

2008 Virginia Women in History

PETITION OF THE NOTTOWAY INDIANS, SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA, TO THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

To the Uonorable the Sspeaker and House of Delegates

The petition of the undersigned, the female Chief, and others of the Nottoway tribe of Indians, in behalf, and with the assent of the whole tribe, convened in Council for that purpose, on the 27th. day of Oct. 1821 most respectfully represent and submits:

That the lands belonging to the said tribe are rendered in a great measure useless by their being held in common, which tenure takes away the main inducement to industry in the cultivation of them, derived from a certainty that the benefits to be received will leave a just proportion to the efforts made by each individual. It is found to be impossible to divide a common crop, made by a number of persons of various powers, and different Wills, so as to give to each a share strictly proportioned to the part taken in the labour performed, and in consequence of long continued dissatisfaction on that head, at length no crop at all is made

There is no longer any game worth pursuing on the lands of the said tribe, and the people are wholly unemployed. Their wants have taught them to consider the timber as the property of the individual who first finds and marks the tree; as the game formerly was of those who could first get possession of it. Each Indian is aloud to take on himself the power of selling the choice timber trees he may chance to find, and the whole, of what is of any value, must soon be destroyed.

That your Petitioners, while they solicit to have their lands divided amongst them, have no expectation of being admitted to the right of suffrage, although they are conscious they could never misuse it; and they will acquiesce readily in a limitation upon the power to alienate the land allotted to each, which may prevent the first, second, third and fourth holders, in succession, from selling more than one fourth part, each, of the quantity actually confirmed to each individual by the act of division; and allso if thought requisite they will be satisfied with an extension of the time of minority, among them, and their descendants, for a given number of years. Your Petitioners humbly solicit that a law may be passed containing provisions such as the Legislature in its Wisdom may deem most fit for the aforementioned purposes, and they will asr in duty bound, ever pray &c.

Done in presence of
TH: M. RANDOLPH
JNO. B RICHARDSON
JOSEPH DANFORTH

Wané Roonseraw or
his
Edith X Turner
mark
Karé hout or
her
Polly X Woodson
mark
WM: WOODSON
Te-res-ké or
his
Solomon X Rogers

mark

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(Docketed as received "Dec. 11th. 1821," referred to the Committee for Courts of Justice, then on Dec. 26. 1821 ordered to lie on the table, then "Rejeced "Jany 23d 1822.")

Source: General Assembly, Legislative Petitions, Southampton County (received 11 December 1821), Record Group 78, Library of Virginia.