

NANCY POSEY, MOTHER OF FAMED INDIAN POET,
FACES LOSS OF HER WEWOKA HOME

By Mary M'Kinney Frye

Her poet son, Alex and her home -- these have mattered most in the life of the full blood Creek Indian woman, Nancy Posey.

While he was still a young man, the poet son, who has been called the one great man produced by the Five Civilized Tribes, was accidentally drowned in the North Canadian river near Eufaula. Now legal proceedings are in progress to remove Nancy Posey from her Wewoka home on which a mortgage has been foreclosed. Clear and vivid are the memories of the day Alex was drowned; but the mind of the Indian woman, who is almost 90 years old, is perplexed and cloudy about what is happening to her now.

For she seems to live more and more in the past. Back in the day of the young Nancy Phillips, daughter

of Pohos Harjos and member of the Wind clan, strongest clan of the Creeks, who lived near Eufaula in the Tuskegee country and who became the bride of Lewis H. Posey, adopted Creek of Scotch-Irish descent, at the age of 15. Back in the day of that proud and beautiful Indian girl who became the mother of the famous Creek poet, Alexander Lawrence Posey, at the age of 17. She remembers an Indian boy by the name of Jackson who lived for a while in her neighborhood in those days. She didn't know that the boy's last name was Barnett and it was always difficult in later years for her to associate the stories of Barnett and his immense wealth with the young Indian boy she had known.

Until Alex was 12 years old, he spoke no English and his subsequent mastery of the language was regarded as all the more remarkable. His mother still speaks only Creek. But she was his teacher and always aware of the poetic sensitiveness that caused him to listen so much more attentively than the other children when she related in her vivid gifted manner old tribal stories and legends that were to have such a marked influence on his writing.

Nancy Posey watched her son become a noted, useful man among the Creeks. As superintendent of public

instruction of the Creek nation, as editor of the Indian Journal at Eufaula, as employe of the Dawes commission, and in many other capacities, Alex Posey served his people well with his keen mind, his patience and tact and his penetrating knowledge of the Indian nature and habits. No one watched his progress with such pride and appreciation as did his mother, and the bond of love and mutual interest grew steadily through the years.

She had 12 children but her relationship with her gifted eldest son had a meaning that her relationship with the other children did not share.

"We called him her pet," one daughter recalls, "but as I grew older I understood why it was she insisted that he be allowed to study quietly and not always share in the work around the house. He was more affectionate, too, and kinder to her than the others were."

His homecomings brought days of delight to her during his last years. For he never failed to find time to spend with her and was always careful that her refusal to learn the English language did not exclude her from any conversation held in her presence.

On May 27, 1908, she eagerly prepared for one

of those joyful homecomings. A homecoming which never took place. On his way from Muskogee to Eufaula to visit his mother he was drowned at what became known as Posey Hole on the North Canadian river. The mother took part in the search for his body which was not found until two bitter, spiritbreaking months had passed.

"He didn't come that day and I was looking for him and sometimes I'll find myself still watching and waiting for him to come home," the old Indian woman told her daughter not long ago.

Nancy Posey's husband had died, her children were scattered and life had become strange. Difficult financial troubles entered the picture. Finally she was persuaded to sell her Eufaula property and come to Wewoka where an oil boom was in progress and where a daughter would help her make a living by taking in boarders.

So -- hope mixed with the strangeness she felt at leaving the Tuskegee country that had always been her home -- Nancy Posey built another home. An attractive, six room cottage in the center of the residential district of Wewoka. Soon flowers were growing in her yard and her gardens flourishing. Alex was gone, most of the

associations of her life were incredibly changed, but she would make a new home for her last years.

Now that home is going too. Plans of the daughter did not materialize, the place was mortgaged, the mortgage has been foreclosed and a writ of assistance issued to the sheriff of Seminole county to force the aged woman's removal from her home. Her children are not able to help her and she will have no place to go.

In his poem "What I Ask of Life," Alex Posey told of his own, and undoubtedly his mother's desire for simple security and peaceful beauty in his old age.

"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."

That simple wish is not coming true for his mother, Nancy Posey.