

To the Hon Senate and House of Representatives  
in General Court assembled,

The undersigned, people of colour, inhabitants of the  
island of Chappequiddic, in the State of Massa-  
chusetts, respectfully ask leave to represent,

That we are laboring under difficulties and  
embarrassments which are exceedingly onerous and  
burdensome and which it is entirely out of our power  
to remedy. Being lone women with no friendly hand to  
assist us in our troubles, and our legal Guardian having  
<sup>no authority</sup> to lend <sup>an</sup> ear to our entreaties, we are constrained to make  
~~our~~ complaint to the Legislature, hoping that some little  
heed will be given to our petition.

The Gen<sup>l</sup> Court, at their session last winter, very  
kindly appropriated \$.2000, for the building a fence among  
us. It seems that some have obtained a large portion of  
fencing stuff, making many subdivisions of their land,  
while we are turned off with a scanty share, with our land  
not even fenced against the public highways. And we  
would here observe that those who have been the most fa-  
vored are not natives of the soil, but full blooded Africans,  
while your petitioners are genuine descendants of the  
Aborigenes. Some of us have been cut short of our quantity  
of land, because we were not able to employ a surveyor at  
three dollars per day to run out the boundaries. New roads  
have been made, without any legal authority, across our  
little territory, which is now as much exposed to the inroads  
of cattle and sheep, as before the said appropriation  
was made. This renders it impossible for us to  
get a living by tilling the soil, and some of us  
leave not planted our grounds for the last two  
of three years.

The division fence, between the  
colored people and the whites, which was built in  
such good order some twenty-four years since  
where Daniel Fellows Esq. was our Guardian, has  
hardly been touched from that time to the present,  
and is now in a very dilapidated condition,  
and almost entirely useless. This is the cause  
of much inconvenience and expense, subjecting  
some of us to the necessity of hiring a pasture for  
our sheep &c. while our own lands are unoccupied.  
The law requiring the Guardian to cause said fence to  
be erected has never been repealed: but it is out of  
our power to do any thing, save making complaint  
the Legislature.

One of your petitioners is owner of a Cranberry Swamp,  
from some twenty or more bushels of Cranberries are some –

times obtained. This crop has been wholly cut off by water being let in upon it by some of our white neighbors. Such a loss to her little income, she is not able to sustain, and no mode of redress being open to her, she now ventures to make complaint to the Legislature for relief. This same water runs into another swamp belonging to another of your petitioners, preventing her from digging peat.

Your Petitioners therefore, are exceedingly anxious that the Legislature should authorize some one or more persons to make enquiry concerning our causes of complaint; with power to make such alterations in the present state of things as they shall deem right and proper. And we would suggest, if it meet your approval, that our former Guardian, Daniel Fellows Esq. be the person appointed, or should there be more than one, that he be chairmen of the said board. For we are fully persuaded that had he continued in said office of Guardian until the present day, none of the above causes of complaint would have occurred. And as in duty bound will ever pray –

Chappequidic  
Feb<sup>y</sup> 15. 1853



Margaret Peters  
Eleanor Joseph  
Hannah K Ross  
Ferebea Harris  
his  
William x Johnson  
mark  
her  
Martha x Johnson  
mark

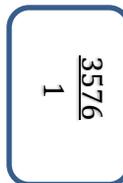
[ verso:

Petition of Margaret Peters and others inhabitants of the "Island of Chappequidick," asking for the interposition of the Legislature in the protection of their rights and privileges –

House of Reps Mar 2<sup>d</sup>. 1853

Referred to the Committee on the  
Judiciary – Mr Schoaler Clerk  
presented by Mr Keniston of Edgartown

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