

TRANSCRIPTION

James Petitioned the General Assembly, November 30, 1786

To the honorable the Speaker & gentlemen of the gen^l Assembly*,
The petition of James (a slave belonging to Will: Armistead of New Kent county) humbly sheweth: That your petitioner perswaded of the just right which all mankind have to Freedom, notwithstanding his own state of bondage, with an honest desire to serve this Country in its defence thereof, did, during the ravages of Lord Cornwallis thro' this state, by the permission of his master, enter into the service of the Marquiss Lafayette: That during the time of his serving the Marquiss he often at the peril of his life found means to frequent the British Camp, by which means he kept open a channel of the most useful communications to the army of the state: That at different times your petitioner conveyed inclosures, from the Marquiss into the enemies lines, of the most secret & important kind; the possession of which if discovered on him would have most certainly endangered the life of your petitioner: That he undertook & performed all commands with chearfulness & fidelity, in opposition to the persuasion & example of many thousands of his unfortunate condition. For proof of the above your petitioner begs leave to refer to the certificate of the Marquiss Lafayette hereto annexed, & after taking his case as here stated into consideration he humbly intreats that he may be granted that Freedom, which he flatters himself he has in some degree contributed to establish; & which he hopes always to prove himself worthy of: nor does he desire even this inestimable favor, unless his present master from whom he has experienced everything, which can make tolerable the state of slavery, shall be made adequate compensation for the loss of a valuable workman; which your petitioner humbly requests may be done & your petitioner shall ever pray &c.

*The writer of this document used the long or leading s, a character that looks similar to an “f” but is used as an “s.”

Citation: Legislative Petition for James, Slave Belonging to William Armistead, November 30, 1786, Box 179, Folder 10, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.