



**Letter from Richard D. Bayly regarding the emancipation of slaves in Virginia.** From the PAS Collection's Incoming Correspondence 1820-1849.

Drummond Town Accomack County Virg<sup>a</sup> Dec 16, 1820

Dear Sir,

From the opinion I have formed of your Philanthropy & Benevolence I am disposed to believe that you would willingly aid any individual who from a sense of duty (or any other honorable motive) would wish to emancipate his slaves under such an impression I have taken the liberty of addressing to you this letter and hope that the multifarious and arduous duties of the high and responsible station you fill will not be such as to prevent you from returning an answer if however that should happen to be the case (for I would not willingly make too great an infringement upon your valuable time) be pleased to place this letter into the hands of some confidential friend who will feel disposed to return an answer.

There is an individual in this County who is the owner of a number of slaves and is desirous of emancipating them, if certain obstacles could be removed for which purpose information is requested. You no doubt have understood that by the Laws of Virginia, no slave can be liberated (unless for some particular meritorious service) and remain longer than one year thereafter in the state without being subject to be sold by the Overseers of the poor and again reduced to a state of slavery. On effect of this law, it is supposed, will be that other states will pass counteracting Laws so far as to prevent the emancipated negroes of Virginia from becoming a part of their population- and thus the Virginian who thinks it wrong to hold his fellow man in slavery may from necessity be compelled to do so, contrary to his own will and thus by a kind of unavoidable constraint withhold from a human being his natural rights although under such circumstances the slave-holder may not violate any religious or moral duty yet such a situation must be very unpleasant & distressing. To prevent being placed in such a dilemma this individual has determined to embrace the present opportunity (while there is no law to prevent their becoming inhabitants of your state) to liberate his slaves provided he can satisfy his mind that they will be placed in a situation in which the adults with industry can obtain a sufficiently comfortable subsistence, and the children, be brought up in a proper manner & free from suffering.

Permit me therefore to request you to give me information on the following questions

Will the Abolition Society or any person or persons take upon themselves to see that the adult emancipated negroes be placed in a situation to get a subsistence by honest industry? Will they undertake to see that the children be provided for & placed in comfortable situations?

What will the best method of emancipation? Will it be most advisable to do it by deed in Virginia- or ought it to be done in Pennsylvania? Would it be best to emancipate the children by a deed retaining their services till a certain future period & vesting

this service in the Abolition Society & if that society would undertake to provide for them, if not in those persons who may so undertake.

The owner of those negroes in case of their emancipation will deliver them in Philadelphia, but will not be at any further expense about them.

Some of those slaves were acquired by purchase at a time when the ideas of the individual now holding them were very different for those with which his mind is at present impressed. The negroes are all healthy and have no known infirmity (unless one of them being near sighted can be so considered) the eldest is a woman about forty years of age with 6 children 2 males & 4 females one other woman about 35 years of age with two children a male & female one other woman about twenty years of age with three children one male & two females and one negro woman about Twenty five years of age with one male and one female child. With regard to the men I have said nothing because if they do not support themselves, it will be their own fault as they are healthy & able to work. Nothing however can be calculated upon as to them for support of the women & 6 children as none of them is the husband of the women.

I am Sir with sincere esteem  
Your Friend Richard D. Bayly<sup>1</sup>

N.B. This letter is to be considered as confidential, except so far as it may be necessary to communicate its contents to others for the purpose of obtaining the desired information.

Your friend,  
Richard D. Bayly

---

<sup>1</sup> PAS documents also record the name as Bagby or Bailey.

Dear Sir  
Sumner Town Accomack County Virg<sup>a</sup> Dec: 16. 1820

81 285

From the opinion I have formed of your Philanthropy & Benevolence I am disposed to believe that you would willingly aid any individual who from a sense of duty (or any other honourable motive) would wish to emancipate his slaves. Under such an impression I have taken the liberty of addressing to you this letter and hope that the multifarious and arduous duties of the high and responsible station you fill will not be such as to prevent you from returning an answer - if however that should happen to be the case (for I would not willingly make too great an infringement upon your valuable time) be pleased to place this letter in the hands of some confidential friend who will feel disposed to return an answer.

There is an individual in this County who is the owner of a number of slaves and is desirous of emancipating them, if certain obstacles could be removed for which purpose information is requested. You no doubt have understood that by the Laws of Virginia, no slave can be liberated (unless for some particular meritorious service) and remain longer than one year thereafter in the state without being subject to be sold by the Overseers of the poor and again reduced to a state of slavery. - One effect of this law, it is supposed, will be that other states will pass countervailing Laws so far as to prevent the emancipated negroes of Virginia from becoming a part of their population. - And thus the Virginian who thinks it wrong to hold his fellow-man in slavery may from necessity be compelled to do so; contrary to his own will, and thus by a kind of unavoidable constraint withhold from a human being his natural rights.

Although under such circumstances the slave-holder may not violate any religious or moral duty, yet such a situation must be very unpleasant & distressing. To prevent being placed in such a dilemma this individual has determined to embrace the present opportunity (while there is no law to prevent their becoming inhabitants of your state) to liberate his slaves provided he can satisfy his mind, that they will be placed in a situation in which the adults with industry can obtain a sufficiently comfortable subsistence, and the children be brought up in a proper manner & free from suffering.

Permit me therefore to request you to give me information on the following questions

Will the Abolition Society or any person or persons take upon themselves to see that the adult emancipated negroes be placed in a situation to get a subsistence by honest industry? Will they undertake to see that the children be provided for & placed in comfortable situations?

What will be the best method of emancipation? Will it be most advisable to do it by deed in Virginia, or ought it to be done in Pennsylvania? Would it be best to emancipate the children by a deed retaining their services till a certain future period & vesting this service in the Abolition Society, if that society would undertake to provide for them, if not in those persons who may so undertake.

The owner of those negroes in case of their emancipation will deliver them in Philadelphia, but will not be at any further expense about them.

Some of those slaves were acquired by purchase, at a time when the ideas of the individual now holding them were very different from those with which his mind is at

present improved. The negroes are all healthy and have  
no known infirmity (unless one of them being near sighted  
can be so considered) the eldest is a woman about forty  
years of age with 6 children 2 males & 4 females. One other  
woman about 35 years of age with two children a male  
& female one other woman about twenty years of age with  
three children one male & two females and one negro woman  
about twenty five years of age with one male & one female  
child. With regard to the men I have said nothing  
because if they do not support themselves, it will be  
their own fault as they are healthy & able to work.  
Nothing however can be calculated upon as to their  
the support of the women & children as ~~none~~ <sup>none</sup> of  
them is the husband <sup>any</sup> of the women.

I am Sir with sincere Esteem  
Your friend Richard D. Bayly

M.D. This letter is to be considered as confidential, except so far as  
it may be necessary to communicate its contents to others for the purpose  
of obtaining the desired information. Your friend R. D. Bayly