

To the Honorable General Assembly of Virginia,

The Petition of Robert Wright a free man of Color resident in the County of Campbell respectfully sheweth:

That your petitioner in the year 1806 in pursuance of a licence obtained for that purpose from the Clerk of Campbell County, was married by a certain William Heath a regularly licensed minister of the Gospel, to a certain Mary Godsey, a free white woman—That since the said intermarriage your petitioner hath allways demeaned himself towards the said Mary as a kind and affectionate Husband—and for several years enjoyed great domestic comfort, and felicity in her society. That sometime in the year 1814 the said Mary became acquainted with a certain William Arthur a free white man, who by his artful, and insidious attentions entirely supplanted your petitioner in her affections—That on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of January 1815 the said Mary unknown to your petitioner secretly eloped with the said William Arthur carrying with her a negro Girl, and other property belonging to your petitioner—That on their route as is beleived to the western country they were overtaken in the Town of Liberty, your petitioner's property recovered, and the said Mary prevailed upon to return to the Home, and the Husband she had so ungratefully and cruelly abandoned—That notwithstanding this infidelity on the part of the said Mary, your petitioner after her return still continued to her that affection and protection which she had of right forfeited, and hoped that time, and a course of affectionate lenity on his part would reconcile her to her situation and restore her to Happiness—But in this just expectation your petitioner was disappointed—That the said Mary on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of November 1815 again secretly, and unknown to your petitioner eloped with the said William Arthur, and as your petitioner is credibly informed and verily beleives is now living in a state of adultery with the said Arthur in the Town of Nashville & state of Tennessee—That your petitioner is advised that although the Law inflicts a penalty on the minister of the Gospel who shall marry a white person with a negro or mulatto and subjects the white person so married to fine, and imprisonment, yet said marriage is to all intents and purposes valid, and binding between the parties—Your petitioner under the circumstances herein allready set forth, prays your Honorable Body for the passage of an act divorcing him from his said wife Mary and as in duty bound &ca.

Stephen Perrow

Charles Gilliam

Lewis Franklin

Campbell County to wit,

This day Lewis Franklin Steven Perrow and Charles Gilliam of lawful age personally appeared before me a Justice of the peace for the County aforesaid and made oath that they have examined the foregoing petition—that they have been well acquainted with the petitioner for many years past, being his neighbours, and that they have every reason to beleive, and do beleive that the material facts set forth in the said petition are true—that the said petitioner so far as their observation has extended has conducted himself with propriety, and that he allways treated his wife with kindness—They also beleive that the said Mary wife of the said Robert did elope in the way mentioned in said petition, and are credibly informed that she is now living in adultery with

the said William Arthur in Nashville Tennessee—Given under my Hand this 4 day of November 1816.

Tho Dixon J.P.

[*endorsed on reverse*]

Robert Wright's  
Petition

Novr. 16<sup>th</sup> 1816  
Rejected

[*attached*]

We the subscribers have been well acquainted with Robert Wright the petitioner in the annexed petition for many years past and do with pleasure certify that we consider him an honest, upright man, and good citizen—and we do further certify that from the best information we have been able to collect on the subject, his petition contains the truth.

Robert Strange  
Geo. G. Garnet  
W. Hannah  
William George  
Lindsay Crable  
Thos Helm  
P.W. [?]  
Ephram Gardner  
Sam Davidson  
Charles Fitch  
Stephen Martin  
Woodson Gannaway  
Joseph Burks  
[?] Dinwiddie

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John Dickey  
Stephen Bradley  
Henry Blankenship  
Bartlet Baugh  
John Hay  
Elijah Garvin  
Yong Davidson  
John Stratton  
Nealey Campbell  
Thomas Duvall  
Robert Bagby  
John [?]  
Re[?]

Subscribers' names  
John H. Bell  
Jno. [?]  
John B. Roy  
Charles D. [?]  
Wm. L. Bell

Petition of Robert Wright, "a free man of color." 16 November 1816. Manuscript. Virginia General Assembly, Legislative petitions of the General Assembly, Petition of Robert Wright, Campbell County. State Government Records Collection, The Library of Virginia. 12-1078-001 thru 004

Jno. Thompson  
Daniel Davis  
R.G. Hallen  
John Franklin S.L.  
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James Miller  
John Davis Jr.  
John Bryan Jr.  
Arch[?] Williamson  
James Wiley

Hezekiah Hargrove  
William Thurmon  
M.B. Nowlin