

Horn, Alexander Grice ^[1]

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by Hugh Buckner Johnston, 1988

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Alexander Grice Horn, "one of the greatest news editors of his day" and secretary of the first Secession Convention at Montgomery, Ala., was a native of Wilson ^[2] (then Edgecombe ^[3]) County. His parents, Jeremiah and Elizabeth Grice Horn, moved in 1834 to the vicinity of Sumterville, Ala. Horn entered school at Greensboro, Ala., and secured a thorough preparation in the law, which he practiced for a short time at Livingston. It became apparent that his temperament was not suited to that profession but rather to "the editorial pen which he was born to wield" and to "the profession which by his genius and ability he has adorned."

In the autumn of 1836, Horn invested \$1,800 in the establishment of the *Macon Transcript* in Noxubee County, Miss., and not long afterwards renamed it the *Mississippi Star*. As a result of "an impecunious and fast partner" and of "the great crash of '37," the newspaper and its premises were sold at auction by the sheriff in 1838. Sometime before 1850 and until April 1852 Horn held the office of clerk in Clarke County. About 1856 he moved to Mobile, Ala., and founded the *Mobile Mercury*, which appeared with considerable success as late as 4 Aug. 1861, and the weekly *Gulf City Home Journal*, which first appeared on 27 Oct. 1862.

On 7 Jan. 1861 Horn was present as a member and temporary secretary of the Alabama State Secession Convention assembled in Montgomery. On 15 January he was elected by acclamation to serve as permanent secretary. On 8 February the delegates from six seceded states adopted for one year a "Constitution for the Provisional Government of the Confederate States of America," and shortly before adjourning on 21 March passed a resolution of appreciation for the "faithful" services of Horn and three other officials.

After the convention, Horn resumed his journalistic career and outspoken support of the Southern cause. With the occupation of Mobile by the Union Army in the latter part of 1864, he returned to Clarke County, Miss., and established the *Quitman Intelligencer* and the *Chickasawhay Advertiser*. In 1866, "when it was but a small town," he settled in Meridian, Miss., and began to publish the *Mississippi Messenger*, which was renamed the *Meridian Mercury* in 1867. The newspaper flourished under his leadership. In 1873 the *Meridian Mercury* was issued triweekly and also weekly on Fridays by the firm of Horn & Kerlee, Publishers. On 31 Mar. 1884 it was merged with the *Tri-Weekly Observer* as a weekly under the name of the *Meridian Mercury and Observer*. By 24 Dec. 1885 it had passed from Horn's control and subsequently was renamed the *Meridian Daily News*.

The *Mercury* office was on Commerce Street. Horn's sons, Jerry and Alex, worked with him and shared the family residence on Lauderdale Street. Their newspaper advertised "a large circulation in this and surrounding States." On 5 Apr. 1872, Colonel Horn (as he was popularly known) was approved by the Mississippi state legislature for the office of commissioner of deeds for Lauderdale County. The following year he appeared in an advertisement as a partner in the real estate firm of Horn & Kerlee. However, it was his "connection with the Mississippi press," dating "farther back than any other man connected with it," for which he was best known.

About 1883 Horn became partially paralyzed as the result of a brain tumor and was forced to use crutches; nevertheless, he continued to supervise his business affairs until the last three or four months of his life. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage and was buried beside his son Alex in the McLemore Cemetery. Both he and his wife had been communicants of the Episcopal Church of Meridian.

"Col. Horn was an able and vigorous writer," wrote R. H. Henry in *Editors I Have Known*, "and his trenchant pen was never silent when the interest of his country or party was at stake. He was a strict party man, and never flickered one jot or tittle during the dark days following the war, when so many Southern men were ready to go over to the enemy for the loaves and fishes offered them by the radical regime then in power. Horn stood steadfast, firm as the rocks of the mountains, immutable as the law of Moses."

About 1847 Horn married Rebecca S. Jackson (1827–ca. 1852), a native of Choctaw County, Ala., by whom he had a daughter, Ella, who married John McCloud of Wilcox County. On 26 Feb. 1854, at Quitman, he married his second wife Lizzie Blakeney, of Camden, who survived him and by whom he had four children: Jeremiah; Alexander Grice, Jr. (ca. 1858–ca. 1881); Ida, who died as a girl in Mobile; and Minnie, who died unmarried before 1886.

References:

R. H. Henry, *Editors I Have Known* (1922). ^[4]

Additional Resources:

Johnston, Hugh Buckner. "The James J. Barnes Bible of Edgecombe (now Wilson) Co., N.C." The North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal 9, no. 3 (August 1983). <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/north-carolina-genealogical-society-journal-1983-august-v.9-no.3/1176919> ^[5] (accessed May 2, 2014).

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Biographies ^[6]

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Authors:

Johnston, Hugh B., Jr. ^[9]

Origin - location:

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Wilson County ^[11]

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press. ^[12]

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