

# *State Response to Quaker Emancipation*

In the 1700s in North Carolina, it was illegal to free an enslaved person without special permission from the government. When the Quakers did so, their neighbors in Pasquotank County complained. This is the response from the General Assembly to that complaint.

The Report of the Committee for taking under consideration the Petition of the People of Pasquotank relative to the Slaves liberated by the Quakers

Your Committee having taken under consideration the petition of the people of Pasquotank relative to the Slaves – liberated by the quakers came to the following opinion – that the conduct of the said Quakers in setting their Slaves free at a time when our open & declared Enemies were endeavoring to bring about an insurrection of the Slaves was highly criminal & reprehensible and that it was also directly contrary to the known and Established Laws of the Country – That upon the late happy change in our government, the former Laws prohibiting the freeing of slaves, except under certain circumstances, could not be carried [out]...[in response] an act was passed at a Gen<sup>l</sup> Assembly held at Newbern the 8<sup>th</sup> day of April 1777...

In the House of Commons 27 January 1779

Concurred with

Thomas Benbury S:C [Speaker, House of Commons]

By Order John Hunt CHC [Clerk, House of Commons]

Report of the Committee...related to the Slaves liberated by the Quakers, General Assembly Session Records, Joint Select Committees, box 1, folder 8, State Archives of N.C.

# *Quaker Petition Regarding Emancipation*

To the next General Assembly of the State of North Carolina ~

The humble Petition of the standing Committee of the People called Quakers (for the Eastern Quarter). Respectfully sheweth, ~

That, whereas there Still remains to be in force a Law prohibiting the freedom of Slaves , intimating as though it was to distract the public Peace, or with an Intent to incite Domestic Insurrection ~

We do sincerely declare that we are free from every Intention of stirring up Strife or Bloodshed amongst our fellow Creatures, being we hope, Redeemed therefore, and brought, through the love of Christ Jesus our Lord to wish peace on Earth, and good will to Men. – And that it is from deliberate consideration and the Conviction of our minds that we are brought to believe that no Law, moral or Divine, hath given us any Right or absolute Prerogative over our fellow Creatures, so as to deprive them of Liberty and freedom for Life. ~

Also, being desirous to fulfill the Injunction of our Blessed Lord, “To do unto others as we would they should do unto us,” and knowing in ourselves, we would not willingly be in Bondage to any People whatever; in obedience to our great Master, we think it our Incumbent Duty to restore to them that **Natural Right** ~

Having this with great submission and simplicity, laid before you the Sole Motives by which we were Induced to set many free, and are thereby still Constrained to wish the freedom of those that yet remain in Bondage: We earnestly desire you will take these things in solid Consideration, and Repeal the acts which now prevent Freedom, tolerating such as may by any of our society receive Liberty to enjoy it, without danger of being again Reduced to Bondage, but be Deem’d as free People protected by Law ~

Signed by order & on Behalf of the sd Committee    the 14th day of the 3rd Month 1782 ~~

Levi Munden Clerk