

***PETITION FROM THE INHABITANTS OF
BRITISH WEST FLORIDA
(after 1778)***

To The Kings Most excellent Majesty In Council

The Humble Petition and Memorial of the Gentlemen, Freeholders and Principal Inhabitants of the Province of West Florida.

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects the Gentlemen, Freeholders, and Principal Inhabitants, of Your Province of West Florida, beg leave to Approach the Throne and assure your Majesty of our most dutiful regard to your Royal Person, Family and Government.

We hold in Abhorrence the present Unnatural and unparalleled Rebellion, raging in Our Neighbouring Colonies, with its leaders and Abettors. From its origin, We have, in many Instances, severely felt its fatal Effects which mingled with the Bad Police, and mismanagement of Peter Chester Esquire Your Governor of this Province has worked itself into a System, nearly subversive of our Liberties with the loss of this Your Province.

Conscious of Your Majesty's Paternal Care, and in expectation of Redress, we have long lamented with Melancholly silence, our heavy Grievances, fearful that our Complaints might give your Majesty Umbrage at a Period when your Royal Mind was so much engaged in bringing your ungrateful revolted subjects to a sense of their Duty

We now, Acknowledge that Your Majesty hath surpassed even our most sanguine Hopes, in providing for our safety. And by your Benignity, removed the gloomy Prospect which had so long been fatal to our Interests, Quietude and Peace of mind.

We Therefore beg leave to assure Your Majesty of our dutiful sense of your late paternal Care, and in the most humble manner to return your Majesty our most sincere Thanks, for sending the Troops now arrived here, for our aid, Safety and defense.

But after all your Majesty's goodness, and Condescension--We labor under Misfortunes, which you are unacquainted with. And which we must now Communicate to your Royal Ear: in full expectation of Redress of past Grievances, and to prevent the like in time to come.

We have beheld, with Indignation, for years past, Peter Chester Esquire, your Governor of this Province, exercising unwarrantable Powers in various shapes, in this Infant Colony,

under the direction of an all-ruling Favorite, his Private Secretary Philip Livingston Junior Esquire; a man of suspicious Principles, whose Father, and Whole Numerous Family are now in actual Rebellion. Governor Chester hath in many Instances, not only acted contrary to your Royal Instructions, but in a Legislative and judicial Capacity in many overt acts of oppression violated the Rights and Liberties of your People and brought upon them their late Calamities which he might easily have prevented.

It would be too tedious and unbecoming of us, to give your Majesty a Detail of the Minutes of his Faults. But we beg leave to confine ourselves to, and enumerate, those of a deeper Dye which immediately affect your Majesty's Honor and Interest, alike with the well-being of your unhappy People, over whom he at present presides.

We would not dare, Sire, to impose upon You; We would not Venture to Complain thro malice, or upon Report: No, we complain from our own Feelings—from our repeated Sufferings, from what, to our sorrow We have experienced. And tho' We want Language to describe our Grievances, we are at no loss for Proofs to support our Charges.

Governor Chester, in almost every Instance, since his Arrival here, hath abused your Majesty's Instructions in Granting Land without consulting the Council.

He hath Granted many Tracts of Valuable Land to his Favorites, upon Fictitious Titles, and signed the Patents out of Council, and, in direct Contradiction to your Royal Proclamation of 1763, often granted Land to the same individual Person as a Reduced Ensign-Reduced Lieutenant-Reduced Captain of one of your Majesty's Regiments of Foot; when it was notoriously known, and Governor Chester, in particular, well knew, that such individual had never been reduced at all.

He hath in a Number of Instances, abused Your Royal Proclamation of 1763, by Granting Lands to reduced Officers of all Ranks, some of who have been, and are now here, and to others who never were, or will be here; and to whom he well knew Land had been Granted, in abuse of your said Proclamation, in other Provinces of America.

He hath, through Pique and Prejudice, refused to Grant Land to some Persons who were confessedly(?), and by his own Promise, intitled thereunto who have been obliged to sell their Rights to some of his own Creatures or Dependants, or some Person who had Interest enough with him to obtain a Grant thereof to the great Prejudice of the first Petitioner.

He hath in a variety of Instance, Granted Land to many Provincial Military Officers of all Ranks of Corps never embodied, and to Provincial Militia Officers, in the same Proportion as to regular Officers reduced in Your Majesty's service, under sanction of your said Proclamation of 1763, in Order to enrich his Private Secretary who had before hand agreed for, and purchased such vague claims and Titles for a Contemptible Consideration.

He hath also Granted Land to many Land and sea officers, under the Denomination of Reduced Officers, serving in America Last War who either were not reduced, or never

served in America, particularly to his Son, a Captain in Your Majesty's service who never was reduced nor ever saw America.

He hath at the Instigation of his Private Secretary, Mr Livingston, refused to Grant Land to any Individual Soldier, or Non Commissioned Officer, entitled thereunto, without the Exorbitant Fees of Office first paid down, and then they have been obliged to sell their Rights for the Value of a few days pay, to his Creatures or Dependants who by their Cajoling or threats have obtained the joint Title Deeds of Twenty thirty or forty at a Time.

He hath under sanction of your late Royal Instructions, (to Grant Land to such of your Subjects as should from Principles of Loyalty be obliged to fly from the Rebel Colonies and take Refuge in this) Granted Land to several Person then, and now in actual Rebellion, and in particular to Peter Van Brugh Livingston, the Father of his Secretary Philp Livingston Junior, late President of the Rebel Provincial Congress of New York, and then, and now a Notorious Rebel.

Govenor Chester hath Granted to himself privately a large Tract of Land reserved(?) by the Surveyor General and Engineer of the Province for your Majesty's Forts and Fortifications which neither his own low Cunning nor his Secretary's interested ingenuity could frame or devise the least Plausible Pretence for, unless under the Denomination of a Reduced Brigade Major in Ireland, and office to which he never was so much as named, or if he had, by no menas under the Proclamation-and after signing a Warrant of Survey of a Tract of remarkable fine Land to a certain Valeris Stephen Comyn, he by the most flagrant Breach of Faith, Granted the said Tract of Land privately to himself.

He hath Granted large tracts of Land in the Names of upwards of Fifty Military Persons, and others, who never existed, but in the Avarious Imagination of his Secretary, who by falsemeans obtained the Patents.

He hath for secret services (as they are termed) granted large Tracts of Land, to the said Philip Livingston, who by such Grants, and those before mentioned, with what he hath bought for the consideration of Exorbitant and Illegal Fees of Office, is now actually possessed of upwards of 100,000 acres of Land in this Province, besides what he hath already disposed of, for valuable considerations.

From the iniquitous manner in which all the best of your Majesty's Lands in this Provice have been disposed of-and a Doctrine industriously propagated that when your Majesty's Provincial Broad seal is once affixed a Patent (tho contrary to your Majesty's Royal Instructions it cannot be vacated-Many of your Majesty's Liege and most industrious and oppulent subjects have by Purchas, under such precarios Titles, been imposed upon, and think themselves unsafe, either to pay the consideration Money, as yet unpaid, or to make advatagious Improvements on the said Land.

To add to these enormous Crimes, Governor Chester hath raised his own and secretary's, with the Attorney General's, Fees, to upwards of Twenty Dollars per thousand acres, in

every Patent, exceeding one thousand acres, over and above the moderate Fees established by George Johnstone Esquire, your first Governor of this Province. And he has, to his Reproach, and the Distress of Individuals, tripled the former fees in every Office, where he and his Secretary Act Officially or Judicially, and in many cases Particularly in the Prerogative, invented and established new and unheard of Fees, for himself and secretary.

Out of the L1000 paid yearly by your Majesty's Treasury for Indian Presents, it is well known that Governor Chester hath for several Years past cloathed his own and Mr Livingston's Plantation Negroes, and furnished them with all necessary Tools and Instruments; and, in Order to Pass his Accounts, hath given large quantitys of Indian Goods in Loan to supply Merchants Trading to the Indian Country, and in return recieves his Family Necessarys. Money or Bills of Exchange and in Order to Ballance his Account of the Indian Fund he allows himself yearly a sum to defray the Expences of Entertaining Indian Warriors and Chiefs whom he never saw or invited.

Governor Chester hath entirely frustrated your Majesty's benevolent Intention inkeeping in constant pay, and well manned and equipped a vessel for the Public Use of Government, for which he has had ever since his coming to this Government and Annual Allowance of L300 and in the space of nine years, and upwards, has only employed one, for about fourteen months, and the greatest part of that time used her in carrying his own, and Secretary's Negroes, Cloathing, Provisions, Tools, and Implements to their Plantations. And then, upon an Emergency, by the advices of the Majority of his Council, sent her with Dispatches to the Governor of Jamaica, when in the Course of the Voyage, by the Ignorance of the Master, and some accidents, she contracted a Debt of Thirteen Hundred Dollars, which the Governor paid to himself out of the Contingent Fund, then sold the Vessel; and , in the abovementioned space of Nine years, has actually Pocketed the sum of L 2700, to the great Prejudice of Emigrants, who had obtained Grants of Land upon the Rivers Amit and Mississippi, and were obliged for want of opportunities, and oftern for want of money, to pay their Passages, to remain in real Distress, at Pensacola, till accident favored their Departure.

Governor Chester allows himself L50 per annum as Clerk of his Public Accounts and hathfilled many of the most respectable Public Offices, with his own Creatures and Dependants, men of no Principles, and mean circumstances. And his Private Secretary has held, for several years, and now holds, by himself or Deputies no less than Nine Publick Offices-Vizt Provincial Secretary-Deputy Clerk of the Council-Clerk of the Court of Ordinary-Clerk of the Patents-Clerk of the Legislative Council-Collector of the Customs at Mobile-Notary Publick and by a violent stretch of Power, hath assumed the Right of Takeing Proof of all Instruments recorded in his Offices-and until lately, that your Majesty was pleased to appoint your Receiver General, Mr Livingston acted as such, for several years under Governor Chester's appointment, and in that time received near L1000 Fines and Forfeitures due to your Majesty, which he now refuses to account for, or pay to your Reciever General under pretence that Governor Chester allowed him to retain several Hundered Pounds of it for his own private services, and the remainder, as he says, has been laid out and Expended for Publick uses as yet undiscovered by the Public.-In these Offices

Mr Livingston has exacted such enormous Fees, and acted with such unheard of rapacity, that the Offices are become a Public Nuisance and Terror.

Governor Chester, as a Chancellor, has exhibited the strongest Marks, not only of Incapacity for such a high office, but the highest Proof, in two Instances, of his Malignity, in Determining and giving Decrees contrary to Evidence, and the clear and invariable Rules of Equity and Justice.

He lately allowed James Willing and Oliver Pollock, two Notorious Rebels, to recover Money in the Law Courts here, and upon application refused to Grant an Injunction to stay Execution, that the money might not be applied to their Use, or remitted to them at New Orleans.

Governor Chester hath lately filled up several vacant seats in Council with Military Officers, most of whom are totally ignorant of Civil Matters, unacquainted with the Interests of the Province, and strangers to it Agriculture and Commerce.

When the Vessels Cargoes Goods and Effects of Many of Your Majesty's Liege Subjects, were, in the year 1777, rapaciously seized in the River Mississippi, and at New Orleans, by Order of Don Galvez, then and now Governor of Louisiana, Contrary to the Treaties and good Faith then subsisting between Your Majesty and the King of Spain, and contrary to the Law of Nations, Governor Checter through timid Delay and Purdanimity allowed the same to be confiscated and when too late, sent two of his Council to Demand Restitution, which was treated with buffing insolences and contempturus recrimination.

He hath for many years past, avoided calling assemblies for fear his own, and his Favorites Conduct should be inquired into and ? to public view. And when at last, roused by his Fears to call an Assembly, after disfranchising two of the Towns formerly represented and throwing every obstruction in the way of Business, he wantonly daringly and illegally adjourned it for ten Months, contrary to every Parliamentary or Assembly Practice or Precedent.

Tho' Governor Chester had repeated accounts and the best intelligence of the design and approach of the Rebel Party which invaded and over-run the Frontiers of this Province in the Beginning of 1778, he effected a disbelief thereof and contrary to the advice of the Friends of Government refused to raise or send away Troops for the Defence of the Distressed Inhabitants, till being afraid of his own Personal safety, and to prevent the Enemy from advancing to the Metropolis he comented to raise and send a small Body of Troops, whom he would scarcely arm and afterwards refused to pay. His Pusilanimity on the Occasion encouraged the Governor of Louisiana to treat some of your Majesty's Officers with a haughty contempt and to aid and supply the Rebels who for a long time resided at, and annoyed this Province from New Orleans.

Tho Governor Chester had not the Spirit to Demand Restitution of the Negroes and Property of your Loyal Subjects seized by the Rebels, and sold under the Eye of the

Governor of New Orleans for the benefit of the Rebel Congress, yet he and his Secretary had the address by some Private Treaty, to have all their own Negroes restored to them. Tho under the same Predicament with those sold or not returned.

Governor Chester hath on every occasion obstructed the good designs of those who exerted their Power to save the Province; and by his scanty supplying the Troops at the out Posts with arms and Provisions and, lately, Protesting the Bills drawn by the commanding officers at Manchack and Natches, for Necessary supplies, he hath hurt the Credit of Government and greatly prejudiced your Majesty's service.

He hath drawn for, and transmitted a species of Vouchers signed by his Secretary Mr Livingston, for the L1000. Granted by your Government for the use of Loyal Refugess, but how the same has been disposed of, or whether agreeable to the benevolent design and Intention of Government, is a secret not likely to be divulged as there is no Instance among the many loyal Refugees now here in great distress, and almost starving who have ever received any benefit from or part of that Fund.

He hath, lately, invested a man of Visient(?) Passions, implacable in his Enmity, and resentment, and of suspicious Principles with the Chief civil and Military Command at Natchez, and commissioned several of his adhorents of the same Principles under him to the great annoyance of Your Majesty's liege Subjects the settlers there who have already felt the Effects of his Tryanny and are daily flying for Refuge to the Spanish side of the River Mississippi where tho under an absolute Government, they meet with every encouragement.

These may it Please your Majesty are some of the many Grievances that Your loyal Subjects of this Province have for several Years past felt, and are now groaning under from the Despotic Disposition of a weak minded, avaricious Tryant, the present Governor of this Province.

Former Complaints, against Governor Chester, were the Complaints of Individuals--But now the whole Body of your People, the Community, suffer,-It is their complaint-They expect a gracious hearing and are ready and prepared to support and prove every Charge adduced against your Governor-But in the mean time, they most humbly beg and intreat, Your Majesty, for the Quiet, the Peace of mind and welfare of all your loyal Subjects, for the safety of this Your Province, that you will be pleased immediately to recal Governor Chester and in his place and stead, appoint and Commission such a Man, to Govern Your People as may in every respect be agreeable to your Majesty's Wisdom; and by so doing you will daily have the additional Blessings of a then happy People who as they now do, will for ever love and revere your Person Family and Government.

Pensacola

Adam Chrystie

John McGillivray

James Dallas

John Miller

James Amoss	Robt Montgomerie	William Ogilvy	George Aikman
Geo Alexander	Edward Taylor	Jno Falconer	Wm Wilton
Wm Garden	Thom Walters Jr	John Campbell	James Murray
John Morison	W Mackinnon	Robert Donald	John Dawson
David McCulloch	John Wheeler	Joseph Gibb	Geo Barnes
James ?	Will Fraser	James Allison	Peter Smith
James Main	Wm Thompson	John Reedhead	Dunn Cameron
Joseph Penhorn	William Clark	James Bunyie	Alexr Begbie
Huberd Rees	John Parker	Charles Grant	Lachlane mcGillivray
Richd Jones	Robert Meech	John Mackenzie	John Moore
Thomas Sears	Alexander Moore	Anthl Camuse	Humphl Grant
Francis Moore	David Holms	Alex Cameron	Mathew Marshall
Benjm Gower	John Randon	William Duncan	George Ritchie
Francis Lewis	John Hench	James Barnard	Thre Benoist

George Nowlan	Jean Trouillet	Thos Pashley	Daniel Mortimer
Henry Legg	Bertrand Nicolas	Barnard Richardson	Antoine Nicolas X
Cha Walker	Cornelius McCartin	Jno A Auston	Roger Moore
Louis Carriere	Joseph Lavis	Dond McPherson	William Pountney
John McIntosh	William Burnet	Walter Turnbull	Aug Rochon
Thos Graham	Samuel Hickenbotham X	James Frazer	Peter Harrison
Charles Roberts	Joel Walker	Jas McGillivray	Finley McGillivray X
James Gun	John McIntosh	William Riddle	Robert McGillivray
John Gilchrist X	George Heil	Benjamin Allen X	Jno Ellis
David White X	John Jackson X	Benja Horn X	Farquhar McGillivray
Lachlan McGillivray	Hyam Solomons	Jean Favre	Benjamin James

Stephen Kemp X	Abraham Mayes	Favre Fis	Russel Jones
Jacob Schneider	Sammuel Loyd	Andrew Mathews	Jacob Harrell
Claud Laflo X	Ferqr Bethune	Tho Baskitt	Thomas Pierce
Francois Laflo X	Mark Flood	Jmes Hoggatt	Daviel Bruner
William Carney	George Smith	John Turnbull	William Weve
John Gairdner X	John Dallas	Hardey Perry	Alexr McIntosh
Charles Beeks X	Will Ferguson	John Gretion	John Morris

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