



George Moses Horton, the Bard of North Carolina

George Moses Horton: An Overview



Facing Obstacles

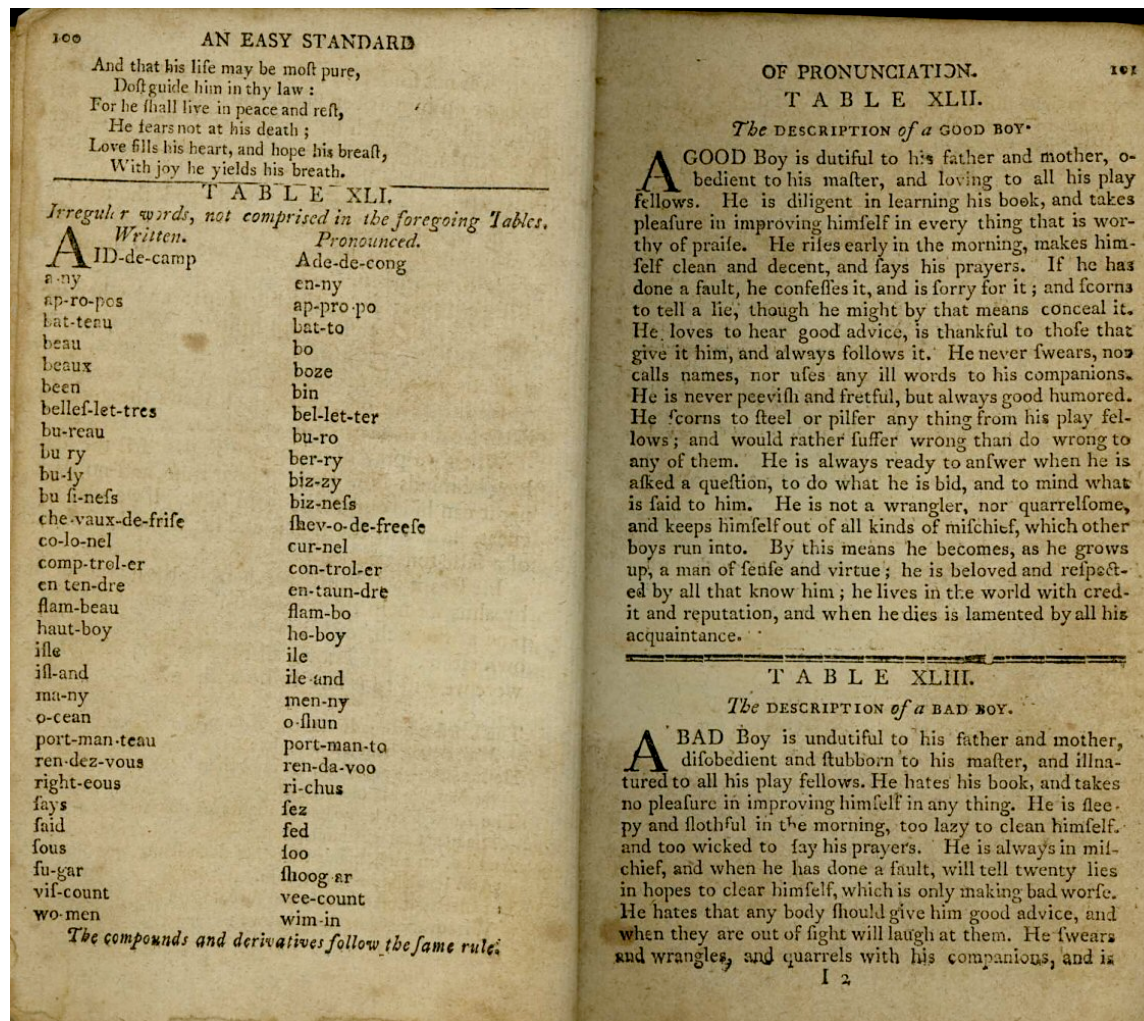
George Moses Horton wrote:

"Being nothing but a poor cow-boy, I had but little or no thought of ever being able to read or spell one word or sentence in any book whatever."

"At length I took resolution to learn the alphabet at all events; and lighting by chance at times with some opportunities of being in the presence of school children, I learnt letters by heart; and fortunately afterwards got hold of some old parts of spelling books abounding with these elements."

"A number strove to dissuade me from my plan, and had the presumption to tell me that I was a vain fool to attempt learning to read with as little chance as I had."

Using a Speller



Developing Poetry While Tending the Cows



George Moses Horton quickly realized his fondness for poetry.

"I began to wonder whether it was possible that I ever could be so fortunate as to compose in that manner. I fell to work in my head, and composed several undigested pieces, which I retained in my mind, for I knew nothing about writing with a pen."

He memorized poems while tending his owner's dairy cows and plowing the fields.

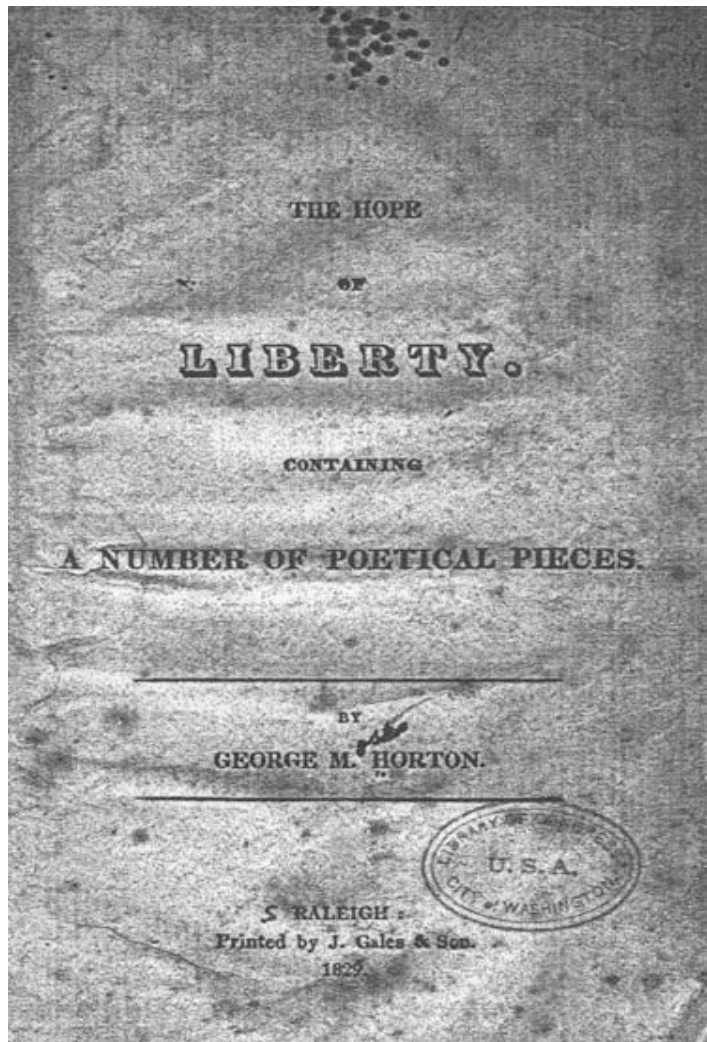
The Colored Bard of North Carolina



"All eyes were on me, and all ears were open. Many were at first incredulous; but the experiment of acrostics established it as an incontestable fact. Hence my fame soon circulated like a stream throughout the college. Many of these acrostics I composed at the handle of the plough, and retained them in my head, (being unable to write,) until an opportunity offered, when I dictated, whilst one of the gentlemen would serve as my amanuensis."

G. M. Horton

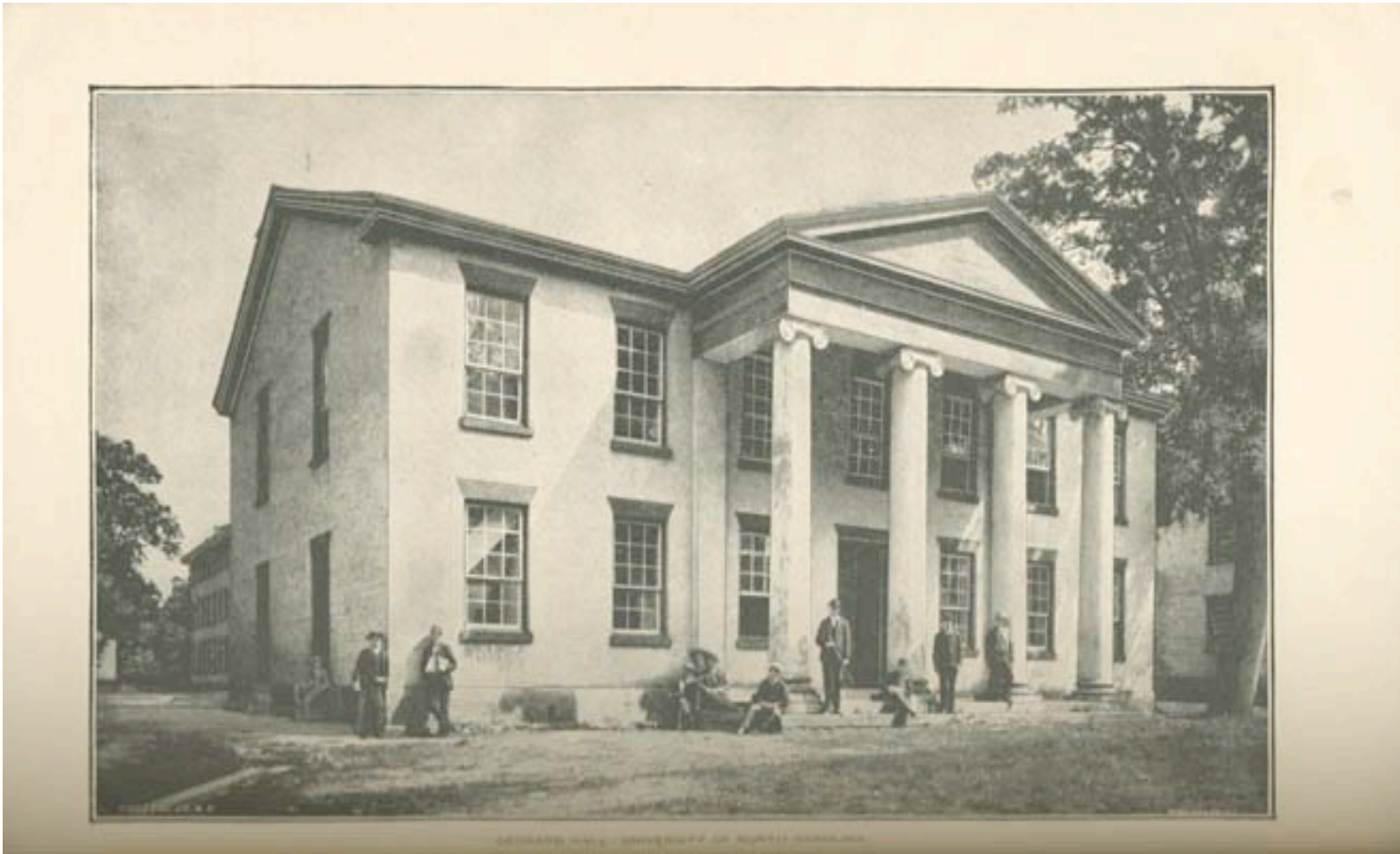
A Published Poet



George Moses Horton published three volumes of poetry:

- *The Hope of Liberty* (1829)
- *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* (1845)
- *Naked Genius* (1865)

Gaining Supporters and a Prestigious Invitation



The Legacy of a Slave Poet/Entrepreneur



Horton Hall was dedicated on the UNC Chapel Hill campus in 2002.

"The Slave's Complaint"

Am I sadly cast aside,
 On misfortune's rugged tide.
Will the world my pains deride
 Forever?

Must I dwell in Slavery's night,
 And all pleasure take its flight,
Far beyond my feeble sight,
 Forever?

Worst of all, must hope grow dim,
 And withhold her cheering beam?
Rather let me sleep and dream
 Forever?

Something still my heart surveys,
 Groping through this dreary maze;
Is it Hope? --- then burn and blaze
 Forever?

Leave me not a wretch confined,
Altogether lame and blind—
Unto gross despair consigned,
Forever!

Heaven! in whom can I confide?
Canst thou not for all provide?
Condescend to be my guide
Forever:

And when this transient life shall end,
Oh, may some kind, eternal friend
Bid me from servitude ascend,
Forever!

"For the Fair Ms. M. M. McL[ean]"

May this inspired acrostic prove
A perfect token of my love
Return thy torch allmost expired
Yet find by whom thou art admired

My soul of love would fly to thee
Constrained thy winning form to see

Like pan whose destiny was grief
Exploring nature for relief
And sure when thee my love has found
Nought els[e] in life can heal the wound

When on the constellations
i cast my eyes afar
Then i can tell
My bonny belle
The queen of every star

When i look from the mountain
Or nature's lofty tower
Then i can tell
My bonny belle
The queen of every flower

When gazing from the window
On blooms both low and tall
Then i can tell
My charming belle
The fairest one of all

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2	Quill & Chain	Image courtesy of Shelton Bryant.
3	Text from <i>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.</i>	Horton, George Moses. <i>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.</i> 1845. Reprint, Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina.
4.	The American Spelling Book	From the collection of Pat Pflieger.
5a.	Cows	Image courtesy of NC Division of Water Quality.
5b.	Text from <i>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.</i>	Horton, George Moses. <i>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.</i> 1845. Reprint, Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina.
6.	Image of an Actor Portraying George Moses Horton	Image from the short video, <i>George Moses Horton, Poet Entrepreneur</i> , filmed by the Apprend Foundation for this project.
6b.	Text from <i>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.</i>	Horton, George Moses. <i>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.</i> 1845. Reprint, Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina.
7.	Title Page of Horton's <i>The Hope of Liberty, 1829</i>	Image courtesy of Documenting the American South, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries.
8.	Gerard Hall at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Image courtesy of Documenting the American South, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries.
9.	Horton Hall at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Image courtesy of Jennifer Krause and University of North Carolina, "The Carolina Story."
10. & 11.	"The Slave's Complaint" by George Moses Horton	Horton, George Moses. <i>The Hope of Liberty: Containing a Number of Poetical Pieces.</i> 1829. Reprint, Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina.
12. & 13.	"For the Fair Ms. M. M. McL[ean]" by George Moses Horton	Horton, George Moses, and Joan R. Sherman. <i>The Black Bard of North Carolina: George Moses Horton and His Poetry.</i> Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1997.