

HOWE, R. D.

INTERVIEW

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Investigator, Theodore R. Hamilton,  
April 14, 1938.  
Interview with R. D. Howe,  
Eufaula, Oklahoma.

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Death of Alex Posey.

This part of the state knew and respected Alex Posey, the Creek Indian poet, who did his writing under the name of FUS Fixico.

On the 27th of May, 1908, Posey and I left Muskogee bound for Eufaula in an endeavor to put through some minor oil leases at the county seat. When the train arrived at Cathey, a station on the M.K.&T. Railroad, we were informed that the Canadian River was over-flowing all of the bottom land. The train conductor told us that he would back the train in to Muskogee for he was afraid to attempt to cross a small wooden trestle a short distance ahead and those passengers who wished to get into Eufaula would have to get out and walk the remaining distance of perhaps three or four miles.

Posey and myself decided that we would do this for the flood was becoming worse and we wished to get our

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business transacted so we started out but when we arrived at the point of crossing the trestle was already submerged so we went up the road a little way to a house to get a boat. At this place the river was in the shape of a horseshoe with the railroad tracks running from the front portion to the back part. This arrangement put the river on both the east and west side of the tracks and from this west side the over-flowing waters had swept against the railroad with a terrific force until a cut had been made in the tracks through which the waters were pouring with terrible force. Two negroes from whom we had gotten the boat helped us to get it to the west side of the tracks as after sizing the situation up, we decided that it would be best to try crossing on that side of the track. The negroes got in to row us across. We had gotten about a hundred yards from the north bank when the negro in the back of the boat lost his oar. When this happened the other negro, who was in the center of the boat and using two oars, got excited and lost one of his oars.

Posey, when he saw what had happened, started to reach out and grab the top of a small tree that extended

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from the water but I shouted to him that if he did that it would upset the boat. During this time we were being swept toward the gap in the railroad embankment and I yelled to the others to try and feel for the right-of-way fence. It was only a moment though before the boat was swept against the posts of the fence and the boat crushed in. There was nothing else to do but jump into the swirling waters and try to save ourselves. When I came to the surface I got my bearings and headed for the Eufaula side of the river for I knew it was my only chance. I was swept over the tracks and when I came to the right-of-way fence I made a grab for it and managed to hang on though I received a deep gash in my hand from the berbed wire.

Before this I had had no time to look about the others but now I looked around and not far away I saw the form of one of the negroes bobbing in the water near by. I made my way to him and found that he was dead. Then, I saw Posey holding onto a bush on the west side of the bridge cut and yelled to him to hold on till I got help. Holding on to the fence I made my way out

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of the water and started toward Eufaula but I had not gone very far when I met some men. I told them what had happened and we got a boat and some rope and hurried on to the river. With the rope tied to the fence and the other end tied to the boat we let one man try to work the boat out far enough to get it within Posey's reach. The man in the boat had to use some of the rope and throw it to Posey, who when he had caught hold of it loosened his hold on the bush, but when he did this, the swift water swept him off his feet and back of the boat. He yelled that he was unable to pull himself in and the rope, wet and slippery, began to give in his hands, and in another moment he had been pulled from it.

When he was swept away he went rolling toward the cut and disappeared from our sight. Two months and a half afterward his body was found about three miles down the river on a sand bar. His neck had been broken, probably by striking against a rail as he was swept through the cut.