

## The Ten Thousand Name Petition\*

Transcribed by  
Jean Pickett Hall\*\*

*Although many of the colonial records have been destroyed, it is possible to document petitions regarding various aspects of religious freedom in the Journal of the House of Burgesses<sup>1</sup> beginning with the 1770 petition by the Baptists for relief from being restricted to preaching in particular meeting houses. In 1772 petitions from Baptists in Amelia, Caroline, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg and Sussex requesting equal treatment under the Toleration Act are also noted in the Journal. A number of other petitions followed. These culminated in a 10,000 name petition which, though proposed and circulated by the Baptists, was signed by a number of individuals of other faiths. Although places of residence are not listed in the 10,000 name petition, most pages appear to begin with the signature of a minister or other church official. We will identify those we can connect with a certain church or county; information regarding the identity of any of the names in the petition is solicited and will be published in the introductions to this continuing series.*

*We begin with two shorter petitions, one from the Baptist Church at Occoquan in Prince William County and the second (in three parts) from the Disenters from the Church of England in the counties of Albemarle, Amherst and Buckingham. The Ten Thousand Name Petition follows these. A study of the original indicates that it was composed of many smaller petitions all of which apparently had the same wording. The wording of the petition was cut off and each petition's signatures was pasted to the first creating a continuous roll with ten thousand signatures.*

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\* Religious Petitions Presented to the General Assembly of Virginia, 1744-1802, Legislative Petitions, Archival and Information Services Division, Library of Virginia.

\*\* Richmond, Va. Mrs. Hall is VGS Historian and a frequent contributor to the magazine.

<sup>1</sup> John Pendleton Kennedy, editor, *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1770-1772* (Richmond, Va.: Virginia State Library, 1906).

[The first petition is the October 12, 1776, petition from the meeting of the Convention from the Baptist Church at Occoquan in Prince William County:]  
 To the honourable Speaker; and other Members of the honourable Convention of Virginia, the petition of a Baptist Church at Occoquan, Pr. William County, hereby sheweth That whereas this Colony with others, is now contending for the civil rights and liberties of mankind against the enslaving schemes of a powerful Enemy. We being convinced, that the strictest unanimity among ourselves is very necessary in this most critical conjunction of public affairs; and that every remaining cause of animosity and diversion may if possible be removed, have thought it our duty as peaceable Christians, to petition for several religious privileges which as yet, we have not been indulged with in this part of the World. Viz. 1. That we be allowed to worship God in our own way, without interruption. 2. That we be allowed to maintain our own Ministers &c. and no other. 3. That we and our friends who desire it, may be married, buried and the like, without paying the Parsons of any other denomination. These things granted we will gladly unite with our Brethren of other denominations, and to the utmost of our ability promote the common cause of Freedom, always praying for our welfare & success.

In behalf of the Church, this 19th day of May 1776.

John Peak	Thos Bland	Sammuel Conner
John Hampton	James Walden	William Williams
Nicholas Anderson	Charles Smith	John King
James Peak	[second column]	James Smith
Edward Williams	Thos Dowel	Thos. Smith
Danniel Mackintosh	Peter Cotrel	Robert Bird
Wm Haney	Richard Renfrey	Joseph Hampton
John Harper	Wm Bird	Jesse Calvert
Obed Calvert Senr	Rolley Calvert	Jeremiah Dowell
Obed Calvert Junr	Wm Darvel	[third column]
John White	Danniel Peak	John Brent
Mordacai Kelley	Vincen Cooksey	Robt Mosley
Hammond Morris	Wm Mills	John Ham[torn]
John Knight	John Moon	[Pton Gwin]
John Reid	Wm Jacobs	Gilbert Roland
Daniel Barnet	Jesse Peak	John Chesser
John Dowel	[OsBorn] Bland	
Thos Rookard	William Calvert	