

*Petition of Chang and Eng, March 12, 1832, Legislative Petitions of
the General Assembly, 1776-1865, Accession 36121, Library of Virginia.*

To the Honourable the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Virginia;
The memorial of Chang & Eng, Known as the Siamese Twin Brothers;
Most respectfully shewith,

That your Memorialists landed in the United States from their Native Country in the Month of August 1829, & embarked for England in the Month of October of the same Year, where they remained a Considerable time, & landed in the United States a second time on the 4th March 1831;

That during the time which your Memorialists have passed in the United States, they have travelled over a Considerable portion of each of the States North of the Potomac; and that they have lately entered the State of Virginia;

That your Memorialists have had much cause to feel grateful for the Kindness shewn to them in the United States; and in no portion of the Union have they received more Kindness than in that part of Virginia, which they have already travelled through;

That up to the period when your memorialists entered this Commonwealth, no demand had ever been made on them for either State or Corporation Taxes; but that on opening a room at Fredericksburgh, They were called upon to pay a sum of Thirty Dollars, to the State, for a license which sum was demanded in pursuance of an annual law intituled “An Act imposing Taxes for the Support of Government,” in which Act it is likewise stated that this Tax is to be levied in “every County, City, Borough or Corporation.”

That as this tax is so large in amount & is payable in every “County, City, Borough or Corporation” So it is evidently meant as a Prohibitory Tax & for the purpose of suppressing the Exhibitions of Jugglers, Sleight-of-hand men & others who might corrupt the public Morals of the Community as well as Puppet-Shows and other Exhibitions of the same class which have a Tendency to collect large masses of People in the open air and thereby endanger the public peace;

That your memorialists would respectfully take leave to state; that inasmuch as no injury can possibly arise either to the morals or peace of the Community from the assemblage of such persons as visit the room of your Memorialists, so they confidently appeal to your Honourable House, whether the “spirit” of the law was meant to interfere in such a case as that which is presented in the persons of your Memorialists; And your Memorialists therefore trust that your Honourable House will grant them relief from the operation of this law against them;

That your Memorialists would beg leave further to state that the enforcement of this tax will prevent them from Visiting any Part of the State except a few large Cities & Towns;

Your Memorialists have thus stated their case & would ask pardon for intruding themselves on the attention of your Honorable House—yet feel confident that as Strangers in the land, far from their own home & labouring under an awful dispensation of the Supreme Being—they will not appeal to your Honorable House in Vain—

CHANG ENG

Richmond 12th March 1832.

[Docket:]

Petition Siamese twins March 12th 1832

Refd to Finance, March 14th, Reasonable