

Two Acrostics
Commissioned by Richard Allison Torrance and
Written by George Moses Horton

NOTE: This is a preliminary report, written by John C. Blythe, Jr., at the request of Abigail Jennings, seeking biographical and genealogical information about Mary McClean and Sophia Alexander, the subjects of two acrostics written by George Moses Horton.

For the Original Documents, see:

Richard Allison Torrance--George Moses Horton--Acrostics (Original), circa 1854

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Manuscript Collections, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archive, UNC Charlotte Torrance and Banks families papers Part 2: Subject Files and Photographs, 1832 - 1927 Subject Files, 1832 - 1927
Richard Allison Torrance--George Moses Horton--Acrostics (Original), circa 1854

Acrostic poems to Mary McClean and Sophia Alexander (ca. 1854) by George Moses Horton, slave-poet of Chatham County, N.C. These were commissioned by Torrance while a student at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

For further information, see:

Brabham, Robin. To the "Tip-Top Belles" of Mecklenburg County: Two Acrostics by George Moses Horton. CLA Journal, Vol. 30, No. 4 (June 1987), pp. 454-460, published by College Language Association.

Sophia Alexander

Brabham states that Sophia "later married John Sample of Tennessee." This allows us identify her as the same person about whom Dr. John Brevard

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Alexander wrote, "Sophia married John Sample and moved to Tennessee, where both deceased without children."

The context in which Dr. Alexander placed her was as a daughter of John Ramsey Alexander (1801-1873) and his wife Harriet Van Hays Henderson (1804-1872). Her full name was Sophia Caroline Alexander. She was born 20 October 1838 in Mecklenburg County, NC. Dr. Alexander writes that the family had "a beautiful home ten miles north of Charlotte, on the Statesville road."

Sophia's paternal grandparents were William Bain Alexander (1764-1844) and his wife Violet Davidson (1771-1821). Their parents were John McKnitt Alexander (1733-1817) and his wife Jean Bean (ca. 1740-1789) and Maj. John Davidson (1735-1832) and his wife Violet Wilson (1742-1818).

Sophia's maternal grandparents were Andrew Henderson (ca 1753-1837) and his wife Elizabeth Robinson (1758-1843). Their parents were Carnes Henderson (1734-1793) and his wife Elizabeth Robinson (1728-1805) and David Robinson (ca. 1726-1808) and his wife Mary Isabelle Van Hays (d. 1791)

On 29 May 1867, Sophia C. Alexander and J. M. Sample were married in Mecklenburg County, NC, by the Rev. Alexander Ranson, whose home was on present-day Ranson Road in Huntersville. He was pastor of the Gilead and Prosperity Associate Reformed Presbyterian congregations.

A Register of Deaths in the City of Memphis, TN, records that Mrs. S. C. Sample died in February 1868 of gastritis. She was reported to be 25 years, white, married, and a native of North Carolina. Burial was in an unidentified cemetery in Memphis.

Sophia's husband, John Milton Sample, was born 14 March 1812 in Mecklenburg County, NC, a son of James Sample (1770-1853) and his wife Martha Robinson (1777-1861). Dr. J. B. Alexander wrote that "John, the

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youngest son of James Sample, was one of the first graduates of Davidson College. He moved west and taught school for many years."

A Register of Deaths in the City of Memphis, TN, records that Dr. J. M. Sample died of typhoid fever on 26 November 1875 at the age of 60 years. he was a white widowed physician. His funeral took place at the Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis. Burial was in an unidentified cemetery in Memphis.

Sophia and John Sample left no descendants.

Mary McLean

No direct evidence has been found to identify this person. The most likely individual is Mary M. McLean, daughter of Dr. William Bain McLean (1802-1883) and his first wife, Amanda A. Hill (ca. 1810-1846). The earliest reference found to date is the 1850 census of Lincoln County, NC, where she is recorded as 15 years old.

Mary's paternal grandparents were Dr. William McLean (1757-1828) and his wife Mary "Polly" Davidson (1766-1862). Polly's parents were Maj. John Davidson (1735-1832) and his wife Violet Wilson (1742-1818).

On 3 May 1859, Mary M. McLean and the Rev. George D. Parks were married in Lincoln County by the Rev. Robert Hall Morrison. At the time, the Rev. Dr. Parks had been twice widowed and had a young daughter. Before entering the ministry, he had served briefly as a physician in the Sharon section of Mecklenburg County. He then became pastor of Steele Creek Presbyterian Church. After his marriage to Mary McLean he served the congregations of Third Creek in Iredell County and Sugaw Creek and Sharon in Mecklenburg County. Later, he helped to establish the Mulberry and Williams Memorial congregations in Mecklenburg County.

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The 1900 census reports that Mary McLean Parks was the mother of eight children. Of these, only five appeared to have survived childhood. They are:

1. Mary M. "Mamie" Parks (1861-1910) married Josiah O. Thomas.
2. Jennie M. Parks (ca. 1862-1900) married Thomas McLaurin "Tom" Belk.
3. Kate Isabel Parks (1865-1907) never married.
4. William McLean Parks (ca. 1866-1888) never married.
5. Nannie Parks (ca. 1870-1901) married Benjamin G. Thomas. No children..

Mary also reared her step-daughter, Elizabeth "Bessie" Parks (1856-1890), wife of Charles W. Laney of Monroe, Union County, NC.

The Rev. G. D. Parks died 2 March 1894 at home in Charlotte, NC. Mary McLean Parks died 19 March 1902 at the home of a daughter in Charlotte. Both were buried in Elmwood Cemetery.