power of Mvskoke Religion*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 83. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

rounded up and jailed for weeks before their sentences were waived on the promise that they would cease all such activity in the future (144). As editor of the *Eufaula Indian Journal*, Posey covered the story of the “uprising” and had interviewed Chitto Harjo about his plight. So, as it happened on that September day in 1905, Posey and Skaggs were not only on a mission to “conciliate” the “Snakes,” but to talk to their leader himself.

After fording the Oktahutche, Posey and Skaggs passed through the small town of Brush Hill. His description of the people he sees allows a peek at several facets of his character, some less than flattering:

Brush Hill is a country post office, consisting of one stone building and school house which is also used as a place of worship and other public gatherings—The school house is packed with pupils, mostly white with a sprinkling of Indian children—A big, overgrown fullblood boy sitting by an open window gives us the “highball” as we place, displaying a fine set of teeth like Roosevelt—A little farther on we pass a negro school swarming with young Africa. (Posey, “Creek Enrollment Field Party,” September 27, 1905)

As this passage suggests, Posey was a complicated man when it came to issues of race. While he lamented the encroachment of Euro-Americans into Indian Territory, he saw the increasing number of white faces as an inevitable symptom of progress. Nevertheless, as an educated, mixed-blood Muscogee, Posey did not completely identify with the traditionalist full-bloods he saw as champions of a praiseworthy, but lost, cause. His open

racism against those of African descent was both the ugliest fault of his character and a strong reminder of the enigmatic, even contradictory, nature of his opinions.

While this particular entry in Posey's journal only hints at how he divided the world in terms of racial categories, his penchant for ridiculing African Americans and African Muscogees—also called freedmen—in his fiction, poetry, and even in his newspaper articles, leaves little doubt about his racist views. Just one month before, Posey had published the following poem, titled "A Freedman Rhyme," in the *Muskogee Democrat*:

Now de time fer ter file  
Fer yo' Freedman chile.  
You bettah lef' dat watermelon 'lone  
An' go look up some vacant lan'  
Fer all dem chillun what you t'ink is yone.  
De good lan' aint a-gwine ter last  
Twell Gabul blow de Judgment blast.  
Hits miltin' like snow  
Up eroun' Bristow;  
Dey'll be none lef' but rocks an' river san'.  
De Injun filin' mighty fast;  
Bettah hump Yo'se'r, nigger,  
An' gin ter kin' 'o figger.<sup>8</sup>

Posey's degrading poem attacks those African Muscogees who, after the Civil War, obtained full citizenship in the nation **including the right to equal allotments of land.**

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<sup>8</sup> "A Freedman Rhyme," *Muskogee Democrat*, August 19, 1905.

Taken along with Posey's "Uncle Dick" tales—stories in which he attempts to derive humor from racist portrayals of Muscogee freedmen—his bigotry assumes a form that cannot simply be chalked up to the unfortunate atmosphere of the times. Such prejudice stands as a good example of how Posey, a man who in his orations and writings vehemently condemns Euro-American racism against American Indians, was himself a racist. Ironically, according to an entry in the journal of his good friend G. W. Grayson, Posey's own maternal grandmother was "so much mixed with negro blood as to appear very much like a full blood negress."<sup>9</sup>

After passing through the racially diverse town of Brush Hill, Posey and Skaggs managed to "secure some testimony in the hayfield"—most likely related to the whereabouts of a "lost Creek." Such "lost" people were recorded but missing Muscogee citizens who workers for the Dawes Commission hoped to verify and enroll. After completing this portion of their work, the two men then "drive to Widow Lerblance's place for dinner but find no one about the house" (Posey, "Creek Enrollment Field Party," September 27, 1905).

So it was about dinnertime when the Creek Enrollment Field Party wagon pulled up to Chitto Harjo's 120 square foot log cabin. What followed was one of the most historically and culturally important discussions ever to take place in Indian Territory, a discussion recorded only in Posey's journal. Posey, who certainly realized the significance of the man before him, writes, "the famous leader of the Snake Faction welcomes us rather coldly" (Posey, "Creek Enrollment Field Party," September 27, 1905). Despite his less than congenial reception of the men, Chitto Harjo offered these

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 201.

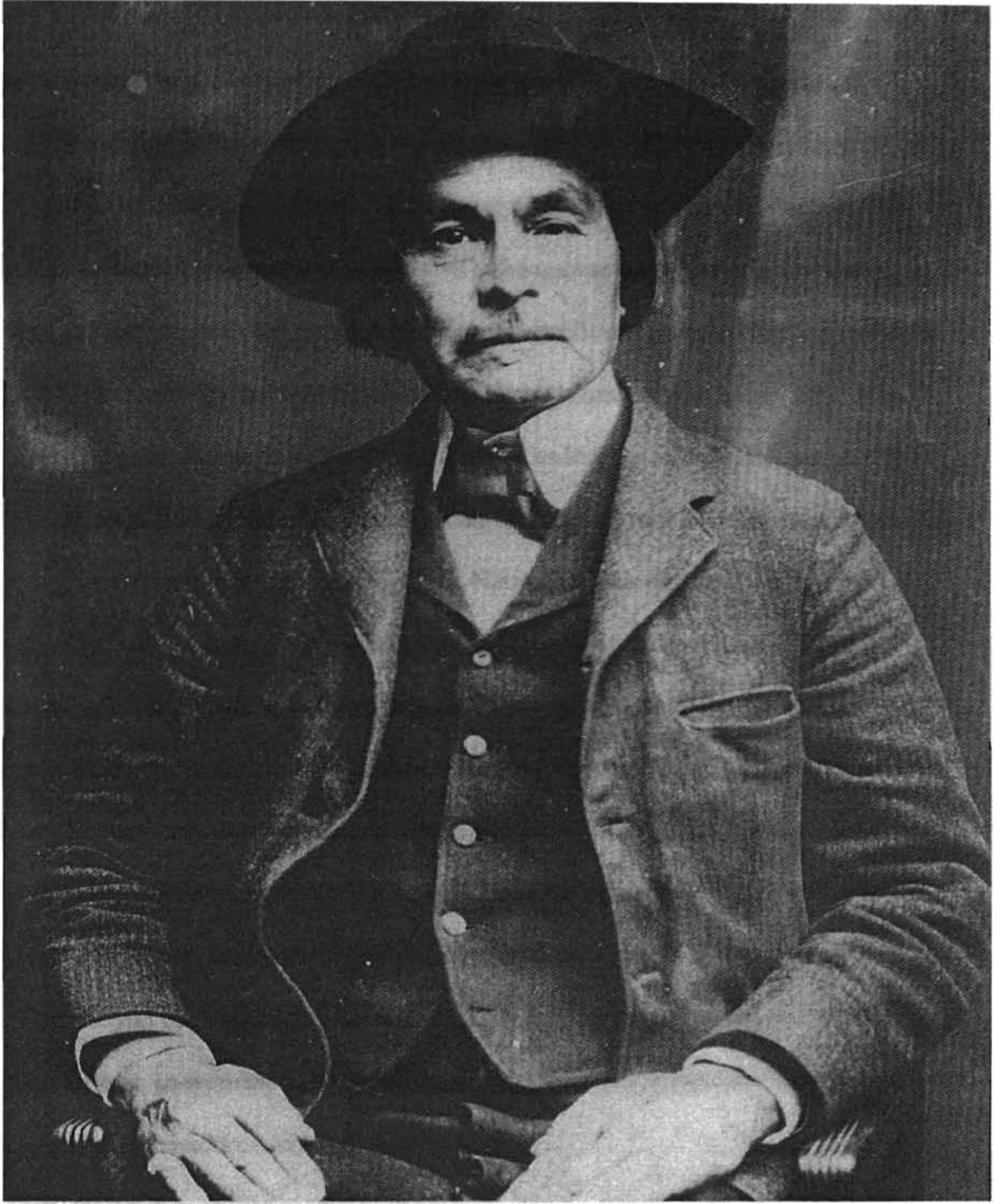
fieldworkers for the Dawes Commission—an entity representing everything he had fought, and even been jailed, for—his only two chairs. The fifty-one year-old Muscogee political and spiritual leader then took a seat on the ground in front of his doorway and listened to what Posey had to say.

Posey writes that after Harjo discovered they were there to “get his testimony,” information meant to help them find certain tribal members for enrollment, the leader then began to “express himself fully and forcibly upon the whole Indian question.” Posey frames Harjo’s words by writing that “Among other things he says, ‘I shall never hold up my right arm and swear that I take my allotment land in good faith—not while water flows and grass grows. God in yon bright firmament is my witness’” (Posey, “Creek Enrollment Field Party,” September 27, 1905). These words were ostensibly spoken by one of the most important American Indian activists of that time, written down by one of the period’s most influential American Indian literary figures. But from this entry arises a question: is this what Chitto Harjo really said to Posey that day?

These sentiments attributed to Harjo in Posey’s journal certainly match the leader’s stance on the issue of enrollment and tribal sovereignty. In Posey’s transcription Harjo even paraphrases General Lewis Cass’s famously broken promise that the Treaty of 1832 would insure Muscogee control of their western lands “as long as the grass grows and the rivers run.” Cass’s words would later become “a slogan of challenge against a further invasion of their tribal domain, in future years.”<sup>10</sup> However, there are several lines in Posey’s transcription of Chitto Harjo’s words that the young writer, for some unknown reason thoroughly crossed out.

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<sup>10</sup> John Bartlett Meserve. “Chief Opothleyahola.” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 9.4 (1931): 442.



Chitto Harjo (1846-1909?), leader of the Snake Faction. Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society, no. 1201.



These obscured lines must fall under what Posey terms the “other things he says.” For the most part these portions of Posey’s original transcription remain indecipherable, but some parts, such as the following passage, remain visible despite his efforts:

Feeling somewhat impaired in health today” he [Chitto Harjo] says, “I have been sitting up here wondering what is to become of us at last. According to treaty this land was to be ours as long [indecipherable section] I can see no hope for the majority of our people. Nothing can save them except the restoration of [their] rights and of which they have been robbed, but nothing will be restored so as long had [we] each member the good [indecipherable section] If all our leading men had [indecipherable section] everywhere in the Creek Nation and has claimed most of our leaders. (Posey, “Creek Enrollment Field Party,” September 27, 1905)

Though mostly incomprehensible, these fragments nevertheless indicate two things: Chitto Harjo had more to say on the problems of the Muscogee Nation, and Posey wanted it obscured. It seems that Posey purposely omits Chitto Harjo’s lament that the nation had few capable leaders. Maybe Posey left this out because he interpreted it as a criticism of himself, a stinging comment on Posey’s failure to serve as the type of leader Harjo wanted. This section of Posey’s journal represents by far the largest and most deliberate of his cancellations. In wondering about his motive for such a substantial deletion two main factors should be addressed.

First, Posey is most likely translating Chitto Harjo’s words from Muscogee into English. As those deleted portions that remain discernable do not appear to differ too substantially in spirit from Posey’s final transcription, it is possible he revised—or

scrapped altogether—certain sentences depending upon how well he liked his translation. The Muscogee language also features both subtle oral nuances and a verb structure far different from that of English. Even for Posey, who was a master of both languages, translating complicated Muscogee sentiments into English was no small task.

A second factor that complicates Posey's depiction, and possibly his censorship, of Chitto Harjo was that Posey, as he did with other tribal traditionalists, harbored a complicated form of admiration for the man. As Littlefield points out, Posey "romanticized the famous leader, presenting him as a noble savage as he had been prone to do with the...other 'relics' of earlier Creek times" (144). The best evidence of Posey's problematic respect for Chitto Harjo resides in his poem, "On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake, January, 1900"

Down with him! chain him! bind him fast!

Slam to the iron door and turn the key!

The one true Creek, perhaps the last

To dare declare, "You have wronged me!"

Defiant, stoical, silent,

Suffers imprisonment!

Such coarse black hair! such eagle eye!

Such stately mien!—how arrow-straight!

Such will! such courage to defy

The powerful makers of his fate!

A traitor, outlaw, —what you will,

He is the noble red man still.

Condemn him and his kind to shame!

I bow to him, exalt his name!<sup>11</sup>

This description of Chitto Harjo as a “noble red man” of “stately mien” tell us much more about Posey than about his romanticized subject. Sentiments such as these certainly complicate not only any consideration of Posey’s opinion of Chitto Harjo, but also of his character in general. Given his work as an advocate of allotment and a fieldworker for the Dawes Commission, such moments, almost make Posey seem self-contradictory. After all this is the same person who would in 1907—in a decision that remains difficult to understand other than as an act of greed—serve as a real estate agent, facilitating the sale of surplus Muscogee allotments to United States citizens and companies. Again, the question of Posey’s motives arises, and again it is left largely unanswered. What clues remain exist in his writing.

In describing the end of his brief meeting with Harjo, Posey comments: “the women are busy setting the table out in the yard under a tree; but Chitto does not ask us to break bread with him, and we drive away hungry.” For a member of a culture that prides itself upon hospitality and manners, Chitto Harjo’s failure to invite the men to eat was not an oversight, and the gesture speaks volumes. The men continue on and Posey writes, “in Deep Fork bottom we meet an Indian woman who gives us the information we sought to obtain from Chitto.” On their way home the men run into some trouble: “just as we are driving down to the North Canadian, Skaggs recklessly strikes a stump and breaks

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<sup>11</sup> “On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake, January, 1900,” *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 88.

one of the brace rods on the tongue of the buggy. After considerable hammering and wrapping we repair the injured vehicle and proceeded on our journey” (Posey, “Creek Enrollment Field Party,” September 27, 1905). Though having written only sentences earlier that he “prefer[s] the Creek name Oktahutche to North Canadian,” he, for some reason, refers to his beloved river by its English name.

Posey’s writing remains enjoyable and of great literary and historical value. The Alexander Posey who lives on in his journals and poems believes that the “progressive” strategy of coping with the United States government would at least allow for some preservation of the Muscogee culture. While he at times viewed his culture’s past through an unrealistic, romanticized veil, he was genuinely concerned about its future. When examined as a whole, Posey’s writing portrays a figure not so much torn between loyalties, as trying to pursue his dreams at one of the darkest moments in Muscogee history. His journals and poems are a record of those dreams, and they remain some of the best works of a talented, yet enigmatic, Muscogee writer.

### **The Muscogee (Creek) Nation: A Brief Historical Context**

While the scope of this edition does not allow for a detailed account of the historical and cultural aspects of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, a brief overview of Muscogee history leading up through Alexander Posey's life helps situate his work and place his complex personal and political beliefs within a proper context—especially as they relate to the bifurcation of the nation into so-called “progressive” and “conservative” groups. Fortunately, several excellent books on the Muscogees exist, and a list of these works is provided at the end of this book. In particular, the following—each written or heavily contributed to by members of the Muscogee Nation—are ideal sources from which to begin learning more about this rich culture. Jean Chaudhuri and Joyotpaul Chaudhuri's *A Sacred Path: The Way of the Muscogee Creeks* provides one of the best overviews of the contemporary Muscogee way of life. Pamela Innes, Linda Alexander, and Bertha Tilkens' *Beginning Creek: Mvskoke Emponvkv* is an excellent text from which to begin learning the Muscogee language, and it also incorporates brief essays on Muscogee life. David Lewis, Jr. and Ann T. Jordan's *Creek Indian Medicine Ways: The Enduring Power of Mvskoke Religion* details the life and practices of the only remaining initiated Muscogee medicine man. Finally, Craig S. Womack's, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* provides a thoughtful analysis of Posey's life and work and represents the most comprehensive study of Muscogee (Creek) literature to date.

Between his birth on August 3, 1873 and his death on May 27, 1908, the short-lived Posey witnessed a remarkable amount of cultural and political change to the

Muscogee Nation. In fact, he lived just long enough to see the political end of the nation itself, a nation that would not begin to recover until the 1970s. Though he was born into the Muscogee tribal town of Tuskegee, by the time Posey died the land of his birth was no longer a separate, independent entity. With Oklahoma statehood in 1907, the United States government dissolved the tribal sovereignty of the so-called “Five Civilized Tribes” (i.e., the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole Nations) and—in violation of earlier treaties—assumed jurisdiction over the land. However, the dissolution of the Muscogee Nation in 1907 was merely one of the more pronounced events in a series of tragic occurrences the nation had suffered over the previous centuries, since first encountering Europeans.

#### *Traditional Muscogee Life and European Contact*

Originating in what is present-day Alabama and Georgia, the Muscogees once represented a portion of a confederacy of autonomous towns, what archaeologists refer to as the Mississippian culture. Each of these towns boasted populations of two or three thousand people and the locations of these towns can still be found today wherever their large ceremonial mounds, some of which are about fifty feet in height, still stand (Jordan 4). Following the destruction and disease that accompanied Hernando DeSoto’s expeditions from 1539-1542, the Mississippian culture fragmented into several smaller groups, found in what is today the American southeast, the Muscogees were one of these cultural splinter groups.

After what Angie Debo calls DeSoto's "dark trail of rapine and plunder"<sup>1</sup> across the southeast, followed approximately two hundred years of undisturbed cultural growth. The Muscogees maintained the practice of organizing themselves, and conquered cultures, as a confederacy of self-governing but allied towns. Jordan writes that the towns (also called *talwas* or *tulwv*) "included speakers of nine distinct languages. Six of these—Muskogee, Alabama, Koasati, Hitchitee, Mikasuki, and Apalachee—are closely related and belong to the Muskogean linguistic group... The confederacy additionally included the Natchez, the Yuchi, and the Shawnee" (5). Thus, the Creek Confederacy was an amalgamation of many ethnic groups, each divided into various towns that, while sometimes boasting distinct linguistic traits, were united by a set of social characteristics and practices. Craig S. Womack writes that

this "swallowing up" effect is important because it demonstrates that Creeks were able to view nationalism as a dynamic, rather than a static, process. Creeks, in constant contact with other peoples... were always experiencing cultural change. Very early on, Creeks learned how to adopt not only new people but new ways of being as well. Yet Native cultures are most often analyzed as if change is something they faced only after European contact, and as if, in every instance, contact with other cultures threatens "cultural purity." (30-31)

Such assimilation of other American Indian tribes encouraged a type of cultural elasticity that would serve the Muscogees well in later years when they strove to remain a unified nation despite significant ideological differences between various internal groups. The

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<sup>1</sup> Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance: A History of the Creek Indians*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941), 26. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

Muscogee ability to absorb change would also be put to the test in the ensuing centuries as virtually every aspect of their culture, even their homes and land, came under attack by the imperialistic policies of the United States government.

Muscogee towns themselves represented a network of social and political units. As Debo explains, “The Creeks recognized peace and war as separate governmental functions and the towns were classed as White or Peace towns and Red or War towns...Each group regarded its members as ‘people of one fire’ and developed a feeling of rivalry that was almost hostile” (6-7). These towns consisted of matrilineally organized families whose houses and gardens were situated around a nucleus of important community structures. Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri explain:

each *talwa* featured a roundish, or oval, ceremonial ground. Outside the ceremonial ground were rings of scattered homes or *huti-s*, for matrilocally extended families. Additional structures such as storehouses were positioned near the family and community gardens...The *talwa* square or the community *chogo—thakko* (the big house)—in its internal spiritual sense was the center of the public life of the community in classic Muscogee life.<sup>2</sup>

This structural arrangement of the Muscogee town sometimes varied depending upon the political role assigned to it—such as its designation as a “white” peace town, or as a “red” war town—clan influences, the political atmosphere of the time, and how well a town had weathered outside war, disease, and other detrimental influences (86).

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<sup>2</sup> Jean and Joyotpaul Chaudhuri, *A Sacred Path: The Way of the Muscogee Creeks*, (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 2001), 81, 88. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.



One of the most important Muscogee cultural events was held each summer. This religious ceremony called the *posketv*, or Green Corn Ceremony, took the form of an eight-day series of social and spiritual renewal. The Muscogees would fast, as no one was allowed to eat the new corn of the season until after the *posketv*. During this ceremony criminals, excluding murderers, were pardoned for their offenses, the ceremonial town fires were extinguished and rekindled according to a complicated ritual, and the males of the tribe would drink the spiritually significant *vsse*, or black drink. The event also included dances and games that incorporated both elements of social recreation and spiritual importance (Jordan 6). Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri explain the deep significance associated with these dances, "Concepts of community, spiritual renewal, reaffirmation of equality and freedom, the blending of the four physical elements of nature, the four mind/spirits, the energy of Ibofanga, the role of differentiations, and the revisiting of the entire creation myth are all blended into the contemporary, traditional Creek stomp" (52-53).

In Muscogee culture women hold much spiritual and social power, and just as a child's town affiliation is determined by its mother's membership in that town, so is a child's clan membership determined by that of its mother. Clans represent groups associated with various important cultural elements (e.g., Wind Clan, Bear Clan, Beaver Clan, Sweet Potato Clan, Alligator Clan, etc.). Clans are highly important, life-long social groupings and the people found within the clans are considered as inter-related as

members of an individual's genetic family. Thus, "people from the same clan were absolutely forbidden to marry because it would be like marrying a close relative."<sup>3</sup>

Once a married couple bore a child it would become a member of the mother's clan, and a male relative of the mother (often her brother) would assume the educational role of the father, "he would teach the male children to hunt and fish, and would be responsible for disciplining the children. The biological father would also help, but his primary responsibility was to his sisters' children" (114-115). Such clan and town loyalties did more than just guard against intermarriages between closely related groups. The Muscogee's matrilineal, exogamous clan system created a complex network of association between members of various towns. It was an ingenious system that helped to foster good relations across spatial, ethnic, and sometimes linguistic borders. Such community cohesiveness would serve the Muscogees well in later years as they weathered wars and governmental policies that threatened to destroy their culture.

The catastrophe that DeSoto and his conquistadors unleashed upon the American Indians in 1539 foreshadowed the type of destruction later Europeans and Euro-Americans would eventually revisit upon the Muscogees. In 1733, following decades of relatively docile relations between the Muscogees, European settlers began to carve plantations out of the wilderness of what is now Georgia. Significantly, at the same time that the Muscogees began to experience prolonged contact with Europeans, they also created what was perhaps one of their first written texts. The anthropologist Ann T. Jordan points out that in 1735 the Muscogee leader Tchikilli delivered an oration at

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<sup>3</sup> Pamela Innes, Linda Alexander, and Bertha Tilken, *Beginning Creek: Mvskoke Emponvkv*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 114. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

Savannah and gave the governor of the Georgia colony, James Oglethorpe, a buffalo skin depicting the Muscogee creation myth (3-4). This buffalo skin, in relating the narrative of the origins of the Muscogee people demonstrates how written forms of that nation's culture arise at moments of contact with Europeans.

In attempting to explain Muscogee oral traditions in writing, a form of communication largely alien to the American Indians of that region, the buffalo skin narrative represents an attempt to reach across a cultural divide, an attempt to foster understanding between the two groups. The Muscogee creation myth—a fascinating account of spiritual origins and discovery—incorporates, from the outset, recognition of cultural difference between various groups. These groups are represented by animals, human communities, and other natural entities, some of which relate to the clans. The particulars of the Muscogee creation myth cannot be adequately covered in this edition; however, Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri provide an excellent account of the myth, along with a detailed discussion of its cultural and spiritual implications (14-22).

Throughout much of the eighteenth-century European powers were locked in a struggle for possession of the land that actually constituted the Muscogee territory, and the Muscogees fought to retain their home. The Muscogees, according to Jordan, “were successful in playing the English, Spanish, and French against one another and creating a balance that allowed them to maintain control of their lands and wealth” (7).

Unfortunately, at times that control slipped, and in 1747 an English trader, James Adair, managed to convince a Muscogee war party—without the permission of the nation—to attack a French settlement. Afterward, the French pressured the Muscogee leaders to punish their members who had participated in the attack. In a statement reflecting how

much power the Muscogees possessed during the middle of the eighteenth-century, and how savvy they were about the intentions of their European intruders, they sent a message threatening that “unless the French should cease their evil design to foment a civil war among them as they had among the foolish Choctaws, their garrison would be wiped out and the river would carry their blood down to Mobile” (Debo 27).

Despite their strength, the encroachment of settlers and traders took its toll on the Muscogee culture, and a split began to form among their towns. Those towns located along the Alabama River, more isolated from the influence of European expansion, became known as the Upper Creeks. The members of the other towns that occupied the Flint and Chattahooche Rivers found themselves closer to the encroaching settlements. These so-called Lower Creeks began to intermarry with the Europeans, an influence that would both alter their culture and further divide the nation in the years to come (Jordan 7-8).

### *The Red Stick War, Treachery, and Removal*

A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff writes that in 1783, after fifty years of gradual European intrusion upon Muscogee affairs, “what became a long history of large cessions of Muscogee land began when the royal governor of Georgia demanded that the nation cede two million acres of the upper Savannah River as payment for trade debts.”<sup>4</sup> Such loss of land, often under completely unjust circumstances, would become the norm for Muscogee relations with Euro-Americans.

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<sup>4</sup> A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, “Introduction,” *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*. By S. Alice Callahan, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), xxxi. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

In 1811 the Shawnee prophet Tecumseh persuaded a large faction of the Muscogee Nation to join him in his pan-Indian coalition. Tecumseh intended to form a crusade of several nations, all bent on ridding the continent of Euro-Americans. What followed was the Red Stick War of 1813-1814, a war that Debo describes as “the greatest catastrophe” in Muscogee history up to that time (76). The charismatic Tecumseh, whose orations sometimes drew crowds of thousands, promised his followers that his powerful “Dance of the Lakes” and their “use of magic red clubs would make invulnerable all Indians who would join in the holy war to expel their enemies, while...unseen powers would lead the white men into quagmires and drive them back to the Savannah” (77).

Muscogee leaders who opposed Tecumseh’s bloody cause worked to counter his sway over their people, but a significant minority of Muscogees still joined the crusade. Some saw natural phenomena, such as the coming of a comet and an earthquake as signs of Tecumseh’s power . On August 30, 1813 Tecumseh’s Red Sticks slaughtered 367 people at Fort Mims, near Mobile. Many of the dead were civilians, including women and children. Following this attack, Tecumseh’s “Red Sticks” battled an opposed coalition of Muscogee, Cherokee, Choctaw, and United States forces. A portion of these opposition forces, led by Andrew Jackson, eventually defeated the Red Sticks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Jackson’s forces reportedly killed 557 of Tecumseh’s warriors, leaving only seventy alive (79-81). In 1814 Jackson and thirty-five chiefs met at Fort Toulouse to formalize a peace treaty. Despite the fact that almost all of the nations represented at the meeting had actually fought for the United States under Jackson’s command, they were forced to agree to take responsibility for the war and cede twenty-two million acres of land to the United States (83). Alarmed by the deterioration of their

territory over the preceding years, the Muscogee Council forbade any further sales of land.

Regardless, in 1824 due to the shifty dealings of two Federal commissioners, Duncan G. Campbell and James Meriwether, along with the greed of a minority of Muscogee chiefs, they would again lose a significant portion of their land. Chiefs Etommee Tustennuggee, William McIntosh, and a host of other tribal members—many of whom had no right to speak for the nation as a whole—secretly agreed to the Treaty of Indian Springs. This treaty stipulated that the Muscogees would give up all claims to land in Georgia and part of Alabama in return for land in the west, in what is present-day Oklahoma (89). The agreement was particularly beneficial for William McIntosh who under the provisions of a supplementary treaty “was to be paid \$25,000 for his residence and 1,640 acres of improved land in the ceded tract” (89).

However, as Chief Opothle Yahola warned him, by treacherously signing the agreement, McIntosh had committed suicide. Enforcing a rule that McIntosh himself had suggested in 1811, the Muscogee Council sentenced the traitor to death. He was shot to death outside his home, which was then burned to the ground. Arguing that the Treaty of Indian Springs was not a legitimate agreement, the Muscogees refused payment. John Crowell, an Indian agent given the task of protecting Muscogee interests protested to the government, but the damage was done. By 1827 the Muscogees had lost control of their land in Georgia (98).

In just five more years another treaty would end all Muscogee claims to land in the southeast. The Removal Treaty of March 24, 1832 ceded the remaining Muscogee land in Alabama to the United States, and included a provision for self-government that

promised the end of United States influence in Muscogee affairs, but United States lawmakers quickly forgot this article. It was a provision that would repeatedly emerge in later years as the United States eroded the Muscogee Nation's sovereignty and claims to their lands in Indian Territory. Later leaders, notably Chitto Harjo, would cite this provision as proof of their unjust treatment at the hands of the United States government (99).

The events surrounding the forced removal of the Muscogees and the members of other southeastern American Indian nations from 1832-1839 represent one of the darkest moments of American history. During this time the Muscogees suffered another civil war, instigated by the Americans who found it easy to play the demoralized, often homeless Muscogees against each other (101). As Debo relates, once captured, those Muscogee factions that had fought removal saw their "men...placed in irons, and with their wailing women and children—a total of 2495 people—were forcibly removed to the West. They were in the most appalling destitution; literally naked, without weapons or cooking utensils, they were set down on their bare new land to live or die" (101).

Over the period of removal thousands of Muscogees died due to starvation and exposure. Anxious to rid the area of all Muscogees, Euro-American land speculators influenced the courts to create laws allowing the seizure of private property belonging to mixed bloods. Some Muscogees were executed for their roles in the rebellion against removal; hundreds of others were forced into slavery. A census taken as part of the proceedings for the Treaty of 1832 listed the population of the nation at 21,792. In 1859, after the Muscogees had slowly begun to rebound from the death toll, another census

listed their population at 13,537. The United States government's genocidal removal had killed approximately 40% of the Muscogee population.<sup>5</sup>

After they arrived in Indian Territory, the Muscogees found a land of abundant resources. Yet the land was wild and lacked agricultural improvements. Exhausted and demoralized, the Muscogees now faced the daunting task of breaking in a new land while they starved. Disease took its toll; many died of malaria, and as Debo writes, "the mild, sunny days of the winters alternated with short, sudden periods of intense cold, new to the experience of these southern people, and as they shivered under rude shelters and inadequate clothing great numbers died of pneumonia" (108). The survivors of the Trail of Tears found that their struggles had only begun as they started over in a new land, under the worst of circumstances.

#### *Upper and Lower Muscogees, Chattel Slavery, and the Dilemma of Christianity*

Following this brutal period of rebuilding, the Muscogees did their best to reestablish their traditional town-based system of government. However, with this gradual rebuilding of the nation, an old social rift began to widen between communities. Those towns founded and occupied by members of the Upper Creek faction, occupying the area near the confluence of the North and South Canadian Rivers, began a slow return to their traditional ways. As Muscogees had done before the arrival of the Europeans, the members of the Upper Creek towns lived and worked communally. Along with their smaller family fields located near their homes, the Muscogees helped cultivate larger communal tracts of land with each member of the town contributing to the work and

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<sup>5</sup> Michael D.Green, *The Creeks*, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990), 72, 81, 83. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.



sharing in the harvest. Even their tools, what few they had, were considered the property of the town. In rare instances when members refused to work in the communal fields, the town would penalize them by confiscating personal items until they agreed to contribute to the labor. The people of the town would also feed and care for those too old or sick to share in the town's labor (111). This system worked well for the Upper Towns, and Debo states that "by 1843 in the rich valley of the main Canadian they had one tract three miles wide and eight miles long that was one continuous field of growing corn" (111).

Those towns settled by members of the original southeastern Lower Creek communities, largely mixed-blood Muscogees highly influenced by Euro-American culture, had abandoned the communal way of life for a more "progressive" approach much closer to that of the Euro-Americans. Some of these Muscogees, a group used to living as their Euro-American neighbors had, were allowed to bring their livestock and other property with them to Indian Territory. Along with these possessions they also brought their slaves. Whereas the Upper Creeks subsisted in towns based upon communal effort and benefit, the Lower Creeks set up plantations based upon a transplanted Euro-American system of chattel slavery. Debo explains that

even during the first hard years they raised a surplus of corn, which they sold to the garrison at Fort Gibson...soon they had great plantations and ranches, each a busy industrial unit...producing corn and cattle to be shipped to distant markets...[the slaves] raised rice in the swampy land along with rivers for their food...the plantation owners lived in large, comfortable dwellings, usually double log houses with spreading

verandas, and they had rich and elegant furniture which was shipped in from the outside world. (110)

This portrait of plantation life represents the striking differences between the Upper and Lower Towns, but not all members of the Lower Towns enjoyed the benefits of the plantation system. Many of the poorer Muscogees who lived in the Lower Towns did not share in the economic surpluses that came with slavery, and on the whole, the Lower Towns suffered from a much higher rate of poverty and alcoholism (Debo 111).

Life for the slaves themselves was also far from idyllic; however, they tended to fare better than slaves owned by the Euro-Americans. Before contact with Euro-Americans, Muscogees—like many American Indian nations—made it a practice during wars with rival nations to take prisoners as trophies and to assimilate them into their towns in order to replenish their population. Predominantly women and children, these captives would eventually become members of the nation rather than a source of forced labor. After making contact with Euro-Americans, some Muscogees, particularly those in the Lower Towns who had intermarried with Euro-American slaveholders, adopted the practice of chattel slavery. Debo argues, “except on the plantations of a few mixed bloods, slavery rested very lightly upon the Creek negroes” (20). While Debo’s sentiment certainly understates the experience of slavery, the Muscogees did indeed treat their slaves less harshly than their counterparts in the United States. Some understanding of the relationship between the Muscogees and their slaves can be found in Works Project Administration (WPA) interviews that took place in the 1930s. One such interviewee, Mary Grayson, relates her experience as a slave to Muscogees in Indian Territory:

We slaves didn't have a hard time at all before the War. I have had people who were slaves of white folks back in the old states tell me that they had to work awfully hard and their masters were cruel to them sometimes, but all the Negroes I knew who belonged to Creeks always had plenty of clothes and lots to eat and we all lived in good log cabins we built.<sup>6</sup>

Other testimonies attest to a less brutal life as a Muscogee slave, some asserting that as slaves they were allowed to keep the food they grew on their own private fields and even keep firearms. Marriages between Muscogees and Africans were not uncommon, though they did become less socially acceptable as the Civil War neared.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, while the Muscogee population suffered a sharp decline after forced removal, the population of African immigrants and freedmen increased. At the time of the 1832 census there were an estimated 902 African slaves in a Muscogee nation of 22,694. By 1890 the number of Muscogees declined to approximately 10,000, but the number of freedmen and other Africans had swelled to 4,621.<sup>8</sup>

Along with the large social differences the Upper and Lower Muscogees carried with them into Indian Territory, another form of Euro-American influence, Christian missionary schools, further widened the rift between these two factions of the nation. For many Muscogees, particularly those of the more traditional Upper Towns, Christianity represented a serious threat to their culture and beliefs. Early missionaries—representing the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches—began to venture into the nation after

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<sup>6</sup> T. Lindsay Baker and Julie P. Baker, *The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 172-173.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *Africans and Creeks: From the Colonial Period to the Civil War*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 114.

<sup>8</sup> Katja May, *African Americans and Native Americans in the Creek and Cherokee Nations, 1830s to 1920s: Collision and Collusion*, (New York: Garland, 1996), 172.

1832 and paired education with indoctrination (Debo 116). In an attempt to discourage the conversion of Muscogees to Christianity, the chiefs did their best to lessen the influence of the religion. They deported missionaries, banned the act of preaching to Muscogees, and even established a law by which those caught attending church were whipped (118). Despite these efforts, Christianity soon established a strong foothold in the nation. Debo writes, “small earnest groups met secretly, sang negro spirituals and the portions of Creek hymns they could remember” (118). By 1841 the nation decided to spend its education budget on helping to establish a series of Christian boarding schools. The chiefs involved in the decision stated that while they detested the preaching that threatened their ceremonies and spiritual beliefs, they welcomed the chance to better educate their citizens (119).

### *The Civil War and Reconstruction*

In 1861 another factor further contributed to the growing rift between the Upper and Lower Muscogees, the American Civil War. At the start of the war mixed blood Muscogee representatives signed a treaty with the Confederate States of America agreeing to help the southern states combat the Union. However, many Muscogees objected to the alliance and fought on the Union side of the conflict. Just as the American Civil War divided the United States, so did it widen the rift between the “conservatives” and the “progressives,” who due to their slave-based economic system and history of southern Euro-American influence, tended to side with Confederates.

In addition to formally allying themselves with the Confederates, the same camp of Muscogee mixed bloods, though they had no real authority to do so, passed another

law meant to further connect the nation with the Confederates. This new law—agreed to while the principal chiefs were in Washington—seems almost farcical in its attempt to force a social bond between the two nations. It stipulated that all free Africans of the Muscogee nation had to pick an owner before a deadline or else be assigned to one. “Their new owners,” Debo writes, “were forbidden to dispose of them to non-citizens under pain of a fine equal to two times the value of the negro, one hundred lashes, and the loss of one ear” (143). Apparently the mixed bloods behind this law hoped to boost the number of Muscogee slave owners, thus forging a stronger alliance with the Confederates under a common cause.

As in the United States, the Civil War forced the Muscogees to fight against their own people. The Muscogees, along with all neighboring nations except the overwhelmingly confederate Chickasaws, split into two factions, the Confederates, and those who chose to side with the Union who were called the Loyal Creeks. Despite the name of the Loyal faction, they were not so much opponents of the Confederacy as proponents of the nation remaining neutral in terms of the conflict—a case best illustrated by the fact that the leader of the Loyal Creeks, Chief Opothle Yahola, had himself been a major slave owner (Jordan 15).

By the winter of 1861 the Confederate Muscogees began to attack their own people. The Loyal Creeks were eventually driven into Kansas through a series of battles with Confederate forces composed of both Indian Territory and Texas forces (150). This aggression against a group composed of hundreds of women and children led to a loss of innocent life. Debo writes that once the fugitive Loyal Creeks reached refuge in Kansas “Men, women, and children lay on the frozen ground with only the snow-encrusted

prairie grass for a bed and scraps of cloth...stretched on saplings for their sole protection against blizzards (152). According to an Army surgeon's account, scores of Muscogees died from exposure. Of those who lived, hundreds had to have limbs amputated due to frostbite (152).

At the end of the war, the United States government—in an act reminiscent of the mistreatment of Muscogees loyal to Andrew Jackson during the Red Stick War—punished the Muscogees as a whole, largely ignoring the fact that many thousands of Loyal Creeks had fought and died on the side of Lincoln's forces. With the 1866 Treaty of Cession and Indemnity, the Union punished the Muscogees in a manner that certainly surprised no one conversant with American history up to that point, by annexing Muscogee land. In addition to losing over 3 million acres to the newly reformed United States, the Muscogees were required to free their slaves and recognize them as members of the nation. Additionally, the treaty widened United States legal control of the nation and provided for the establishment of railroads. Among the list of provisions included in the treaty, the approximately 7000 Loyal Muscogees and freedmen who had suffered so much while remaining allied with the Union were to share the sum of \$100,000 “according to an investigation of their losses” (174).

In the years immediately following the Civil War, the Muscogees again found themselves rebuilding their nation. In 1867 the Confederate and Union Muscogees agreed to reunite, and they also made a significant change in their system of government. They drew up a new constitution that in the words of Angie Debo was “very brief and very badly drafted. It began with a preamble copied after that of the United States” (180). Along with several other substantial changes to the nation's former mode of government,

towns no longer served as autonomous entities with their citizens responsible for selecting their own leaders. The towns would retain their function as important ceremonial centers, but under a new two-house system similar to the United States congress, they would now appoint one representative to the so-called House of Kings and one to the House of Warriors, modeled after the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives respectively. The Muscogees also created a five-member supreme court with appointees serving four-year terms. Additionally the traditional council of chiefs would no longer represent the Muscogees at the highest level. A principal chief, chosen by a general election, would now represent the whole of the Muscogee Nation (181).

Still, with all this change a significant number of “conservative” Muscogees refused to accept the authority of the newly created constitutional system. It would take more than the creation of a new government to bridge the rift between the “progressives” and those who still viewed the old ways as best. Disagreeing with the new congressional system, some conservative towns refused to send representatives to the House of Kings and the House of Warriors, a form of protest that also left them with a further diminished say in the direction of the nation.

### *Railroads, the Green Peach War, and the Debate Over Allotment*

In the two years before Alexander Posey’s birth in 1873 the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad (commonly referred to as the M. K. & T.) finally made its way through Muscogee territory. Predictably the construction of the railroad substantially increased Euro-American influence among the nation. It also negatively contributed to the social character of the area by facilitating the arrival of what Debo argues were “a

dangerous class of intruders, enterprising adventurers who fastened themselves upon the Indian country and were determined to make it a white man's land" (197). In one of his earliest poems, "Wildcat Bill," Posey described these unwelcome Euro-American intruders:

Whoop a time er two fer me!  
Turn me loose an' let be be!  
I'm Wildcat Bill,  
From Grizzle Hill,  
A border ranger; never down'd;  
A western hero all around:  
A gam'bler, scalper, born a scout;  
A tough; the man ye read about,  
From no man's lan';  
Kin' rope a bear an' ride a buck;  
Git full on booze an' run amuck;  
Afeard o' nothin'; hard to beat;  
Kin die with boots upon my feet—  
An' like a man!<sup>9</sup>

With this short, comical poem Posey ridicules the stylized image of the Wild West that such Euro-American immigrants brought with them. Poems such as this from the young Posey also help trace the genesis of his wry and teasing brand of humor, a powerful form of social commentary he would later master in his *Fus Fixico* letters.

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Posey, "Wildcat Bill," *Indian Journal*, December 14, 1894.



The year 1873 saw yet another instance of a Muscogee loss of land when the United States required the nation to set aside a large section of its territory for the Seminoles. In the years of Posey's childhood the Muscogee nation desperately fought to reconstruct itself in the aftermath of war, genocide, cultural decay, the nefarious influence of outsiders, and the infighting that such tragedies often bring. So, in 1882, it was probably no surprise to those knowledgeable of the arguments between the conservative and the progressive factions that the festering conflict between these two cultural groups escalated into violence. Though called a war, the short-lived and mostly bloodless event was actually more of a minor political uprising. Led by the conservative leader Isparhecher, the conflict became known as the Green Peach War when troops fighting on the side of the progressive faction stole fruit from a freedman settlement's orchards (Debo 272).

The conflict came to an end in August of 1882, and eventually most of the charges of treason against Isparhecher and his followers were dismissed. A year later in August 1883, with help of Euro-American mediators, the opposing groups reconciled their differences and both agreed to abide by the Muscogee constitution after deciding upon a series of minor alterations to the document (280). In essence, the progressives had won the battle over the direction of the nation's government, but the shadow of another more substantial threat now loomed over the Muscogees. The debate over the allotment of land—and the subsequent abolishment of the Muscogee government—would soon render pointless their years of constitutional debate.

The railroads, timber industry, and the then emerging oil industry, exerted great pressure on the Muscogees to allow Euro-Americans, and their companies, the right to

expand into Muscogee territory. As both a cause and a symptom of this pressure, the United States Congress worked hard to make the individual allotment of land, and its subsequent sale to Euro-Americans by impoverished Muscogees, a reality. As the nature of the growing social and ideological rift between the conservative and progressive Muscogees might indicate, the conservatives condemned the idea of dividing their land into 160 acre plots owned by individuals, and they were especially against the sale of land to those who were not members of the nation.

On the other side of the debate the progressives argued that the economic benefits, particularly on the level of the individual, were just too great to ignore. They had seen their land—often through their own mishandling against the wishes of the conservatives—repeatedly ceded for a series of tragic causes. The progressives believed that, aside from the sheer profit to be made through the sale of land, individual ownership would unleash a new era of growth. This growth was to be seen through public resources such as better funded schools and civic amenities. The progressives were, after all, much more assimilated into the Euro-American culture, and they looked forward to the convenience and economic benefits that some threats to sovereignty—such as the railroad—brought to Indian Territory.

However the progressives described their opinion of the benefits that would follow allotment, it is impossible to overlook their own historical streak of avarice. Such characteristics had worked against the conservative cause since before Removal and was perhaps most profoundly illustrated through the events leading up to the American Civil War. Nonetheless, the debate was far from simple, and members of each side vacillated among their motives. In one of Alexander Posey's first comments on allotment, a poem

about an issue that would loom large over his entire writing career, he puts the debate this way:

To allot, or not to allot, that is the  
Question; whether 'tis nobler in the mind to  
Suffer the country to lie in common as it is,  
Or to divide it up and give each man  
His share pro rata, and by dividing  
End this sea of troubles? To allot, divide,  
Perchance to end in statehood;  
Ah, there's the rub!<sup>10</sup>

The issue of statehood was certainly a “rub” to many on both sides of the debate. As much as they relished the idea of actually owning and selling land, supporters of allotment were still uncomfortable with the idea of Oklahoma statehood. With allotment came the private ownership of land and the economic benefits involved in such ownership. However, statehood would officially end the Muscogee government and, after centuries of cultural conflict between the Muscogees and Euro-Americans, dissolve tribal sovereignty.

#### *Legal Encroachment, The Dawes Commission, and Chitto Harjo*

Much of post-contact Muscogee history is a story of steady incremental loss. Just as the United States government had whittled away and finally absorbed all of the Muscogees' original southeastern homelands, so did that same government erode the

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Posey, “[To allot, or not to allot, that is the],” *Indian Journal*, March 1, 1894.

nation's Indian Territory lands and sovereignty. With the 1866 Treaty of Cession and Indemnity the Federal government opened the way for two railroads (the Atlantic and the Pacific) to enter Indian Territory. The highly lucrative cattle industry fueled the demand for railroads, and soon Congress began to grant even more railroads the right to begin laying track in the once forbidden area. This expansion led to a legal protest by the Cherokee Nation, but the United States court system quickly ended the challenge by ruling "that the United States had the right of eminent domain across Indian Territory" (Debo 286-287).

During this time Euro-American land thieves called "boomers" continued to covertly move into Indian Territory, setting up homes and cattle ranches in flagrant disregard of laws forbidding Euro-American title to the land. Sometimes these thieves were forcibly removed by the United States Army, but most commonly they were ignored or even encouraged by newspapers editors to break the law in order to speed settlement of the area (240, 257, 316). The railroad and cattle industry-driven increase of Euro-Americans in Indian Territory created an opportunity for Congress to further erode the sovereignty of the Indian Territory nations. By 1889 the United States had set up an Indian Territory court in Muskogee, which had the right to hear cases involving disputes between American Indians, regardless of nation, and United States citizens (326). This court supposedly still recognized the sovereignty of the American Indian nations.

However, on those occasions when the Muscogee Nation—which suffered great financial woes often due to fraud from both external and internal parties—did manage to secure some money, Congress would alter the legal situation in favor of the United States. In one such heinous legal decision, Congress in 1891 expanded the "court of

claims jurisdiction over all claims for depredations committed upon United States citizens by Indians, waived the statute of limitations, and provided that all judgments should be charged against the tribe” (354). This decision, opportunely coinciding with the Muscogee Nation’s acquisition of about \$200,000, made it legal for Euro-Americans from Alabama to sue the Muscogee Nation for damages stemming from their 1836 uprising against Removal. Despite such rulings, the most damaging policies that Congress enacted against the Muscogee Nation would remain those related to the acquisition of land (354).

Clearly, throughout their shared history the United States government levied a steady chain of injustices against the Muscogees, and taken as a whole it is difficult to label any single event as more harmful than the others. However, Congress’s passing of the General Allotment Act in 1887 certainly stands out as one of the most damaging. Ironically, this Act that would do so much damage to Muscogee interests did not directly pertain to them. Though limited to only nations not included in the Five Tribes, the General Allotment Act served as the first step in a broader campaign for the allotment of American Indian lands in severalty. In terms of the final dissolution of the Muscogee government, this Act opened the way for other laws and legal decisions that would eventually end their tribal sovereignty.<sup>11</sup>

The Five Tribes’ exemption from the General Allotment Act only delayed the allotment threat for a few years. In 1893 Congress created the Dawes Commission—named for its chair, Senator Henry L. Dawes—which was charged with convincing the

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. and Carol A. Petty Hunter, “Introduction,” *The Fus Fixico Letters*, By Alexander Posey, Eds. Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. and Carol A. Petty Hunter, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 3-4. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

remaining nations to agree to allotment. At first the Five Tribes held out, but by 1897 the Seminoles agreed to accept allotment. The following year Congress, frustrated by the refusal of the other nations to agree to their provisions, passed the Curtis Act, which Littlefield writes, “provided for allotment as a prefatory step to statehood for Indian Territory. This legislation forced the remaining nations to negotiate allotment agreements in order to salvage as much of their land and other resources for their people as possible” (4).

In 1901 the Muscogees finally succumbed to years of pressure from Congress and signed the allotment agreement set forth by the Dawes Commission. In keeping with the agreement, every man, woman, and child who had signed up for the Dawes Commission rolls as belonging to the Muscogee Nation received a 160-acre parcel of land. Under further provisions carried by the Curtis Act, Muscogee towns—those integral components of a Muscogee social system that for thousands of years had served as the main cohesive unit of the culture—were sold. Muscogee finances and their public institutions such as schools were placed under the authority of the United States Secretary of the Interior (Debo 373).

Angie Debo describes the post-allotment atmosphere: “it was a sad and disillusioning experience, for as the white people rushed in to build the towns and develop the oil pools and purchase the farms, the fullblood Creeks were wholly unable to adjust themselves to the new order” (376). One such Muscogee who refused to accept the changes to their traditional way of life was Chitto Harjo, whose name some translated to mean “Crazy Snake.” Chitto Harjo was a charismatic leader, and his followers who were dubbed “Snakes” fought against the allotment of land by setting up their own government

at the Hickory Ground town site. Chitto Harjo and other conservatives maintained that the Treaty of 1832 was still valid and that the United States government had no jurisdiction over the Muscogee Nation. Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri explain that “Chitto Harjo linked all the agony to Columbus. Columbus would come again and again, in the minds of Chitto Harjo and many full-bloods, under the guise of various transformations such as the conquistadors, Andrew Jackson, Dawes and the supporters of allotment” (64).

In response to these developments, Chitto Harjo and his followers created their own lighthouse police unit that, on a few occasions, tried to scare off both the Euro-Americans they saw as intruders and some of the Muscogees who had agreed to accept their allotments. This so-called “Crazy Snake Rebellion” ended with Federal troops imprisoning Chitto Harjo and over ninety of his followers. After receiving suspended sentences for their refusal to abide by the policies of the Curtis Act, Harjo and many of his followers continued to personally resist the changes that had been thrust upon their way of life. Though they had been forced to accept allotments in order to secure suspended jail sentences, many of these conservatives never agreed to their ownership of those allotments (Debo 376; Womack 146).

### *Oklahoma Statehood, Land Fraud, and a New Beginning*

With allotment achieved, one final step remained to completely incorporate the Indian Territory nations within the jurisdiction of the United States: Oklahoma statehood. Some Five Tribes leaders argued that Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory should form two separate states rather than seek joint statehood. In 1904 Indian Territory representatives, a group that included Alexander Posey, drafted a remarkably farsighted

constitution for the proposed state of Sequoyah. The constitution included legislation allowing a vote on women's suffrage and banning child labor at a time when such provisions were still years from fruition in the United States. However, the idea never stood a chance against a Republican Congress that feared the admission of a new Democratic state to the Union. By that point many Euro-Americans illegally held land in Indian Territory and joint statehood assured that those parties, especially the railroads, land speculators, oil companies, and cattle ranchers, would get their chance to profit from the situation (Littlefield and Hunter 227). Thus, in 1906 Congress passed the Enabling Act which legally required joint statehood for both Oklahoma and Indian Territory and ended any further debate over the possibility of an American Indian state.<sup>12</sup>

However, the end of the Muscogee Nation did not end the lives, or the troubles, of the Muscogees themselves. Earlier provisions of the Dawes Commission meant to prevent wholesale alienation of Indian Territory lands by preventing American Indians from immediately selling their allotments. Such rules were almost immediately relaxed by Congress, which "passed a law that allowed freedmen and mixed bloods of less than one-half Indian blood to sell their land" (Jordan 20). Individual allotment meant that land fraud moved from a national to an individual focus, a situation that increased dramatically after substantial oil deposits were found under the land. According to Jordan, "young allottees were actually kidnapped just before reaching legal age and convinced to sign away their land...guardianships of orphans, fraudulent marriages to full-bloods, and various other schemes were used to gain control of Mvskoke wealth" (20).

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<sup>12</sup> Donald E. Green, *The Creek People*, (Phoenix: Indian Tribal Series, 1973), 86.



In 1932, under pressure from President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Congress enacted the Oklahoma Welfare Act, which—in an effort to stem the tide of abuse against the American Indians of the state—allowed for a limited return of tribal government. This law allowed the Muscogees to pursue incorporation, draft charters, and take control of some tribal property. All of these measures were intended to help the various nations protect themselves from unscrupulous business practices (20-21). Though the Muscogees could elect certain representatives, the president of the United States appointed their principal chiefs until 1971.

The Muscogee (Creek)/Cherokee literary critic Craig S. Womack argues that Angie Debo's 1941 history of the Muscogee people, *The Road to Disappearance*, suffers from an "unfortunate title" (29) because unlike some other American Indian nations, the Muscogees have not disappeared. After five centuries of European and Euro-American colonialism manifested by war, disease, theft, and the atrocity of forced removal, the Muscogees remain. In fact, the nation is stronger than it has been in over a hundred years. As Jordan makes clear, the Muscogees enjoy a strong form of self-appointed political representation. The nation's "boundary includes ten counties in Oklahoma. It operates a \$82-million-dollar budget and serves 45,860 enrolled tribal members" (22). The Muscogee Nation's resilience, its ability to absorb dramatic cultural change and still retain a well-defined cultural identity, is one of its greatest strengths.

Another of the Nation's strengths is its tendency to generate influential literary and political figures who, despite their differing ideological stances, represent a genuine desire to advance and glorify their culture. Alexander Posey, one of the most important American Indian writers of his time, was such a man. Despite political ideas that were,

One Month, One Dime.

7

One Year, One Dollar.

# Sturm's STATEHOOD Magazine.

MARCH, 1906.

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO INDIAN TERRITORY, OKLAHOMA AND THE GREAT SOUTHWEST. — THEIR AGRICULTURE, OIL, GAS, MINERALS, COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, — INDIAN LORE AND HISTORY. —



Published by O. P. Sturm, Tulsa, Indian Territory

The cover of the March 1906 issue of *Sturm's Statehood Magazine*, a pro-statehood publication in which Posey sometimes published his work.

and still are, unpopular with a substantial portion of the Muscogee citizenship, Posey's life and work arose from, and celebrated, his culture. Like the Muscogee Nation itself, Posey's work represents an amalgamation of influences, each absorbed into a larger cultural body.

No complete understanding of Posey's work exists without an attempt to also understand the complex historical and cultural tradition from which it emerged. This characteristic holds true for the whole of the nation's intellectual production. Muscogee literature forms an impressive cultural tradition leading from earlier Muscogee writers such as Posey, Charles Gibson, S. Alice Callahan, and Thomas E. Moore to those of more recent years such as Louis Littlecoon Oliver, Joy Harjo, and Durango Mendoza. This resilient strand of literary culture, especially as preserved through oral tradition even today, binds these and future writers, ensuring that Muscogeese continue to speak through a rich cultural voice.

## **The Life and Literature of Alexander Posey**

### *A Muscogee Childhood, 1873-1885*

Alexander Lawrence Posey was born on August 3, 1873 in a rural area of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation near the town of Eufaula in what is now Oklahoma.<sup>1</sup> His father, Lawrence Henderson “Hence” Posey, was a Euro-American who had been adopted into the Muscogee Nation as a child. His mother, Nancy Harjo, was a Muscogee of mixed Chickasaw and Muscogee heritage who belonged to the Upper Creek town of Tuskegee and was a member of the Wind clan. In keeping with matrilineal practices of Muscogee descent and relation, all of Nancy’s children (Alexander was the first of ten) were born as members of her town and clan and were considered related to all other members of the Wind clan. (Littlefield 12).

In a more traditional Muscogee setting, Nancy’s male relatives would have taken on the sole responsibility of serving as role model and educators for the young Posey. However, both the town of Tuskegee and Posey’s parents shared the so-called “progressive” cultural ideology. The environment of Posey’s earliest years was influenced by both Muscogee tradition and the adoption of some Euro-American ways. Littlefield explains the young Posey’s situation by stating that “his mother’s family and town would have the greater influence on him, though not because of clan law and

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<sup>1</sup> In the years following Posey’s death, several biographical statements, many filled with errors or myths, sprang up in newspaper and magazine accounts of the writer’s life. For the most part, such sources have been ignored in favor of Daniel F. Littlefield Jr.’s biography, *Alex Posey: Creek Poet, Journalist, and Humorist* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992). Littlefield’s book serves as the source for the majority of the information provided in this biographical overview, and specific page references are provided within the text.

practices...Instead, in their religious and political activities, the Tuskegees would provide the child with models of “progressive” social change that would be bolstered by his father’s political and economic ambitions” (12). Though he grew up within a climate of “progressive” ideology that does not mean that Posey, or others of the progressive view, suffered from a conflicted cultural identity. Progressive Muscogees such as Posey still occupied a world much different from that of the Euro-Americans and many—Posey among them—sympathized with the beliefs of those designated as conservatives, or traditionalists.

In fact, one of the defining traits of the Muscogees had been their social system of absorbing different cultures within itself, forming a nation of many subcultures. When the Muscogees were the dominant nation of what is now the American southeast, it was common for various towns, depending upon their previous cultural origins, to speak differing languages and practice their own unique customs. With this ancient social strategy in mind—an ingenious approach to dealing with the diversity of conquered tribes—progressive Muscogees such as those of Posey’s family and town, seem less like an assimilated people and more like a continuation of a traditional Muscogee social dynamic.

Despite his progressive influences, the fact that Posey would in just a few years become one of the most important American Indian literary figures of all time is nothing short of remarkable. Growing up in a predominantly rural Muscogee world where educational opportunities were extremely rare, it was much more likely that Posey, like his father, would have spent his life farming plots of land and caring for his family. Like so many of those around him, Posey was more likely to have lived a relatively happy

Indian Territory life, a life that once over would eventually disappear into the historical haze of a bygone world. Posey was different. His early life represents a series of educational and literary accomplishments that illustrate how this bright, inquisitive young man managed to become a nationally recognized poet and political humorist whose voice would influence generations of American Indian writers to come.

Posey spent his childhood enjoying the rural scenes of both his family's Bald Hill ranch and their other residence in the Tulledega Hills. Posey and Tom Sulphur, a full-blood Muscogee boy that Posey's family had adopted, thrilled in exploring the natural setting. This secluded world formed the backdrop for some of Posey's happiest memories, and he would later write much about his childhood in the area, attributing his poetic sensibility and his love of nature to his upbringing in this particularly rustic part of the Muscogee Nation. Geographically, this area resides in the southeastern part of what was formerly the Muscogee Nation, west of Eufaula. It was bordered on the north by a tributary of the Canadian River and on the south by the main branch of the North Canadian, or Oktahutche, River. The Tulledega Hills, stretching perpendicularly across the Oktahutche, loom above the surrounding prairie (23). In his poem, "In Tulledega" Posey describes this area as:

Where mountains lift their heads

To clouds that nestle low;

Where constant beauty spreads

Sublimar scenes below;

Where gray and massive rocks

O'erhang rough heights sublime;  
Where awful grandeur mocks  
The brush, and poet's rhyme,

We saw the evening blush  
Above the rugged range,  
We heard the river rush  
Far off and faint and strange.<sup>2</sup>

For Posey, the Tulledega area represented a magical combination of natural beauty and Muscogee culture. During this time his mother, and probably other people, told him Muscogee tribal stories, works of oral tradition passed down for centuries, and along with his own youthful exploits these tales would form the bedrock of his literary imagination. Some of these Muscogee tales emerge in his prose works such as "The 'Possum and the Skunk: Or How the 'Possum Lost the Hair Off His Tail" and "A Creek Fable."<sup>3</sup> Other oral traditions arise in his poetry, such as "A Fable" and "God and the Flying Squirrel (A Creek Legend)."<sup>4</sup>

Another important influence found within the Tulledega Hills were the traditional Muscogee medicine men, or "prophets." These spiritual men practiced traditional Muscogee healing and their expertise included help for all manner of maladies along with the ability to influence both the natural and supernatural realms. From curing headaches

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<sup>2</sup> "In Tulledega," folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>3</sup> "The 'Possum and the Skunk: Or How the 'Possum Lost the Hair Off His Tail" and "A Creek Fable," Alexander Posey, *Chinnubbie and the Owl*, 110-111 and 112-114.

<sup>4</sup> "A Fable" and "God and the Flying Squirrel (A Creek Legend)," folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

to calling up rain for drought weary farmers, the prophets could be hired to lend their skills to the task. Two such prophets, Chalogee and The Alabama Prophet emerge at multiple points in Posey's writing and he clearly harbored a good amount of respect—albeit romanticized—for these men who represented what he saw as the last vestiges of a fading tradition.<sup>5</sup> His poem, “The Burial of the Alabama Prophet,” demonstrates Posey's complicated admiration for one medicine man, the final two stanzas of which read:

In Nature's clasp and care—  
In life's last still retreat—  
A sleep that all must share,  
Lies one whose work's complete.

Sleep on thou mighty one,  
Thro' time and distant years,  
Because of what thou'st done,  
Thy name shall live in tears!<sup>6</sup>

Posey's best representation of the role of the Muscogee prophet within the traditional Muscogee world exists in “The Indian's Past Olympic,” a poem which includes several references to the spiritual figure's duties during the Green Corn Ceremony.<sup>7</sup>

Yet it is his short story, “Two Famous Prophets,” that best recalls how these medicine men influenced Posey during his childhood.<sup>8</sup> In this story, Posey details the

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<sup>5</sup> David Lewis, Jr., the last initiated Muscogee medicine man (*hillis haya*), still practices today and, with anthropologist Ann T. Jordan, published a book about his work. See David Lewis, Jr. and Ann T. Jordan, *Creek Indian Medicine Ways: The Enduring Power of Mvskoke Religion*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> “The Burial of the Alabama Prophet,” undated pamphlet, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>7</sup> “The Indian's Last Olympic,” *Muskogee Phoenix*, December 17, 1896.



exploits of Chaloguee and The Alabama Prophet. His tales of these men betray the ambiguous character of his respect for full-bloods and their ways. He presents Chaloguee in a comic manner, as an honorable yet bumbling “amateur” who, when hired to end a drought, loses control of his “thunder bolts” and almost floods the world (68). Posey writes, “The full-bloods, among whom he was most popular, mistook his intimate acquaintance with natural facts and laws for divine knowledge, and he, like other prophets, was shrewd enough not to let them know any better” (68).

In describing the other medicine man of his youth, the Alabama Prophet, Posey continues with his depiction of the Muscogee prophet as a pseudo-comic figure. However, he also portrays this medicine man—named for his birth in Alabama before Removal—as a wise and spiritually powerful figure whose powers far exceeded those of the bungling Chaloguee. For Posey, the Alabama Prophet was the genuine article, a man who “could prophesy—see months and years into the future. Had he not come from a race of prophets? Had he not taken counsel of the Great Spirit in the seclusion of Tulledega?” (69). Posey would continue to seek out the company of Muscogee full-bloods for whom he retained a romanticized and sometimes patronizing form of admiration. As a child, such figures taught him much about his own culture and this knowledge would help him gain admission into full-blood circles throughout his short life.

### *Early Education, 1885-1889*

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander Posey, “Two Famous Prophets,” *Chinnubbie and the Owl*, 67-72.

Though Posey learned much about his Muscogee heritage during his early childhood, his father, Hence, believed that the boy needed more to succeed in a rapidly changing land. Hence had witnessed much change in Indian Territory and feared his children would be left behind without a formal, Euro-American education. Posey's father was a self-educated man of great common sense whom Littlefield writes was "well informed on local and United States national affairs and kept current by subscribing to magazines and newspapers" (Littlefield 36). Hence also owned a copy of Charles Darwin's *Descent of Man*, now held in Posey's personal library at Bacone University, that bears the inscription, "L. H. Posey Eufaula, I. T."<sup>9</sup> He apparently read and enjoyed the book because he named one of his sons, Darwin, after the author. Alexander Posey's name might also have arisen from Hence's reading. In his January 13, 1897 journal entry, Posey mentions he is reading Plutarch's account of Alexander the Great, which he adds is a figure, "after whom my father was pleased to name me."<sup>10</sup>

When Posey was about twelve, Hence hired a private tutor to help begin his son's formal education, but this tutor left much to be desired. Posey would later describe this man as "a dried-up, hard-up, weazenfaced, irritable little fellow with an appetite that caused the better dishes on my father's table to disappear rapidly. My father picked him up somewhere and seeing that he had a bookish turn, gave him a place in our family as private teacher." According to Posey this early tutor taught him "the alphabet and to read short sentences," but was otherwise a figure of minimal influence.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For a full listing of the books held in Alexander Posey's personal library, see Appendix A of this edition.

<sup>10</sup> "Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum," folder 18, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>11</sup> "Biographical," *Twin Territories* 2 (May 1900): 108.

By the time he was fourteen, Posey could understand some spoken English, but he was by no means proficient enough to speak or write the language. Hence decided it was time to take drastic action. Posey would later explain that he

never spoke any English until I was compelled to speak it by my father. One evening when I blurted out in the best Creek I could command and began telling him about a horse hunt, he cut me off shortly: ‘Look here, young man, if you don’t tell me that in English after supper, I am going to wear you out.’

I was hungry, but this put an abrupt end to my desire for the good things I had heaped on my plate.

I got up from the table and made myself useful—brought water from the well, turned the cows in the pasture—thinking maybe this would cause him to forget what he had said. My goodness, however, did no good, for as soon as he came from the table, he asked me in a gentle but firm voice to relate my horse hunt. Well, he was so pleased with my English that he never afterwards allowed me to speak Creek.<sup>12</sup>

At first glance Hence’s strategy of threatening his son into speaking only English might appear as a forced abandonment of his son’s Muscogee heritage. However, Posey’s connection to his culture was probably enhanced by his education. His literacy allowed him to write down and preserve oral traditions and practices he encountered during his childhood. Later in life, his education, along with his natural eloquence, would make him an influential figure within tribal politics. He **would become** a valuable asset for those

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<sup>12</sup> “Biographical,” *Twin Territories* 2 (May 1900): 108.

full-bloods, such as Chief Isparhecher, who found themselves dealing with Euro-~~or the~~ Americans but whose knowledge of English was limited or non-existent. Furthermore, Posey would continue to speak—and sometimes write—his native language, at times working it into his writing in clever ways. Some of his best works, such as his “Fus Fixico” letters and his poems about Muscogee life, incorporate his native language. For his satirical Fus Fixico letters—narrated by a fictional full-blood Muscogee—Posey would even prove himself a master of writing down the hybridized Muscogee and English spoken by many full-bloods. It was a dialect found only in the Muscogee Nation, a dialect Posey’s friend, the Muscogee writer Charles Gibson called, “Este Charte,” or red man’s English (Littlefield and Hunter 16-18). Posey’s knowledge of English, enriched by his cultural circumstances, made him not only an educated Muscogee but also one equipped to create a highly influential and unique body of literary work.

Concerned with educating both Alexander Posey and his other children, Hence realized that if he could not bring education to his family, he would send his children to school. Plucked from the rural, idyllic environments of Bald Hill and the Tulledega Hills, the young Posey enrolled in the Creek national public school in Eufaula (Littlefield 37). He approached his studies with an uncommonly sharp and inquisitive mind, and he spent his free time at the offices of the local newspaper, the Eufaula *Indian Journal*. Posey seemed particularly enamored with newspaper work and during this time he learned how to compose articles, run the printing equipment, and manage the office. A quick study, Posey soon mastered the details of running a newspaper. In fact, Posey’s skills became so advanced that when the regular editor fell ill, the young man took over and continued to publish the newspaper himself (Littlefield 38).

Journalism came naturally to Posey, and it was a calling he would enjoy for the rest of this life. Over the years his association with the *Indian Journal* would grow until he eventually became the paper's editor and partial owner. Indian Territory boasted a large number of small regional newspapers such as the *Indian Journal*. Posey, who understood the social character of the region as well as anyone, would later employ these publications to promote his ideas. He realized that newspapers were the ideal means to reach a large Indian Territory readership, and as later examples illustrate, he used the power of the press to further both his literary and political agendas—often at the same time.

#### *College Years, Oratory, and the Beginnings of a Poet, 1889-1894*

Posey quickly progressed, in the words of Littlefield, “as far in his education as the Eufaula school could take him” (Littlefield 38). So, in November of 1889—at the age of sixteen—he enrolled at the American Baptist run Bacone Indian University in the town of Muskogee (41). The school's curriculum included courses in a wide range of disciplines: art, literature, science, Latin, English, mathematics, philosophy, and so on. Through his studies and his own copious reading, Posey found himself immersed in a world far removed from that of his rustic, pastoral upbringing. Of the various subjects he encountered at school, Posey most loved literature, and he soon began to write his own poems, stories, and orations. The profound influence of Posey's education, much of it self-education, can hardly be overstated. The young man who just a few years before could barely even speak the English language, had become a writer.

At the age of seventeen, in 1890, Posey met a man who would become one of his best friends for the rest of his life, George Riley Hall. One night Hall, a self-educated teacher from Missouri, sought a room in a hotel owned by Posey's father. Hence had purchased the hotel to both house his family as they sought their educations and to serve as a source of extra income. The night Hall inquired about a room the hotel was full and he agreed to share a room with the owner's son, Alexander. Hall instantly took a liking to the uncommonly intelligent and well-read Muscogee boy. In Posey, Hall saw a young man who had "come under some benevolent influence that was a very strong influence before I knew him." Hall recognized, "elements of greatness in point of humanity and a remarkable mind, which if properly trained would make him a brilliant literary man" (quoted in Littlefield 41).

Indeed, fueled by his own reading and by taking advantage of the best education available in the Muscogee Nation, Posey's literary aspirations began to emerge. He spent his free time working on the college newspaper, the *B. I. U. Instructor*, and in addition to providing news articles and setting type, Posey also began to contribute poetry, humorous short pieces, and stories to the publication. It was at this time that he adopted his first pseudonym, "Chinnubbie Harjo." He would publish poetry and stories under this name for years to come, and it would serve as a precursor for his later masquerade as "Fus Fixico."

Yet it was Posey's talent for oratory that first brought him to widespread regional attention. Asked to deliver the 1892 Bacone freshman commencement address, he selected as his title, "The Indian: What of Him?" His speech advocated formal education



Alexander Posey circa 1891. Courtesy Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

for American Indians and condemned the Euro-American racist view that such teachings were wasted efforts:

It has been asserted and proclaimed to the world by eminent men of this republic that the Indian is an unprogressive being; that his tendency is to retrograde rather than to advance...that it is time, energy, and money wasted in striving to educate him to a degree that will enable him to occupy equal grounds with his Anglo Saxon brother...These are sentiments expressed by unscrupulous tongues, founded on hearsay and without the slightest evidence of truth. (Posey, *Chinnubbie and the Owl*, 82)

In this early oration the young Posey declares himself a progressive, a position he would occupy for life. He promotes the idea that the Muscogee Nation, and the whole of Indian Territory, belongs to the “republic,” while also taking racist United States politicians to task. He would deliver two more commencement speeches—“Sequoyah” and “Room at the Top”—over the following two years. Each of these three orations enjoyed considerable regional popularity and were published in newspapers such as the *Indian Journal*, the *Muskogee Phoenix*, the *Cherokee Advocate*, the *Red Man*, and the *Daily Oklahoma State Capital*. “Room and the Top” was even published, in an abbreviated form, as a broadside (Littlefield 55-56).

Though these and other examples of Posey’s oratory take a diversity of topics, they almost always argue for American Indians to pursue a formal, Euro-American education. He saw such education as a major weapon in the fight against the unjust and racist dealings of the United States government—especially as related to the loss of



American Indian land and sovereignty. Also, as Posey's various stories and poems based on Muscogee oral traditions suggest, he recognized literacy as a way to help preserve an American Indian culture that was in danger of becoming lost. For Posey, education simultaneously insured a future for American Indians and partially safeguarded the lessons of the past.

Paradoxically—despite his love of learning, good academic performance, and repeated statements of advocacy for education—Posey terminated his studies at Bacone in the fall of 1894. Littlefield surmises that Bacone's "strict code of conduct may have been too much for the 'free-thinking' and fun-loving Alex" (58). Along with a host of other stipulations, campus rules required students to abstain from the use of alcohol and tobacco, only send letters with the permission of a teacher, not leave campus without permission, attend daily religious services, and strictly observe Sabbath restrictions on work and entertainment (58). These last two items may have most troubled Posey. Throughout his life he held a measured disdain toward organized religion. Attending a Baptist college certainly exposed him to an environment he sometimes found disagreeable due to its pronounced religious basis, a situation that arises in a letter he wrote during his sophomore year at Bacone. In this 1892 letter to George J. Remsburg, Posey wrote: "I am at present attending school in the Indian University, one of the best institutions of this country; tho' controlled by a religious denomination, to which I pay little attention. A freethinker can enjoy the freedom of thought anywhere and under all circumstances...So I enjoy mine and preach my views."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander Posey to Geo. J. Remsburg, October 31, 1892, "Letters Written by A. L. Posey and Charles Gibson," Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society.

Posey's opinion of organized religion arose in part from his admiration for such freethinkers as Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll. He even wove allusions to these writers' ideas into some of his orations. For example, in his eulogy for Daniel N. McIntosh, Posey proclaims that the Muscogee statesman and Confederate colonel "built his religion on facts...He could not believe in the religion that slew with famine, sword, and pestilence. He chose rather to be a devotee of mental freedom...He did what he could for the destruction of fear—the destruction of the imaginary monster who rewards the few in heaven—who tortures the many in perdition."<sup>14</sup> It is doubtful that McIntosh's beliefs entirely matched Posey's description, but Posey himself would remain a conflicted religious skeptic throughout his life.

Whatever his beliefs, divine entities represent an important component in Posey's work, especially his poetry. Some of his poems include mentions of a divine figure apparently in the mold of the Christian God. One such example is found in his poem, "The Evening Star":

Behold, Evening's bright star,  
Like a door left ajar  
In God's mansion afar,  
Over the mountain's crest  
Throws a beautiful ray—  
A sweet kiss to the day,  
As he sinks to his rest!

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander Posey, "Col. McIntosh: A Few Words to His Memory," *Chinnubie and the Owl Muscogee (Creek) Stories, Orations, and Oral Traditions*, Ed. Matthew Wynn Sivils, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 92-94. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

Still, Posey's writing also sometimes invokes gods and religious beliefs from Muscogee cultural traditions. For example in the poem, "The Warriors Dream," he writes of "gods" that seem, due to the context of the poem, to hail from Muscogee culture. However, as this stanza from "The Flower of Tulledega" demonstrates some of Posey's poems contain a mixture of gods from both Greek and Muscogee cultures:

A chilling breeze came o'er the forest trees,  
And all the leafy branches shook with cold;  
Stechupco blew such tender melodies  
As Pan blew from his oaten lute of old,  
On fair Arcadia's sunny slopes, when Echo  
Loved the youth Narcissus to her sorrow.

In this poem, the Greek deities Pan, Narcissus, and Echo share a world with the Muscogee spiritual figure, Stechupco (often spelled *Este Chupko*) whose name means the Tall Man. Posey does not arbitrarily position these gods within the same poem; each of these mythical figures are associated with the natural world, and in other works he often utilizes mythological allusions that testify to the importance of various cultural sources within his work.

One theme found throughout Posey's work is the nostalgic desire to return to the idyllic days of his youth, a youth he directly associated with the rural scenes of Bald Hill and especially the Tulledega Hills. Yet his exposure to the relatively urban worlds of Eufaula and Muskogee, and in particular his interest in newspaper work, meant that except for brief recreational forays, he would never again return to the life he had once known. His college years had served him well and, as Littlefield writes, Posey "emerged

from Bacone a voracious reader and a self-styled free-thinking skeptic, ready for the practical education that the life of a writer and man of public affairs could give him” (59).

*Politics, Family, and Literature, 1895-1897*

With his years at Bacone behind him, Posey’s reputation as a well-educated progressive orator, along with family connections, allowed him to quickly gain favor within the Muscogee political world. In 1895 he sought election as a representative for the town of Tuskegee in the House of Warriors. During the 1895 election year Posey joined the political camp of Isparhecher, the former head of the anticonstitutional faction in the Green Peach War, who was running for the office of principal chief (73). Posey immersed himself in the political environment and even delivered a speech at a political rally for Isparhecher’s candidacy.<sup>15</sup>

Though Posey was only a political novice, the speech proved he had already mastered the noncommittal rhetoric of political discourse. In the speech, which had to be translated into Muscogee for much of the audience, Posey charges, “the history of the white man’s dealings with the Indian is a history of broken treaties and of unfulfilled promises” (99). However, three paragraphs after this statement Posey concludes with this advice: “Trust to the honesty of the United States and stand by the man who will protect and guard the interests of the people—Such a man is Isparhecher, the patriot, statesman and warrior” (98). Thus, Posey promotes Muscogee sovereignty, condemns the past dealings of the United States, points out the need to continue dealings with the dishonest

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<sup>15</sup> Alexander Posey, “The Creek Opening Guns,” *Chinnubbie and the Owl Muscogee (Creek) Stories, Orations, and Oral Traditions*, Ed. Matthew Wynn Sivils, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 95-99. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

Americans, and favorably mentions Isparhecher, all without fully advocating him for the office.

On September 1895 Posey won his campaign for a place in the House of Warriors, and Isparhecher became the principal chief of the nation. Appointed to oversee aspects of the national treasury, the twenty-two year old Posey quickly realized he was not well suited for the life of a political figure. His friend, Hall, would later suggest that the role of politician conflicted with Posey's literary ambitions and poetic sensibility. Posey soon requested a job in the realm of the Muscogee educational system and in November of 1895, Hotulke Emarthla—the acting principal chief at the time—appointed Posey as the superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum (Littlefield 79-80).

At the time of his appointment, the Okmulgee-based asylum sheltered, fed, and educated about one hundred Muscogee orphans between eight and twenty-one years of age (orphans were admitted up to age eighteen). After receiving this two-year appointment to oversee the asylum, Posey—who had secured the position through political patronage—soon dispensed some patronage of his own. To fill out his teaching staff, Posey hired his sister Melissa who had just graduated from high school, and Hall, who had worked as an educator in the Muscogee system for five years. Posey also inherited a staff that included a few other teachers and a principal named, John E. Emery (81). A crisis emerged almost as soon as the new staff members settled into their jobs at the orphan asylum: John Emery and Melissa Posey fell in love. Posey condemned their relationship and fired his sister, sending her back home to Bald Hill where Hence and Nancy did their best to keep the couple apart. Soon, however, Emery and Melissa eloped, and Posey was left with two vacant staff positions. To replenish his staff, Posey assigned

Hall to the job of temporary principal, but with the loss of Melissa he also needed another woman to serve as a matron for the about fifty female orphans.

He found the perfect person for the job in Minnie Harris, a teacher from Arkansas whom he had first met a few months earlier through his friend John Thornton. Minnie had come to a Eufaula hotel to take part in the qualification exams necessary to teach in the Muscogee educational system. While there, Minnie met Posey and Thornton as the two men ate breakfast (82), and though it was only a brief meeting, for Posey the attraction was instantaneous. In his January 4, 1897 journal entry he writes:

The beauty of the young school teacher thoroughly charmed me; and, though I saw her frequently, I could not sufficiently overcome my Indian nature to talk with her. She went away. I thought of her constantly; would sometimes grow anxious to declare my love by letter. Two months passed and she return [sic] to take up her work at Hillabee. One day I made it convenient to pass the school house. I got a glimpse of her as I hurried by on "Ballie", and another as I returned. My love grew deeper. Three months latter I was elected to the position I now hold. One night I was at Eufaula, and by chance met her. I offered her a place in my school; she accepted it, and, when summer was come again, "two hearts beat as one."<sup>16</sup>

This narrative, and the wider circumstances of the situation, affords a glimpse into the complexity of the young Posey's character. Enraged by his sister's love for John Emery, a Euro-American from Arkansas, Posey, in an effort to keep the two apart, went so far as

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<sup>16</sup> Journal of Alexander Posey (1897-1900), January 4, 1897, folder 18, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

to fire his sister and send her home. However, when he fell in love, ironically with another Euro-American from Arkansas, Posey seems blind—at least in writing—to the hypocrisy of his actions. Nevertheless, Hall was highly amused by the situation and “could not help laughing at his young friend’s marrying an “Arkansawyer” after having listed Emery’s greatest fault, next to being a ‘nit-wit,’ as being from Arkansas” (83).

Enchanted by Minnie, but initially too shy to court her, Posey displays an interesting aspect of his personality. In pursuing Minnie, Posey seems to display equal portions of hypocrisy, shyness, and cunning. Though he struggled with the prospect of professing his love to Minnie—even via letter—months later he takes advantage of the staffing problem he created by firing his own sister by hiring Minnie. Despite his reserved nature, Posey exploited the situation, inviting Minnie to take a job under his supervision, and on his ground, a move perhaps orchestrated to help reduce his diffidence in pursuing the hand of the woman he loved.

With Minnie settled into her job at the orphan asylum, the two soon began to spend their free time discussing literature, reading each other poetry, and sharing long walks. Posey gave Minnie the pet name Lowena, which he would continue to call her for the rest of his life (83). On February 3, 1896, Minnie’s birthday, Posey wrote what would be one of the first of at least two poems bearing her pet name as its title. This first poem titled, “Lowyna,” leaves little doubt that after Minnie began working at the orphan asylum Posey quickly overcame his earlier reticence about putting his feelings for her into words. In this poem, Posey merges his love for Minnie with his love for poetic images of birds:

The lark,

From dawn  
Till dark,  
Has drawn,  
On fence and post and tree,  
In meadow, brown and sere,  
From out its heart, so free,  
So full of mirth and glee,  
Sweet songs of ecstasy,  
To hail the glad new year  
That makes you twenty-three!<sup>17</sup>

Minnie would later admit that, like Posey, she had fallen in love from the beginning. Hall, whose job as a teacher at the orphan asylum gave him a front row seat to the courtship, recognized that the two seemed destined for each other. On May 9, 1896, just three months after Posey wrote the birthday poem, he and Minnie were married in the town of Checotah (83).

Following his marriage, Posey entered perhaps one of the most pleasant times of his life. His duties as superintendent of the orphan asylum were far from taxing, and he was left with ample time to read, write, explore the natural world, and engage in other diversions such as croquet and practical jokes. During this time Posey also began his longest and most informative journal. Stretching from January to June of 1897, and also including a couple entries from 1899 and 1900, this journal provides a wealth of

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<sup>17</sup> "Lowyna," February 3, 1896, folder 80, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.





The faculty of the Creek Orphan Asylum, 1896. In the background (left to right), Minnie H. Posey and probably Rosa and Lillie Lee. In the foreground (left to right), Alexander Posey and George Riley Hall. Courtesy of the Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

information about Posey's voracious reading habits, literary ambitions, and relationships with friends and family. His journal of this time stands as a unique account, not only of his life, but also of life in the last days of Indian Territory.

Throughout Posey's first, and most comprehensive journal, he kept a detailed log of his reading. The list is a truly impressive catalog of literature, historical works, and other materials such as magazines and newspapers. In January alone he read James W. Buel's *Heroes of the Dark Continent*, a large portion of Plutarch's *Lives*, and magazines such as *Puck*, *Truth*, and the *Iconoclast*. In the newspapers, he followed Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain, a situation that had enticed him, during the previous December, to publish the poem, "Cuba Libre," in which he fervently advocates Cuban independence from Spain's "butchery."<sup>18</sup> Posey also read about the hardships of a fellow humorist, and in his January 27 entry writes: "The papers state that Mark Twain, after making a lecture tour of the world in hope of retrieving his fortune, is now penniless in London. Poor Mark! The world has laughed with him; will it weep with him? He is sixty years old, and his courageous but unsuccessful efforts for the recovery of lost fortune is a pathetic story."<sup>19</sup> While Posey might have been sincere in his sympathy for the destitute Twain, there is little evidence he was a big fan of the writer. Posey's personal library, held at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, boasts only one copy of a book by Twain, a 1917 edition of *Life on the Mississippi* that Posey, due to his death in 1908, could not have owned and was probably the property of either Minnie or one of their children.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Cuba Libre," *Muskogee Phoenix*, December 24, 1896.

<sup>19</sup> Journal of Alexander Posey (1897-1900), January 27, 1897, folder 18 Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>20</sup> See the appendix for a comprehensive list of the books found in Posey's personal library.

Despite asserting, “this month’s output of magazines is rubbish,”<sup>21</sup> Posey found plenty to read in both February and in the following months. Over this time he continued to read Plutarch’s *Lives*—a book Posey would allude to in much of his subsequent writing. He also devoured Washington Irving’s *A Tour on the Prairies*, Aesop’s *Fables*, Homer’s *Iliad*, Bret Harte, William Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Joaquin Miller, Walt Whitman, and several newspapers and magazines such as the *Eufaula Indian Journal*, the *Muskogee Phoenix*, the *Kansas City Star*, the *Arkansas Gazette*, *Current Literature*, and *Cosmopolitan*. He also read, and re-read, the work of his favorite poet, Robert Burns. In his March 5, 1897 journal entry he proclaims, “Read Burns. I find some new pleasure, some new thought, some new beauty heretofore unseen every time I read the poems of the ‘Ayrshire Plowman’. His warm heart, his broad and independent mind “glint” like the daisy in the ‘histie stibble field’ in every song he coraled.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to reading, Posey also spent a good amount of his time writing. During the six-month span that forms the bulk of this journal, he mentions working on the poems, “Lines to Hall,” “The Two Clouds,” “Daisy,” “To a Mocking Bird,” and a poem that probably became “Be Fair.” He also mentions writing, and submitting for publication, the poem, “An Arbekan Episode,” but all copies of this poem about one of Hall’s romantic relationships have since been lost. Ever nostalgic for his childhood, Posey also began work on what he termed, “a series of boy hood stories, entitled “Tom & Abe & I.” This manuscript, too, has been lost, but it is likely that Posey revised a portion of this biographical work into the story, “Two Famous Prophets.”

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<sup>21</sup> Journal of Alexander Posey (1897-1900), February 16, 1897.

<sup>22</sup> Journal of Alexander Posey (1897-1900), May 5, 1897.

Even during this happy time of his life, the newlywed Posey could not shed the desire to return to what he saw as his idyllic Tulledega childhood. During a February 14, 1897 trip to visit his parents, Posey rode by the remains of his childhood homestead, an experience that enticed him to write a belated Valentine to a girl he once knew, and a eulogy to the boy he once was:

The place is in the last stages of decay; but how familiar and how dear!  
The scenes call up a thousand pretty memories. I am a boy again,  
delighting in play and mischief, I am struck by the pretty face of the  
renter-girl and am not brave enough to meet her with my bouquet of peach  
blooms. She stands at the kitchen window and begs for it in vain. I am  
with Tom & Abe in the corn field, in the "old swimming hol'," in the  
squirrel hunt, in the fox chase, in the hay field. Alas! that a boy grows old  
and leaves this behind.<sup>23</sup>

Posey had good reason to be nostalgic for his innocent and carefree boyhood—he was soon to be a father. On March 29, 1897 Minnie gave birth to a son, and an elated Posey wrote a quick couplet in his journal: "O what's the reason of my joy?/ The advent of a "bran" new Boy!" The following day found Posey less ecstatic, but still very much interested in his reading: "Finished Irving's Columbus. I am not in a mood yet to tell how it feels to be a father. The baby has cried enough to make me walk the floor at night. I am sorry to have to say that it looks very much like its father. We have not yet found a handle for him." But Posey need look no further than his Muscogee culture and his current reading for a name. Posey and Minnie gave their son the first name of Yahola, a

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<sup>23</sup> "The Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum," February 14, 1897, folder 18, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Muscogee name literally meaning “echo” but also denoting the traditional Muscogee criers, or yaholas, of the green corn ceremony (Littlefield 90). Posey also gave the boy the middle name of Irving. Just as Hence had done with his son Alexander, Posey carried on the practice of bestowing names drawn from favorite books upon his own children.

Despite the added responsibilities that came with Yahola, Posey and Minnie continued to enjoy a pleasant existence at the orphan asylum. Ever the practical joker, the new father enjoyed the first of April, writing in that day’s entry, “I have fooled and been fooled all day. Everybody has laughed today.” Indeed merriment and entertainment were always on Posey’s mind during these months. When he was not reading, writing, traveling on business, or fulfilling his light duties at the orphan asylum, Posey joined his family and friends—especially Hall—for fishing, hunting, croquet, mussel gathering, poetry readings, nature walks, musical recitals, picnics, buggy rides, and even ice skating. It was definitely a time to enjoy life, and sometimes the jovial atmosphere would even spill over on unsuspecting visitors, as it did on September 2, 1897 when Posey writes, “Miss Rose Lee and Supt. Land of Euchee are here for the night. Eat water melons, throw seeds and rinds at each other! A Perfect melee!”

### *Poetry and Tragedy, 1897-1902*

Posey’s tenure as superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum ended in December of 1897, and with it ended the carefree days at Okmulgee. It would seem that Posey’s summer of reading writers such as Donald Mitchell, Joaquin Miller, and perhaps John Burroughs had fueled his desire to pursue an agrarian life of farming and writing. So, Posey moved his family to Stidham where he hoped to become a “full time poet farmer”

(Littlefield 101), but he still needed employment, and when Isparhecher appointed him to the position of superintendent of public instruction for the nation, he put his plans on hold.

The period of Posey's life between 1897 and 1900 represented both the flowering and demise of his poetic ambitions. Posey penned the majority of his poems throughout these years, jotting them down on the letterhead of whichever educational institution he worked for at the time. With a few notable exceptions, much of his writing remained rooted in romantic clichés inspired by his emulation of Shelley, Burns, Whittier, and Longfellow. Virtually all of his poems deal with aspects of the natural world, but the nature found in these works exists as an abstract concept rather than the concrete world of Indian Territory. Posey probably realized the inherent weaknesses that resided in much of his work. In 1898, a year in which he wrote many of his weakest poems, he decided to publish only a handful of them (106). However, even the worst of Posey's poetry fell well above the average local fare. Indian Territory magazines and newspapers quickly published most of the works he submitted.

By 1899 Posey seems to have stepped up his poetry submissions and managed to place work in venues such as the *Indian Journal*, *Twin Territories*, and the *Muskogee Phoenix*. This increase in submissions resulted in Posey's first opportunity for fame outside of Indian Territory, and for a much broader readership. After noticing his work in the *Muskogee Phoenix*, the editor of *The Red Man*, the publication of the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, asked Posey to send her a poem for publication. He sent her "My Hermitage" and "The Decree." Soon after the appearance of these poems in *The Red Man*, other publications such as *Indian's Friend* and the *Nashville Daily American*

reprinted these poems, helping to bring Posey's words to a much larger and more diverse audience. The *St. Louis Republic*, the *Kansas City Star*, the *Kansas City Journal*, the *Philadelphia Press*, and even the *New York Evening Sun* began to reprint Posey's poetry, photograph, and a biographical statement he had published earlier in *Twin Territories* that was simply titled, "Biographical." The mysterious American Indian poet had found a degree of fame outside of Indian Territory. Yet, in keeping with his enigmatic and diffident personality, he did his best to reject the exposure of his work to the world beyond his homeland. In response to his newfound celebrity Posey wrote, "I write exclusively of the West, of home scenes and place, and fearing that my local allusions might not be appreciated elsewhere, I have never made any attempt to get a hearing in the East."<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Posey could not easily shake the fame he had attained almost overnight. An article about him appeared in the *St. Louis Republic*, and he was asked to write a newspaper piece about Chitto Harjo's Snake faction for the same newspaper (118-119).

Like his other seemingly contradictory actions, Posey's refusal to capitalize on his literary windfall remains largely unexplained. Littlefield argues that as Posey was "a voracious reader of periodicals [he] must have known that the American reading public was at that time much drawn to Indians and Indian subjects" (119). He also certainly knew that writers such as Charles A. Eastman and Zitkala-sa had enjoyed success in bringing their American Indian literature to Euro-American audiences far removed from those regions. It would seem that Posey rejected the fruition of his own dream. After all, he idolized many professional writers and saw himself in their mold. He had submitted his poems and other writing for publication for several years, but perhaps it is in his

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<sup>24</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, November 4, 1900, clipping, scrapbook, Gilcrease.

choice of publications that Posey hints at his literary aspirations. For the most part he sent poems only to local newspapers, especially *Indian Journal* and *Twin Territories*. Maybe he justified sending work to *The Red Man* (later *The Red Man and Helper*) because it was an American Indian publication. Perhaps Posey's disinterest in cultivating a wider audience arose from grief. Only three months before the surge of interest in his work, his infant son, Pachina Kipling Posey, had died. It was a devastating loss and had an effect on both Posey's general outlook on life and his literary ambitions (116). As Littlefield points out, "at the time Alex received his greatest notice as a poet, he had almost stopped writing verse" (120).

While the loss of Pachina might have forced Posey to reevaluate himself as a writer, evidence suggests that even before that tragic event Posey had already begun to make decisions about his poetic legacy. In what was probably the winter of 1898, Posey transcribed over sixty-five of his poems in a ledger. This manuscript, now held at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, remains a mystery. The ledger, now just a collection of pages (with several sequential pages missing), boasts both his most recent poems of that time and also earlier works, even some written during his days at Bacone Indian University. There seems to be no editorial method to Posey's collection. He includes both previously published works and many that never saw print. Littlefield writes that Posey, "either could not or did not intend to distinguish between his best and worst verse, for the collection contains both" (120). The collection might have been the beginnings of a book of poetry, but as it is handwritten rather than typed, the intention seems more personal in nature. Maybe he wished to give a handwritten copy of his



favorite poems to his children, or Minnie, but there is no dedication, no hint at what he proposed to do with the strange gathering of poems.<sup>25</sup>

The year 1902 began with a series of dramatic events affecting Posey and his family. His father, Hence, died early in the year and only a few days after this loss, the family met with two additions. Posey's longtime friend, Hall married Minnie's sister, Kittie. Then, on February 9 Minnie gave birth to their last child, a daughter named Wynema Torrans Posey. Posey bestowed upon his daughter a name ripe with literary allusion. Littlefield argues that her first name possibly derived from "the well-known Modoc interpreter whose story was the subject of a play popular in the late 1870s and 1880s" (137). The name also may have originated from the title character of S. A. Callahan's book, *Wynema*. A fellow Muscogee writer, Callahan and her father were good friends of the Posey's. Another friend, the minor Texas poet John Beauregard Torrans, served as the source of Wynema's middle name.

#### *Fus Fixico and Fame, 1902-1903*

Along with these changes in Posey's family came a change in his career. Soon after the death of his father, Posey abandoned his attempts to become a poet farmer. He purchased the Indian Journal Publishing Company, which published the Eufaula *Indian Journal*, and made himself the paper's editor. Though he had not worked at a newspaper since his days as a student, he quickly took to the work and set about turning the newspaper into an "instrument through which [he] promoted the idea of social, political, and economic progress in the Indian Territory" (Littlefield 139). While Posey disliked

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<sup>25</sup> Folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. See the appendix for a transcription of these poems in their original order and versions.

editorials because he wanted his paper to remain impartial, he soon modified this opinion and began to write short editorials, some of them only one sentence long, espousing the progressive nature of Eufaula and calling for a variety of town improvements, such as livestock laws meant to keep hogs and cows from wandering the streets (139-140). With statehood on the horizon, Posey also made the *Indian Journal* Eufaula's champion in the debate over whether that town or Checotah should be eventually made the county seat.

By the fall of 1902 Posey had acquired a taste for incisive political humor, and in the October 24 issue of the *Indian Journal* he pseudonymously published the first of what would, over the next five and a half years, become seventy-two so-called "Fus Fixico" letters. In these satirical letters, written from the viewpoint of a fictional Muscogee full blood who identified himself as Fus Fixico (which some translate as "heartless bird"), Posey merges his keen sense of political humor with his talent for dialect writing. Written in large measure as a reaction to the impending demise of Muscogee sovereignty and other dramatic political and cultural changes to Indian Territory, the Fus Fixico letters deliver a humorous take on what were certainly unsettling times.

The concept of publishing such letters in Indian Territory newspapers was hardly new, as Littlefield and Hunter explain. At first the appearance of a letter written in dialect drew little attention: "for local readers, there was nothing remarkable about the letter's mild humor or its publication, since letters of that type had occasionally appeared in the *Journal* during the preceding months" (Littlefield and Hunter 1). Legitimate letters to the editor written in what Charles Gibson called *Este Charte*, or red man's English, were not uncommon and were simply part of the Indian Territory experience—a result of cultural confluence.

However, Posey's letters were different. In addition to representing clever works of satire—in terms of their cultural savvy and political insight—the letters were of uncommon sophistication for Indian Territory newspaper humor. Posey's unique education and cultural background made him the perfect person to create a comical brand of satire that drew upon both his knowledge of the full-blood Muscogee world and his extensive reading of Euro-American humor. Along with his love for comical newspaper and magazine pieces, Posey's library boasts a collection of humorist literature such as George Ade's *Fables in Slang*, Jerome K. Jerome's *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow: A Book for an Idle Holiday*, and other collections of humor that certainly gave Posey a quick course on the art of comedy. Together with his own well-developed sense of humor, his reading left him prepared to take up the pen of a political humorist. Additionally, Posey was a master of the full-blood Muscogee dialect, a skill that made his characters much more believable than similar attempts that came both before, and after. In fact, Posey's letters represent only one segment of a much larger tradition of Indian Territory dialect humor, and as Littlefield points out, "despite comparisons of Posey's humor to that of his American contemporaries, it had more affinities to the work of older generations of humorists reaching back as far as the 1830s" (Littlefield and Hunter 23)

Though the first thirty-three of the letters appeared in Posey's own *Indian Journal*, for the first few months Posey kept his role in the actual creation of the letters a secret. Once he revealed he was the satirist responsible for what had become an extremely popular literary phenomenon, he once again gained national attention. Though virtually all of the letters would originally appear in local newspapers such as the *Muskogee Democrat*, the *Vinita Weekly Chieftain*, the *Muskogee Phoenix*, and the *Indian*

*Journal*, by June of 1903 the letters and articles about their author began to appear in newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Boston Transcript*, *Pittsburgh Leader*, and several other publications far removed from Indian Territory. As with his earlier fame as a poet, part of the reason for his celebrity resided in what was a sort of racist novelty at the idea of a literary American Indian. Posey's work as a newspaper editor also contributed to this view and as Littlefield writes, "the publishing world found an Indian publisher of a daily newspaper enough of a journalistic oddity to be interesting" (Littlefield and Hunter 19).

Yet there was more than racial novelty to the appeal of Posey's *Fus Fixico* letters. While for many readers outside of Indian Territory the subject of allotment and Oklahoma statehood probably seemed of no great interest, the letters were still (and remain) quite funny. It also did not hurt that Posey expanded the appeal of his letters beyond their regional scope by sometimes taking jabs at national figures. For example, the characters whose comical and insightful conversations were recorded in the letters (i.e., *Fus Fixico*, *Hotgun*, *Choela*, *Tookpafka Micco*, *Wolf Warrior*, and *Kono Harjo*) at times ridiculed Teddy Roosevelt by calling him "President Rooster Feather" and referred to Tams Bixby, the Republican politician who chaired the Dawes Commission, as "Dam Big Pie."<sup>26</sup> In 1903 Posey was once again a hit at a national level, and as he had done two years earlier when his poetry attained national exposure, he refused to capitalize upon his opportunity for a wider readership. He even turned down the chance to take part in an American Indian lecture circuit, an opportunity that his younger self—whose first local fame arose from his mastery of oratory—might have jumped at. In response to his most recent bout with celebrity, Posey wrote, "I have always made my letters of territorial

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<sup>26</sup> Posey, *Fus Fixico Letters*, 58 and 132.

importance only, using characters and incidents that all of our people are familiar with. I fear that eastern people would not understand me.”<sup>27</sup>

By this time Posey had significantly reduced his output of poetry, and the poetry he did write often took the form of Posey’s brand of political satire. For example in the fall of 1903 a scandal broke out over the possibility that representatives of the Dawes Commission and other members of the United States government were guilty of Indian Territory land speculation (Littlefield 175). Amidst calls for a special investigation into these allegations of ethics violations, William Mellette, the United States attorney responsible for the region, declined to create a grand jury to look into the matter. As Littlefield writes, “whether he was speaking of the weather or the political nature of the controversy, Mellette said it was too hot to call such a jury” (176). In response Posey published “It’s Too Hot,” a short poem capitalizing upon Mellette’s choice of words:

He hates to sweat  
Does Bill Mellette.  
He’ll wait till frost, no doubt;  
It’s too hot yet  
For Bill Mellette  
To Turn the rascals out.<sup>28</sup>

In October 1903 Posey sold the *Indian Journal* and moved his family to Muskogee where he had secured a job as the city editor of the *Muskogee Times*. Muskogee had become the home of virtually all political and economic dealings associated with Indian Territory lands. The Dawes Commission, the federal courts, and

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<sup>27</sup> *South McAlester Capital*, July 16, 1903.

<sup>28</sup> *Indian Journal*, August 14, 1903

other governmental offices could all be found in Muskogee and the choice made perfect sense for a political satirist. Posey could now comment on the often-shady political dealings surrounding allotment, from the town at the center of the issue (157-158).

### *Lost Creeks and the Oktahutche, 1905-1908*

Posey's stay at the *Muskogee Times* was short lived. The newspaper failed as a business and Posey, whose advocacy of allotment had only grown in the recent years, then went to work as an interpreter and fieldworker for the Dawes Commission. Assigned the duty of updating the tribal rolls that would be used to establish allotments, he traveled the countryside seeking information about the whereabouts of so called "lost Creeks." One of his most challenging tasks was to try to convince those Muscogees skeptical of the process to enroll for their allotments. The individual ownership of Muscogee land was a particularly contentious issue for the conservative Muscogees, who clung to their rapidly fading heritage of communal ownership and dreaded the end of tribal sovereignty that accompanied allotment and Oklahoma statehood.

During these last years of his life, Posey's literary production declined. He wrote fewer of his highly popular Fus Fixico letters, and his production of poetry and stories had all but ceased. However, between August 1905 and March 1906 Posey wrote one of his most significant journals, an account of his role of his work with the Creek Enrollment Field Party. This journal stands as not only a chronicle of his days as a Dawes fieldworker but also as a glimpse into the lives of several conservative Muscogees during the very last days of Indian Territory. Of particular importance is Posey's account of a meeting with the charismatic Muscogee full-blood leader Chitto Harjo, but perhaps some

of the most touching passages deal with the everyday lives of rural Muscogees. For instance his March 8, 1906 entry reads: “Visit New Church—a meeting in progress—only full bloods in attendance—sit in buggy and listen to Creek songs—some good voices—a beautiful spring day—farmers busy plowing.” Posey’s “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party” represents one of the most important documents of the late Indian Territory period and would serve as one of his last significant works of literature.

On March 4, 1907 the Dawes Rolls officially closed and Posey’s time as a fieldworker and a translator hunting for “lost Creeks” came to an end. By now he had all but ceased literary endeavors and was instead focused on his new, surprising career as a land agent for the Palo Alto Land Company. Though Congress had enacted restrictions against Muscogees selling their allotments of land, such agents specialized in finding ways around those restrictions and convincing poor Muscogees to sell their holdings to large land companies for resale to third parties. Posey’s choice of a new job perplexed those who knew him only from a literary standpoint. However, his progressive stance—a stance advocating the private ownership of land to improve the nation’s economic fortune—required the sale of some of those lands to start the financial machine. Littlefield writes that like other progressive Muscogees, Posey “realized that sales were necessary to establish a tax base for state and local governments” (229). But Posey’s intentions in 1907 were far from selfless. He acquired tracts of land for himself and additionally, he and John Thornton began the Posey-Thornton Oil and Gas Company, and its articles of incorporation gave it broad economic leeway in all dealings associated with the land it held, from mineral speculation to the livestock business (231). For a man who

had worked hard to see allotment become a reality—and who had the opportunity to take advantage of the situation—the enticement to make a fortune must have been great.

In the fall of 1907 Posey once again took up the role of editor for the *Indian Journal*, though he still pursued oil ventures on the various tracts of land he controlled. Though Eufaula had already won the contest for county seat, Checotah's citizens managed to bring the matter to a popular vote. Posey once again took up his pen to write on Eufaula's behalf. This time he wrote limericks deriding both Checotah and those newspaper editors who had backed the rival town's bid for county seat. One such limerick, "O'Bleness," condemns the pro-Checotah editor of the *Hoffman Herald*:

There was an editor, O'Bleness,  
Subsequent cognomen, Dennis.  
Who gave as his quota  
One vote to Checotah,  
And his folks approached him with menace.<sup>29</sup>

April and May of 1908 were some of the rainiest months on record, causing the Oktahutche River to swell to its highest level in years (247). In taking up the editorship of the *Indian Journal*, Posey found he could keep his family in Muskogee by commuting twice a week to the newspaper's offices in Eufaula. On May 27 during this routine trip, Posey drowned attempting to cross the Oktahutche. The powerful water swept his body downriver and despite the efforts of numerous search parties was not recovered until July 20. In the days since the early death of Alexander Posey some Muscogees have viewed his death, in the very river he loved, as punishment by elements of the spiritual world for his role in the sale of Muscogee land.

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<sup>29</sup> *Indian Journal*, May 8, 1908.



### **The Multicultural Complexity of Posey's Journals and Poems**

In the decades following the initial—and error-filled—publication of Posey's journals and poems, critical reception to his writing as a whole has been extremely limited. There are a few main reasons for this critical inattention to what are some of the most important works of American Indian literature. For one, only since the late 1960s have American Indian writers enjoyed any real critical attention. N. Scott Momaday's winning of the 1968 Pulitzer Prize for *House Made of Dawn* helped convince literary critics to take notice of texts and writers previously ignored. Following this increase in scholarly attention, studies of American Indian poetry and life-writing still often took a back seat to other literary forms, such as fiction, that command greater critical and popular attention. Coupled with this slow critical response is the widespread tendency of American Indian literary critics to marginalize or outright ignore early American Indian authors. While contemporary American Indian writers such as Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, and Sherman Alexie enjoy (and deservedly so) healthy critical attention, those writers who emerged before the post-World War II period often appear as footnotes in critical studies, if they appear at all.

Thanks to the scholarship of people like Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., Carol A. Petty Hunter, Alexia Kosmider, Suzan Shown Harjo, and Craig S. Womack, Posey has not gone completely unstudied; however, Posey's absence from a number of relatively recent studies reveals an unfortunate academic blind spot. For proof of how current scholars of American Indian literature seem to either marginalize, or remain ignorant of, Posey's

work, note the minimal treatment of his life and work in such recent critical studies as Robert Dale Parker's *The Invention of Native American Literature* (Cornell University Press, 2004) and Elivra Pulitano's *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (University of Nebraska Press, 2003). Even more unfortunate is a total absence of any mention of Posey in such otherwise excellent studies of American Indian autobiography and nonfiction as Heartha Dawn Wong's *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years* (Oxford University Press 1992), Arnold Krupat's *For Those Who Come After* (University of California Press, 1985), and Krupat's anthology, *Native American Autobiography: An Anthology* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1994). One of the more anticipated new works of scholarship devoted to American Indian nonfiction, Robert Warrior's *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005), includes a chapter entitled, "The Work of Indian Pupils: Narratives of Learning in Native American Literature," that directly addresses the history, social implications, and literary legacy of American Indian education during the nineteenth-century. For some reason left unexplained, Warrior omits any mention of Posey. Given that Posey was both a student at an American Indian institution (i. e., Bacone Indian University in Muskogee, Creek Nation) and a man who, after receiving his education, spent much of his life working as an educator in a variety of Indian Territory schools. Indeed, Posey's longest work of nonfiction, his "Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum" records his time as the superintendent of that school and even mentions the name of the school in its title. Nevertheless, there is not so much as a footnote about Posey in Warrior's book.

Additionally, Kenneth Lincoln completely leaves Posey out of his study of American Indian poetry, *Sing with the Heart of a Bear: Fusions of Native and American*

*Poetry, 1890-1999* (University of California Press, 2000). No less frustrating is Posey's omission from Lucy Maddox's recent book, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race and Reform* (Cornell University Press, 2005). Posey was certainly an influential and nationally recognized American Indian intellectual from the period of Maddox's study, and he had definite—if unfortunate—opinions about race and tribal reform. Posey's omission from these studies would be less problematic if these books were not so important to the development of a broader view of American Indian literature. Through their failure to adequately incorporate (or in some cases even address) Alexander Posey, they present an incomplete picture of the development of American Indian letters. Each of the books I list above represent excellent and much needed additions to the scholarly discussion about American Indian literature. Why then do they consistently leave out the work and life of Alexander Posey, an American Indian writer so central to their arguments?

There are several reasons for Posey's under representation in studies of American Indian literature. Early American Indian writers pose several critical challenges to scholars, challenges not common when dealing with most contemporary writers, American Indian or otherwise. Due to decades, sometimes even centuries, of critical neglect, the work of early American Indian writers is often housed solely in a variety of regional archival collections. Unearthing these important texts of American Indian literature requires the work of literary scholars who are willing, and able, to spend a considerable amount of time hunting for manuscripts, and once locating those manuscripts, deciphering the often challenging scrawl of a long lost author's handwriting. Along with these duties, scholars who hope to decipher meanings and place works within

the American Indian literary tradition need to learn as much as possible about the author's life and the historical and cultural contexts from which they worked. It is no exaggeration to say that literary critics who thrill in rediscovering the faded manuscripts of forgotten authors must possess the skills of an anthropologist, historian, and textual scholar as well as a keen interpretive eye.

Placing Posey's journals and poems within a larger literary framework requires a broad set of scholarly tools and the realization that in some ways his literary legacy overlaps with that of his Euro-American influences. Some American Indian literary critics may dislike this latter point due to a recent push to remove American Indian literature from the canon of American literature. However, as Posey's journals and poems demonstrate, he viewed his work within the tradition of these Euro-American writers. This fact, however, in no way reduces Posey's status as a groundbreaking, and in several ways remarkable, American Indian writer.

*Posey's Journals: Muscogee Nationality, Euro-American Models, and Life-Writing as Tradition*

In 1897 when Posey began to write the first of his journals (or at least the first of those that still exist today), he had at least two main traditions of autobiographical writing available to use as models: American Indian traditional oral storytelling and a number of Euro-American examples from the period. Posey grew up immersed in a culture of oral tradition. Both his mother and father were avid storytellers, and he would also spend time listening to traditionalist members of his nation relate both works of oral tradition and tell stories about their own life experiences. Posey was especially interested in the stories of

those who had lived in the old country of the Southeast and had survived the forced removal period that came to be called the Trail of Tears. After about the age of fourteen, when Posey began to learn and use English, he sought out Euro-American literary examples. He was particularly fond of the journals, essays, and nature writings of such figures as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert G. Ingersoll, John Burroughs, and Henry David Thoreau, works that take up space on both the shelves of his personal library and in his own journal entries recording his reading habits.

Though it may be unfashionable at this time in the history of American Indian literary criticism to note that an American Indian's writing is the product of a syncretic literary education that simultaneously draws upon American Indian and Euro-American models, I find such a view particularly persuasive—and even unavoidable—for someone like Posey. After all, Posey himself, in his journals and letters, championed Euro-American sources, and how else are we to think about a man who collected Muscogee oral traditions (with a view to publishing a collection), wrote poems emulating Burns and Whittier, and liked to carry a copy of *Walden* in his pocket (Littlefield 121, 205)? In calling for a more exclusive critical approach to studying American Indian writers, Womack criticizes this view: “Biculturalism looks at Native literature as a hybrid discourse, influenced by European literary forms such as the novel, the short story, and the poem, the argument being that such expression is not indigenous to tribal cultures” (Womack 137). In this case, Womack's argument is a reaction against Alexia Kosmider's study *Tricky Tribal Discourse*, a book in which she argues in part that “Alex Posey at times emulates the dominant culture's beliefs—at other times, he celebrates and tries to

dispel negative Indian stereotypes. His vacillation is the act of an individual who has difficulty understanding who he is—and perhaps accepting his Indian identity.”<sup>1</sup>

Both Womack and Kosmider present valid points, but both take them too far in attempting to explicate Posey’s literary motives. Contrary to Kosmider’s argument, no evidence exists that Posey suffered an identity crisis. In each of his journals we find a person comfortable with his place within the extremely complex cultural world into which he was born. However, she correctly gestures toward Posey’s realization that there was more than one kind of Muscogee in Indian Territory. For example, while Posey’s written criticisms of the United States government hail from a position of an outsider—in other words he writes as a Muscogee—Posey is fully aware that he writes as a “progressive” rather than a “traditionalist.” Nevertheless, Womack correctly points out that Posey’s “progressive” label is an oversimplified designation for a man whose seemingly contrary actions and opinions repeatedly frustrate attempts to define him through such clear-cut dichotomies (131-132). In other words, Posey is a complex member of a complicated Muscogee Nation, a nation containing a number of factions which represented different ways of weathering the assimilationist onslaught of the United States and specifically the Dawes Commission.

Womack, himself, slightly overshoots the mark when he discourages critical approaches to Posey that incorporate serious consideration of his Euro-American influences. It would seem that this condemnation of multicultural influence assumes the doubtful possibility of a literature untouched by the influences of other cultures, and what came before. This sterile ideal is both impossible and undesirable because ignoring

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<sup>1</sup> Alexia Kosmider, *Tricky Tribal Discourse: The Poetry, Short Stories, and Fus Fixico Letters of Creek Writer Alex Posey*, (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1998), 20.

Posey's Euro-American influences—influences he often praises in his journals—risks creating a portrait of Posey that ignores a major source of his literary education. As Womack himself argues, Posey is no less American Indian, and certainly no less Muscogee (Creek), just because he read, loved, and emulated Burns, Thoreau, Plutarch, Shelley, and Washington Irving.

Nevertheless, Posey sometimes complicated the issue by appearing to view himself as an “American.” For example, when he comments on the Cuban war of independence from Spain in his January 1, 1897 entry in his “Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum” he writes: “The reports in today’s papers regarding the sentiments of Congress in the matter of the negotiation of the Independence of Cuba are far from encouraging. Congress should express the will of the American people in this matter and not the will of the President and his cabinet. This “diplomatic jabbing” of the Cleveland administration deserves contempt.”<sup>2</sup> Posey empathizes with the Cubans in their war with Spain while he simultaneously condemns what he viewed as the inept and corrupt political machinery of the United States. Yet it is hard to know whether Posey includes himself within his categorization of “the American people,” or if he means to phrase it as a statement directed to the citizenry of the United States. Much of Posey’s writing would indicate the latter of the two readings.

Indeed, while the dealings of the United States government had eroded much of their sovereignty, the Five Tribes still retained their own watered down form of self-government. Either way, many citizens of these American Indian nations strongly retained their identity as members of a political and cultural body apart from the United

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<sup>2</sup> January 1, 1897, “Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum [1 January 1897 to 2 January 1900],” folder 18 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

States. Yet again, Posey sometimes forwards a complicated political stance in which he seems to place himself within the American camp while also occupying a more specified identity as a Muscogee. For example, in his January 28, 1897 journal entry, Posey writes, “John and I went to town. Had an hour’s chat with Shields and Myers. We gave prize fighting down the country and were frank in declaring what we thought about Americans—if they be that—who accumulate fortune by peddling books and rat-traps and cap the climax by allying their families with foreign nobility—when the greatest thing is to be simply an American citizen!”<sup>3</sup> Here Posey (ever the satirist) may be satirizing American nationalistic pride, but he does not provide enough information to make a definitive interpretation. As he often expresses a genuine admiration for select Americans (e.g. Daniel Webster, Thomas Paine, Robert G. Ingersoll, Henry David Thoreau) his political stance—like most of his beliefs—remains inconclusive.

At issue is the need to reconcile Posey’s Euro-American literary influences with his Muscogee culture, a culture that affected Posey’s creativity in many forms that transcend the simple reading of a book. Ultimately, Posey’s reading took the form of examples he could then experiment with to inscribe his own unique Muscogee world into print. Debates about biculturalism and hybridity too often veer away from the recognition that Posey chose, through his own interests, those Euro-American models he most enjoyed. What Posey could not choose was his own Muscogee heritage, a heritage that was a powerful force in fashioning his entire concept of self and community. For a writer such as Posey who grew up in a strong Muscogee family, who spoke only Muscogee until his adolescence, and who continued to **understand his place in the world as a citizen of**

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<sup>3</sup> January 28, 1897, “Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum [1 January 1897 to 2 January 1900],” folder 18 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



the Muscogee Nation, his Euro-American literary influences are quickly outweighed by a culture informing virtually every aspect of his life.

Thus in his writing, Posey did indeed draw from both cultural examples of autobiography, and from those Euro-American sources he became exposed to through his lifelong love of reading, but he never for a moment questioned his status as a Muscogee citizen or as a writer of Muscogee literature. Posey was certainly an “adopter” and an “adaptor” of what he heard, saw, and read, but part of his genius resides in how he found ways to merge voices and forms from a variety of sources to suit his own artistic agenda. His works serve as an excellent record of his exposure to, and opinions of, these various influences. Krupat argues, “Indian autobiographies are not a traditional form among Native peoples but the consequence of contact with the white invader-settlers, and the product of a limited collaboration with them.”<sup>4</sup> Krupat further insists, “there simply were no Native American texts until whites decided to collaborate with Indians and make them” (5). Krupat’s view of what constitutes American Indian texts is significantly limited and does not take into account what were several forms available to American Indians for expressing their life narratives. Oral traditions, performative dances, and even just idle conversations all fall under an inclusive definition of autobiography. Even if Krupat’s view of American Indian autobiography is limited to only written documents—objects bearing symbols that relate a narrative of personal experience—his definition of what constitutes autobiography is still blind to the textual possibilities found within Native American petroglyphs, pictographs, pottery, clothing, and deerskin parchments—

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<sup>4</sup> Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xi.

not to mention such texts as the, now destroyed, pre-Columbian Aztec codices. Such texts certainly required no “collaboration” with the Euro-Americans.

Heartha Dawn Wong offers an alternative view of what constitutes American Indian autobiography and ultimately all American Indian texts: “Native American autobiographical expressions are not based on Euro-American notions of self, life, or writing. Before the arrival of Europeans, indigenous people had numerous oral and pictographic forms in which to share their personal narratives...these narratives were told in different forms, with different emphases, for different audiences and purposes, but they *were* told” (12). Such a view of American Indian autobiography, and literature in general, helps underscore the importance of viewing Posey’s work as not simply pure emulations of Euro-American forms. He certainly draws heavily upon the written examples available to him, but the multicultural complexity that forms the backdrop of his life (especially in those first fourteen or so years in which he only spoke Muscogee) contributes much to the way that Posey writes about his experiences. In short, while Posey’s journals take the standard forms of the Euro-American examples he read, they remain uniquely American Indian, uniquely Muscogee, texts.

*Posey’s Poems: Muscogee Tradition, Euro-American Influences, and the Creation of an Indian Territory Pastoral*

Posey wrote the largest body of American Indian poetry of his time, and his poems represent a decisive cultural moment in American and American Indian literary history. Few would disagree that Posey’s verse at times seems antiquated—as the artifact of an obsolete literary aesthetic. In writing about the quality of Posey’s poetry, Littlefield

argues that while much of Posey's work displays "sentimentality, halting lines, and weak endings" he, at times, also manages to reveal "striking, sometimes brilliant images" (105). Regardless, all of Posey's work succeeds in one important way: with these poems Alexander Posey gained something that had eluded almost every American Indian writer before him and too many after, a national literary reputation as a serious writer.

As with his journals and other writing, Posey drew from a host of Euro-American influences that were, in turn, modified by his Muscogee heritage. While, in terms of poetic mastery, most of his works hardly rival those of his Euro-American models (e.g. Shelley, Whittier, Byron, Tennyson, Burns, etc.), his verse does provide a gateway into a unique literary world found nowhere else. Posey's work reflects his own vision of the Muscogee Nation, and of Indian Territory as a whole, at time in which these worlds were—through the dealings of the United States government—coming to an end. Posey then overlays his Euro-American influences with what are often uniquely Muscogee images, cultural references, and humor. Thus is it unsurprising that Posey is at his best when he writes about his own culture, about the political injustices levied against his nation, about those tribal members he respected, and about home.

In writing about Edward Taylor, another important poet who is as often maligned as celebrated, Karl Keller reminds us, "he is more interesting and more important than one might at first think. A minor writer...can be known and enjoyed as purely as a major one, and perhaps more easily" (5). The same may be said of Alexander Posey. His status as a minor poet whose historical and cultural significance outweighs his literary accomplishments should not distract readers and scholars from that historical and cultural significance itself. Furthermore, Posey is not without his moments. I argue that poems

such as “Autumn,” “To a Hummingbird,” “Song of the Oktahutche,” and “Tulledega,” along with the heretofore unpublished, “The Blue Bird” and “Callie” stand as some of the best poetry from that period. Some poems are remarkable for a variety of reasons not directly related to sheer poetics. For example, Posey’s political and humorous works such as “Wildcat Bill,” “Ye Men of Dawes,” “[To allot, or not to allot, that is the],” “Cuba Libre,” “The Fall of the Redskin,” and “On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake, January, 1900” serve as fascinating accounts of Indian Territory political thought by a man who not only reflected the times but helped shape public opinion through his newspaper editorials, orations, and role as an educator.

Posey’s cultural traditions and his copious reading habits led to a writer who drew from a rich well of resources. Not surprisingly, this diversity of influences led to Posey writing an equally diverse body of poetry that can best be understood when organized into four rough, and sometimes overlapping, categories of subject matter. These categories include subjects related to an idealized natural world, Muscogee (Creek) cultural traditions, Indian Territory humor and wit, and personal works (i.e., those poems devoted to family, friends, and sometimes even enemies). Almost all of Posey’s poems share at least a couple of these subjects, and, as one might expect, his best works emerge when he finds inventive ways to combine these subjects within an individual poem.

At other times, Posey’s poems become what Littlefield describes as “metrical experiments,” in which “his free verse...was not always entirely ‘free’ but included unrhymed metrics in which he created an unusual effect with the unaccented end of one line and the accented beginning of the next. Other poems appear to be merely experiments in rhyme” (105-106). Often such poetic experiments take on the subject of a

romanticized natural world that seems far removed from its Indian Territory inspiration. The poem, "The Deer," serves as a good example of how Posey at times appears to marginalize his subject matter for exactly the metrical tinkering and rhyme experiments that Littlefield describes:

From out the folded hills,  
That lie beneath a thin blue veil,  
There comes a deer to drink  
From Limbo's waters in the dale.  
  
Then flies he back into  
The hills, and sitting here, I dream  
And watch, as vain as he,  
My image lying in the stream.<sup>5</sup>

In this and many similar works, Posey echoes the influence of his favorite poets, often those who worked in the romantic and genteel traditions. Doubtless few of the people who lived near Limbo Creek in the Muscogee Nation envisioned it winding through a "dale." The stamp of Posey's readings in James Russell Lowell, Whittier, William Cullen Bryant, Longfellow, Shelley, and many others marks these poems, but his reason to idolize the work of these poets stems from his task of finding language equal the to the challenge of inscribing his own Muscogee view of the world he loved into English.

In his tendency to choose diction that seems to clash with the subject matter, Posey is guilty of emulating those Euro-American influences he thought most closely

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<sup>5</sup> "The Deer," manuscript dated September 25, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 112, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

matched his own culturally based aesthetic sensibilities. After all, he did not speak or write in English until about the age of fourteen, and he chose the form and style of English (at least in terms of poetry) he thought best reflected the way he viewed his natural environment. In an oft-quoted statement, Posey writes, “All of my people are poets, natural-born poets, gifted with wonderful imaginative power and the ability to express in sonorous, musical phrases their impressions of life and nature.”<sup>6</sup> He continues by explaining his view of how American Indian literature—in this case an oral literature contained within a rich indigenous language—is at its heart similar to the work of the romantic Euro-American poets he admired. He argues that many songs, poems, and other works of American Indian oral tradition “have a splendid dignity, gorgeous word-pictures, and reproduce with magic effect many phases of life in the forests—the glint of the fading sunshine falling on the leaves, the faint stirring of the wind, the whirring of insects.”<sup>7</sup> Coming from Posey, such a statement carries with it certain complexities because he simultaneously champions the richness and validity of his American Indian culture while also falling into the trap of romanticizing that very culture. Posey becomes guilty of promoting the “noble savage” stereotype, a portrait of a culture that sacrifices the humanity of the American Indians for an unrealistic and nostalgic ideal that actually does much more to reflect Euro-American anxieties than any American Indian reality. Further demonstrating his tendency to romanticize his own culture, Posey continues with the assertion that “the Indian talks in poetry; poetry is his vernacular—not necessarily the

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Posey quoted in William Elsey Connelley, *Memoir of Alexander Lawrence Posey, The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, collected and arranged by Mrs. Minnie H. Posey, Topeka: Crane, 1910: 61-62

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Posey quoted in William Elsey Connelley, *Memoir of Alexander Lawrence Posey, The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, collected and arranged by Mrs. Minnie H. Posey, Topeka: Crane, 1910: 61-62

stilted poetry of books, but the free and untrammelled poetry of Nature, the poetry of the field, the sky, the river, the sun and the stars. In his own tongue it is not difficult for the Indian to compose, —he does it instinctively.”<sup>8</sup>

Posey’s romanticized portrayals also creep into his poems dealing with individual American Indian figures such as Chitto Harjo in the poem “On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake, January, 1900” in which Posey ends with a text-book example of this problematic literary representation:

Such coarse black hair! such eagle eye!

Such stately mien!—how arrow-straight!

Such will! such courage to defy

The powerful makers of his fate!

A traitor, outlaw, —what you will,

He is the noble red man still.

Condemn him and his kind to shame!

I bow to him, exalt his name!<sup>9</sup>

This unrealistic portrait of Chitto Harjo as the “noble red man” largely centers on an idealized physical type that includes references to Harjo’s “eagle eye” and “stately mien.” Posey’s Chitto Harjo is a caricature drawn from his reading of Euro-American portrayals that idealized a lost Indian presence that never existed to begin with. The image of the “noble savage” was especially common in the late nineteenth century and Posey would certainly have run across these unrealistic accounts in his extensive reading

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake, January, 1900,” *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 88.

of newspapers, literary magazines, romantic poetry, and most definitely in reading one of his favorite authors, Washington Irving. Irving's influence on Posey is undeniable. Posey's library contains ten of Irving's books; in his journals Posey praises Irving as a writer who possesses the ability to write works of "wondrous beauty;"<sup>10</sup> he even named his first son, Yahola Irving Posey. Many of Irving's American Indians fall into the Rousseau-inspired idealized convention of virtuous, well-spoken, physically perfect children of nature. For example in *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon*, Irving includes a piece entitled, "Traits of Indian Character," in which he writes:

There is something in the character and habits of the North American savage, taken in connection with the scenery over which he is accustomed to range, its vast lakes, boundless forests, majestic rivers, and trackless plains, that is, to my mind, wonderfully striking and sublime...His nature is stern, simple, and enduring; fitted to grapple with difficulties, and to support privations...if we would but take the trouble to penetrate through that proud stoicism and habitual taciturnity...we should find him linked to his fellow man of civilized life by more of those sympathies and affections than are usually ascribed to him.<sup>11</sup>

Though a reaction to earlier racist presentations of American Indians as ruthless demons of the wilderness, many view this "noble savage" portrayal as no less a form of racism because it trades one stereotype for another, and in so doing ignores the reality of American Indian humanity, rights, and culture. As a member of a beleaguered American

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Posey, January 19, 1897, "Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum," folder 18 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>11</sup> Washington Irving, "Traits of Indian Character," *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Other Stories in the Sketch Book*, (New York: Signet, 1981), 272.



Indian nation, Posey certainly had a front row seat to forms of malicious racism. Perhaps he so welcomed a seemingly positive view of his people that he could ignore what he doubtlessly knew was a fictional cultural assessment. Thus when presented with the dilemma of writing about his own people he chose the representation he found most appealing and promoted it throughout the bulk of his writing.

So the question arises, does Posey, perhaps unconsciously, hold a complicated, idealized, or even racist, view of his own people? Several of his poems, orations, newspaper articles, journal entries, and stories suggest the answer is yes. In Posey's "Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party" his complicated opinion of the Muscogee traditionalists emerges when he attempts to debate the issue of allotment with one of the leaders of the anti-allotment conservative group (also called the "Snakes):

John Kelly, is high in the "Snake" council and proposes to stand by the "old treaties" at all hazards. I approached him once while he was at work in his "sofky patch" and tried to explain to him the utter uselessness of holding out against the inevitable—how the tribal governments had fallen into decay—how the country had been over-run by white people, outnumbering the Indians ten to one—how it was impossible for the United States to arrest progress in order that the Indians might enjoy undisturbed possession of their country...But he would have none of it, saying, "The real Indian was not consulted as to allotment of lands; if he had been consulted he would have never consented to depart from the customs and traditions of his fathers. Our tribal government was upset by a stroke of the pen, because a few cried 'Change' and because we were

helpless. I call myself a real Indian; you see me here today tilling my ground, tomorrow you will find me here. The real Indian does not change and is steadfast in the truth. He will not be reconciled to wrong. The government of the United States has made us solemn pledges and without our consent has no right to break them. As for us we will keep good faith.” So spoke John Kelly and so he speaks today.<sup>12</sup>

Evident from this passage is Posey’s view that the conservatives of his tribe adhered to doomed traditions and antiquated ideals. Yet even in describing this conversation, a discussion in which John Kelly subtly argues that progressive Muscogees like Posey are not “real indians,” Posey maintains a form of romanticized admiration, a belief that some of his own people fit the problematic mold of the “noble savage.” His closing line of “So spoke John Kelly and so he speaks today” echoes the “proud stoicism and habitual taciturnity” found in Washington Irving’s “Traits of Indian Character.” Thus, while Posey believed that the conservatives of his nation led quaint, admirable lives, he also held that they could not survive in the rapidly changing world of Euro-American encroachment.

Aside from these significant weaknesses, Posey’s best writing bursts forth with vibrant, playful language that conjures a hopeful (if idealized) natural world. The same man who loved to walk in the meadows and woods that surrounded his homes at Bald Hill and the Tulledegas also loved to create such places in his writing. Though almost always at least somewhat clichéd, his nature poems—especially those devoted to birds and the ubiquitous Oktahutche—often still manage to call forth inventive lines and

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<sup>12</sup> September 2, 1905, “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party,” folder 38, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma

singing language that collectively represents the most thrilling love letter ever written to the natural world found within of the Muscogee Nation.

Even most of Posey's formulaic and derivative poems remain beautiful testaments to his sincere feelings for family members, friends, and nature. Yet sometimes true gems emerge from the body of his work, poems that seem particularly inspired and hit the mark that many other miss. For example Posey's very brief poem, "The Bluebird," works precisely because of its brevity: "A winged bit of Indian sky/ Strayed hither from its home on high."<sup>13</sup> With its straightforward, yet striking image and simple delivery this poem succeeds where many of Posey's much longer and over-wrought works fall flat. Another poem, "Autumn," also differs in form from the majority of Posey's verse, and it is this apparently experimental character that enhances the elements of what might otherwise be just another paean to the natural world:

In the dreamy silence  
Of the afternoon, a  
Cloth of gold is woven  
Over wood and prairie;  
And the jaybird, newly  
Fallen from the heaven,  
Scatters cordial greetings,  
And the air is filled with  
Scarlet leaves, that, dropping,  
Rise again, as ever,

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<sup>13</sup> Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 137, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

With a useless sigh for  
Rest—and it is Autumn.<sup>14</sup>

This poem with its springing rhythm and warm imagery evokes the natural world, not as a reflection of reality, but as Posey wanted it to be—and as it remains in his verse. The best of Posey's nature poetry becomes a sort of Indian Territory pastoral, poems that rank with the best of American verse at the time and that deserve increased critical attention.

Several poems that serve as windows into Posey's unique Indian Territory setting echo Muscogee oral tradition and make direct references to his Muscogee culture. These poems—just as many of Posey's stories and journal entries—should be seen as precious cultural gems that, without Posey's writing, would have been lost. These poems, such as "The Indian's Past Olympic," and several that were, until this edition virtually unknown, such as "God and the Flying Squirrel (A Creek Legend)," "Fus Harjo and Old Billy Hell," "The Warrior's Dream," and "A Fable" draw heavily upon Posey's Muscogee heritage and cultural traditions and cannot be measured by conventional Euro-American ideas of literary worth.

The cultural and literary implications of Posey's work remain fertile areas of research and appreciation. His journals and poems stand as important keys to understanding the broader artistic sensibilities and concepts associated with both American Indian and Muscogee identity. In this regard these works represent some of the most important examples of American Indian literature of that period.

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<sup>14</sup> Manuscript dated October 20, 1897 on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 88, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

### **A Note on the Editing of these Texts**

The purpose of this edition is to present a complete, accurate, and accessible collection of Alexander Posey's journals and poems, a collection that represents, as much as possible, his creative wishes. Thus, for this edition, the final version of a text published while Posey was still alive takes precedence over all other versions of that text. For those versions available only in manuscript form, that manuscript version becomes the copy-text. In rare cases where substantial variants (those involving more than a variant word or comma) exist, this edition includes both versions, allowing a window into how Posey revised his writing over time.

In the case of twelve poems, all we have left are the versions presented in the problematic 1910 edition of Posey's poetry. As these versions are the only ones available, they are included in this edition; however, I include these versions only as a last resort because the 1910 edition often contains substantial errors. In the text, I note each of these twelve poems as originating from possibly corrupt editions. Posey's journals bear similar problems. I include Barde's typescript of Posey's so-called "River Journal" only because it is the most complete version available.

As a large number of the poems collected here lack dates, I employed a variety of strategies to place these texts within chronological order. Posey published much of his poetry in issues of Indian Territory newspapers that are now either extremely rare or completely lost. Luckily, Posey's wife, Minnie maintained a set of scrapbooks devoted to her husband's work. However, she often clipped the poems out of those sources and

pasted them into her scrapbook without providing any information about either the source or the date of publication. In some cases the sources of these newspaper clippings can be derived from the distinctive characteristics of the type they used. It is sometimes possible to roughly date these clippings from clues found in Posey's journals or based on hints provided by the contents of the poems themselves. The same goes for Posey's poetry manuscripts, which also often lack dates of composition. Fortunately, he wrote many of his manuscripts on the distinctive letterheads of the various schools where he worked. By making the assumption that Posey only wrote on those different types of letterhead while working at those institutions, we can place those poems within a rough chronology based upon his known job history. It is an admittedly imprecise method of dating the poems, but it remains the only way. In the case of the undated pages from a ledger (i.e., folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma) containing manuscripts of several poems, the contents of the ledger itself allows for a rough estimation of the time period from which the works originated. Despite these efforts, twenty-four poems found in this edition cannot be dated and are simply placed alphabetically at the end of the collection.

Thus sorted into the best possible chronological order, the works are then divided into two sections depending on genre, one for the journals and one for the poems. The texts are then annotated for the ease of the reader, and all emendations and textual notes are located at the end of the edited items. No silent changes have been made to these texts. Endnotes found after each piece help explain historical, biographical, and other obscure references. As most people will not read this book from front to back, endnotes are repeated when their referents occur in more than one text.

Posey's writing deserves conscientious preservation and study. He wrote the largest body of American Indian poetry of his day, and during his lifetime, his poetry represented some of his most popular work, work that helped him gain a national literary reputation well before the notoriety that followed his satirical *Fus Fixico* letters. Similarly, Posey's journals are a fascinating account of the life of one of the most enigmatic of American Indian figures during the last days of Indian Territory. Often poetic in their own right, his journals stand as valuable works of nature writing, travel writing, autobiography, political commentary, history, and cultural studies.

For decades, the versions of Posey's journals and poetry most accessible to the public were also the least accurate. This edition brings the work of this important American Indian writer to a new generation of readers and scholars. Ultimately, the eight works of life writing and one hundred ninety-eight poems that make up this edition are much more than just academically significant reminders of a bygone era, they are also—simply put—a good read.

## The Journals: An Introduction

Sept. 17 [1905] At home—Read Thoreau’s “Journal” in the Atlantic Monthly—Am amused at an entry made in February saying, “I have gone this far into the winter without putting on drawers” or words to that amount. Some days after he writes of being confined to his cabin by bronchitis!<sup>1</sup>

—Alexander Posey, “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party”

### *Posey’s Life-Writing*

Alexander Posey lived a brief but extraordinary life, and the fact that he wrote about that life is, itself, remarkable. The issue of outside influences problematizes any discussion of Posey’s work, including his journals. As the above epigraph demonstrates, the Muscogee (Creek) Posey enjoyed reading Euro-American journals. For example, his library contains a complete twenty-volume set of Thoreau’s journals, a worn copy of *Walden*, and two books about Thoreau. That is not to mention books by several other authors who worked in a variety of life-writing forms such as nature writing, travel narratives, journal writing, essays, and autobiography. These writers—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Gilbert White, John Burroughs, Richard F. Burton, Joaquin Miller, Thomas De Quincey, Donald G. Mitchell, and several others—lined Posey’s shelves and did indeed serve as strong influences on his own writing. However, as a thorough reading of Posey’s journals makes clear, his Muscogee heritage builds upon and sometimes even overwrites these traditional Euro-American influences.

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<sup>1</sup> “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party,” September, 17, 1905, folder 38, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Posey's journals stand as both some of his most interesting works and as some of the best accounts of daily life in late nineteenth-century Indian Territory. His journals record a period of intense cultural crisis for his own Muscogee (Creek) Nation and for other American Indian nations that found themselves in the path of an aggressive campaign of assimilation by the United States government. During Posey's short lifetime, the United States worked to put the finishing touches on the centuries long project of absorbing, and at times erasing, a complicated body of indigenous cultures. As an influential Muscogee politician, educator, journalist, and writer of the time, Posey commanded a unique view of these turbulent years, a view he sketched in his journals. Though his accounts are sporadic and fragmented, they remain a series of fascinating works that offer detailed glimpses into several facets of his daily life. While many of Posey's journal entries focus on issues related to the dramatic cultural conflict he witnessed, he also makes it clear that the natural world is never far from his mind. Posey's love of nature becomes the central focus of four journals, and it is in these works that his writing often takes on a vivid, poetic cast that at times surpasses even the best of his nature poetry.

Posey's works of life-writing stretch from the opening entry of his longest journal in January 1, 1897 to "Lost to His Tribe for Many Years," an article derived from his Dawes Commission field notes and published in the May 15, 1908 issue of *Indian Journal* (an article he published just twelve days before his death). These works, and the other autobiographical texts that fall between, follow an approximately eleven-year arc. Through his journals we follow Posey from his days as the superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum; to his years as an educator, farmer, and newspaper editor; and up to

final few years as a notable Indian Territory literary figure and a fieldworker for the Dawes Commission. Categorizing these rare examples of American Indian life-writing from the turn of the nineteenth century proves a complicated exercise, one that further reveals the unique status of these works. For the most part, Posey's journals follow conventional genre expectations; they are composed of chronologically organized entries recording both daily activities along with the occasional reminiscence, shared story, and thoughts on a variety of issues. Unfortunately, Posey was never one to write any given journal for long.

The earliest, and longest, of his journals kept Posey's interest for only a few months. In this journal, devoted to his final months at the Creek Orphan Asylum, he made relatively regular entries from January 1, 1897 to September 4, 1897. However, he then ceased writing in the journal until November 11, 1899 when he contributed an entry in which he comically writes one sentence: "It has been a long time—two years—since I wrote in my diary." After this entry Posey waits until November 29, 1899 before he writes again. He then ends the journal with a couple of short entries: one on November 31, 1899 (that briefly mentions a snowball fight) and on January 2, 1900 (in which he praises Boswell). Such is the abrupt end of Posey's longest journal. Perhaps it was the journal's lack of true closure, or its chronological incongruity, that led editor, Edward Everett Dale to completely leave out, without so much as a mention, the journal's final four entries in his *Chronicles of Oklahoma* transcriptions. However it was certainly sloppy editing that caused Dale to further omit two entire paragraphs from within the larger body of the journal.

As sporadic as they are, Posey's journals—especially his first one—were of great use to him in terms of his other writing. He infuses several of his 1897 journal entries with verse, and sometimes his entries become fodder for his own poetic subjects to come. For example, in his February 14, 1897 entry (perhaps significantly on Valentine's Day) he writes of a girl he once knew in his childhood. This description of a lost sweetheart would find its way into "Callie," a poem of that same period, which includes these lines:

Callie, leaning from the window, begged in  
Vain that afternoon for just a single  
Blossom of the many in my hand. How  
Gloriously pretty! and my love was  
Deep for Callie; but a boyish heart was  
Mine, and I had not the courage then to  
offer any token of affection.<sup>2</sup>

During this point in his life, Posey would often mine his journal for such poetic inspiration, developing rough ideas and fragments into verse. This tendency reveals a clue to the creative process behind at least some of Posey's poems and stories, offering a glimpse into how he fashioned the raw material of his life into art. Posey's first journal stands as his most personal work of writing. In this journal he records his daily life at the orphan asylum, the birth of his first son, his deep love for his wife, the seemingly constant fun he has with his friends, and his frustration at a life bound to the complicated world of Muscogee politics. With the possible exception of his "Journal of the Creek

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<sup>2</sup> "Callie," undated manuscript on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 92, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Enrollment Field Party,” never again would Posey’s journals approach this level of intimacy and introspection.

In May of 1900 he published a short summary of his youth entitled, “Biographical.” Written for the Indian Territory literary magazine, *Twin Territories*, this piece relates a few key aspects of Posey’s childhood and does so with a brand of reserved humor that emerges in several of his other works. Posey manages to relate much in a small space, detailing his nostalgia for his carefree days of childhood (a recurrent theme in much of his writing) and how his father scared him into speaking English. Posey seems aware of how unique his education is and even mentions his first tutor. Brief and perhaps more clever than accurate, “Biographical” remains one of the only sources of pure autobiography by a writer who preferred leaving such matters to his sporadic journals.

While Posey’s journals, like most examples of the genre, do recount the events of his daily life, his political opinions, his reading habits, travels, and even his role as an instigator of several practical jokes, the subject that almost always comes to the fore is that of nature. In virtually all of his journals his descriptions of the natural world emerge from the page as poetic, idealized love letters to the Indian Territory environment. Posey devotes no fewer than four of the journals collected in this edition to the celebration of nature. “The Cruise of the Good Vrouw: From a Diary by One of the Crew” and “The River Journal: The Barde Typescript” both derive from his, now lost, “River Journal.” One of Posey’s most fascinating journals and perhaps his most accomplished work of nature writing is the brief “Notes Afield.” Another work of nature writing, the so-called “Hains Letters,” also apparently originated from his journals. At one point in the letters

Posey promises to Hains that “I shall tear out another leaf of my journal for you soon.”<sup>3</sup> Together these brief accounts of the natural world form some of Posey’s most interesting and timeless works.

The original manuscript of Posey’s 1901 trip down the Oktahutche River—an account he referred to as his “river journal”—has been lost. According to Littlefield, in 1915 Posey’s wife, Minnie, loaned the manuscript of this journal to Frederick S. Barde, a journalist for the *Kansas City Star*. Barde died soon after he received the manuscript but not before he managed—against Minnie Posey’s wishes—to publish a segment of the journal in the *Kansas City Star*. Barde’s death, coupled with possibly nefarious dealings by Barde’s wife and the Oklahoma Historical Society resulted in Minnie’s inability to reclaim the original manuscript, which was never seen again (Littlefield 264-265). Due to this loss, only remnants of the journal remain. One source that presents a few of the journal’s entries is an article Posey published in the July 25, 1902 issue of the *Indian Journal*. This article, entitled, “The Cruise of the Good Vrouw: From a Diary by One of the Crew,” was meant to be the first of a series of pieces drawn from the journal. However, one of the men portrayed in the work, Posey’s friend John Thornton, objected to any further publication of the piece. His reasons for this objection are not clear, but they may stem from Posey’s portrayal of him as both trigger happy and immature.

Another source that provides remnants of the river journal is Barde’s typescript for his October 31, 1915 *Kansas City Star* article, “An Indian Poet’s Tale of a River Trip.” This typescript, which includes more of the journal’s content than the resulting article, now remains the only source for two paragraphs of Posey’s river journal. When

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Posey to Henry Hains, March 21, 1905, folder 33, Alexander L. Posey Collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

he published the article, Barde changed several aspects of Posey's account. For example, as Posey's own 1902 article about the trip demonstrates, he tended to call the river in question by its Muscogee name of Oktahutche (sand creek). Barde alters the account by replacing specific mentions of the river with the English name: the North Canadian. A more intrusive change in the journal exists in Barde's apparently deliberate (and unexplained) removal of at least two paragraphs found in Posey's original manuscript. Barde removed these two paragraphs from his own early typescript for the *Kansas City Star* article, and his reasons for this change remain unknown. As Barde's typescript ostensibly suffers from the fewest number of editorial changes, this edition uses that early typescript as a source text instead of Barde's published article.

"Notes Afield," another short journal of entries devoted to Posey's observations of nature, stands as one of his most fascinating works. Posey wrote the journal between March 7, 1902 and about July 13, 1902. The actual end date is uncertain because the final two entries take the form of undated poetic passages. The opening entries take the form of intriguing works of nature writing that demonstrate Posey's excellent knowledge of the natural world and his debt to a diversity of influences such as Thoreau, Emerson, John Burroughs, Gilbert White, and most of all his own Muscogee (Creek) heritage. The entries seem almost accidentally poetic. For example Posey's March 10, 1902 entry reads: "Hear the piping of little frogs. Elms becoming green in sheltered places. See a small white butterfly—anemonea—crocus in full bloom—also plum trees—" This short entry, one of several like it, provides an inspired list of springtime images.

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Notes Afield

March 7. - The wind very high, cloudy  
misty sky, but penetrating every crevice  
directly, plowed fields having the appearance  
of sand bars; few birds seen in the  
upland woods and none singing  
except now and then, the cardinal and  
black-capped (titmouse)  
Capped Titmouse in the deep woods chirp  
trill of on the wind. The glades along  
the river sprinkled with Yucca filifera  
glauca bluets of the softest and tenderest  
blue imaginable - the strawberry well  
on the way but a few dead leaves at the  
bottom indicate that it has been on the  
way too early. Find a moth muller  
gutting the stalk of ash after plow in the  
meadow for the "favour of Spring"; but, like  
the strawberry, only at a great cost;  
for I find dead leaf after dead leaf  
beneath the green ones on the rising

The first page of the manuscript of "Notes Afield." Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 23.

Complete with a mock-epic battle between a wasp and worm, “Notes Afield” manages to provide entries that are both humorous and profound. The poetic entry entitled, “An Hour’s Walk in the Woods” displays an almost stream of consciousness quality that manages to blur the lines between his traditional nature journal entries and his romantic poetry. Characterized by a series of bold images separated by dashes, this apparently rough list of natural observations captures the natural world through Posey’s eyes with an authenticity that transcends his often over-wrought nature verse.

Three years later, between March 18 and March 23, 1905, Posey again dabbled in nature writing when he sent four letters, some apparently drawn from information in his journals, to Henry Hains, the editor of the *Muskogee Democrat* (Littlefield 205). These so-called “Hains letters,” were written with publication in mind and demonstrate the richness of Posey’s literary talents in the last years of his life.<sup>4</sup> Taken together these four letters demonstrate how Posey combines political humor, nature writing, and issues of cultural preservation. It is tempting to wonder how Posey’s literary legacy might have changed had he decided to focus on, and further develop, such mergers of cultural commentary and nature writing.

With his river journal, “Notes Afield,” the Hains letters, and other such works, Posey’s voice commands an authority and freshness that—apart from certain moments in his *Fus Fixico* letters—he would never again achieve. In one of the very few critical studies of Posey’s journals, Craig S. Womack writes that “what is striking is the amount of detail Posey is able to muster in relation to the land he loves, chronicling its changes across seasons, as well as the way the land differs in various locales throughout the

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<sup>4</sup> Few issues of the *Muskogee Democrat* from this period survive, and the actual publication of these letter cannot be confirmed.



nation.”<sup>5</sup> Womack also argues that Posey’s titles for these works (i.e., “The River Journal” and “Notes Afield”) suggest that he intended to further develop these explorations of the natural world, “had he lived long enough” (61). However, in the case of “The River Journal” and “Notes Afield,” Posey still had about five years of life ahead of him, plenty of time to develop these pieces. It is more likely, given Posey’s decline in literary production over the last few years of his life, that he instead abandoned these works, or else viewed them as already complete.

Between August 28, 1905 and March 30, 1906 Posey kept a journal of his experiences as a translator and fieldworker for the Dawes Commission. This so-called “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party” would be his last journal and would also serve as source material for one of his final works, “Lost to His Tribe for Many Years,” which would appear in the May 15, 1908 issue of the *Indian Journal*. During this time, Posey worked for the Dawes Commission as a fieldworker who helped update the Muscogee tribal rolls by enrolling those tribal members whose names had been left off of earlier rolls, and to find evidence of enrolled citizens who had gone missing. Updated rolls were necessary for the allotment of Muscogee land as stipulated by the Dawes Commission. Missing Muscogees were termed “lost” until field parties found evidence (often in the form of eyewitness testimony) that they were still alive and legally entitled to a share of the land. However, many of the Muscogees Posey encountered were conservatives who condemned allotment. These Muscogees (called “Snakes”) instead advocated the traditional practice of communal ownership of the land and the preservation of traditional tribal government. Thus Posey’s job was complex; he had to

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<sup>5</sup> Craig S. Womack, “Alexander Posey’s Nature Journals: A Further Argument for Tribally-Specific Aesthetics.” *Studies in American Indian Literature* 13 (2001): 52.

track down old tribal members (some possibly dead), enroll new ones (often infants), and attempt to convince the so-called “Snakes” that allotment was in their best interests all while traversing the rugged rural areas where these Muscogees lived.

As a progressive Muscogee, Posey saw his facilitation of the allotment of land as the best way to survive the encroachment of Euro-Americans into Indian Territory. As his own written comments about the Dawes Commission, allotment, and the loss of tribal government strongly suggest, he was not happy about these changes but believed that by accepting the private ownership of land, the Muscogees and other American Indian nations would then have a chance to preserve something of their heritage. In the “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party” Posey at times seems to defend the opinions of the conservatives of his tribe who, in his own words, “wish to live in undisturbed enjoyment of their old customs and usages and rights guaranteed to them by former treaties with the Government.”<sup>6</sup> Yet Posey also believed that the conservatives held to an admirable but sadly outdated lifestyle, a lifestyle of communal land use and town-based government that could not withstand the influence and greed of the Euro-Americans. Throughout his life, Posey respected the traditionalists of his tribe while also admonishing them for what he saw as their antiquated ways.

Perhaps no better example of Posey’s complicated view of the conservative Muscogees arises from his dealings with the legendary conservative spiritual and political leader, Chitto Harjo. In one of the most fascinating segments of Posey’s “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party” he relates his tense meeting with Harjo, a man he respects and even romanticizes but who also represents a traditionalist philosophy the progressive

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<sup>6</sup> Circa August 28, 1905, “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party,” folder 38, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Posey could not advocate. In his journal, Posey would later mark out some of what Chitto Harjo supposedly said during their brief discussion. Where these cancellations are legible this edition provides them in the textual notes, but much of what Harjo ostensibly told his young visitor is left indecipherable by Posey's cancellations. Perhaps Harjo's words—words that apparently bemoan the need for new tribal leaders—continued to sting well after he had written them down. Perhaps Posey interpreted Harjo's call for leaders as a criticism aimed directly at the young, charismatic, and famous writer himself. Whatever Posey's future service to his nation might have been was soon marred by his dealings in land speculation. His decision to facilitate the sale of Muscogee land to Euro-American interests was a great insult to his tribe and, at best, might be understood as the poor decision of a young man who hoped to make enough money to provide for his family and help finance his writing. However, his death in 1908 forever ended any chance for Posey to redeem himself or to further contribute to the literary legacy of his nation.

*Theft, Deceit, and Sloppy Editing: The Textual History of Posey's Journals*

Posey's wife, Minnie, recognized that her husband's early death left her with the daunting task of providing for his literary legacy; the young widow also hoped to help support her two fatherless children with the proceeds derived from publishing Posey's work. Along with his poems, short stories, and Fus Fixico letters, Minnie understood the importance of Posey's journals. In a 1910 letter explaining her publishing ideas for her late husband's work, she writes: "There is [sic] also many...field notes & journals that would make an interesting volume."<sup>7</sup> Posey's journals, the fascinating accounts of the life

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<sup>7</sup> Minnie H. Posey to F. S. Barde, January 29, 1910, Frederick S. Barde Collection, Archives and Manuscripts Division—Oklahoma Historical Society.

of an equally fascinating man, certainly held much promise (or at least it seemed in 1910). So, it is not surprising that almost immediately after Posey's death, people—some of them deceitful—came looking for his journals.

One such person was Frederick S. Barde, a correspondent for the *Kansas City Star*, and a former acquaintance of Posey's. Barde wrote Minnie asking for information that might help him write an article about Posey, and Minnie, who at the time welcomed anyone's interest in her husband and his writing, agreed to provide information and even photographs for Barde's article. However, what really interested Barde was the so-called "River Journal," a short account of Posey's 1902 canoe trip with some friends down the Oktahutche River. Barde hoped to publish the journal in the *Kansas City Star*, but Minnie declined. In 1915, after a series of requests that grew increasingly persistent, Minnie finally sent Barde the journal to read, but not for publication. Barde died before Minnie could reclaim the journal, which apparently was donated to the Oklahoma Historical Society and later lost. Barde, however, did live long enough to ignore Minnie's wishes. He published an abbreviated (and much edited) version of the River Journal in the October 3, 1915 issue of the *Kansas City Star*. Barde's early transcript for this article contains additional passages that were edited out before publication, and this transcript, that now serves as one of the last vestiges of the River Journal, is collected here.

Edward Everett Dale, the famed Oklahoma historian, was another who took advantage of Minnie's naiveté. In 1918 Dale approached Minnie about publishing her husband's journals in the Oklahoma Historical Society's publication, *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*. Still stinging from earlier publishing debacles, Minnie had become less inclined to allow others access to her late husband's manuscripts. She even came to regret

publishing the poems at all, feeling she had somehow betrayed her husband (Littlefield 267). Nevertheless, Minnie did allow Dale access to the journals with the stipulation that he not “publish a line” without her approval (quoted in Littlefield 266). Despite the warning, Dale published a poor transcription of Posey’s 1905 “Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party” in his 1930 book, *Readings in Oklahoma History*. Minnie probably never knew.

By 1955 Minnie regained interest in publishing a book of her husband’s poetry and, remembering his earlier interest in her husband’s work, she approached Dale for help. Dale apparently redirected the issue to publishing the journals instead, and after much wrangling finally secured her reluctant approval to publish transcriptions of Posey’s two longest journals, those of 1897 and 1905, in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*.<sup>8</sup> However, as eager as Dale and Muriel Wright (the then editor of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*) were to secure permission, they were hardly in a rush to actually publish the pieces. The journals would not see publication until 1967 and 1968, six years after Minnie’s death. Furthermore, Dale’s transcriptions of these journals contain numerous errors. For example, among many other mistakes, he consistently misspells Posey’s brother Darwin’s name as “Dorwin.” In two instances, Dale even omits entire paragraphs.

The body of Posey’s life-writing stands as a unique and extremely important component of both American Indian and American literary history. In these few journals and other autobiographical texts Posey managed to do something that only a handful of other American Indian had accomplished at the time, to record his own life in print. This edition strives to free Posey’s works of previous errors inserted by earlier editors and to

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed account of Edward Everett Dale’s dealings with Minnie Posey see Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 265-269.

present this material in a manner meant to facilitate the study, and enjoyment, of these remarkable texts.

January 2, 1949

Dear Mr. [unclear]

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## **Journal of the Creek Orphan Asylum**

**[January 1, 1897-January 2, 1900]**

Jan. 1897

Fri. 1 It is midwinter—the first of January—but as I sit down to make this first entry into my diary, a heavy storm is approaching from the west, accompanied by vivid lightning and loud claps of thunder. This is an unusual winter. No snow has fallen sufficient to make tracks in. A heavy frost a few mornings ago is the nearest approach to winter that we have had. There is but one garden spot in the world and it is here in the Indian Territory.

It is a common saying of my father that one wild shoat will spoil a gang of tame ones. Ben Long, whom I expelled from school for the second time yesterday for bad behavior, coaxed some of the best boys off with him this morning. He was deaf to good counsel, and I am only too glad to know that he is gone and that there are other orphans in the country needing the shelter and the advantages he would not improve.

Brann's "Iconoclast" has wide-spread notoriety so I have been told. If it be true, I cannot see for what reason. I read the December number for two solid hours this afternoon without stumbling onto so much as the slightest suspicion of a new idea or a decent attempt at witticism.

The reports in today's papers regarding the sentiments of Congress in the matter of the negotiation of the Independence of Cuba are far from encouraging. Congress should express the will of the American people in this matter and not the will of the President and his cabinet. This "diplomatic jabbing" of the Cleveland administration deserves contempt.

Sat. 2 "Cold and dark and dreary;  
It rains and the wind is never weary."

I am fond of this kind of weather. There is something in me that responds to the slow beating of the rain [2] from the eaves and the long moan of the wintry wind.

Snip McGirt, one of the boys Ben Long coaxed away yesterday, has returned; wet to the skin, and apparently the most penitent boy in the world. This will do him more good than a year's schooling. I hope it will be the making of him. Experience never intends her lessons to be forgotten. Her precepts come like the white men into the Indian country—to stay.

I have finished the first volume of Plutarch's "Lives." Lycurgus, it appears to me, was more remarkable for short and sententious sayings than for the rigorous laws he gave the Spartans. It is to be lamented that he is not of this age! Plutarch has impressed me that in Greece and Rome one's greatness was determined by banishment.

Sun. 3 Cold, bitter cold. The fury of the northwest has kept us in doors all day. Miss Lee and Kit returned in the afternoon from Checotah, by special conveyance, and have not thawed out yet. They say John is on the road, but his arrival is uncertain, and we are threatened with famine. There are not enough necessaries of life in the larder for a scanty breakfast tomorrow, though we have limited ourselves to two meals a day since sending for supplies.

I have spent the best part of the day preparing a poem for publication and puzzling my head over as to what title I shall give it. The title it really ought to have is too long and, I fear, too commonplace; the poem being about a visit to Mr. Hall in



Arbeka a year or two since and the story he told me about his courtship with a “witching squaw girl.”

I have undertaken a difficult task—that of learning to play the violin. But, despite [sic] my assiduous application, I am making no perceptible progress. “No excellence without labor,” says the old adage; but I believe that I have found an exception in the rule. If I learn to play two tunes I shall be satisfied: viz, “Swanee Ribber” and “Evelena” with variations. [3] Rev.—I don’t know his name—preached to the students tonight, but I did not go in to hear him. I rather preferred to be entertained by Plutarch’s accounts of the justice and the glorious conduct of Aristides, the Athenian.

Mon. 4 I peeped into the mirror today by chance and mistook myself for a rebellious Populist! I am very much in need of a clean shave.

John returned with the supplies from Checotah in the early part of the morning, having stopped overnight at the Half Moon Ranch, with one Rev. Brinks. He says he got lost yesterday while trying to come a nearer way known as the prairie route, and but for vigorous walking would have frozen to death. The winds swept over those prairies without the opposition of hill or wood for forty miles.

I read Plutarch’s Marcus Cato, the frugal Roman of memorable sayings; and “who, by good discipline and wise and temperate ordinances reclaimed the Roman commonwealth when it was declining and sinking into vice.” Gladstone, at over eighty, espousing the Armenian cause and stirring up sympathy by public speeches, reminds one much of Cato, who, in extreme old age, stirred up the roar which resulted in the overthrow of Carthage [sic].

Maxey Sims, another runaway boy came back this evening and apologized to me before the school for his behavior. He was so manly and frank in saying that he had done wrong and repented of it that I took him back in school.

I have nowhere mentioned my "better half." The story of our courtship and marriage would make a readable romance. I was introduced to her one morning, nearly two years ago, by J. N. Thornton, the "ye" editor of the Indian Journal, at breakfast in a hotel at Eufaula. The beauty of the young school teacher thoroughly charmed me; and, though [4] I saw her frequently. I could not sufficiently overcome my Indian nature to talk with her. She went away. I thought of her constantly; would sometimes grow anxious to declare my love by letter. Two months passed and she return [sic] to take up her work at Hillabee. One day I made it convenient to pass the school house. I got a glimpse of her as I hurried by on "Ballie", and another as I returned. My love grew deeper. Three months latter I was elected to the position I now hold. One night I was at Eufaula, and by chance met her. I offered her a place in my school; she accepted it, and, when summer was come again, "two hearts beat as one."

Tues. 5 Mr. Hall straggled in afoot this evening—the mere shadow of himself—having been on the road all day without refreshments. He has been spending the holidays in the Senora country with his brother Jeff—hunting, making inroads into Dog Town and having a good time generally. High water is his excuse for being tardy.

One Ed Grissom, a galvanized, garrulous Indian farmer, called this afternoon, and, seeing that he could sell me no hogs, proceeded to talk. Among other things he advised me to set our catalpa for shade trees; and said that he had been preaching my

ideas on the Indian problem these twenty years! I must confess this stunned me not a little.

Today, I have followed Phyrus [sic] in his brilliant campaigns [sic] in Macedonia, Lacedaemon, Italy, and Sicily [sic]. Like Napoleon and Alexander, he was a man of continental desires; one conquest could not satisfy him; and the ambition for a greater empire resulted finally in his ruin. He lacked the patience to [5] secure himself in the conquests he made. He might not have become so famous but he would have been happier if he had devoted his great talent to the upbuilding of his little kingdom of Epirus. Here is a great big moral.

Wed. 6 Mr. Hall has the most savage looking pistol I have seen in many a day, except the one with which Uncle Will shot off his foot. It appeared to me to be a combination of all models. If he were to go to Cuba with this pistol, the freedom of that island would be assured!

I spent the morning with John out at his room. Knowing him to be fond of jokes and much given to laughter, I tried to split his sides open.

Finished reading the life of Caisus [sic] Marius.

Thur. 7 Read the life of Cornelius Sylla, the implacable enemy of Caisus [sic] Marius, and as great a lover of tyranny as Marius, though an inferior warrior.

Here are some choice morsels I gathered from Puck and Truth.

Persons of many accomplishments often accomplish but little.—Puck.

The man who is always willing to let well enough alone, mighty seldom secures quarters in that much-talked-of room at the top.—Puck.

Leisure is spare time in which a man can do some other kind of work.—Puck.

When the unexpected happens it is usually greeted with exclamations of “I told you so!”—Puck.

Being beautiful, she was courted,

Being a woman, she wished to know all things.

One day, in the tangle of an old garden, she came upon a skull.

At first she drew back from it, frightened.

[6] Then, placing it upon a rose-twined pedestal, she questioned it.

“You who have lived, tell me of life,” she said.

“And having loved, tell me of passion,

And being dead, speak to me of eternity.”

But the skull only grinned vacantly at her.

Perhaps it had forgotten life—and love.

Perhaps it knew nothing of eternity.—Truth

This is accompanied by a beautiful picture of a woman questioning a skull and is entitled “The Questioner.”

Fri. 8 I walked down to the capital this afternoon for the first time in a month. When Council is in session, and the flying jenny is in running order, Okmulgee is a pretty wild place. You can walk out almost any morning then and find a man for breakfast. But at other times, Okmulgee is one of the quietest places in the world. So it was this evening, until one young negro called another a “chicken thief.” This application was resented and a vehement altercation ensued, and they stood facing each other with distended nostrils and whites of the eyes exposed like blown cotton bolls. But friends interposed and the town relapsed into tranquility.

I received a letter from Yaha Tustanugga, who is now at Washington representing the Creeks. He tells me that he and his colleague, McIntosh, have had the most flattering reception by the officials of the departments, but is very skeptical about Congress appropriating the \$400000.00, which they are instructed to ask for. He thinks, however, there are ways to cross a bridge of this kind, but does not feel sure what the results will be.

While at town this afternoon, I picked up a poor little orphan boy; who had been tossed [7] hither and thither, like a weed on a wide sea, without father or mother to cling to many years. I brought him back with me, and he is the happiest boy this side of paradise. He has a home now and some one to look to for food and raiment.

Sat. 9 This has been a beautiful day—a piece of spring itself. Such a day as make one sleepily [sic] to look at. Miss Lee, Lowena—that's my wife's Indian name—and myself took dinner to the “wood boys” down in Cussetah bottom, and enjoyed a kind of picnic. Jack built the fire, I made the coffee, while Miss Lee and Lowena spread the dinner; which consisted of pies, cakes and sandwiches [sic]. The jay birds, overhead in the trees wished us well and bade us come again.

To be a successful croquet player is nothing to boast of; but Mr. Hall and I beat Miss Rosa and Lowena two games this evening—and “skunked” them one game!

The Indian Journal says Eufaula has an Aingel for postmaster. Eufaula must now be in direct communication with Heaven. In the editorial column I find the following, “If ignorance is bliss, some of the Creek politicians ought to be supremely happy.” The Journal is unusually bright this week.

Sun 10 The story I have been reading today, of how Lucullus overcame the Asatic [sic] kings, is highly interesting. Mithridates and Tigranes, with their innumerable hosts, could not withstand him. He sacked their richest cities with less resistance than a bear robs a bee-tree.

I sent a poem—"An Arbekan Episode"—to the Indian Journal.

Mon 11 Read the life of Crassus in the forenoon and pruned an oration I wrote on Sequoyah when a student at Indian University. There is not much [8] of it left; but what is left is infinitely more to the purpose.

After dinner I hitched up the team and Lowena and I drove to town. On the way, Maude stumbled and fell flat on the ground and broke—our conversation!

Our number has swelled this evening by the advent of a Uchee boy, who is one-eyed and a dwarf.

Tues. 12 Besides reading the life of Pompey, I read the *Iconoclast* for January. Brann is cleanly witty and says some right good things—at least in one or two articles.

Senator Vest, so the papers state, has been re-elected to Congress. This is the man who helped to confer unconstitutional authority on the Dawes Commission & who so grossly misrepresented the facts pertaining to the condition of affairs in this country. This the man who is now making pathetic appeals for the Cubans, but who is destitute of sympathy for a people almost as badly persecuted. He is considered to be a great big brainy man. Is he? In what way has he shown it? He has not the first principle of greatness. Of what stuff is this Free Silver Populist made?

I spent the afternoon in class rooms listening to recitations.

Wed. 13 I fell into a very bad habit—among others—while I was at the Indian University—that of sleeping late. Resolving to break myself of it, I flew out, to use a common Creek term, long before daylight this morning; and aroused John and the cook up, I fear, much against their will, as they groaned heavily when I called them and were a [9] long time dressing—especially the cook, whose name is Tompkins. This groaning and slowness at dressing does not augur much for a young man; the probabilities of his making a mark in the world are powerfully uncertain.

The perusal of the life of Alexander—after whom my father was pleased to name me—is responsible for the following:

The Caesars [sic] and the Alexanders were but men gone mad; who ran about awhile, upsetting kingdoms in their fierce career, and then were slain like rabid dogs, or died in misery. Assassination awaited Caesar [sic]; wild deliriums cut short the glory of Alexander; death was dealt to Pyrrhus [sic] by a woman's hand; deception cooled the fever Pompey had; Themistocles and Hannibal [sic] drank deep of poison in their desolation.

Thur. 14 I received a note from Issac [sic] Manuel, the royal blooded blacksmith at Okmulgee, who sharpens our tools and shoes our bronchos, praying for a lift into the matrimonial boat in which he is about to embark. I sent him an order by his henchman setting up my account with him in full with congratulations.

Dickey—just simply Dickey—he has no other name that I am aware of—is a dried up little fellow and just a common everyday Indian. He lives in the first hollow east of the Mission. You would not think it to look at him but he is shrewd and cunning withal as a fox. He manages to get along in the world as well any fullblood you could find in a

day's ride. And the reason of his success is simple. He is industrious and self-denying, drops every nickel [sic] he gets in the gourd and makes provisions for a rainy day. Frequently I have dealings with [10] him in a small way, and have become familiar with some of his methods of keeping body and soul together and laying by now and then for he generally gets the best of me. For instance, he will come, as he did today, and draw me into a conversation, appear to take much interest in the welfare of my business, perhaps by telling me that he saw my cow or hog away over yonder out of its range, inform seriously that some miscreant made away with the last side of bacon he had in the smoke house, and then get me in the notion to lay my larder under contribution in advance for a little work.

Fri 15 John, whose surname is Phillips and who is a cousin of mine, and I went to town after a barrel of salt.

I began reading Buel's "Heroes of the dark Continent," which must be Africa. The title is high sounding but not less so than the language used by the author. The book is large, very red and profuse with illustrations. Much light is thrown on a dark subject.

Sat 16 Continued my perusal of the "Heroes of the Dark Continent" with increasing interest. Capt. Spekes discovery of the Nile's source excited the jealous envy of even Richard Burton; who soiled his own brilliant explorations in his efforts to appropriate that honor to himself.

In my walk this afternoon, I wandered around where Joe and Tom were quarring [sic] rock. I have offered them a suit of clothes apiece to complete the walk begun last summer. It will be three fee wide, flaged [sic] and in the shape of Mr. Hall's tuning fork, running from the two front doors to the gate, sixty yards distance. They are making



admirable progress and doing the work nicely. [11] If it is good honest work that you want apply to Joe and Tom.

Sun 17 I did not know that this was Sunday until late in the evening. But that is no matter. One day is as holy to me as another.

Kept in doors all day reading.

Mon. 18 I came in personal contact today with a man who bears a name known in all corners of the earth. It was purely a business matter that brought us together. What else could induce Thomas Carlyle to lift his hat to me at my door and thus expose that Tarpeian brow to one so unworthy to behold it? His visit was a stupendous surprise; but I recovered sufficiently to buy his axhandles [sic] which he valued at one dollar in due bills!

Took Lowena driving in the afternoon. We drove for miles thro' the "dull gray winter woods," to borrow a phrase from my wife, without hearing a single bird sing or a crow caw. The monotony was broken however by a little girl as we were returning. She was in the road ahead of us and seeing us coming turned and fled as if for dear life down the road, disappearing in a deep hollow.

Tues. 19 Finished reading the "Heroes of the Dark Continent." From a literary standpoint, the book is a failure, and not as complete as it might be as a history. The author seems to be in too great a hurry to be done with it; which gives one the impression that his main object was to put the book on the market and as quickly as possible enjoy the proceeds thereof. With the rich material thus so carelessly used, Irving would have built a structure of wondrous beauty.

Heigh ho!

A snow storm! a snow storm!

See the great white flakes fall!

[12] Heigh ho!

The posts have hoods along

The lane and snow-birds sing!

Heigh ho!

The snow is ankle-deep

And earth's a desert now!

Heigh ho!

Away the prairies sweep

With only skies for shores!

Now, by George, where are my boys?

Wed. 20 While I was at town this afternoon, I dropt in at Captain Belcher's, the postmaster. I found the Captain and Mr. Smith, the saddler, engaged in spinning yarns, and I joined them. Presently, Mr. Shields, the store keeper, straggled in; and, just as he was about to lay us all in the shade with the story of how he once climed [sic] out of an unwallled well into which he had been scared, a tall man with sandy mustache and a tent pole in his nose, poked his head in the office window.

"Is there anything like a letter for me, Captain?"

"No."

"Say, Captain, do you know that there man Airheart?"

"Yes."

“Well, if he calls for my mail, you tell him there aint any. He’s not safe. I wouldn’t trust any further than I could throw a bull by the tail. Be sure, Captain, because if I have it to do, his name will be Airheart sure ’nough.” He give his mustache a twist and disappeared in the direction of the cider stand.

Thur. 21 I read old back number magazines and slept a good part of the day. To burn midnight oil is to wear one’s self out and be fit for [13] nothing on the morrow. It is as necessary to avoid taxing your mind and body too much as it is to avoid over-drawing your bank account.

Fri 22 Read the life of Julius Caeser [sic]—Plutarch’s third volume. He was a poet, a historian, an orator, a statesman, a warrior, a philosopher, and— Caeser [sic]. His versatility seems incredible.

A day or two since I let Dickey have six bushels of corn and a sack of flour, for which he agreed to haul a thousand pounds of flour for me from Checotah. Thinking that he would charge me nothing extra, inasmuch as I had paid him in advance, I added two hundred pounds of beans. Far from it. When he returned from his trip, he came in saying, “Well, I am back, but I had a pretty time of it; stuck up several times on the way. I tell you what two hundred pounds makes a big difference.” I took the hint and settled with him for the beans—in clean cash—he would accept nothing else—and he went away greatly pleased.

Sat. 23 Today I began writing a series of boy hood stories, entitled “Tom & Abe & I,” just simply to amuse myself and at the same time preserve in black and white those youthful recollections which I may not always remember.

Mr. Hall shouldered his double-barrelled gun bright and early this morning and went in pursuit of game. Late in the day he returned, as expected, empty-handed. To hear him tell it, he came within an ace of bagging a fine buck, just the other side of that little sandy place in the road between here and the lake.

Sun 24 Read the life of Cato the younger, who won greater victories by simply being right than any general Rome ever had.

[14] Mon. 25 Continued my writing on "Tom & Abe & I," but with poor success. To write well you must be in the mood for it.

Read the life of Demosthenes aloud to my wife. In acquiring, by constant application, what nature was not kind enough to give him, Demosthenes has shown that any man with a well balanced head, if he has but the will, can become a genius in some field of action.

Mr. Hall, though he cannot slide his fingers down the strings and make them shriek like a north wester through a rail fence, can handle the violin with considerable skill. To hear him attempt new pieces of music and strike a celestial note now and then is like looking at the sky on a cloudy night and once in a while seeing a star.

Tues. 26 Read the life of Cicero. "Cicero," says Plutarch, "was the one, above all others, who made the Romans feel how great a charm eloquence lends to what is good, and how invincible justice is, if it be well spoken." If Cicero's pointed sayings, for which he was remarkable, made him offensive, it also made him very famous.

Dickey popt [sic] up at my door today all wrapt [sic] up and buttoned up as though about to set out in search of the North Pole. He was a half hour unbuttoning his coats and removing the shawls from his neck; and, like Irving's Ten Breeches, his

“drumstick” appendages were encased in divers overalls. When he was thawed out, he said “an infinite deal of nothing.”

The papers state that Mark Twain, after making a lecture tour of the world in hope of retrieving his fortune, is now penniless in London. [15] Poor Mark! The world has laughed with him; will it weep with him? He is sixty years old, and his courageous but unsuccessful efforts for the recovery of lost fortune is a pathetic story.

Wed. 27 That was a most enjoyable hour I spent with Capt. Belcher this morning at his office. The old Captain is an interesting conversationalist and I found him in capital humor. He is a man of extensive reading and considerable wisdom. He interested me most, however, with his knowledge of Creek history and personal recollections of the men who have helped to make it. He said the Creeks have progressed wonderfully but are for all that much further from the golden age now than they were in the days of open-air councils. For then their laws were simple and their government purer; they were more honest, paid their debts better, did not sell their per capita money to as many parties as would buy it, and in their deliberations legislated for the common good. But with the defusion [sic], he added with emphasis, of missionary spirit and ardent spirits came the evils that threaten a revolution of their affairs.

Thurs. 28 John and I went to town. Had an hour's chat with Shields and Myers. We gave prize fighting down the country and were frank in declaring what we thought about Americans—if they be that—who accumulate fortune by peddling books and rat-traps and cap the climax by allying their families with foreign nobility—when the greatest thing is to be simply an American citizen! When this interchange of sentiments

was over I went and called on Isparhecher who was at his office dispatching executive business right and left.

[16] Fri 29 Read the life of Mark Antony, whose character in calamities was better than at any other time—except at Actium, where he abandoned his army and followed Cleopatra in her flight.

Took Lowena and the girls (and Mingo, our black dog) to the pond where I skated to my heart's content, to the great amusement of the girls, this being the first time they ever saw anyone on skates. I am no expert skater but I can sometimes wind my legs up and stand on my head.

Sat. 30 Mr. Hall went with me to the pond to learn the lick it is done with but succeeded only in putting on the skates.

Read the like of Marcus Brutus. The only good that resulted from his assassination [sic] of Caesar [sic] was perhaps his own death and that of Cassius.

Sun 31 Read the life of Artaxerxes, the Persian King.

Wrote a page or two short sayings for the Journal entitled "Shells from Limbo." February.

Mon 1 Read the lives of Caius and Tiberius Gracchus, with whom Plutarch concludes his famous "Lives." Plutarch is certainly a master of his art. He is as much a philosopher as a biographer.

I must compliment my wife on the sofky she made today—this being her first effort. She, by some hook or crook, contrived to give it just the proper flavor. No one but an Indian can make sofky; Lowena can make sofky; therefore Lowena is an Indian!

We saw the sun in eclipse with smoked glasses. Mr. Hall claimed that he saw the nose of the man in the moon.

[17] Tues. 2 The weather has at last moderated. The larks and crows have rioted all day.

Lowena has been down with "la grippe" since 3 o'clock this morning. Mr. Hall is confined to his room also.

Last week's issue of "Truth," "Judge" and "Up-to-Date" are side splitters. 'Up-to-Date's' thrusts at high life are sharp enough.

Went to town—that is Okmulgee—after medicine for the sick.

"Heard" Hall's big geography class. I have acted the parts of doctor, teacher, nurse and errand boy.

Wed. 3 Taught in Mr. Hall's place. I think I missed my calling in not becoming a teacher.

My father, accompanied by Mr. Cowin, who is a renter on my place, came about 4 o'clock and took me by surprise. I entertained them as royally as my means would permit. My father was in an extremely fine humor and treated Mr. Hall and I to a feast of common sense; while at intervals, if not all the time—Cowin "sawed" vehemently on the fiddle. He is a pretty tolerable good fiddler and a sort of harlequin with it. "The Arkansas Traveler" is his masterpiece; which he plays in a kind of melodrama fashion—that is to say he saws a while and repeats a dialogue awhile. All this was opportune and highly enjoyable.

This is Lowena's Birthday.

Thur 4 Father, Cowin, and I went to town—walked. Cowin took in the sights while father and I called on Capt. Belcher. The Capt. and my father are old time friends—knew each other before the war—and their meeting give rise to story telling. The “Lawyer Gion” and the “Dr. Brown” stories I intend sometimes to commit to writing.

[18] After dinner my father and Cowin returned to Bald Hill anticipating a rough time in Deep Fork bottom and Tulledega.

Kittie left us this morning for her home in Fayetteville, Ark. After a long stay in the C. O .A. John took her to Checotah via Miss Wilson’s who will perhaps take Kit’s place.

Feb 5 Waited on the sick.

Read “The Arizonian” and “The Last [Taschastus]” aloud to Mr. Hall.

6 Miss Wilson came today to assume her duties as assistant matron in Kittie’s place.

The sick are improving very slowly. Mr. Hall has a grave-yard look, but is able to puff away at his pipe. Lowena takes a turn about feeling good and feeling bad.

7 Walked down to Mr. Lynch’s—found him gone. Came back, ate doughnuts and began reading the “Illiad.” [sic]

I am restless. I want to get away from this place. I feel that I am not free. I want to go to my farm, and, by the gods, I am going. I will throw me up a shack, buy a couple of Possum Flat razor back sows and a cow and let public life go down the country—and political friends with it.



8 Mr. Morrow and his brother arrived today from Checotah on a business visit. Sat up late and talked on all manner of subjects.

9 Mr. Morrow and I go to Wealaka. The day right chilly. Kindly entertained by Mrs. Loughridge. In the night getting home.

10 Joe and I go to Isparhecher's.

11 Read all day—newspapers. [19]

12 Take a trip to my farm in Possum Flat. Delightful weather. The jay birds—those ever gay dandies who enliven our winter—bow and wish me well in every grove. Summer lingers in the mistletoe and the Tulledegan evergreen. Reach home at four o'clock. Sister Mattie spreads me a wholesome dinner, consisting of pork, beans, cornbread, eggs, pies, and sofky. This latter dish tasted superb. Find Bill sick in bed and Frank complaining of a severe cold—miscalled "La Grippe." John hale and hearty; at home from school on a kind of vacation. Pa and Ma and the rest of the family well. Coney very inquisitive as usual. He is an interrogation point. Play checkers with Frank after supper and rub a few diamonds off his championship belt.

13 Pa and I go to Eufaula. Drive the little black mules. As we pass Richard Grayson's—Uncle Dick's lineal descendant—Pa tells me of Richard's way of avoiding detection after a successful raid on a neighbor's gang of shoats. Rich says, "Jes throw de suspishun on someone else by leaving de insides er de head of de shoat right close to 'is house—trow it in 'is ya'd if yo' can!" Meet many friends in town; among them Abe Kite, the hide dealer, who thinks little, does little and is the happiest mortal this side of Gehenna. Take dinner with Thornton. Return home at sunset and make the children happy with candy, apples, and nuts. John having cast his hook in the pond during the day,

we enjoyed catfish for supper. Pa goes to bed early. I set up and read, play with the puppy and chat with ma and Mat till late.

14 Bid the home folks goodbye. The day is lowery and the roads muddy. Come by the old homestead on Limbo. The place is in the last stages of decay; but how familiar and how [20] dear! The scenes call up a thousand pretty memories. I am a boy again, delighting in play and mischief, I am struck by the pretty face of the renter-girl and am not brave enough to meet her with my bouquet of peach blooms. She stands at the kitchen window and begs for it in vain. I am with Tom & Abe in the corn field, in the "old swimming hol'," in the squirrel hunt, in the fox chase, in the hay field. Alas! that a boy grows old and leaves this behind.

15 Joe goes to father's after a load of sweet potatoes, grown in Possum Flat's generous soil. Read Current Literature. Chat Hall, who is now able to be up. He is tickled at the fine weather and sighs for Tulledega.

16 This month's output of magazines is rubbish—Kipling's, Hall Caine's and others', who write because it pays. It is not the material in the story or the poem the magazines want but the name attached thereto.

John Gast, the chief justice of the Creeks, is my guest. Gast is a clever fellow. He talks a heap, but, unlike some guests I have had, says a heap. His figures and comparisons are unique. For instance, in speaking of our deplorable condition, financially and otherwise, he said the Creek Nation is like a consumptive and its continuance as a separate government only a matter of very short time. He brings interesting news from the country about Holdenville. He says the presence of two lions in the sparsely settled districts has struck terror into the hearts of the people. This seems incredible but he says

they have been seen and chased from the carcasses [sic] of cattle and hogs. They are either lions escaped from some circus or what is more likely mountain lions emigrated. [21]

17 Went to town with Judge Gast. John left this morning for—he did not know himself—in search of a job. I was sorry to be compelled to turn him off. But he got too independent, and I cannot put up with independence in a servant even tho [sic] he be my relative.

18 Read “Ships that Pass in the Night.” A pathetic, a charming and a simple little story. The conclusion of it, however, is disappointing. The story the author introduces of “The Traveler and the Temple of Knowledge” is a rare morsel—really the best thing in the book.

Lowena gave the flowers a sunbath.

19 Spent the day with Hall reading Irving’s “Tour of the Prairies.”

Capt. Callahan arrived this evening from Checotah and is a guest of the C.O.A. He is the Chief’s private secretary and is on way to the Capital.

20 Drive to town with Capt. Callahan; return a little before noon and the Capt. goes home.

21 Read all day.

22 Read a comment in the Review of Reviews on the arbitration treaty between Great Britian [sic] and United States line by line with deep interest. It seems strange that this simple and best way of settling national disputes was not thought of and resorted to long ago. I [sic] would have cost nothing and would have saved innumerable [sic] blood sheds and unfriendly acts between nations. Posterity will have a cause to be proud of

Cleveland and Olney for one of the greatest diplomatic triumphs—one of the few redeeming features of the administration.

23 Went to town with hall. Found Judge Marshall reading a letter from Byrd Horn's to a group of Indians relative to a country somewhere in South America, whither the Indian [22] might go to escape the trespass of the unfaithful white man.

24 Go to Checotah. Met Bill Barns just the side of Cussetah Creek. I have known Bill ever since I was knee high to a duck. He worked for my father when Tom & Abe & I were boys together. We talked of those good old days and wondered how times had changed. Bill is worried, has a half dozen children and is turning gray. Arrive at Checotah about 3 o'clock. Transact business.

25 Go over to my father's. Eat a big dinner. I enjoy eating nowhere as much as at home. Frank & John are "pitching" a crop. Bill just recovering from sickness. Darwin, the boy of cute sayings, is my bed fellow. Coney spins improbable yarns and rides the pasture. Mattie has a lot of fun at his expense, telling how he & the light horse Captain, Barney Green, persued [sic] and carried fire & sword into some horse thieves.

26 Pa & I go to Eufaula, start before daylight. Withdraw suit against Brooheors. Stidham assumes cost & damages. Come home facing a blizzard.

27 Come home. The sun shines brightly [sic] but not warmly. The trip long & wearisome.

28 Read. Mr. Ewing is a visitor. He preaches to the children. Lowena & I are happy over the prospect of having a new cook. Joe left on the 26<sup>th</sup>—Just pulled up & left without ceremony. He was a bird of passage

March

29 Cowan brought my new workhand.

[23] Hall and I go hunting. He takes a double-barreled gun and I a Winchester—prepared for all kinds of game. We find some ducks on the pond but succeeded in bagging none. After a long tramp on Okmulgee Creek we find a squirrel. My gun snaps and it runs in a hole. I shake a limb and scare it out and Hall kills it. But when it was dressed and cook it was so tough that it could not be masticated.

After study hour Hall and I visit the workhand and listen to Cowan's Arkansaw breakdowns on the violin.

2 Our new cook is anything but a culinary artist.

I have a dreadful headache. Lowena applies hot cloths and poultices and succeeds in miltigating [sic] the pain somewhat.

I write the first chapter of my new book. Hall has agreed to contribute another tomorrow. Its title has not been decided on.

Joe Young, a French Creole cook, puts in his timely appearance and ends our trials with the new cook.

3 Read a sketch of Rudyard Kipling, the story teller and poet novelist. Took Lowena to Mrs. Lynch's and went on to town.

Wrote a second chapter of my new book.

4 Inauguration day. McKinley steps in and Grover steps down and out with a good round sum—nay, a millionaire. There is more than honor in serving one's country.

If the gloomy weather without extends to Washington, the gods must [24] be unfavorable to the pomp and pageantry indulged in by the people of the Capital.

Now that McKinley is a full fledged ruler of these United States, one can confidentially look forward to that golden era of prosperity which he has pledged himself to give us.

5 Read Burns. I find some new pleasure, some new thought, some new beauty heretofore unseen every time I read the poems of the "Ayrshire Plowman". His warm heart, his broad and independent mind "glint" like the daisy in the "histie stibble field" in every song he coraled [sic].

Mr. Hall furbished up his gun and pulled out to Senora country on a hunt this afternoon. I am under obligation to pay half the expense of the transportation of the game. I would that all my obligations were so safely made!

Heard Hall's big geography class and took Lowena buggy driving.

6 Tried to write, but couldn't; didn't have the inspiration, nor the gift of writing anyhow like our modern writers.

Bossed the yard cleaning. The boys under my management were not of a very working kind. Played croquet with the ladies. I white washed them but it is not good manner to boast of it. Rendered Burns' "To a Mountain Daisy" into as good English [25] as I was able for Hall's benefit. He says he cannot enjoy and appreciate Burns fully on account of his "horrid" dialect. I have undertaken to throw Hall into better love with the poet but, in doing so, I fear I have spoiled the poem; for it is in his dialect that Burns is sweetest.

7 Read "Twa Dogs" and "Holy Fair."

Hall came back as he went—without game. He almost got game, though,—to hear him tell it. He made the water fly up right under a big white duck and can't understand why the duck flew away alive.

8 Read "Othello."

Went to town—walked and went in my shirt sleeves. Fine cloudy weather. Spring is appearing in the meadows.

Hall shot so much lead into a poor mud duck down on the pond that it sank!

9 Wrote a poem entitled "Lines to Hall"—the burden of it being that the subject could not sing in brick walls.

Read a biographical sketch of Burns by Alexander Smith.

10 Read a criticism on Albert Pike's "Every Year"—a poem of much beauty. The writer of the critique is too much like Dr. Hornbook. The way he slings his rhetorical terms about is simply dumbfounding. The most inexcusable thing in a writer is the ostentatious display of acquirements. Some of the finest poems I have met with lately are in this [26] weeks "Arkansas Gazette."

The girls and I paid early Spring a visit this afternoon—walked away down below Dickey's on the creek.

11 Read "Death and Dr. Hornbook." Hall and I take in the sights at Okmulgee. The sights consisted mostly of nigers [sic] and sneaking "sofkies" of mixed ancestry.

12 All of a sudden I take a notion to go Eufaula. Take Jessie with me. A cool day. Find Deep Fork up—cuss and strike out for Whaley's ferry—a dozen miles out of the way—and meet with greater difficulties. The ferryman absent. Drive in and get extremely

wet. More epithets. Get home by dark—cold and hungry. Frank make me a loan of dry clothes—but has no shoes that I can wear and I borrow mother's overshoes.

13 Bright and early pa and I are off to town. Close the deal with Stidham. Take dinner with Thornton. Very cold coming home.

14 Come home. Weather moderated. Come by way of the Senora country and cross the river at the "Big Shallows." Take dinner here.

15 Read all day. I have a good supply of late magazines. Go to town on "Cricket."

16 Read magazines. The "Singing of the Pines" by Sharlot Hall in the Midland is a fine poem. The poems in the Current Literature by Archibald Lampman [27] are sweet and delicate—nothing grand and sweeping in them. The serial stories I pay no attention to—be they Conan Doyles,' Kipling's or others who write because it takes and pays. I have but little use for fiction at best and no use whatever for the kind of fiction we are offered by the magazines. I want facts—truth elegantly dressed—interpretations of nature—something to build on and to broaden my views—something to give me a deeper understanding in all that pertains to life.

17 Read the life of Washington Irving by Chas. Dudley Warner—just published. Highly satisfactory so far as I am concerned.

18 Read Emily Dickison's [sic] poems.

19 Began reading the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." Wrote a description of our dinner to Kit. Hall went to town and returned in a gallop with news of the prize fight.

20 Hall and I walk to town for exercise. Gather a boquet [sic] a piece. Hall takes the girls a walking. Lowena and I read his poems to Miss Wilson.



21 Was up before daylight and scared the cook into spoiling his breakfast. I got a white sheet and made uncouth noise outside the Kitchen, letting the wind flop the sheet against the window where Joe was preparing his dough. He hollered "Whose dat?" and made distance, dropping lard in all directions. He is over the effects of this scare yet.

Read Brann aloud to Hall.

[28] Go out and gather Lowena a bouquet of wild flowers.

Hall & I take the girls walking. Hunt wild onions, gather flowers and set the prairies on fire. Anna, Sarah and Til find sport on a grapevine. The plum trees are in bloom, the grass is up.

22 Creek Council meets today to receive the report of the delegate regarding the four hundred thousand dollars, and the outlook at Washington. I have not been down to inform myself of the proceedings and shall not go at all, unless I am called there for some other purpose than to find out what is happening. My business is here, not there. I despise to see a man hang around where he has no business.

The Honorable Judge Benjuman [sic] W. Wadsworth is again riding a free horse to death at the C.O.A. He has not outraged our toothbrushes and hairbrushes as on former occasions for the reason we had by certain mysterious intonations a foreknowledge of his coming. He never misses an occasion to be where he is the least needed and has come for the express purpose of warning the Creek legislators to be careful and not monkey too much with the Dawes!

Miss Fanny Scott is a guest of the C.O.A. faculty.

23 Began reading Irving's Life of Columbus.

Hall has had an inspiration! [29] He has written a poem on last evening's experience in the chapel with the ladies. Music never fails to have its effect on Hall. There are some lines in the poem that bear the stamp of originality—lines not born to be read and “cast as rubbish to the void.”

24 Sent Dickey to Checotah after supplies.—Continued reading Irving—I am visited by a little dried up fellow, lame in one leg, calling himself Matt, who tried without success to sell me certain root and herb concoctions possessing marvelous virtues.—Hall and I go walking back of the field.—Misses Wilson & Lee attend the entertainment at Okmulgee, which was not a success on account of a dance.

25 Followed the “mighty minded Genoese” in his voyages of discovery.

26 This is the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Six more weeks and we shall have done.—Lowena & I have a brown duck for dinner, with stuffing and gravey [sic].—Read and take a horseback ride around the farm. Mr. D. N. Clark, or “Uncle Nute,” as he is called by Miss Lee, arrived this evening from Arkansas on a visit to the Misses Lees.—Dickey gets back from Checotah.

27 Read.—Mr. Hall and “Uncle Nute” take the ladies a driving to the lake.—John Phillips pays us a visit—particularly Miss Wilson.

28 Read.—Miss Wilson takes a spin. S. B. Callahan takes dinner with us.—Rainy.

29 “Uncle Nute” goes home. I did not find an opportunity to talk with him during his visit but he looked like plenty of experience and accomplishment. [30]

O what's the reason of my joy?

The advent of a “bran” new Boy!

30 Finished Irving's Columbus.

I am not in a mood yet to tell how it feels to be a father. The baby has cried enough to make me walk the floor at night. I am sorry to have to say that it looks very much like its father. We have not yet found a handle for him.

31 Begin a chapter in my book of experiences entitled "Callie."

During the storm last night the wind blew a tub thro' the hall and dispossessed Hall of his wits.

Hall is planning to write a story, the scene of which is to be laid on Canadian River.

Send Joe to Checotah after Kit.

Hall and I visit town.

April

1 All Fool's Day. I have fooled and been fooled all day. Everybody has laughed today.

Began reading Ik. Marvel's "Dream Life." In sweetness of fancy and purity of language Marvel cannot be surpassed. His prose is first class poetry.

Mr. Hall and Miss Lee go to town after supper. Hall goes to hear and see the phonograph and Miss Lee goes to stay all night with Miss Scott.

2 Read.—Joe returns from Checotah.—The cook entertains Hall & me by telling us [31] of his soldier life in the west. He served under Custer in a campaign against the Cheyennes. He describes Custer as a red faced, long haired daring calvery [sic] leader—of many deeds and few words. It was funny to hear him tell of a campaign they once made against a certain tribe of red skins who had abandoned their reservation, and taken refuge in the mountain fortresses near the Mexican line; and how they dislodged and

thoughtlessly chased them into Mexico and how they were chased back across the Rio Grande by Mexican troops. "Didn't you have enough men to give the Mexicans battle?" Hall asked. "Yes; we could have killed every mother's son of them," answered Joe; "but you see we were a way over in Mexico!"

3 Wrote a poem, which Hall criticized favorably. Read. Jeff Hall comes.

4 Chatted with the poet and his brother most of the morning. I build air castles. Plan a home in a Bald Hill valley. Remark that if I cannot build the kind of house I want I will content myself with a shack.—Take the girls walking and gather flowers on Cussetah. Bring back a spray of red bud in bloom for Lowena.—The cook returns.

5 Hall and I go fishing. Though unsuccessful we had a fine drive. Roberson begins planting corn.

6 Read. Write a poem entitled "The Two Clouds."

7 Roberson, the work hand, and I start to Checotah. It is cold and rainy. Find Cussetah up and head it as we do [32] the rest of the streams on our way. We go the prairie and go thro' a hundred pastures and more gates—coming to one every five minutes. Roberson, having to hop out in the cold & rain to open them, lets slip a sluice of epithets in the direction of their owners to my great amusement. We come to one with a board tacked upon it with this legend, "Gentlemen will shut me; others may not," and Roberson looks at [sic] like a mad bull at a red cloth but says nothing. An accident befalls us but fortunately near a house. Roberson drives into a ditch and broke the coupling pole of his wagon. He sums up the situation with "damnation!" and "h—l f—e" thrown in for good measure. We borrow a coupling pole and reach Checotah O. K.

8 Friday is an unlucky day it is said and I believe it. I start to Eufaula by way of Berry hill's ferry and lose my team by drowning. Fanny gets scared and pushes Maud off the boat and follows her. I save myself but it is a narrow escape. We save the buggy and harness by dint of hard work. I send one of the ferrymen to Eufaula for a livery team. A storm comes up. I wait. After so long the liveryman comes. Get to town about dark. Eat a huge supper. Misfortune does not affect my appetite. Get a shave and go to the concert with Thornton. [33]

9 Spend the day in Eufaula. Thornton & I take dinner with Whitmore. Pa returns from Checotah on the "Flyer" and Frank takes us home.

10 Frank, Bill, John & I play croquet. Lot of visitors. The carpenters from Checotah come and I show them where I contemplate building.

11 Pa and I take a drive around Bald Hill and select a place for a pasture. Take dinner with Jim Price.

12 Pa lets me have a buggy team. Coney and I go to town. From there I go to Checotah, accompanied by W. T. Banks, the lawyer.

13 Come home after nearly a weeks absence. Find the folks just on the point of sending the Poet in search of me.

14 Read & rest all day.

15 The Poet & Anna go to Checotah. The work hand, the cook & I go to town.

16 Read all day—play croquet.

17 Mr. Shields and a young doctor take dinner and chat the ladies. Shields, they say, cracked jokes at his own expense. Jeff Hall is a visitor. The Poet & Anna return from Checotah.

19 Not well—in bed all day—read Burns. Get up before supper and play croquet. Send a poem to the “Inquirer.”

20 Read Burns. Help Lowena water the flowers. Joked the cook. [34]

21 The Greek and the unspeakable Turk are at war. The war in Cuba is about ended. Spain unable to maintain her army on the island owing to her exhausted means. Long live free Cuba! Paul Kruger and John Bull are far from being on intimate terms. A good shaking up would only be for the good of England. It will rot and fall to pieces without something of the kind.

Hall and I take a walk to the pond. Sit on the grass and watch the white caps break. I tell him how nice it is to watch the waves break on the shore of Lake Michigan.

22 Wrote a stanza. Read “Puck” and “Judge.” Played croquet with Miss Rose. Lowena has a chill.

23 Laid around and read Burns most of the day. What an inactive life I am leading here! I want change of air, of place and habits of life.

24 Lowena has another chill and becomes so sick that I send for the doctor.

25 Such a cool clear day. Lowena is much better—able to walk to the kitchen for her meals. The Poet and I take a long stroll in the hills back of the C. O. A. farm. Find a beautiful glen and a water fall—lay and rest on the mossy rocks; and would sleep here but for the fear of centipedes (on the Poet’s part.) We sit apart— [35] one on one side of the glen and the other on the other side—and repeat the following extempor [sic] verses alternately:

If I were rich, wee mountain stream,

I would not sit by thee and dream,

But loiter on a silken cot  
And sign for pleasures that are not.

The wrens above me in the trees  
And thou below me in the glen—  
To see thee turn and twist, and then,  
To hear the whispering of the breeze,  
The mossy rock's the seat of ease.

To have a soul attuned to all  
The bird-songs and the water-fall,  
The beauties of the earth and air  
That charm the senses anywhere,  
And satisfy the spirit's need,  
Ah, this is to be rich indeed!

26 Read—sleep. Take Lowena out driving. Visit the place where the Poet and I wrote the poem yesterday; cross Cussetah, go out on the prairie beyond and return by way of the Porter place. Fresh scenes and fresh air.

27 Write a rattle snake [sic] poem. Play croquet. While we are thus engaged a thunder storm approaches and we narrowly escape from being lightning struck. Miss Rose, Amanda and I had our heads shocked while Joe Grayson's ankle was jolted.

28 Just the sort of day I like! Great woolly clouds—signs of coming showers—  
[36] cool winds—birds singing everywhere—and the fields are fresh and green. I stroll  
and let fancy have her way.

29 Hall and I aim our humor at a lone prairie schooner with “sails furled and  
headed Arkansasward.”

Bro. Bill arrives on a short visit, accompanied by Kirkpatrick, a former inn keeper  
at Checotah. They tell, in the way of news, of a cloud burst recently on the North Forth,  
causing the river to rise 20 feet in less than a half hour and sweeping away the railroad  
bridge; also of the extinction of the town of Shawnee, in Oklahoma, night before last, by  
a cyclone.

30 Bill & his companion return. I dive into Burns' songs.

May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Read Burns and played croquet.

2 Took Lowena buggy driving! Went to Deep Fork. The river is out of its banks  
and has turned philosopher. The lake is brimful and “o'er hung with wild woods  
thick'ning green—a beautiful scene! See a jack rabbit for the first time. When we return  
has sad news. He is without “Star.” We go to town after some and come back well  
supplied.

3 Send off two poems to the papers—“Lines to Hall” & “Daisy.” The last is a  
tribute to my little brother, Darwin's, pet dog. [37]

Give the students a lecture.



This the last week of school and the fact gives me no little pleasure. I want to get out of brick walls—out of politics and be a common citizen. No more do I intend to be a government servant, and will not be a servant for any individual.

4 Finish reading Burns.

5 Dicky gets back from Checotah. Received a bill of books from Knisley. Poems of Whitman, Shelley and Bret Harte; “Wet Days at Edgewood,” “My Farm of Edgewood” by Donald G. Mitchel, “Ike Marvel,” and the “Building of the City Beautiful” by Joaquin Miller. My idle moments during the summer will be spent with these.

6 Yahola is sick all day. Go town after medicine for him. Hall & I walk down and return with Blackstone in the buggy.

John Phillips comes to witness our entertainment tomorrow night which promises well.

7 Begin reading “My Farm of Edgewood,” a book that promises to be entertaining. The first chapter has lifted my face to blue skies, with here and there a white cloud dreamily drifting; has taken me to the mountain top overlooking cosy [sic] New England hamlets, arms of the sea and glimpses of the lordly Hudson in the distance.

This is the last day of school. Our work is ended and our large family broken up. The entertainment was a roaring success. There was not room sufficient to accommodate visitors. Ellis Grayson & Rufus Marshall took down the house in the “Tooth Carpenter.” The impersonation of the “Shepherdess” [sic] by Anna Howell was fine; and [38] her recitation, “The Old Woman’s Complaint” could not be excelled. Miss Wilson played the “Rose Act” to perfection. The “Bonnet Drill” by sixteen girls—what words shall I use to

describe it? The instrumental music by Mr. Hall and Miss Rose Lee, altho' [sic] a little "dancy" sometimes, was highly enjoyable. It was all good!

8 The school is closed and the children in a bustle preparing to go home. Play croquet.

9 Go to Muscogee with Brother Bill in response to my father's request.

10 Lay around—or rather stand around the court house waiting for Bill's case to be called. It is not called. Go to Checotah, returning to Muscogee Tues-

11 day morning with Hall. Lay around again all day. Hall takes in the sights—if a mixture of brick & shanty house, unpaved & crooked streets, filled with negroes & hungry business men, with never an "honest Injin" to be seen, can be called sights.—Bill's case is called and dismissed on lack of sufficient evidence.—We all, that is my father, Bill & Hall & I go to a show, which turns out a very cheap & mean affair—if not vulgar.

12 Hall & I come home. Pa & Bill take the train for Eufaula.

13 Sleep all day and dread going back to Muscogee as much as Lowena hates to have me go.

14 Read. After dinner, Ellis Grayson & I start to Checotah.

15 Take train—I for Muscogee & Ellis for Wagoner, where he goes to spend vacation. I am a witness before the Grand Jury but my case is not called—dispite [sic] the [39] fact the prosecuting attorney promises three hundred times to call the case up. A white man never made a promise with an Indian that he kept.

16 Spend the Sabbath at Mr. Garland's three miles from town—a beautiful place—genuine hospitality and our brimming good cheer. Visit Byrd Horn's and talk

about emigrating to South America or Mexico—any where away from Congress & the Dawes Commission.

17 My case before the Grand Jury is called and I testify. Receive a telegram from Lowena about three o'clock saying "Baby very sick. Come at once." The train six hours late. Get to Checotah about 3 o'clock and drive home.

18 Get home before nine. Never so glad or sleepy. Find baby better. Sleep.

19 Sleep & caress Yahola.

20 Get a nurse for baby.

21 Read "My Farm of Edgewood." Yahola better. Nurse kind & good to him.

We have a pack of young curs. The fattest and the "cutest" little fellows in the world.

22 Write a stanza. The gist of it being, don't censure the world until you have tried to make it better.—Continued reading Donald Mitchell.—Lowena and I go walking and gather a boquet [sic] of wild flowers apiece.

23 Read "My Farm of Edgewood" and slept like a Dutchman.

24 Did the same thing over.

25 Finished reading "My Farm of Edgewood." Donald Mitchell, like Irving, [40] never tires me. Can beautiful language, faultless and pure, delightful descriptions of Nature, so true that you hear the rustling of the poplar leaves, and philosophical excursions ever tire?

26 Read—Go to town and pay my debts

27 Revise a chapter of my new book and read same to my wife & Miss Wilson. They think it readable.

28 Over haul another chapter of my new book.—Joe returns from Checotah.

29 Read new magazines. Cosmopolitan & Current Literature good numbers.

Prof. Hall, accompanied by Mr. Ray, are our guests. Our visitors are both musically inclined and we have a lot of music.

30 Hall & companion go home and with them two of our girls—Liza and Cindy.—Read & revise another chapter.

31 Read & take care of baby Yahola—the brightest & sweetest young one in the world—while Lowena makes preparations for departure tomorrow for Arkansaw [sic] by way of Grandpa's and Grandma's at Bald Hill.—Hall is to hold the fort in our absence.

June

1 Lowena, Yahola and I depart for Arkansaw [sic] by the route indicated in the above entry. The drive thro' the Senora & Tulledega countries is highly pleasant. The recent rains [41] have made the streams to look like naughty children after crying—Deep Fork & Wolf Creek in particular. An elm with curled and twisted limbs on the latter stream amuses me by reminding me of a stingy Jew's whiskers. Tie the buggy wheels descending Tulledega—Lowena & baby walk down. Ferry North Fork. Reach my father's place about five o'clock. It rains.

2 Yahola is sick but not serious. Yesterday's trip was too hard for the little fellow. My father & I scare the renters on the farm into fits with false faces. We run them out of the cotton patches and out of their homes and out of their wits. I played the part of the hag and my father that of the devil before day.

3 Yahola is better. Pa & I go over to Richman's to see Boone about a claim. Boone has acted the dog in the manger with me. I staked off a claim not long since and he

has gone staked it off for himself. The conference does not result in a settlement. Boone is contentious—a man in the wrong always is.

4 I take three wagons and a half dozen hands and run around Boone's stakes. In all stake off about a mile square pasture. I pay Boone back in his own coin and in some of my own. Lowena & I start to Checotah at 12 o'clock.

5 Take the morning train for Fayetteville. Transfer at Wagoner. The Valley route proves rough. Get to Ft. Smith at twelve. Forty-one cabmen contend with each other for our baggage & patronage. I had rather be attacked by a band of outlaws than these men. We put up at a hotel until 4 o'clock when we take the "Cannon Ball" for our destination, arriving at seven. Mountain sceneries many & pretty. [42]

6 Lowena is back at her old home and is satisfied but I am not. Read and stay in doors for the rain is pouring down. Walk out with Mr. Harris and take a look at the Greg farm.

7 Come home despite [sic] Lowena's pleading. Come by way of South McAlester.

8 At about one o'clock I am at the C. O. A. Fresh breezes & contentment.

9 Hall goes home. Rest—read.

10 Clean up and make a hammock. Am very industrious.

11 Get lonesome. Receive a letter from Lowena. More lonesome.

11 Write a poem. After dinner hitch up Cayenne & Pepper and drive to Checotah.

12 Take the train for Fayetteville. Lay over 3 hours at South McAlester. Leave at twelve & arrived at destination at seven. Lowena is expecting me and is not surprised.

13 Visit the confederate cemetery with Mr. Harris to see the newly dedicated monument, "A tribute to Southern Women." Visit the mentioned cemetery and drive over town.

14 Lowena, Yahola & I come home. Have a pleasant trip.

15 Arrive at C. O. A. at half past four.

16 Rest—read. Bro. Bill comes on a short visit. Hall goes to Checotah and will return with Kit. [43]

17 Laid in my barrel stave hammock and read Joaquin Miller's "Builders of the City Beautiful." Whatever Miller writes is charming and this book is no exception.

18 Wrote a stanza "To a Mocking Bird." Hall's criticism of the same is favorable. Read Aesop's Fables.

19 Hall & I go to Bald Hill. Take dinner with Mr. Ray. Hall shows me his crop and we predict good results. The drive from here on is rough but pleasant. We reach my father's about sundown—eat a big supper and talk.

20 This is the hottest [sic] day we have had. Old Sol shines without compunction. The conversation between my father and the Poet is worth hearing. My father whets his wits on "organizations and combinations, political, religious and otherwise."

After dinner Hall, [Frank] and I went over to Sandy Land to attend "a singing," which we discovered to be a gathering of renter folks; where the young awkward boys & girls sparked most unceremoniously and the old farmers and their wives talked of corn and cotton and their neighbors between "Hark! From the Tomb" and "What a friend We Have," etc, etc.

21 We return. Reaching North Fork we find the ferryman absent and wait here 3 or 4 hours. In the meantime the Poet strips and wades the river and goes to Burney for tobacco.

22 Rest. The Poet goes back to Ray's to look after his crop.

23 Lay in the hammock and read the "Star."

July

10 Capt. Callahan, of Checotah, takes dinner with us. [44]

11 Mr. Hall returns to look after his business at Senora. From there he expects to go to San Antonio, Texas, on a visit to his sister. He is to write us a letter sitting on the Alamo.

12 Miss Lee, who has been our guest during the Institute, leaves this morning for her home in Booneville, Ark. She will spend the next six weeks at Eureka.

24 Take the excursion fever and go to Galveston. Spend a day and a half there taking in the sights and turning somersaults in the Mexican wave. Stop at the Brock Hotel—an emense [sic] place and charges in proportion. Go out on a steamer with two sail boats hitched on the sides. Waves become boisterous and the sail boats jamming against the streamer, water splashing everywhere, on everybody, irrespective of rank and dignity, and cause some excitement. There are two sweethearts on board and they make sundry soft remarks. For instance, "Love, if we were away out yonder where we couldn't see a thing, we'd sure see lots of water, wouldn't we?"—The moss woods beyond the Brazos—how beautiful! The maidens this side and beyond—oh!

Aug. 28 Hall returns from Checotah with Miss Wright, our new teacher, who is from "Ole Virginny." We expected them yesterday, but the Poet having some important business to attend to out east of Checotah, delayed their leaving Checotah yesterday. [45]

29 S. B. Callahan pays us a short visit in the morning on his way home from Council.—John throws up his job and goes to Checotah.—The Poet and the ladies (Misses Wright and Harris), my wife & myself & the children go to the camp meeting, which is in progress west of town. The Poet & Ladies became entangle [sic] in the Deep Fork woods and are lost a half a day; while our crowd has vexation with a wagon tire, which, catching our heads turned, would leave the wheel and dash away as if for life.—We have a superb dinner—many dainties—among other things a Chocolate cake made in Virginia—thanks to Miss Wright! Come home as soon as dinner is over.—Dolly & Fay outstrip Cayenne and Pepper in a buggy race—to the great satisfaction of the Poet and the Ladies.

30 The poet goes to Senora.

Miss Wright, Cindy Jacobs, Mrs. Posey, Master Yahola and myself go pearl hunting on Deep Fork. Miss Wright rides Cricket and the rest of us go in the buggy. The outing is highly enjoyed and not without success. We gather some live mussels and bring them home and lo and behold Miss Wright finds a pearl in one of them! Joe and I think to fool her with oyster pearls but the joke is turned.

We discover the spring of perennial youth and eight and [sic] nine cupsfull [sic] respectively. Yahola participated in the sports with equal pleasure.

Return before 3 o' clock and eat an extremely palatable dinner.



31 Joe and I go pearl hunting—away up Deep Fork in the wildest Joe has ever been in. We find pleasure but no precious stones.

Hall is back from Senora. In extremely good spirit [sic]. [46]

Sept. 1 My mother, accompanied by Bill, Frank, Jim and Master Mendum arrived today on a visit. This is the first long trip my mother has taken in years.

2 My mother, Frank & Master Mendum leave early for Newyoka where they go to visit her aunt, returning after dark.

Miss Rose Lee and Supt. Land of Euchee are here for the night.

Eat water melons, throw seeds and rinds at each other!

A Perfect melee! The Poet does not participate for reasons best known to himself.

3 Mother, Frank, Jim & Master Mendum return to Bald Hill. Bill remains and will act as “for me” for the C.O.A.

4 Read. Go horse back riding with Lowena. Johnson Tiger comes to assume his duties as principal.

November 1899

11 It has been a long time—two years—since I wrote in my diary.

November 29, 1899

Hall the poet, came down from Muskogee last Friday evening and convoked a meeting of the Informal Club, at my office. Of course he had something to say, or he would not have convoked us. It is the rule of the Club that a member must have something to say worth hearing before calling a meeting. The Poet would not live in town under no circumstances. There's an end on it. He prefers the country. He said amongst other things, “Men who live in town, on account of having to follow some business for a

livelihood, become sort of [47] automatic machines for the accumulation of pennies.”

Thornton proffered charges of a serious nature against Capt. Grayson. He informed the Club that the Captain, at a previous meeting, had reviled him and was unduly intoxicated. As the Captain was not present to defend himself, no action was taken.

Bro. Hall's cigar like to broke up the meeting on account of its cheapness. Thornton and myself can't stand a two-for.

On Xmas day the Club took dinner at my father's place at Bald Hill. We may not look upon such a dinner again. My father's hospitality is as boundless as his common sense.

Hall & myself held a session of the Club on return from Bald Hill till a late hour. He returned to Muscogee on the following morning. From there he went to his home at Senora, west of Tulledega.

November 31

Throw snow balls and got the worse of it. My father brings Coney, John, Horace, and Mattie to school.

Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1900

[Since] reading Boswell's Johnson I have enjoyed nothing so much as the letter of 'Gail Hamilton' to her friend Whittier the Quaker poet. She is so lively and he so sober. She pokes all kinds of fun at him—in fun—and he is tickled by her pleasantries.

## Text

This journal, intermittently spanning the years 1897-1900, is located in folder 18 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A transcription of this journal was published in the winter 1967-1968 issue of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*. However, *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* version, edited by Edward Everett Dale, contains numerous textual errors and significant omissions that sometimes leave out paragraph long sections of the journal. Because of these substantial errors, the Dale version has not been used for this edition.

The manuscript consists of forty-seven loose, handwritten pages of 12 ½ x 7 ¾-inches in size. The pages are lined, and for the most part Posey's handwriting remains within the printed margins of the pages. The upper right and left sections of the pages are printed with large Arabic numerals running from one to forty-seven. Though the pages are loose, none are missing. Posey filled both sides of the pages, and he wrote the dates of his entries in the left margins of those pages. For the most part, Posey's handwriting is relatively clear, but at some portions of the manuscript his writing becomes difficult, or even impossible, to decipher. Such indecipherable passages, and those for which the reading is uncertain, are indicated in the text by brackets and are also noted in the textual apparatus.

### Textual Notes

- 122.1        1897] This year is written centered at the top of the page in large numbers.
- 133.15       Airheart] Apparently this word began as Areheart but the first “r” was later changed in a different ink to an “I.”
- 136.3        capital] This word has been altered from “capatil” to “capital” by an alteration of the fourth and sixth letters in an different ink.
- 138.14       This is Lowena’s Birthday.] This is written perpendicularly in the margin of the “Wed. 3” entry.
- 161.9-21     Every date between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> has been written above another marked out date of one digit more. For example, the “11” is written above a hashed out “12.” Posey thus creates two entries for the 11<sup>th</sup>.
- 163.16       entangle] Posey originally wrote “entangled” but then marks out the “d” in this word.
- 164.23       November 1899] This date is centered on the page.
- 165.2        December 29, 1899] This date is centered on the page.
- 165.13       Bro. Hall’s cigar] This passage is written perpendicularly in the upper left margin of page 47, beside the December 29, 1899 entry.

### Emendations

All emendations correspond to the indicated page and line numbers. This edition’s reading appears to the left of the bracket; the copy text reading appears to the right.

These symbols denote textual modifications:

< > passage deleted by the author

- ↑ ↓ authorial interlineations
- ~ portion of the copy text matching this edition's reading
- ^ absence of an item in the copy text which is found in this edition
- 125.17 One Ed Grissom] ~ < Shelton Smith > ↑ Ed Grissom ↓ [different handwriting? and in pencil]
- 127.16 This application was resented and a vehement] < Where upon > ↑ This application was resented and ↓ ~ [in pencil]
- 127.17 and whites of the eyes] ~ ↑ whites of the eyes ↓ [in pencil]
- 127.17 exposed like] ↑ exposed ↓ ~ [in pencil]
- 129.8 Tues. 12] ~ < 1 > ↑ 2 ↓ [in pencil]
- 129.13 but] ~ < is he >
- 129.18 Wed. 13] ~ < 3 > ↑ 3 ↓ [in pencil]
- 130.3 father was] ~ ↑ was ↓
- 130.16 of the Mission] ~ < me > ↑ the Mission ↓
- 130.17 well any] ↑ well ↓ ~
- 130.21-22 then for he generally gets the best of me] ~ ↑ for he generally gets the best of me ↓
- 131.10 Continent"] ~ ^
- 133.11-12 a tent pole in his nose,] < lots of bridge > ↑ a tent pole ↓ ~
- 134.8 nothing extra] ~ < for it > ↑ extra ↓
- 134.17-18 morning and went] ~ ↑ and went ↓
- 134.21 won greater] ~ < more > ↑ greater ↓

- 135.18 were encased] ↑ were ↓ ~
- 136.1 spent] ~ < in >
- 137.14 give] ~ < the >
- 137.14 No] ~ < indecipherable >
- 137.16 in eclipse] ↑ in ↓ ~
- 137.20 has been] ~ ↑ been ↓
- 138.18 Gion"] ~^
- 139.8 Hall] ~ < looks >
- 141.13 brings] ~ < indecipherable >
- 143.7 some] < the > ~
- 146.22 by Archibald] < of > ↑ by ↓ ~
- 147.2 have but little] ~ < no > ↑ but little ↓
- 147.20 prairies] < f > ~
- 148.20 Okmulgee, which] < Eufaula > ↑ Okmulgee ↓ ~
- 151.12 dislodged] < they thoughtlessly chased > ↑ how they ↓ ~
- 151.14 "Didn't] < "Did y" > ~
- 152.15 ferrymen] < for a liver > ~
- 153.10 17] ~ < 8 > ↑ 7 ↓
- 155.11 I had] ~ < indecipherable > ↑ had ↓
- 155.17 arrives] ~ < from >
- 156.1 Read] < I > ~
- 156.4 return] ~ < ed >
- 156.12 government servant] ~ ↑ servant ↓

- 156.19 Yahola is] ~ < is > ↑ has been ↓
- 158.17 Yahola.] ~ < Send for? a nurse >
- 158.18 Get] < Nurse very good. Yahola better. Read "My Farm of Edgewood" >  
~
- 159.13 Over haul] < indecipherable > ↑ Over ↓ ~
- 160.12 to Richman's] < indecipherable > ~
- 161.21 stanza] ~ < "To the >
- 162.7 went over] < go > ~
- 162.8 where] < both old and young > ~
- 163.4 Waves] < indecipherable > ~
- 164.4 I think] ~ < thought > ↑ think ↓
- 165.5 It] ~ < I >
- 165.9 automatic] < indecipherable > ~

### Commentary

- 122.8 my father] Lawrence Henderson (Hence) Posey (1841?-1902). See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 19-21.
- 122.9 whom I expelled from school] At this time Posey was the superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum near Okmulgee. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 79-97.
- 123.15 Miss Lee] Rosa "Rose" Lee, one of the teachers at the Creek Orphan

- Asylum. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 91, 112-113, and 118. The deaths of Rosa Lee and James Posey both served as inspiration for Posey's poem, "Memories (Inscribed to my poet friend George Riley Hall)"
- 123.15 Kit] Also called "Kittie," this person was Katherine Harris, a teacher at the Creek Orphan Asylum and Minnie Posey's sister. In later years she married Alexander Posey's good friend, George R. Hall. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 91, 98, 112, 196, and 137.
- 123.20 preparing a poem for publication] This poem may be lost, or might be "The Rural Maid" which refers to the "witchery" of a young woman.
- 123.22 Mr. Hall] A minor poet himself, George Riley Hall (1865-1944) was one of Posey's best friends and would later marry Minnie Posey's sister, Catherine. Hall worked as a teacher at the Creek Orphan Asylum during Posey's term as superintendent. In later years he would edit the *Henryetta Free-Lance*. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 71-72, 81-97, 137, 196.
- 124.10-11 mistook myself for a rebellious Populist!] This humorous analogy is perhaps a reference to the long-bearded United States Senator, William Peffer, who belonged to the People's Party, which was commonly called the Populist Party.
- 124.19 Gladstone] William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) was a British Prime Minister known for his populist speeches and political rivalry with Benjamin Disraeli.
- 125.6 J. N. Thornton] John N. Thornton was a close friend of Posey; see Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 122-123.



- 125.10-11 her work at Hillabee] Minnie (Harris) Posey was working as a teacher in the Hillabee Creek Nation school. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 82.
- 128.19 Eufaula has an Aingel for postmaster] Possibly a play on words based upon the name of the postmaster.
- 129.5 a poem—"An Arbekan Episode"] This poem is lost.
- 129.6-7 an oration I wrote on Sequoyah] For an earlier version of this oration see Posey, *Chinnubbie*, 85.
- 129.10 Maude] A reference to their horse.
- 129.15 Senator Vest] George Graham Vest (1830-1904) was a United States Senator from Missouri who served from 1879-1903.
- 129.16 Dawes Commission] In 1893 a United States congressional committee chaired by Henry Laurens Dawes created the Dawes Act which allowed for the formation of the Dawes Commission. This commission was charged with facilitating the dissolution of tribal land titles and providing for the allotment of land in severalty to the individual members of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes (i.e., the Muscogee (Creek), Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole Nations).
- 129.21 Free Silver Populist] This is a reference to those who advocated the unlimited coinage of silver for United States currency.
- 132.8 Thomas Carlyle] Posey is making light of the fact that a traveling salesman, shares a name with the famous philosopher, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881).
- 132.9 Tarpeian] A reference to the rock-face of Capotiline Hill in Rome. See J.

- A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, eds. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 17:645. See Littlefield, *Alex*.
- 132.12 Lowena] Alexander Posey's pet name for his wife, Minnie (Harris) Posey.
- 134.20-21 "Tom & Abe & I,"] No manuscript of this has been found; however, some of these tales may still exist in the form Posey's story, "Two Famous Prophets".
- 136.14 per capita money] For a detailed discussion of the problems surrounding the disbursement of Muscogee per capita payments see Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance*, 349-359.
- 136.18 John] John Phillips was Posey's cousin, whom he had hired as a carpenter and would later fire on February 17, 1897.
- 136.18 Shields and Myers] These people are unidentified.
- 137.1 Isparhecher] Isparhecher (1828-1902), pronounced "Spi-e-che" was principal chief of the Muscogees from 1895-99). See Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 246, 361-75.
- 137.20 sofky] Sofky (variously spelled "sofky," "sofki," "sofke," or "sofkee") is a traditional Muscogee food made by cooking corn in lye water. See Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 21 and Iness et al., *Beginning Creek*, 189.
- 138.5 "la grippe"] This is another term for influenza. See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 6:853.
- 139.6 Bald Hill] With Tulledega, one of Posey's two boyhood homes and the location of his family's ranch; located about eight miles west of the town of Eufaula. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 29.

- 139.7 Tulledega] A rural area near what is now Lenna, Oklahoma where Posey was born and spent the first years of his life. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 23.
- 139.9 C. O .A.] This is Posey's abbreviation for the Creek Orphan Asylum.
- 139.9 via Miss Wilson's] This person is unidentified.
- 139.12 "The Arizonian" and "The Last [Taschastus]" These works, possibly poems, are unidentified.
- 139.17 Mr. Lynch's] This person is unidentified.
- 139.21 Possum Flat] This is Posey's ranch near Bald Hill. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 96.
- 140.1 Mr. Morrow and his brother] These people are unidentified.
- 140.3 Wealaka] This is a reference to the Wealaka Boarding School. See Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 249, 279, 310, and 352.
- 140.4 Mrs. Loughridge] Possibly the wife of the missionary Robert M. Loughridge. See Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 250 and 308.
- 140.10 Mattie, Bill, Frank] Posey's sister and two of his brothers.
- 140.13 Ma] Nancy Posey, Alexander's mother.
- 140.15 Coney] Cornelius (Conny) Posey, Alexander's brother.
- 140.17-18 Richard Grayson's—Uncle Dick's lineal descendant] Muscogee freed people who lived at the Coon Creek settlement near the Posey ranch at Bald Hill. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 32.
- 140.22 Gehenna] Another term for "Hell."
- 141.4 Limbo] Limbo Creek runs through the Tulledega Mountain area of

Posey's childhood home.

no markings

- 142.7 “Ships that Pass in the Night.”] Published in 1893, the title of this popular romance novel by the British suffragette writer Beatrice Harraden (1864-1936) became a catch-phrase for ill-fated relationships. Posey's library still holds his copy of Harraden's *Ships that Pass in the Night*.
- 142.12 Irving's “Tour of the Prairies.”] In this 1835 book Washington Irving provides a detailed account of his travels through Indian Territory.
- 142.13 Capt. Callahan] Samuel Benton Callahan, personal secretary of Isparhecher and father of Muscogee author S. Alice Callahan. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 86 and 137.
- 143.1 Cleveland and Olney] A reference to then President Grover Cleveland and his Secretary of State, Richard Olney. Here Posey refers to a border dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain in which Olney acted as arbiter. The situation was not as amiable as Posey describes, Cleveland and Olney's diplomacy included hints of armed force. Eventually Great Britain backed down due to their need to focus on another of their international problems at the time, the Boers in Africa.
- 143.3-4 Judge Marshall reading a letter from Byrd Horn's] These people are unidentified.
- 143.6 Bill Barns] This person is unidentified.
- 143.12 Darwin] Alexander Posey's brother.
- 143.14-15 light horse Captain, Barney Green] This person is unidentified. The

- lighthouse police served as rural law enforcement for the Muscogee Nation.
- 143.16 Withdraw suit against Brooheors] The details of this lawsuit are unknown.
- 143.20 Mr. Ewing] Information about this houseguest is unknown.
- 143.21 Joe left] Joe Thompkins, the cook. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 84.
- 144.1 Cowan] This is probably the renter who is referred to as Cowin in other portions of the journal.
- 144.14 Joe Young] Information about this cook is unknown.
- 144.17 Mrs. Lynch's] This person is unidentified.
- 144.12 like Dr. Hornbook] A reference to Robert Burns's poem "Death and Dr. Hornbook." [http://www.doghouse.com/~rj/hornbook.htm](#)
- 146.19 "sofkies" of mixed ancestry] Posey sheds light on his use of this term in a note he provides in his story, "Uncle Dick's Sow:" "Sofky is a Creek word and stands for a very delectable dish; but it has been corrupted by the white man and is made to denote a contemptible dog" (Posey, *Chinnubbie and the Owl*, 54). Thus, Posey's use of the term in this entry refers to ill-mannered, mix-breed dogs.
- 146.20 Jessie] This name is unidentified and may even refer to a dog or a horse.
- 147.8 Sharlot Hall] Sharlot Hall (1870-1943) was an early Arizona writer and historian who also served as associate editor of *Out West* magazine.
- 147.9 Archibald Lampman] Archibald Lampman (1861-1899) was a Canadian poet most famous for his 1888 book, *Among the Millet, and other Poems*. Posey's library holds a copy of Lampman's *Lyrics of Earth*.

- 148.5 Brann] Probably William Cowper Brann (1855-1898) the editor of the *Iconoclast* and a religious skeptic who was famous for his attacks on the Baptist Church.
- 148.8 Anna, Sarah and Til] These people are unidentified.
- 148.15 The Honorable Judge Benjuman [sic] W. Wadsworth] A local political figure who as Littlefield writes, “had a nasty habit of using other people’s toothbrushes and hairbrushes” (*Alex Posey* 85).
- 148.21 Miss Fanny Scott] This person is unidentified.
- 150.4 “cast as rubbish to the void.”] This is a quotation from Alfred Tennyson’s long poem “In Memoriam A. H. H.”
- 150.10 “mighty minded Genoese”] A reference to Christopher Columbus who was Genoese. Posey was reading Washington Irving’s *Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* at the time.
- 150.13 Mr. D. N. Clark, or “Uncle Nute,”] This person is unidentified.
- 150.16-17 John Phillips] Posey’s cousin. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 85.
- 150.22 a “bran” new Boy!] Here Posey subtly announces the birth of his first son, Yahola Irving Posey.
- 151.4 a chapter in my book of experiences entitled “Callie.”] This manuscript no longer exists, but a poem bearing this same title does and is included in this edition.
- 152.5 Jeff Hall] Jeff Hall was George Hall’s brother.
- 152.6 the poet] Posey’s nickname for George Hall.
- 152.10 Roberson] One of Posey’s work hands.

- 153.9 the “Flyer”] This is a reference to the “Katy Flyer” of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway, a railroad more commonly known as the MK&T.
- 153.13 Jim Price] This person is unidentified.
- 154.2 a poem to the “Inquirer.”] This is Posey’s shorthand for the *Checotah Inquirer*. The poem in question is probably “The Two Clouds;” an undated clipping printed in *Checotah Inquirer* typeface exists in the Alexander L. Posey Collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- 154.6 Paul Kruger and John Bull] Paul Kruger (1825-1904) led the Boer resistance against Great Britain in the Boer War. John Bull is a fictional character meant to represent the whole of England, similar to the “Uncle Sam” figure of the United States.
- 155.17 Write a rattle snake [sic] poem] This poem is likely, “The Rattler.”
- 155.19 Joe Grayson’s] A member of the large Grayson family. For information about a Joe Grayson that may be this same man, see Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian*, 155.
- 156.6 Bro. Bill] William Posey.
- 156.17 “Star.”] A brand of chewing tobacco.
- 156.19 “Lines to Hall” & “Daisy.”] Apparently both were published in one of the local newspapers; undated clippings of both poems are held in the Alexander L. Posey Collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

- 157.20 Ellis Grayson & Rufus Marshall] These people are unidentified.
- 158.22 Spend the Sabbath at Mr. Garland's ] This person is unidentified.
- 158.23 Visit Byrd Horn's] This person is unidentified.
- 159.12 Write a stanza.] Probably a reference to a short poem titled, "Be Fair" which he later incorporated into "Epigrams."
- 160.3 Mr. Ray] This person is unidentified.
- 160.15 stingy Jew's whiskers] Posey reveals his anti-Semitism in this comment.
- 160.22 Boone] Thomas Boone was a neighbor of Posey's. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 99.
- 163.21 Brazos] This is a reference to the Brazos River in Texas.
- 164.12 Dolly & Fay outstrip Cayenne and Pepper] These are horses.
- 165.4 Bill, Frank, Jim and Master Mendum] Four of Alexander Posey's brothers.
- 165.8 Supt. Land of Euchee] J. H. Land was the superintendent of the Euchee Boarding School. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 101.
- 165.14 the Informal Club] This club consisted of Alexander Posey, John N. Thornton, George Riley Hall, and George W. Grayson. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 113-114.



## Biographical

Requests galore have been received by Twin Territories, to “publish more concerning the real Indian writers who contribute to the magazine.” These requests come not only from Indian Territory, but from many readers in the states, and it is with pride and pleasure that Twin Territories grants them.

In mentioning Indian writers—the “real Indian” writers, which Twin Territories presumes, means those of Indian birth—Chinnubie Harjo, whose poems and droll sketches have regularly delighted the readers of this magazine, should receive foremost attention. Chinnubie Harjo is none other than that young and brilliant Creek Indian man, Mr. Alex Posey, who at present is superintendent of the Creek High School at Eufaula.

Mr. Posey was educated almost entirely in Indian Territory schools, and he is one of the ablest minded men in this country. His poems have attracted widespread attention, and he has contributed to several Eastern magazines and newspapers. Many critics and persons who hold prominent positions in American literature have personally written Mr. Posey, complimenting him and urging him to devote more time to the work for which he possesses such talent.

For the benefit of those who have not met Mr. Posey we will say that he is a quiet, self possessed man, of average height. His hair and eyes are dark. He is a good conversationalist and is a man whom one likes at once.

In reply to a letter from Twin Territories, which contained a request for information concerning his boyhood, Mr. Posey wrote the following:

“EDITOR TWIN TERRITORIES:

It is enough to say, concerning my youth, that I was raised on a farm and was accounted a pretty weedy crop. The cockleburrs and crapgrass seemed to spring up all the more prolific after I had been given a good thrashing. Tom, an orphan boy adopted by my father, was my youth-long companion; and I often look back to “the days of the last sunshine” when we romped in our long shirts, or “sweeps,” as we called them, which my mother fashioned for our use. These long shirts, or “sweeps,” were long flowing garments made on the order of the tunic, but longer and more dignified. There was a vast freedom in these gowns; such room for the wind to play in; and they were so easily thrown aside at the “ol’ swimmin’ hole.” We looked forward with regret to the time when we would have to discard them for jeans coats and pants and copper-toed boots, though these were desirable to chase rabbits in on a snowy day. Those who have never worn “sweeps,” have never known what it is to be free; have never known half of the secrets whispered by the winds of boyhood.

My first teacher was a dried-up, hard-up, weazen-faced, irritable little fellow with an appetite that caused the better dishes on my father’s table to disappear rapidly. My father picked him up somewhere and seeing that he had a bookish turn, gave him a place in our family as private teacher. From him I learned the alphabet and to read short sentences, but never spoke any English until I was compelled to speak it by my father. One evening when I blurted out in the best Creek I could command and began telling him about a horse hunt, he cut me off shortly: “Look here, young man, if you don’t tell me that in English after supper, I am going to wear you out.”

I was hungry, but this put an abrupt end to my desire for the good things I had heaped on my plate.

I got up from the table and made myself useful—brought water from the well, turned the cows in the pasture—thinking maybe this would cause him to forget what he had said. My goodness, however, did no good, for as soon as he came from the table, he asked me in a gentle but firm voice to relate my horse hunt. Well, he was so pleased with my English that he never afterwards allowed me to speak Creek.

When I was old enough to leave home, my father sent me to a public school at Eufaula, where I learned enough to enable me to enter the second academic class at the Indian University. I remained here about five years. During my stay at the University, I acted as librarian on Sundays and set type after school hours on week days for a little paper called the Instructor, published by the faculty.

I was employed by Gov. Brown and went to my post at Sasakwa after leaving school. Upon my return, I entered Creek politics and have been in the service of the Creek government ever since.”

Chinnubbie Harjo’s poems—one appears in this issue of Twin Territories—are written in a graceful musical style. His prose works are often humorous and descriptive of rural life and scenes. He is one of the “real Indian” writers whom the Territory is proud to claim.

## Text

“Biographical,” was published in the May 1900 (volume 2 number 5) issue of the Muskogee, Indian Territory literary magazine, *Twin Territories*. Though excerpts of this short autobiographical article appear in Daniel F. Littlefield Jr’s biography, *Alex Posey*, this edition contains the first entire reprint of this piece. The editor, at this time, was the Cherokee writer and journalist, Ora V. Eddleman Reed (1880-1968) who published her own short stories under the pseudonym of Mignon Schreiber.

## Emendation

180.22 “EDITOR] Λ~

## Commentary

180.12 His poems have attracted widespread attention] At this time Posey had begun to receive considerable national attention for this poetry. His fame would blossom again in 1902 when he began to publish the widely popular “Fus Fixico” letters.

181.4-5 “the days of the last sunshine”] This is a misquotation of a line from James Whitcomb Riley’s 1884 poem, “Out to Old Aunt Mary’s.” The actual line reads: “In those days of the lost sunshine.” Posey was an avid fan of Riley and his personal library contains five of the poet’s books. For more about Posey’s library see the appendix at the end of this edition.

182.11 employed by Gov. Brown] In October of 1894, after leaving Bacone Indian University, Posey went to work Posey for the mercantile establishment of Brown Brothers in Sasakwa, Seminole Nation. “Gov. Brown” refers to the owner of the business and Seminole governor, John

F. Brown. Posey's employment with Brown Brothers did not last long; he resigned in December 1894 and returned home to Bald Hill. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 70-71.

182.14 one appears in this issue] The poem that appears in this issue of *Twin Territories* is "Song of the Oktahutche."

### **The Cruise of the Good Vrouw: From a Diary by One of the Crew**

Monday June 10<sup>th</sup>—Our boat, “The Good Vrouw,” is on the water. Doc and “J. N.” have just tested her sea-worthiness and pronounced her O. K. She is not a bit leaky, and is plenty roomy for three and paraphernalia. Thanks to her builder, Mr. Fink.

The crew of the cruise are Doc, “J. N.” and myself. Doc is a good-natured Creek full-blood, who is to sit amidship and manipulate the oars, with “J. N.” at one end of the boat and myself at the other, taking in the scenery.

“J. N.” and I have dreamed of drifting down the Oktahutche for many a day and this is the beginning of the realization of that dream.

“Ready?”

“Yep.”

Well, we are off. “Wish you all good luck, boys,” shouts our friend Mastin from the shore, and others who have come to witness our embarkation wave us adieu.

The river is on a slight boom, and Doc, assisted by the strong current, is carrying us along lively enough. It is between one and two in the afternoon, and the weather is fine. The sky seems to bend low in its infinite blueness, with here and there a great flaky cloud rolling aimlessly.

Bang! Bang!

“J. N.” knocks a feather from a fish hawk flying over us, causing the bird to tear out from that neck o’ the sky and himself to chuckle at his close marksmanship.

“What stream empties here?”

“Wewoka.”

“Pretty name, aint it? What does it mean?”

“Barking water.

Tuow!

“Dog gone that old macasin more than tore out!”

The thunder of water ahead warns us of our approach to the Alabama rapids. Land and reconnoitre. “It’s a wolfish looking place,” says “J. N.” “Liable to swamp us. Better take the Good Vrouw in tow.”

The Good Vrouw bucks, cuts up and makes trouble for Doc, who sits back on the cable fastened to her snout as if he were tusseling with a prairie broncho at a round up.

Safe.

There goes a kingfisher. The chatterbox will like as not tell every river goddess he meets that we are coming.

“J. N.” is coining names for some islands we are passing. He is good at that—makes a practice of it. He called me a coward a while ago because I volunteered to do all the skirmishing and advance exploring during our cruise. He thinks I ought to stick more closely to the Good Vrouw.

“Coot!” (I’ll be d—d.)

“What’s the matter, Doc?”

“Po-he-pa-kis.” (Hear it.)

“Better land and let me investigate,” says I.

The rapid is a band one. The water falls about three feet into seething cauldrons. We unload the Good Vrouw and again take her in tow and get over the rapids safely.

“It’s getting more wolfish,” says “J. N.” “How about another one of them things, eh?”

“This river water aint so bad, is it? Tastes pretty good, I think.”

Catch a glimpse of a fair river goddess in the willows and listen for Pan in the reeds.

The sun is about down.

Pass a hut on the bank of the river. A dense smoke is rising from the chimney and a girl is standing in the doorway peeling onions, unmindful of our passage.

“If she has eggs to mix with the onions, she’ll have a jim dandy supper,” “J. N.” remarks.

Again Doc’s keen ears catch the sound of more turbulent waters and we land and camp just above another fearful rapid.

Eat a great big supper. Have cold fried chicken, navy beans, pickles, boiled eggs, biscuits, hot black coffee, and what not.

Doc sets out some hooks in the river. May have a blue channel cat for breakfast..

“J. N.” and I stretch our hammocks and ourselves therein, while Doc rolls himself up in the wagon sheet and lays him down to pleasant dreams, looking like some monster cocoon. There are some mosquitos, but the fleas we have brought with us are particularly annoying.

We are camped in a tall grove of young red oaks between the river and the mountains. The weird stillness of the night is not broken but emphasized and brought out by the one deep, continuous roar of the nearby rapid. Doc snores like a fat porker. “J. N.”



is chewing Star and contemplating. Now and then, from a way off up the mountain, comes the half plaintive call of the cuckoo. But the camp fire is failing.

(To be Continued.)

## Text

Alexander Posey's article, "The Cruise of the Good Vrouw: From a Diary by One of the Crew," was originally published in the *Indian Journal* on July 25, 1902 and serves as the copy-text for this edition. This article occupies a single page of the *Indian Journal* and runs slightly over two columns. The print is easy to read, and no changes have been made to the content of the piece.

## Commentary

- 185.1        Vrouw] A "vrouw" is another word for a woman or wife. See J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, eds. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 19:780.
- 185.2        Doc and J. N.] "Doc" is Doc Williams, a Muscogee man who also accompanied Posey on some of his outings recorded in "Notes Afield" which is also included in this edition; see Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 29, 122, and 123. "J. N." is John N. Thornton, who was a close friend of Posey; see Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 122-123.
- 185.5        Fink] The unidentified Edward Fink is also mentioned in "An Indian Poet's Tale of a River Trip."
- 185.13       Mastin] Mastin remains unidentified.
- 186.4        macasin] probably a dialect spelling for the snake commonly named the "water moccasin" or "cottonmouth" (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*); see Roger Conant and Joseph T. Collins, eds. *A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 228-230.

- 188.1 Star] Star was a brand of chewing tobacco; see E. E. Dale, "Journal of Alexander Lawrence Posey with Annotations," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* (XLV.4): 423, n. 27.
- 188.3 (To be Continued.)] Apparently, John N. Thornton ("J. N.") objected to the publication of the journal, and no sequel was ever published. The only other account of this journey is found in "An Indian Poet's Tale of a River Trip" (included in this edition), see Littlefield, *Alex Posey* 264.

### **The River Journal: The Barde Typescript**

Eufaula, OK., July .----Way out in the rugged Tulledega Mountains and along the winding Oktahutche (North Canadian) there is still in the Creek fullblood settlements affectionate remembrance of Alexander Posey, the Creek poet, whose untimely death by drowning in the North Canadian River marked the passing of Oklahoma's most gifted writer of verse. Though of Scotch and Creek parentage, Posey was typically Indian, both in appearance and temperament. The promise of his poetic talent was great, though he was moody and desultory in his habits of writing. From his manuscripts there has been published a single volume of verse. He loved the fullbloods of his race best of all, and spoke the Creek language with a fluency that appealed to their pride.

A journal of a June boating trip down the Oktahutche in 1901 was found recently among Posey's papers. It is fragmentary, his intention having been to elaborate his notes into sketches of outdoors. His love of nature was ardent. He was especially fond of birds and their delightful ways.

Posey called his boat Hithy Mahty, which is Creek for Good Martha. He was accompanied by a white friend named Thornton and a Creek fullblood, Doc Williams. The Oktahutche has numerous frothing rapids, and the boatmen were in frequent danger of upsetting. The region through which they passed was wild and sparsely settled. These extracts from Posey's journal are descriptive of wild life along an Oklahoma stream in the flush of summer:

"The Good Martha is sixteen feet long, four wide, and was built by Edward Fink, according to our plans. The river is high enough for good sailing, and for the first six miles we made good time. We strike the Alabama Rapids a couple of miles below the

mouth of Wewoka, and find it difficult to run them. The boat bucks and kicks up like a broncho. Thornton knocks some feathers from a bald eagle and chuckles at his marksmanship. [2]

Catch a glimpse of a river nymph as she disappears around a bend of the river. We think that Pan must be blowing on his reeds in the tall grass along the river. Pass a farmer's cabin on the brink. See a pretty country girl, but she is so busy getting supper for laborers afield that she does not see us.

We rise with the sun. Thornton goes out after squirrel, while I go in the hills after turkey and deer. Instead of either, I find the nest of a cuckoo I heard calling throughout the night, and a tarantula about the size of my hand. As soon as he saw me, the tarantula placed himself in position for combat. The tarantula wore a terra cotta jacket, black trousers, and looked as hairy as a cocoanut above his hips. The cuckoo's nest was the poorest excuse for a nest I ever saw, consisting of blackjack twigs jumbled together any way. I wondered how it was possible for such a nest to hold the two greenish eggs, which were about the size of the smallest eggs a hen sometimes lays. The cuckoo watched me from a nearby tree as I inspected its curious nest.

A mile or so below the third rapid we come to pretty country. My duty of running ahead to investigate when we hear the sound of many waters affords me many opportunities of seeing things I would otherwise miss. On a high rock I see Mr. and Mrs. Buzzard making love. The catbird heard all along the river; cuckoos only now and then. In a cottonwood grove we listen to a fierce family quarrel in the household of a flicker. His wife evidently is in high dudgeon and has the children on her side. Ask an Indian

fisherboy the distance to Eufaula. He replies that we have to wait a long time before we get there.

A tub by the river side marks where some country girl has been washing. We call her Phyllis and imagine her beautiful. On one of my lookout tours ahead of the boat, I came to a beautiful beach, inlaid with shells and pebbles, with the river lying round it in a perfect crescent at the base of a hill. In the sand I see the daintiest footprint imaginable. Phyllis has walked here. [3]

We have traveled forty miles, but are only fifteen miles from Wetumka. A short distance below the crossing, the flight of a couple of Indian boys cause us to think deer are running in the woods. A white renter on the bank seems to wonder “who the hell ar’ you’ns, an’ where the hell ar’ you’ns goin’?”

Moccasins and cotton-mouths are plentiful. A moccasin leaps from a willow over Thornton’s head, after which Thornton does a war dance. Mountains on either hand, “pointing” down to the river alternately, and at a distance looking as if dove-tailed. The banks are lined mostly with cedar. Wild ivy and grape hang gracefully from the overhanging limbs of cedar, oak, walnut, and cottonwood and sycamore, giving the woods a tropical appearance.

Hérons are flying before us all the way—now and then a duck, catbird, cardinal, downy woodpecker, flicker, crested titmouse, pileated woodpecker, crows and buzzards are plentiful. I cut a moccasin in two with my rifle.

About 2 o’clock we reach the mouth of Piney, up which we turn for half a mile, and seek a camping place in the shadow of the pines. I failed to mention the largest and most beautiful island we have yet seen. It was several miles below Dog Town. It rises up

from the middle of the river with its rounded miniature forest of willows, sycamores, etc. We named it Yahola, the name of my boy, meaning "echo," in Creek.

A turkey gobbler arouses us from our slumbers. He gobbles defiantly over toward the old Dowdy ranch. I hunt for him, but return empty handed. Hear a wolf. Wolves are more numerous in and about Tulledega than in many years.

Visit the rapids at the mouth of Piney. Doc and I climb two tall pines; see Bald Hill, Leonora Prairie, Checotah Prairie and hills along the Canadian. Doc is tickled to see pine trees for the first time in his life. In climbing up, remarks that he fears to go higher, as he might not find his way back to earth. Thornton has dinner ready when we reach camp. Doc roasts a bacon rind and eats same with much relish. [4]

Put in the afternoon reading. We have the Greek Anthology, Doyle's White Company, one copy of The Daily Kansas City Star, and the June numbers of Current Literature, World's Work, and Review of Reviews. About sundown, while Thornton and I were reading, Doc alarmedly drew my attention to one of the most perfect specimens of tarantula I ever saw. Doc was lying on the ground, and the tarantula came up nearly to Doc's head before he heard it in the dry leaves and shouted "Kut, he chas!" Thornton shot it.

There is an old bullfrog in a hole of water near us, and every evening he blows on his bass horn. The whip-poor-will makes a peculiar noise when flying after the female, that I have never heard before. He utters a hoarse caw, and at the same time audibly claps his mandibles together. This sound is made only during the courting season. The crows caw continuously in a wild, rocky gorge making out into the mountains above our camp.

I suspect there are young crows up there. Doc brings two young flickers to camp. We take them back to their home—a hole in a dead birch limb. Mother delighted.

Early rising is one of the pleasures of camp life. You can't stay abed when the wild denizens begin saluting each other in the cool of the summer morning. And there is no stretching, no yawning, no cat-napping; you get up wide awake, satisfied with your rest and rejoicing in your strength. x x x Doc has squirrel and hoe cake ready for breakfast when I return.

We are drifting on idle oars, eaves-dropping on nature. Doc calls my attention to a strange whistle way out in the mountains, and says it is the woodspirits. The old Creeks tell of Cha-cha-nah, who whips trees. He is tall, heard only at night, and seen only when the sun looks small in mist. Whoever sees him straightaway becomes a good hunter.



The copy-text for this piece is F. S. Barde's typescript for his article entitled, "An Indian Poet's Tale of a River Trip" which appeared in the *Kansas City Star* on October 3, 1915. This typescript is held in folder 71 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In publishing the article, Barde made alterations to Posey's account. For example Posey preferred to call the river in question by its Muscogee name, Oktahutche, rather than call it the North Canadian. A more significant alteration was the removal of at least two paragraphs of Posey's account. These paragraphs were deleted from Barde's version between the completion of the typescript and the publication of the article in the *Kansas City Star*. Because of these alterations this edition uses Barde's typescript rather than the published article.

### Textual Commentary

- 191.1        The words, "F. S. Barde/ Guthrie, Ok." are printed at the top left of the typescript. Each of the four page numbers are centered at the top of the page.
- 191.2        Oktahutche] In the typescript this word is spelled "Oktahutchee," but this is probably Barde's own spelling rather than Posey's. As Posey's other works indicate, he spelled the Muscogee name of this river with only one "e." All instances of this spelling have been emended.
- 191.20        built] This word is spelled "builded" in the Barde typescript, and it is probably a transcription error by Barde because while the extremely

literate Posey certainly makes spelling and typographical errors in his writing, those errors do not reflect an ignorance of basic usage.

192.9 cuckoo] Spelled “cockoo” in the transcript, this could be a transcription error by Bard. Posey, who was knowledgeable about birds probably knew the correct spelling of the name. In fact, Barde’s transcript at times includes both spellings.

### Emendations

All emendations are keyed to their corresponding page and line number.

Following the lemmatic form of indicating emendations, this edition’s reading appears to the left of the bracket and the copy text reading appears to the right. The following symbols denote textual modifications:

- < > passage deleted by the author
- ↑ ↓ authorial interlineations
- ~ portion of the copy text matching this edition’s reading
- ^ absence of an item in the copy text which is found in this edition

191.2 Oktahutche] Oktahutchee  
191.10 Oktahutche] Oktahutchee  
191.16 Oktahutche] oktahutchee  
191.20 built] builded  
192.5 blowing] blo < s > ↑ w ↓ ing  
192.9 cuckoo] cockoo

192.13	any way] anyway	
192.15	eggs] egges	ḡḡḡḡ
192.15	cuckoo] cockoo	ḡḡḡḡ
193.12	Moccasins] Mocasins	ḡḡḡḡ
193.20	cut] c < a > ↑ u ↓ t	
194.4	Wolves are] ~ ↑ are ↓	
194.15	tarantula] trantula	
194.16	Thornton] Thronton	ḡḡḡḡ
195.3	the pleasures] thepleasures	ḡḡḡḡ

#### Commentary

- 191.8 volume of verse] A reference to *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910).
- 191.14 Hithy Mahty] In Posey's own account of the trip found in "The Cruise of the Good Vrouw: From a Diary of One of the Crew," he refers to the boat as the "Good Vrouw" which means "Good Wife." It is possible that Barde mistranslated the Muscogee term "hēres mahē" (very good), which Posey might have written phonetically as "hithy mahy." As the original manuscript is lost, it is impossible to know the accuracy of Barde's transcription.
- 191.15 Thornton...Doc Williams] Doc Williams, was a Muscogee man who also accompanied Posey on some of his outings recorded in "Notes Afield" (included in this edition); see Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 29, 122, and 123. John N. Thornton was a close friend of Posey; see Littlefield, *Alex Posey*,

- 122-123.
- 191.18 Oklahoma stream] Technically, this designation is incorrect. At the time of the trip, in 1901, the stream would have been in Indian Territory.
- 191.20 Edward Fink] The unidentified Edward Fink is also mentioned in “The Cruise of the Good Vrouw: From a Diary of One of the Crew.”
- 192.5 Pan] Posey playfully includes a reference to the Greek and Roman god associated with nature and the pastoral.
- 192.22 high dudgeon] A feeling of resentment. See J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, eds. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 4:1104.
- 193.12 Moccasins and cotton-mouths] Both names refer to the poisonous snake, *Agkistrodon piscivorus*; see Roger Conant and Joseph T. Collins, eds. *A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 228-230.
- 193.22 Dog Town] This place name has not been identified, but it may refer to Senora. See Posey, *Fus Fixico Letters*, 64n6.
- 194.6-7 Bald Hill] Bald Hill was the location of Posey’s family ranch near present-day Eufaula, Oklahoma.
- 194.16 “Kut, he chas!”] “Oh, look!” See R. M. Loughridge and David M. Hodge, *English and Muskokee Dictionary* (Okmulgee: Baptist Home Mission Board Oklahoma, reprinted 1964), 153 and 142; Jack B. Martin and Margaret McKane Mauldin, *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 48 and 65.

## Notes Afield

March 7. — The wind very high, cloudy smoky sky, dust penetrating every crevice; drouthy; plowed fields having the appearance of sandbar; few birds astir in the upland woods and none sing songs except now and then, the cardinal and black-capped (chickadee) titmouse in the deep woods sheltered from the wind. The glades along the river sprinkled with bluets of the softest and tenderest blue imaginable—The strawberry well on the way but a few dead leaves at the bottom indicate that it has been on the way too early. Find a moth mullein getting the start of all other plants in the race for the favors of Spring; but, like the strawberry, only at a great cost; for I find dead leaf after leaf beneath the green ones on the rising [2] stalk. The sheltered nook in which it stands has been too favorable for its growth, and, time and again, as cold and sunny days alternated, it has put out its hairy palms only to have them bitten by the frost. Truly, hath it risen on the stepping stones of its dead self—

March 10. Hear the piping of little frogs. Elms becoming green in sheltered places. See a small white butterfly—anemonea—crocus in full bloom—also plum trees—

March 17. Wood violets abundant. Peach trees in bloom on the 8<sup>th</sup>

April 5. While Mr. Atkins and myself were rowing on Wewoka today we witnessed what we never before saw or heard of—a swamp [3] rabbit sitting shoulder-deep in water among the knarled roots of a beech tree as if that was his house. He never moved until we jammed the prow of our boat against the roots of the beech—when he hopped thro' the water to the bank and disappeared in the woods. Perhaps he was hiding from dogs or feeding on the tender bark of the beech roots.

April 6— The wind changes to the north during the night & day dawns blustering—The wind higher than any day during March. Cold—a little rain—fear for the fruit—but the wind abates a little toward noon & the sun shines out—

April 6 The most summer like day we have had. The air full [4] of summer sounds. The sky blue and cloudless. The woods full of new songs. The hillsides greening. A tinge of greenness over all the woods. The high wind of yesterday has spent itself a calm serene quiet prevails. The cows break into the rose garden to crop the tender green leaves. My buggy horses—Joaquin and Shelly—fight over the tufts of green grass I offer them. A sparrow is building a nest in the barn.

No spring rains as yet—quiet dry and dusty.

April 15. The dogwood in blossom. Red buds crimsoning all the woods. The cherry tree has pitched its snowy tent [5]

April 19. The workhand capture [sic] a ruby breasted Humming bird which flies into his room. I take it to the apple orchard and set it at liberty where it begins to suck the sweet of the apple blossoms.

April 20. A fine morning. The birds in full song—especially the Cardinal, singing as I never before heard him sing—mocking many the other singers. At first I believe I hear the Mocking bird.

April 21. A profusion of violets—white and blue. Nuthatches conspicuous. The wasps are building their nests. The largest nest yet is about the size of a half dollar. The one I saw today had three wasps on it. [6]

I was much amused by a downy woodpecker this afternoon. It flew out of a sound blackjack to the trunk of a dead one standing nearby and proceeded to make a thorough

investigation of its cavaties [sic]. Coming to a hole near the top it stopped suddenly as if a voice had warned it to look sharp out. After moment's deliberation it decided to have a peep. It approached the hole very cautiously, thrust its head in it a number of times, to make sure that there were no boogers in there, and then went in, but it [7] did not stay on there any longer than it had time to turn around and look out to see that no one was approaching to slam the door on it. Then it flew down the hillside to hold a confab with another downy exploring a dead red oak.

April 23. For some reason—probably on account of the late frosts—the dogwood blossoms are not as beautiful as they are usually. Instead of being creamy white they have a dull dusty appearance. The apple and cherry trees, however, are pleasant to look upon.

April 24. Two new voices have joined the bird choir—the robin redbreasts' and another birds' whose name I have not learned. The heat is quite oppressive. Woods, hills and valleys green [8]

May 1<sup>st</sup> Up to April 30 quail had not mated. Today, I saw Bob White and his wife by the roadside, in the same place where I saw a large covey the day before yesterday. [9]

June 26. I have just witnessed a tragedy—a struggle to the death between a black wasp and a leaf worm three times as long as the wasp—a great burly fellow. I was lying in my hammock reading when all of a sudden something fell on me out of the thick foliage above. On investigation I found a black wasp and a leaf worm struggling fiercely in the hammock—I shook them out & so separated them: but in a moment the wasp flew at the worm and fastened itself to its neck. The worm flounced, squirmed, wriggled and coiled around his antagon[10]ist heroically but to no purpose. The wasp ate into its head rapidly

and soon overcame it. When the worm ceased its struggle somewhat, the wasp fastened to it about midway of its body and gnawed out a pellet of hide & flesh. Then it flew up, circled several times around the hammock and disappeared. I wondered if it would return. Sure enough in about five minutes it came back and cut out another pellet and bore it away as the same as the first. It had made the third trip when I went to dinner. The flies, ants, nats, etc were industriously making way with the worm's carcass in [11] the wasp's absence. I supposed the wasp deposited its pellets in the cells of its nest. The wasp never used its sting during the combat.

Oct Find a tarrapen [sic] devouring a locust

Activity of ants—repairing damage—find one carrying away bodily another ant—either a bad citizen or conquered in a fight.

Dec 22 1901 Doc, Con, Horace & myself find a winchester [sic] cartridge in a rat nest under a ledge of rocks on Bald Hill with the bullet nearly eaten out & rim of shell gnawed sharp—[12] Have always noticed that scorpions & centipede crawl about most during a warm cloudy day when there is plenty of moisture in the air.

July 13 1902

The mocking bird sings now only late at night.

A fox squirrel—Two grey squirrels [...] on a birch over the creek & another on this side trying to get to them. [...] over & the three frisk together—

[13] An Hour's Walk in the Woods

A rabbit—its warm warren

Wood pecker—jay bird—now down

now up—whittling it's bill on bough—



Grey woods—here & there a green or red  
leaf—Everything hunting a living—A bird's  
nest in a briar thicket—full of little dry leaves  
Another rabbit—scampers a few yards—stops  
and sits up wide-eyed—a bush coming  
between causes him to sit further back—  
Hear a hawk—life maintains here as  
elsewhere—Rabbits patter thro' the thicket  
as I rise—Another rabbit—a big fellow  
One must bend down bushes—make way  
thru' storm dead tree tops—look  
under leaves & logs to find the secrets  
of Nature—Great wasp nests—follow n[o]  
path—Crows, "There, I told you so!"

[14] Creek Spring Flowers

The earliest spring flower—so far  
I have observed—is the Bluet (*Houstonia*)  
in Creek it would be called Ho-lot-to-che,  
Common in open woods and unplowed  
fields during February and March, the  
ground in places being over sprinkled  
with them.

## Text

Originally written between March 7, 1902 and approximately July 13, 1902, the original manuscript of “Notes Afield,” is now held in folder 23 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and serves as the copy text for this edition. A transcription of “Notes Afield” was published in the spring 1968 issue of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*. However, *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* version contains numerous errors and omits passages; therefore, it has not been used for this edition.

The manuscript of “Notes Afield” takes the form of fifteen 6 x 3 ¾-inch handwritten pages torn from a notebook. The first twelve pages are numbered from one to twelve with Arabic numerals placed at their upper right corners. Posey wrote on both sides of the pages, leaving a margin of approximately ¾ of an inch at the top of each page. While it is possible that additional pages may be missing after the twelfth, all pages before that are present. The three pages that represent the portions of the journal written after the July 13, 1902 entry are not numbered or dated. The legibility of Posey’s handwriting varies, and while the journal is relatively easy to read, some passages are challenging.

## Textual Notes

- 200.1        The title “Notes Afield” appears centered at the top of the page and is underlined twice by short lines spanning the distance between the “o” and the “A” of the title.
- 201.1        Posey makes two entries with the date of April 6<sup>th</sup>. The first of these

- appears to have originally read April 5<sup>th</sup>, but the number of the date seems to have been changed from a 5 to a 6.
- 201.1 Posey uses what appears to be a smudged plus sign to indicate the word “and” when he writes, “night & day.” An & symbol has been inserted in each instance to indicate this truncated word.
- 202.15 In the original manuscript, Posey does not complete this page. The May 1<sup>st</sup> entry is the sole entry on this page and he leaves the remaining 3½ inches of the page blank.
- 203.9-11 Posey positions two dashes, one over the other, at both the center of the line above and the line below his sole October entry.
- 203.16 July 13 1902] Posey centers this date on the page and places dashes above and below it. The dashes that span approximately the distance from the “y” to the “3.”
- 203.17 Posey ends the page after this line, leaving approximately three inches blank.
- 203.18 A new page begins with this line, but unlike the pages preceding this one, it does not contain a handwritten number at the upper right hand portion of the page.
- 203.19 Posey ends the page here, leaving the remaining ¾ inches of the page blank.
- 203.20 An Hour’s Walk in the Woods] This title is centered at the top of the page and a dash is placed beneath the “W” in “Walk.” This entry, which takes up an entire page, bears no date or page number. As this entry resembles a

poem, the original line breaks have been retained.

- 204.15 Creek Spring Flowers] This passage is contained on a half sheet of the same paper used for the rest of the “Notes Afield” journal. The lower half of the page has been neatly cut off. On the back of this page is what appears to be a shopping list. This title is centered at the top of the page and each word is underlined three times. As with the previous entry, the original line breaks have been retained because of its poetic nature.

### Emendations

All emendations correspond to the indicated page and line numbers. This edition’s reading appears to the left of the bracket; the copy text reading appears to the right.

These symbols denote textual modifications:

- < > passage deleted by the author  
↑ ↓ authorial interlineations  
~ portion of the copy text matching this edition’s reading  
^ absence of an item in the copy text which is found in this edition

- 200.4-5 black-capped (chickadee) titmouse] < tufted > ↑ black-capped (chickadee)  
↓ ~
- 200.6 bluets of] < indecipherable > < forget me nots > ↑ bluets ↓ ~
- 200.12 palms only] ~ ↑ only ↓
- 200.22 bark] < fibrous > ~
- 201.7 tender] < indecipherable > ~

- 201.23 a dead one] < another> ~
- 202.3 times,] ~ < and then went in>
- 202.4-5 but it did not stay on there] ~ <was no sooner in there it peeped out to see that no one was> ↑ did not stay on there ↓
- 202.5 there any] ~ < no > ↑ any ↓
- 202.5 longer than it had time to turn around and look out to see that no one was approaching] ↑ longer than it had time to turn around and look out to see that no one was ↓ ~
- 202.19 fell on me] ~ < in my hammock > ↑ on me ↓
- 202.20 fiercely in the hammock] ~ ↑ in the hammock ↓
- 202.21 out] ~ < of the hammock >
- 202.21 so separated] < then > ↑ so ↓ ~
- 202.22 its neck] < the > ↑ its ↓ ~
- 202.22 neck] ~ < of the worm >
- 203.2 gnawed] knawed
- 203.2 of hide & flesh] ~ < the worm's body > ↑ hide & flesh ↓
- 203.4 Sure enough in] ↑ Sure enough ↓ ~
- 203.4 about] a about
- 203.7 wasp's absence.] < wasp > ↑ wasp's ↓ ~
- 203.10 another ant] ~ < who must >
- 203.13 gnawed] knawed
- 204.11 storm] ~ < deaf? >

### Commentary

- 200.16 Mr. Atkins] This person has not been identified.
- 203.12 Bald Hill] This was the location of Posey's family ranch near present-day Eufaula, Oklahoma. "Con" refers to Posey's brother Cornelius Posey and "Horace" would be Horace Posey, another of his brothers. "Doc" probably refers to Doc Williams, a full-blood Creek who also accompanied Posey on his trip down the Oktahutche River. That trip that is partially recorded in "The Cruise of the Good Vrouw" and "An Indian Poet's Tale of a River Trip," both of which are included in this edition. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 29, 122, and 123.

## The Hains Letters

Paden, March 18, 1905.

My Dear Hains:

I went out for a stroll this morning in the low-lying hills just east of Paden in answer to the call of the wild. I said to myself as I sauntered forth, I'm tired of the gloom in a four-walled room; heart-weary, I sigh for the open sky and the solitude of the greening wood. It was a bright beautiful morning, though the night had been dark and stormy—thrust by lightning and rent by thunder. The rosy arrows of dawn were flying in the east and a wooing zephyr was blowing over the horizon from the south. On the outskirts of the town I was joined by a small bench-legged dog with a long body like a weasel. I discovered at once that he was not of low sofky or cur extraction common hereabouts, but a well-bred and good mannered canine whose company a Fifth Avenue lady might desire. He scampered along ahead of me, stopping and looking back ever and anon lest he get out of my sight. We came at length to a little brook which was up. I ran and jumped across it, landing somewhat in the mud. My strange bench-legged friend attempted to do likewise and fell in out of sight. He scrambled out dripping at every hair and looking at me as if he expected me to laugh at his plight. But I maintained my composure and he came to me wagging his tail and seeking sympathy. I patted him on the head and he—shook water all over me. When we reached the out-skirts of the town on our return, we separated as unceremoniously as we had met, he going one way and I the other. It was a pleasant and laughable incident in my morning's ramble. I have always

like a dog's company in the woods. With a dog for a guide and philosopher the sense of loneliness is dispelled and Nature brought closer. Then a dog is always sure to do something ludicrous, as my bench-legged companion did this morning, encouraging the development of the sense of humor.

This is a sort of strange land out here.



Dustin, March 21, 1905.

My Dear Hains:

I find another entry in my journal as follows: This is a strange sort of country, abounding in things out of the common. For instance, during my ramble this morning, I found a rock resembling peanut candy. The particular rock is a composition of fine-grained red sand, flinty pebbles and little shells, and after a cleansing shower looks good enough to eat. But I know of no use to which it can be put, as it is without shape and yields to pressure almost like chalk. The soil where this rock is found is also red—red to an unknown depth and discolors the streams. The natives here call it “gumbo land” and place much value upon its productive qualities. Wherever this soil has been upturned the scar remains—a fresh red wound on the landscape.

Even the trees in this far border-land appear to be of a distinctive species. They do not attain noble proportions, but are squatty and shriveled up, as if a curse had blighted them.

Cyclones are frequent here during the spring months, and a storm-hole may be found at every house in close proximity to the back door. When a black cloud appears on the horizon in the southwest every person tumbles into his burrow like a prairie dog. A hail storm blew over Paden last May and crushed it like an egg shell. The roofs of the houses were punctured and every window shattered. Chickens that did not get out from

under were killed outright. A man's arm was broken by a hailstone during the storm and a mule driven crazy. Vegetation was beaten to a pulp and the streams ran green in spite of the "gumbo." The inhabitants even now do not talk to each other five minutes without making reference to that dreadful occurrence. If one is asked when his baby was born, he will invariably answer that it was born just before or just after, as the case may be, the great hailstorm.

I shall tear out another leaf of my journal for you soon.

Your friend,

Dustin, March 22, 1905.

My Dear Hains:

Another entry in my journal runs as follows: "Spring is here. In fact, it has been here for some time; for on the second of March, while Skaggs and I were driving along near Bearden, we heard the frogs. Truthfully speaking, it was I that heard the frogs; for Skaggs, as is his wont, was humming a ragtime air and entirely oblivious. When I called his attention to the concert in the neighboring swamp, he wanted to know where the lambs were.

"It is the time to go fishing. The angle worms are bestirring themselves. When I went abroad the other morning, after a heavy shower, I found angle worms crawling around everywhere. They do that after the first spring rain. The thunder seems to jar them loose and cause them to come to the surface. It is a good sign, they'll bite! It is time to cut a dogwood switch and kick about in the trash for a rusty can.

"The elms are in full bud along Fish Creek, near Spokogee. The bluets are in bloom and the crocus is due. Wood violets are awakening and throwing off the coverlid. Already a pink atmosphere hovers about the redbud.

"Skaggs hums and drones like a burly bumblebee in a field of clover. The spell is upon him. Right here I am tempted to quote Tennyson.

“Ere long the old milch cow will hoist her tail and plunge wildly into the cool depths of the old swimming-hole.

“Every morning a new voice is heard in the forest choir.

“The blackbirds are falling like autumn leaves in the furrow behind the plowman.

“There is an old codger doing menial service at the hotel where we are stopping that knows all about angling. He can give Sir Izaak cards and spades. He recommends dough for bass and beef for catfish. But, he says, the quickest way to catch a mess of fish is to hang a dead rabbit in the water and just drip your hook down beside it. Whole schools of the finny tribe will find your bait!”

Your friend,

Dustin, March 23, 1905.

My Dear Hains:

My journal shows the following entry under the date of March 20: "Originally Dustin was known as Spokogee, and I have been curious to know why the change of the name was made. Upon inquiry I have learned that the change in the name was made to humor the whim of President Dustin of the Fort Smith and Western Railroad, who had signified a wish to have some town along the line named for him, holding out as an inducement a promise to contribute liberally to the substantial upbuilding of the town so named. Somewhat after the fashion of the women of the ancient legend who sacrificed their beautiful hair for bowstrings, Spokogee changed its poetic and musical name to Dustin for a division point on the Fort Smith and Western Railroad. But it is observed that the passenger trains of the eastern and western divisions remain overnight at Weleetka after making their daily runs. Only the local freight trains spend the night at Dustin.

"Pray, what does Dustin suggest? Common, dry, every day dust."

Speaking of Dustin recalls Hanna and Slumka. The last was founded by Tony Proctor and named for a fullblood Indian woman—the wife of Hopyoche, who is high in the councils of the Snake faction. At present, this new town is in its swaddling clothes

and consists only of a post office and a grocery store, all under one roof. Its chief claim to notice is that it is located on historic ground—the old Weogufky Square.”

“A little further on down the line is Hanna, which I suppose was named in honor of the late lamented chief of the Republican Party. The trains do not slow up at Hanna except when there is a passenger to be let off or taken aboard. Occasionally a drummer alights there and his trunks are dumped out on the ground. It requires the combined strength of the next train crew to reload the baggage, there being no trucks, skids or pulleys to be used. It is down right laughable to watch the conductor, braky, porter, newsboy, engineer and fireman getting busy.”

Your friend,

## Text

Between March 18 and March 23, 1905 Posey sent these four letters—short pieces meant for publication—to Henry Hains, the editor of the *Muskogee Democrat*. The typescripts of these four letters, serve as the copy-texts for this edition. The originals reside in folders 32, 33, 34, and 35 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. These four typescripts occupy one 8½ x 11-inch sheet of paper each.

## Textual Notes

- 213.5        invariable] This reading has been retained because it seems to be a purposeful usage rather than a spelling error.
- 217.5        abroad] This may be a misspelling of “aboard,” but as either “abroad” or “aboard” may be correct, the copy text’s reading has been retained.

## Emendations

All emendations correspond to the indicated page and line numbers. This edition’s reading appears to the left of the bracket; the copy text reading appears to the right.

These symbols denote textual modifications:

- < >    passage deleted by the author
- ↑ ↓    authorial interlineations
- ~        portion of the copy text matching this edition’s reading
- ^        absence of an item in the copy text which is found in this edition

210.10	cur] dur
210.10	common] dommon
210.11	Fifth] Firth
212.6	sheells] shells
212.11	wound] would
212.15	Cyclones] Clyclones
213.2	Dear] dear
213.3	even] evern
213.4	occurrence] occurance
214.7	neighboring] neighboring
215.4	autumn] autoun
216.7	signified] signigied
217.1	post office] postoffice

### Commentary

210.10	sofky] Sofky (also sometimes spelled “sofke,” “sofki,” or “sofkee”) is a Muscogee food made of corn cooked in lye water. See Wright, <i>Creeks and Seminoles</i> , 21. However, according to Posey’s note in his story, “Uncle Dick’s Sow,” the word “sofky” also denotes a “contemptible dog,” and it is this meaning that he employs in this passage. See Posey, <i>Chinnubbie and the Owl</i> , 54
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## **Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party [August 28, 1905 to March 30, 1906]**

### Fore-Word

Drennan C. Skaggs and myself constitute what is officially known as the "Creek Enrollment Field Party of the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes". I am clerk in charge and Creek interpreter with Skaggs acting as notary public and stenographer. Our business is to secure additional evidence in applications for enrollment, search for "lost Creeks" and conciliate the "Snakes". We were detailed for this work in October of last year; and though we have labored steadily and strenuously ever since, the end is not yet. There is more evidence to be secured, more "lost Creeks" to be found and more "Snakes" to be conciliated. This work can not be accomplished in the office of the Commission at Muskogee—"lost Creeks" do not turn up there to be identified—the "Snakes" will not be coaxed in to establish better relations with the Government—important witnesses in citizenship cases pending before the Commission can not go to Muskogee at their own expense for the purpose of testifying—the work must be done on the roadside, at the hearthside and in the cotton patch. Hence the "Creek Enrollment Field Party."

The so-called "Lost Creeks" are persons whose names appear upon the tribal rolls, but none of whom the Commission has been able to identify. These people, of course, can not be allowed to participate in the distribution of tribal property until their identity has been established and their rights as citizens determined according to law.

The "Snakes", so called because their leader, Crazy Snake, are a faction of the Creeks who are opposed to the allotment of lands in severalty and the relinquishment of tribal authority. They number several hundred and were arbitrarily allotted lands by the Commission. They have persistently ignored the work of the Commission and [2] refused

to be governed by its decrees. They wish to live in undisturbed enjoyment of their old customs and usages and rights guaranteed to them by former treaties with the Government.

Aug. 28 In the field again. Arrived in Checotah today from Muskogee on the noon “flyer” and established headquarters at the Gentry hotel. Drove out to Soda Springs in the afternoon and examined one witness, a Creek freedman whom we found at work in the hay field. The livery team was “pokey” and the dust disagreeable. Skaggs jumped over a farm fence and stole a stalk of sugar cane and extracted the juice thereof with great relish. I never before saw such an abundance of ragweeds. Wherever the sod on the prairie has been broken they have taken possession. The prettiest object I saw was a flaring red flower, uncommon in the woods at this season. Blue and yellow flowers were plentiful.

Aug. 29 Drive to Pumpkin Hill, about six miles from Checotah as the crow flies and fully twelve miles as the road runs. Examine two witnesses—a white man and a negro woman. The white man’s memory is not good as to dates, but on the contrary the negro woman remembers clearly every event that has happened in her neighborhood for a dozen years back. She refreshens her memory, she states, “wid de almynic”. If a child is born to any of her neighbors she draws a line through the date of its birth in her almanac—if any thing else happens she does the same thing. We find no pumpkins at Pumpkin Hill but bargain for a water melon. [3]

Aug. 30 Go to Hitchita, a country postoffice twelve miles west of Checotah. The wind is in our favor and we suffer little from the dust. Have a better team than we had yesterday—also a better buggy. Read the story of the “Guinea Pigs” in the American

Illustrated Magazine for September aloud to Skaggs. It is the funniest short story I have read for some time. Get the testimony of one Freeman. He tells a pathetic story of family troubles. A bright and promising son named Benjamin was accidentally killed by an elder brother while the family was en route to Indian territory from Louisiana. The elder brother has since become insane on account of the accident and is under confinement.... Get the testimony of an Indian named Loby on our return. The testimony relates to one of the "Lost Creeks" whose names appear on the tribal roll as "Lije Grayson." Loby swears he knew him simply as "Lije," and soldiered with him during the War—that he lost track of him at the close of the war and never saw him again until some time in 1895—a short time before his death. Lije for 30 years had lived among the Cherokees.

Aug. 31 From Checotah we go to Eufaula, where we had about 30 cases to investigate. Our headquarters are at the Foley Hotel. Captain Elsey is "mine host." The Captain has had his boots made by one cobbler for 30 years and never had his foot in a machine made shoe... Eufaula is rather a dull place just now, and the big credit merchants are off on their summer vacation. Eufaula's large "recording district" is being whittled up into counties by the Constitution Convention now in session in Muskogee and that is cause for much street talk. According to the new map being prepared, Eufaula and Checotah are in the same county, and there isn't room in one county for two rival towns.

[4]

Sept. 1 Do office work most of the day and interview a few Indians—lay plans for next week.

Sept. 2 Raining and weather too inclement to go afield—the usual crowd from the country absent from the streets—Take Captain Grayson's testimony in the matter of the

application for enrollment of William Chotky, a new-born Creek whose father is dead and whose mother is a "Snake", opposed to any proposition that smacks of allotment of land and loss of tribal authority. Her father, John Kelly, is high in the "Snake" council and proposes to stand by the "old treaties" at all hazards. I approached him once while he was at work in his "sofky patch" and tried to explain to him the utter uselessness of holding out against the inevitable—how the tribal governments had fallen into decay—how the country had been over-run by white people, outnumbering the Indians ten to one—how it was impossible for the United States to arrest progress in order that the Indians might enjoy undisturbed possession of their country "as long as grass grows and water flows"—and so forth and so forth. But he would have none of it, saying, "The real Indian was not consulted as to allotment of lands; if he had been consulted he would have never consented to depart from the customs and traditions of his fathers. Our tribal government was upset by a stroke of the pen, because a few cried 'Change' and because we were helpless. I call myself a real Indian; you see me here today tilling my ground, tomorrow you will find me here. The real Indian does not change and is steadfast in the [5] truth. He will not be reconciled to wrong. The government of the United States has made us solemn pledges and without our consent has no right to break them. As for us we will keep good faith." So spoke John Kelly and so he speaks today.

The growth of towns, the building of railroads, the leasing and selling of land, the clearing of forests and opening of farms, the disappearance of game and hunting grounds and all the marvelous progress of the country cannot disturb his opinion. He will not vary. He stands pat.

Sept. 3 Spent the day at home with my family

Sept. 4 Labor Day. Muskogee is gala attire. Parades—floats and speeches at Hyde Park.... Return to Eufaula at noon accompanied by my wife and children. Mrs. P and children go on out to Bald Hill.

Sept. 5 Witness the ball game between the Eufaula and Arbekas at the southern limits of Tulledega. It was the bloodiest conflict I ever witnessed. Not one player escaped unhurt. Only one ball was thrown and then the fight began. The Arbekas were driven to their goal by the Eufaulas disputing every inch of ground. The officers vainly tried to stop the fight by firing pistols in the air. Dove Coker, of the Eufaula side, was stabbed or shot above the right hip and badly injured. Before the game commenced men and women of both sides staked their hats, handkerchiefs, coats, skirts, stockings, and what not upon the issue. The game or rather battle was witnessed by about 2500 people.

Sept. 6 Fill an appointment at Coweta.

Sept. 7 Take testimony in the vicinity of Lenna. [6]

Sept. 8 Investigate cases around Burney. Eat our lunch at an Indian cabin on Deep Fork where there is no one at home. Share our lunch with the chickens, cats and dogs.

Sept. 9 Go back to Eufaula and thence home with my family to spend Sunday.

Sept. 10 Return to Eufaula on night train.

Sept. 11 Drive to vicinity of West Eufaula church—wrestle with Tom Pologee, a blind Snake Indian, on the enrollment of his daughter's children and fail of my purpose. The blind will not be led. Other Snakes I find "come across", as the saying goes.

Sept. 12 Go to Artussee—take dinner with my uncle, Johnson Phillips—Indian dishes galore—chase Isaac Manley down and secure his evidence—drive to Bald Hill.

Sept. 13 Return to Artussee and thence to Mellette—come across Tom my boyhood companion and recall a few youthful pranks—Buy some “apusky” from Bob Bender’s wife—Examined Tuckabatche church record for dates—Return to Bald Hill.

Sept. 14 Visit Brush Hill and vicinity—Eat dinner with Sam Logan, town king of Arbeka Deep Fork—Skaggs and my brother John say nice things to Susie Island, a pretty Indian girl—Ask a negro to direct us to Thorn Ridge and receive following directions: “Jes take dat [7] mainest road an’ go till you see a clump o’ trees wid glitterin’ leaves—dats de place.” We discover that the trees “wid glitterin’ leaves” are silver maples. Get testimony at Thorn Ridge and return to Bald Hill by way of Burney.

Sept. 15 Visit Burney, New Burney and Brush Hill—Get March Thompson’s testimony—find him barbequing beef to feed his renters. March is a prosperous Creek, but he never has much to eat and his hospitality is of the mustard seed variety. Once he hired some men to work in the hay field. When he called them to dinner his wife informed him that he had provided nothing to eat. Whereupon March picked up a stick and killed a hen and throwing the dead hen at his wife’s feet said, “Aint this something to eat?” His wife cast the dead hen to the hogs saying it could not be cooked without lard. March then took the workmen to the orchard and told them to help themselves to the apples. At supper time there was still nothing to eat and the workmen adjourned to a neighbor’s house to satisfy the inner man. While they were eating someone down the road was heard whistling and presently March came in sight. Riding up he dismounted and soon joined his hungry haymakers in their good fortune.

Sept. 16 Return to Eufaula and from there go home to spend Sunday. [8]

Sept. 17 At home—Read Thoreau's "Journal" in the Atlantic Monthly—Am amused at an entry made in February saying, "I have gone this far into the winter without putting on drawers" or words to that amount. Some days after he writes of being confined to his cabin by bronchitis!

Sept. 18 Return to Eufaula—Skaggs and I do office work, Skaggs transcribing his notes and I making reports in our cases investigated.

Sept. 19 Not yet done with office work—Take Charley Gibson's testimony about his uncle John Leacher—Charley talks like he writes his "Rifle Shots."

Sept. 20 More office work.

Sept. 21 Go to Mellette and Flat Rock—Take a "snap shot" at some farmers making sorghum—they promise me a jug full of sorghum in return for the picture when it is finished—Turn in for the night at Bald Hill, my mother's place.

Sept. 22 Go to Lenna. Stidham and Brush Hill and thence back to Eufaula—Take dinner with Roley McIntosh, who is in truth a noble red man—welcome and hospitality under his roof—the most intelligent fullblood Indian I have ever known—lives like the old southern gentleman—has held nearly every office within the gift of the Creek people and gives good account of himself.

Sept. 23 Remain in town—Saturday is market day and the whole countryside flocks to town—Investigate several cases. [9]

Sept. 24 Spend a quiet Sunday at home—Read more of Thoreau's Journal—Mrs. Hall, of Henryetta, is our guest.

Sept. 25 Return to Eufaula and take up my work—stay in—Charley Gibson testifies again—After supper Dr. Buford and I visit old Man Seorcy and listen to his

talking machine—Dr. Buford always did remind me of Doctor Goldsmith—is just such another character except he is not a poet—He looks like Goldsmith, acts like him and is no better off in the goods of this world.

Sept. 26 Do office work.

Sept. 27 Go to Brush Hill and Burney by way of Fame—Beautiful weather—Autumn leaves falling—Get off the main highway at Ewing's place and while seeking our bearings discover a fine spring of water—the whole neighborhood uses it—Cross the North Canadian at the Rock Ford—I prefer the Creek name Oktahutche to North Canadian—The river falls over a stone bottom at Rock Ford and its roar can be heard afar off—In the olden days the Indians used to poison fish here, and on such occasions the people gathered in great numbers from the country round about to participate in the sports. Brush Hill is a country post office, consisting of one stone building and school house which is also used as a place of worship and other public gatherings—The school house is packed with pupils, mostly white with a sprinkling of Indian children—A big, overgrown fullblood boy sitting by an open window gives us the “highball” as we place, displaying a fine set of teeth like Roosevelt—A little farther on we pass a negro school swarming with young Africa... Secure some testimony in the hay [10] field. Drive to Widow Lerblance's place for dinner but find no one about the house.

Then we go on to Chitto Harjo's place—The famous leader of the Snake Faction welcomes us rather coldly and says he has not been in good health for sometime—The only two chairs on the place are placed at our disposal—Chitto sits down in the doorway of his 10 x 12 log cabin and learning the purpose of my visit—to get his testimony—proceeds to express himself fully and forcibly upon the whole Indian question. Among



other things he says, "I shall never hold up my right arm and swear that I take my allotment land in good faith—not while water flows and grass grows. God in yon bright firmament is my witness."... Meantime the women are busy setting the table out in the yard under a tree; but Chitto does not ask us to break bread with him, and we drive away hungry... In Deep Fork bottom we meet an Indian woman who gives us the information we sought to obtain [11] from Chitto—On our way to Bald Hill, just as we are driving down to the North Canadian, Skaggs recklessly strikes a stump and breaks one of the brace rods on the tongue of the buggy. After considerable hammering and wrapping we repair the injured vehicle and proceeded on our journey.

Sept. 28 Drive to Uncle Joe Hutton's away up in the blue folds of Tulledega—Uncle Joe is quite an old character—Eat our lunch near the Hermit's Cave on the head of Shell Creek—return to Eufaula by way of Kialipee.

Sept. 29 Our work at Eufaula is finished—except two cases—do office work.

Sept. 30 Drive out to Okfusky—Skaggs discovers a curious ear of corn at Jackson Lewis'—unlike the ordinary ear of corn each grain on this one is covered with shuck, reminding one of lemon drops wrapped with tissue paper—Lewis explains that it is a freak flint corn.

Oct. 1 Spend Sunday with family at Muskogee.

Oct. 2 Return to Eufaula—a rainy day—do office work.

Oct. 3 Leave Eufaula for Dustin—Miss connection at Crowder City, a very dead town with very beautiful scenery.

Oct. 4 Arrive in Dustin—make out our expense accounts.

Oct. 5 & 6 Go to Cumming: —thence to Arussee—back to Dustin by way of Hanna.

Oct. 7 Take testimony in Weogufla—Eat dinner at Barney Green's.

Oct. 8 Spend Sunday in Dustin—read.

Oct. 9 Drive out to the old Watson place—return to town for dinner—then drive to Barney Green's—Mr. Simmons [12] accompanies us—Get G's testimony about Charles Jones who died on the road side while returning from Council—G. keeps a record on the deaths of his townsmen—

Oct. 10 Go to Hickory Ground—investigate eight cases. The day very cool—eat lunch in the woods—Skaggs bombards a covey of quail without results—Visit Yadeka Harjo, who is blind and very old—thinks he may be a hundred years old—came here from the "Old country"—an advocate of the Simple life—doesn't care for U. S. citizenship.

Oct. 11 Back in Hickory Ground—Tom Thompson testifies. Tom a fine specimen of Creek manhood—looks like the Indian you see in pictures—Pass a mixed school of white and Indian children—[Cuxom Bland] teacher—

Oct. 12 Office work.

Oct. 13 Ditto.

Oct. 14 Go home—miss connection at Crowder City—Vivacious Indian girl—stuffed rattlers—Missouri hotel—see monkey circus—reach Muskogee too late for Ringling Bros.

Oct. 15 Spend day at home—rested. Martin and May Della our guests—also brother John. Skaggs and John take girls driving and Mrs. P. and children and myself go to Hyde Park.

Oct. 17 Return to Dustin—Uncle Ned returns to Bald Hill—May Della returned home last night.

Oct. 16 Spend day at home and office.

Oct. 18 Go to Okemah—guest of Col. Davis—the Col. [13] a prince of good fellow.

Oct. 19 Establish headquarters at Broadway Hotel—have the finest room in the house—Drive out to Nocus Halahtas—

Oct. 20 Stay in town.

Oct. 21 Ditto.

Oct. 22 Skaggs and Col. Dew go to Durant ranch horseback. I stay and take dinner with my cousin John Phillips—read and write—go driving.

Oct. 23 Drive to Okfusky with Col. Dew—Eat dinner at Mann Warren's—The grave horses at Cinda's big as box shacks—

Oct. 24 Go to Morse—sloppery, slippery roads.

Oct. 25 Drive to Greenleaf and Castle.

Oct. 26 Drive to Okfusky—a long hard drive and marshy roads—Visit Chfolop Harjo, whom the white people call “Joe Phillip,” being unable to pronounce his Christian name—Thus Indian names are corrupted—Chattanooga, for instance, is a corruption of the Creek word Chubo-nook-kee, meaning “sick rock”—Chofolop Harjo is much interested in statehood but is ignorant of the plans of politicians—thinks the Chief ought

to enlighten his people on the subject in order that they may act intelligently when the matter of statehood is left to a vote of the people—What a pity that there is no newspaper published in the Creek language for the benefit of the fullbloods! The lack of such a paper has been the cause of all the misunderstandings between government and ward.

[14]

Oct. 27 Investigate a land contest case near Morse—Visit Cindy, the thriftiest Indian woman known hereabouts—She is about 50 and was never married and is as chaste as a Vestal virgin—Many a doughty warrior has sought her hand in vain—She has been beautiful and is still good looking—A sound, sensible and business-like woman—has plenty and her credit in Okemah is as good as gold—Her house, which is on Buckeye Creek, is a quaint place—Instead of building a house of many rooms she has built some half a dozen hewed log cabins of varying architectural designs—The kitchen and dinning room are under one roof, but separated by a wide hall or “entry”—The roof sweeps down over the long porch, which is fenced in from the pigs, chickens and softy dogs by pickets—Her own house is a trim log structure with a stone chimney—A duplicate of this house standing near is her servants’ quarter—then there is the smoke house, chicken house, plunder house, barn, hay shed, wagon shed, carriage shed (for Cindy rides in a carriage), well house, and what not. There is a fine orchard and garden, and up and down Buckeye lies a twenty-acre farm white with cotton and yellow with corn—“I made this place myself”, she says, “with a man’s help.” There is a grave yard near by where a number of her relatives are buried. Over their [15] graves she has had erected veritable houses, besides which the common Indian grave house would pale into insignificance. The house over her mother’s (Kinta) grave is big enough to live comfortably in—Cindy

began making her own way in the world at 15 and is certainly a notable example of what a persevering woman can do—Everywhere about her home there are signs of thrift and evidence of prosperity.

1906

March 7 Bob White and his wife have gone to housekeeping—saw them busy about their domestic affairs in the woods along Cusseta Creek, south of Okmulgee—

March 8 Visit New Church—a meeting in progress—only fullbloods in attendance—sit in buggy and listen to Creek songs—some good voices—a beautiful spring day—farmers busy plowing.

March 12 In Henryetta.

March 13 Drive out to Kate Watson's, thence to Jacksie's (Osa Harjo) Jacksie has many dogs—

March 15 Go to Hickory Ground—eat one lunch at home of Jinalee & share it with children—how the little fullbloods enjoy the cake and pie! Do a good work at Yadeka's—

March 16 Visit Tom Thompson in his box house on black prairie.

March 18 Visit John Freeman in his box house in the woods.

March 20 Drive to Africa—Sunny boy has store and several wives—Africa a secluded place.

March 22 Visit George Tiger and [L??sey] West.

March 24 Drive out to Thomas' Butter cups in bloom

March 27 Visit Amos McIntosh at Piney Hollow—good dinner—relics—the Texas Creek tells of his people in Texas, still make jars and baskets—Amos talks about

his missionary work—bones of [Dove Kelly] dug up & [two nickles found]—springs—  
scenery—game—wild life— [16]

March 28 Secure testimony of Katie Watson relative to death of her grandmother  
Tegomhoke—Remove headquarters to Wetumka—

March 29 Visit Saheche—get her testimony relative to death of Doche or Toche  
who was reputed to be the best dancer and handsomest woman ever known among the  
Alabamas—John Baker testifying about her once said “she was a magnificent woman!”

The deserted cabin of Joe Larney—the new grave and a bundle of clothes in grave  
house.

March 30 Visit Sarty Come, council member—Sarty’s cabin is perched upon a  
high hill overlooking valley of Oktahutake—Jon [indecipherable] gives testimony about  
his deceased sister Lillie—Drive back to town for dinner—Then visit Hagie Green and  
secure his wife’s testimony about her child Barney—Nancy, a three year old girl playing  
in chimney corner outside falls asleep—the picture touches my heart, as she lies there  
thinly dressed and bare footed—She cries when awakened—no doubt she is sick. I give  
her four pennies—

Go to Iatkis Harjo’s—my heart touched again—Tomoche, a young fullblood lies  
dying of consumption in a tent in the yard—no room in cabin which is not more than 8 x  
10—calls me to his bedside and inquires if his child will be enrolled—he cannot live  
many days.

Encompassing Posey's life as a fieldworker for the Dawes Commission from August 28, 1905 to March 30, 1906, the original manuscript of Posey's "Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party" is held in folder 38 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This manuscript serves as the copy text for this edition. A transcription of this journal was first published without the knowledge of Minnie Posey by Edward Everett Dale and Jesse Lee Rader in their 1930 collection, *Readings in Oklahoma History*. Decades later, Dale would again publish a transcription of this journal, this time in the spring 1968 issue of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*. However, both of these transcriptions contain numerous textual errors; therefore, neither have been used for this edition.

The manuscript of Posey's "Journal of the Creek Enrollment Field Party" takes the form of sixteen 7 ½ x 9 ½-inch handwritten pages torn from a lined journal. The journal pages are printed with large blue Arabic numerals in the upper left (for even numbers) and right (for odd numbers) margins of the pages. These numerals run from one through sixteen and no pages appear missing. Posey wrote on both sides of the pages, leaving a margin of approximately one inch at the top of each page. The dates of the entries are indicated in the left margin of each page. The dates are listed neatly in a column with all other writing confined to a one-inch margin. The legibility of Posey's handwriting varies, and while the journal is for the most part relatively easy to read, some words, especially at the end of the journal, are indecipherable.

### Textual Notes

- 220.1 Fore-word] This text is centered at the top of the page and underlined twice in an ornamental fashion from the “e” to the “W.”
- 221.3 Another ornament, similar to the one mentioned above, is centered on the page and divides Posey’s preface from the August 28 entry.
- 223.17 faith.”.] Posey includes the extra period.
- 224.1 Muskogee is gala attire] Probably a typo for “Muskogee in gala attire.”
- 227.15 place] This may be a typographical error for “pass.”
- 229.6-8 accompanies us...keeps] These are the only lines in the journal that Posey writes using the whole line on the paper, including the left most margin.
- 229.20-21 too for Ringling Bros.] Possibly a typographical error for “too late for Ringling Bros.”
- 230.4 Posey wrote a “7” over the “6” he had written. He does not reconcile the inversion of the date entries for October 16 and 17.
- 230.18 “ [.] Here Posey uses hash marks to indicate the words from above, “Drive to.”
- 232.6 There is a large “x” in the left margin between the words “March 7” and “March 8.” This “x” does not cross anything out.
- 232.16 Visit John Freeman] Drawing on the entry preceding it, Posey uses hash marks to indicate the following words in this sentence: “Visit” and “in his box house.”
- 232.20 Butter cups in bloom] With a diagonal line drawn over it, this passage written diagonally in the space above the entry for March 27 and it



probably belongs to that date.

### Emendations

All emendations correspond to the indicated page and line numbers. This edition's reading appears to the left of the bracket; the copy text reading appears to the right.

These symbols denote textual modifications:

- < > passage deleted by the author
- ↑ ↓ authorial interlineations
- ~ portion of the copy text matching this edition's reading
- ^ absence of an item in the copy text which is found in this edition

- 221.9 prairie] pairie
- 221.14 memory is] ~ ↑ is ↓
- 221.17 date of its birth] ~ ↑ of its birth ↓
- 223.11 consulted] < a party to > ~
- 223.11 allotment] < what he desired > ~
- 223.12 the customs] < his old > ↑ the ↓ ~
- 223.15 you] < and > ~
- 223.15 tomorrow] < and > ~
- 223.15 here] ~ < in the same place >
- 223.19 growth] < marvelous? > ~
- 223.19 his opinion] < have no effect upon > ↑ and all the marvelous progress of  
the country cannot disturb ↓ ~
- 223.21 his opinion] ~ < whatever >

- 224.7 every] < and > ~
- 224.10 stockings] < indecipherable > ~
- 224.20 led] le< a >d
- 225.15 hen and] < indecipherable > ~
- 225.21 and soon] ~ < joined shared the good fortune of his hungry haymakers >
- 226.2 entry] < indecipherable > ~
- 226.7 Sept. 19] ~ < 20 > ↑ 19 ↓
- 226.13 Go to] ~ ↑ to ↓
- 226.23 Seorcy and] ~ < listen to the tal >
- 227.15 boy] ~ < make >
- 227.23 question] < “Feeling somewhat impaired in health today” he says, “I have been sitting up here wondering what is to become of us at last. According to treaty this land was to be ours as long Had [use?] > < I can see no hope for the majority of our people. Nothing can save them except the restoration of their ↑ the ↓ rights and of which they have been robbed, but nothing will be restored as ↑ so ↓ as long had we? each member the good> < If all our leading men had that? sight/right? of our prevail? everywhere in the Creek Nation and has claimed most of our leaders. >
- 228.3 women are] ~ < were > ↑ are ↓
- 228.4 Chitto does] ~ < did > ↑ does ↓
- 228.6 sought] < had> ~
- 228.6 are driving] < were > ↑ are ↓ ~
- 228.7 breaks one] < broke > ↑ breaks ↓ ~

- 228.15 corn] ~ < this one >
- 228.16 drops wrapped] ~ < covered > ↑ wrapped ↓
- 229.20 too late] ~ ↑ late ↓
- 230.1 home] ~ < and office >
- 231.7-8 is as] ~ < chaste >
- 231.8 a vestal] < Zenobia > ~
- 231.17 plunder house,] ~ < stable >
- 232.8 good voices] < beautiful > ↑ good ↓ ~
- 232.14 children] < her > ~
- 233.8 grave] ~ < indecipherable >
- 233.8 bundle of clothes] ↑ bundle of ↓ ~

### Commentary

- 220.2 Drennan] A misspelling of Drennen C. Skaggs's first name. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 193.
- 221.5 "flyer"] This probably refers to the passenger train called the Katy Flyer.
- 221.22-222.1 the story of the "Guinea Pigs"] This would be Ellis Parker Butler's tale, "Pigs is Pigs." See *American Illustrated Magazine*, September 1905, 496-502.
- 222.16 Constitution Convention] This is a reference to the 1905 "Sequoyah Convention," for which Posey was the Secretary. The purpose of this convention was to promote the separate statehood of Indian Territory and to draft a constitution for the proposed state. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*,

- 213-217.
- 222.23 Grayson's testimony] George W. Grayson was a Muscogee statesman and a friend of Posey's. See Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 346, 362; Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 113, 148-149, 152.
- 224.4 ball game] Muscogee towns play a violent game that requires players to move a ball to their opponent's goal using long rackets. This game is much more than a diversion; it carries important political and social implications. See *Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri*, 31-35; Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 25-26; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 37-38;
- 225.2 "apusky"] Apusky or "apvske" is a Muscogee drink made from corn and sugar. See Innes, Alexander, and Tilkens, *Beginning Creek*, 189-190.
- 226.7 Charley Gibson... "Rifle Shots"] Charles Gibson was a Muscogee writer who regularly contributed short articles, which were sometimes titled "Gibson's Rifle Shots," to the *Indian Journal*. Gibson's articles often related Muscogee oral traditions or made comments about Indian Territory political issues. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 185.
- 227.1 talking machine] This is a reference to a phonograph, possibly one made by the Victor Talking Machine Company.
- 227.15 "highball"] A railroad signal indicating that the track is clear and it is safe to proceed at full speed. See J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, eds. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 7:223.
- 231.14 sofky dogs] Posey often refers to feral dogs as "sofkies." In a footnote fro

his story, "Uncle Dick's Sow," he explains it this way: "Sofky is a Creek word and stands for a very delectable dish; but it has been corrupted by the white man and is made to denote a contemptible dog. Therefore, the sofkyes mentioned in the above story are puppy [sic], whelp and hound and curs of a low degree." See Posey, *Chinnubbie and the Owl*, 54.

- 231.22 Indian grave house] Traditionally, Muscogees would place structures resembling small houses over their graves.
- 232.5 Bob White and his wife] Posey is commenting on the bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*).
- 232.22 relics] Posey collected and sold Muscogee artifacts. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 43-45.

### **Lost to His Tribe for Many Years**

A lost Creek searching party of the Dawes Commission discovered some time ago in the flint hills of eastern Cherokee nation an old Creek Indian who had separated from his tribe back in Alabama and who has resided among the Cherokees as one of them for over sixty years. His name is Is-chas Harjo, but among the Cherokees he is known as Old Creek Beaver, a slight corruption of his Creek name which in English means Crazy Beaver. That he is an interesting character is disclosed by his own testimony, which was taken by the government representative for the purpose of identification.

“What is your name?” he was asked.

“Is-chas Harjo, if I lived in my own country,” he answered, “But among my Cherokee brethren I am called Old Creek Beaver.”

In reply to the question, “How old are you?” he replied, “I have passed through many days and traveled a long way. The shadows have fallen all about and I can not [sic] look far into the dim light, but my mind is clear and my memory has not failed me. I cannot count the years I have lived; I only know that I was old enough to draw the bow and go hunting at the time of the second emigration of the Creeks and Cherokees from the Old Country under the leadership of Chief Cooweescoowee. I was born near Eufaula, in Alabama, and left there when the peaches were green and arrived in this country when the wild onions were plentiful.”

“What is your postoffice [sic] address?” the government representative then asked him.

“Bunch,” replied the old Indian, “but the mail that has come to me through that office has not been of a kind to please a true Indian who loves the land and the

institutions of his fathers. The mail I have received have been official communications from the white men telling me to give up free woods and open ranges and accept a piece of ground hedged about by slabs of stone to show the extent of my dominion. I have never accepted an allotment of land for myself, nor do I ever intend to do so. I am opposed to the allotment of land among the Indians. If my name appears upon any tribal roll of the Creeks or Cherokees and for that reason I am to be given an allotment of land, I want it stricken from the roll.

Then turning to the Creek interpreter, Is-chas Harjo said, "I have lived in the hollow of these hills and by these running waters since the time I established a home for myself, and you are the first Creek speaking stranger that has visited me on my own premises. Had we met out in the woods I would have spoken in Cherokee to you and you would not have known that you had met a man of your own tribe."

## Text

Posey published "Lost to His Tribe for Many Years," in the May 15, 1908 issue of *Indian Journal*. This short piece is positioned on the front page of the newspaper and occupies less than two columns. The type is clear, and only a few emendations have been made to standardize the text.

## Emendations

All emendations correspond to the indicated page and line numbers. This edition's reading appears to the left of the bracket; the copy text reading appears to the right.

These symbols denote textual modifications:

- < > passage deleted by the author
- ↑ ↓ authorial interlineations
- ~ portion of the copy text matching this edition's reading
- ^ absence of an item in the copy text which is found in this edition

## Commentary

- 242.1 Bunch] The town of Bunch, Oklahoma is approximately twenty miles north of Sallisaw, Oklahoma.



*ALEX POSEY, THE CREEK INDIAN POET*

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THE POEMS  
OF  
Alexander Lawrence  
Posey

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED  
BY  
MRS. MINNIE H. POSEY

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WITH A MEMOIR  
BY  
WILLIAM ELSEY CONNELLEY  
Author of "Wyandot Folk-Lore," "The Ingalls Memorial Volume,"  
"Quantrill and the Border Wars," etc.

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CRANE & COMPANY, PRINTERS  
TOPEKA, KANSAS  
1910

Original title page for the 1910 edition of Posey's poems.

## The Poems: An Introduction

If it were not for the efforts of Posey's wife, Minnie, we would not have most of his manuscripts available today, and ironically, we would also not be left with a sometimes problematic series of texts to draw from. By January 1910, Minnie Posey was worried. Less than two years after her husband's tragic drowning, his literary legacy had already started to fade. Most of Posey's work—despite its popularity during his lifetime—remained either unpublished or lay yellowing in old issues of Indian Territory newspapers. She knew that her husband's writing risked falling into obscurity, so she developed a plan to publish what he had left behind. First on Minnie's list was a book of poetry. She wrote that “the title of the book is, ‘Song of the Oktahutche, and Other Poems’ ...As soon as this book is out I will take steps to get the “Fus Fixico” Letters, out. There is [sic] also many legends and stories—field notes & journals that would make an interesting volume.”<sup>1</sup>

After selecting one hundred and five of her husband's poems, works she thought “very pretty,”<sup>2</sup> Minnie submitted the manuscript to three of the major publishers of the day: Houghton Mifflin, Scribners, and McClurg. She could realistically court the best publishing houses. After all, Alexander Posey had been more than just locally famous. At the height of his notoriety reprints of his poems and satirical Fus Fixico Letters—along with articles about the talented Muscogee (Creek) writer and newspaper editor himself—

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<sup>1</sup> Minnie H. Posey to F. S. Barde, January 29, 1910, Frederick S. Barde Collection, Archives and Manuscripts Division—Oklahoma Historical Society.

<sup>2</sup> Minnie H. Posey to F. S. Barde, February 3, 1910, Frederick S. Barde Collection, Archives and Manuscripts Division—Oklahoma Historical Society.

appeared in such newspapers and magazines as the *Kansas City Star*, the *Criterion*, the *St. Louis Republic*, the *Kansas City Times*, the *New York Evening Sun*, the *Red Man*, the *Kansas City Journal*, the *Indian's Friend*, the *New York Herald*, the *Philadelphia Press*, the *Boston Transcript*, the *New York Times*, and several other national publications (Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *Alex Posey*, 118, 183-185). Newspapers in such faraway locales as New York and Philadelphia asked Posey for regular contributions. He was even invited to participate in a lecture tour of American Indian figures (184). Regardless, each publisher rejected Minnie's manuscript.

Minnie blamed herself for this failure and bemoaned her lack of expertise in the matter: "I have had no assistance in preparing or collecting the poems and I feel so incompetent."<sup>3</sup> However, William E. Connelley—a former director of the Kansas State Historical Society—soon stepped forward to help her secure a publisher. Later that year a Topeka, Kansas publisher, Crane and Company, released a handsome red volume entitled, *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*. The book included all of the poems Minnie had originally selected and also contained a lengthy biographical essay penned by Connelley. Minnie's original title for the book had apparently fallen by the wayside, but she had at least accomplished her dream of publishing a book of her husband's poems. Posey's death had left Minnie in a bleak financial situation, and in addition to her motive of preserving her husband's writing, she hoped to use the proceeds from the book to help provide for her two children, Yohola and Wynema. Unfortunately, sales were poor.

"They were so bad," Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., writes, "that the publisher ultimately destroyed the stock of books and plates and returned the copyright to Minnie" (264). The

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

disappointment was too much. Minnie tabled her plans to publish her husband's other works and went to work teaching at a variety of government operated Indian schools, scraping by and raising her two children. Though no one wanted to publish a book length version of Posey's work, over the years, unscrupulous archivists, newspapermen, and scholars repeatedly victimized Minnie, absconding with manuscripts, family heirlooms, and Posey's collection of Muscogee artifacts.

However, while her intentions in protecting and promoting her husband's poetry were admirable, she also shares a large degree of guilt in corrupting Posey's published work. Her 1910 edition of his poetry actually did more harm than good to his literary reputation. In a letter bemoaning the trouble of finding a publisher that would accept the poetry manuscript, Minnie betrays the problematic nature of her collection: "of course I have not attempted any changes or made any corrections. Mr. Posey was very modest & placed little value on any thing that he wrote. Many of the little verses that to me are very pretty—I am sure he would not have consented to their being included in a volume."<sup>4</sup> Thus, Minnie selected only those poems she personally liked, those she found "pretty," omitting scores of his other, and often better, verse.

Even more damning, despite her claim that "I have not attempted any changes," Minnie did indeed alter a number of her husband's poems. She sometimes selected older versions that Posey had since revised, introduced transcription errors, and in some cases even purposely altered poems to her liking. Changes to Posey's manuscripts in Minnie's handwriting prove she sometimes supplied new titles, cut poems in two (for example, cutting "Distant Music" into two "new" poems) and even at times rearranged stanzas.

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<sup>4</sup> Minnie H. Posey to F. S. Barde, February 3, 1910, Frederick S. Barde Collection, Archives and Manuscripts Division—Oklahoma Historical Society.



Wynema and Minnie Posey, 1910. From Minnie H. Posey, comp. *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey* (Topeka: Crane, 1910).

Her reasons for these changes probably originate from an ill-perceived desire to improve the poems—at least in her own eyes. Other changes may stem from her dislike of Posey's religious skepticism and perhaps represent an urge to censor the atheistic Posey's questioning of organized religion, especially Christianity. Following Posey's death Minnie fought against accusations that her husband was an atheist despite the strong evidence to the contrary found in his eulogy to D. N. McIntosh and his open admiration of religious skeptics.<sup>5</sup> Minnie's wish to cover up her husband's ideas on religion may also explain why a large section of an earlier poetry ledger of Posey's is missing several pages. Perhaps those works displayed beliefs she found unacceptable.

The key to Posey's best poetry, along with the complicated political and cultural views that often inform that work, resides in how his traditional Muscogee upbringing merged with his exposure to an uncommonly advanced education for a Muscogee of his time. This unique amalgam of influence (a mixture not to be confused with biculturalism) first found its way into his poetry. An examination of how Posey developed as a poet brings to light this complex melding and molding of influences, and reveals a rich and often perplexing poetic voice.

The earliest of Posey's poems originate from his days as a student at Bacone Indian University where his education allowed him access to a library, a printing press, and supportive teachers. On June 11, 1890, at the end his first year at Bacone, Posey's favorite teacher, Miss Anna Lewis, presented him with a copy of C. M. Kirtland's *Language and Poetry of Flowers* (1884). This book remains in Posey's personal library, held at Bacone College, and on page forty-eight (in the Narcissus section) appears what is

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<sup>5</sup> For Posey's uncensored thoughts on religion see Posey, "Col. McIntosh: A Few Words to His Memory," *Chinnubie and the Owl*, 92-94. Also see Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 252-253.

perhaps Posey's first extant poem, an early draft of his sonnet, "Narcissus." Another early example of his poetry is found in folder 77 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. This early example of Posey's verse is an untitled valentine poem beginning with the line: "Take my valentine and be" and ends with an unexpected punch line that proves Posey already had the makings of a humorist well before he began to write in earnest.

Posey worked at both the library and on the university's newspaper, the *B. I. U. Instructor*. He had worked on a newspaper before, helping to edit the *Eufaula Indian Journal* (Littlefield 38), but his work on the *B. I. U. Instructor* seemed to coincide with his first experiments as a writer. Only one complete copy of this newspaper exists from Posey's time with the publication, but thanks to Minnie who kept a variety of undated clippings in her scrapbooks, we have early works that demonstrate he did more than just set type and write short articles for the paper. He also submitted several poems and short stories, at times even printing pamphlets of his work in the characteristic type of the *B. I. U. Instructor* press. It seems Posey instantly sought publication for his work and took great pains to present himself as a publishing writer from about 1892 on.

Posey signed his earliest poems as A. L. Posey, but he soon did something that would become common in his later work: he took on a thinly veiled pseudonym that also appeared to become a literary persona. From about 1893 Posey signed most of his writing (other than the Fus Fixico letters and his orations) as "Chinnubbie Harjo." It was at about this time that he wrote at least four short stories about a mischievous trickster figure of the same name. Posey apparently took the mask of a trickster poet, a persona he would refine later on as Fus Fixico. Poems such as "The Warrior's Dream," "The Red Man's

THE B. I. U. INSTRUCTOR.

<p>INDIAN LEGENDS. THE WARRIOR'S DREAM. By A. L. POSEY.</p>	<p>'Twas vain to hope, 'twas vain to pray, In manhood's prime my head was gray.</p>	<p>The dazzling domes of crystal mountains rose Unknown to savage winds and Winter's foes,</p>	<p>W OF A YO</p>
<p>Wounded on the battle-field I lay, Neglected there and cast away; By arrows pierced, no friend to see; Alone in solitude and agony: Without a hope to comfort me, Save my anxious hopes of eternity. Left to treach'rous chance and fate, To die and knock at Hell's or Heaven's gate.</p>	<p>Denied by springs, rivers and rain, And even dew, I thirst in pain, No food was nigh to tempt my eyes, Save flesh that wolves and vultures prize.</p>	<p>There leap'd the roe and laugh'd the warrior bold, There blush'd the rose tho' endless ages roll'd. And circumfused in various tints of gold, Did ballad-kings their tuneful lyres hold.</p>	<p>TUR HA FU ST</p>
<p>Around me heaped the decomposing dead, And horrors filled my dreams with dread. The solemn form of melancholy stood Or lurk'd about to bathe its feet in blood.</p>	<p>How strange is human destiny! What miseries pay existence's fee! This truth did rack and haunt my brain Till I no longer wished for life again, And wonder'd how in want and pain I lived while counted with the slain.</p>	<p>No days there were nor sable nights; No weeks, no months, nor yearly flights; No sleep, no death, no ill nor pains; No want, nor woe that Earth contains.</p>	<p>J. P PH GAL TH</p>
<p>The silent braves lay lifeless side by side, With them my nation's hope of conquest died— Pluck'd as a bloom in Summer's prime, And doomed to fall long ere its time. Their locks uncrowned by Winter's ago— The glossy prize of manhood's stage, Stream'd in the sighing zephyr's breath, As if no orbless gloom infested death.</p>	<p>'Tis strange I thought, but lo, I found, The Water-god had coiled around To shield me from fatigue and harm: I reached to him my quivering arm And begged for death or liberty— For life or in the tomb to be. Of his presence I was scarce aware, When I was lifted mountain heights in air.</p>	<p>When rosy morn again had beamed Its orient light I thus had dreamed, And this foretold my future fall: The ocean's brood did my home enthrall, And hurried my youthful bloom To death and dark eternal gloom. My dream of Heaven's paradise, Forbade my land and warriors rise. My wilds, the soil that gave me birth— My woes and grief the world might girth, Or reach to stars my dream hath seen,</p>	<p>JOS MI CI Att y Pron to</p>
<p>As if the queen of futurs hopes was nigh, But sleep had seal'd each warrior's eye, The avenger's key had lock'd their tomb— Thus back to earth—their mother's womb. Eternal silence paused and all was still, And not a note or sound the woods did fill, As the sinking beams of day declined The western waves and heights behind.</p>	<p>Yet my thoughts and happy feelings had, And I tho' marv'ling much was glad. My wish was answered, as I asked— My soul by pain no longer tasked; Could think and see and loudly talk, And move at will and proudly walk. I saw below my place of woe And sombre mountains wrapped in snow.</p>	<p>Beyond the fiery Sun that rolls between, What woes infect a nation's path! Whose end is tears though born to laugh! This dream inscribed my epitaph!</p>	<p>office SUE I \$1.50 Every</p>
<p>The silver queen of night drew back the blinds Of the eastern void and kiss'd the mournful pines. What grandeurs smiled, what beautiful scenes! But lo, on yonder corpse the savage tiger gleams, And curls his ruthless lips in scorn.</p>	<p>The mangled dead were dim to view, As I passed the azure heavens thro'. The Sun and Moon, I left behind, And came to starry worlds sublime, In which unfading summers reigned— And love and rapturous mirths unnamed. Past countless worlds and journeyed on And on to brighter worlds anon, And anchor'd safe in Heaven's harbor great; The home of peace, the soul's estate. I met the gods and praised them all.</p>	<p>The Post Office store at Muskegon is headquarters for stationery, fruits, confectionery, and notions. Prices are always to suit the times.</p>	<p>BAPT OF GEN</p>
<p><b>E THE PATTERSON MERCANTILE CO'S</b> <b>X FINE DRESS GOODS</b> <b>A LADIES' &amp; GENT'S FINE SHOES.</b> <b>M FINE CLOTHING FOR MEN &amp; BOYS.</b> <b>I TRUNKS AND VALISES.</b></p>			<p>MU</p>

A portion of Posey's poem, "The Warrior's Dream," in the June 16, 1892 issue of the *B. I. U. Instructor*. The newspaper's unique typeface is also found on several of Minnie Posey's scrapbook clippings. Courtesy of the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections, Bowdoin College Library.



Pledge of Peace,” “The Burial of the Alabama Prophet,” and probably the long narrative poems “The Indian’s Past Olympic” and “Fus Harjo and Old Billy Hell,” hail from this early period in which Posey took scenes, traditions, and figures from his childhood and put them into a highly structured poetic form. In these, and a few other early poems, Posey appears to struggle to reconcile his Euro-American poetic education with his Muscogee cultural knowledge.

Yet even in these early days, Posey’s favorite poetic subject was the natural world. His early poem, “Twilight [Eventide],” which he published in pamphlet form, emphasizes a grandiose admiration for nature. He begins this poem with a type of verse that would become characteristic of much of his work:

Beyond the far-off waves the seagulls cry,  
As twilight shades  
The emerald glades  
And zephyrs waft the strains of nightbirds nigh,<sup>6</sup>

Posey writes of the nature found in his books rather than beyond the window. After all, the young and sessile Posey had probably never seen the ocean’s waves or even heard a seagull. His nature is one of grand implications, of the wind romanticized into “zephyrs,” of cow pastures molded into “emerald glades.” He would remain an unapologetic dreamer for the whole of his short life and though it makes for less than revolutionary poetry, this same romanticized worldview caused Posey to cultivate a persona of the genteel poet who was witty, well-read, and never too busy to stop to inspect a flower—all

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<sup>6</sup> “Twilight [Eventide],” undated pamphlet, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

characteristics that probably did much to influence positively his most admirable work in the form of his journals, stories, and Fus Fixico letters.

In 1894 the Dawes Commission began to make its presence felt in Indian Territory, and Posey seems to have taken instant notice of the problems associated with the commission's goal of convincing the people of the Five Tribes to accept allotment and abandon their tribal government. Though always of a progressive bent, Posey distrusted the Dawes Commission and vented his feelings in the form of two poems: "O, Oblivion!" and "Ye Men of Dawes." These works presaged his later Fus Fixico letters and also a number of later poems that would take up a slew of political issues from Eufaula's battle for county seat to Cuba's fight for independence from Spain.

By this time Posey had also started to serve as the Bacone Indian University correspondent for the Eufaula *Indian Journal*. He sent weekly notices of goings on around the college and often included short poems along with these tidbits of news. Most of these snippets display their author's love for the pastoral, but sometimes they take on a political stance, such as in his poem "[To allot, or not to allot, that is the]," in the March 1, 1894 issue of the *Indian Journal*. His college education, love of reading, and political opinions had started to influence his poetry, and he was not shy about publishing them. He seemed to understand the power of the printed word from an early age. For example, as an accomplished orator, Posey delivered four important political speeches in the early 1890s, but he was always careful to also present these orations in written form by publishing them in local newspapers and even sometimes printing up pamphlets of his speeches.

In the December 12, 1894 issue of the *Indian Journal*, Posey published the poem “Wildeat Bill,” which would be one of his first experiments in merging regional dialect humor with social commentary. The poem parodies the type of Euro-American immigrants he saw in Indian Territory, a group of uneducated, braggart cowboy criminals for whom he provides a comical voice. Engaging in satirical vernacular humor would become Posey’s trademark literary approach, and it suits him well even at this early stage. He ridicules the self-styled cowboys who had increasingly become an unwelcome presence in Indian Territory and does so in an intellectual manner that serves as an challenge to three common racist views: that education was wasted on American Indians, that they were incapable of creating meaningful art and literature, and that they were stoic and humorless. Posey’s writing would continually demonstrate that not only could American Indians express themselves intellectually, but that they had something to say about the latest chapter in a centuries old series of abuses stemming from Euro-American imperialism.

After 1895 Posey entered a transitional period in his life. He left college and even briefly worked for the Brown Brothers mercantile company in Sasakwa, Seminole Nation. Never one to stay away from home for long, Posey spent approximately two months at the job before returning to Eufaula where he entered Muscogee politics. Only two extant poems can be attributed to Posey for the year 1895 and even these are of uncertain authorship. The poems “There’s a Tide” and “[In UNCLE SAM’S dominion]” (both published in the *Indian Journal*) are probably Posey’s handiwork, but while they bear the mark of his wit, they lack a signature.

In December of 1895 Posey's political contacts helped him secure a two-year appointment to the position of superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum in Okmulgee (Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 79). The job allowed Posey to hire others to manage a large portion of the work, leaving him with an amount of free time he had not enjoyed since his boyhood years. As Posey settled into life at the orphan asylum, which also served as a school, he took advantage of this time to enjoy the companionship of his wife and his friends, such as George Riley Hall. Only three poems can be dated to Posey's first year at the orphan asylum: "The Indian's Last Olympic," "Cuba Libra," and a manuscript of a love poem to his wife titled, "Lowyna." However, "The Indian's Last Olympic" with its traditionally inspired treatment of the Muscogee Green Corn Ceremony, and its signature line of "A. L. Posey," probably derives from his earlier Bacone work. "Lowyna" stands as the first of five love poems Posey would write to his wife, Minnie H. Posey, over his lifetime; it is also the first time he uses his pet name for her in print (he would later change the spelling to "Lowena").

The development of Posey's political ideology becomes apparent in "Cuba Libra," a work of doggerel that vehemently champions the Cuban uprising against Spain and demonstrates how Posey's political interests sometimes left the borders of Indian Territory. Despite its weaknesses, the poem does manage to present an interesting empathetic voice, the voice of a fellow victim of colonial pressures and injustices. Posey's exclamation of "Down with tyranny!" arose from a man who belonged to another nation also victimized by an unjust, imperialistic system.

Between 1897 and 1900 Posey's poetic output skyrocketed. These years, in which he worked at a series of administrative posts within the Muscogee Nation's education

system, left him with the free time necessary to write approximately 130 poems. While the majority of these poems are undated, he almost invariably drafted his work on the stationery of whichever educational post he then occupied. This tendency, coupled with a few clues derived from his journals, allows for a rough chronology of his poetic efforts. Throughout 1897, in his last year as superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum, Posey began to write poems betraying a strong debt to the work of Shelley and other Romantic poets. While Posey's earlier verse had already begun to create an idealized Indian Territory of "zephyrs" and "glades," he began to populate his vision of the natural world with figures from his reading, especially from Greek mythology, while also further introducing Muscogee figures and traditions. By merging the Euro-American traditions he read about in books with his own Muscogee culture, Posey creates an Indian Territory pastoral, an idealized poetic world that arose from his unique education and worldview. For instance in "Lines to Hall," a poem in which Posey calls for his friend Hall to retire to the woods for poetic inspiration, he writes to Hall, "get thee to a hut/ Along some Tulledegan creek./ High life ill suits thy muse. Go put/ Her up an altar on the moor." Posey then ends the poem in the same vein when he asks Hall to relate the Muscogee oral tradition of the lost hunter:

Tell how that Indian hunter died  
That wintry day between the hill  
And frozen river; how he cried  
In vain for help, and how he still  
  
Is heard on stormy nights to cry,

And beat the wolves without avail;  
And how his bones were left to dry  
And scatter in that lonely vale<sup>7</sup>

This is an Indian Territory that could exist only in the mind of a remarkably educated Muscogee who takes freely those images and ideas he admires from his prolific reading. Posey's amalgamation of classical western mythology and Muscogee (Creek) tradition stands as one of his most remarkable, and least recognized, literary accomplishments.

Sometimes he would focus on single animals, plants, and other natural objects. In 1897 he began writing what would be a large body of poems devoted to birds, flowers, and sometimes other denizens of his unique Indian Territory. At moments he merged his love of dialect writing with his penchant for animal poems. "The Rattler," for example, presents the humorous vernacular of an unidentified man as he comments on an encounter with an overgrown rattlesnake: "If he were once to nip you on/ The thigh, you'd cross the Great Divide/ In just about as many steps!" While the poem itself appears unremarkable, the dialect of the narrator and the presence of a silent character whom the speaker addresses without reply reveal how Posey experimented with voice. As with his later masterwork of dialect humor, the Fus Fixico letters, Posey's "The Rattler" offers a voice who is simultaneously funny and genuine—simultaneously the butt and the teller of the joke.

Posey and Minnie's first child, Yahola, was born in March 29, 1897 and the new father quickly took his son as the subject of one of his most touching poems, "To Our

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<sup>7</sup> Photocopy of an undated newspaper clipping, box I-22.6, Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Posey notes in his journal that he wrote this poem on March 9, 1897.

Baby, Laughing.” In lines that would prove ironic a decade later when Posey’s early death left his children fatherless, he writes:

If I were laid beneath  
The grasses there,  
My face would haunt you for  
A while—a day maybe—  
And then you would forget,  
And not remember me.<sup>8</sup>

His work is often at its best when dealing with his love of family and friends, and this poem, while sentimental, shows the range of Posey’s poetic sensibilities. Capable of penning funny doggerel about a rattlesnake or, in this case, a deeply serious poem commenting on his own mortality and eventual memory, Posey did not shy away from a gamut of topics.

Through 1897 and 1899 Posey increased his poetry submissions to local newspapers and his work began to appear in print throughout the region. Printed in low numbers on paper with a high acid content in a territory ill-suited for archival collection, newspapers from this period are scarce. However, sources held in the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, the Oklahoma Historical Society, and the American Native Press Archives reveal that during the early days of Posey’s most productive years he published poems in the *Checotah Inquirer*, *Muskogee Phoenix*, *Eufuala Indian Journal*, and also in the influential Indian Territory literary magazine, *Twin Territories*. As his later, enigmatic rejections of widespread literary popularity

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<sup>8</sup> “To Our Baby, Laughing,” undated manuscript on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 79, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

would demonstrate, Posey sought publication on his terms, for what he viewed as his own people of Indian Territory.

If 1897 marked the sprouting of Posey's poetic output, the years of 1898 and 1899—when he worked as the superintendent of public instruction for the Muscogee Nation—represented its problematic flowering, problematic because while Posey's poetic production had boomed, the quality of his work had not. Nevertheless, by 1899 he began to gain notice from readers outside of Indian Territory. Newspaper editors from *The Red Man*, *Indian's Friend*, the *Nashville Daily American*, *St. Louis Republic*, the *Kansas City Star*, the *Kansas City Journal*, the *Philadelphia Press*, and the *New York Evening Sun* began to print, and sometimes reprint, Posey's poems. However, in a move that remains hard to understand, Posey refused to take advantage of this newly found fame. Though editors wrote him asking for poems, articles, and personal information, he shied away from the spotlight.

Yet Posey did seem interested in preserving his poetry, and he did so in a manner as enigmatic as the man himself: he handwrote a copy of about sixty-five of his poems in a ledger. Judging from the specific poems included, he probably compiled this handwritten collection between the end of 1898 and the early portion of 1899. The exact number of poems Posey originally entered into the ledger is unknown because several pages were subsequently removed. Posey's reasons for creating this single, handwritten collection remain unknown. The collection includes both his earliest work, some of it dating back to his years at Bacone, and some of his more current verse. Some poems remain unchanged while others, even some he had already published, display alterations. As Littlefield points out, Posey "either could not or did not intend to distinguish between



his best and worst verse, for the collection contains both, ranging from his earliest to his most recent works” (120). Whatever his motive for creating this manuscript of sixty-five poems, it serves as a glimpse into his creative process and provides several poems unavailable anywhere else. As this ledger may contain a thematic unity thus far unstudied, perhaps even similar to Emily Dickinson’s fascicles, it is presented in its entirety in the appendix.

By the end of 1900—the year that Posey’s verse drew a large degree of national attention—he had all but ceased writing poetry. Only one manuscript can be dated to this period, “The Haunted Valley,” written on Wetumka National School stationery. It would seem that the death of his infant son Pachina in 1900 had taken its toll on the young poet. Also, Posey may have realized that his poetry rarely met with his own high standards. Those poems that appeared in print between 1900 and 1902 were often holdovers from his earlier days of steady output. Though published in 1901 and 1902, the poems “The Fall of the Redskin,” “Fus Harjo and Old Billy Hell,” “Saturday,” “The Evening Star,” and “On Hearing a Redbird Sing” almost certainly date to earlier years. Indeed, the longer narrative poem “Fus Harjo and Old Billy Hell,” may be a relic of Posey’s Bacone days that now exists only in the form of a later reprint. As with many of Posey’s enigmatic decisions, few clues remain as to why he so abruptly ended his career as a poet.

In 1902 Posey began writing his satirical Fus Fixico letters, and these works became his main literary focus. However, he did continue to pen the occasional verse, and virtually all of the poetry he wrote in the last five years of his life took the form of editorial doggerel. These light poems variously condemned the unethical practices of the Dawes Commission (“It’s Too Hot” and “The Creek Fullblood”), derided political figures

("It's Too Hot" and "Alex Posey is Responsible,"), praised conservative Muscogees as "Noble Savages" ("The Creek Fullblood"), made racist comments against those of African heritage ("A Freedman Rhyme"), or attempted to foil the rival town of Checotah's chances at becoming the McIntosh county seat ("Checotah" and "O'Blenness"). Indeed, the only notable poem from this period is "Hotgun on the Death of Yadeka Harjo," a work that bemoans the death of a conservative Muscogee leader whom Posey respected and had immortalized in his Fus Fixico letters. This poem, published in January of 1908, melded his earlier verse experiments with his masterful use of Muscogee full blood dialect. The poem stands as both a reminder of the best of Posey's earlier poetry and as an example of the type of work he might have pursued had he not died in May of that year.

1891

**[Take my valentine and be]**

[Manuscript dated February 14, 1891, folder 77, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The back of the manuscript reads "Mr. A. Posey."]

Take my valentine and be

More than all the world to me.

Take me too and then my heart,

From your love shall never part

Take my purse and let it hold,

5

All your wealth in stocks and gold;

Give me love and wealth combined

And I will be your Valentine

1892

**The Warrior's Dream**

[*B. I. U. Instructor*, June 16, 1892, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.]

Wounded on the battle-field I lay,  
Neglected there and cast away;  
By arrows pierced, no friend to see;  
Alone in solitude and agony:  
Without a hope to comfort me, 5  
Save my anxious hopes of eternity.  
Left to treach'rous chance and fate,  
To die and knock at Hell's or Heaven's gate.  
Around me heaped the decomposing dead,  
And horrors filled my dreams with dread. 10  
The solemn form of melancholy stood  
Or lurk'd about to bathe its feet in blood.  
The silent braves lay lifeless side by side,  
With them my nation's hope of conquest died—  
Pluck'd as a bloom in Summer's prime, 15  
And doomed to fall long ere its time.  
Their locks uncrowned by Winter's age—  
The glossy prize of manhood's stage,  
Stream'd in the sighing zephyr's breath,

As if no orbless gloom infested death. 20

As if the queen of future hopes was nigh,

But sleep had seal'd each warrior's eye,

The avenger's key had lock'd their tomb—

Thus back to earth—their mother's womb.

Eternal silence paused and all was still, 25

And not a note or sound the woods did fill,

As the sinking beams of day declined

The western waves and heights behind.

The silver queen of night drew back the blinds  
Of the eastern void and kiss'd the mournful pines. 30

What grandeurs smiled, what beauteous scenes!

But lo, on yonder corpse, the savage tiger gleans,

And curls his ruthless lips in scorn,

The ghastly form beneath his paw is torn.

Oh, wondrous man! thou king of Earth! 35

Born to increase an animal's mirth!

And all thy joys doth swiftly pass

In a few days, then gone, alas!

An arrow thro' my cheeks had sped  
Its viewless course and I in torrents bled; 40

Naught was I but mangled flesh,

For jaws of heartless dogs to crush,

And hourly nearing swift decay—  
In bonds of woe and pain I lay.  
'Twas vain to hope, 'twas vain to pray, 45  
In manhood's prime my head was gray.  
Denied by springs, rivers and rain,  
And even dew, I thirst in pain.  
No food was nigh to tempt my eyes,  
Save flesh that wolves and vultures prize. 50  
How strange is human destiny!  
What miseries pay existence's fee!  
This truth did rack and haunt my brain  
Till I no longer wished for life again,  
And wonder'd how in want and pain 55  
I lived while counted with the slain.  
'Tis strange I thought, but lo, I found,  
The Water-god had coiled around  
To shield me from fatigue and harm:  
I reached to him my quivering arm 60  
And begged for death or liberty—  
For life or in the tomb to be.  
Of his presence I was scarce aware,  
When I was lifted mountain heights in air,  
On curls of azure fume, the most divine 65

That rose above the Sea-god's shrine.  
Behold! my wounded form was gone,  
And viewless as the winds I rode upon,  
Yet my thoughts and happy feelings had,  
And I thro' marv'ling much was glad. 70  
My wish was answered, as I asked—  
My soul by pain no longer tasked;  
Could think and see and loudly talk,  
And move at will and proudly walk.  
I saw below my place of woe 75  
And somber mountains wrapped in snow—  
The mangled dead were dim to view,  
As I passed the azure heavens thro'.  
The Sun and Moon, I left behind,  
And came to starry worlds sublime, 80  
In which unfading summer reigned—  
And love and rapturous mirths unnamed.  
Past countless worlds and journeyed on  
And on to brighter worlds anon  
And anchor'd safe in Heaven's harbor great; 85  
The home of peace, the soul's estate.  
I met the gods and praised them all,  
My former friends and warriors tall;

Gazed on radiant structures grand,  
And all the gems of glory's land. 90  
The Earth was hell when matches with these,  
Where shackling death no life can seize.  
On emerald thrones and evergreen,  
Sat the gods the ivory walls between;  
And herds of bison white as polar's snow 95  
Were the roaming target of the warriors bow.  
As silver threads of brightest dye,  
The rivers crooked and pass'd me by.  
The dazzling domes of crystal mountains rose  
Unknown to the savage winds and Winter's foes, 100  
There leap'd the roe and laugh'd the warrior bold,  
There blush'd the rose tho' endless ages roll'd.  
And circumfused in various tints of gold,  
Did ballad-kings their tuneful lyres hold.  
No days there were nor sable nights; 105  
No weeks, no months, nor yearly flights;  
No sleep, no death, no ill nor pains;  
No want, nor woes that Earth contains.  
When rosy morn again had beamed  
Its orient light I thus had dreamed, 110  
And this foretold my future fall:



The ocean's brood did my home enthrall,  
And hurled my youthful bloom  
To death and dark eternal gloom.  
My dream of Heaven's paradise, 115  
Forbade my land and warrior's rise.  
My wilds, the soil that gave me birth—  
My woes and grief the world might girth,  
Or reach to stars my dream hath seen,  
Beyond the fiery Sun that rolls between. 120  
What woes infest a nation's path!  
Whose end is tears though born to laugh!  
This dream inscribed my epitaph

**[And old or new, can records find]**

[Fragment of a longer poem (now lost) in praise of Thomas Paine. Posey to Remsburg, November 25, 1892, "Letters Written by A. L. Posey and Charles Gibson," Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society.]

And old or new, can records find  
A nobler man in book or scroll,  
Than he who taught a nation's mind  
To love the freedom of the soul?

**Circa 1893**

**Death of the Poets**

[Typescript, Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Posey signed this poem as A. L. Posey.]

Lowell first, then Whitman, Whittier went;<sup>1</sup>  
Next, the lyric bards of songs—the  
English laureate.<sup>2</sup> Who to  
Follow them? Our Wendell Holmes?<sup>3</sup>  
Then, alas! the space and sky their 5  
Genius lit must darken to its stars!  
How long, oh, will the shadow last?—  
Until as bright or brighter orbs  
Appear, and flood the realms of rhyme,—  
Celestial, glowing, newly born! 10  
Yes, the poetic sky is scant of suns,  
And only by its minor beacons graced  
But 'tis true, unbidden wonders come  
And meteors flash, and Sol at eve is  
Sinking but to rise. 15

Notes

<sup>1</sup> James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), Walt Whitman (1819-1892), and John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892).

<sup>2</sup> Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was the English laureate.

<sup>3</sup> This poem appears to date from the period before Oliver Wendell Holmes's death on October 7, 1894. As the clipping of this poem (now lost) was noted as bearing the typeface of the *B. I. U. Instructor*, it probably dates from around 1893 when Posey worked on that paper.

### **Red Man's Pledge of Peace [Circa 1893]**

[Typescript, Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. As the clipping of this poem (now lost) was noted as bearing the typeface of the *B. I. U. Instructor*, it probably dates from around 1893 when Posey worked on that paper. In 1898 Posey revised this poem, and the later version immediately follows this poem.]

I pledge you by the moon and sun,  
As long as stars their course shall run,  
Long as day shall meet my view,  
Peace shall reign between us two.

As long as grass shall clothe the fields,  
As long as earth her bounty yields,  
I this saying ne'er will rue:  
Peace shall reign between us two.

Lo! Indian tribes of times unborn  
Shall ne'er this sacred treaty scorn—

5

10

Or in arms seek war with you—  
Peace shall reign between us two.

I came from mother soil and cave,<sup>1</sup>  
You came from pathless sea and wave,  
Strangers fought our battles thro'—  
Peace shall reign between us two.

15

As long as eagles wing their flight  
Above their mountain eyrie's height,  
Long as years their youth renew,  
Peace shall reign between us two.

20

As long as streams to oceans flow,  
As long as seasons come and go,  
Long as truth is truth and true,  
Peace shall reign between us two.

We met as foes, we part as friends;  
Now mildly earth and ocean blends,  
Clasping hands we bid adieu—  
Peace shall reign between us two.

25

Note

<sup>1</sup> According to the Muscogee (Creek) creation myth those people who would eventually become Muscogees first emerged from a cave. See Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri, *A Sacred Path*, 14-22.

### **Red Man's Pledge of Peace [Circa 1898]**

[An undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 123, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. This is a revision of a much longer version of this poem. See "Red Man's Pledge of Peace [Circa 1893]" for the poem's first incarnation.]

I pledge you by the moon and sun,  
As long as stars their course shall run,  
Long as day shall meet my view,  
Peace shall reign between us two.

I pledge you by those peaks of snow, 5  
As long as streams to ocean flow,  
Long as years their youth renew,  
Peace shall reign between us two.

I came from mother soil and cave,<sup>1</sup>  
You came from pathless sea and wave, 10  
Strangers fought our battles through,—  
Peace shall reign between us two.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> According to the Muscogee (Creek) creation myth those people who would eventually become Muscogees first emerged from a cave. See Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri, *A Sacred Path*, 14-22.

## Undated Poems Written Between October 1891 and the Summer of 1894

Posey attended Bacone Indian University from November of 1889 until the summer of 1894 (Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 41, 59). During this time he began to write poetry, and some of this work appeared in the school newspaper, the *B. I. U. Instructor* which began publication in October 1891 (Connelley 19). Bacone also published some of Posey's works in pamphlet form, and it is likely that Posey set the type himself (Littlefield, 45, 50). The following two undated poems: "The Burial of the Alabama Prophet," and "Twilight [Eventide]" both in pamphlet form and using *B. I. U. Instructor* type, hail from this period.

### The Burial of the Alabama Prophet

[Undated pamphlet, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The back of this pamphlet bears an ornament composed of a scythe, stalks of grain, and flower and reads: "PUBLISHED BY INDIAN UNIVERSITY, Bacone, Ind. Ter."]

Slow moves the fun'ral train,

No trumpet sounds are heard;

The dead's forth-borne in pain,

In sorrow, grief interred.

No lays of death are sung,

No pompous scenes are made,

5

No praise of mortal tongue,  
No sacred rites are paid.

Last duties to the dead

Are paid in silent tears; 10

No words are lisped or said—

The coffin disappears.

Sad-lowered to his cell

With hopes of life beyond,

Exempt from fears of hell— 15

No marble decks his mound.

For, he, when dying, said,

“I wish no lips to praise

The life that I have led,

Nor hands my tomb to raise. 20

“Let Time his tribute pay.

With flow’ring seasons ’bove

The form returned to clay

Whose deeds were human love.



“Far better there to sleep 25  
The endless sleep of death,  
Where vines and mosses creep,  
Than tombs of gold beneath.

“At eve, when sinks the sun,  
Its tomb’s in ev’ry heart; 30  
Wherefore erect ME one,  
When death bids me depart?

“O life, farewell—I go,  
And leave this earthly tide;  
'Tis sweet and well to know 35  
'Tis rest in death to 'bide.”

Now wild-wood’s turf below,  
Where footsteps seldom tread,  
Where thick’ning forests grow  
And oaks their branches spread, 40

In Nature’s clasp and care—  
In life’s last still retreat—  
A sleep that all must share,

Lies one whose work's complete.

Sleep on thou mighty one,

45

Thro' time and distant years,

Because of what thou'st done,

Thy name shall live in tears!

### **Twilight [Eventide]**

[Undated pamphlet, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. This poem is typeset in the style of Bacone Indian University publications, and was published as "Eventide" in the 1910 edition of Posey's poems.

Beyond the far-off waves the seagulls cry,

As twilight shades

The emerald glades

And zephyrs waft the strains of nightbirds nigh,

Now sinks the sun—

5

Its course is run—

The day is done—

It fades in the gold of the western sky.

Now high, in raven files, the must'ring crows

Their wings display, 10  
    Thro' ether way,  
And transient gleams and saffron bars disclose,  
    And beauties throng  
    The sky along;  
    And bugs of song 15  
Now pipe among the vales of dew-kissed rose.

Now Night, on high, her spangled robe unfurls,  
    Unveils the moon—  
    The silver moon—  
The orbs, the milkyways, the circling worlds: 20  
    Now bright, sublime  
    In clusters shine  
    The stars divine,  
And 'cross the twinkling void the meteor whirls.

1894

**Death of a Window Plant**

[Photocopy of a clipping set in *B. I. U. Instructor* type, box i-22.11, Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. William Elsey Connelley mentions that this poem derives from a January 1894 issue of the *B. I. U. Instructor*, but no copy has been found. See Connelley, "Memoir of Alexander Lawrence Posey," in Minnie H. Posey, comp., *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, (Topeka: Crane and Company, 1910): 20.]

The air was chill,

The leaves were hushed,

    The moon in grandeur

Climbed the spangled

Walls of heaven,

5

    When the angel came

That whispers death;

Unseen, unheard,

    To lisp that word and

Leave my window

10

Sad when night should

    Blossom into day.

The moon had waned,

And each bright star,

Like visions of a 15  
Dream. Up rose the  
Sun on wings of  
Gold, and soared thro' fields  
Of light serene;  
All earth seemed gay, 20  
And banished from it,  
Sorrow; birds sang  
Songs of summer  
In the clear sweet sky.  
But I was sad, 25  
And song of bird  
Nor sky of splendor  
Could for one brief  
Moment bring a  
Solace to my heart. 30  
I mourned, and all  
Was dark and drear  
Within my chamber,  
Lorn and bare, where  
Sweetness was and 35  
Beauty for a day.  
My window-friend,

I'll dig thy grave,  
Inter thee grandly,  
No sod shall lay 40  
Nor blossom there  
Thy kindred flowers.  
Within my soul's  
Deep core is built  
Thy tomb enduring. 45  
Ah, morn shall kiss  
Thee nevermore  
In purple of dawn;  
And stars shall rise  
And twinkle in 50  
Vain and pass away.  
Should all thy race  
Thus disappear,  
In death forsake the  
Soil in which you 55  
Grew, the world would  
Then be sad as I.

**O, Oblivion!**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Due to its subject matter, this poem probably dates to 1894 when the Dawes Commission first began work in Indian Territory.]

O, Oblivion, how thou'rt robbed and cheated!

Congress never meets but there is seated

From thy dark abode some politician

With a bill anent the demolition

Of our Indian governments, and gets in 5

Print, like Curtis<sup>1</sup> and the well-named Dennis Flynn,<sup>2</sup>

And that there man from Colorado—Teller,<sup>3</sup>

I believe, he's called—that wondrous feller

Who thundered by us once aboard a car,

And knew just what was needed here, by Gar! 10

But Dawes<sup>4</sup> will make thee restitution,

Though he violates the Constitution!

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles Curtis (1860-1936), a prominent politician from Kansas, introduced the Curtis Act in 1896. This act called for the allotment of Indian Territory lands to individual members of the Five Tribes (Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole Nations). The Curtis Act eventually passed in 1898, paving the way for the dissolution of tribal governments and Oklahoma statehood.

<sup>2</sup> A congressional delegate from Pennsylvania, Dennis T. Flynn (1861-1939) advocated the incorporation of Indian Territory into the proposed state of Oklahoma. Many American Indians, Posey included, hoped that Indian Territory would become a separate state.

<sup>3</sup> The Colorado Senator, Henry Moore Teller (1830-1914), had been the source of an infamously shoddy account of the supposedly poor condition of life in Indian Territory. His report helped fuel the argument that the United States should absorb Indian Territory.

<sup>4</sup> Both a Massachusetts congressman and a senator during his political career, Henry Laurens Dawes (1816-1903) served as the head of the congressional commission charged with persuading the Five Tribes to abandon their own governments and to accept the allotment of land in severalty.

### **Ye Men of Dawes**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. This clipping is signed “Shimubbie Harjo,” and is probably a typesetter’s misreading of Posey’s “Chinnubbie Harjo” signature, which boasts a capital “C” that in some manuscripts resembles an “S.” Due to its subject matter, this poem probably dates to 1894 when the Dawes Commission first began work in Indian Territory.]

Ye men of Dawes,<sup>1</sup> avaunt!

Return from whence ye came!

If ye are godly men—

I fear ye’re not the same—

Lay down this work of shame!

5



This first thing that ye know  
Five thous'n' will warp  
Your little conscience so!

Is there no good that ye  
Can do in any state 10  
That ye have come among  
Us, so precipitate,  
For to negotiate?

Lo! has the lurid flame  
Of mobs gone out at last, 15  
With crimes by every name?

O man of Dawes, ye talk  
As sleek as ratpaths 'neath  
A crib, or slipp'ry elm  
Tree growing on the heath; 20  
Ye all take lodgings, faith,  
In manner to impress:

Look kind o' sour, as if  
In mighty mental stress:

Ye wear duck suits galore 25

And shoes of patent skin:  
Ye strut majestically;  
    But ye can't lead us in  
    To any such a sin  
    As giving aid to ye  
To sanctify a wrong—  
    Gives robbery chastity!

30

Note

<sup>1</sup> In 1893 a United States congressional committee chaired by Henry Laurens Dawes created the Dawes Act which allowed for the formation of the Dawes Commission. This commission was charged with facilitating the dissolution of tribal land titles and providing for the allotment of land in severalty to the individual members of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes (i.e., the Muscogee (Creek), Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole Nations).

**[Did'st thou see the spceteral [sic] blossoms fall?]**

[Photocopy of an undated clipping from *Indian Journal*, Circa 1894, box I-22.6, Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Though this clipping lacks a date, it may have been published in 1894 because it opens one of Posey's short Bacone Indian University articles for the *Indian Journal*, most of which date from that year.]

Did'st thou see the spceteral [sic] blossoms fall?

And heard'st thou the north winds moan and shriek and sigh?

Did'st thou see bright heaps of snow 'gainst the wall,  
On meadow, tree and hill, and drift and dazzle by?

**[Oh, those voices now we hear,]**

[Photocopy of an undated clipping from *Indian Journal*, Circa 1894, Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, box I-22.6, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Though this clipping lacks a date, it may have been published in 1894 because it opens one of Posey's short Bacone Indian University articles for the *Indian Journal*, most of which date from that year.]

Oh, those voices now we hear,  
So gladening [sic], cheery, ye,  
How quaint and strange,  
Oh, those faces prize we dear,  
And though we laugh, we marvel at the change!

**[Forsooth, thou art so versatile, O Bob!]**

[Photocopy of an undated clipping from *Indian Journal*, January 30, [1894?]. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, box I-22.6, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Though this clipping lacks a date, it may have been published in 1894 because it opens one of Posey's short Bacone Indian University articles for the *Indian Journal*, most of which date from that year.]

Forsooth, thou art so versatile, O Bob!  
And naught, in which we fail alike and sob  
To know our weakness, never baffles thee  
'Twas natures [sic] kind intent that thou shouldst be  
A horseman, fireman, tiller of the land,  
A doctor, scholar, speaker, singer grand;  
And higher, nobler yet than all of these,  
A bard, whose measured thoughts doth greatly please!

**[To allot, or not to allot, that is the]**

[*Indian Journal*, March 1, 1894.]

To allot, or not to allot, that is the<sup>1</sup>  
Question; whether 'tis nobler in the mind to  
Suffer the country to lie in common as it is,  
Or to divide it up and give each man  
His share pro rata, and by dividing  
End this sea of troubles? To allot, divide,  
Perchance to end in statehood;  
Ah, there's the rub!

5

Note

<sup>1</sup> This poem is obviously a satirical allusion to the most famous soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and demonstrates how the young poet incorporated disassociated literary influences into statements about the political environment of Indian Territory.

**[For two long days the polar breeze]**

[*Indian Journal*, March 29, 1894.]

For two long days the polar breeze

Blew swift and crisp and cool,

The buds are dead upon the trees,

And frogs have left the pool.

The birds have ceased to twitter sweet

5

Spring songs, Tis sad, alas!

And ev'rywhere you trod you meet

The vi'let on the grass.

And daisy lying drooped and dead,

The poet lorn surveys

10

The sylvan scene where late he said,

“O, Spring, 'tis thee I praise!”

**[The picnic's comming, [sic]]**

[*Indian Journal*, May 11, 1894.]

The picnic's comming,

Strawberries rip'ning,  
The May is passing,  
And the June will bring  
Three months of rest and joy and ease, 5  
Three months of doing as you please.

**[The whippowill [sic] has come]**

[*Indian Journal*, May 25, 1894.]

The whippowill has come  
To chant his dreamy lay;  
The bumble-bees now hum  
Thro' all the lovely day,  
The man with books to sell 5  
Now knocks upon your door—  
And you could quickly fell  
Him welt'ring in his gore.

**[Those bursts of oratory—how they stir the soul!]**

[*Indian Journal*, June 8, 1894.]

Those bursts of oratory—how they stir the soul!  
Demosthenese [sic],<sup>1</sup> arise, that you may hear them roll  
Like thunder-peals among the Alpine

Steeps, and mock that tongue of dust of thine!

Note

<sup>1</sup> Considered by some as the greatest of the Greek orators, Demosthenes (384?-322 B. C.) gained notoriety through a series of orations called the *Philippics* and *Olynthiacs* which called for Greeks to fight against Macedonian tyranny. Posey, who was an accomplished orator himself, perhaps saw a parallel between the situation of the Greeks during Demosthenes day and the political atmosphere of Indian Territory.

**[Autumn days—bright days of gold;]**

[Photocopy of an undated clipping from *Indian Journal*, [October] 1894. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, box I-22.6, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Though this clipping lacks a date, it may hail from October 1894 because it originates from one of Posey's short Bacone Indian University articles for the *Indian Journal*. In the article Posey writes, "Indian University opened its doors, Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, to a large number of students." As October 2, 1894 did fall on a Tuesday, Posey almost certainly published this piece in 1894, probably in middle or late October.]

Autumn days—bright days of gold;

Ah! lovely, filled with cheer!

Not, as one has said of old,

"The saddest of the year."<sup>1</sup>

Note

<sup>1</sup> A quotation from William Cullen Bryant's poem, "The Death of the Flowers." The first two lines

of the poem read: "The Melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year,/ Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sere."

### Wildcat Bill

[*Indian Journal*, December 14, 1894.]

Whoop a time er two fer me!

Turn me loose an' let be be!

I'm Wildcat Bill,

From Grizzle Hill,

A border ranger; never down'd;

5

A western hero all around:

A gam'bler, scalper, born a scout;

A tough; the man ye read about,

From no man's lan';<sup>1</sup>

Kin' rope a bear an' ride a buck;

10

Git full on booze an' run amuck;

Afeard o' nothin'; hard to beat;

Kin die with boots upon my feet—

An' like a man!

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> With Kansas's western boundary located at the 37<sup>th</sup> parallel and the conditions of the Missouri Compromise forbidding Texas (a slave state) to claim any land above 36° 30' North, a small strip of



unclaimed land between the two states came into existence. This thirty-four mile wide and 128 mile long piece of land came to be called "No Man's Land" and would, in 1890, become incorporated into Oklahoma Territory and now forms Beaver County in western Oklahoma.

1895

**There's a Tide**

[*Indian Journal*, March 1, 1895. The authorship of this poem is unconfirmed, but Posey is probably the author due to the poem's style, literary allusion, and humor.]

There's a tide in the lives of men

Which, when taken at its flood,<sup>1</sup>

Will land a fellow's bark of life

To the quarter-deck in mud,

There's a tide in the lives of men

5

Which, when taken at its ebb,

Will strand the lubber's crazy craft

In the sharper's<sup>2</sup> fatal web.

Then what the deuce's a fellow to do

In life's queer navigation—

10

Must he be tossed by every squall

And beat by all creation?

No, gentle reader; follow me,

And by the Great Eternal,

You'll get the inside tack on life—

15

Just read the INDIAN JOURNAL.<sup>3</sup>

Notes

<sup>1</sup> The opening lines of the first and second stanza are puns drawn from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (IV.3.218).

<sup>2</sup> Another term for a swindler.

<sup>3</sup> The Eufaula *Indian Journal* was a newspaper that Posey kept in close association with for much of his life. He worked on the paper as a young student and then went on to write for and edit the paper in later years.

**[In UNCLE SAM'S dominion]**

[*Indian Journal*, March 1, 1895. The authorship of this poem is unconfirmed, but Posey is probably the author due to the poem's style, literary allusion, and humor.]

In UNCLE SAM'S dominion

A few own all the "dust."

They rule by combination

And trade by forming trusts.

In the "injun's" own arrangement

5

We acknowledge with a sigh,

We can realize derangement.

Tho' the moat is in our eye.

But in trying to reform us,

Our great white Uncle, why

10

Don't you firstly pluck the saw-log

From out your own black eye?

1896

**Lowyna<sup>1</sup>**

[Manuscript dated February 3, 1896 on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 80, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

The lark,

From dawn

Till dark,

Has drawn,

On fence and post and tree,

5

In meadow, brown and sere,

From out its heart, so free,

So full of mirth and glee,

Sweet songs of ecstasy,

To hail the glad new year

10

That makes you twenty-three!

Note

<sup>1</sup> The title refers to Posey's pet name for his wife Minnie Harris Posey (born on February 3, 1873). Minnie Posey explained in a letter to Edward Everett Dale that the name meant, "loving the bright and happy." See Minnie H. Posey to Edward Everett Dale, February 19, 1919, Dale Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman. Posey would later alter the spelling to "Lowena."

### The Indian's Past Olympic

[*Muskogee Phoenix*, December 17, 1896. As this poem is signed "A. L. Posey" instead of the more common "Chinnubie Harjo," it may date from Posey's earlier Bacone poems, which were long and often boasted his real name.]

The gala day has come—'tis morn;<sup>1</sup>  
In mounds high heaps the rip'ning corn,  
Which warriors dare not touch, disdain  
Till now, and bisons from the plain,  
Wild turkeys, bears and antelopes 5  
From shady wilds and mountain slopes,  
And meats from all the woods around,  
Doth grace the ancient, sacred ground,  
Where painted nations group in one  
To shout the praise of battles won. 10  
And lo! 'tis half of heaven's bliss  
To see a scene as grand as this:  
Now squaws begin the meat to roast,  
And all shall now enjoy the toast;  
The prophet,<sup>2</sup> plumed, slow taps the drum, 15  
Exclaims aloud: "O Warriors come  
And drink this noble drink I give,<sup>3</sup>  
And thus prolong the years you live,

As did your fathers, slumb'ring sound  
Beneath the soil—their native ground. 20  
Cleanse well your souls of former sin  
And all the vile that lurks within;  
Begin anew, as doth the year  
And young you'll be when death is near.”

This said, the prophet taps the drum, 25  
And music rings—tum, tum, tum, tum,  
The ball is tossed, thro' air serene,  
With speed, it flies on wings unseen.  
With ball-sticks pointing to the skies  
Each warrior stands with watchful eyes; 30  
And like a thunderbolt that's hurled  
From heaven downward to the world,  
Hard strikes the ball upon the ground,  
And gives the ear its muffled sound.

The warriors whoop and whooping bound 35  
As lions on the shepherd's pen,  
Loud blends the shouts of savage men.

Each strikes and striking seeks his end;  
True friendship's lost and foes contend.

High to and fro the ball is thrown, 40  
And gaping wounds by war clubs torn,  
Gush torrents, streams of clotting gore,  
The thirsty earth fast spreading o'er.  
And now, anon, like winds at sea,  
When typhoons, raging storms are free, 45  
Rush rank on rank, more swift, intense  
In fury's maddened violence!  
In mis'ry, pain, remorse untold  
Lies groaning, foiled the warrior bold—  
Unquenched his thirst, unkissed his lips, 50  
Unmourned his fate—death angel grips  
The valiant form, the lifeless brave  
And wings him, sleeping, to his grave;  
Uncoffined there and left alone,  
To dust returning, bone by bone. 55  
And not one drop of tear is shed,  
Or words of grief or sorrow said  
By those who watch or those who play,  
Where men their kindreds, fellows slay.  
The victor wins the victor's name, 60  
And honors great enhance his fame;  
Becomes he chief and warrior bold—



'Tis past—the tragic scene is told.

“Now bathe ye braves and swift prepare

And feast we now in twilight air!”

65

In tones aloud the prophet speaks.

And now a pool each warrior seeks

And bathes his gory form and scars

Beneath the gleaming twilight stars.

Lo! gorgeous heaps of flesh are spread,

70

And piles of most delicious bread

Which scent the straying zephyrs round:

Each warrior's seated on the ground,

And smiling maids their wants supply,

While howls the wolf and jackals cry

75

Upon the lifeless and the slain,

Left tombless on the battle-plain—

Enough to freeze the human veins!

Yet pleasure, joy and laughter reigns;

And lo! 'tis naught but earthly bliss

80

To them, inured to sights like this.

The moon is up, most lovely night!

The center flame is blazing bright,

And war-whoops peal from crag to crag,  
 Adown the hollow cavern's swag 85  
 And on the wave of waters near,  
 To hills repeating as they hear.  
 Now round and about the blaze  
 Revives the sport of other days.  
 Each ankle of the maiden race 90  
 A snowy tortoise shell doth grace,<sup>4</sup>  
 And brilliant plumes the warrior's head,  
 Who, like the haughty peacock, spread  
 Their vast and gleamy [sic] plumage round,  
 Pretentious sweep and court the ground. 95  
 The prophet shakes the hollow gourd  
 In which are stones and pebbles stored,  
 To cheer, enthuse the rev'ling band;  
 And, lifting high his jeweled hand  
 Exclaims the leader, "Heap the flame— 100  
 As burns the blaze so burns our fame!"  
 And fiery sparks, like met'ors, rush  
 High upward thro' the woods and brush,  
 Revealing all the savage host,  
 Of life regardless, and its cost; 105  
 Eyes like burnished em'ralds gleaming—

Strange in form—as demons seeming.

Full in the zenith beams the moon,

'Tis midnight's melancholy noon,

So clear, serene, so pure and bright.

110

The met'or wings his burning flight

And, flashing dies upon his way.

'Tis lovely—grander far than day.

The ghosts of mountains spread around

And peaks, by snows of ages crowned,

115

Look down upon the rev'ling host

In savage bliss and pleasures lost,

Fast circling round the center-blaze.

The prophets chant their battle-lays,

And tap the muffled drums to bass

120

The songs and speed the warrior's pace.

They pause, they stop, but not for dreams—

For brighter still the pine-light, gleams,

And mortal sleep now hath no charms

'Mid rapture, war-whoop's loud alarms.

125

Their strength refreshed and thirst allayed

A rush, a thundering rush is made

To gain the ring, the beaten ground.

And now again they circle round  
And sing aloud of battles won; 130  
The deeds of mighty chieftains done.  
The sky is changed, and now 'tis gray—  
The luna-orb has lost its way.  
Day blossoms crimson in the east  
And ends the dance, the play and feast. 135

Emendation 93 haughty] heaughty

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Much of this poem describes the traditional Muscogee stickball game that typically occurs during the yearly Green Corn Ceremony. Stickball games are often played between rival towns and sometimes become quite violent. The game is often termed “little brother of war” and involves maneuvering a ball toward the rival goal with a club-like racket. See Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 21 and Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> A “prophet” is a Muscogee medicine man or *hilis haya*. See Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri, *A Sacred Path*, 118-119 and Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 157-160. For an extended discussion of the role of the Muscogee medicine man, see Lewis and Jordan, *Creek Indian Medicine Ways*.

<sup>3</sup> A reference to the ingestion of sacred medicine, possibly the medicine called “ussi” or “black drink.” See Lewis and Jordan, *Creek Indian Medicine Ways*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> A reference to the turtle shell rattles that women “shell-shakers” use when performing ceremonial dances. See Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 38.

## Cuba Libre

[*Muskogee Phoenix*, December 24, 1896.]

Forward, Cuba, forward!<sup>1</sup>

Down with treachery!

Forward! Hang the coward

For his butchery!—

Weyler,<sup>2</sup> beast of Spain!

5

Forward! forward ever!

Down with tyranny!

Forward! backward never

From thy enemy!—

Weyler beast of Spain!

10

On! on! Gomez,<sup>3</sup> triumphantly!

Thou hast the wide world's sympathy!

Maceo,<sup>4</sup> rest thee,

Cuba shall be free

Notes

<sup>1</sup> This poem advocates Cuba's struggle to gain independence from Spain, a cause that would escalate into the Spanish-American War in 1898.

<sup>2</sup> General Valeriano Weyler (1838-1930) was the Spanish governor of Cuba who, in an effort to keep rebels soldiers from hiding within the peaceful civilian population, relocated much of the population to camps. These camps were poorly conceived, and unhealthy conditions led to the death of thousands of people, many of them women and children.

<sup>3</sup> Máximo Gómez Baez (1836-1905) was one of the leaders of the military rebellion against Spain and helped engineer the hit and run guerilla tactics that were the trademark of the rebels.

<sup>4</sup> Antonio Maceo (1845-1895) was a popular commander of the Cuban Liberation Army which fought to free Cuba from Spanish rule.

THE CREEK ORPHAN ASYLUM.

A. L. POSEY, SUPT.

ANNUAL ENDOWMENT. \$6,600.

JOHNSON E. TIGER, PRINCIPAL.  
GEORGE R. HALL, ASSISTANT.  
MISS BELLE WRIGHT, ASSISTANT.  
MRS. A. L. POSEY, MATRON.

Okmulgee, Ind. Ter.                      189    

Callie.

It was April, and the orchard looked like  
white clouds budded up together, slightly  
tinged with crimson, sweet, rising every zephyr.  
Callie, leaning from the window, begged in  
vain that afternoon for just a single  
blossom of the many in my hand. How  
gloriously futile! and my love was  
damp for Callie; but a boyish look was  
mine, and I had not the courage then to  
offer any token of affection.  
And, so, she sat there begging; and I stood  
there hesitating, with my flowers; all  
the while the mountain called to and for  
above me; all around the meads were green,  
with here and there a glimpse of prairie land  
very wide; and still beyond, the mountain blue,  
with cool dark shadows crawling over them.  
Chimney Rock

Manuscript of "Callie" on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 140.

#### Four Undated Poems Written Between December 1895 and December 1897

Posey served as the superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum from December 1895 to December 1897 (Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 79). During this time he wrote several poems on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, but did not provide dates for two of them: "Callie" and "Mother and Baby." Assuming he only used that particular stationery while working at the Creek Orphan Asylum, those two undated poems were probably composed between December 1895 and December 1897. The poem, "Daisy," was written a little before May 3, 1897 because in Posey's journal he mentions submitting it for publication on that date. "The Squatter's Fence" is found on the same manuscript as "Sea Shells" and probably dates to before December 23, 1897, when "Sea Shells" was published in the *Muskogee Phoenix*.]

#### Callie

[Undated manuscript on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 92, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

It was April, and the orchard looked like  
White clouds huddled up together, tightly  
Tinged with crimson, accounting every zephyr  
Callie, leaning from the window, begged in  
Vain that afternoon for just a single  
Blossom of the many in my hand. How  
Gloriously pretty! and my love was

5



Deep for Callie; but a boyish heart was  
Mine, and I had not the courage then to  
offer any token of affection. 10

And, as, she sat there begging; and I stand  
There hesitating, with my flowers; all  
The while the martins sallied to and fro  
Above us; all around the woods were green,  
With here and there a glimpse of prairie land 15  
Beyond; and still beyond, the mountains blue,  
With cool dark shadows crawling over them.

### **Mother and Baby**

[Undated manuscript on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 94, Alexander L. Posey  
Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Tired at length of crying,  
Laughing, cooing, sighing,  
The baby lies so qui't and still,  
Scarce breathing in his sleep;  
The mother watches half-inclined 5  
To hide her face and weep.

### **Daisy**

[Photocopy of an undated clipping, Box I-22.6, Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. A manuscript of this poem exists in a ledger collecting several other works. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Posey mentions submitting "Daisy" for publication in his May 3, 1897 journal entry, thus the poem was written before that date. A shorter version of this poem titled, "On a Mischievous Pup" exists as an undated newspaper clipping in a scrapbook found in the Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Mirthful Daisy,

Pretty brindle pup;

Playful Daisy,

Ever pricking up

Your ears to see

5

The way the rabbit's gone.

Or to accept a bone,

Impatiently;

Barking Daisy,

Mischief-making pup;

10

Restless Daisy,

Long the buttercup  
Has watched you sleep.  
If there are squirrels there,  
In Heaven where you are— 15  
    You went there when you died—  
Or cotton-tailed hare,  
Or any sheep,  
    The angels keep you tied!

But I am jesting. 20  
    You were a friend, and true;  
A closer brother, too,  
    Than some who've shook my hand.  
You ever gave alarm  
At ev'ry sign of harm. 25  
    You were so faithful and—  
I leave you resting.

### **The Squatter's Fence**

[Undated manuscript, folder 156, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. As this manuscript also contains a poetry fragment that would later become the first stanza of the poem "Sea Shells" this

manuscript probably dates to before December 23, 1897, when "Sea Shells" was published in the *Muskogee Phoenix*.]

He sets his posts so far apart  
And tacks his barbed wire so slack  
In haste to get the [Injun] land  
Enclosed and squat him qui'llly down,  
Unseen by any, that  
His fence when built looks like  
A country candy pulling!

5

The Creek

Orphan Asylum.



A. L. Posey, Supt.

Annual Endowment,

\$6,000.00.

Chmulooc, Ind. Dec. 1852

Lines to Hall.

You cannot sing in walls of brick,  
George Hall; go get thee to a hut  
Along some Tullidegan creek.  
High life ill suits thy Muse, do fish  
Here up an altar on the moor,  
And keep the robins company,  
You're not yourself when not obscure  
From gaze of friends and flattery.  
Go hide thee quick in some deep wild  
And ead as a brown thrush may,  
Much petting spoils a gifted child.  
Go sing for us; go now, this day!  
Tell how that Indian hunter died  
That wintery day between the hills  
And frozen river; how he cried  
In vain for help, and how he still  
Is heard on stormy nights to cry  
And beat the waves without avail,  
And how his bones were left to dry  
And scatter in that lonely vale  
Shimabie Hoop.

An early draft of "Lines to Hall" on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 93.

1897

### The Conquerors

[Manuscript dated January 13, 1897 on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 81, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

The Caesars<sup>1</sup> and the Alexanders<sup>2</sup> were

But men gone mad; who ran about a while

Upsetting kingdoms; and were slain in turn

Like rabid dogs, or died in misery.

Assassins laid in wait for Caesar; wine,

5

Amid the boasts of victory, cut short

The glory of the Macedonians;

Deception cooled the fever Pompey<sup>3</sup> had;

Death was dealt to Phyrus [sic] by a woman's

Hand;<sup>4</sup> Themistocles<sup>5</sup> and Hannibal<sup>6</sup> drank

Deep of poison in their desolation.

10

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gaius Julius Caesar (100-44 bc), Roman statesman who initiated the Roman imperial system. He was assassinated by a group of senators who feared his popularity would make him a king.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander the Great (356-323 bc), Macedonian king who conquered the Persian Empire.

<sup>3</sup> Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (106-48 bc), Roman general and statesman who was a rival of Caesar.

<sup>4</sup> Pyrrhus (318?–272 bc), king of Epirus who supposedly died during a street skirmish when a woman threw a tile at him from the roof of a house.

<sup>5</sup> Themistocles (527?–460? bc), Athenian naval general and statesman, who commanded the Athenian fleet at the Battle of Salamis. Legend has it he committed suicide by drinking poison.

<sup>6</sup> Hannibal (247–183 bc), Carthaginian general who famously crossed the Alps to attack Rome from Spain. Later in his career, with his capture by Roman forces imminent, Hannibal committed suicide by drinking poison.

### **Lines to Hall**

[Photocopy of an undated newspaper clipping, box I-22.6, Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. An undated manuscript of this poem exists on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 93, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Posey notes in his journal that he wrote this poem on March 9, 1897. See folder 18, folder 93, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

You cannot sing in walls of brick,

George Hall;<sup>1</sup> go get thee to a hut

Along some Tulledegan<sup>2</sup> creek.

High life ill suits thy muse. Go put

Her up an altar on the moor,

5

And keep the robins company.

You're not yourself when not obscure  
From gaze of friends and flattery.

Go hide thee quick in some deep wild,

And carol as a brown thrush may.

10

Much petting spoils a gifted child.

Go sing for us; go now, this day!

Tell how that Indian hunter died

That wintry day between the hill

And frozen river; how he cried

15

In vain for help, and how he still

Is heard on stormy nights to cry,

And beat the wolves without avail;

And how his bones were left to dry

And scatter in that lonely vale

20

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A poet, teacher, and newspaper editor, George Riley Hall (1865-1944) was one of Posey's best friends. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 71-72, 81-97, 137, 196.

<sup>2</sup> Tulledega is Posey's name for the rural area west of Eufaula, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, where he spent a good part of his childhood.

### To Our Baby, Laughing



[Undated manuscript on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 79, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

If I were dead, sweet one,<sup>1</sup>

So innocent,

I know you'd laugh the same

In merriment,

And pat my pallid face

5

With chubby hands and fair,

And think me living, as

You'd tangle up my hair.

If I were dead, loved one,

So young and fair,

10

If I were laid beneath

The grasses there,

My face would haunt you for

A while—a day maybe—

And then you would forget,

15

And not remember me.

Note

<sup>1</sup> This poem was written for Posey's first son, Yahola Irving Posey, who was born on March 29, 1897.

### **The Two Clouds**

[Photocopy of an undated clipping from the *Checotah Inquirer*, Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, box I-22.11, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. According to Posey's journal, he wrote this poem on April 6, 1897. Later that month, in his April 19, 1897 journal entry, he writes, "Send a poem to the "Inquirer;" this poem was probably the one he mentions. A later manuscript version of this poem exists in folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Away out West, one day,

Two clouds were seen astray.

One came up from the sea,

Afar unto the South,

And drifted wearily.

5

One came out of the North.

Away out West that day,

A town was swept away!

### **The Rattler**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Though an undated manuscript is the only source of this poem, it was probably written on April 27, 1897. On that day in his journal, Posey mentions spending part of the day writing, "a rattle snake poem."]

Great heavens! Hold up! Don't you see

What you are riding onto there?

Quick! Jump down! Throw your reins to me!

(Whoa Bald) Don't give him any time

To sail, Shoot! There, he's done for now!

5

Gee Whiz, but isn't he rusty! Twice

Twelve rattles and a button! Whew!

Ram straws up in his nostrils. See,

They're four holes<sup>1</sup> there as sure as fate!

If he were once to nip you on

10

The thigh, you'd cross the Great Divide

In just about as many steps!

Note

<sup>1</sup> Rattlesnakes are members of the family Crotalidae, and like all pit vipers possess pit-like organs located near each nostril which serve as heat receptors.

**June [Midsummer]**

[Manuscript dated June 11, 1897 on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 82, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. In this earliest manuscript, the title "June" has been replaced with "Midsummer" in Minnie Posey's handwriting. Minnie incorporated this change into her 1910 edition, perhaps because there was another poem also called "June." In a later manuscript, that Minnie apparently did not consult, the poem is once again called "June" and lacks the final stanza. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

I see the millet combing gold

From summer sun,

In hussar caps, all day!

And brown quails run

Far down the dusty way,

5

Fly up and whistle from the wold;

Sweet delusions on the mountain,

Of hounds in chase,

Beguiling every care

Of life apace,

10

Though only fevered air

That trembles and dies in mounting.

### **The Idle Breeze**

[Manuscript dated June 29, 1897, folder 83, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The manuscript of "My Fancy" is also on this sheet.]

Like a truant boy, unmindful  
Of the herd he keeps, thou, idle  
Breeze, hast left the white clouds scattered  
All about the sky, and wandered  
Down to play at leap frog with the  
Grass, and rest in the branches;  
While, one by one, the white clouds stray  
Apart and disappear forever.

5

### **My Fancy**

[Manuscript dated June 29, 1897, folder 83, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The manuscript of "The Idle Breeze" is also on this sheet.]

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,

5

That trees lean out to save

The drowning from the clutches of

The cold, remorseless wave.

### Autumn

[Manuscript dated October 20, 1897 on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 88,  
Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

In the dreamy silence

Of the afternoon, a

Cloth of gold is woven

Over wood and prairie;

And the jaybird, newly

5

Fallen from the heaven,

Scatters cordial greetings,

And the air is filled with

Scarlet leaves, that, dropping,

Rise again, as ever,

10

With a useless sigh for

Rest—and it is Autumn.

[Oh, to loiter where] [A Rhapsody]

[Manuscript dated November 7, 1897 on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 90, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. At the top of this manuscript, the title "A Rhapsody" has been written in Minnie Posey's handwriting.]

Oh, to loiter where

The sea breaks white

In wild delight

And throws her kisses evermore,

A slave unto the palm-set shore!

5

Oh, to wander where

The gray moss clings,

And south wind sings,

Forever, low, enchantingly,

Of islands girdled by the sea!

10

Oh, I'll journey back

Some day; some day

I'll go away,—

Forsake my land of mountain pine,

To win the heart that captured mine!

15

### To a Hummingbird

[*Muskogee Phoenix*, December 23, 1897. Manuscript dated July 3, 1897, folder 85, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

Now here, now there;

E'er poised somewhere

In sensuous air.

I only hear, I cannot see

The matchless wings that beareth thee.

5

Art thou some frenzied poet's thought,

That God embodied and forgot?

### To the Century Plant

[Manuscript dated July 5, 1897, folder 84, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

Thou art gloriously

Crowned at last with beauty;<sup>1</sup>

And thy waxen blossoms,

Born of nameless patience,

Charm away the desert's

5

Dreariness, as some great

Truth a benefactor's



Cast in persecution  
Sheds splendid glory  
In another age.

Note

<sup>1</sup> The Century plant, or Mexican agave (*Agave americana*), flowers only after several years of maturation, after which it dies.

**Verses Written at the Grave of McIntosh<sup>1</sup>**

[Manuscript dated August 10, 1897, folder 86, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. This poem also appeared in *Twin Territories* 3 (June 1901): 133, and also the *Indian Journal*, however no copy has been found.]

O, carol, carol, early Thrush,

A song

Where Oktahutche's<sup>2</sup> water's rush

Along!

In dewey bowers perched to greet

5

The dawn,

Sing on, O songster ever sweet,

Sing on!

And, list'ning to thy ecstasy,

Oh, let me fancy that I hear, 10  
An echo of that voice so dear, 20  
Thrown on the morning air by thee!

An echo of the voice  
Of McIntosh, my friend  
And Indian brother, true, 15  
So true, unto the end.

Carol, carol, sing,  
O bird of melody  
Say as sweet a thing  
Of him as he of thee! 20

Blossom, blossom, swing  
Thy flowers lovingly,  
Sweet wild Rose of Spring,  
Here where his ashes lie!

As one by one the cold days pass, 25  
And Life and Love come on a-wing  
In early sens'ous days of Spring,  
Creep gently hither, modest Grass,

Concealing every ugly cleft,  
And cover up the wreck that's left 30  
    By Winter rude and pitiless!  
O April Beauty, then, come too,  
In snow-white bonnet, sister true  
    Of charity and tenderness  
Ye oaks that spread broad branches at the Wind's behest 35  
Be thou his monument, the watcher o'er his rest!

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Daniel N. McIntosh (1822-1895), Muscogee statesman and Confederate colonel. See Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 143-145.

<sup>2</sup> Oktahutche is the Muscogee name for the North Canadian river in eastern Oklahoma. Translated, the name means "Sand Creek."

#### To the Summer Cloud

[Manuscript dated September 7, 1897 on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 87, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

Ever straying,  
Never staying,  
    Never resting, e'er an aimless rover.  
Wind Shelley's<sup>1</sup> spirit rise to thee,  
Up from the cruel sea, 5  
And dost thou bear it ever thro'

The vast unbounded blue,

Ever ranging,

Ever changing,

Ever yet the same the wide world over!

10

Note

<sup>1</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1827) English Romantic poet whose "Ode To the West Wind" and death by drowning Posey may allude to here.

**To the Crow**

[Manuscript dated October 27, 1897 on Creek Orphan Asylum stationery, folder 89, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

Caw, caw, caw,

Thou bird of ebon hue,

Above the slumb'rous valley spread in flight,

On wings that flash defiance back at light,

A speck against the blue,

5

A-vanishing.

Caw, caw, caw,

Thou bird of common sense,

Far, far in lonely distance leaving me,

Deluded, with a shout of mockery

10

For all my diligence

At evening.

Emendation      6 A-vanishing ]↑ A-vanishing ↓ < Caw, caw, caw >

### To a Snowflake

[*Twin Territories* 1 (December 1899): 8. Manuscript dated December 13, 1897 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 91, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The version of this poem found in the 1910 edition of Posey's poems removes the stanza break after line four.]

This is no home for thee,

Child of the winter cloud.

I question God why He,

In blessing, has allowed

Thee to escape, unless

5

It were to have thee bear

To Earth, in sinfulness,

A sweet, white pardon there.

### Sea Shells

[*Muskogee Phoenix*, December 23, 1897.]

I picked up shells with ruby lips

That spoke in whispers of the sea  
Upon a time and watched the ships  
On white wings sail away in glee

The ships I saw go out that day

5

Live misty dim in memory,

But still I hear, from far away,

The blue waves breaking ceaselessly.

## **Undated Poems Written Between Late December 1897 and October 1898**

Posey served as the superintendent of public instruction for the Muscogee Nation from December 1897 to October 1898 (Littlefield 101). During this period of intense creative output he wrote numerous poems on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, however he provides dates for few of them. Assuming he limited his use of that type of stationery to this period of time, he probably wrote the following poems between late December 1897 and October 1898. With the absence of additional information about their dates of composition, these poems are organized alphabetically.

### **The Bluebird**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 137, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

A winged bit of Indian sky  
Strayed hither from its home on high.

### **Coyote**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 131, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

A few days more and then

There'll be no secret glen,  
Or hollow, deep and dim,  
To hide or shelter him.

And on the prairie far,  
Beneath the beacon star  
On evening's dark'ning shore,  
I'll hear him nevermore.

For where the tepee smoke  
Curled up of yore, the stroke  
Of hammers ring all day,  
And grim Doom shouts, "Make way!"

The immemorial hush  
Is broken by the rush  
Of armed enemies  
Unto the utmost seas.

Emendation      15 armed enemies] ↑armed ↓< usurping > ~

### **Distant Music**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 129,  
Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art,



Tulsa, Oklahoma. See below for an earlier version of this poem and for an explanation of how Minnie Posey altered that early draft in her 1910 edition of her husband's poems.]

I hear a distant melody

And years come crowding back to me,

Thro' vistas dim of memory,

As ships to haven from the sea,

Each freighted with the dreams of youth,

5

And moor them in the restless bay

About my heart awhile and then

Each sail away—so far away

I fancy that I sit beside

The shore of slumber's phantom sea,

10

Behold sweet visions die and hear

The siren voices calling me.

Emendation      11 Behold sweet] ~ < ing > ↑ sweet ↓

68

Mother's Song -  
Cupadpa, Ind. Ter.,

189

I hear a distant melody  
And years come crowding back to me,  
Two vistas dim of memory,  
As ships to haven from the sea;

Last thing that was the dream of youth  
And now there is the restless bay  
About my heart awhile and then  
Last part away was far away!

At The Sirens' Call.

I fancy that I sit beside  
The shore of shimmering phantom sea  
And see sweet visions dim and hear  
The siren voices calling me.

I hear it now;  
It comes never,  
On land and sea  
It follows me,

The altered early manuscript of "Distant Music," displaying Minnie Posey's revisions of her husband's draft. The titles "Mother's Song" and "At the Siren's Call" are in Minnie Posey's handwriting. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 136.

### **An Earlier Draft of “Distant Music”**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 136 and 150, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. In her 1910 edition of her husband’s poems, Minnie H. Posey changed this early draft of “Distant Music” into two poems, giving them titles of her own making: “Mother’s Song” and “At the Siren’s Call.” Alexander Posey selected the first three stanzas of this draft for “Distant Music,” and he even wrote a clean draft of the poem in its final form; see undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 129, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. In preparing her posthumous collection of Posey’s poems, Minnie Posey ignored his version of “Distant Music” (it does not appear in her edition) and divided the stanzas. Minnie made stanzas one, two, four and five into “Mother’s Song” and then placed stanzas three and six under the title of “At the Siren’s Call.” Minnie’s reason for such this alteration of her husband’s poetry remains unknown. Perhaps she hoped to salvage Posey’s abandoned stanzas, but her actions certainly violated her husband’s authorial decisions.]

I hear a distant melody,

And years come crowding back to me,

Thro’ vistas dim of memory,

As ships to haven from the sea;

Each freighted with the dreams of youth,

5

And moor them in the restless bay  
About my heart a while, and then  
Each sails away—so far away!

I fancy that I sit beside

The shore of slumbers' phantom sea 10  
And see sweet visions die, and hear  
The siren voices calling me.

I hear it ever;

It ceases never;

On land and sea 15

It follows me,

So soft and low and far away,

Like echoes dying in the folded hills.

I hear it there, go where I may,

A cure for all the sad heart's ills. 20

Am I a shell cast on the shore

Of Time's illimitable sea

To hear and whisper evermore

The music of Eternity?

### **Earth's Lilies and God's**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. An undated manuscript of this poem exists on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 125, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Earth's starry lilies sink to rest,  
All folded in the mere at night  
But God's slip back and slumber best,  
Sky hidden, in the broad day light.

### **Her Beauty**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 133, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The third stanza of this poem has been crossed out in the manuscript. It is included here in brackets. The 1910 edition includes a poem entitled "A Valentine" which is apparently a variation of this poem. Both versions are reproduced here.]

Her cheeks are garden-spots  
Of Touch-me-nots;  
Her hair the gathered beams

Of sunny dreams;  
And that her soul looks thro' 5  
Are bits of fallen blue.

No wall hath circled yet,  
Nor dews have wet,  
A red rose like her lips.  
Her finger-tips 10  
They taper like a leaf;  
Her heart is all mischief.

[She's God's improvement of  
Her sex. O Love!  
O Life! O Birds! O Light! 15  
O winds! O night!  
Ye are Heaven here  
When she is near!]

#### **A Valentine [Her Beauty]**

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 175. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect

his final intentions. See the entry for “Her Beauty” for further information about this poem.]

Your cheeks are garden-spots

Of Touch-me-nots;

Your hair the gathered beams

Of sunny dreams;

And that your soul looks thro’

5

Are bits of fallen blue.

No wall hath circled yet,

Nor dews have wet,

A red rose like your lips.

To steal sweet kisses from your brow,

10

A lightsome zephyr I would be,—

A book to murmur you a vow

Of love and constancy.

**[I sing but fragments of]**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 138, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Apparently Posey incorporated this fragment within the poem “[The

Poet's Song].” The same manuscript page that bears this fragment also contains the poem  
“A Picture.”

I sing but fragments of  
    A high born melody  
Stray notes and castaways  
    Of perfect harmony

**Ingersoll<sup>1</sup>**

[*Fort Gibson Post*, October 15, 1904. An undated manuscript version of this poem exists on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 124, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A cancelled fragment found at the top of the same manuscript page was apparently meant for another poem and is included here in brackets.]

When love and the fireside inspired,  
    Words dropped from his eloquent lips  
Like music from the golden lyre  
    Swept by Apollo's finger-tips.

[Cancelled fragment found on an undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 124, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]



[I have wandered back thro' the mist of the years  
With what sad, heavy heart and eyes full of tears  
I have relived the days of my youth today  
Did I muse on the scenes so sacred for aye.  
I heard voices that speak nevermore  
Sing and laugh and talk as of yore]

5

Note

<sup>1</sup> Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899), Lawyer and accomplished orator, famous for his agnostic views.

### **Life's Mystery**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 139, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

I wander by the shore of life,  
Enchanted by the voices from the sea;  
Forever trying—like a child—  
In vain, to understand its mystery.

### **A Picture**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 138, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The poem “Where the Rivers Meet” appears to be an alternate version of “A Picture.” This alternate version is included in this edition. Also found on the manuscript of “A Picture” is an untitled stanza that begins with the line “[I sing but fragments of],” and a full transcription of this fragment is included in this edition.]

Lo! what a vivid picture here,  
Of sin and purity  
Here where the rivers join their hands  
And journey to the sea.

A dirty, earthly look hath one  
Reflects not back the sky  
But on the other's bosom rests  
The smiles of chastity.

5

### **Sequoyah<sup>1</sup>**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 126, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

The ages will remember thee,

Illustrious Indian, poets tell  
Thy story. Thou' st a star to be;  
Aye, one whose light has not yet fell  
But which is shining far away 5  
And cannot reach the world today.

Note

<sup>1</sup> Sequoyah (1776?-1843) invented the Cherokee syllabary.

**[Upon Love's sea, our barques shall sail] [Drifting Apart]**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 132, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The 1910 edition entitles this poem "Drifting Apart," but no title exists on this manuscript.]

Upon Love's sea, our barques shall sail  
No more together;  
The dark'ning sky and rising gale  
Bring stormy weather.

The cruel Fates, at last, sweetheart, 5  
Our love must sever;  
Must furl our sails, drift us apart  
For aye and ever.

I pray a sunny port be thine,

When storm is over;

10

I know whatever lot be mine,

I'm still thy lover.

OFFICE OF  
ALEX. L. POSEY,  
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,  
MURKREEK, INDIANA

To Wahilla Enhotulle (To the South Wind)

Oh, take me, Wind, into  
Thy confidence; and tell  
Me, whispering soft and low,  
The secrets of the dell.

Oh, teach me what it is  
The meadow flower say,  
As to and fro they nod  
Thro' all the golden day.

Oh, make me Wind to know  
The language of the bee,  
The burden of the will  
Bird's rapturous melody;

Oh, waft me e'er so sweet  
Long fragrance from the  
That haunts the meadow  
The scorch of new-mown hay  
And songs of harvest men;

Oh, hear me, balmy Wind,  
And, whispering softer yet,  
Unfold the story of  
The pine trees sad request.

O Wind hasten a sigh  
Blow from her lips divine  
Upon this sunbright day? -  
A token or a sign?

The pass-words of the leaves  
Upon the cactus weed  
And let me join them in  
Their mystic brotherhood.

The cooing from the sea  
And forests dark and deep;  
The soft red notes of Plover  
And bleat of <sup>straggling</sup> wandering sheep.

An early draft of "To Wahilla Enhotulle (To the South Wind)" on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 134.

**To Wahilla Enhotulle (To the South Wind)**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. An undated manuscript of this poem on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery can be found in folder 134, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

O Wind, hast thou a sigh  
    Robbed from her lips divine  
Upon this sunbright day—  
    A token or a sign?

Oh, take me, Wind, into 5  
    Thy confidence, and tell  
Me, whispering soft and low,  
    The secrets of the dell.

Oh, teach me what it is 10  
    The meadow flowers say,  
As to and fro they nod  
    Thro' all the golden day.

Oh, hear, Wind of the South,

And whispering softer yet,  
Unfold the story of 15  
The pine tree's regret.

Oh, waft me echoes sweet  
That haunt the meadow glen,  
The scent of new-mown hay  
And songs of harvest men. 20

The coolness from the sea  
And forests dark and deep,  
The soft reed notes of Pan<sup>1</sup>  
And bleat of straying sheep.

Oh, make me, Wind, to know 25  
The language of the bee,  
The burden of the wild  
Bird's rapturous melody.

The pass-word of the leaves  
Upon the cottonwood; 30  
And let me join them in  
Their mystic brotherhood.

Note

<sup>1</sup> In Greek mythology Pan is the god of the forest and fertility who bears the feet, ears, and horns of a goat.

### **What My Soul Would Be**

[Undated manuscript on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 126, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

What mountain glens afar

And woodland valleys are

To echoes in the air,

My soul would be

To harmony.

5



1898

**In the Winter Hills**

[Manuscript dated January 6, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 95, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

The sunshine, falling warm from  
Out the low hung winter sky is  
Dancing in the valley; wreathes of  
Haze, as blue as you can think, have  
Circled all the hills; and birds, 5  
Forgetting in their jubilation,  
Are singing everywhere of Spring.  
And, oh, to live! and, oh, to breathe  
This Indian air and dream and dream  
All day here in the winter hills! 10

**The Open Sky**

[Manuscript dated January 14, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 96, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The poem, "Sunset," is also found on this manuscript page.]

I look up at the open sky,

And all the evils in  
My heart the instant pale and die,  
For, lo! I cannot sin!

### Sunset

[Manuscript dated January 14, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 96, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The poem, "The Open Sky," is also found on this manuscript page.]

By coward clouds forgot,  
By yonder's sunset glow,  
The Day, in battle shot,  
Lies bleeding, weak, and low.

### The Legend of the Red Rose

[Manuscript dated February 15 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 96, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Though this manuscript does not include a year, Posey only worked as superintendent of public instruction for the Muscogee Nation from December 1897 to October 1898 (Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 101). Assuming he only used this stationery during that time, he more than likely wrote this poem on February 15, 1898. The poem "My Pearl" also appears on this same manuscript page. The version of "The Legend of the Red

Rose” that appears in the 1910 edition contains several variants that may originate in a revised version now lost. Both versions are reproduced below.]

But, in a luckless hour,

The Red Rose once was white

As any flake of snow can be;

The sum of her delight

Was knowledge of her purity—of the Rose!

10

For so the pretty little legend goes.

5

#### My Pearl

But, on a luckless day,

There bloomed outside the garden wall

A common wildwood flower,

So wondrous sweet and fair and tall,

That envy flushed the white cheeks of the Rose!

10

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane,

1910): 129. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey’s lifetime;

as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband’s work, this version may not reflect

his final intentions.]

Shaped like a falling tear

The Red Rose once was white

As any flake of snow can be;

The sum of her delight

Brook Song

[Manuscript dated February 18 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,  
As ev'ry Bee and nodding Poppy knows, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American  
But, in a luckless hour, poem occupies the same page as "Prairies of the West."]

There bloomed outside the garden wall  
A common wildwood flow'r,  
So wondrous fair and sweet and tall,  
That envy flushed the white face of the Rose! 10

In a wee brook's song

That come as voices **My Pearl** 5

[Manuscript dated February 18 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder  
96, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and  
Art. Though this manuscript does not include a year, Posey only worked as  
superintendent of public instruction for the Muscogee Nation from December 1897 to  
October 1898 (Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 101). Assuming he only used this stationery during  
that time, he more than likely wrote this poem on February 18, 1898. The poem "The  
Legend of the Red Rose" also appears on this same manuscript page.]

[Manuscript dated March 27, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,

I own a wee pink pearl Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American

I picked up long ago, poem occupies the same page as "Brook Song." Posey incorporates

Shaped like a falling tear from the later poem, "The Homestead of Empire"]

On maiden cheeks aglow.

Roll on, ye Prairies of the West,

Roll on, like unsaddled seas away **Brook Song**

[Manuscript dated March 27, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 97, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. This poem occupies the same page as "Prairies of the West."]

If you'll but pause and

Listen, listen long,

There're far-off voices

In a wee brook's song

That come as voices

5

Come from out the years;

And you will dream you

Hear the voice once *Her's*

Perhaps and wend on

Blinded by your tears.

10

### **Prairies of the West**

[Manuscript dated March 27, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 97, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. This poem occupies the same page as "Brook Song." Posey incorporates all lines except the fifth into the later poem, "The Homestead of Empire."]

Roll on, ye Prairies of the West,

Roll on, like unsailed seas aways!

I love thy silences

And thy mysterious room.

Roll on, companions of my soul

5

Roll on, into the boundless day!

### **To Yahola, on His First Birthday<sup>1</sup>**

[Manuscript dated March 28, 1898, folder 98, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

The sky has put her bluest garment on,

And gently brushed the snowy clouds away;

The robin trills a sweeter melody,

Because you are just one year old today.

The wind remembers, in his sweet refrains,

5

Away, away up in the tossing trees,

That you came in the world a year ago,

And earth is filled with pleasant harmonies,

And all things seem to say,

“Just one year old today

10

Note

<sup>1</sup> This poem was written for Posey's first son, Yahola Irving Posey, who was born on March 29, 1897.

### To a Morning Warbler

[*Fort Gibson Post*, October 15, 1904; also published in *Indian's Friend*, April 1901 and *Muskogee Phoenix*, November 2, 1899. Manuscript dated March 31, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 99, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art]

Sing on till light and shadow meet,

Blithe spirit of the morning air;

I do not know thy name, nor care;

I only know thy name is sweet,

And that my heart beats thanks to thee,

5

Made purer by thy minstrelsy.

Ellettsville, Ind. Dec., 189.

Lowena.

When hills between us lie  
And rivers broad and deep;  
But here, or there, a bird  
Is singing me to sleep.  
And Love has bridged the mountain stream  
And do all the streams between us flow.

Kind friends they bid me stay  
And make their houses my own;  
But they cannot be you  
To me and I am alone  
And shall be till we meet.

However kind the friends,  
He comes however fair,  
My heart returns to thee,  
Not happy anywhere  
I ever when thou art near to share  
Life's light of joy or shade of care.

Came last May 21, 1898

Manuscript of "Lowena" on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 100.



Save when thou art near to share

Lowena<sup>1</sup>

[Manuscript dated May 31, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 100, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

The title refers to Posey's pet name for his wife Minnie Harris Posey (born on February 3, 1873). Minnie Posey explained in a letter to Edward Everett Dale that the name meant, "loving the bright Blue hills between us lie,

And rovers broad and deep;

But here, as there, a bird

[The Poet's Song]

Is singing me to sleep,

And love has bridged the mountains blue

5

And all the streams between us two.

Kind friends, they bid me stay

And make their homes my own;

But they cannot be you

To me, and I'm alone

10

Amid the music sweet,

And shall be till we meet.

However kind the friends,

The scenes however fair,

5

My heart returns to thee,

15

Not happy anywhere

[We take no notice of]

Save when thou art near to share

Life's light of joy or shade of care.

Note

<sup>1</sup> The title refers to Posey's pet name for his wife Minnie Harris Posey (born on February 3, 1873). Minnie Posey explained in a letter to Edward Everett Dale that the name meant, "loving the bright and happy." See Minnie H. Posey to Edward Everett Dale, February 19, 1919, Dale Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman.

We see it only here and there.

### [The Poet's Song]

[Manuscript dated June 30, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,

folder 101, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American

History and Art. The title of this poem is written in Minnie Posey's handwriting and

probably derives from her. This poem appears to incorporate the fragment, "[I sing but

fragments of]" which is included in this edition. This manuscript also contains the poem

"[We take no notice of]."

The poet sings but fragments of

A high-born melody.

A few stray notes and castaways

Of perfect harmony

That come to him like murmurs from

The sea of mystery.

5  
5

[We take no notice of]

[Manuscript dated June 30, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 101, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. This manuscript also contains the poem "The Poet's Song."]

Beneath the boughs of oak and pine, 10

We take no notice of all the year,

The sunshine falling everywhere

Nor care for it until

We see it only here and there.

My spirit's needs 15

Are satisfied. [Nature's Blessings]

[Manuscript dated July 1, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 102, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The title of this poem is written in Minnie Posey's hand and is probably her creation. The version of this poem found in the 1910 edition omits the third stanza and fails to indent the second and fourth lines.] 20

A hush, sunshine,

'Tis mine to be in love with life,

And mine to hear the robins sing;

'Tis mine to live apart from strife

And kneel to flowers blossoming—

To all things fair, 5

As at a shrine—

To drink the air

Twilight [July 7, 1898]

[Manuscript] As I would wine, 898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 103, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and

To Love, I've built a temple here, <sup>ackets differentiates it from another poem of the same</sup>

<sup>th</sup> Beneath the boughs of oak and pine, <sup>see how placed here 9 10</sup>

Beside a spring, that all the year, <sup>see how a change has been</sup>

O Tells of a harmony divine, <sup>rest within</sup>

Thy I own no creeds

For I am Sweet Love beside <sup>me with</sup>

Thy My spirit's needs 15

So tender Are satisfied, <sup>be fraught with dreams</sup> 5

Of beauteous things.

For all the pleasures of the King,

For all the joys the rich man feels, <sup>one [July 10, 1898]</sup>

For all the bliss that gold can bring, <sup>Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,</sup>

<sup>for</sup> I would not turn upon my heels, <sup>collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of America</sup> 20

<sup>History</sup> A hush, sunshine, <sup>ion of the title in brackets differentiates it from another poem</sup>

bearing th A clamb'ring vine

Upon the wall

O maid, Is worth them all.

Who holds, in act to sup,

Emendations 13 I own] ~ ↑ own ↓ < love >

Of sensuous sunshine 14 Sweet Love] ↑ Sweet Love ↓ < My own >

**Twilight [July 7, 1898]**

[Manuscript dated July 7, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 103, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The portion of the title in brackets differentiates it from another poem of the same title.]

According to marks on the manuscript, Posey later placed lines 9 and 10

before lines 11 and 12. The earlier version reversed this order. Posey's change has been

O Twilight, fold me, let me rest within  
Thy dusky wings;

For I am weary, weary. Lull me with

Thy whisperings,

So tender; let my sleep be fraught with dreams

5

Of beautiful things,

No soft and wooing,

#### June [July 10, 1898]

[Manuscript dated July 10, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 104, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The portion of the title in brackets differentiates it from another poem bearing the same title.]

O maid, of shape divine,

Who holds, in act to sup,

10

And over-brimming cup

Of sensuous sunshine.

**The West Wind [Husse Lotka Enhotulle]**

[Manuscript dated August 7, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 105, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. According to marks on the manuscript, Posey later placed lines 9 and 10 before lines 11 and 12. The earlier version reversed this order. Posey's change has been retained in this edition. The title "Husse Lotka Enhotulle" is written in Minnie Posey's handwriting and is probably her own addition to the poem.]

From o'er the hills it comes to me,

The clouds pursuing,

With song of bird and drone of bee,

So soft and wooing; away

And drowned in overflow

From o'er the woods, thro' shade and sheen,

5

With fragrance teeming,

From o'er the prairies, wide and green,

And leaves me dreaming. 13, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery.

Folder 107, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American

Across the fields of corn and wheat

In valleys lying,

10

It seems to sing a message sweet

Of peace undying; swim anyone

"So can a goose," remarked a sage.

I shout aloud—the wildwoods ring

As they have never—

“Blow, O Wind of the West, and sing

This song forever!”

“So can a bullfrog,” said the sage.

But, heedless still, the fool began,     **Morning**

[Manuscript dated August 11, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,  
folder 106, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American  
History and Art.]

“And so can any jackass,” said

The cloud-dykes burst, and lo is peace.

The Night is swept away

And drowned in overflow

Of Light at break of day!

#### Eyes of Blue and Brown

[Manuscript dated August 2, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery

#### **The Athlete and the Philosopher**

[Manuscript dated August 13, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,  
folder 107, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American  
History and Art.]

Two eyes met mine

In Greece, an athlete boasted once

That he could outswim anyone.

“So can a goose,” remarked a sage,

M	With eyes alive with wholesome fun.	5
	Refused to woo	
	The athlete boasted on, "And I	5
	Can deeper dive than any man."	
	"So can a bullfrog," said the sage.	
D	But, heedless still, the fool began,	
	A whole year thro,	10
	"And more than that, can higher kick	
	Than any living man in Greece."	10
	"And so can any jackass," said	
B	The sage. The athlete held his peace.	
	Two eyes of brown,	
Emendation 1	11 "And] A ~	15
	Beneath a crown	

### Eyes of Blue and Brown

[Manuscript dated August 21, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 108, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

	The shining gold,	20
	Two eyes met mine	
	Of heav'n's own blue—	
	Forget-me-nots	
	Seen under dew;	



My heart straightway 5  
 Refused to woo  
 All other eyes  
 Except those two.

Days came and went  
 A whole year thro, 10  
 And still I loved  
 Two eyes of blue.

But when one day  
 Two eyes of brown,  
 In olive set 15  
 Beneath a crown

Of browner hair,  
 Met mine, behold,  
 The eyes beneath  
 The shining gold, 20

Love-lit and loved  
 In days of yore,  
 Grew dim, and were

Sky-blue no more!

### Flowers

[Manuscript dated August 26, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 109, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

When flowers fade, why do

Their fragrances linger still?

Have they a spirit, too,

That Death can never kill?

Is it their Judgment Day

5

When from the dark, dark mould

Of April and of May

Their blooms again unfold?

### Mount Shasta

[Manuscript dated September 10, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 110, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

Behold, the somber pines have pitched their tents

At Shasta's base like hosts of Night;

For aye besieging in his battlements—

For aye in vain—their monarch, Light!

10

Though seas dry up and empty deserts bloom;

5

Though races come and pass away

From earth, it still, it still is seen to loom,

And flash back God's smile for aye!

### **The Dew and the Bird**

[Manuscript dated September 16, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 111, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

There is more glory in a drop of dew,

That shineth only for an hour,

Than there is in the pomp of earth's great Kings

Within the noonday of their pow'r.

There is more sweetness in a single strain

5

That falleth from a wild bird's throat,

At random in the lonely forest's depths,

Than there's in all the songs that bards e'er wrote.

Yet men, for aye, rememb'ring Caesar's<sup>1</sup> name,

<sup>1</sup> Limbo Creek runs through the Tulledega Mountain area of Posey's childhood home

Forget the glory in the dew,

And passing Homer's epic let the lark's

Song fall unheeded from the blue.

[Manuscript dated September 26, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction

Note

stationery, folder 113, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of

American History and Art.] <sup>1</sup>Gaius Julius Caesar (100-44 bc), Roman statesman who initiated the Roman imperial system. He

was assassinated by a group of senators who feared his popularity would make him a king.

### The Deer

Upon the rocks that frown

[Manuscript dated September 25, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction

Above the North Fork river,

stationery, folder 112, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of

American History and Art.]

Are couches green of moss,

Cast all his cares aside

5

From out the folded hills,

And dream of troubles never.

That lie beneath a thin blue veil,

There comes a deer to drink

Be it my lot someday,

From Limbo's<sup>1</sup> waters in the dale.

when life is gusty weather

And snow falls thick in June

Then flies he back into

And all my roses wither.

5

The hills, and sitting here, I dream

To leave the cold world fair

And watch, as vain as he,

Behind and journey further

My image lying in the stream.

Note

When Love is Dead

[*Twin Territories 2* (October 1900): 35. Manuscript dated September 26, 1898 on  
<sup>1</sup> Limbo Creek runs through the Tulledega Mountain area of Posey's childhood home  
Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 114, Alexander L. Posey

Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The version of this

### Be It My Lot

poem found in the 1910 edition is arranged in a significantly different order. As the  
[Manuscript dated September 26, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction  
version presented here matches both the original manuscript and the version published  
stationery, folder 113, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of  
American History and Art. The original title of this poem was "Be It My Lot Someday,"

but at some point Posey crossed out the last word in the title.]

Who last shall kiss the lips

Of love when Love is dead?  
Upon the rocks that frown

Who last shall fold her hands  
Above the North Fork river,

And pillow soft her head?  
Are couches green of moss,

Where one could rest forever;

Who last shall vigil keep  
Cast all his cares aside

Beside her lonely bier?  
And dream of troubles never.

I ask, and from the dark

Cold night without, I hear  
Be it my lot someday,

When life is gusty weather

The mystic answer: "I  
And snow falls thick in June

Her mother, Earth, shall press  
And all my roses wither,

Her lips the last in my  
To leave the cold world fair

Infinity tenderness."  
Behind and journey thither.

5

10

### To the Morning Glory When Love is Dead

[*Twin Territories* 2 (October 1900): 35. Manuscript dated September 28, 1898 on  
Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 114, Alexander L. Posey  
Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The version of this  
poem found in the 1910 edition is arranged in a significantly different order. As the  
version presented here matches both the original manuscript and the version published  
during Posey's lifetime, it probably best reflects his final intentions.]

Long ere the noonday beams appear

Who last shall kiss the lips

Of love when Love is dead?

Who last shall fold her hands

5

And pillow soft her head?

Along the path that I must go

Who last shall vigil keep rest below.

5

Beside her lonely bier?

I ask, and from the dark

To an Over-Stylish Miss

[Cold night without, I hear 2, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery  
folder 116, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American

The mystic answer: "I

Her mother, Earth, shall press

10

Her lips the last in my fingers fair

Infinite tenderness." at beauty, miss.

Not all the costly silks you wear

Add to the sweetness of your life **To the Morning Glory**

[Manuscript dated October 2, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,  
folder 115, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American  
History and Art.]

I fear you've never thought of this

The sun hath never set look so rare.

Upon thy beauty yet

Long ere the noonday beams appear

Thou diest in thy loveliness.

But wintry days await, *the of bliss*

50

And trials sore and great, *he has plied.*

Along the path that I must go

Ere withered youth finds rest below.

*A dawn of hair was on your head!*

But they, alas, have given place **To an Over-Stylish Miss**

[Manuscript dated October 2, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,  
folder 116, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American  
History and Art.]

The jewels on your fingers fair

*[Farewell, frail leaf, till]*

Cannot increase your beauty, miss;

[Manuscript dated October 17, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery  
folder 117, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American

History and Art.]

Add to the sweetness of your kiss.

Your teeth are pearls sufficient, miss, 5

And silks enough your wondrous hair.

I fear you've never thought of this

That you contrive to look so rare.

From thy mould, thou will rise 5

I'm sure that Nature sorrows, miss,

To see you so unsatisfied;

That are desolate now!

To know you've not a tith of bliss 10

For all the pains that she has plied.

[Manuscript dated October 22, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery]

A twilight blush was on your face, collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American

A dawn of hair was on your head!

But they, alas, have given place

To artificial show and fled! 15

The smile of a father

Emendations 12 blush was] ~ < is > ↑ was ↓

The smile of a mother,

13 hair was] ~ < is > ↑ was ↓

The smile of a sister,

The smile of a sweetheart 5

**[Farewell, frail leaf, till]**

When fondly you've kissed her

[Manuscript dated October 17, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery,

The moment ere you part

folder 117, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American

The sweet smile of a wife.

History and Art.]



Farewell, frail leaf, till

14

Spring sets free the rill

And puts life in the bough

And a song in the bird.

From thy mould, thou will rise

5

Like a spark that is stirred,

To thy home in the skies

That are desolate now!

### **The Sunshine of Life**

[Manuscript dated October 22, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 118, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

The smile of a mother,

The smile of a father,

The smile of a brother,

The smile of a sister,

The smile of a sweetheart,

5

When fondly you've kissed her,

The moment ere you 'part,

The sweet smile of a wife,

And the smile of a friend

Who proves true to the end,

Is the sunshine of life.

OFFICE OF  
**ALEX. L. POSEY,**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,  
MICHIGAN

Eufaula, Ind. Tex., 189

*Gone.*

*Gone! leaving all her bright  
Hopes scattered, shell-like, on  
The shore of life. Gone! gone!  
Like a white dove in flight.*

*She hangs the robe she wore  
In mottled harmony  
And perfect purity,  
She needs it now no more.*

*She is but a memory  
Of kind deeds and of  
A life that was all love,  
How sweet her rest must be*

*Beneath the leaves that fall  
From Autumn branches bare  
To slumber with her there  
In answer to her call!*

Oct. 22, 1898

*Chimnobie Hoop's*

The torn manuscript of "Gone" on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 119 and 128.

## Gone

[Dated October 22, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, the manuscript for this poem has been torn into two halves that now form the contents of folders 119 (the first two stanzas) and 128 (the final two stanzas), Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Posey crossed out the second stanza, but it is retained here in brackets. As the manuscript appears to have been deliberately torn in half, it is uncertain whether he abandoned the work, intended only the first stanza to survive, or divided the poem into two different texts.] stationery folder 120, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American

Gone! leaving all her bright

Hopes scattered, shell-like, on

The shore of life: Gone! gone!

Like a white dove in flight: true,

I cannot choose between the two

[There hangs the robe she wore

5

In matchless harmony: why

And perfect purity: to wear

She needs it now no more.]

She's but a memory: Kate and Lou,

Of kind deeds and of love so true,

10

A life that was all love: the two,

10

How sweet her rest must be: if by

Beneath the leaves that fall

From Autumn branches bare

To slumber with her there,

15

In answer to her call!

### **Kate and Lou**

[Manuscript dated October 28, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 120, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

So wondrous fair are Kate and Lou,

And both return my love so true,

I cannot choose between the two.

And so the rolling years go by,

Nor ever halt to question why

5

I cannot bring myself to woo

Sweet Kate and not love fair Lou too.

So wondrous fair are Kate and Lou,

And both return my love so true,

I cannot choose between the two,

10

And so, as the swift years roll by,

Alike I'll love them till I die;  
For I can't bring myself to woo  
Fair Lou and not love sweet Kate, too.

OFFICE OF  
**ALEX. L. POSEY,**  
 SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,  
 INDIANA STATE.

*His silence when all is still,  
 When darkness gathers round,  
 To hear from hill to hill,  
 The far, the wandering sound  
 Of My Hermitage.*

Cafaula, Ind. Dec. 1878

Between me and noise of strife,  
 The walls of mountain set in pine,  
 The dusty, care-strewn paths of life  
 Lead not to the retreat of mine.

I live with Cole and with Song,  
 And Beauty leads me far to see  
 Her temples, colonades, and long  
 To gather do we love to be.

The mountains wail  
 The hills have wailed me in conflict  
 And left me but a bit of blue  
 Above. My days are brief but sweet  
 To sunset! And all the long nights thro'

I hear the river flowing by  
 Along its sandy bars;  
 Behold, far on the midnight sky,  
 My garden of stars  
 An infinite of stars

Nov. 28, 1878.

The cedar and the pine  
 Have pitched their tents with me,  
 What freedom vast is mine!  
 What rooms of mystery!  
 And on the dreary southern breeze  
 A healing balm is on the breeze  
 That stabs me, like a laden bee,  
 And sighs for rest among the trees,  
 O'er far flowers, bits of melody.

What afterglow the twilight holds  
 The dark wing skies along!  
 And oh, what nose like dawn's my field  
 That smites the hills to song!

High, in the solitude of air,  
 The gray hawk circles on and on,  
 Like a spirit soaring there,  
 His image pales and he is gone.

Chimney Stairs

An early draft of "My Hermitage" on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 121.

## My Hermitage

[*Indian's Friend* 12 (May 1900): 1; first published in *The Red Man* 15 (February 1900): 2. Manuscript dated November 28, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 121, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. The version of this poem found in the 1910 edition of Posey's poems reprints the poem in a significantly different order from any known version from Posey's lifetime. As the version presented here is the last known to have been published during Posey's lifetime, it probably best reflects his final intentions.]

To hear, from hill to hill,

Between me and the noise of strife 20

Are walls of mountains set with pine;

The dusty care-strewn paths of life

Lead not to this retreat of mine.

What freedom vast is mine!

I live with Echo<sup>1</sup> and with Song, 5

And Beauty leads me forth to see

Her temple's colonnades, and long, 25

Together do we love to be

And sighs for rest among the trees,

The mountains wall me in complete,

And leave me but a bit of blue 10

Above. All year, the days are sweet—

How sweet! And all the long nights thro' 30



I hear the river flowing by  
Along its sandy bars;  
Behold, far in the midnight sky, 15  
An infinite of stars!

'Tis sweet, when all is still,  
When darkness gathers round,  
To hear, from hill to hill,  
The far, the wandering sound. 20

The cedar and the pine  
Have pitched their tents with me.  
What freedom vast is mine!  
What room of mystery!

And on the dreamy southern breeze, 25  
That steals in like a laden bee  
And sighs for rest among the trees,  
Are far-blown bits of melody.

What afterglows the twilights hold,  
The darkening skies along! 30

And O, what rose-like dawns unfold,

That smite the hills to song!

High in the solitude of air,

The gray hawk circles on and on,

Till, like a spirit soaring there,

His image pales and he is gone!

Note

<sup>1</sup> In Greek mythology, Echo is a nymph who is deprived of her ability to speak by Hera and must instead repeat the words of others.

**What I Ask of Life**

[Manuscript dated December 12, 1898 on Superintendent of Public Instruction stationery, folder 122, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.]

I ask no more of life than sunset's gold;

A cottage hid in songbird's neighborhood,

Where I may sing and do a little good,

For love and pleasant memories when I'm old.

If life hath this in store for me—

A spot where coarse souls enter not,

Or strife, I'm sure there cannot be

On earth a fairer heaven sought.

## Poems From an Undated Ledger, Between Late 1898 and Early 1899

These poems either originate from, or are later versions of poems taken from, an undated ledger that resides in folder 140 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. These poems—or in some cases fragments of these poems—were written between late 1898 and early 1899. As no further information is known, these poems are arranged alphabetically.

### A Glimpse

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. As Posey mentions the Brazos River in this poem, his inspiration probably came from a trip to Galveston Texas he took in June of 1897.]

A hurried glimpse is all I had of her,  
Beyond the Brazos and the Trinity;<sup>1</sup>  
'Twere best I saw no more of her lest I  
Had bowed to her as some divinity.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> Brazos and the Trinity, two rivers in Texas. Posey was probably inspired to write this poem by his June 1897 trip to Galveston, Texas. In his June 24, 1897 journal entry he writes of his trip: "The moss woods beyond the Brazos—how beautiful!"

### The Boston Mountains

[Photocopy of an undated clipping, Box I-22.6, Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. A manuscript of this poem exists in folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

When God had finished making earth,  
He found He had a residue  
Of rocks, poor soil and scrubby oaks,  
For which, plan as He might, He had  
No use; and so, despairing, swept  
Them all up here together, 'tween  
Fort Smith and town of Fayetteville.<sup>1</sup>

5

Note

<sup>1</sup> Fort Smith and Fayetteville are both towns located western Arkansas.

### **By the River's Brink**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

The sky is blue, the day so fair,  
I sit here by the river's brink—  
The Oktahutche,<sup>1</sup> deep and wide—  
And dream awhile—in fancy think,  
Long looking down into the tide

5

That floweth on and on as blue,  
My soul is drifting thither, too;  
Till lost in willow shadows there.

Note

<sup>1</sup> Oktahutche is the Muscogee name for the North Canadian river in eastern Oklahoma. Translated, the name means "Sand Creek."

**By the Shore of Life**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

I wander by the shore of life  
Enchanted by the voices from the sea;  
Forever trying, like a child,  
In vain to understand its mystery.

**Chinkings**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A manuscript of this poem exists a ledger collecting several other works. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Just like that white washed fence

That man with good, hard sense  
And polished ways;  
Rub 'gainst him, close and tight,  
You'll carry off some white 5  
That'll wear for days.

The longer that I live  
I find true friends more rare;  
He's like a flea these days;  
Right sure, you think he is 10  
To find he isn't there.

Say your say and be away,  
For these are times demanding this of you;  
Men can't listen to all day  
What might be said in just a word or two. 15

### **A Common Failing**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of  
American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

There is a faint and subtle curse  
Of high authority

That makes us rather be  
The speaker to the audience  
Than auditor in all of us. 5

It seems a foolish thing,  
Yet we would have men follow us  
And each one be a king.

### A Fable

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A manuscript of this poem exists a ledger collecting several other works. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

String this with the pearls of Aesop:  
A sachem, once upon a time,  
So say the prophets of the Creeks,  
Convoked a mighty council,  
Declared that he could learn no more, 5  
And thereupon prepared to die.  
But loath to leave this world without  
Indulging in the luxury  
Most dear to him—his usual smoke—  
He asked his daughter for a coal 10

Of fire, wherewith to light his pipe.  
She brought the coal on ashes in  
Her palm, and up the sachem jump,  
“What folly! Foolish man!” said he,  
“I’m taught a lesson by a child!”

15

### Epigrams

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A manuscript of several of the epigrams found in this later published version exists in a ledger. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Man is mortal and not divine,  
Ruled by woman, made drunk by wine,  
Loved of angels, by devils sought  
His pride is vain—but God hath wrought!

Read the riddle—grace to the skies—  
Are some born fools, are some born wise?  
Tell me, Wizard, regarding man,  
Why most men “can’t” and yet some “can.”

5



Why some with brains on certain line

(10 make)

Are yet absurd where others shine?

10

Are many free of these weak spots

Enough to laugh at harder lots?

God did decree this painful thing—

Humbled man's pride because of sin:

That all are fools, and all are wise—

15

But then he made us different eyes.

There are men wearing broadcloth who are not able to clothe their ideas well.

Some men will ask impossible things of you and then become your enemies.

When you ask a man for a favor, do not get mad at him if he requires you to give him  
your note.

Some individuals do not even pay the world rent for the room they take up in it.

Prosperity tends to impair the memory of some individuals who can remember readily  
when pinched for means.

When a man says the world is bad, let him show some proof that he has tried to make it better.

When a man throws his head backward and puts on a wise mysterious look, you are in no danger of being shot down by a new idea.

Those who wonder why Gen. Otis<sup>1</sup> is not ousted from his command in the Philippines, fail to reflect that his pull with the administration is made of Manila hemp.

Many individuals dream of castles in pole pens; of magnificent estates on a ten-acre sofky<sup>2</sup> patch, and of other impossibilities; but few, very few lay hold on the things within their reach.

When a man becomes so good that he is in nobody's way; when everybody is prompt to say but well of him. I tell you, sir, you can put it down, and safely too, that the world can move on without him.

When a man, who is not a frequent visitor, comes to your house, you can be certain that he has an ax to grind. And, as he will in his talk, prowl in the neighborhood of his wants, you can soon acquaint yourself with his motive without inviting him to tell you about it.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Elwell Stephen Otis (1838-1909), was the unpopular commanding general of the United States forces in the Philippines during the Philippine-American War. In 1878 he published a book entitled, *The Indian Question* which boasted chapters such as "Can the Indian be Civilized?" and "How can the Indian be Controlled and Improved?" Posey's animosity for Otis probably stems from his reading of this book.

<sup>2</sup> Sofky (variously spelled "sofky," "sofki," "sofke," or "sofkee") is a traditional Muscogee food made by cooking corn in lye water. See Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 21 and Iness et al., *Beginning Creek*, 189.

### **God and the Flying Squirrel (A Creek Legend)**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

"I'm pleased with thee;

Go climb a tree,"

Said God, when He had made

Thy Flying Squirrel. "Nay,"

Replied the creature, half afraid,

5

"I want to fly away."

"You anger me;

Go climb a tree!"

Spoke God, in wrath, But still

The creature longed to fly.

10

"Alas! You treat me ill,"

It weeping gave reply.

When God into

A passion flew

And stretched the rascal's skin

15

Right roughly from his sides

And threw him high up in

The branches, where he hides

### **In Tulledega<sup>1</sup>**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A manuscript of this poem exists in a ledger found in folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Where mountains lift their heads

To clouds that nestle low;

Where constant beauty spreads

Sublimer scenes below;

Where gray and massive rocks

5

O'erhang rough heights sublime;

Where awful grandeur mocks

The brush, and poet's rhyme,

We saw the ev'ning blush

Above the rugged range,

10

We heard the river rush

Far off and faint and strange.

Note

<sup>1</sup> Tulledega is Posey's name for the rural area west of Eufaula, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, where he spent a good part of his childhood.

**In Vain**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Blow! O Wind of the sea!

O, blow! until I see

The ship that went away

Sail safe into the bay!

Wind of the sea! Wind of the sea!

5

What tidings dost thou bring to me?

But there's no reply;

There's no sail in sight;  
And the years go by  
And her hair grows white.

10

Emendation

6 tidings dost] ~ < bearest > ↑ dost ↓

7 bring to me] < for > ↑ bring to ↓ ~

**The Inexpressible Thought**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

'Tis said that Moses only saw  
The radiance of Deity;  
'Tis so we see the thought that we  
Can never utter perfectly.

**July**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A variant of this poem was appeared in the 1910 edition and is included after this version.]

The air without has taken fever,  
Fast I feel the beating of its pulse;

The leaves are twisted on the maple,  
In the corn the autumn's premature;  
The weary butterfly hangs waiting 5  
For a breath to waft him thither at  
The touch; the grass is curled and dust-blown;  
The sun shines down as on a desert.

The air without is blinding dusty;  
Cool I feel the west wind; I see 10  
The sunlight, crowded on the porch, grow  
Smaller till absorbed in shadow; the  
Far hills erstwhile blue are changed to a gray;  
Twilight shadows all the land apace;  
And now I hear the shower falling 15  
And the leaves clapping their hands for joy.

#### July [1910]

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 106. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect his final intentions. An earlier variant of this poem is provided above.]

The air without has taken fever;

The man who can ensnare,

By trick and fond caress,

Another unaware,

May not at all possess

The smooth ability

5

To catch and kill a flea.

### **Meaningless**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Till baby lips have spoken "papa, mamma,"

There is no meaning in the words at all;

The house is but a pile of brick or lumber

Till baby feet have pattered thro' the hall.

### **The Milky Way**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

A fast path winding thro'

The vast star-sprinkled blue

And ending at the gate



Fast I feel the beating of its pulse.  
The leaves are twisted on the maple,  
In the corn the autumn's premature;  
The weary butterfly hangs waiting 5  
For a breath to waft him thither at  
The touch, but falls, like truth unheeded,  
Into dust-blown grass and hollyhocks.

The air without is blinding dusty;  
Cool I feel the breezes blow; I see 10  
The sunlight, crowded on the porch, grow  
Smaller till absorbed in shadow; and  
The far blue hills are changed to a gray, and  
Twilight lingers in the woods between;  
And now I hear the shower dancing 15  
In the cornfield and the thirsty grass.

### **The Man-Catcher**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A manuscript of this poem exists a ledger collecting several other works. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Where God's white angels wait.

### **Miser**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

O miser, why art thou a miser, pray?

Was Nature very stingy with your clay?

### **A Vision of June [Narcissus—A Sonnet]**

[The *Philadelphia Press*, November 4, 1900. See, clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. An undated manuscript of this poem exists in folder 158, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. This manuscript page also contains a version of the poem, "All the While [Let Men Dispute.]" The poem immediately following this one, "Narcissus—A Sonnet," originates from a revised manuscript in a ledger from circa 1899. As these two versions vary in interesting ways that allow a glimpse of Posey's creative process, both are provided in this edition.]

At last, my white narcissus is in bloom;

Each blossom breathes a wondrous fragrance. Lo!

From over bleak December's waste of snow,

In summer garments, lightly thro' the gloom,  
Comes June to claim the truant in my room  
With her, the airs of sunny meadows come,  
And in the apple boughs I hear the hum  
Of bees; in all the valleys, brooks resume,  
'Twi'xt greening banks, their murmurous melody,  
The sunlight bursts in splendor in the blue,  
And soon the narrow walls confining me,  
Recede into the distance from my view;  
My spirit in the Summer's largeness grows,  
And every thorn is hidden by the rose.

5

10

Emendation    2 blossom sheds] ~ < breathes > ↑ sheds ↓

~~Narcissus - A Sonnet.~~

~~All last, my white Narcissus in the bloom  
And beneath a snowy downy fragrance soft; and,  
I see the black Narcissus buds, sweet of perfume,  
Like some enchanted maiden lost in gloom,  
Came forth to claim the tenants of my room.  
With her, the winds from verdant meadows come  
And in the apple boughs I hear the hum  
Of bees and in the willows brooked murmure  
Whate their tardy journey to the sea.  
The sunlit bursts, in splendor on the blue  
And swift the noons with the evening mist  
Fades into the distance, from my view,  
From Winter's barren ocean and from the sky,  
I am transported to a Paradise.~~

~~To a Face Above the Surf.~~

~~To steal sweet kisses from thy brow,  
A light blue zephyr I would be,  
A boat to minister thee a vow  
Of love and constancy.~~

~~To feel thy fingers' soft caress,  
A meadow flower I would be,  
A green blade for thy foot to tread  
Upon the April sea.~~

~~Upon thy bosom <sup>fair</sup> to rest,  
A little sea-bird I would be,  
A songster in the green forest  
To charm thee with my melody.~~

~~To clasp thee in a wild embrace,  
To gaze thy face with captivously,  
To look upon the face of face,  
I wished that I were in the sea!~~

Cancelled manuscript of "Narcissus—A Sonnet" and "To a Face Above the Surf."  
Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey  
Collection, folder 140.

### Narcissus—A Sonnet

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. With the exception of the title, Posey crossed out this entire poem.]

At last, my white Narcissus is in bloom,  
And breathes a wondrous fragrance forth; and, lo,  
Far over bleak December's waste of snow,  
Like some supernal maiden lost in gloom,  
Comes June to claim the truant in my room, 5  
With her, the winds from verdant meadows come  
And in the apple boughs I hear the hum  
of bees and in the valleys brooks resume  
elate their tardy journey to the sea.  
The sunlight bursts in splendor in the blue 10  
And swift the narrow walls confining me  
[Exudes] into the distance from my view,  
From Winter's burrow a [indecipherable] and sombre skies.  
I am transported into paradise.

### Not Love Always

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

'Tis not love in every instance  
That makes one trust another kind;  
'Tis often prompted by the fear  
Of daggers in the dark behind.

### On Piney

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A manuscript of this poem exists a ledger collecting several other works. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Far away from the valley below,  
Like the roar in a shell of the sea,  
Or the flow of the river at night  
Comes the voice strangely sweet of the pines.  
Snowy clouds, sometimes white, sometimes dark,  
Like the joys and the sorrows of life,  
Sail above, half becalmed in the blue;  
And their cool shadows lie on the hills.

5

Here and there, when the leaves blow apart,  
To admit sunny winds seeking rest

10

In the shade with their burthen of sweets,  
Piney Creek shimmers bright, with a cloud

Or a patch of the sky on its breast;  
Here the din and the strife of the mart  
And the gabble of lips that profane,  
Are heard not, and the heart is made pure.

15

### **Our Deeds [A Simile]**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The version of this poem found in the 1910 edition is titled "A Simile."]

Like bits of broken glass  
Chance scatters in the sun,  
Our deeds reflect the light  
We carry in the world.

### **Pendantry**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Some men are like some broad,

Broad rivers that I know,  
That flow majestically,  
Look deep, but are not so.

### **Say Something**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Form something when you'd have men heed;  
Don't bark when you have nothing treed.

### **September**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A manuscript of this poem exists a ledger collecting several other works. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]]

A distant hill asleep in light blue haze  
And soft—a Moorish lady in her veils—  
And ev'rywhere reunions of the quails  
And early morning hints of cooler days.

### **Sunset**



[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

By coward clouds forgot

For yonder sunset's glow,

The Day, in battle shot,

Lies bleeding, weak and low.

### **A Thin Quilt's Warmth**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

There is warmth 'neath a quilt that is thin

And a sleep that is perfect and sound;

And the secret is simple as sin:

Just keep still and do not move around.

To be brief, straighten out, as if dead,

5

Covered up from your feet to your head.

### **Thoughts**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

People either get more or less than their deserts.

When a man does his duty, he's got a job.

However fate may conspire against a man he still has something to be thankful for.

### **To a Common Flower**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Thy waxen blooms of yesterday

Today all wither and decay.

But, oh, so sweet a life is thine!

So full of days unlike to mine.

Never knowing ill words spoken,

5

Sorrows of a heart that's broken, [sic]

Emendation      2 Today] To day

Posey renumbered this poem's lines after his initial draft, interpolating line four from the end of the poem.

### **To a Face Above the Surf**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Posey crossed out this poem.]

To steal sweet kisses from thy brow,

A lightsome zephyr I would be;

A brook to murmur thee a vow

Of love and constancy.

To feel thy fingers' soft caress,

5

A wayside flower I would be;

A grass blade for thy foot to press

Upon the April lea.

Upon thy bosom fair to rest,

A little sunbeam I would be;

10

A songster in the green forest

To charm thee with my melody.

To clasp thee in a wild embrace;

To press thy pink lips rapturously;

To look upon thee face to face,

15

I would that I could be the sea!

Emendation      9 bosom fair] ~ < indecipherable > ↑ fair ↓

### To a Winter Songster

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Sweet, sweet, sweet is the song you sing,

Bonny bird, on the leafless tree;

And tender are the thoughts you bring

To me as your own melody.

Sing on! I am sure, somewhere, May

5

And Love are lingering on the way.

#### **To Hall<sup>1</sup>**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

I ne'er could selfish be—

P'raps that's why I'm threadbare!

Good wine is naught to me

Unless some friend can share.

So when your verses came—

5

And better I ne'er read,

Tho' bearing Byron's<sup>2</sup> name—

I felt it in my head

I had received a jug  
Of Bourbon labeled “old”— 10  
No peddler’s juice of bug<sup>3</sup>  
At Indian councils sold!

And when I did apprise  
Friend Grayson<sup>4</sup> of the fact,  
He opened wide his eyes 15  
And said, Is it intact?”

“It is,” was my reply,  
“Come, let us drink.” He came.  
He too some on the sly  
And gave your bourbon fame. 20

He took some more and more  
And by the Great Horn Spoon,  
He tumbled on the floor  
Dead tipsy pretty soon!

John Thornton<sup>5</sup> passing by 25  
To make some dunning call,

Our bourbon did espy

And yanked it, jug and all!

Thief! I could smash his crown

Like a dark alley thug

30

He made himself and town

Drunk with the stolen jug!

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A poet, teacher, and newspaper editor, George Riley Hall (1865-1944) was one of Posey's best friends. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 71-72, 81-97, 137, 196.

<sup>2</sup> Byron (1788-1824), English romantic poet.

<sup>3</sup> A term for illegal whisky.

<sup>4</sup> Grayson, George W. Grayson (1843-1920) was one of Posey's best friends and was also an important Muscogee (Creek) political figure. He served as principal chief of the Muscogee's from 1918-1920.

<sup>5</sup> John R. Thornton, was the editor of the *Indian Journal* and together with Posey, Hall, and Grayson served as a member of what the men termed "The Informal Club." According to Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. Thornton's "dunning call" was his attempt to collect newspaper subscriptions owed him by Posey and Grayson. Littlefield states that during this visit Thornton and Grayson read a poem Hall had sent to Posey. They compared the poem to good whisky and Thornton decided to publish Hall's poem, without permission, in the *Indian Journal*. Posey's poem is meant as a light-hearted apology to Hall for publishing his poem without permission. An early draft of this poem was subtitled, "An Apology for the Publication of a Poetic Epistle." See manuscript, "To George Riley Hall," Frederick S. Barde Collection, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society.

**To Jim Parkinson<sup>1</sup>**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Thou art a frozen hearted man,

Jim Parkinson,

And cold warts thy finger-tips

Thou snappest like a logerhead [sic]<sup>2</sup>,

Jim Parkinson,

5

Kind words were never on thy lips.

Thou art a very stingy man,

Jim Parkinson,

And very poor in charity.

Thou growlest like a fierce bulldog,

10

Jim Parkinson,

At all the forms of poverty.

There was a man that died one time,

Jim Parkinson,

And thou didst scoff his widow out

15

Imploring credit for a shroud,

Jim Parkinson,

Her tearful pleading heeding not.

Thou hast a well of water fine,

Jim Parkinson,

20

But thou art stingy, too, with that,

For thou hast taken off the pails,

Jim Parkinson,

Now, move the well from where 'tis at!

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jim Parkinson is unidentified.

<sup>2</sup> Loggerhead, the common name for any of several species of snapping turtle belonging to the family Chelydra.

#### **Trysting [Then and Now]**

[Typescript of an undated newspaper clipping, Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. Collection. American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. A manuscript version of this poem titled, "Then and Now," and written in Minnie Posey's handwriting exists in folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

I laid amid the hum of bumble bees,

And O, and O,

Above me, to and fro,

The clover-heads were tossing in the breeze!



And O, and O, how cool their shadows lay 5  
    Upon the lea,  
    In dark embroidery!  
How sweet the mock-bird sang, O perfect day!

The heavens in the south hung low and blue;  
    Too low and blue 10  
    For clouds to wander thro;  
And so they moored at rest as white ships do.

My heart gave answer, bird, for thee and me  
    O perfect day!  
    For she is on her way 15  
I know to join me in my reverie

Between that time and now, lie many years;  
    And oh, and oh,  
    And oh, time changes so!  
The spring and summer wane and autumn seres. 20

Sing, Mockingbird upon the bending bough!  
    Sing as of yore;  
    My heart responds no more;

She listens, O, to sweeter music now.

### Tulledega<sup>1</sup>

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. A manuscript of this poem exists a ledger collecting several other works. See folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

My choice of all choice spots in Indian lands!  
Hedged in, shut up by walls of purple hills,  
That swell clear cut against out sunset sky.  
Hedged in, shut up and hidden from the world,  
As though it said, "I have no words for you: 5  
I'm not a part of you; your ways aren't mine";  
Hedged in, shut up with low log cabins built—  
How snugly!—in the quaint old fashioned way;  
With fields of yellow maize, so small that you  
Might hide them with your palm while gazing on 10  
Them from the hills around them, high and blue.  
Hedged in, shut up with long-forgotten ways  
And stories handed down from sire to son.  
Hedged in, shut up with broad Oktaha,<sup>2</sup> like  
A flash of glory curled among the hills! 15

How it sweeps away toward the morning,  
Deepened here and yonder by the beetling  
Crag, the music of its dashings mingling  
With the screams of eagles whirling over,  
With its splendid tribute to the ocean!  
And this spot, this nook is Tulledega;  
Heged in, shut up, I say, by walls of hills,  
Like tents stretched on the borders of the day,  
As blue as yonder op'ning in the clouds!

20

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Tulledega is Posey's name for the rural area west of Eufaula, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, where he spent a good part of his childhood.

<sup>2</sup> A town in what is now Muskogee County in eastern Oklahoma.

#### A Vision

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

In pensive mood she stood,  
In garments white like snow,  
Beside the darksome wood,  
Amid the twilight glow;  
As if she held communion there  
With spirits in the fading air.

5

And loath to break the spell—  
The sweet enchantment that  
She seemed to love so well,  
I back-ward stept, thereat  
The beauteous vision fled from me  
In strange and silent mystery.

10

### **What Profit**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

What profit is there in conversing, pray,  
With him who nods assent to all you say?

### **When Molly Blows the Dinner Horn**

[Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

'Tis twelve o'clock in Possum Flat;<sup>1</sup>  
The cabbage steams, and bacon's fat;  
The bread is made of last year's corn—  
When Molly blows the dinner-horn.

The shadows lengthen north and south; 5  
The water wells up in your mouth;  
You're neither sober nor forlorn,  
When Molly blows the dinner-horn.

A quiet falls, the smoke curls up  
Like incense from a censor cup; 10  
It makes you glad that you were born.  
When Molly blows the dinner-horn.

The cur, erstwhile stretched in a snore,  
Lays stout siege to the kitchen door;  
Nor will he raise it or be gone, 15  
When Molly blows the dinner-horn.

Note

<sup>1</sup> This is Posey's ranch near Bald Hill. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 96.

## Undated Poems Written Between the Fall of 1899 and June 1900

Posey served as the superintendent of Eufaula High School from approximately the fall of 1899 until June 1900 (Littlefield 111-116), and during this time he wrote undated poems on Eufaula High School stationery. Assuming Posey only used this particular stationery during his tenure at that school, he probably wrote the following poems between the fall of 1899 and June 1900. As no other organizational information exists, the poems falling within this period are organized alphabetically.

### The Arkansas River

[Undated manuscript on Eufaula High School stationery, folder 146, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

I dread thee, mighty River! There's a flush  
Of anger on thy face that will not pale.  
Thou'st treach'rous, turbulent, and move  
Within thy roomy bed as if unconfined.  
Before thy deep cold tide, and majesty, 5  
Man pauses, lingers, and is mute with awe.  
The white dust hanging over thee, when winds  
Are high, must surely be the anxious ghosts  
Of all the drowned, expecting that thou wilt  
Someday go dry, and disappear from Earth. 10

[Assured]

[Undated manuscript on Eufaula High School stationery, folder 151, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Be it dark; be it bright;

Be it pain; be it rest;

Be it wrong; be it right—

It must be for the best.

Some good must somewhere wait,

5

And sometime joy and pain

Must cease to alternate,

Or else we live in vain.

Emendations: This manuscript contains a cancelled opening that reads:

< Be it dark instead of bright;

Be it pain instead of rest;

Be it wrong instead of right,

It must be for the best. >

**Lovingly [The Call of the Wild]**

[*Twin Territories* 3 (March 1901): 47. The author of this poem is printed as “Chinnubbie Hays,” which is probably a misreading of Posey’s “Chinnubbie Harjo” signature. The

poem is undoubtedly Posey's, and an earlier undated manuscript version titled "Call of the Wild" exists on Eufaula High School stationery in folder 148, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

I'm tired of the gloom  
In a four-walled room;  
Heart-weary, I sigh  
For the open sky  
And the solitude 5  
Of the greening wood,  
Where the blue birds call  
And the sunbeams fall  
And the daisies lure  
The soul to be pure. 10

I'm tired of the life  
In the ways of strife;  
Heart-weary, I long  
For the river's song,  
And the murmur of rills 15  
In the breezy hills,  
Where the pipe of Pan<sup>1</sup>—  
The hairy half-man—



The bright silence breaks

By the sleeping lakes.

20

Note

<sup>1</sup> In Greek mythology Pan is the god of the forest and fertility who bears the feet, ears, and horns of a goat.

### **Limbo [Esapahutche]<sup>1</sup>**

[Undated manuscript titled on Eufaula High School stationery, folder 153 and folder , Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The 1910 edition contains a poem titled “Ensapahutche (Gar Creek)” that appears to be a later revision of “Limbo.” Another, similar manuscript version of this poem—lacking both a title and a date—can be found in folder 161, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Now complaining and cross,

Through the reeds and the moss

I come down with a roar

To the green fields before,

From the hills of the old Dowdy Ranch—<sup>2</sup>

5

From the valleys of pine where I branch—

From the hollows and coves where I lie

In the shade of the precipice high

Through the days of the unclouded sky.

And I flow, 10  
As I go  
Through the hills,  
Into rills—  
Into many a pool,  
Overshadowed and cool; 15  
Where the bright  
    Lily's bloom  
To a light  
    In the gloom.  
And I murmur all day,  
    Impatient of delay,  
    Ere I glide  
    In the tide  
    Of the wide  
    River, at  
    Cedar Flat.<sup>3</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Limbo refers to a creek near Posey's childhood home, and Gar Creek is also found in that area. The manuscript version of "Limbo" has the Muscogee word for Gar Creek, "Esapahutche," written in pencil across the top in Minnie Posey's handwriting, and this title may be her own creation. Furthermore, the 1910 edition uses the Seminole dialect variant for Gar Creek, "Ensapahutche." The Muscogee language boasts a number of dialects, and encountering different spellings and pronunciations in Indian Territory was not uncommon. However, the reason for this difference remains unclear. For more information about the

Muscogee words for “gar” and “creek” see Loughridge, *English and Muskokee Dictionary*, 129 and 150 and Martin and Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek*, 31 and 57. This edition presents both the manuscript version of this poem and the 1910 edition’s version. Note the similarities of this poem with “[By the cardinal led aright,],” “[Every moment I flow,]” and “On the Piney.”

<sup>2</sup> Dowdy Ranch, which Posey also sometimes spelled as “Doughty,” “Dawdy,” and “Dowdie” is unidentified.

<sup>3</sup> Cedar Flat, an unidentified area apparently located in the same area as Posey’s Tulledega childhood home.

### **Ensapahutche (Gar Creek)<sup>1</sup>**

[This alternate version of “Limbo [Esapahutche]” is found in *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 143-144. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey’s lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband’s work, this version may not reflect his final intentions. For information about this poem see the above note for “Limbo [Esapahutche].”]

Now complaining and cross,  
Through the reeds and the moss  
I come down with a roar  
To the green fields before,  
From the hills of the old Doughty<sup>2</sup> ranch,  
From the valleys of pine where I branch,  
From the hollows and coves where I lie  
In the shade of the precipice high,  
Through the days of the unclouded sky.

5

And I flow, 10  
As I go  
Through the hills,  
Into rills,  
Into many a pool,  
Overshadowed and cool, 15  
Where the white lily-bloom  
Is a light in the gloom.

Down the slope of the wild mountain-side  
Come the grasses athirst to my tide,  
By the Cardinal led aright. 20  
Far away, like the roar in the shell of the sea,  
The sad voice of the pine on the crag answers me,  
As I fall on the rocks at night.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This poem refers to a creek near Posey's childhood home. The manuscript version of this poem, entitled "Limbo," has the Muscogee word for Gar Creek, "Esapahutche," written in pencil across the top in Minnie Posey's handwriting. This title may be her own creation. This 1910 edition of the poem uses the Seminole dialect variant for Gar Creek, "Ensapahutche." The Muscogee language boasts a number of dialects, and encountering different spellings and pronunciations in Indian Territory was not uncommon. However, the reason for this difference remains unclear. For more information about the Muscogee words for "gar" and "creek" see Loughridge, *English and Muskokee Dictionary*, 129 and 150 and Martin and

Mauldin, *Dictionary of Creek*, 31 and 57. Note the similarities of this poem with “[By the cardinal led aright,],” “[Every moment I flow,]” and “On the Piney.”

<sup>2</sup> Doughty Ranch, which Posey also sometimes spelled as “Dowdy,” “Dawdy,” and “Dowdie” is unidentified.

**[Every moment I flow,]**

[Undated manuscript on Eufaula High School stationery, folder 144, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Note the similarities of this poem with “[By the cardinal led aright,],” “Esapahutche [Limbo]” and “On the Piney.”]

Every moment I flow,

Willows ask me in vain:

Wither, O, do you go?

Will you come back again?

I slip out of their arms—

5

Long and beautiful though—

And away from their charms,

O whither, whither whither?

Birds chirp in pleasant weather.

But hither, hither, hither!

10

Forever and forever,

Far calls the distant river.

It's a long weary way

From the hills of the old Dawdy Ranch,<sup>1</sup>  
And the valleys of pine where I branch.

15

Emendation. Posey cancelled the following lines, which began after line seven.

< The grass from the mountain side  
Comes down to drink from my tide;  
And the maid when she sips,  
With her breast on a rocky shelf,  
Sees a maid kiss her lips  
Sweet and beautiful as herself. >

Note

<sup>1</sup> Dawdy Ranch, which Posey also sometimes spelled as "Doughty," "Dowdy," and "Dowdie" is unidentified.

### **Memories (Inscribed to my poet friend George Riley Hall)<sup>1</sup>**

[*The Press*, November 4, 1900. See, clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Undated manuscript on Eufaula High School stationery, folder 149, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

What sweet and tender memories,  
What joys and griefs are yours and mine!  
Hands rest that smote the ivory keys  
And still, the lips that sang, divine.  
O'er lips that cannot say;

5

O'er hearts that cannot beat,  
The sky bends blue to-day,  
And flowers blossom sweet.

Dear ones, near ones have wended  
Homeward thro' the vale of tears;  
The voice that charmed has blended  
With the silence of the years.

10

Though far apart we've drifted, Hall,  
'Tween you and me there's but a single river  
And but a single mountain wall—

15

'Tween Rose and Jim and us, the vast Forever!<sup>2</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A poet, teacher, and newspaper editor, George Riley Hall (1865-1944) was one of Posey's best friends. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 71-72, 81-97, 137, 196.

<sup>2</sup> Rose and Jim, Rosa "Rose" Lee, was a good friend of Posey's and worked as one of the teachers at the Creek Orphan Asylum during his tenure at there. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 91, 112-113, and 118. The deaths of Rosa Lee and Posey's brother, James Posey, served as inspiration for this poem.

### **The Mocking Bird**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The manuscript of this poem is on

Eufaula High School stationery, folder 142, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas  
Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Whether spread in flight,

Or perched upon the swinging bough,

Whether day or night,

He sings as he is singing now—

Till every leaf upon the tree

5

Seems dripping with his melody!

Hear him! hear him!

As up he springeth—

As high he wingeth

From roof or limb!

10

If you are sad,

Go cry it out!

If you are glad,

Go laugh and shout!

Hear him! What heart can shut him out?

15

He hath a song for every mood,

For every song an interlude,



To dry the tear or stem the shout!

Whether you work, whether you rest,

Hark! listen! hear him sing

20

As careless as he builds the nest

For his mate in the spring!

### **Spring in Tulwa Thlocco<sup>1</sup>**

[Undated manuscript on Eufaula High School stationery, folder 150, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Thro' the vine-embowered portal blows

The fragrant breath of Summer time;

Far, the river, brightly winding, goes

With murmurs falling into rhyme.

It is Spring in Tulwa Thlocco now,

5

The fresher hue of grass and tree

All but hides upon the mountain's brow

The green haunts of the chickadee.

There are drifts of plum blooms, snowy white,

Along the lane and greening hedge;

10

And the dogwood blossoms cast a light  
Upon the forest's dusky edge.

Crocus, earliest flower of the year,  
Hangs out its starry petals where  
The spring beauties in their hiding peer,  
And red buds crimson all the air.

15

Note

<sup>1</sup> Tulwa Thlocco is Muscogee (Creek) for "big town."

#### Where the Rivers Meet

[*Twin Territories* 3 (February 1901): 24. An undated manuscript version of this poem exists on Eufaula High School stationery in folder 143, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

This appears to be an alternate version of the poem "A Picture." For more information, see the note for "A Picture."]

Lo! what a vivid picture here  
Of sin and purity—  
Here where the rivers join their  
Hands and journey to the sea!

A dirty, earthly look has one,  
Reflects not back the sky;

5

But mark how on the other's tide

The clouds are passing by!

1899

Ode to Sequoyah<sup>1</sup>

[*Twin Territories* 1 (April 1899): 102]

The names of Watie<sup>2</sup> and Boudinot—<sup>3</sup>

The valiant warrior and gifted sage—

And other Cherokees, may be forgot,

But thy name shall descend every age;

The mysteries enshrouding Cadmus'<sup>4</sup> name

5

Cannot obscure thy claim to fame.

The people's language cannot perish—nay,

When from the face of this great continent

Inevitable doom hath swept away

The last memorial—the last fragment

10

Of tribes, —some scholar learned shall pore

Upon they letters, seeking ancient lore.

Some bard shall life a voice in praise of thee,

In moving numbers tell the world how men

Scoffed thee, hissed thee, charged with lunacy!

15

And who could not give 'nough honor when

At length, in spite of jeers, of want and need,

Thy genius shaped a dream into a deed.

By cloud-capped summit in the boundless west,

Or mighty river rolling to the sea,

20

Where'er thy footsteps led thee on that quest,

Unknown, rest thee, illustrious Cherokee!

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sequoyah (1776?-1843) invented the Cherokee syllabary.

<sup>2</sup> Stand Watie (1806-1871) was a Cherokee statesman and Confederate brigadier general.

<sup>3</sup> Born as Gallegina Watie, Elias Boudinot (1800-1839) was a Cherokee statesman and the progressive editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

<sup>4</sup> In Greek mythology, Cadmus was a Phoenician prince who invented the Grecian alphabet.

#### Nightfall [Twilight]

[*Twin Territories* 4 (May 1902): 124. This poem, titled as "Twilight," was also published in the November 4, 1900 issue of *The Philadelphia Press* and the November 26, 1899 issue of the *St. Louis Republic*. See, undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Another version of this poem, titled as "Nightfall," and bearing slight variations was published in *Muskogee Phoenix*, November 2, 1899.]

As evening splendors fade

From yonder sky afar,

The Night pins on her dark

Robe with a large bright star,  
And the new moon hangs like 5  
A high-thrown scimitar.  
Vague in the mystic room  
This side the paling west,  
The Tulledegas<sup>1</sup> loom  
In an eternal rest, 10  
And one by one the lamps are lit  
In the dome of the Infinite.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Tulledegas is Posey's name for the rural area west of Eufaula, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, where he spent a good part of his childhood.

#### An Outcast

[*Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine* 1 (October 1905): 84. In Posey's lifetime this poem also appeared in the following publications: *Fort Gibson Post*, October 15, 1904; *Twin Territories* 4 (November 1902): 330; *Twin Territories* 4 (May 1902): 124; and *Muskogee Phoenix*, November 2, 1899.]

Pursued across the waning year,  
By winds that chase with lifted spear,  
A leaf, blood-stained, fell spent at last  
Upon my bosom. Poor Outcast!

### Pohalton Lake<sup>1</sup>

[*Twin Territories* 1 (November 1899): 246. According to a note accompanying this version of the poem in *Twin Territories* it was also published earlier in the *Indian Journal*, but no copy has been found. Along with varying indentation, the version of this poem found in the 1910 edition reverses the order of stanzas three and four.]

Thick heavy leaves of emerald lie

    Upon Pohalton's water's blue,

    O'erspread with lustrous drops of dew,

Dashed from my oar, as I glide by

    In my swift light canoe.

5

Large water-lilies, virtue-pure,

    Bright stars that with Pohalton fell

    From heaven where the angels dwell,

Drive back the shadows that obscure,

    And, siren-like, my fancies lure.

10

Unmindful of the moccasin

    That, swift with darting tongue, slips by

    And climbs a sunny drift to dry,

Reposing half awake, his tawny skin

Scarce revealed to the searching eye. 15

Huge frightened turtles disappear;  
And as the ripples widen o'er  
The lake toward the reedy shore,  
The dragon-fly, a wise old seer,  
Drops down upon the log to pore— 20

And, ever and anon, the breeze  
From piney mountains far away,  
Steals in; and waters kiss the day,  
And break the image of the trees  
That looking downward, sigh dismay. 25

The wood spirit is wandering near,  
Wrapt in old legends' mystery;  
I drift alone, for none but he  
And nature's self are native here  
Of me to know. But now I see 30

The patient heron by the shore  
Put down his little leg and fly,  
While echoes from the woods reply



To each uncanny scream, low o'er

The lake into the evening sky.

35

Vast brooding silence crowds around;

Dark vistas lead my eye astray

Among vague shapes beyond the day

Upon the lake, I hear no sound;

I go ashore, and hasten 'way.

40

Note

<sup>1</sup> This lake is unidentified and may be fictional.

### Shelter

[*Muskogee Phoenix*, November 2, 1899.]

In my cabin in the clearing

I lie and hear the Autumn showers pouring slow;

Afar, almost out of hearing,

I lie and hear the wet wind thro' the forest go.

Sense of shelter steals o'er me;

5

Into the evening dimness failing,

Into the night before me,

I lie and fancy I am sailing.

All night the wind will be blowing;  
All night the rain will slowly pour,  
But I shall sleep, never knowing  
The storm raps ceaseless at my door.

10

### **To a Daffodil**

[*Muskogee Phoenix*, November 2, 1899; also in the *St. Louis Republic*, November 26, 1899.]

When Death has shut the blue skies out from me,  
    Sweet Daffodil,  
And years roll on without my memory,  
Thou'lt reach thy tender fingers down to mine of clay,  
    A true friend still,  
Although I'll never know thee till the Judgment Day.

5

### **Happy Times for Me an' Sal**

[Undated newspaper clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. What appears to be an earlier version of this poem appears in *Twin Territories* 1 (December 1899): 20. A manuscript of this poem exists in a ledger found in folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Hear the happy jays a-singin';  
 Leaves a-driftin' in the medder;  
 See the 'simmons turnin' redder,  
 An' the farmer boy a-grinnin'  
     At his copper toes. 5

Happy times fer me an' Sal;  
 Happy times fer Jim an' Al;  
 We've raised a sumshus crop,  
 An' we are upon top,  
     In our new-bought clothes. 10

More an' more it's gittin' cooler;  
 Frost is makin' purtyer picters  
 On the winder-panes. By victers!  
 I am feelin' like a ruler  
     Over all this earth. 15

Happy Happy times fer me an' Sal;  
 Happy times fer Jim an' Al;  
 We've raised a sumshus crop,  
 An' we are upon top,  
     Settin' by the he'rth. 20

Nights are havin' longer howers;

Sleep is surely growin' finer;

Dreams becomin' sweeter, kiner,

Since the season of the flowers,

Winter days fer me.

25

Lots o' time fer Lib'ral thought;

Lots o' time to worry not;

When snow's knee-deep out doors;

An' driftin' on the moors,

Like a silver sea.

30

## An Undated Poem Written After January 1900

### On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake, January, 1900<sup>1</sup>

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 88. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect his final intentions. The exact date of this poem is also unknown, but due to its subject matter it was certainly published after January of 1900.]

Down with him! chain him! bind him fast!

Slam to the iron door and turn the key!

The one true Creek, perhaps the last

To dare declare, "You have wronged me!"

Defiant, stoical, silent,

5

Suffers imprisonment!

Such coarse black hair! such eagle eye!

Such stately mien!—how arrow-straight!

Such will! such courage to defy

The powerful makers of his fate!

10

A traitor, outlaw, —what you will,

He is the noble red man still.

Condemn him and his kind to shame!

I bow to him, exalt his name!

Note

<sup>1</sup> Chitto Harjo (Crazy Snake) (1846-1909?) was the charismatic Muscogee (Creek) traditionalist leader who in 1902 led the so-called "Snake Uprising" when he and his followers formed their own Muscogee government at the Muscogee town of Hickory Ground. They resisted the loss of tribal sovereignty and traditional ways that accompanied the workings of the Dawes Commission. Their mostly peaceful "uprising" was quickly put down and Chitto along many of his followers (called "Snakes" by their detractors) were briefly imprisoned. Chitto Harjo and his fellow conservatives would remain strongly opposed to the allotment of land, many never accepting their own allotments.

1900

**[What sea-maid's longings dwell] [To a Sea Shell]**

[*Twin Territories* 2 (March 1900): 50. This untitled poem was published as "To a Sea Shell" in the 1910 edition, which most likely takes its title from an earlier manuscript version. See Ledger, folder 140, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

What sea-maid's longings dwell

    Upon thy lips, O Shell,

Washed to my feet from the depths of the sea?

    Listening, I hold thee to my ear,

    But the secret that I would hear

5

Blends with the ocean's mystery.

**The Decree**

[*The Red Man* 16 (April 1900): 3.]

What does the white man say to you?

    Says he, "You've got to hoe; you've got to plow;

    You've got to live by the sweat of your brow—

Even as I. You've held your last powwow

And your last revelry.  
The council fire whereby you hold debate  
Against my stern decree  
Is flickering out before the breath of fate.

5

What does the white man say to you?

Thus speaketh he to you: "You've got to cast  
Your laws as relics to an empty past.  
You've got to change and mend your ways at last.

10

I am your keeper and  
Your guardian, in the judgment of mankind,

And 'tis mine to command  
You in the way that leaves your savage self behind."

15



EUFULA IND. TER.

1900.

Song of the Oktahutche.

Far, far, far are my silver waters drawn;  
The hills embrace me loth to let me go;  
The maidens think me fair to look upon,  
And trees lean over glad to hear me flow.  
Thro' field and valley, green because of me,  
I wander, wander to the distant sea.

Thro' lonely places and thro' crowded ways,  
Thro' noise of strife and thro' the solitude,  
And on thro' cloudy days and sunny days,  
I journey till I meet, in sisterhood,  
The <sup>wood</sup> grand Canadian, red with the sunset,  
Now calm, now raging in a mighty fret!

On either hand, in a grand colonnade,  
The cottonwoods rise in the azure sky,  
And purple mountains cast a purple shade  
As I, now grave, now laughing, pass them by;  
The birds of air dip bright wings in my tide  
In sunny reaches where I noiseless glide.

Page one of an early draft of "Song of the Oktahutche" on Eufaula High School stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 154.

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ANNUAL ENDOWMENT,  
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MATTIE FEARS, CLERK  
MRS. A. POSEY, MATRON  
CATHARINE HARRIS, BRISTOL MATRON

EUPAULA IND. TER. \_\_\_\_\_ 1900.

<sup>sandy rocks found with</sup>  
O'er ~~shale of mossy~~ rocks and mussel shells,  
Blue over spacious beds of amber sand,  
By hanging cliffs, by glens where Echo dwells—  
Elusive spirit of the shadow land—  
Forever blest and blessing do I go  
A-widening in the morning's roseate glow.

Tho' I sing my song in a minor key,  
Broad lands and fair attest the good I do;  
Tho' I carry no white sails to the sea,  
~~My sails are white with battle, I would I were thro'~~  
And quails are whistling in the waving grain  
And herds are scattered 'er the verdant plain.  
Chinnubbie Harjo

Page two of an early draft of "Song of the Oktahutche" on Eufaula High School stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 154.

### Song of the Oktahutche<sup>1</sup>

[*Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine* 1 (1906): 92. An identical version of this poem exists as an undated clipping in a scrapbook held in the Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. An earlier version of this poem appeared in *Twin Territories* 2 (May 1900): 87. The manuscript version of this poem exists on two undated sheets of Eufaula High School stationery and was probably written between the fall of 1899 and the early months of 1900; see folder 154, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The version of this poem found in the 1910 edition spells "Oktahutche" as "Oktahutchee." While spellings of Muscogee words certainly vary, Posey always wrote the word with a single "e." As the version presented in this edition was the last published during Posey's lifetime, it probably best reflects his final intentions.]

Far, far, far are my silver waters drawn;

    The hills embrace me loth to let me go;

The maidens think me fair to look upon,

    And trees lean over glad to hear me flow.

Thro' field and valley, green because of me,

5

    I wander, wander to the distant sea.

Thro' lonely places and thro' crowded ways;

    Thro' noise of strife and thro' the solitude,

And on thro' cloudy days and sunny days,

I journey till I meet, in sisterhood, 10  
The broad Canadian,<sup>2</sup> red with the sunset,  
Now calm, now raging in a mighty fret!

On either hand, in a grand colonnade,  
The cottonwoods rise in the azure sky,  
And purple mountains cast a purple shade 15  
As I, now grave, now laughing, pass them by;  
And birds of air dip bright wings in my tide,  
In sunny reaches where I noiseless glide.

O'er shoals of mossy rocks and mussel shells,  
Blue over spacious beds of amber sand, 20  
By cliffs and coves and glens where Echo<sup>3</sup> dwells—  
Elusive spirit of the shadow-land—  
Forever blest and blessing, do I go,  
A wid'ning in the morning's roseate glow.

Though I sing my song in a minor key, 25  
Broad lands and fair attest the good I do;  
Though I carry no white sails to the sea,  
Towns nestle in the vales I wander thro';  
And quails are whistling in the waving grain,

And herds are scattered o'er the verdant plain.

30

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Oktahutche is the Muscogee name for the North Canadian river in eastern Oklahoma. Translated, the name means "Sand Creek."

<sup>2</sup> The Canadian River.

<sup>3</sup> In Greek mythology, Echo is a nymph who is deprived of her ability to speak by Hera and must instead repeat the words of others.

**To a Robin**

[*Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine* 1 (October 1905): 84. An identical version exists as an undated clipping in a scrapbook held at the Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Slightly different versions of this poem appeared in *Twin Territories* 4 (September 1902): 258; and *Twin Territories* 2 (July 1900): 139. The version of this poem found in the 1910 edition bears different indentations and other minor variations. As the version presented here is the last one known from Posey's lifetime, it probably best reflects his final intentions.]

Out in the Golden air,

Out where the skies are fair,

I hear a song of gladness,

With never a note of sadness.

Ring out thy heart's delight,

5

And mine of every sorrow!

Sing, sweet bird, till the night,

And come again tomorrow.

**Bob White**

[*Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine* 1 (October 1905): 85. An identical version exists as an undated clipping in a scrapbook held in the Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. This poem was also published in slightly different versions in *Twin Territories* 4 (October 1902): frontispiece; and *Twin Territories* 2 (August 1900): 172. The version of this poem found in the 1910 edition reprints the poem in a significantly different order from any known version from his lifetime. As the version presented here is the last known to have been published during Posey's lifetime, it probably best reflects his final intentions. What is probably the first manuscript of this poem exists as an undated draft on Eufaula High School stationery, folder 147, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

A speck of brown adown the dusty pathway runneth he.  
Then whirreth, like a missle shot, into a neighboring tree.

Bob-Bob White!

The joyous call comes like a silver chime.  
And back across the fields of summer time,  
The echo, faint but sweetly clear,  
Falls dying on the list'ning ear—

5

Bob-Bob White!

And when the cheery voice is dead,

And silence soothes the wind to rest, 10

Among the oak boughs overhead,

From valley, hill or meadow's breast,

There comes an answering call—

Bob-Bob White!

And, once more, over all, 15

The spirit Silence weaves her spell,

And light and shadow play

At hide-and-seek behind the high

Blue walls around the day.

Again, from where the wood and prairie meet, 20

Across the tasseled corn and waving wheat,

Awak'ning many tender memories sweet—

Bob-Bob White!

### **The Blue Jay**

[*The Red Man and Helper*, September 7, 1900. This poem is also found on an undated manuscript on Eufaula High School stationery, folder 145, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

The silence of the golden afternoon

Is broken by the chatter of the jay.

What season finds him when he is not gay,

Light-hearted, noisy, singing out of tune,

High-crested, blue as is the sky of June?

5

'Tis autumn when he comes; the hazy air.

Half-hiding like a veil, lies ev'rywhere,

Full of memories of summer soon

To fade; leaves, losing hold upon the tree,

Fly helpless in the wintry wind's unrest;

10

The goldenrod is burning low and fitfully;

The squirrel leaves his leafy summer rest,

Descends and gathers up the nuts that drop,

When lightly shaken, from the hick'ry top.

### **Moonlight [In the Moonlit Wood]**

[St. Louis *Republic*, November 26, 1900. Also, undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. This poem is titled "In the Moonlit Wood" in the 1910 edition.]

I dream that it is snowing

And waking do but find



The moonbeams softly glowing

Thro' branches intertwined.

Wetumka National School,

ALEX. POSEY, SUPERINTENDENT.

WETUMKA, IND. TER., \_\_\_\_\_ 1900

The Haunted Valley

Ever, somber on the boundless blue,  
Floats a cloud, like a ship at sea;  
Ever, a shadow lies on the hills  
And a wind from the South blows free

Ever is heard the voice of the firs  
As they creep over a long-wooded lane  
And ever, like the path of a story,  
Flows the stream with hills above

Ever the fawns betray, fessing such,  
Secrets of brown-leaves no more  
Ever the huntsman's piping there  
At ear hears the dip of the oar

Page one of an early draft of "The Haunted Valley" on Wetumka National School stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 155.

Wetumka National School,

ALEX. POSEY, SUPERINTENDENT.

WETUMKA, IND. TER., \_\_\_\_\_ 1900

Beholds on the moonlit road afar,  
Two vapour forms in a light canoe  
That is lost anon in the shadows  
Where the river bends out of view.  
Chambers Harris

Page two of an early draft of "The Haunted Valley" on Wetumka National School stationery. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. Alexander L. Posey Collection, folder 155.

## A Poem Written Between June 1900 and Spring 1901

### The Haunted Valley

[Undated manuscript on Wetumka National School stationery, folder 155, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Posey held the position of superintendent of the Wetumka National School between June 1900 and the spring of 1901 (Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 116-122). By the time he took this job, his poetic output had waned significantly. While he continued to publish his earlier poems, "The Haunted Valley" is Posey's only known poem to actually have been written during this period.]

Ever, somewhere in the boundless blue,

Floats a cloud, like a ship at sea;

Ever a shadow lies on the hills

And a wind from the South blows free.

Ever is heard the voice of the pines

5

As they weep o'er a long-lost love

And ever, like the path of a star,

Flows the stream with hills above

Ever the glens betray, passing sweet,

Secrets of brown lovers no more

10

Ever the huntsman lingering there

At eve hears the dip of the oar

Beholds on the moonlit wave afar,

Two vague forms in a light canoe

That is lost anon in the shadow

15

Where the river bends out of view.

1901

**The Fall of the Redskin**

(With Apologies to Edwin Markham)<sup>1</sup>

[*Indian Journal*, January 18, 1901. This poem was also published in the January 24, 1901 issue of the *Wagoner Record* under the title, "The Man with the Woe."]

Awed by the laws of Arkansaw,<sup>2</sup> the whims  
Of Hitchcock,<sup>3</sup> and the bill that Curtis<sup>4</sup> sent  
To him, he leans against a witness tree  
And gazes on the far-blazed section-line,  
The emptiness of treaties in his face, 5  
And on his back the burden of the squaw.  
Who made him dead to raptures of the chase,  
The ills of not desiring to allot,  
A thing opposed to change, that never files,  
Stubborn and slow, a brother to the Boer?<sup>5</sup> 10  
Who loosened and let down the pledge—  
"As long as streams give tribute to the sea,  
And grass spreads yearly banquet for the herds?  
Whose breath blew out the faith within this brain?  
Is this the thing the Lord God made and gave 15  
To have dominion over sea and land;  
To hunt the deer and chase the buffalo

From climes of snow to climes beneath the sun? ["]  
Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped Tom Platt<sup>6</sup>  
And sent Roosevelt<sup>7</sup> on his career of light? 20  
Down all the stretch of Carpetbaggers to  
The last man fresh from Maine or Illinois,  
There shines no ray of hope for him! He sees  
But darkness filled with censure of his ways—  
Night filled with signs and portents that appall— 25  
Greed fraught with menace to his grass and ore!

What gulf between him and home rule! The ward  
Of Uncle Sam's high-salaried minions,  
What to him are Tams Bixby,<sup>8</sup> J. George Wright?<sup>9</sup>  
What the long reaches of the tape of red, 30  
The splendors of the carpetbag regime?  
Through this dread shape the Phillipino looks;  
The vow not kept is in that doubting stare;  
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,  
Plundered, profaned and disinherited, 35  
Cries protest to the judges of the courts,  
A protest that is also made in vain.

O, Bill McKinley,<sup>10</sup> Hanna,<sup>11</sup> bosses in

All lands Republican beyond dispute,  
How will you reckon with this Indian in 40  
That hour when he unchallenged casts his vote,  
When whirlwinds of Democracy blow J.  
Blair Shoenfelt<sup>12</sup> back north to see the folks,  
And spiders weave their nets in spacious rooms  
And corridors of Misrule's capital? 45

How will it be with towns that batten on  
The wrong—with those whose bread depends upon  
The shame—when Bradford's<sup>13</sup> dream becomes a fact  
And pies of politics are baked at home?

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This poem parodies the Edwin Markham (1852-1840) poem, "The Man with the Hoe," which was published in 1899 and enjoyed wide popularity. Posey would again parody this same Markham poem in his 1906 poem, "The Creek Fullblood."

<sup>2</sup> As Oklahoma statehood approached, the United States imposed the state laws of the neighboring state of Arkansas upon the various American Indian nations of Indian Territory. This move, furthered the transition from tribal to state government, and as this poem proves, was not a popular change even among those who considered themselves "progressives."

<sup>3</sup> Ethan Allen Hitchcock (1835-1909), the United States Secretary of the Interior.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Curtis (1860-1936), congressman and author of the Curtis Act. He would later become Vice President under Herbert Hoover.

<sup>5</sup> Boer, a reference to the Dutch, who after establishing the South African Republic fought the English who wanted to control the gold wealthy area. The Boer War officially lasted from 1899 to 1902.



<sup>6</sup> Thomas Collier Platt (1833-1910), senator responsible for an amendment to an army appropriations bill that persuaded Cubans to draft a constitution providing the United States the right to become involved in the decisions of the Cuban government.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), at this time Vice President of the United States, Roosevelt's involvement in the Spanish-American War, particularly with his so-called "Rough Riders," had significantly boosted his popularity.

<sup>8</sup> Tams Bixby (1855-1922), congressman from Minnesota who was the chairman of the Dawes Commission.

<sup>9</sup> J. George Wright (1860-1941), was the Indian Inspector for Indian Territory at the time of this poem's composition.

<sup>10</sup> William McKinley (1843-1901), was serving his second term as President of the United States at the time of this poem's publication. He would be assassinated a few months later, on September 14, 1901.

<sup>11</sup> Marcus Alonzo Hanna (1837-1904), Ohio senator who spearheaded both of McKinley's presidential campaigns.

<sup>12</sup> J. Blair Shoenfelt (1859-1905), was the United States agent to the Five Civilized Tribes at the time of this poem.

<sup>13</sup> According to Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., this is probably Gamaliel Bradford (1831-1911), a Massachusetts banker who detailed his anti-republican political ideas in a book titled, *The Lesson of Popular Government* (1899).

## Fus Harjo and Old Billy Hell

[*Indian Journal*, March 22, 1901.]

Fus Harjo<sup>1</sup> was not a good Creek;

The pious members of his clan

Declared his virtues all were weak;

That Satan daily led the man;

For when they pitched their tents to feast and praise the Lord with zest, 5

He pitched his at the Square<sup>2</sup> and in the dance led all the rest.

So when the news was spread one day

That Fus had bought a violin,

The church folks straightaway ceased to pray

For him, shocked at so great a sin. 10

He gave the Indian trader for the instrument

A quit-claim<sup>3</sup> to his head-right money, every cent.

When he had touched the traders [sic] pen

And made the usual Christian sign,

He took his brand new fiddle then 15

And got himself on a bee-line

Immediately, for fear the trader, if he stayed,

Perchance, might want to rue the trade that he had made.

Fus Harjo set himself to saw;

He sawed thro' weather foul and fair; 20

If he'd been sawing wood, his squaw

Would not have known a daily care;

No doubt, he would have sawed until his head was gray

Had it not dawned upon him that he could not play.

“Perhaps, the prophet Chalogee, 25

Who does most anything you want,

Can learn me how to play,” said he,

And straightway sought the wise man's haunt,

“I would, Harjo, that you had come to me for rain,”

The prophet answered him, “I fear you've you come in vain. 30

“For, tho' I know the rainbow well—

Can bid it come or bid it go—

It happens, I regret to tell,

I know naught of your fiddle bow.

However, I can set you on a certain clue 35

That may to very wonderful results lead you.”

“I have some due bills<sup>4</sup> for your clue,”

Said Harjo, very much relieved.

“Will one for half a dollar do?

This prodigal reward received

40

The prophet Chalogee began, most grave and slow.

Remember, then, upon a journey must you go

“By night until the morning star

Shines on you in the loneliest part

Of Tulledega mountains far.

45

You needs must go forth stout of heart,

For you shall hear unearthly noises everywhere,

And in the unstarred darkness meet the Devil there.

“To him thus shall you make address:

‘Thou god of darkness and of sin,

50

Fus Harjo, famed for wickedness,

Would learn to play the violin.’”

When Harjo said, “I little like your clue, O seer,”

The prophet Chalogee<sup>5</sup> gave answer, “Have no fear.

“You’ll find my clue to be first rate;

55

’Twill make you famous in the land;

Besides—but it is growing late,

And I've a shower on my hand."

The conference coming thus abruptly to an end,

Fus Harjo sought the pathway home, down in Bear Bend.

60

Fus Harjo bade his squaw to pound

Him some apusky<sup>6</sup>—'bout a quart—

To cook some dumplings—blue and sound—<sup>7</sup>

A slice of beef—the sun-dried sort—

A rarer dish than which, when hashed, I mind not one!

65

"Have these," said Harjo, "ready by the set of sun."

Not satisfied till each parched grain

Of maize turns into golden dust,

The good squaw pounds with might and main

Exactly as all good squaws must

70

She boils the dumpling, cooks the beef, while Harjo lies

Beneath the arbor like catalpa, fighting flies.

As Tulledega lay a bank

Of purple 'gainst the fading sky

Fus Harjo, rising ate and drank;

75

And then, without explaining why,

Took up his brand new instrument but frazzled bow  
And vanished like a spectre in the afterglow.

He traveled on and on along

By ways uncertain thro' the night, 80

Now in the open, now among

The trees, now up, or down, the height

He stumbled here or yonder fell into a mire

And, though his fiddle saved, his temper lost entire.

He took a short cut here and there 85

A shorter still, to save his strength;

For he would have no strength to spare

If, when he reached the goal at length,

Old Nick should try to play him foul. Sometimes a limb

Scraped on his fiddle and almost frightened him. 90

At last, he came to Limbo,<sup>8</sup> brook

Of dismal name, coiled at the base

Of Tulledega. There he took

Refreshments, then resumed his pace.

Up, up the mountain, thro' the dark pinewoods went he, 95

Then down, far down into the vale of mystery.

He rested near the boulder grey

Of strange inscriptions<sup>9</sup>—near the place

A lonely huntsman fell a prey

To wolves, o’ertaken in the race.

100

He heard the river chafing on the rocks below,

The pines complain as night winds rocked them to and fro.

Then all at once an earthquake’s shock

The whole world jarred, and stars went out,

And tree crushed tree, and rock crushed rock,

105

And frenzied winds came with a shout,

And shallow waters in the river leaped to drown!

Behold, Fus Harjo’s hair stood up instead of down!

Then something did so roughly poke

Him in the ribs he jumped sidewise,

110

Thought he heard one rib when it broke,

The punch one meant to paralyse.

The pain shot up and down his spine and he was dumb,

But knew that Billy Hell had jabbed him with his thumb.

“Thou god of darkness and of sin,

115

Fus Harjo, famed for wickedness,  
Would learn to play the violin,”  
Said Harjo, trembling more or less.  
Whereupon Nick took his instrument without reply,  
Examined it closely and ran the strings up high, 120

A-thrumming each now loud now low,  
To get the pure and perfect sound.  
Then, with a flourish of the bow,  
And stamping his hoof on the ground,  
Nick gave Fus such a shower bath of melodies 125  
As lifted him to highest glory by degrees.

What runs! what tremulous thrill! and O  
What variation did he play!  
At each unseen touch of the bow,  
Yet finer runs and trills held sway, 130  
And variations, vastly better than the last,  
Held Harjo and the warring elements steadfast!

“Now let me hear you play,” said Nick  
Returning Fus his instrument.  
“It is a very simply trick,” 135



But Fus the air with discords rent,  
Whereat Nick lost his temper, scratched Fus one the head,  
Stampeded over him, and left him all but dead!

When Fus Harjo, at last, came to,  
With aches and pains in every limb, 140  
Chilled thro' and wringing wet with dew,  
Nick's hoof-prints were all over him!  
Some forty yards apart his bow and fiddle lay  
And his apusky was scattered every-which-way!

He picked up his apusky sack, 145  
Put in his violin and bow,  
Slinging the burden o'er his back  
He went home strighter [sic] than a crow,  
As bright day came extinguishing nights [sic] lesser lights  
And south-born breezes freshened o'er the piney heights. 150

But for the prophet Chaloguee,  
The magic healer of all ails,  
Who gave him much yalonka tea—<sup>10</sup>  
A remedy that never fails,  
Even tho' Nick be responsible for its use— 155

Fus Harjo would not have lived over his abuse.

Then spake the prophet Chalogee,

“I charge you now to not complain;

Good lies deeper than we can see;

Trees flourish from a hidden grain.

160

As I’ve given you bitter draughts to make you well,

So Nick his blows that you in music might excel.”

“I lived long weeks and did not eat;

Alone kept fierce beasts company;

Passed perils few would dare to meet,

165

To win the gift of prophecy,

The power to uproot all causes of disease,

Make drouthy summers green, and probe the mysteries.”

At this each lingering ache and sore

In Fus let go; the old desire

170

Returned grown stronger than of yore;

He smote the strings with soul on fire,

With feet a-patting, playing tunes not heard before,

Henceforth, Fus played at every dance the country o’er.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Fus Harjo, translated from Muscogee this name means “Crazy Bird.” This name appears to be an evolutionary link between Alexander Posey’s “Chinnubbie Harjo” pen name and his “Fus Fixico” persona. He never used the name of “Fus Harjo” again in his writing.

<sup>2</sup> The tribal town square was the location of the so-called “stomp” dances and other activities associated with the Muscogee Green Corn Ceremony.

<sup>3</sup> A quit-claim relinquished a person’s holding of certain property, in this context Posey probably refers to the character’s share of Muscogee national assets (note courtesy Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr.).

<sup>4</sup> Another term for a check or I. O. U.

<sup>5</sup> Chaloguee, a medicine man Posey knew as a child. For another of Posey’s tales about this real life figure see “Two Famous Prophets,” in Posey, *Chinnubbie and the Owl*, 67-72.

<sup>6</sup> Apusky is a traditional Muscogee food made from corn meal.

<sup>7</sup> Blue dumplings are another traditional Muscogee food made from corn.

<sup>8</sup> A creek found near Posey’s early childhood home of the Tulledega region west of present-day Eufaula, Oklahoma.

<sup>9</sup> According to Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. this passages refers to actual petroglyphs found in the Tulledega Hills area.

<sup>10</sup> A medicinal tea.

## Saturday

To my friend Jim Cowin.<sup>1</sup>

[*Indian Journal*, March 22, 1901.]

Danged, if I kin be content ’roun’

Home on Saterdag—gits me down.

It’s a day to smoke cigyars on,

Hear tall talk an’ see airs on,

A day to gas an' whittle on, 5  
Maybe, take a little on!

Jes 'pears like Sunday when you stay  
'Bout home, glum like, on Saturday.

Somehow it gits me out o' hitch,  
Gives me the all-overs an' sich 10  
Till I saddle old Jude an' set  
Her clean to town in a fret.

I jes can't he'p but go to town  
On Saterdag, an' loaf aroun'  
It's a day to git the news on, 15  
To play at cards an' lose on;  
It's a day for folks to meet on,  
To spark the gal you're sweet on.

It's jes in me to be in town  
On Saterdag, a mozin' 'round' 20  
It's a day to trade an' swap on,  
To soak your hoss an' crop on.  
It's a day to have your fun on,  
To get your grindin' done on.

Don't keer if it pours down for weeks, 25

On Saturday I'll head the creeks!

It's a day to go to town on,

The folks you know ar' foun' on:

It's a day to git home late on,

Have the ol' woman wait on. 30

I never missed but once to go,

An' jacks I felt worse a week er mo'.

It's a day one ort not pick on

To complain an' be sick on.

It's a day to get up soon on, 35

An' ride to town 'fore noon on.

Ginst one Saterdag passes by,

Anuther's loomin' in my eye.

It's a day to Jew an' buy on—

I mean the things they're high on— 40

To take the editors hint on,

Pay up an' git in print on.

My plow, when Saterdag comes 'roun',

Kin stand till Monday in the groun'

It's a day to see the sights on,

45

To drop in at Abe Kite's<sup>2</sup> on;

A day to eat a tamale<sup>3</sup> on.

To be in Eufaly on!

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Cowins lived near Posey's Bald Hill residence and rented land from him in 1897. See entries for February 3, 4 and 5 of 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Abe Kite was a Eufaula hide dealer. See Posey's February 3, 1897 journal entry.

<sup>3</sup> Tamale vendors were commonly found in Indian Territory towns (note courtesy of Daniel F. Littlefield Jr.).

1902

**The Evening Star**

[*Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine* 1 (October 1905): 84. A version of this poem with minor differences in indentation was published in *Twin Territories* 4 (March 1902): 65.]

Behold, Evening's bright star,

Like a door left ajar

In God's mansion afar,

Over the mountain's crest

Throws a beautiful ray—

5

A sweet kiss to the day,

As he sinks to his rest!

**On Hearing a Redbird Sing**

[*Twin Territories* 4 (March 1902): 84.]

Out in the howling wind;

Out in the falling snow;

Out in the blight and gloom

Of a desolate world,

I hear a lone bird sing,

5

“O it is sweet, sweet, sweet!”

Out in the sunless fields;

Out in the moaning woods;

Out in the dark and cold

Of a drear stricken world,

10

I see the roses bloom

And hear the drop of leaves!

### **She Was Obdurate**

[*Indian Journal*, May 23, 1902]

A young Southern gentleman, who visited his mother in this city a short time since, writes back thus:

“I had a very uneventful trip all the way back. A very pretty girl got on the train at South McAlester and occupied the seat just in front of me. I of course had to help her raise the window, but she didn’t invite me over to sit with her, as I thought she should have done, although I fumbled around with it considerably longer than necessary. She wore a hat trimmed with a wreath of violets, and pretty soon the wind blew off a small spray which fell in my lap, and I leaned over and asked her if I might have them, which she agreed to, but immediately relapsed into an oysterlike silence, so I wrote a verse and dropped it over into her lap, which in order to preserve for the delectation of posterity, I will here repeat:

‘Where are you going, my pretty maid?

I would have asked, but I was afraid,



When I helped you raise the window shade.

I have seldom seen a face so fair,

And 'tis many a trip since such hair

Has trailed o'er the back of a 'Katy'<sup>1</sup> chair.

I miss the violet's sweet perfume,

But thank the wind that stole the bloom.'

“I signed it ‘Chinnubbie Harjo’ and went into the next car in order to see if she would greet me with a ‘spasm’ when I returned, but we had passed Denison when I came back, and she must have gotten off there, for she was absent. I immediately proceeded to calm my wildly palpitating heart, swallowed my vain tears, and dashed away the lump in my throat which was struggling for exit, and busied myself with the biscuits [sic] and ‘preserves’ with which your forethought had provided me, ruminating the while, on the transitory nature of human events.”

It's our set 'em up.

Note

<sup>1</sup> That is, a chair on the passenger train the “Katy Flyer”

1903

**What a Snap**

[*Indian Journal*, June 26, 1903.]

I wish I were an editor,  
Out in the country free,  
Where old subscribers would bring  
Potatoes in to me;  
And as I counted up each spud,  
Each cabbage and each beet,  
I grab my pen and give the man  
    A veg'table receipt.

5

Emendation     7 1] 1'

**It's Too Hot**

[*Indian Journal*, August 14, 1903. This poem also appeared in *Fort Smith Times*, August 19, 1903]

He hates to sweat  
Does Bill Mellette.<sup>1</sup>  
    He'll wait till frost, no doubt;  
It's too hot yet  
For Bill Mellette

5

To Turn the rascals out.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> In 1903 accusations surfaced that federal officials and some members of the Dawes Commission were involved in illegal land dealings. Concerned citizens demanded that William Mellette, the United States Attorney in charge of the area to call a grand jury investigation of the matter. Mellette initially declined because he said it was too hot to convene a jury. Eventually the investigation did occur, finding several federal employees guilty of land fraud. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 175-176.

#### **Alex Posey is Responsible**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Due to its subject matter, Posey probably wrote the poem referred to in this brief newspaper piece in the fall of 1903 while he was the editor of the *Muskogee Times*.]

A recent snap shot of President Roosevelt shows him tipping his hat to a friend standing near a billboard on which was a large poster advertising the gold dust twins<sup>1</sup> (negro babies) This causes the Muskogee Times poet to break forth with:

If Hitchcock<sup>2</sup> goes off half cocked,

And Bony<sup>3</sup> closes up like a clam,

While Roosevelt tips his hat to the Gold Dust Twins,

How old is Mary Ann?<sup>4</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The N. K. Fairbanks Company advertised several of their cleansing products with racist caricatures of two African American children. These children were called the Gold Dust Twins and were often displayed doing various household chores below the catch-phrase of “let the twins do your work.”

<sup>2</sup> Ethan Allen Hitchcock (1835-1909), Secretary of the Interior. In 1903 allegations arose that a number of federal employees and members of the Dawes Commission were involved in land graft. In October of 1903, Hitchcock appointed Charles Joseph Bonaparte (1851-1921), a lawyer from Maryland, to investigate the allegations. Posey was critical of Bonaparte who conducted his cursory investigation behind closed doors (hence “closes up like a clam”) and did little to punish those involved in the illegal land dealings. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 180-183 and Posey, *The Fus Fixico Letters*, 138n.

<sup>3</sup> Boney, Posey’s humorous nickname for Charles Joseph Bonaparte.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Ann, possibly a reference to Theodore Roosevelt’s maid. See David McCullough, *Mornings on Horseback*, 21.

1905

A Freedman Rhyme

[*Muskogee Democrat*, August 19, 1905.]

Now de time fer ter file<sup>1</sup>  
Fer yo' Freedman chile.  
You bettah lef' dat watermelon 'lone  
An' go look up some vacant lan'  
Fer all dem chillun what you t'ink is yone. 5  
De good lan' aint a-gwine ter last  
Twell Gabul blow de Judgment blast.  
Hits miltin' like snow  
Up eroun' Bristow;  
Dey'll be none lef' but rocks an' river san'. 10  
De Injun filin' mighty fast;  
Bettah hump Yo'se'r, nigger,  
An' gin ter kin' 'o figger.

—Fus Fixico

Note

<sup>1</sup> In this poem, Posey derides those Muscogee freed people who, during the allotment process, signed up for their fair share of land. This poem makes plain Posey's ugly racist tendencies and also betrays his disdain for allotment rules that allowed Muscogee freed people the same right to land as other members of the Muscogee Nation.

1906

**The Creek Fullblood**

(With apologies to Edwin Markham.)<sup>1</sup>

[*Muskogee Times-Democrat*, August 9, 1906.]

Shorn of his rights for centuries he mopes  
Beside his hut and broods upon his plight,  
The emptiness of treaties in his face,  
And in his morose soul an outraged trust.  
Who made him pretty to grafter and the shark, 5  
A thing that any rogue may rob that will,  
Hold up and plunder in the open day?  
Who conceived the undoing of this Creek?  
Whose was the act that forced this change on him?  
Who trampled under foot his sacred rights? 10  
Is this the Creek to whom was granted sole  
Dominion over all this western land?  
What gulfs between him and that solemn pledge!  
Prey of the horde of grafters, what to him  
Are Hitchcock<sup>2</sup> and the swing of the Big Stick?<sup>3</sup> 15  
What the long reaches of the tape of red,  
The rules prescribed, restrictions on his land?  
Through this red man the Filipino looks;<sup>4</sup>

whose untutor'd mind/ Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind." (This note courtesy of Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr.)

1907

**Arkansaw**

(The insinuation that nothing would rhyme with Arkansas has stirred the ire of the local poets and one of them comes forward with a defense.)

[*Muskogee-Times Democrat*, June 20, 1907. This poem also appeared in the June 29, 1907 issue of the *Tahlequah Arrow*, and in the July 5, 1907 issue of the *Indian Journal*.]

No rhyme for Arkansaw?

What's wrong with mother-in-law,

Or Wichita,

Or Washita,

Or Spavinaw,

5

Or Mackinaw,

Or Ma

And Pa?

Bah!

Hath not a crow a caw,

And greedy sharks a maw?

10

Is not a female Chickasaw

A squaw?

Don't jacks hee-haw



And wildcats claw?

Ever hear of Esau?

15

Never saw

A Choctaw

Smoke or chaw?

Ever see a Quapaw

20

Eating a ripe pawpaw?

No rhyme for Arkansaw?

Pshaw!

—Fus Fixico

1908

**Checotah**

[*Indian Journal*, May 1, 1908.]

There was a small town, Checotah<sup>1</sup>

A very nice place to gotah,

'Till the farmers got skinned

On the cotton there ginned

And rose in their might and smotah.

5

<sup>1</sup> Like "O'Bleness" this poem promotes Eufaula as the town best equipped to serve as county seat.

**O'Bleness**

[*Indian Journal*, May 8, 1908.]

There was an editor, O'Bleness,<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent cognomen, Dennis.

Who gave as his quota

One vote to Checotah,

And his folks approached him with menace.

5

Note

<sup>1</sup> The editor of the *Hoffman Herald* who had promoted the town of Checotah, instead of Posey's town of Eufaula, for county seat. Like "Checotah" this poem is meant to advocate Eufaula as the best town to serve as county seat.

### Hotgun on the Death of Yadeka Harjo

[*Kansas City Star*, January 19, 1908. Also in *Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine* 6 (May 1908): 43.]

"Well, so," Hotgun he say,

"My ol'-time frien', Yadeka Harjo,<sup>1</sup> he

Was died the other day,

An' they was no ol'-timer left but me.

"Hotulk Emathla<sup>2</sup> he

5

Was go to be good Injin long time 'go,

An' Woxie Harjoche<sup>3</sup>

Been dead ten years or twenty, maybe so.

"All had to die at las';

I live long time, but now my days was few;

10

'Fore long poke weeds an' grass

Be growin' all aroun' my grave house,<sup>4</sup> too."

Wolf Warrior<sup>5</sup> listens close,

An' Kono Harjo<sup>6</sup> pay close 'tention too;

Tookpafka Micco<sup>7</sup> he almos'

15

Let his pipe go out a time or two.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Yadeka Harjo, a conservative Muscogee from Hickory Ground whom Posey visited in October 1905. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 201-2.

<sup>2</sup> Hotulk Emathla, second chief of the Muscogee Nation in 1895. He appointed Posey as the superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 74, 76, 78, 79.

<sup>3</sup> Woxie Harjoche is unidentified.

<sup>4</sup> Traditional Muscogee burial customs call for a small house-like structure to be placed over the grave.

<sup>5</sup> Wolf Warrior, a fictional character found in Posey's "Fus Fixico" letters.

<sup>6</sup> Kono Harjo was a fictional Muscogee conservative who appears in Posey's "Fus Fixico" letters.

<sup>7</sup> Tookpafka Micco, like Kono Harjo, is a figure from the satirical "Fus Fixico" letters.

## Undated Poems

Drawn from undated manuscripts, and clippings from Minnie Posey's scrapbook, these poems cannot be dated and are simply organized alphabetically.

### Again

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Do all the beauteous sunsets glow

And all the fragrant flowers blow

But on the border line of Bliss?

Is there diviner joy somewhere

That worldly mortals cannot share

Beyond the rapture of a kiss?

5

If not, why do we dream, when we

Behold the sunsets wane, or see

The rose in bloom, that there is?

If not, the lovers long in vain

That they will meet and kiss again

In endless lanes of Paradise.

10

**All the While [Let Men Dispute]**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. An undated manuscript of this poem exists in folder 158, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The manuscript page also contains the poem, "A Vision of June."]

Let mankind fight and jower  
Over creeds decayed or new;  
Deny that God had power,  
That the Holy Book is true,  
The birds are singing all the while,  
And grass is growing mile on mile.

5

**[By the cardinal led aright,]**

[Undated manuscript, folder 161, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Note the similarities of this poem with "[Every moment I flow,]" "Esapahutche [Limbo]" and "On the Piney." This folder also contains an untitled manuscript version of "Esapahutche [Limbo]."]

By the cardinal led aright,  
Down the slope of the wild mountainside

Come the grasses a thirst to my tide;  
 As I fall on the rocks at night,  
     Far away, like the roar in the shell of the sea, 5  
     The weird voice of the pines in the crag answers me  
 Here the sky  
 Comes to lie  
 On my breast  
 There the night 10  
 In her flight  
 From the light  
 On the height  
 Seeks to rest  
 Tis a long away away [sic] 15  
 From the hills of the old Dowdie Ranch<sup>1</sup>  
     And the valley of pine where I branch  
 And I murmur all day  
     Impatient of delay

Emendation      11 In her] < Seeks to rest > < From > ↑ In ↓ ~

<sup>1</sup> Dowdie Ranch, which Posey also sometimes spelled as "Doughty," "Dawdy," and "Dowdy" is unidentified.

**Come**

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 98-99. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect his final intentions.]

Above,

The stars are bursting into bloom,

My love;

Below, unfolds the evening gloom.

Come, let us roam the long lane thro',

5

My love, just as we used to do.

The birds

Of twilight twitter, sweet and low,

And fly to rest, and honored go

The herds.

10

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!

15

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,

20

And June

Spills all her sweetness on the air.

Come, let us roam the long lane thro',

My love, just as we used to do.

### **The Flower of Tulledega**

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 120-122. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect his final intentions.]

I know a Tulledega<sup>1</sup> flower rare

That lifts between the rocks a blushing face,

And doth with every wind its sweetness share

That bloweth over its wild dwelling-place.

It gathers beauty where the storms are rough

5

And clings devoted to the rugged bluff.

Far 'bove its sisters in the vale below,  
It swings its censor like a ruby star,  
And thither all the days of summer go  
The mountain bees-fierce knights of love and war— 10  
To seal in noontide hour—O hour of bliss!—  
Each tender vow of true love with a kiss.

And often, like a beauteous blossom blown  
By careless winds o'er heaven's opal floor,  
The Butterfly entreats it, "Be my own"; 15  
And never would in valleys wander more,  
Content to hang for aye enchanted there  
Beside the frowning summit bleak and bare.

"Come sit with me in my green cedar tent,  
Bright Flower," said Tulledega long ago, 20  
Whilst leaning o'er his lofty battlement,  
And wooed the flower from the vale below.  
In vain the Oktahutchee<sup>2</sup> pleaded, "Stay:  
Abide here by my mossy brink always,"

And flashed on thro' the folded hills. "Abide," 25  
The Valley said, "Upon my vendant breast."

“‘Tis bleak and cold up there,” the Thrushes cried.

“Nay, nay, I love the Tulledega best,”

Replied the lovely Flower as it went

High up the Mountain’s rugged battlement.

30

“Alas!” the River sighed, and cast a tear

Upon a slender reed; while overhead

A passing cloud cast down a shadow drear

Upon the valley green in sunshine spread;

And softly sweet from every feathered throat

To music set, escaped a plaintive note.

35

A chilling breeze came o’er the forest trees,

And all the leafy branches shook with cold;

Stechupco<sup>3</sup> blew such tender melodies

As Pan<sup>4</sup> blew from his oaten lute of old,

On fair Arcadia’s sunny slopes, when Echo<sup>5</sup>

Loved the youth Narcissus<sup>6</sup> to her sorrow.

40

Abide, O lovely Flower, in your home

Of pine and cedar on the mountain height;

To come and go, as I have come and gone

So often before,—let that be my delight.

45

'Tis May, and winds that blow from where you are,  
Tell me you hand now like a ruby star.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Tulledega is Posey's name for the rural area west of Eufaula, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, where he spent a good part of his childhood.

<sup>2</sup> Oktahutche is the Muscogee name for the North Canadian river in eastern Oklahoma. Translated, the name means "Sand Creek." As Posey consistently spelled the word as "Oktahutche," the spelling presented here is probably a change made by Minnie Posey.

<sup>3</sup> Stechupco, also called Este Chupco, is the Muscogee spiritual figure of the "Tall Man," a giant who protects the woodlands. See Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri, *A Sacred Path*, 128-129.

<sup>4</sup> In Greek mythology Pan is the god of the forest and fertility who bears the feet, ears, and horns of a goat.

<sup>5</sup> Echo is a nymph from Greek myth who falls in love with Narcissus and is then deprived of her ability to speak by Hera and must instead repeat the words of others.

<sup>6</sup> In Greek mythology, Narcissus is the handsome son of the river god. Echo falls in love with him but he rejects her advances.

#### For Me

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

I strayed by the shore where the echoes are sleeping  
Among the blue hills that encircle and hide  
The broad-breasted river where, laughing and leaping,  
The streamlet makes haste to unite with the tide

Of sylvan Oktaha<sup>1</sup> whose stretches of sand 5  
    Made girdles of beauty about this fair land.

The blue of the sky and the green branches waving—  
    The sweet invitation of nature to rest  
Seem to satisfy all of the soul's eager craving  
    To live in a land by eternal spring blest. 10  
The mountain, the river, each flower, each tree  
    Had a love-song to sing and all, all was for me!

The whispering breeze from the panhandle blowing  
    Had breathed on the ripening grain of the west—  
Had gathered up sweets where Canadian, flowing 15  
    Past cottonwood groves where the summer birds nest,  
Low murmured a chorus of rapturous glee  
    In vesper-like cadence, and it was for me.

The far-away clouds drifted slowly while seeming  
    To blend with the billows of green on the hills 20  
Within the cool shade I sat quietly dreaming  
    And sipping the nectar the morning distills.  
Like mem'ries of love o'er that emerald sea  
    The wind-harps of heaven vibrated for me!

Note

<sup>1</sup> A town in what is now Muskogee County in eastern Oklahoma.

### **Frail Beauty**

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 178. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect his final intentions.]

The raven hair of youth turns gray;

Bright eyes grow dim; soft cheeks grow pale;

The joyous heart becomes less gay:

For beauty is a thing so frail,

If once Time's fingers touch it in caress,

5

It droops, and loses all its loveliness.

### **A Glimpse of Spring**

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 182. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect his final intentions.]

Overcast is the sky,

And the wind passes by,

Breathing blight.

Yet, afar in the gloom,  
In the desolate room, 5  
Cold and white,  
Where December is king,  
I hear a lone bird sing.  
And the gloom,  
Ere my glad lips can say, 10  
From the earth melts away,  
In the warm smile of Spring,  
And the frosty winds bring  
Sweet perfume.  
In the vast waste of snow, 15  
I see the roses bloom.

### **The Homestead of Empire**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Lo! plain and sky are brothers; peak  
And cloud confer; the rivers spread  
At length to mighty seas!  
The soul is lifted up  
In room whose walls share God's; wherein 5

Empire has staked off a homestead!

Roll on, ye prairies of the west,

Roll on, like unsailed seas away!

I love thy silence

And thy mysterious room;

10

Roll on, ye deserts unconfined,

Roll on into the boundless day!

Roll on, ye rivers of the west,

Roll on, through canyons to the sea!

Ye chant a harmony

15

Whereto free people march!

Roll on, O Oregon, roll on!

Roll on, O thunderous Yosemite? [sic]

Ye are the grand voiced singers of

The great Republic! ye echo

20

Thro' the years the hymn of

Freedom and of power;

The song of union and of peace

For aye is in thy troubled flow!



Loom! loom, ye far cold summits of 25

The west! cloud-girt, snow-crown'd shine on!

Keep watch toward the dawn;

Keep watch toward the night!

Loom! loom, ye silent sentinels,

O'er Freedom's vast dominion! 30

Move on, world of the Occident,

Move on! Thy footfalls thro' the globe

Are heard as thou marchest

Into that larger day

Whose dawn lights up the armored front 35

In Cuba and the Phillipines. [sic]

**[In that valley country lying east of]**

[Photocopy of an undated newspaper clipping, box I-22.6, Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection, American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. This work of prose poetry appears to introduce a story, but no copy has been found.]

In that valley country lying east of

'Possum flat,<sup>1</sup> along that clear, cool stream that

Tumbles from the Tulledegan<sup>2</sup> hills, a

Little brook, into the tangled Coon Creek

Woods, and flashes out a river—in that 5  
 Land of soft blue springs that murmur all the  
 Year, and where the breezes, scattering fragrance  
 Stolen from the pine sprays on the westmost  
 Mountains, whisper what the mocking bird is 10  
 Saying in the sweet June fields, is where I 10  
 Picked this story up, one quiet sultry  
 Summer day, when Bald Hill<sup>3</sup> lay aquiv'ring  
 'Gainst the far horizon in a dreamy haze.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is Posey's ranch near Bald Hill. See Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 96.

<sup>2</sup> Tulledega is Posey's name for the rural area west of Eufaula, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, where he spent a good part of his childhood.

<sup>3</sup> Bald Hill, the location of Posey's family ranch near present-day Eufaula, Oklahoma.

Close-hooded as a monk

High-cheeked as a Red Sea

**Irene**

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

The char<sup>1</sup> Irene,<sup>1</sup> revealed 5

In this My queen

Thou dost not love me more.

Upon a Irene, n face

Once in My queen, 5

Know my heart is not sore.

Irene,

**On the Hills of Dawn**

[Undated manuscript, folder 145, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease

Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Irene,

10

Behold My queen, my glory's here!

I have been there before.

That morning spills of silver dew

Note

And song upon the winds that war

<sup>1</sup> Irene is unidentified.

And sigh their vows

5

Among the boughs!

**On a Marble Medallion of Dante**

[Undated manuscript, folder 157, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease

Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Behold, I'm rich in character,  
And pearls and breathe a golden air

Close-hooded as a monk;

High-cheeked as a Red Man;

High-nosed as a Hebrew;

Full-lipped as Greek god.

The character revealed

5

In this bit of white stone

Is such as is not stamped

Upon a human face

Once in a thousand years.

How savage, fierce and grim

His bones are bleached and **On the Hills of Dawn**

[Undated typescript, folder 145, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease  
Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

He mocks the fate

5

Behold, the morningglory's [sic] sky blue cup

Is mine wherewith to drink the nectar up

That morning spills of silver dew

And song upon the winds that woo

And sigh their vows

50

Among the boughs!

Of this mighty waste, the world of

Behold, I'm rich in diamonds rare,

And pearls and breathe a golden air

My room is filled with shattered beams

Of light; my life is one of dreams.

10

In my hut on

The hills of dawn.]

I pity him who never **On Viewing the Skull and Bones of a Wolf**

[Undated manuscript, folder 160, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease  
Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

A burden more than I could bear

How savage, fierce and grim!

I pity his bones are bleached and white;

But what is death to him?

Thou He grins as if to bite.

He mocks the fate his soul must bear

That bade, "Begone."

There's fierceness stamped

    In ev'ry bone,

Let silence settle from the midnight sky—

Such silence as you've broken with your cry;

The bleak wind howl, unto the uttermost [sic] verge

Of this mighty waste, thy fitting dirge.

*[The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey, comp. Minnie H. Posey (Topeka: Crane,*

*1910), 159. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime;*

*[The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane,*

*1910): 177. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime;*

*as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect*

*his final intentions.]*

Forgiveness: earth is filled with light

I pity him who never dreams,

Who has no castles in the air.

Denied my fancies, life would be

    A burden more than I could bear.

Upon the river's side away

I pity him who never hears

5

The high-born perfect harmony

That haunts the air of loneliness:

[How very dead his soul must be!

[The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 116. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime;

I pity him who cannot feel

The thrill of rapture but in lust;

10

Who cannot rise above himself,

And only lives because he must.

And you, most sure, a stranger

But birds sing sweeter for you **A Reverie**

[The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane,

1910): 159. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime;

as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect

his final intentions.]

The sky bends over in a sweet

Forgiveness; earth is filled with light;

And mellow autumn hues, soft winds

That croon of summer lands; and tho'

10

The brooding stillness comes a strain

5

Of music, and, as leaves are swept

Upon the river's ride away,

*The Sweet*

My thoughts drift off and on to God.

*Possey, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane,*

*1910): 152. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime;*

*as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered* **The Rural Maid** *work, this version may not reflect*

*[The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane,*

*1910): 116. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime;*

*as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect*

*his final intentions.]* voice of love

Shout welcome from the cottage door.

Said I, "Sweet maid, I do not know your name,

And you, most sure, a stranger are to me;

But birds sing sweeter for your presence here,—

5

My heart is captured by your witchery."

*'Tis sweet to see the child at play*

Drop She fled from me,

5

In dread of me.

*To My Wife*

Said I, "Sweet maid, I did not know your name,

And you, most sure, a stranger here to me;

But birds sing sadder for your absence here,—

My heart is broken by your witchery."

10

I've heard the music of the bird

And given voice to my delight.

I've sought the shapes that come in—'Tis Sweet

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910):152. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect his final intentions.]

Have stood, thro' weal and woe, true as

'Tis sweet, so sweet, when work is o'er,

10

At eve, to hear the voice of love

Shout welcome from the cottage door,

[Embowered on the hill above.

From furrowed field, where all day

5

You toil and sweat for little bread,

'Tis sweet to see the child at play

Drop toys and come with arms outspread.

How merry still art thou, and yet

### To My Wife

[Undated manuscript, folder 162, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Till winter, wooed a captive to the room

I've seen the beauty of the rose,

I've heard the music of the bird,

And given voice to my delight;



I've sought the shapes that come in dreams,  
I've reached my hands in eager quest,  
To fold them empty to my breast;  
While you, the whole of all I've sought—  
The love, the beauty, and the dreams—  
Have stood, thro' weal and woe, true at  
My side, silent at my neglect. 10

Some day,

For aye.

### To the Indian Meadow Lark

[Undated clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Sometimes—oftentimes—

When other birds despairing southward fly,

In early autumn time away;

When all the green leaves of the forest die, 10

How merry still art thou, and gay.

At rest with me.

O! golden breasted bird of dawn, 5

Through all the bleak days singing on,

Till winter, wooed a captive by thy strain, 15

Breaks into smiles, and Spring is come again.

### A Vision of Rest

[*The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, comp. Minnie H. Posey, (Topeka: Crane, 1910): 142. There is no extant copy of this poem dating from Alexander Posey's lifetime; as Minnie H. Posey sometimes altered her husband's work, this version may not reflect his final intentions.] *sweet apollian airs*

Which, in the poet's inmost soul,

A Some day this quest

I ask Shall cease; blooming far

Afield, *at* Some day, answered me:

5

"From pl For aye, to this, where Love

A This heart shall rest with his breath.

5

I qu In peace, then a stately tree.

Sometimes—oftentimes—I almost fell

The calm upon my senses steal,

10

So soft, and all but hear uncomforted

The dead leaves rustle near—lark,

10

And sigh to be the waving grass

At rest with me, the, its answer came

Though I behold where I meet thee—

15

A The ashen branches tossing to and fro,

I Somehow I only vaguely know

15

The wind is rude and cold.

Gave answer to my question—thou

From heights where stormy Passes **Whence?**

20

[Undated manuscript, folder 159, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease  
Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Whence come these sweet aeolian airs

Which, in the poet's inmost soul,

Awaken silent melodies?

I ask a wild rose blooming far

Afield, and thus it answered me: 5

"From places like to this, where Love

Abides to start them with his breath."

I questioned then a stately tree,

With leaves a-ripple in the breeze.

"From lonely woods," it gave reply, 10

"Where Sorrow broods uncomforted."

And then I asked a meadow-lark,

A-bobbing on the waving grass.

As quick, as blithe, its answer came:

"From meadows where I meet the sun, 15

And brown bees rove in quest of sweets."

Then Tulledega,<sup>1</sup> lying like

A purple shadow in the West,

Gave answer to my question, thus:

"From heights where stormy Passion speaks 20

In the language of the tempest.”

*Manuscripts and Archival Materials*

Note

American Native Press Archives, University of Oklahoma

<sup>1</sup> Tulledega is Posey’s name for the rural area west of Eufaula, Muskogee (Creek) Nation, where he spent a good part of his childhood.

Bacone College, Muskogee, Oklahoma

Alexander L. **[With him who lives a neighbor to the birds!]**

[Undated *Indian Journal* clipping, scrapbook, Alexander L. Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

Photo Collection

With him who lives a neighbor to the birds!

Who treasures up the secrets of the woods,

And knows where rivers bend the gracefulest,

Where mountains frown the awfulest and winds

Stray saddest in the forest evergreen!

5

A hut where Limbo<sup>1</sup> drifts the mussel shells ashore.

Posey, Alexander, *Chimichie*

Note

*Oral Traditions*, ed. Marjorie ...

<sup>1</sup> A creek found near Posey’s early childhood home of the Tulledega region west of present-day Eufaula, Oklahoma.

—, *The Fus Fuxico Levere*

... and Carol A. Petty Hunter

Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

—, *Poems of Alexander Posey*

... and August H. Posey, Topeka, Kansas

Crane and Company, 1887

—, *Poems of Alexander Posey*

... and Marnie H. Posey

Muskogee: Okmweige Culture **Bibliography** and the First Colonial Tribes

*Manuscripts and Archival Materials*

American Native Press Archives, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Second Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. Collection

Bacone College, Muskogee, Oklahoma

Alexander L. Posey's Personal Library

Oklahoma Historical Society, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma City

Alexander L. Posey Collection

Photo Collection

Oklahoma Historical Society Library

Newspaper Archives

Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma, *and the Oral*

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49.

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By the time of his arrival in the North Canadian (or Oktanutche) River in 1908,<sup>2</sup> Posey had accumulated approximately 200 volumes, a collection representing a wide range of literary, political, and historical thought. However, Posey's library, like the rest of his life, offers a mixed picture. Oklahoma, provides only a narrow selection of regularly read magazines and newspapers such as the *North American Review*, the *Journal*, the *Kansas City Star*, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, the *Metropolitan*, among others.<sup>3</sup> Posey's important reading matter included the *Journal*, which provided him with the education and literary work that boasts stories, poems, and articles that made him a celebrity. Today the life and mind of one of the most important figures in the

Between 1954 and 1962, the *Journal* was on a homemade bookshelf. Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., between 1962 and 1970, (and his) academic work on the eighteenth and nineteenth century skeptics, especially Thomas Paine and James

## Appendix A: A Catalog of Alexander Posey's Library<sup>1</sup>

Alexander Posey was probably one of the most literate inhabitants of Indian Territory. By the time of his accidental drowning in the North Canadian (or Oktahutche) River in 1908,<sup>2</sup> Posey—at only thirty-four years of age—had accumulated approximately 200 volumes, a collection representing a wide range of literary, political, and historical thought. However, Posey's library, now housed at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, provides only a sampling of the bulk of his reading. He also regularly read magazines and newspapers such as the *Muskogee Phoenix*, the *Eufaula Indian Journal*, the *Kansas City Star*, the *Arkansas Gazette*, *Puck*, *Current Literature*, and *Cosmopolitan* among others.<sup>3</sup> Posey's impressive reading habits, coupled with his Muscogee heritage, provided him with the education necessary to create his own notable body of literary work that boasts stories, poems, orations, and the satirical Fus Fixico letters that made him a celebrity. Today Posey's library continues to educate; it provides insight into the life and mind of one of the most influential and enigmatic of American Indian figures.

Between 1890 and 1908 Posey's library quickly grew from a few books lined up "on a homemade bookshelf" (Littlefield 40) to a well-stocked collection. According to Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., between young man's freshman and sophomore years at Bacone Indian University, Posey "had more than seventy books in his personal library [and his] academic work had led him to a...systematic study of English writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (49). Littlefield notes that Posey was fond of "religious skeptics, especially Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll" (49), and these

influences surface in his eulogy for D. N. McIntosh and his political speech in favor of Isparhecher's 1895 campaign for Principal Chief.<sup>4</sup> A significant number of Posey's books bear the imprint of subscription book clubs, and the advertisements in the backs of these volumes hint that he obtained a substantial portion of his collection through the mail. Posey disliked leaving Indian Territory,<sup>5</sup> and such subscription services were probably a good way to acquire books in the rural area. Whether Posey read every book found in his library is unknown, but his journals offer a glimpse into his voracious reading habits. Over just a few months in 1897 he read Plutarch's *Lives*, Homer's *Iliad*, Aesop's *Fables*, James W. Buel's *Heroes of the Dark Continent*, and works by Washington Irving, Robert Burns, William Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, Donald G. Mitchell, Walt Whitman and others.<sup>6</sup> In Posey's journals he openly reveals his opinions of the works he read, and these passages help explain the contents of his library. For example Posey's June 17, 1897 entry reads, "Laid in my barrel stave hammock and read Joaquin Miller's 'Builders of the City Beautiful.' Whatever Miller writes is charming and this book is no exception" (429). Such praise helps explain why Posey's library boasts eleven of Miller's works. Thirteen books by the naturalist John Burroughs appear in Posey's collection, and next to a passage in his copy of Burroughs' *Birds and Poets with Other Papers*, Posey jotted, "Therefore Burroughs must be possessed by genius." High praise from the man who after reading Buel's *Heroes of the Dark Continent* wrote, "From a literary standpoint, the book is a failure...Irving would have built a structure of wondrous beauty" (405-406). Alongside, or, perhaps even above such favorites as Irving, Miller, and Burroughs, Posey loved Robert Burns. His March 5, 1897 journal entry reads, "Read Burns. I find some

new pleasure, some new thought, some new beauty heretofore unseen everytime I read the poems of the 'Ayrshire Plowman'" (416).

Posey's library stands as a monument to his wider search for the same "pleasure," "thought," and "beauty" he found in Burns. However, cataloging Posey's library as it exists today presents two main complications. The first of these is that Posey could not have owned at least two of these books because they were either given to a member of the Posey family or published after his death in 1908.<sup>7</sup> Posey's library changed hands no fewer than three times after he died—first to his wife Minnie, then to his daughter Wynema who then gifted the library to Bacone College. Thus a few of these books undoubtedly belonged to parties other than Posey. However, it is possible that he ordered some of these volumes before his death, and at the very least they are of importance considering the history of Posey family literacy. An example of a book Posey could not have owned but that figures prominently in his family history is the copy of J. L. and J. B. Gilder's *Authors at Home*. This book, inscribed with "Yahola Posey from Beauregard Torrans, Muskogee, Ok, March 28, 1909," is a gift to Posey's son from John Beauregard Torrans, who according to Littlefield was "a Texas poet of some local note and Alex's longtime friend" (137). In fact, Posey even gave his daughter, Wynema Torrans Posey, her middle name in honor of his friend.<sup>8</sup> Torrans also gave Posey a book in 1899, Andrew Lang's *Ballades and Verses Vain*, which bears the inscription, "To my friend Alex Posey from Beauregard Torrans 11/2/99." Posey may have borrowed and failed to return another Torrans book, Tennyson's *The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, as it simply bears the signature: "Beauregard Torrans. 1898."

Posey's The second complication in cataloging the contents of Posey's library is that at some point it was merged with the library of another man named James L. Caldwell. Caldwell frequented Bacone at roughly the same time as Posey. Bacone yearbooks indicate that Caldwell graduated in 1892 when Posey was in his second year of enrollment, and according to a 1902 issue of Bacone's student newspaper, *The Baconian*, Caldwell became a preacher after leaving college.<sup>9</sup> However, no further recorded connection between Posey and Caldwell exists. It is improbable that Posey acquired the books in Caldwell's library during his lifetime because Caldwell's books are generally textbooks or other volumes on subjects which Posey had little recorded interest, such as physics and the French language. While many of the dates associated with the Caldwell books coincide with Posey's stay at Bacone, the presence of J. L. Nichols's *The Business Guide; or Safe Methods of Business*, a book copyrighted in 1902 and bearing a bookplate reading: "Private Library of James L. Caldwell" suggests that Posey did not acquire the books during his stay at the university, which he left after the Spring 1894 semester. Additionally, none of the Caldwell texts bears either Posey's bookplate or his signature, which Posey often included in his books. Furthermore, as the Caldwell books are not listed in the original card catalog for the Posey collection, it is almost certain that the Posey and Caldwell libraries were merged only after they were gifted to the Bacone College Library.

While only twelve of the volumes included in the collection bear either Caldwell's bookplate or signature, it is possible that other volumes belonging to Caldwell, but lacking these identifiers, are integrated into Posey's library. Therefore, all books not bearing either an identifying bookplate or signature, or not mentioned in

Posey's journals, should be considered of uncertain ownership. A good example of this ambiguity is found in the collection's single copy of the Bible. This book is inscribed with, among other items, the name of "Okla H. Spradling" and, "From the girls, and Lady teachers of Indian University. June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1895." This date indicates that the book was presented to its original owner approximately one year after Posey left Bacone.<sup>10</sup> Though Posey's autograph book, held in the Gilcrease Museum does contain the passage, "Your friend and classmate at B. I. U./ Okla Spradling/ Vinita, IT June 20, 1893," the Bible bearing her name probably did not belong to him.<sup>11</sup> Caldwell might also have known Spradling, and the Bible is not included in the original Bacone card catalog for the Posey library. These factors make it likely that the book either belonged to Caldwell, Spradling, or to another party altogether.

These complications aside, as evidenced by the records in the Posey collection's original card catalog—along with his bookplates and signatures—most of the volumes housed in Bacone College's Alexander Posey Library did indeed belong to Posey. One book, a copy of Charles Darwin's *Descent of Man* inscribed with "L. H. Posey Eufaula, I. T.," even belonged to his father. However, those works that most influenced Posey never lined his bookcases. As a man with a strong connection to his Muscogee heritage, Posey owed a great debt to the works of oral tradition he heard from his mother and other Muscogee storytellers.<sup>12</sup> Craig S. Womack writes, "Alexander Posey, no matter how much Burns he read, was a member of the Creek Nation...he was very solidly in the midst of Creek culture in all its complexity" (141). No better proof of Posey's debt to Muscogee culture exists as that found in his own literary achievements. In Posey's story, "Chinnubbie and the Owl," a tale steeped in Muscogee oral tradition, he refers to tribal



storytellers as “the keepers of the oral library,”<sup>13</sup> and throughout his short career, he made it no secret that his work arose from this “oral library” as much as from the books that graced his shelves.<sup>14</sup>

#### Notes

1. I am grateful to Frances Donelson of the Bacone College Library in Muskogee, Oklahoma for allowing me access to the Alexander Posey Library. I also thank the staff of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma for help using their Alexander L. Posey Collection.

2. Daniel F. Littlefield, *Alex Posey*, 4.

3. Littlefield, 87.

4. Littlefield, 72, 77.

5. Littlefield, 99.

6. Alexander Posey, “The Journal of Alexander Lawrence Posey: January 1 to September 4, 1897,” 398-429.

7. These books are the 1917 edition of Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi* and J. L. and J. B. Gilder’s *Authors at Home*, which according to an inscription in the book was presented to Yahola Posey on March 28, 1909.

8. Wynema Torrans Posey’s first name was probably in honor of the title character of S. Alice Callahan’s novel, *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*. See Littlefield 137.

9. For records of Caldwell and Posey’s enrollment at Bacone Indian University between 1889 and 1894, see volumes 10-14 of the Bacone Indian University annual; for a

brief mention of Caldwell's later career as a preacher, see *The Baconian* (August 1902): 65.

10. Littlefield 59.

11. Autograph book, folder 1, Alexander Posey Collection, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

12. Littlefield 9, 24-25.

13. Alexander Posey, "Chinnubie and the Owl," unpagged pamphlet.

14. Littlefield 257.

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Edward Everett Dale, ed. *Chronicles of Oklahoma*. 45.4 (1967-1968).

Womack, Craig. S. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.

#### **A Note on the Catalog**

All books are listed alphabetically. When known, copyright or publishing dates of the books—along with the content of bookplates, inscriptions, and signatures—are included in the individual entries. The entries for books boasting marginalia include the

notation, "Marginalia." Books bearing signatures are indicated by the notation, "Autograph," followed by the content of the signature. For example, if a book is autographed with "Alex Posey," as many are, then the entry reads: "Autograph: Alex Posey." Similarly, in a volume with a bookplate indicating, "Private Library of A. L. Posey No. 78." the entry would read: "Bookplate: Private Library of A. L. Posey No. 78." Brackets indicate all such notations. While books known by their signatures or bookplates to have belonged to James L. Caldwell are listed separately, further categorization by suspected ownership would be merely speculative and is thus avoided. Two books listed in Bacone's original card catalog for the Posey library are missing from the collection. These missing texts are included in this catalog, and their status as lost is noted in their entries.

### **The Alexander Posey Library**

Ade, George. *Fables in Slang*. Chicago: Herbert S. Stone, 1899. [Autograph: Alex Posey].

*Alamo and Other Verses*. Florence: Edward McQueen Gray, 1888.

Aldrich, Thomas Bailey. *The Poems of Thomas Bailey Aldrich*. 2 vols. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1897.

Apgar, E. A. and A. C. Apgar. *Apgar's New Plant Analysis: Adapted to all Botanies*. New York: American Book Company, 1892. [Autograph: A. L. Posey].

*The Arabian Nights' Entertainments, A New Edition, Revised*. New York: F. M. Lupton Pub. Co., n.d.

Arnold, Edwin. *The Light of Asia or, The Great Renunciation (Mahabhinish Kramana)*.

- Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism. (As Told in Verse by an Indian Buddhist)*. Chicago: Donohue, Henneberry and Co., n.d.
- Bangs, John Kendrick. *A House-Boat on the Styx*. Biographical ed. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1899. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- The Book of Fables, Containing Aesop's Fables, Complete*. New York: Hurst & Co., n.d.
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- Burroughs must be possessed by genius." Marginalia].
- . *Fresh Fields*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1898. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *Indoor Studies*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1898. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *John James Audubon*. Boston: Small, Maynard, and Co., 1902.
- . *Literary Values and Other Papers*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1902. [Marginalia. Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *Locusts and Wild Honey*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *Pepacton*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1898. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *Riverby*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *Signs and Seasons*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1898. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *Winter Sunshine*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *A Year in the Fields. Selections from the Writings of John Burroughs*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1901. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *Wake-Robin*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- . *Whitman, a Study*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1896. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- Burton, Richard F. *Dumb in June*. Boston: Copeland & Day, 1895.

- . *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to el-Medinah and Meccah*. 1<sup>st</sup> American ed.  
New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1856.
- Byron, Lord. *The Poems and Dramas of Lord Byron, with Bibliographical Memoir, Explanatory Notes, etc.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., n.d.
- Carlyle, Thomas. *The Carlyle Anthology*. Edward Barrett, ed. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1876. [Bookplate: Private Library of A. L. Posey No. 15 Date 1880].
- Channing, William Ellery. *Thoreau, the Poet Naturalist, with Memorial Verses*. F. B. Sanborn, ed. Boston: Charles E. Goodspeed, 1902. [Marginalia].
- Chapman, Mary Berri. *Lyrics of Love and Nature*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., Pub. 1895.
- Chittenden, William Lawrence. *Ranch Verses*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897. [Autograph: Posey].
- Clarke, Jennie Thornley. *Songs of the South: Choice Selections from Southern Poets from Colonial Times to the Present Day*. Intro. Joel Chandler Harris. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1896. [Autograph: Alex Posey].
- Coolbrith, Ina. *Songs From the Golden Gate*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1895.  
[A note pinned in this book's front fly leaf reads: The verses marked are selected - each mark the ones chosen - Mrs. Posey].
- Creasy, E. S. *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World From Marathon to Waterloo*.  
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## **Appendix B: A Ledger of Poems Collected Between Late 1898 and Early 1899**

Housed in folder 140 of the Alexander L. Posey Collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the manuscript that serves as the source text for these poems is a series of pages on 7 ½ x 12 inch ruled paper torn from a ledger. Blue numbers printed on the upper right portion of the page indicate the odd numbered pages and similar numbers on the upper left section of the sheets denote even pages. The pages found in this collection are numbered 1-8, 13-26, and 29-30; with the other pages missing. This reproduction of the ledger uses bracketed numbers to indicate the manuscript pages and does not correct any of the mistakes found in Posey's transcriptions. Textual notes are included in brackets below the title of the individual poems and emendations are indicated at the end of the poems.

### **[1] Tulledega**

My choice of all choice spots in Indian lands!  
Hedged in, shut up by walls of purple hills,  
That rise clear cut against out sunset sky.  
Hedged in, shut up and hidden from the world,  
As though it said, "I have no words for you;  
I'm not a part of you; your ways aren't mine";  
Hedged in, shut up with low log cabins built—

5

How snugly!—in the quaint old fashioned way;  
With fields of yellow maize, so small that you  
Might hide them with your palm while gazing on 10  
Them from the hills around them, high and blue;  
Hedged in, shut up with long-forgotten ways  
And stories handed down from sire to son.  
Hedged in, shut up with broad Oktaha, like  
A flash of glory curled among the hills! 15  
How it sweeps away toward the morning,  
Deepened here and yonder by the beetling  
Crag, the music of its waters mingling  
With the screams of eagles whirling over,  
With its splendid tribute to the ocean! 20  
And this spot, this nook is Tulledega;  
Hedged in, shut up, I say, by walls of hills,  
Like tents stretched on the borders of the day,  
As blue as yonder opening in the clouds!

### Twilight

Beyond the far-off waves the seagull's cry,  
As twilight shades  
The emerald glades  
And zephyrs waft the strains of nightbirds nigh,

Now sinks the sun— 5  
Its course is run—  
The day is done—  
It fades in the gold of the western sky.

Now high, in raven files, the must'ring crows  
Their wings display, 10  
Thro' ether way,  
And transient gleams and saffron bars disclose,  
And beauties throng  
The sky along;  
And bugs of song 15  
Now pipe among the vales of dew-kissed rose.

Now Night, on high, her spangled robe unfurls,  
Unveils the moon—  
The silver moon—  
The orbs, the milkyways, the circling worlds: 20  
Now bright, sublime  
In clusters shine  
The stars divine,  
And 'cross the twinkling void the meteor whirls.

[2] **The Red Man's Pledge of Peace**

I pledge you by the moon and the sun,  
As long as stars their course shall run,  
Long as day shall meet my view,  
Peace shall reign between us two.

Lo! Indian tribes of times unborn 5  
Shall ne'er this sacred treaty scorn—  
Or in arms seek war with you—  
Peace shall reign between us two.

I came from mother soil and cave,  
You came from pathless sea and wave, 10  
Stranger fought our battles through,—  
Peace shall reign between us two.

I pledge you by those peaks of snow,  
As long as streams to ocean flow,  
Long as years their youth renew, 15  
Peace shall reign between us two.

**A Fable**

String this with the pearls of Aesop:

A sachem, once upon a time,  
So say the prophets of the Creeks,  
Convoked a mighty council;  
Declared that he would learn no more, 5  
And, thereupon, prepared to die.  
But loath to leave this world without  
Indulging in the luxury  
Most dear to him—his usual smoke—  
He asked his daughter for a coal 10  
Of fire, wherewith to light his pipe.  
She brought the coal on ashes in  
Her palm and up the sachem jumps,  
“What folly! Foolish man!” said he,  
“I’m taught a lesson by a child!” 15

[3] **Happy Times for Me an’ Sal**

Hear the happy jays a-singin’;  
Leaves a-driftin’ in the medder;  
See the ’simmons turnin’ redder,  
An’ the farmer boy a-grinnin’  
At his copper toes. 5  
Happy times fer me an’ Sal;  
Happy time fer Jim an’ Al;

We've raised a sumshus crop,  
An' we are upon top,  
In our new-bought clothes. 10

More an' more it's gittin' cooler;  
Frost is makin' purtyer pictures  
On the winder-panes. I victers!  
I am feelin' like a ruler  
Over all this earth. 15

Happy times fer me an' Sal;  
Happy time fer Jim an' Al;  
We've raised a sumshus crop,  
An' we are upon top,  
Settin' by the he'rth. 20

Nights are havin' longer hours;  
Sleep is surely growin' finer;  
Dreams becomin' sweeter, kiner,  
Since the season of the flowers,  
Winter days fer me. 25

Lots o' time fer lots o' thought;  
Lots o' time to worry not;  
When snow's knee-deep out doors,

An' driftin' on the moors,

Like a silver sea.

30

#### [4] Contact

Just like a white washed fence,

That man with good hard sense

And polished ways;

Rub 'gainst him, slow and tight,

You'll carry off some white

That'll wear for days.

5

#### True Friends

The longer that I live,

I find true friends more rare;

They're like a flea these days—

You put your finger where,

Right sure, you think they are

To find they are not there.

5

#### Briefly

Say your say and be away,

For there are times demanding this of you;

Men can't listen to all day

What might be said in just a word or two.

### **The Man-catcher**

The man who can ensnare

By trick and for a caress,

Another unaware,

May not at all possess

The smooth ability

To catch an active flea.

5

Emendation      5 an active flea] < the smallest > ↑ an active ↓ ~

### **Say Something**

Form something when you'd have men heed;

Don't bark when you have nothing treed.

### **[5] Pendantsry**

Some men are like some broad,

Broad rivers that I know,

That flow majestically,

Look deep, but are not so.

### **A Thin Quilt's Warmth**

There is warmth 'neath a quilt that is thin



And a sleep that is perfect and sound;  
And the secret is simple as sin:  
Just keep still and do not move around.  
To be brief, straighten out, as if dead, 5  
Covered up from your feet to your head.

### **The Boston Mountains**

When God had finished making earth,  
He found He had a residue  
Of rocks, poor soil and scrubby oaks;  
For which, plan as He might, He had  
No use; and so, despairing, swept 5  
The trash up here in one huge pile!

### **September**

A distant hill asleep in light blue haze  
And soft—a Moorish lady in her veils—  
And everywhere reunions of the quails  
And early morning hints of cooler days.

### **By the Shore of Life**

I wander by the shore of life  
Enchanted by the voices from the sea;

Forever trying, like a child,  
In vain to understand its mystery.

### [6] In Tulledega

Where mountains lift their heads  
To clouds that nestle low;  
Where constant beauty spreads  
Sublimer scenes below;

Where gray and massive rocks 5  
O'er hang rough heights sublime;  
Where awful grandeur mocks  
The brush, and poet's rhyme,

We saw the evening blush 10  
Above the rugged range,  
We heard the river rush  
Far off and faint and strange.

### Cuba Libre

Forward, Cuba, forward!  
Down with treachery!  
Forward! Hang the coward

For his butchery—

Weyler, beast of Spain!

5

Forward! forward ever!

Down with tyranny!

Forward! backward never

From thy enemy—

Weyler, beast of Spain!

10

On! on! Gomez, triumphantly!

Thou has the wide world's sympathy!

Maceo, rest thee;

Cuba shall be free!

### [7] Daisy

Playful Daisy,

Pretty brindle pup;

Watchful Daisy,

Ever perking up

Your sure to see

The way the rabbit's gone,

5

Or to accept a bone  
Impatiently;

Barking Daisy,  
Mischief making pup; 10

Restless Daisy,  
Long the buttercup

Has watched you sleep,  
If there are squirrels there  
In Heaven where you are— 15  
    You went there when you died—  
Or cotton-tailed hare,  
Or any sheep,  
    The angels keep you tied!

But I am jesting; 20  
    You were a friend, and true;  
A closer brother, too  
    Than some who've shook my hand.

You ever gave alarm  
At every sign of harm; 25  
    You were so faithful and—

I leave you resting

**[8] Lines to Hall**

You cannot sing in walls of brick,

George Hall; go get thee to a hut

Along some Tulledegan creek

High life ill suits thy muse. Go put

Her up an altar on the moor

5

And keep the robins company.

You're not yourself when not obscure

From gaze of friends and flattery.

Go hide thee quick in some deep wild

And carol as a brown thrush may,

10

Much petting spoils a gifted child.

Go sing for us; go now; this day.

Tell how that Indian hunter died

That wintry day between the hill

And frozen river; how he cried

15

In vain for help, and how he still

Is heard on stormy nights to cry  
 And beat the waves without avail  
 And how his bones were left to dry  
 And scatter in that lonely vale. 20

of the afternoon.

Cloth of gold

### Two Clouds

Away out west, one day,  
 Two clouds were seen astray. 5  
 One came up from the sea,  
 So far unto the South,  
 And drifted wearily; 5  
 So one came out of the North.  
 Away out west that day, 10  
 A town was swept away.

Rest, and it is

Emendation: The title has been changed from "The Clouds" to "Two Clouds"

### [13] [Fragment of "Verses Written at the Grave of McIntosh"]

The sky is bitter, the day is cold  
 By Winter, rude and pitiless.  
 I sit here by the grave of mine  
 O April Beauty, then come too,  
 The Oxtail, the Rose, and the  
 In snow white bonnet, sister true  
 And dream a while of my  
 Of charity and tenderness 5  
 That flower, the rose, the  
 Ye oaks that spread broad branches at the Wind's behest 5

That lift up God's blue temple dome, guard ye his rest.

Till lost in wifery's shadowy day

### Autumn

In the golden silence

of the afternoon, a

Cloth of gold is woven

Over wood and prairie;

And the jaybird, newly

5

Fallen from the heaven,

5

Scatters cordial greetings;

And the air is filled with

Scarlet leaves, that, dropping,

Rise again, as ever,

10

With a useless sigh for

Rest, and it is Autumn.

10

If I were told better

The ground

### By the River's Brink

The sky is blue, the day so fair,

I sit here by the river's brink—

And The Oktahutche, deep and wide—

15

And dream awhile—in fancy think,

Long looking down into the tide

5

That floweth on and on as blue,

My soul is drifting thither, too; *To the Stranger-Child*  
Till lost in willow shadows there.

Never staying.

Never resting. *et cetera* [14] **To Baby Yahola**

If I were dead, sweet one, *et cetera*

Up So innocent, *et cetera* 5

I know you'd laugh the same

The In merriment, *et cetera*

And pat my pallid face 5

Even With chubby hands and fair,

And think me living, as *et cetera* 10

You'd tangle up my hair.

*et cetera*

If I were dead, loved one, *et cetera*

So young and fair, *et cetera* 10

If I were laid beneath *et cetera*

The grasses there, *et cetera*

My face would haunt you for

A while—a day maybe— *[18] et cetera*

And then you would forget, *et cetera* 15

And not remember me! *et cetera*

Upon a time, and watched the ships

Emendation *et cetera* 8 my hair] ↑ my ↓ ~*et cetera*



## To the Summer Cloud

Ever straying, 5  
Never staying,  
Never resting, e'er an aimless rover.  
Did, Shelley's spirit rise to thee,  
Up from the cruel sea? 5  
And dost thou bear it ever thro'  
The vast unbounded blue  
Ever ranging,  
Ever changing,  
Ever yet the same the wide world over! 10

## A Glimpse

A hurried glimpse is all I had of her,  
Beyond the Brazos and the Trinity;  
'Twere best I saw no more of her lest I  
Had bowed to her as some divinity.

## [15] Seashells

I picked up shells with ruby lips  
That spoke in whispers of the sea, 10  
Upon a time, and watched the ships,  
On white wings, sail away to sea.

The ships I saw go out that day 5

Live misty—dim in memory,

But still I hear, from far away,

The blue waves breaking ceaselessly.

And ever

Emendation 4 away to sea] ~ < in glee > ↑ to sea ↓

Can put it down

5

The world can

### When Molly Blows the Dinner Horn

'Tis twelve o'clock in Possum Flat;

The cabbage steams, and bacon's fat;

The bread is made of last year's corn,

When Molly blows the dinner-horn.

What profit will it be

A quiet falls, the smoke curls up 5

Like incense from a censor-cup;

How glad you are that you were born,

When Molly blows the dinner-horn!

And so it

The cur, erstwhile stretched in a snore,

Lays stout siege to the kitchen door; 10

Nor will he raise it or be gone,

When Molly blows the dinner-horn.

Now here

Emendation 10 siege] seige

In sensuorax

I only hear

### Goodness

Sir, when a man becomes as good

That he is in nobody's way

And everyone is prompt to say

But well of him, I tell you

Can put it down, and safely too

The world can roll on without him.

2 Today all

Emendation 4 you] you you

3 But, oh

5 Never

### [16] What Profit

6 Sorrows

What profit is there in conversing, pray,

4 So full of days

With him who nods assent to all you say?

Emendation

### September

A distant hill asleep in light blue haze

And soft—a Moorish lady in her veils—

And everywhere reunions of the quails

And early morning hints of cooler days.

Sky-birds

### To a Humming Bird

Now here, now there,

To Jim Parkinson

E'er poised somewhere

In sensuous air.

I only hear, I cannot see

The matchless wings that beareth thee.

5

Art thou some frenzied poet's thought

5

That God embodied and forgot?

Thou art a very flower

### To a Common Flower

1 Thy waxen blooms of yesterday

2 Today all wither and decay.

3 But, oh, so sweet a life is thine!

10

5 Never knowing ill words spoken,

6 Sorrows of a heart that's broken,

5

4 So full of days unlike to mine.

There was a flower that

Emendation: [2 Today] To day

And thou wilt be a flower

Imploring: [2 Today] To day

### Earth's Lilies and God

Earth's starry lilies sink to rest

1 All folded in the mere at night;

But God's slip back and slumber best

1 Sky-hidden in the broad daylight.

Jim P.

20

### [17] To Jim Parkinson

Thou art a frozen hearted man,

For Jim Parkinson,

And cold warts thy finger-tips

Thou snappest like a logerhead,

Jim Parkinson,

5

Kind words were never on thy lips.

I see the milk

Thou art a very stingy man,

Jim Parkinson,

And very poor in charity.

Thou growlest like a fierce bulldog,

10

Fly Jim Parkinson,

At all the forms of poverty.

88; To 22nd

There was a man that died one time,

P Jim Parkinson,

And thou didst scoff his widow out

15

Imploring credit for a shroud,

Jim Parkinson,

Her tearful pleading heeding not.

5

And better

Thou hast a well of water fine,

Jim Parkinson,

20

But thou art stingy, too, with that,  
For thou hast taken off the pails,

Jim Parkinson,

Now, move the well from where 'tis at!

### June

I see the millet combing gold

From summer sun,

In hussar caps, all day!

And brown quails run

Far down the dusty way,

5

Fly up and whistle from the wold.

### [18] To Hall

I ne'er could selfish be—

P'raps that's why I'm threadbare!

Good wine is naught to me

Unless some friend can share.

So when your verses came—

5

And better I ne'er read,

Tho' bearing Byron's name—

I felt it in my head

I had received a jug  
Of Bourbon labeled "old"— 10  
No peddler's juice of bug  
At Indian councils sold!

And when I did apprise  
Friend Grayson of the fact,  
He opened wide his eyes 15  
And said, Is it intact?"

"It is," was my reply,  
"Come, let us drink." He came.  
He too some on the sly  
And gave your bourbon fame. 20

He took some more and more  
And by the Great Horn Spoon,  
He tumbled on the floor  
Dead tipsy pretty soon!

John Thornton passing by 25  
To make some drumming call,

Our bourbon did espy

And yanked it, jug and all!

[19] Thief! I could smash his crown

Like a dark alley thug

30

He made himself and town

Drunk with the stolen jug!

### [19] On the Piney

Far away from the valley below,

Like the roar in a shell of the sea,

Or the flow of the river at night,

Comes the voice, strangely sweet, of the pines.

Snowy clouds, sometimes bright, sometimes dark,

5

Like the joys and the sorrows of life,

Sail above, half becalmed, in the blue,

And their cool shadows lie on the hills

Here and there, when the leaves blow apart,

To admit sunny winds seeking rest

10

In the shade with their burthen of sweets,

Piney Creek shimmers bright, with a cloud



Or a patch of the sky on its breast;  
Here the din and the strife of the mart  
And the gabble of lips that profane  
Are heard not, and the heart is made pure.

15

### **Not Love Always**

'Tis not love in every instance  
That makes one trust another kind;  
'Tis often prompted by the fear  
Of daggers in the dark behind.

### **Miser**

O miser, why art thou a miser, pray?  
Was Nature very stingy with your clay?

### **[20] Be Fair**

It may be true the world is bad,  
But when you say it is, take care  
To give some proof that you have tried  
To make it better and be fair.

### **Sunset**

By coward clouds forgot  
For yonder sunset's glow,  
The Day, in battle shot,  
Lies bleeding, weak and low.

### **Fancy**

Why do trees along the river  
Lean so far out o'er the tide?  
Cold reason tells one 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.

5

### **The Milky Way**

A fast path winding thro'  
The vast star-sprinkled blue  
And ending at the gate  
Where God's white angel's wait.

### **The Open Sky**

I look up at the open sky,  
And all the evils in  
My heart the instant pale and die,  
For, lo! I cannot sin.

### [21] To a Sea Shell

What sea-maid's longings dwell  
Upon thy lips, O Shell,  
Washed to my feet from the depths of the sea?  
Listening, I hold thee to my ear,  
But the secret that I would hear  
Blends with the ocean's mystery.

5

### God and the Flying Squirrel (A Creek Legend)

"I'm pleased with thee;  
Go climb a tree,"  
Said God, when He had made  
Thy Flying Squirrel. "Nay,"  
Replied the creature, half afraid,  
"I want to fly away."

5

"You anger me;  
Go climb a tree!"

Spoke God, in wrath, But still  
The creature longed to fly. 10  
“Alas! You treat me ill,”  
It weeping gave reply.

When God into  
A passion flew  
And stretched the rascal’s skin 15  
Right roughly from his sides  
And threw him high up in  
The branches, where he hides

### Sunset

By coward clouds forgot,  
For yonder sunset’s glow,  
The Day, in battle shot,  
Lies bleeding, weak and low.

### [22] Tender Memories

What sweet and tender memories—  
What joys and griefs are yours and mine!  
Hands rest that smote the ivory keys,  
And still, the lips that sang divine.

Near ones, dear ones have wended

5

Homeward through the vale of tears;

The voice that charmed has blended

With the silence of the years.

### **Mother and Bay**

Tired, at length, of crying,

Laughing, cooing, sighing,

The baby lies so calm and still,

Scarce breathing in its sleep;

The mother watches half-inclined

5

To hide her face and weep.

### **A Common Failing**

There is a faint and subtle curse

Of high authority

That makes us rather be

The speaker to the audience

Than auditor in all of us.

5

It seems a foolish thing,

Yet we would have men follow us

And each one be a king.

## The Inexpressible Thought

'Tis said that Moses only saw

The radiance of Deity;

'Tis so we see the thought that we

Can never utter perfectly.

### [23] July

The air without has taken fever,

Fast I feel the beating of its pulse;

The leaves are twisted on the maple,

In the corn the autumn's premature;

The weary butterfly hangs waiting

5

For a breath to waft him thither at

The touch; the grass is curled and dust-blown;

The sun shines down as on a desert.

The air without is blinding dusty;

Cool I feel the west wind; I see

10

The sunlight, crowded on the porch, grow

Smaller till absorbed in shadow; the

Far hills erstwhile blue are changed to a gray;

Twilight shadows all the land apace;

And now I hear the shower falling

15

And the leaves clapping their hands for joy.

### **The Conquerors**

The Caesars [sic] and the Alexanders were

But men gone mad, who ran about awhite [sic]

Upsetting kingdoms, and were slain, in turn,

Like rabid dogs, or died in misery.

Assasins [sic] laid in wait for Caesar; [sic] wine,

5

Amid the shouts of victory, cut short

The glory of the Macedonians;

Deception cooled the fever Pompey had;

Death was dealt to Phyrus [sic] by a woman's

Hand; Themistocles and Hannibal drank

Deep of poison in their desolation.

### **[24] Our Needs**

Like bits of broken glass

Chance scatters in the sun,

Our deeds reflect the light

We carry in the world.

### **In Vain**

Blow! O Wind of the sea!

O, blow! until I see

The ship that went away

Sail safe into the bay!

Wind of the sea! Wind of the sea!

5

What tidings dost thou bring to me?

But there's no reply;

There's no sail in sight;

And the years go by

And her hair grows white.

10

Emendations

6 tidings dost] ~ < bearest > ↑ dost ↓

7 bring to me] < for > ↑ bring to ↓ ~

### **The Rattler**

Great heavens! Hold up! Don't you see

What you are riding onto there?

Quick! Jump down! Throw your reins to me!

(Whoa Bald) Don't give him any time

To sail, Shoot! There, he's done for now!

5



Gee Whiz, but isn't he rusty! Twice  
Twelve rattles and a button! Whew!  
Ram straws up in his nostrils. See,  
They're four holes there as sure as fate!  
If he were once to nip you on  
The thigh, you'd cross the Great Divide  
In just about as many steps!

10

[25] **Narcissus—A Sonnet**

[Excluding the title, this whole poem is crossed out.]

At last, my white Narcissus is in bloom,  
And breathes a wondrous fragrance forth; and, lo,  
Far over bleak December's waste of snow,  
Like some supernal maiden lost in gloom,  
Comes June to claim the truant in my room,  
With her, the winds from verdant meadows come  
And in the apple boughs I hear the hum  
of bees and in the valleys brooks resume  
elate their tardy journey to the sea.

5

The sunlight bursts in splendor in the blue  
And swift the narrow walls confining me  
[Exudes] into the distance from my view,

10

From Winter's burrow a [indecipherable] and sombre skies.  
I am transported into paradise.

### To a Face Above the Surf

[This poem is crossed out.]

To steal sweet kisses from thy brow,  
A lightsome zephyr I would be;  
A brook to murmur thee a vow  
Of love and constancy.

To feel thy fingers' soft caress, 5  
A wayside flower I would be;  
A grass blade for thy foot to press  
Upon the April lea.

Upon thy bosom fair to rest, 10  
A little sunbeam I would be;  
A songster in the green forest  
To charm thee with my melody.

To clasp thee in a wild embrace;  
To press thy pink lips rapturously;

To look upon thee face to face,

15

I would that I could be the sea!

Emendation 9 bosom fair] ~ < indecipherable > ↑ fair ↓

### [26] Thoughts

People either get more or less than their deserts.

When a man does his duty, he's got a job.

However fate may conspire against a man he still has something to be thankful for.

### The Coyote

A few days more and then

There'll be no secret glen,

Or hollow, deep and dim,

To hide or shelter him.

And on the prairies far,

5

Beneath the beacon star

On Evening's darkening shore,

I'll hear him nevermore.

For where the tepee smoke

Curled up of yore, the stroke 10  
Of hammers sing all day,  
And grim Doon shouts, "Make way!"

The immemorial hush  
To [sic] broken by the rush  
Of man, his enemy, 15  
Then to the utmost sea.

### Meaningless

Till baby lips have spoken "papa, mamma,"  
There is no meaning in the words at all;  
The house is but a pile of brick or lumber  
Till baby feet have pattered thro' the hall.

### [29] To a Winter Songster

Sweet, sweet, sweet is the song you sing,  
Bonny bird, on the leafless tree;  
And tender are the thoughts you bring  
To me as your own melody.  
Sing on! I am sure, somewhere, May 5  
And Love are lingering on the way.

## Then and Now

I laid amid the hum of bumble bees,

And oh, and oh,

Above me, to and fro,

The clover heads were tossing in the breeze.

The heavens in the south hung low and blue;

5

Too low and blue

For clouds to wander thro;

And so they moored at rest as white ships do.

And oh, and oh, how cool their shadows lay

Upon the lea

10

In dark embroidery!

How sweet the mock-bird sang, O perfect day!

My heart gave answer, bird, for thee & me

O perfect day!

For she is on her way

15

I know to join me in my reverie

Between that time and now, lie many years;

And oh, and oh,

And oh, time changes so!

The spring and summer wave and Autumn seres.

20

Sing, mocking bird upon the bending bough.

Sing as of yore

[30] My heart responds no more;

She listens, O, to sweeter music now.

### **A Vision**

In pensive mood she stood,

In garments white like snow,

Beside the darksome wood,

Amid the twilight glow;

As if she held communion there

5

With spirits in the fading air.

And loath to break the spell—

The sweet enchantment that

She seemed to love so well,

I back-ward stept, thereat

10

The beauteous vision fled from me

In strange and silent mystery.

VITA *J*

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