

HOOSIER WOMEN AT WORK

STUDIES IN INDIANA WOMEN'S HISTORY

Session 1

April 2018

Sunny Scenes and Deep Shadows: The Lyrical Poetry of Sarah T. Bolton

ADRIENNE PROVENZANO*

This paper explores the life and enduring works of Sarah T. Bolton (1814 – 1893). Arriving in Indiana from Kentucky in 1818, Bolton eventually became well known as a poet in Indiana as well as being recognized nationally and internationally. In more recent years, she has been called Indiana's Pioneer Poet Laureate. Some of her poems were set to music during her lifetime and at least one poem was set by several composers after her death, further spreading knowledge of her name and work. This paper combines original research with primary source documentation and existing scholarship to study a selection of those songs.

As a cornerstone of the paper, Bolton's iconic poem, "Paddle Your Own Canoe" is considered as a reflection of the Hoosier spirit, and E. W. Foster's 1867 musical setting of the poem is analyzed. Other pieces, such as "Indiana," "I Live, Love! But For Thee," and "The Orphan's Lament" give insights into Hoosier life in the early and mid-1800's.

During the presentation, a PowerPoint slideshow will be used to portray locations in Indiana important to Bolton's life story, including sites of her former homes in Indianapolis and Beech Grove and her grave marker at Crown Hill Cemetery on which her epitaph "The First Singer in a New Land" is inscribed. Sheet music from the 1800's and early 1900's will also be included in the PowerPoint presentation.

* Adrienne Provenzano is a Certified Interpretive Guide with the National Association for Interpretation, a NASA JPL-CalTech volunteer Solar System Ambassador, and an Indiana Master Naturalist. She holds degrees from Arcadia University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Indiana University and has completed graduate work at Butler University.