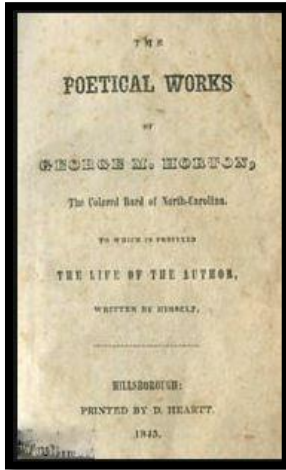


The Works of George Moses Horton Chatham County's Celebrated Poet



George Moses Horton was an African-American poet from North Carolina, the first to be published in the Southern United States. His book *The Hope of Liberty* was published in 1829 while he was still enslaved. His poetic protests of his status are the first ever written by an enslaved person in America.

Horton (ca. 1797-ca.1883) was born in Northampton County, where he, his mother and siblings were enslaved by William Horton. As a child, he moved with William Horton to Chatham County, taught himself to read, and began composing in his head poems based on the rhythms in hymns.

By the time he was twenty, George Moses Horton had begun visiting the campus of The University of North Carolina -- eight miles away. There he sold students acrostics on the names of their sweethearts. For several decades he "bought his time" from his enslavers through the sale of his poems and through the wages collected as a campus laborer.

Horton's campus presence led a professor's wife to encourage him, and his first printed poem, "Liberty and Slavery," appeared in her hometown newspaper, the *Lancaster Gazette*, on 8 Apr. 1829.

In 1845 the *Hillsborough Recorder* brought out *The Poetical Works of George M. Horton, The Colored Bard of North-Carolina, To Which Is Prefixed The Life of the Author, Written by Himself*. In 1865, his third book, *Naked Genius* was published from the press of William B. Smith in Raleigh.

Two of Horton's three books are available online in the Documenting the American South collection:

[*The Hope of Liberty*](#)

[*The Poetical Works of George M. Horton, the Colored Bard of North Carolina, to which is Prefixed the Life of the Author, written by himself*](#)

Naked Genius is available in print in all three of Chatham County's libraries. Richard Walser's biography of Horton is available in the Chatham Community Library in Pittsboro.

In addition, copies of all three of Horton's works are available for use in the [Chatham Historical Museum](#) during Museum hours.