

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Karen Howard, Chair
Franklin Gomez Flores, Vice Chair
Jim Crawford
Mike Dasher
Diana Hales

COUNTY MANAGER: Dan LaMontagne**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.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED Therefore, be it resolved that the Chatham County Board of Commissioners shall request that the NC Department of Transportation recognize 15-501 U.S. highway from the Orange County line to the Deep River and Lee County line with the Honorary Designation of "George Moses Horton Highway".

Adopted, this the 21st day of February 2022.

ATTEST:

Lindsay K. Ray, NCCCC, Clerk to the Board
Chatham County Board of Commissioners

Karen Howard, Chair
Chatham County Board of Commissioners

