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Letter from John Sibley to Amos Stoddard, April 2, 1812

John Sibley

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Major Amos Stoddard
New York

John Sibley
Natchitoches
April 2nd, 1812.

Natchitoches, April 2nd, 1812.

Dear Sir,

By the last Mail I had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 10th of Jany, for which I am obliged to you: it gives me great pleasure to hear of your extraordinary good health, Justly attributable to good living & a Climate that agrees with your Constitution- you Say nothing about the publication of your Book, your last letter Says it is in the press.-

I wish I Could give you Some Satisfactory Account of the Present Political State of the Kingdome of Mexico. Notwithstanding the Contending parties are probably as thirty to one, the Smaller Number being Europeans pretending to contend for Ferdinand the Seventh, they have from Superior Management possessed themselves of Most of the Arms & Military Strength & resources of the Country by Stratagem. Surprise & Treachery have disarmed the Inhabitants of Most of the Provinces, even to the Womons Scissors. General Ryan who is still in force like Washington Fights & flies alternately. Most of his followers fight either with the Bow & Arrow or a Sling & Stones. every few days Some Accounts Reach us of his total defeat & himselfe being killed or a Prisoner which has I believe been repeated fifty times. he is still - - - - - to the Royal party. Could a few Thousand Stands of Arms & Ammunition with a few convenient field Pieces & Some Artillery officers be Introduced into the Country the whol kingdome of Mexico would Soon be a free Sovereign, Independant Country. But there is Something Treacherous in the genius & Character of Spaniards, they are Jealous almost of Themselves. The Indians are very troublesome to the present European party. Nearly all the Military Force from Nacezdoches was not long Since taken away to go against them. The hostile tribes are the Histans, Tankaways, Commanches, Tanakenos & Panies. It is Seposed they are Influenced by the Republican party. The Country between this place & Sabine has for Some Months past been Invested with a Banditti of Robbers at Some times to the Number of Nearly an hundred. Col Pike Came herer about two Months Ago & Sent out Lieutenants Magee & Montgomery with about 40 Men who patrolled the Country as far as the Sabine, Laying everything Waste, one would have thought they had Read General Tauro's expedition to La Vendee & were endeavouring to imitate his Recorded Exploits Amongst Women & Children; but of this expedition I Shall Say no more at present as it will at Some future Period be discussed in another Manner. If the Character of the United States Troops acquired By the late

expedition Should not be Changed & Should be believed in Canada as it certainly will, whatever may be Said to the people, Should an Army be Sent thither men Women & Children will rise in Mass against them & they must be exterminated before they are Conquered. Our Government Should Cause a Strict enquiry to be made into the Transactions connected with this late expedition. fourteen Prisoners were made & considerable property in Horses, Mules, Hoggs, Hens & Chickens, Womens gowns & Petic coats, Scissors & Thimbles, finger & - - - rings & Shawls Sheets Blankets, Some Money, Goods Guns & Rifles was brought in. Nine of the Prisoners are now here under a Military Guard five were Released. Some of them were Striped tied to Trees & Whipt & Burnt with Chunks of fire ()as they said) to make them confess. An Attempt will be made to have Some of these Prisoners tried by the Superior Court of this Territory for having aided & assisted in Robbing Several parties of Spanish Traders on the East Side of the Sabine & killing two; but the Jurisdiction of the Court is questionable. They are Judges in & for the Territory of Orleans, which never extended to the Sabine. the Banditti Ought to be dispersed which Consists of an Assembly of Mostly Americans from different parts of the United States of the worst character. Col. Pike - - - - about Ten days Ago for Batton Rouge. Captain Overton Son of Genl. Overton of Tennessee Commands here at present.-

My Son whose Post is Fort Osage on Missouri made me a Visit this Winter past he left this Six Weeks ago for Washington, his two younger brothers who Came here from Carolina a Short time before him Accompanied him as far as Fayetteville, they took the New Road through the Creek Nation to Augusta, the two younger will return the Same Rout & bring out their Sister & a few family Negroes, our House in Carolina Since the death of my wife is to be Broken up. I Shall be glad when they get Back & my family affairs arranged. George the Factor last Summer made an excursion from his Post to the Kansas, from thence to the Panie Republics from thence to the Grand Salines & Salt Mountain, he kept an Account of his Voyage & observations on the Country, descriptions of the Mountains & the Indian Tribes &c &c, & made an Intelligent Map of his Tract, which I think would afford you Some Amusement, they are all in my possession, he Decended the Mississippi during the first of the Earthquakes & gave me a Satisfactory Account of those he experienced 30 or 40 Shocks, and would give you Some Account of them, but Conclude you have Seen those published in the News papers, Some of which that I have Seen are well described. it is astonishing that they still continue, we are lately informed of a Volcanic eruption Somewhere on the Arkensa, the light from which is Seen every Night by those decending the Mississippi.- -

Mr. Mullanphy formerly of St. Louis has a pretty large Store in this Town. a few Other Stores are established Since you were here, who are doing a very Considerable Business in the Spanish Trade,

they get dollars in exchange for Goods, & very frequently from ten to twenty thousand Dollars are brought in at time This trade would have been more Considerable had it not been for the Brigands Intercepting the Road between this & the Sabine.-

I am Impatient to hear your Opinion of the Piece of Mineral Sent to New York by Mr. Johnson, in which I have an Interest. I am inclined to think it ought to be Sent to England to have the Most made of it, & whether it would be more Valuable as a Curiosity or Worked up is the question. I hope it will excite the Attention of Doctor Mitchell & other gentlemen of his turn.- Mr. Hoomes hopes you will See his wife.- -

In this distant quarter all we Can do about the - - War is to express our Anxiety, hear the News, & wait the events, pretend to believe we Shall have no War &c &c.- Should we have a War- - - - of the Country will greatly feel it by the failure of our Staple, Cotton, - - - - - be in considerable demand in the Eastern States for home manufacture- - - - - Risque from New Orleans to New York will be so great, it - - - - - of a less than 50 Cent which will be that reduction of - - - - The Steam Boats which are now in operation in the event of War- - - - - a Most Wonderful affect, they will Seem to bring all the Upper Countries nearer a Market, we expect in a Short time to have them on Red River, when we may feast on Oysters in Natchitoches as well as you, & perhaps fatten as fast.-- Doctor Forsyth formerly of the Army is Settled in Natchitoches him & myself are Copartners in the Practice of Medicine, & in an Medical Shop.

We are on the eve of Becoming a State, & without West Florida is Annexed to us, I dread the Effect the French will have a preponderancy & will presume it as long as they can. Amongst the Means of doing it, making what Americans are here so Uneasy as to oblige us to leave the Country & adopting Such Laws & Regulations as will prevent further emigrations will first Suggest themselves to the governing party; If Florida is Joined to us, the Americans will Preponderate, otherwise we Shall have none but French Laws & French Administrators of them.

When I began to write you I had no Idea of extending my letter to Such length. I Ought to apologise for it. frequent letters from you will give me great pleasure

With very great Esteem

Am Yr Obt Servant

John Sibley

Major Stoddard