

PINTLALA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Next Meeting:
July 16, 2017 - 2:30 p.m.



c/o Pintlala Public Library
255 Federal Road
Hope Hull, Alabama 36043

Volume XXXI, Number 3

www.pintlalahistoricalassociation.com

July 2017

Ramah/Ramer Baptist Church and Ramah/Ramer Masonic Lodge Number 243 (Upper Level)



Church and Ramah/Ramer Masonic Lodge Number 243 (Upper Level). Church constituted on July 11, 1857 with George Granberry McLendon as first pastor; Ramer Lodge organized, June 15, 1857; shared building on the second floor. Church was renamed Sampey Memorial Baptist Church in 1947 in memory of Dr. John R. Sampey who spent his childhood in Ramer and served as president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1928-1942

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - "The Problem And The Solution"

For those of us involved in organizing a community around a love for local history, the challenge is both daunting and mystifying. The challenge is this: How to reverse declining memberships in historical societies. The PHA seems to be better off than most, but the threat of decline is on our doorstep. Aging and attrition and apathy seem to be the culprits. After all, not everyone is interested in history, I'm told. What is thrilling, energizing and exciting to me may not be so for others. The offering of relevant programs and four substantive newsletters each year are vital to achieving our educational mission, but those ventures do not seem to create an appetite for more.

In 2000 Robert Putnam wrote *Bowling Alone: The Collapse And Revival Of American Community*. It was developed from his 1995 essay entitled *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*. Putnam explores why many civic organizations have declined in numbers over the last several years. He uses bowling as an example. Although the number of those who bowl has increased in the last twenty years, those who participate in bowling leagues has decreased. The bowling metaphor may be a bit dated, but the point is made.

Analyzing our challenge is one thing; answering the challenge is another. The PHA has a bright future if we begin to deal with these realities. On an optimistic note, there is a tried and proven response to renewing our organization:

Never underestimate the power of a personal invitation. Invite someone to our next meeting. Meeting Graham Neeley may be the magnet necessary to attract someone new.

Gary Burton, President
garyburton1@charter.net

July 2017 Program

Pintlala Historical Association will meet on July 16, 2017 at 2:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of Pintlala Baptist Church.

The program will be presented by Graham Neeley, Collections Curator with the Alabama Department of Archives and History. Neeley's program will emphasize the work of local historian, Peter Brannon, who spent time in Pintlala and Hope Hull. Graham will feature his writings centered on our "neck of the woods."

Neeley is a native of Montgomery, graduate of Huntingdon College, and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in history at Auburn University. His graduate thesis will examine Peter Brannon's contribution to Alabama history. This will include an in depth study of Brannon's writings, lectures, and involvement with numerous historical societies. His thesis development is under the direction and guidance of Drs. Kathryn Braund and Keith Hebert of the Auburn University faculty.

We welcome all members and visitors—please attend!

Alice Carter, Program Chairman



Graham Neeley, Collection's Curator at ADAH, Photo courtesy Alabama Department of Archives and History

The Gathering Year: A Montgomery County Bicentennial History Project by Alice Carter

The first in a series of Gatherings was held at Pintlala Baptist Church on April 29, 2017. This project is funded in part through a grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and in cooperation with the following organizations: 200 Alabama Bicentennial, Montgomery County Historical Society, Black Heritage Council, Auburn University, Montgomery County Probate Court, Old Alabama Town Landmark's Foundation and Pintlala Historical Association.

The event was certainly a success for this area of Montgomery County. The participating volunteers representing the above organizations were dedicated, patient, and interested in materials and verbal narratives brought to the Gathering. Pictured in this issue of our newsletter are snapshots taken by Jerrie Burton at the event.



James Fuller, Executive Director, Montgomery County Historical Society, Interviewing Mary Lillian Rosier



Dr. Keith Hebert, Auburn University, Scanning Materials Belonging to Patsy Hall Davis



Gary Burton, PHA President, and Ricky McLaney Examine an Architectural Remnant from Dr. Thomas Duncan Home

The Gathering Year: A Montgomery County Bicentennial History Project



Jack Hornady, Trish McLaney, Ina Slade, Margery Henry and Gary Burton Discuss Items Brought to “The Gathering”



Ina Slade and Alice Carter Look at Wooden Crate, Possibly Over 200 Years Old



James Fuller Displaying Photograph of WWI Hornady Brothers

Photos courtesy Jerrie S. Burton

Artifact Found In Pintlala by Gary Burton

A very interesting artifact was brought to the Gathering on April 29th. It commemorates the inauguration of George Washington. In 1970 an old barn was torn down on the property of Mary Lillian Rosier who was a new resident in the Pintlala community. Her son, Kenny, found the object under a part of the flooring inside the barn. Since 1970 the interesting piece has existed in Mary Lillian Rosiers' home. Currently, it has been loaned to Gary Burton who is trying to ascertain its significance. Developing plausible theories has been fun and challenging.

The token attached to the stone may have more significance than the stone itself.

Stone Side A

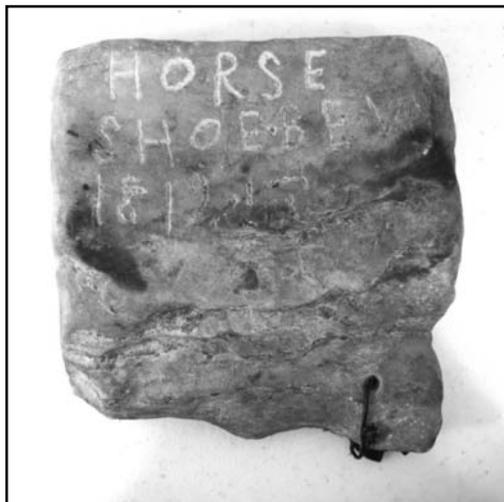
George Washing
ton Born Feb
(Masonic Emblem?) 22/1732
Inaugurat
ed First
President
1789
God



Stone, Side A

Stone Side B

Horse
Shoe Bend
1812 (??)



Stone, Side B

Token Side A

Washing-ton



Token, Side A

Token Side B

Inrau-gated
17__



Token, Side B

Local Resident Featured in Book by Alice Carter

The recently published book, *Tin Can Titans: The Heroic Men and Ships of World War II's Most Decorated Navy Destroyer Squadron* by John F. Wukovits mentions Pintlala resident Jacob Thomas Chesnutt, Jr. more than twenty times. Wukovits, a military expert, specializes in the Pacific theater of World War II and has authored books including *Hell from the Heavens*, *For Crew and Country*, *One Square Mile of Hell* and *Pacific Alamo* along with numerous articles for military history publications.

He became knowledgeable of Thomas Chesnutt through a diary kept by Chesnutt during his time in the US Navy from 1942 -1945. (see Diary notation) Thomas is the son of the late Jake and Annie Killough Mosley Chesnutt of Pintlala. He was born in 1921, which makes him 96 years old! He enlisted in the Navy in 1942 and is quoted in *Tin Can Titans*: "I'd hardly ever been out of Alabama", ... "I was a green hick who didn't know anything, but was raring to go!" (p. 58)

Wukovits summed up Thomas's service to country by writing "except for his marriage, his time in the Navy was the noblest period of his life. His pride in his ship and his shipmates, who banded together to help defeat the Japanese, and his love for the Navy, which was such a large part of that victory, still shine." (p. 240) Thomas is quoted again in *Tin Can Titans*: "Anchors Aweigh still makes shivers run up and down my back..." "I guess I will always be a United States Navy man at heart!" (p. 240)

We are proud of Thomas Chesnutt and his exemplary service to his country and for his always being willing to share his Pintlala memories. *Tin Can Titans* will soon be available to read in the Pintlala Historical Section of the Pintlala Library.

NOTE: Diary of Jacob Thomas Chesnutt, Jr., November 13, 1942 in the J. Thomas Chesnutt Collection (AFC/2001/001/58477), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. Found at <http://leweb2.loc.gov/natlif/afc2001001/service/58477/pd0001.pdf>

Accessed October 13, 2015, by Wukovitz with additional phone conversations with Thomas



Thomas Chesnutt and Wife Betty Proudly Share Book *Tin Can Titans*



Thomas Chesnutt's Archives from His WWII Naval Service Aboard Destroyer, "Fletcher"

The following article was published by Mon-Cre Telephone Cooperative of Ramer, Alabama in July, 2004 for the Co-Op's Fiftieth Anniversary issue of their quarterly publication, "In Touch." It was adapted from "Ramer: A Likely Sketch of the First 100 Years" by Gloria Smith of Ramer, written in 1984. The article is published here with permission of both parties. Transcription by Alice Carter with much appreciation to gracious Gloria Smith and Teresa Rich, with Mon-Cre Co-Op. The images accompanying the article were taken by Gary Burton. Bracketed material added by Carter for clarification purposes.

Ramer, AL—A Short History

In the first half of the nineteenth century, as a nation, we were still young and growing. Land was plentiful and could be purchased for a good price from the government. In 1819, Alabama had become the twenty-second state. Between 1826 and about 1840, the first settlers arrived in the area now known as Ramer. By 1840, Hardy Wilkins, a U. S. Marshall, had settled on the headwaters of the creek. Wilkins was the first to move his family to Ramer. The area's growth would be steady until the outbreak of the Civil War.

The 1860 Montgomery County census, which was taken by Hardy Wilkins son, Charles, identified the area as the Ramah precinct of Montgomery County. William Falconer, Sr., a prominent and well-to-do settler also lived on the headwaters of the creek. The Falconers came from Montgomery, having come originally from Maryland, and later South Carolina, before coming to Alabama. William Falconer had what has been described as a "splendid plantation" on the creek. The plantation consisted of the family's home, a church, a school, a family cemetery, and possibly other buildings as well.

A little to the south of the Falconer home was the stagecoach station. The bunkhouse and the blacksmith barn stood beside the old stage road. Traces of the old stagecoach road are still evident today. The stagecoach traveled east and west. Hickory Grove was on the route to the west, and China Grove was on the route to the east. In the early days, there was no community for the stagecoach to pass through. Even after the town of Ramer began to come into existence, the stagecoach bypassed the town, choosing instead to continue using the old road across Ramer Creek, traveling by Thomas Caffey's plantation, and traveling up Turnipseed's Hill into Raif Branch.

A village was beginning. Among the first buildings—other than homes—were two churches, a Baptist Missionary Church, and a Methodist Episcopal Church. The post office was in existence by 1850, and was known as the Ramer Post Office. Ramer means "a high piece of land." The postmaster in 1850 was William Gunter, who was also a tailor. The village could also boast a shoemaker, a wagon maker, and a blacksmith. By 1860, the Methodist Protestant Church was started. The first school was started in the home of John Green Berry Milligan.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the men of the area joined the Confederate Army. Company E of the 33rd Alabama Infantry was mustered across the road from the Ebenezer Primitive Baptist Church and consisted of soldiers, most of whom were no more than boys, none older than 23. Their captain, John Norman, [Captain Henderson Hiram Norman, listed in *Revised History of the 33rd Infantry* by L.B. Williams, 1998] led them into battle at Perryville, Kentucky. They went into the battle with 500 men, and came away at the end of the day with only 88. A rock monument was dedicated to these young soldiers in 1933, and is located at Ebenezer Primitive Baptist Church.

After the war, James L. Sampey, a Methodist minister and sheep farmer, moved to the area from Fort Deposit [Lowndes, County] with his



Home of James L. Sampey, as of 2017, Thought to be Oldest Home Still Extant in Ramer, James was father of John R. Sampey who became President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and for whom Sampey Memorial Baptist Church was named

wife and two sons. He homesteaded about 20 acres of land and built a home that is still standing, and is believed to be the oldest house in Ramer. His son, John, after attending a revival meeting at the Baptist Missionary Church, joined that church. This son of a Methodist minister would go on to become president of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dr. Anthony Hamilton Sellers moved from Pine Level to the village and set up a practice of medicine about 1865. His home and office were located where the Armory now stands. The village—not yet a town—was, for a time called Athens. Ironically, the post office continued to be called Ramer. By 1881, Athens was a growing village of 300 residents. Professor E. Y. McMorris taught the children at the school. Four stores supplied the village's needs. The three [two] churches were strong, and the Masons, the Good Templars, and the Young Men's Debating Club flourished.

Professor John W. Weldon came to Athens from Pine Level in 1884 and taught school. Among his pupils were children from the village's families, from the Jackson, Harris, Milligan, Athey, Hicks, Berry, Peagler, Rushton, Stough, Sellers, Howell, Mullin, McFadden, Gillis, Turipseed, Logue, Morris, Smedley, and Tucker families who were all living in the area at the time.

By 1885, Dr. Norman Henry McCrummen had moved to Athens from Dublin. For the next 20 to 25 years, Dr. McCrummen would serve Athens and the surrounding areas. He also owned the drug store, which was one of the town's finest buildings, and the home he built for his family still stands today. Dr. McCrummen's drug store had a marble counter with a fountain that dispensed drinks of all flavors. Customers could sit in cast iron chairs around marble-topped table to enjoy their flavored drinks. The store also had a perfume counter. To the delight of customers, the counter held large, pretty bottles of perfume. The perfume was sold by the ounce, poured from the large bottles into smaller bottles. In the back of the store were Dr. McCrummen's office and the counter where he rolled his pills.



Dr. Norman Henry McCrummen Served Ramer Residents
as Physician as Early as 1885



Home of Dr. N.H. McCrummen, Ramer
Photograph is as house appears in 2017

In 1889, the Alabama Midland Railroad, later the Atlantic Coast Lines, extended a branch of its standard gauge tracks from Troy to Tucker's Cross Roads (renamed Grady) and Athens, through the Walter Brothers' farm to tie into Sprague. A depot was built and named Ramer, and eventually the village became known as Ramer, too. Around this time, the town claimed a pole house jail, and rowdiness was considered a problem. It was a pretty town. The streets were lined with oak trees and large, comfortable homes sat behind white picket fences. The residential street was called Gospel Avenue, and Main Street was the business district. Out in the hills was wilder territory—moonshine country.

By 1889, Professor B. H. Boyd, and his wife and children were living in Ramer. Professor Boyd, who was a prominent educator, owned and operated the prestigious Boyd Academy. Students had to board in

private homes, or in the school boarding house, which was also owned by Professor Boyd. The school, although now sadly deteriorated, still stands, and for many years has been known as the Cannon house. The school boarding house, owned for many years by the Gray-Mount family was moved from its original location next to the school to its present location on Highway 94, within the town's boundaries. It was around this time that the state allocated money for public school systems, and in the next few years, great strides were made in public education in Ramer and throughout Alabama. The public school in Ramer was located next door to the Methodist Protestant Church. When the church held a revival, students were sent across to the church to attend the services. The school was a four-room building. Ten grades were taught in those four rooms.

Much of Ramer's social activity in these early years was centered on the schools. Commencement exercises at the close of the school year at the academy and at the public school were the biggest events of the year. For a month before commencement, the schools prepared and rehearsed skits, pantomimes, recitations, and presentations of awards. Other social activities took place at church activities, community oyster suppers, and the occasional circus and medicine show would come through Ramer, which always drew a big crowd. Political rallies and picnics were held at the Ebenezer Primitive Baptist Church. A ball field was located where Montgomery County High School stands today, and a dance hall was located near the railroad tracks (roughly where today's county and state roads meet at the overhead bridge). Guests would often come from Montgomery on the train to attend ball games and dances. Ramer's young people went on hayrides, had picnics and parties at friends' homes—but always in the daytime because the roads were too bad to travel at night.



Boyd School Boarding House, Owned by Mount Family as of 2017

By 1900, Ramer had a sawmill, and saw miller, James McDowell. Rural route mail service was begun in 1902; the first rural mail carrier, Luke Shaver Brooks, carried the mail on a horse-drawn cart. During these years, many of Ramer's families worked for the railroad. The train's arrival each day was an event. At 5:00 each afternoon, most everybody in town went to the depot. Salesmen, or drummers as they were called then, rode the train into Ramer and spent the night at the hotel boarding house on Main Street owned by Lum Turnipseed. The drummers made their rounds the next day and caught the 5:00 train that afternoon to their next stop.

Mr. Turnipseed also owned and operated a store next door. His wife, Cora, ran the store. Cora Turnipseed was also a milliner, as was Miss Sarah Brooks, who has been described as a very proper lady who wore taffeta dresses every day. Miss Brooks ran a store also, in which she carried a variety of merchandise of interest to women such as fabrics, sewing notions, and hosiery.

Just up the street was a cotton gin owned by Ralph Whatley. After the cotton gin was shut down, the old cement frame of the weight scale was used by a black preacher as a pulpit to preach hellfire and damnation. Next door to the cotton gin was a large brick building that housed Mr. Whatley's grocery, hardware, and merchandise store that carried everything from hats to caskets. Each day men from all around would gather in front of the store to talk about their crops—and politics. Several other stores and businesses were nearby: a barbershop, several other grocery stores, a drug store, the post office, and later a bank that failed during the Depression.

The Grant, Collier, Ormes, Scoggins, Tillerson, Jones, and Steel families were among those living in Ramer at this time. Samuel Steele helped build the Panama Canal. Three other families active in the life of the community, but not living right in town were the Bill Waller and the Dick Waller families and the Joe Sellers family. The Waller families lived on Waller Pond, and the Sellers family lived on the Ramer-Dublin Road. Bill Waller served in the state legislature, was sheriff several times, and was tax collector.

The Rawls, Felton, and Stubbs families were living in Ramer by 1920, all having moved from the surrounding countryside between 1910 and 1920. Dr. A. D. Cowles came to Ramer in 1911, and his

brothers, Russell and Neal, came a little later. They owned a store, and later a bank. Dr. Cowles and his wife, Mary, moved into the house that had been built years earlier by George Turnipseed. Dr. Cowles' office was located next to his home, and for the next 50 years, Dr. Cowles would serve Ramer and the surrounding area as a family doctor. He worked until his advanced age did not allow him to go to his office. Not only was Dr. Cowles the area's family doctor, he was also a member of the Alabama National Guard, a local politician, a farmer and an avid fox hunter.

It was also around 1915 to 1920 that the Cosby and Ace Carter families moved into Ramer to be close to good schools for their children. When the new consolidated high school, Ramer High School, was built in 1917, the eleventh grade was added, and the next year, the twelfth grade was added. During these years, the women's civic club was active, along with the Woodmen of the World, and Ramer's residents actively participated in political campaigns. Some residents wanted incorporation but others did not. Plans began to materialize, but were eventually dropped because the lack of water and fire protection would make it too difficult to attract industry.

Automobiles soon became a common sight, and it became easy for those in Ramer to get up early, drive to Montgomery to take care of any necessary business and return home in the afternoon. The first automobile in Ramer was owned by Dr. N. H. McCrummen and the second by Willis Bell. When children heard one of the automobiles coming, they would run to see which one it was. Oscar Norman was the first man in the area to sell and repair automobiles. Napoleon Trotter a saw miller, was the first to haul his lumber to market by truck. Cole Felton, a dedicated member of the Methodist Church, came up with the idea of converting his logging truck into a church bus. He, Luke Griffith, and Luke's brother, Ben, built a bus body that was interchangeable with a logging body. On Sunday, the logging body was lifted from the truck frame, and the bus body was put in its place. The church bus ran a route every Sunday to encourage church attendance.

As Ramer's own Gloria Smith has written so beautifully in her 1984 account of the history of Ramer, it was in the early years, in the days of railroad trains, county doctors, big homes, and a time when life was simple, that Ramer was perhaps at its "grandest." In just a few years, the widespread use of the automobile, the growing opportunities for work in the big cities, the Great Depression, and then World War II, would rob Ramer of some of her sons and daughters. In spite of the events going on in the world around it, Ramer held on to its uniqueness.

Alabama Power had installed electrical service in the late 1930s. Until then, most of the schools, churches, and many homes had generated their own electricity using Delco batteries. Then, in 1946 the county and the state paved Ramer's streets. However by the early 1950s, the town still retained much of the small town flavor of the 1930s. It was neat, quiet, and sociable. On Sunday mornings, the Baptist and the Methodist churches rang their bells calling Ramer's residents to church, for it was a town in which just about everybody went to church on Sunday.

Until the Mon-Cre Telephone cooperative was organized, only two telephones were to be found in town, one at Dudley Hassey's store and the other at the county school bus shop that was located on the grounds of Ramer High School. There was no public water system. Most of the town's residents had shallow wells with electric pumps. Neil Cowles' windmill stood tall reaching into the sky. Once a month, a county truck drove through town to pick up trash.

Although it was virtually unnoticed, a train passed through Ramer every morning in route to Montgomery, and returned every afternoon, stopping to pick up loaded pulpwood cars and to leave empty cars to be



Dr. A. D. Cowles came to Ramer in 1911 and Served as a Family Physician for Over Fifty Years

loaded during the week. Logging was the backbone of the county's economy. Cap Caplinger was the depot agent and Pearl Hassey was the substitute. Instead of riding the train, most of Ramer's residents chose to drive to surrounding towns, or to ride the big Trailways bus that stopped at the Ramer Service Station that was owned by G. T. House. There were two automobile repair shops and two icehouses. Occasionally, Arthur Rushton would grind corn for customers at his gristmill.

The Baptist church and the Church of Christ had relatively new churches. The Methodist church was still in its beautiful old structure that was constructed of wood painted white with green shutters on the windows. The Whalley building burned in 1946, but across Main Street Arthur Rushton went to his store each day. Nora Hill ran the Post Office with the help of Smilie Jones and Luke Griffith. Clem Little and Claude Brooks were the rural route mail carriers. The barbershop was closed in these days, closing after the death of Will Wingard, Ramer's barber. Carl Trotter and his wife, Louise, operated the drugstore. The big attraction at the drugstore in those days was the almost continuous game of dominos played on the porch by men who came to talk about crops and politics. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to go to Dudley Hassey's store, which was located in the Turnipseed building, to pick up grocery items, get gas for their automobiles, make a phone call, or just to sit around the wooden table that could be found in the middle of the store.

Ministers and their families occupied the Baptist, Methodist, and Church of Christ parsonages. Dr. Cowles' home and office stood on Main Street, and it was still very much as it was when he and his wife, Mary, had moved there. Dr. Cowles always stayed busy tending to those who were sick. The Alabama National Guard units in the county had been activated because of the Korean conflict, and many of Ramer's young men were away during the early 1950s. Several filling station-grocery stores were scattered around town—Grant's store, Cherry's store, Pete Myers' store, Henry Stephens' store, Dewey Collins' store, and Maud Miller's store. Mrs. Herman Smith, who lived just outside town, was well known for her home-baked cakes. With the help of Lauriza Hall, she baked cakes in her home and sold them at the Montgomery County Curb Market in Montgomery.

In these days, as has always been the case in Ramer, much of the town's social activity was centered on the schools. The schools, in the early 1950s, were segregated, with white students attending Ramer elementary School and Ramer High School. Black students attended schools scattered around the county, which were, for the most part, just two-room buildings. In the early 1960s, Dunbar Elementary School and Dunbar High School were opened, with the dedication of the new, modern building taking place in 1963. Today, the schools are for all of Ramer's students. In the late 1950s and in the 1960s, the Baptist and Methodist Churches, and the Church of Christ, continued to be active. The Civic Club for women, the Men's Club, the Masons and the Eastern Star were all active. Many residents enjoyed fishing in the ponds scattered around the countryside, and many women enjoyed quilting.

It was around this time that many of Ramer's residents began driving each day to nearby cities to jobs, something that is now very common and taken for granted. Likewise, there is no longer a country doctor to take care of Ramer's sick residents; people have a medical clinic to go to, or they go into the nearby cities for healthcare. The depot is no longer standing by the railroad tracks, having been moved to Main Street and converted into a private business. Many of the traditional filling station-grocery stores have closed; today, Ramer still has Wyatt's Supermarket, owned by Cecil Wyatt, a teacher and a member of the Alabama House of Representatives, the Ramer Service Station owned by Jimmie Browder, and just outside of town, The Food Basket, owned by Ray [Roy] Houlton, who was for many years the assistant chief of police in Montgomery. Southwest Forest Industry Wood Yard became Ramer's largest business.

Today, Ramer is once again experiencing growth as people now want to leave the big cities and the hectic pace of life, and return to their roots. Ramer's old houses are full of family life once again, and new homes are springing up in the outlying areas on family-owned land that has been passed down through the generations. Ramer, as it has always been, is an independent minded, neighborhood town. In spite of the fact that there is little industry or business to provide it with local tax money, Ramer refuses to wither away. Instead, this likable, livable, little town is on the move!



**PINTLALA HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION**

*c/o Pintlala Public Library
255 Federal Road
Hope Hull, AL 36043*

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NEXT MEETING

JULY 16, 2017

2:30 P.M.

PINTLALA BAPTIST
CHURCH
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Join the Pintlala Historical Association
Please mail completed form & dues to:

**Pintlala Historical Association
Ina Slade
15212 Highway 31
Hope Hull, Alabama 36043**

Name _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Phone (Home & Office) _____

E-Mail Address _____

Areas of Interest _____

If you are interested in genealogy, please indicate family surnames _____

\$15.00 Annual Dues