

Born Like the Pines

By James Ephraim McGirt

Born like the pines to sing,
The harp and song in m' breast,
Though far and near,
There's none to hear,
I'll sing as th' winds request.

To tell the trend of m' lay,
Is not for th' harp or me;
I'm only to know,
From the winds that blow,
What th' theme of m' song shall be.

Born like the pines to sing,
The harp and th' song in m' breast,
As th' winds sweep by,
I'll laugh or cry,
In th' winds I cannot rest.

Source: African-American Poetry of the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology (University of Illinois Press, 1992)



An African American writer, publisher, and businessman, James Ephraim McGirt was born in Robeson County in North Carolina. In 1895, he earned a BA from Bennett College. McGirt worked as a manual laborer until 1903, when he moved to Philadelphia and launched McGirt's Magazine. As editor and publisher, McGirt featured his own prose and poetry "urging race advancement along with writings by prominent African Americans." In 2004, McGirt was inducted into the Literary Hall of Fame by the North Carolina Writers' Network. Although he did not garner literary acclaim during his lifetime, McGirt created a significant publishing outlet for other early-20th-century African American writers.

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