

PINTLALA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Next Meeting:

January 19, 2025 at 2:30 p.m.
Pintlala Baptist Church



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

Volume XXXIX, Number 1

www.pintlalahistoricalassociation.com

January 2025



2024 OFFICERS

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A Christmas Poem by Zitella Cocke (1897)

'Twas long ago an angel came,
 To comfort the sad earth;
 And glorious news he brought to man
 Of a Royal Infant's birth —
 To shepherds at the dead of night,
 He told the welcome story,
 And skies above and earth beneath,
 Were all ablaze with glory.

Glory to God, and Peace to man,
 And joy at even' hearth,
 For ne'er had Heaven stooped so low
 To gladden the sad earth:
 In David's City, Bethlehem,
 A Babe was born that night --
 A helpless Babe in a mother's arms;
 And yet, - the, P dice of Light.

Out of the East three wise men came,
 At id cm their tiresome way,
 A radiant star arose to guide
 Them where the Infant lay.
 Across Arabia's burning sands,
 Through trackless vvilds afar,
 They journeyed, led by God's own light,
 Which shone from Bethlehem's star.

And gills they brought of treasures rare;
Brought gold, and incense sweet -
And bending low, in homage laid
Them at the Infant's feet.
Nor Jewish books, nor Grecian arts;
Nor Egypt's cunning lore —
Nor Roman pride e'er held the wealth,
This humble manger bore.

O wondrous star! O wondrous Babe!
O wondrous gift to man!
The sin-sick earth smiled thro' her tears,
For life and love began;
The silent stars so coldly bright,
Now took a kindly speech,
And told the fatherhood of God
Far as their light could reach.

And human hearts, bleeding and sore,
By sin and sorrow riven;
Looked up to bless that infant smile,
Which spoke the love of heaven.
And all of painters magic art —
Of music's tender tone,
Found no theme like the gift which came
From our good Father's throne.

O mothers, whose sweet babes to-night
Shall hear the merry chime
Of Christmas bells, and lisp the songs
Of the olden Christmas-time,
Comes not a purer joy to you,

And deeper love 14 them,
Because of the Mother and the Babe
Who smiled in Bethlehem?

Children, whose eager, wayward rd feet
In life's paths shall he torn,
Shines not the sun with brighter ray,
That the dear Christ child was born?
Then bring from sere and frosty woods,
Your sturdy Christmas tree --
Laugh, when its thorns shall prick your hands,
In innocence and glee -

For never in your life shall come
A sharper, stronger pain,
Than the sweet Babe of Bethlehem
Can heal and bless again.
No treasure like your loving hearts
E'er lay at Jesus' feet -
Dearer to him is childhood's- faith
Than Magi's incense sweet.



Julia Zitella Cocke

A poet for Alabama



Julia Zitella Cocke (1840-1929) was a prolific poet during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During her lifetime, she produced more than 300 poems, several essays and short stories, and several musical compositions. She covered a variety of subjects in her poetry, but her best works were inspired by her native South.

Born on November 10, 1840, in Marion, Perry County, Zitella Cocke was the oldest of Woodson St. George and Mary Binion Cocke's eight children. Her father, a descendent of an influential Virginia family, moved to Marion in the 1830s and became a planter. Her mother, descended from French Huguenots, was an accomplished scholar, musician, and linguist. Thus, the Cocke children were encouraged to develop their musical and scholarly skills and interests. Mary Cocke closely oversaw the education of her children by personally instructing them in many subjects, including music and Latin, and using tutors for others. As a child, Zitella wrote verses and left them under her mother's breakfast plate for her to review. At the age of seven, she completed "The Mimosa Tree," her first poem. Cocke entered Judson Female Institute at age six and graduated with honors at sixteen. Following her graduation, she traveled to Europe and continued her study of music.

Cocke returned to Alabama with the expectation that she would return to life as she knew it. That promise was interrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War. Just a month before Alabama seceded from the Union, Cocke was selected to present a regimental flag to the Marion Rifles at a ceremony on December 13, 1860. In front of a crowd gathered on the main lawn at Judson College, Cocke delivered an eloquent speech that was reprinted in the Marion Tri-Weekly Commonwealth newspaper; it included some of her poetic verses.

The excitement of the celebration soon dissipated as the war progressed and deprivations began to affect daily life in the South. Cocke accepted a position in Judson's music department to provide her family with income. She assumed the responsibility of supporting her family in the absence of two of her brothers, who were serving in the Confederate army, and the ill health of her parents. To supplement her teacher's salary, Cocke began publishing poems in periodicals. Like many families in the South, the Cocke family lost a son and much of their wealth during the Civil War. In the 1870s, she left Judson and taught music in several cit-

ies, including Nashville and Chicago, before settling in Baltimore in the 1880s. There, she gave private lessons in music and German and wrote musical compositions.

In the early 1890s, she moved to Boston. In addition to writing essays, short stories and poems, she also translated works for the Boston Public Library. She had always composed poems for personal enjoyment, but in Boston she turned her hobby into a successful career. In addition to the publication of three volumes of poetry, she contributed pieces to magazines such as The New England Magazine, Lippincott's Magazine, The Youth's Companion, and Harper's Bazaar. Her poems display inspirations ranging from nature, to religion, history, society, and grief. Her works generally received favorable criticism throughout the nation and abroad. Her poetry compilations sold well except, ironically, in the South. Cocke believed her books didn't sell well in the South because of the hardships many endured during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Despite this, her popularity as an author provided Cocke with the means to support herself and to travel extensively.

Cocke returned to Alabama in 1918 and resided in the Mobile Benevolent Home until 1922, when she moved to the Gadsden home of her niece, Molly Cocke Denman. Her eyesight began to fail and her health was failing as well, but she continued to write poems by dictating verses to others. Zitella Cocke died on December 3, 1929. Her remains were returned to Marion, where she was buried in Marion Cemetery among her family.

This Christmas poem, The Babe of Bethlehem, was written by Cocke in the 1890s and published in 1897 by the Artistic Lithographic Company of New York and London. The voice of this gifted "poet for Alabama" still rings true for all who celebrate the birth of the Holy Child in this Christmas season.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Our appreciation is extended to PHA member, Jim Power, Jr. for permitting PHA to publish his 2023 personal Christmas greeting which he designed and researched. It seems so appropriate for a historical association to publish this Christmas poem written by an Alabama author. Thank you, Jim.

NEW OFFICERS

The election of new officers will be held at the January 19th meeting.

YEAR END GIFTS

As the year 2024 comes to a close, PHA sends Christmas greetings to each of our members. We appreciate your support and encouragement as we work to publish history associated with south Montgomery County. End of year financial gifts are truly appreciated and bring additional funds to aid in publishing high quality newsletters, provide excellent speakers and support projects as they develop.

Treasurer, Ina Slade will gratefully accept any amount you might share. Her mailing address is 15212 U. S. Hwy 31, Hope Hull, AL 3604

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

The Rev. and Mrs. Wesley Toles
Cleveland Heights, OH

Mr. and Mrs. Buddy Green
Hope Hull, AL



IN MEMORIAM

Mrs. Jack (Sharron) Cates

Pintlala Historical Association Program for January 2025

The program for January 19, 2025 will be presented by Debbie Pendelton from Alabama Department of Archives and History. Recently the ADAH hosted a work day involving the identification of images and videos from years past produced by WSFA News Department. Several retired persons from the News Department visited Archives and worked with the staff to aid in identifying the events and persons which were part of a large collection of images given to ADAH by the WSFA News Department. The purpose of the project was to preserve and make the images available to the public for study. We might have a surprise alum from WSFA to join Debbie for sharing their efforts to complete the history of these images!

Sunday, January 19, 2025 at 2:30, in the Fellowship Hall of Pintlala Baptist Church is the date and time for this interesting program.

Please attend and bring a friend!



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ASSOCIATION**

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



NEXT MEETING

JANUARY 19, 2025

2:30 P.M.

**PINTLALA BAPTIST
CHURCH**



Join the Pintlala Historical Association

Please mail completed form & dues to:

Pintlala Historical Association

Ina Slade, Treasurer

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