

### **1774-1879. Dorcas (Obituary)**

By the Rev. Epmer Whitaker, D.D. (The Christian at Work, May 6, 1879)

It was in March 1774, that Dorcas was born, of pure African blood, the property of James Horton, and she died near the end of March, 1871, beloved and revered by all who knew her, and greatly lamented by the large circle of her neighbors, as well as by her kindred, and the First church of Southold, whereof she was a member, and in which, for the seventy-two years of her full communion therein, she had been a polished stone of the spiritual temple, a pillar of strength and of beauty.

The man who was her legal owner at her birth, and as long thereafter as he lived, was the eldest son of Deacon James Horton, who was a son of Jonathan Horton. The latter was the youngest son of Barnabas Horton, and this Barnabas Horton was born at Moseley, Leicestershire, England, in 1600, and became one of the founders of the Church and the Town of Southold in 1640.

Barnabas built the west part and Jonathan the east part of the old Horton House, which has recently become famous throughout the United States. They were in a new country in their day, and they did not a little to make new laws. The former was often a member of the Legislature of the Colonies of New Haven and of Connecticut; and the latter built an addition to his dwelling in order to provide a Court House for Suffolk County. They were in no bondage to mere precedent and uniformity; and so, in the face of the custom of Old England, Barnabas Horton bequeathed his homestead to his youngest son – not to the eldest. In this matter the spirit and example of the Hebrew patriarch Jacob doubtless wrought more or less in the heart and soul of the Southold patriarch.

Jonathan's son James lifted up his eyes and looked toward the south, where he saw that a neck of fertile land thrust itself into the fruitful and sparkling waters of the beautiful Peconic Bay. This neck is now the rich and pleasant School District of Bay View. It is the southern part of the old parish of southold.

On this neck of land, James Horton Built his house. It was the first dwelling erected thereon for a Christian home. It stood a few rods nearer the Peconic Bay than the present residences of ex-Sheriff Silas Horton and of his bother David Austin Horton. The builder of this house, throughout the last part of his life, was specially known as a Deacon of the Southold Church and a personal friend of the Rev. George Whitefield. On his death in May, 1762, his homestead became the property of his eldest son James, in whose residence our Southold Dorcas was born two years and four months before the Continental Congress sent forth the Declaration of American Independence.

It was the privilege of Dorcas in her girlhood to feel the influence and to profit by the example and instructions of her master's mother, Anna (Goldsmith) Horton, the widow of the good Deacon. This excellent woman lived until Dorcas was nine years of age, and already the little slave girl had shown in many ways that she was an exceedingly capable child, intensely eager for the rights and prosperity of her master, and quick-witted to discern and promote his interests. For instance, near the close of the Revolutionary war, she saw a British foraging party drawing near, and by a quick and bright expedient she saved her master's poultry. When she was ninety-five years old, she told me, with great glee, how she drove the geese into a cellar and shut them up so darkly that they never once quacked while the red-coats were near.

In the course of her girlhood, she became the flax-spinner and weaver of the family, and acquired her eminent skill in these arts, which were considered indispensable in a thrifty household in the country an hundred years ago. She did not forsake her wheel until she lacked less than threescore months of her hundredth year.

On the death of her master, she went by his bequest, to his son James, whom Dorcas habitually called her young master, even in her old age when she was the dignified and highly attractive mistress of her own house. He received her with the request, that he would emancipate her at his death; and this he did. He never married. he was a kindly social neighbor, a good Christian; but an extremely eccentric man. It was his habit, on the Sabbath morning, to start early on foot for the public worship, and make a brief call on every family between his own home and the church. Dorcas cherished for him almost a filial affection; and during his last illness, which continued for several months, she nursed him with the utmost assiduity

and care, never leaving him an hour at a time day or night. I well remember the charm of her hospitality one day when she was nearly midway between ninety and an hundred years of age. Before we rose from her tea table, at which she presided with an easy courtesy and a lady-like grace, she gave me a full narrative of the latest months of her young-master's life, while her deep and tender emotions, like the ebb and flow of the tide, sometimes rose so high as to lay an arrest upon her voice, and the tears of sensibility and affection rained from her mild and expressive eyes.

After Mr. Horton's death, "some natural tears," as Milton sings, she "dropt, but wiped them soon," for, as the poet says of Adam and Eve, "the world was all before them where to choose their place of rest, and Providence their guide," so it was with Dorcas, and she chose to find rest in the house of an husband. She accordingly accepted the offer of the heart and the hand of a worthy man named Maltby, and they were married March 15, 1807.

Maltby was born August 15, 1776, the son of Kedar and Chloe, slaves of William Albertson of Hashamomuck, but he had become in his youth the property of Zaccheus Goldsmith. His mother had died after having three children. His father had married again, and fourteen children were the fruit of this second marriage. Kedar and his second wife Margaret each died at the age of eighty years.

Maltby continued in the possession and employment of Mr. Goldsmith, on the farm now occupied by Daniel, Eara, Mehetabel, Sophronia and Salem Goldsmith, grandchildren of Mr. G., until 1801, when Mr. Goldsmith generously emancipated his servant, Maltby at the time being twenty-five years of age. The latter died March 30, 1838, and Dorcas was left a widow when she was sixty-four years of age.

After Maltby became a freeman, he adopted his word, descriptive of his civil condition, as his family name, and the generations of his posterity now bear it.

Maltby and Dorcas, after their marriage, were provident, industrious, pious and prosperous. They became the tenants of Daniel Brown on the Dickerson Farm, now owned and occupied by Eider Hiram J. Terry. They were divinely favored. Children were born to them, and they trained their offspring in ways of industry, virtue, knowledge and kindliness. They became in a few years the owners of one of the most sightly farms in the parish. It has charming prospects of land and water, and the spires of Southold and Shelter Island are in full view. It is the property of their son Jasper.

After the death of her husband, Dorcas and a maiden daughter kept house in the eastern part of the broad and well-built dwelling, and her son Jasper and his wife with their children lived in the western part. There were two families, but only one heart and soul in this Christian home; for Love was the robe always worn by the Angel of this household of Peace.