



# George Moses Horton, the Bard of North Carolina

## George Moses Horton: An Overview



## Facing Obstacles

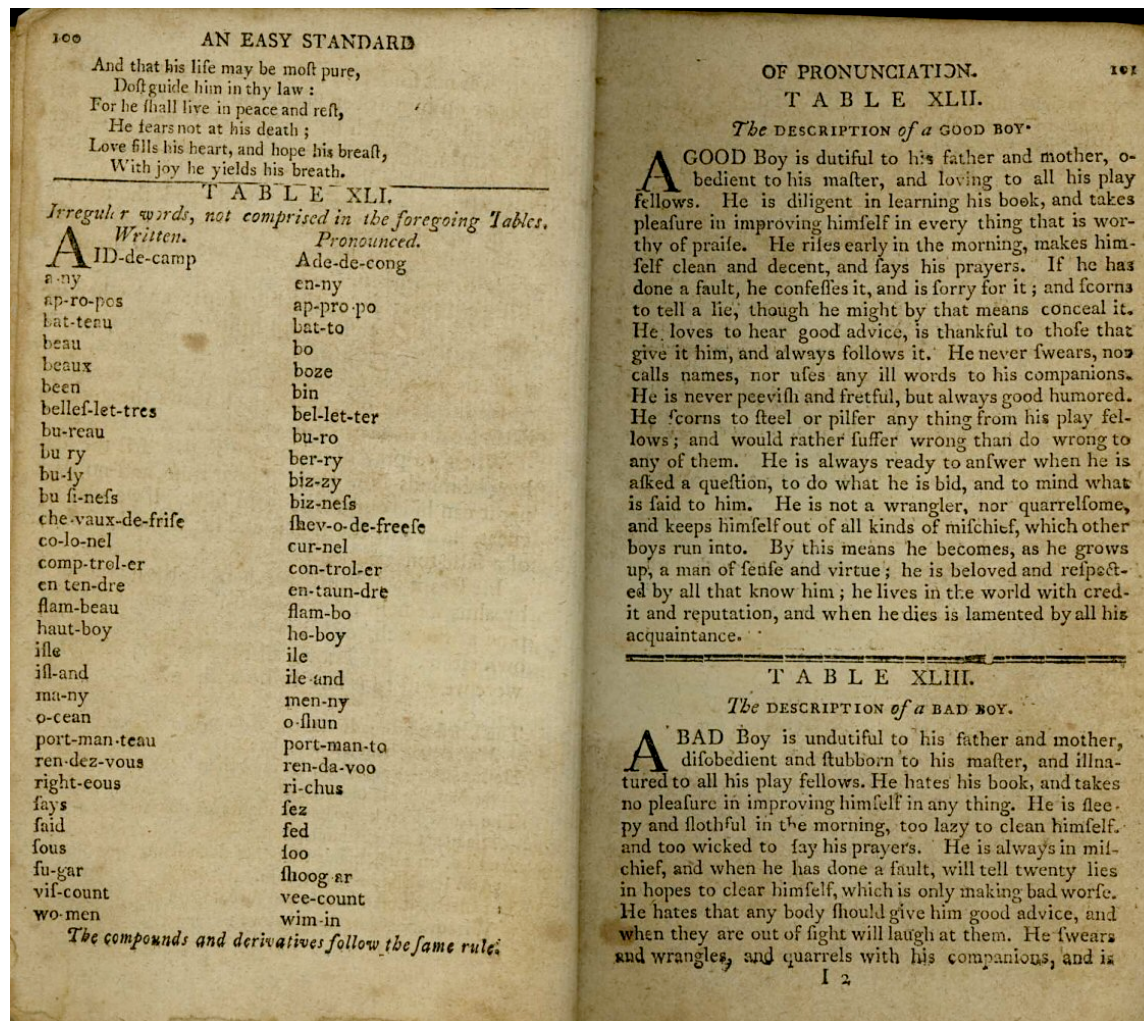
George Moses Horton wrote:

***"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.

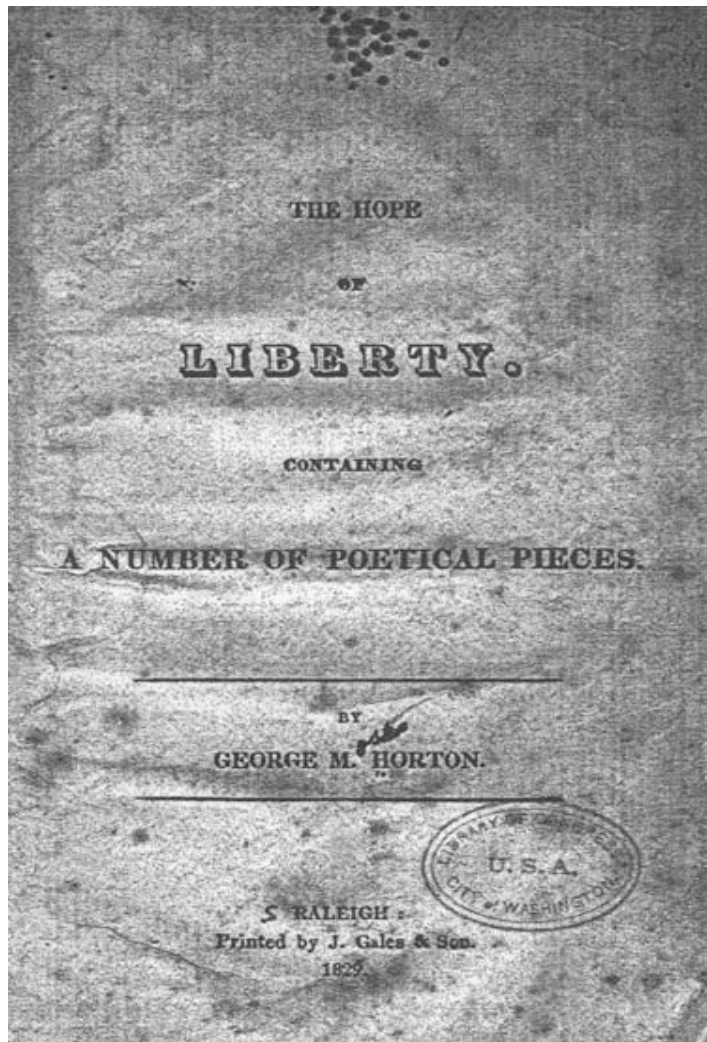
## The Colored Bard of North Carolina



***"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

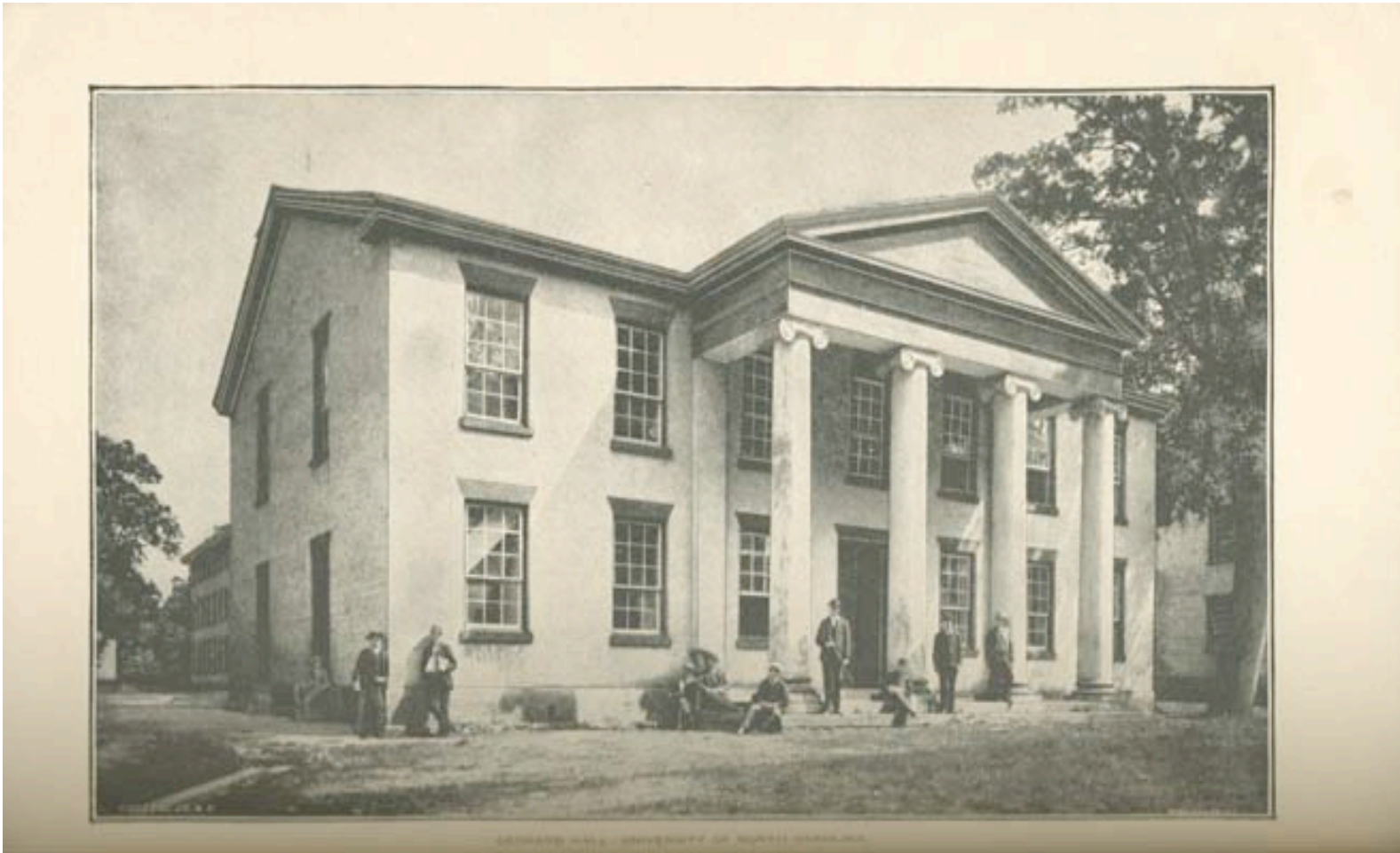
## A Published Poet



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.

## "Slavery"

Slavery, thou peace-disturbing thief,  
    We can't but look with frowns on thee,  
Without the balm which gives relief,  
    The balm of birthright—Liberty.

Thy wing has been for ages furl'd,  
    Thy vessel toss'd from wave to wave,  
By stormy winds 'mid billows hurl'd—  
    Such is the fate of every slave.

A loathsome burden we are to bear,  
    Through sultry bogs we trudging go;  
Thy rusty chains we frown to wear,  
    Without one inch of wealth to show.

Our fathers from their native land  
    Were dragged across the brackish deep,  
Bound fast together, hand in hand,  
    O! did the God of nature sleep?

When sadly thro' the almond grove  
The pirate dragged them o'er the sod,  
Devoid of pity and love,  
They seemed as left without a God.

Are we not men as well as they,  
Born to enjoy the good of earth,  
Brought in creation from the clay,  
To reap a blessing from our birth?

Alas! how can such rebels thrive,  
Who take our lives and wealth away,  
Since all were placed on earth to live,  
And prosper by the light of day.

The maledictions of our God,  
Pervade the dwindling world we see;  
He hurls the vengeance with his rod,  
And thunders, let the slave be free!

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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.	"Slavery" by George Moses Horton	Horton, George Moses., and Will H. Banks. 1865. <i>Naked genius.</i> Raleigh, N.C.: Wm. B. Smith & Co. Southern Field and Fireside Book Publishing House.