

Lindenwood University

Digital Commons@Lindenwood University

John Sibley Papers

George and Mary Easton Sibley Papers

2-28-1803

Letter from John Sibley to Samuel Sibley, February 28, 1803

John Sibley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/john>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Copy

Natchez 28th Feby. 1803

Dear Hopkins:-

On the 20th of Janry. I received your letter of Dec. 8th the receipt of it gave me great pleasure for I had not heard from you before since I left you, I wrote you soon after my arrival here, mentioning several things I wished you to do, I have not been able to finish my business here so as to set off on my return, how soon I shall effect it is uncertain, I shall loose no time I can avoid, do the best you Can in the meantime for yourselfe, and afford to your Mother & the Children all the assistance & comfort in your power – I am in pretty good health, am going for a few days over the River into Louisiana, which Country is very little known in the United States, tho the finest Country in the world, I keep a journal of my travels with pretty lengthy remarks – some extracts would amuse you - - “I was at an old French gentleman’s House in Louisiana, where I asked to stay all night, I was met at the Gate by the Old Man who took me by the hand in the Most friendly manner he spoke not a word of English, conducted me into a handsome Gallery and Sat me down beside himselfe on a Settee I Layed my hat on a Table as I entered, he rose took my hat & put it on my head observing it was too cool to Set uncovered, he immediately withdrew, a servant brought me some wine, a Large Bell rang as big as a Church Bell I asked what ‘twas for a gentleman who was Setting with me told me ‘twas for prayers, I propos’d to attend, he told me it was a domestic regulation among the servants that we might or might not attend as we pleas’d, I saw the old man no more till supper was announced which was about an hour after, we were conducted into a Large Elegant Hall well lighted, candle sticks of Silver, a Table covered with plates, a variety of dishes Wines Sallads &c. with about half a dozen well Looking Servants, no white woman in the House, the Old Man was there, I then discovered he had withdrawn to dress himselfe which he had neatly done, he placed me next himselfe, a clean Napkin was furl’d up in a curious manner over each plate which being removed disclosed a piece of bread, a fork with four tongs all of Silver, the knife a Silver handle, a Wine Glass & Tumbler, he politely helped all at Table, and pressed us all to dring Setting the example himselfe, after supper he sat an hour, talked a great deal all in French, he went out a few minutes, returned and asked me if I choose to go to bed, my room was ready a servant conducted me to my room, which I found remarkably neat, a Pavillion to the Bed, a Toilet with wine and water, a dressing case & Looking Glass, a water stand Towel &c. a prayer Book & Crucifix, and a handkerchief for my head, being fateagued I went directly to bed & put out the the Candle, a few minutes after the Old man knocked at my door “Couchee Monsieur” sayed he I answered ‘Owee Monsieur,’ “Bon repose” he said, I saw no more of him – this is nearly a description of the treatment I received in Travelling four hundred miles through Louissiana.

A few days ago near Natchez two Choctau Indians had a falling out One challenged the other to fight a duel, the challenge was accepted they fought with muskets five steps apart & fired at the word, and were both Instantaneously killed – several duels had been fought among the officers and gentlemen of Natchez a short time before & no one hurt the Indians had Laughed at them and called them no warriors – Last fall about three Miles from Natchez one Indian killed another in a quarrell, it is a law with them that no Indian who has killed another except in War shall live, it is not like a Warrior to be killed or put to death so they do it always themselves assisted by their nearest friend or relation, this Indian had appointed to die at Sundown the day after he had killed the other, it was known in the neighborhood & several went to see how he would behave, a Gentleman who was present told me the Story, they found him very buisey among the Indians talking a few words to One & Another & sending Messages to his absent friends & acquaintances his countenance tranquil and his mind Collected, his wife was with him who appeared in his presence quite composed but was observed just before Sundown to go by herself and cry; but soon returned again with an affected cheerfulness, the Sun Sat the appointed time arrived, the Indian in a Louis Voice addressed himself to the Spectators, appologis'd for disappointing them & told them, 'twas not convenient for him to die 'till tomorrow morning at Sunrise he wanted to see a friend who had not arriv'd, the Spectators dispers'd, some of them went in the morning, ' saw him die, he put the Muzzle of a Gun under his Chin & with his Toe drew the trigger, he slept most of the preceding night quietly – and Called upon his friends to witness that he died like a Warrior – The Choctaus in their Town don't bury their dead; but make a Scaffold of forks & Poles on Twelve feet high near their Houses on which they place the Dead body 'till the flesh is so putrid that it will Slip off the Bones, this is done by the nearest relation, the flesh is buried, the bones put in a Box and deposited in the Bone House.- The Choctaus are a numerous tribe, they live on Tombeckbee River, but are always wandering about in families among the white Settlements many of them dont see their towns for two or three years – they Seldome Steal or do Mischief of any kind, and they boast that no Choctau has ever Shed white Man's blood Since the french Massacre in 1719 – I am about preparing to Collect a parcel of Mules, they are in Louissiana as large as Horses, and in droves of many thousand in a Gang. The French Government is expected to take place in April some of them with the Officers Baggage have arrived in New Orleans –

I am with much affection

Yours &c

John Sibley

Samuel Hopkins Sibley

(Vol. 1 Sibley Manuscript, Missouri Historical Society)