



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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COUNTY MANAGER: Bryan Thompson

Resolution of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners Signs Honoring George Moses Horton on US Highway 15-501

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, 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.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chatham County Board of Commissioners shall request that the North Carolina Department of Transportation erect signs on US Highway 15-501 at the Orange County line and Lee County line to honor George Moses Horton.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall supersede all other resolutions concerning George Moses Horton road names and signs.

Adopted, this the 16th day of June 2025.

Karen Howard, Chair

ATTEST:

Jenifer K Johnson, Clerk to the Board

Integrity — Respect — Collaboration — Community — Equity — Service — Accountability