

A Resolution Honoring Chatham's Bard, George Moses Horton

Whereas, the Chathamite George Moses Horton achieved distinction in 1829 when publication of his collection of poetry, *The Hope of Liberty*, made him the first African-American man to have a book printed and distributed in the antebellum South. And further, that he published two additional collections: *The Poetical Works* in 1845 and *Naked Genius* in 1865.

And whereas, despite the fact that his society denied him any formal education, he began verbally composing verse as a teenager, selling love poems to students at the University in Chapel Hill and to passersby at the community market, and eventually taught himself to read and write at the age of thirty-four.

And whereas, Horton's poetry celebrated not only his love of people and the natural beauty of Chatham County but also his desire for freedom, writing: "Alas! And am I born for this, To wear this slavish chain?/ Deprived of all creative bliss, Through hardship, toil and pain!/ How long have I in bondage lain, And languished to be free!/ Alas! And must I still complain—Deprived of liberty./ Oh, Heaven! And is there no relief, This side of the silent grave—to soothe the pain—to quell the grief, And anguish of a slave?"

And whereas, George Moses Horton was held in bondage by the family of William Horton from his birth in 1798 to the time of national emancipation in 1865, despite his efforts to purchase himself from servitude with money earned by his talent; and he lived only the last seventeen years of the eighty-five years of his life as a free man.

And whereas, he is the namesake of Horton Middle School (built to serve as a high school during the era of racial segregation), was honored with June 28 being designated as George Moses Horton Day in 1978 by the county, became Chatham's historic poet laureate in 1997, and was elected to the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in 1996, we can do more to celebrate his life, work, and inspiration.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Chatham County Board of Commissioners shall rename the 15-501 U.S. highway from the north boundary of Pittsboro to the Orange County line "North George Moses Horton Boulevard;" and it shall name the 15-501 highway from the south boundary of Pittsboro to the Deep River and Lee County line "South George Moses Horton Boulevard."

It is further resolved, that the Chatham County Board of Commissioners formally asks the town board of Pittsboro to likewise rename Sanford Road and Hillsboro Street to honor George Moses Horton and thereby provide consistency for this central byway of our home.