



Established 1771

CHATHAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Resolution of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners

HONORING GEORGE MOSES HORTON DAY ON JUNE 28

WHEREAS, George Moses Horton was an enslaved African-American poet born in Northampton County, North Carolina in 1797, who achieved distinction in 1829 with the publication of his collection of poetry, *The Hope of Liberty*, which made him the first African-American to have a book published in the United States; by publishing *The Poetical Works* in 1845, which advanced the national abolition movement; by publishing *Naked Genius* in 1865, which documented contemporary sentiment on emancipation and human dignity; and by influencing scholars and students for decades at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill through his poetry and other writings; and

WHEREAS, as a child, George Moses Horton moved to a farm in Chatham County with his owner William Horton, Horton taught himself to read and began composing in his head poems based on the rhythms of hymns, then in his twenties he started visiting the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill in order to sell fruits and farm products for his master, where he started selling love poems to students for twenty-five cents; and

WHEREAS, George Moses Horton was enslaved 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 from his talent; and he lived only the last seventeen years of the eighty-five years of his life as a free man; and

WHEREAS, in 1978, he was the namesake of Horton Middle School, which was built to serve as a high school during the era of racial segregation and was honored with June 28 being designated as George Moses Horton Day in 1978 by Chatham County; and

WHEREAS, other noteworthy recognitions of George Moses Horton include election to the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in 1996 and designation as Chatham County’s historic poet laureate in 1997; and

WHEREAS, George Moses Horton continues to be a source of community inspiration, research, and literary and historical celebration, as evidenced by the 2021 renaming of George Moses Horton Middle School in Pittsboro by the Chatham County Board of Education, the republication of *Naked Genius* by the Chapel Hill Historical Society, the naming of buildings and awards for him at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the celebration in 2000 of the 200th anniversary of his arrival in Chatham County with a jubilee coordinated by the Chatham Arts Council;

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners resolve that June 28, 2024 will be a day of community celebration to honor the 46th George Moses Horton Day, and encourage the residents of Chatham County to read his works, cherish his lasting impact on our community, and acknowledge his powerful message on human dignity and equality, the human right to education, and the importance of artistic expression.

Adopted, this the 17th day of June.

ATTEST: 
Jenifer K. Johnson, MMC, Clerk to the Board


Mike Dasher, Chair

