

To the Assistant Commissioner,
Bureau Refugees, Freedmen
& Abandoned Lands, State of N.C.,
Raleigh—

Sir: The undersigned freedmen, old citizens of Currituck County, State of North Carolina, born and reared upon Roanoke Island, humbly complaining respectfully sheweth—

That there is a disposition on the part of those whose lands have been restored to them by Maj. Gen. Howard to do the undersigned and those for whom they act injustice—in that the aforesaid owners of lands refuse to allow the petitioners to remain upon the land so restored notwithstanding the fact that the undersigned offer to pay rent or express a desire to purchase lots.

As before stated, born and reared here, the undersigned know only how to make a living by fishing, fowling and "propping"—these being their means of support from their youth to the present day. They are not farmers: this is a sterile section, consequently, but little attention has been paid to agriculture. This being the case, the undersigned, if driven to the necessity of leaving their old home, around which cluster many pleasant recollections—would be able to earn but a poor living, being inexperienced laborers on a farm. The undersigned are sure that you will sympathize with them. They know not what to do in the matter, neither do they know where to go—indeed they here ask whether they shall be made to leave their birth-place, merely to gratify the whims of men who are not well-affected towards the government of the United States.

They therefore ask that you will take such action in this matter as will insure the undersigned justice—protect them in everything they may do in a lawful manner, or rather, see to it, that, by paying reasonable rent, they will be permitted to reside where it is their wish to spend their days, and "when life's fitful fever's over," lay their bones to mingle with the dust of their childhood's home.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

Joseph X Tillett

Jno. Franklin X Tillett

Francis X Tillett Sr.

Henry X Ashbee

George X W. Bowzer

John X Tyler

George X Baum

James X Baum

Ernest X Tillett

James D. X Midget

Sam'l X Midgett

Riley X Midgett

Edward X Wise

Zachary X Taylor

Benjamin X Mann

Moses X Madre

For themselves and other old resident freedmen of Roanoke Island, N.C.
December 4th, 1866

[Marginal note: Witness to the marks of all petitioners Mr B. Gilbert]

[Joseph Tillett et al. to the Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 4 December 1866, Letters and Orders Received, Reports, and Supply Requests, Roanoke Island, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for North Carolina, Record Group 105, series 2821, National Archives.]