

To the honorable the Council and Houfe of  
Representatives of the State of Mafsachufetts Bay,  
In General Court Asembled

The Petition of a Number of Inhabitants of the Town  
of Chilmark, on the Ifland of Martha's Vineyard and  
in the County of Dukes County.

Humbly Sheweth, That the faid Ifland of Martha's  
Vineyard (aspecially the weftern Part therof, where your  
Petitioners refide, & where there is a Road for Shipping)  
is by its Situation, at leaft, as much expofed to the Enemy  
now pofsefled of Rhode Ifland; as the Iflands called Eliza=  
beth Iflands, in the fame Town. For the Protection of which  
laft mentioned Iflands, much greater<sup>^(tho' we do not think too great)</sup> Provifion is made  
than for the Protection of Martha's Vineyard: when this  
laft named Ifland is of much greater Value in itfelf &  
of vaftly greater Importance to the Public than the  
others. There being on Elizabeth Iflands, but feventeen Families  
and about one hundred Souls; when there are on Martha's Vine=  
yard at leaft five hundred Families and about 2750 Souls:  
exclusive of Indians living by themfelves. And this laft  
named Ifland is alfo much better accommodated, [ *crossout* ] than  
Elizabeth Iflands, with Harbors and Roads for fhipping.  
By Means of which Harbors of Martha's Vineyard, and  
a few Soldiers there Stationed, with the Pilots and other In=  
habitants of faid Ifland; a very large part of the many  
rich Prizes taken from the Enemy during the prefent  
War, have ( after they have waited fometime time in faid  
Harbors for a fair Wind, & for an Opportunity to pro=  
ceed to the Port to which they were bound, without  
Danger of being intercepted by the Enemy) fafely arrived  
either at Dartmouth or Providence or at fome other  
Place, where they might be difcharged of their Cargo.  
All which Advantages accruing to this and other ~~Amer~~  
American States from the Harbors of Martha's  
Vineyard while that Ifland remains in the  
Pofsefion of Friends to the common Caufe of  
thefe States; will not only be loft to this and the  
others States on the neighbouring Continent: if faid  
Ifland or it's Harbors fhould be pofsefled by the Enemy:  
but the Advantage the Enemy will hereby gain  
will, perhaps, be no lefs pernicious to the Navigation  
of thefe States, than the Pofsefion of that Ifland  
& it's Harbors hath hitherto been advantageous thereto

[verso:

On which Accounts your Petitioner ( with great Deference and Submission to your Honors superior Wisdom & Judgment) do presume to declare that they apprehend it to be of great Importance, not only to the Inhabitants of Martha's Vineyard; but also to this and other American States, that it be kept from falling into the Hands of their Enemies. But this, without further Protection from your Honors, we see no way to prevent. for we apprehend this Island to be in great Danger of such an Attack from the Enemy, as the Inhabitants thereof ~~with the five & twenty Soldiers remaining there;~~ will not be able to withstand. For the Number of Men, on this Island, able to bear Arms hath of late been greatly diminished & is still diminishing by their flipping themselves on board of continental & other Cruizers against the Enemy; and also by the Inlisting of some others in the continental Army. And we are also, not a little, weakened by our Disagreement in Opinion, with Respect to the most proper Course we can take for our Safety. For while your Petitioners, with many other Inhabitants of this Island, are fully satisfied that the present War [ *blot* ] is, on the American Side, just & necessary; And are far from being afraid to declare this openly; and are ready to exert themselves <sup>to the Utmost</sup> in every suitable way, in support of the American Cause [ *blot* ] There are yet (we are sorry to find ground to say it) some <sup>here</sup> who have manifested, at least, a Doubt of our being in the Right, in taking up Arms and fighting against the Forces of the King of great Britain. And they with others have openly expressed a Belief that Britian will conquer & subdue America, & have labored to infuse such a Belief into others; and whatever Effect this hath had, it is a certain Matter of Fact, that there is a considerable number of Men here, who appear to be very doubtful which Side will finally overcome and obtain what they are contending and fighting for; and who therefore chuse to be as still & inactive as possible, in the present Contest, <sup>and</sup> are accordingly averfe to doing anything towards the Defending of this Island by others. To which Principle we impute it, That when ten Freeholders of this Town, by a writing under their Hands, - lately requested the Selected Men to call a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town to consider and determine what it was proper for them to do for their Safety in this Time of Danger: This Request was not complied with By which Means we found ourselves obliged to petition your Honors, in the way we do, as Individuals subscribing our Names hereto. In short, we wish that your Honors might have a just and full Conception of the Danger this Island is in, by Means of its exposed situation ( while the Enemy is so powerful & <sup>no</sup> further than about twelve leagues Dis-

ance therefrom ) when it is in so weak & defenceless a state,  
as it now is: & also of what Importance it is that it be  
kept from falling into the Hands of the Enemy.  
A true Representation hereof we have here given –  
But not so full & clear a Representation as to convey  
to your Honors such an Idea of the State ~~of the State of~~  
this Island with respect to the present American Trou-  
bles as your Honors would have if you had been some-  
-time resident here. And with

[folio 2:

90 with Regard to the State of this Island which we  
have represented; The Prayer of your Petitioners  
is: That no such Measure may be adopted to keep the  
stock on said Island from falling into the Hands  
of the Enemy as that of removing it [ *crossout* ]  
to some other Place . For if nothing better than this  
can be done with the Stock belonging to Martha's –  
Vineyard; to what a State of Wretchedness must the  
owners thereof be reduced! For if their Stock be remo-  
ved, where will they find Pasture or Hay for it? And if for  
want hereof they are obliged to sell it; where will they  
find Buyers who will give them any thing near the Va=  
lue thereof? And as, in this way, the People of this Island  
would be likely to suffer almost a total loss of their  
Stock; they would suffer also, for a Time <sup>at least</sup> ( and who knows  
for how long a time?) The Loss of their Houses and Lands,  
Which they must desert. For without Stock they will receive no  
Benefit from their Land, as without Stock oxen they will not be able to  
till it. And if this Island be forsaken by its Inhabitants; It will (with=  
out such a Protection as would be now sufficient for its Defence) in all  
Probability, be taken possession of by the Enemy: And how detriment=  
tl this would be to this the neighboring States, as hath been shown;  
no Men may be taken from hence to serve as Soldiers elsewhere. For as said Island,  
when all the Men now thereon continue there, is so weak & defenceless; how im=  
proper a Thing must it be, if it can be avoided, still further to weaken it, by taking  
Men from thence, where they are so much needed? And besides, how greatly must  
it distress a Man, who has a Wife & several small children or aged feeble Pa=  
rents to take care of; to be compelled to hazard his life in War, at a great Dis=  
tance from them and leave them in a Place so exposed, as this is, to the out=  
ragious Hostilities of the Enemy; when by continuing with them he might  
afford them some Help & Protection. What we have offered, we pray your Ho=  
nors to take into your Wise consideration; And intreat that besides suffering  
the men here to continue in this Place; Your Honors Would be pleased to  
send such number of Men to this Island for its Protection, as you Honors,  
in your great Wisdom shall judge proper and that your Honors would af=  
ford for the Protection of Elizabeth Islands, at least, an equal number of Men  
to that which was last stationed there; And your Petitioners as in Duty bound  
shall ever pray &c

Sam <sup>el</sup> Hillman	Benjamin Hillman	Jofeph Mayhew
William Tilton	Benj <sup>a</sup> Bafsett	Cornelius Bafsett
Jofeph Mayhew ju <sup>r</sup>	Richard Hillman	Samuel Mayhew
Benjamin Hatch	James Norton ju <sup>r</sup>	John Bafsett
Abner Mayhew	David Hillman	Timothy Mayhew
Mark Mayhew	Jonathan Bafsett	Simon Mayhew
Thomas Hillman	Josiah Mayhew	John Hillman
Samuel Mayhew Jun <sup>r</sup>		Nathaniel nickerfon
Samuel Norton		James Norton
Silas Bafsett		John Cottle
Jethro Mayhew		John Cottle J <sup>un</sup>
Fort. <sup>n</sup> Bafsett		Robert Hillman
Jofeph Bafsett		Benj. <sup>a</sup> Hillman J <sup>ur</sup>
		Abner Hillman
		John Mayhew

[verso:

In the Houfe of Reprerentatives March 24. 1777

Read together with the Petition of the Committee of the  
Town of Tifbury & thereupon Ordered That  
Brig Danielfon. Cap<sup>t</sup> Cobb & Coll Reed  
with fuch as the Hon Board fhall  
join to be a Committee to take  
the fame under confideration  
& report

Coll Reed  
Cap<sup>t</sup> Cobb  
Brig Danielfon

Sent up for Concurrence  
J Warren Spk<sup>r</sup>

In Council March 24' 1777 Read and  
Concurred and W<sup>m</sup> Seaver & Walter Spooner  
& Dan.<sup>l</sup> Davis Esq.<sup>rs</sup> are joined

Jn.o Avery Dpt<sup>y</sup> Sec<sup>y</sup>

Martha's Vineyard  
Petition