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Letter from John Sibley to Henry Dearborn, January 10, 1807

John Sibley

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Natchitoches Jany. 10th 1807

Sir

Our latest accounts from the Province of Taxus [Texas], are that all the Spanish troops except about one Company have left Nacogdoches and are taking away all the Cannon they had there consisting of Eleven Pieces, tis said they have heard of the Meditated Invasion of Mexico & that their force will be drawn to the defence of that place & Vera Cruz [Vera Cruz].——— I am informed Capt. Burling late Aid to General Wilkinson, on his arrival at Nacogdoches was announced as a Public officer on important Public business. An officer with a detachment of Calvary was immediately Ordered to attend him to St. Antonio, that he there Met with Salsido [Salcedo] the Governor General, soon after an Express arrived at Nacogdoches ordering Govr. Herrera with all the troops & cannon to proceed to St. Antonio, and that Capt. Burling has gone on towards Mexico, it is now believed his business in that Country is not to buy Mules. The Scenes lately acted in New Orleans are extraordinary & astonishing. The Civil power Ought Certainly to be able to prevent & Punish any Infractions of the Laws of the Land, it is enough to drive a people to acts of desperation & distraction to witness the necessity of the Civil Authority giving place to Military power, it will hardly admit of a question whether such a remedy is not worse than the disease, but much more so If it is Usurped without Necessity, to know the Existance of the fact without commenting upon it renders it impossible to suppress feelings the Most horrid. I pray God if it was Necessary I may never witness a repetition of it and more ardently do I pray for the same. If it was done without necessity.

Last Saturday at the Salt Works a few Miles from this place a dispute took place between a White Man, a Labourer by the Name of Watson and a Creek or Conchatta Indian. Watson discharged a Gun at the Indian and Killed him Instantly, in presence of several persons, who suffered him to load his gun again & go away without Molestation, I did not hear of it till tuesday when I sent out Warrants for his apprehension, the Men have not returned & I doubt If he is taken, I have likewise Sent for the relations of the Indian who are pretty numerous & influential. I shall do all I can to Pacify them & hope to prevent any attempt on their part to retaliate.

A Party of Caddo Indians lately returning from the Panis Nation were robbed [sic, the word "robbed" is clearly intended] by a party of Osages of 74 Horses; but received no other injury they sent a runner to inform their Chief of it, who immediately Set off with a Strong party of his own & some other Tribes to the relief of his people & to Attack the Ozages [Osages] if he could find them, I have not heard from him Since his departure; but soon after the Chief left home a Small Child of his family Carrying some fire Either in or out of his house Set it on fire, it was very Large and composed of a frame of Timber covered with Thatch upon Ribs of Cane & Burnt up in a few Minutes, with all he had in it, & his Corn House with his whole Crop of Corn; the disasters of this year bear very hard upon them & Strengthen their claim upon us for some Assistance. There are now At the Conchetta Village 23 Barrels of Flour remaining of what was left there by Major Freeman, it is Said to have received Some damage by getting wet and would not be Worth the Expense of bringing it down. If so, I think by dividing of it among the Caddos it would have a good Effect, & be the best appropriation of it, when Major Freeman left this [Natchitoches] he left with me Some Instruction about his Boats & in Case the Voyage should not be

renewed, the River is now ten feet higher than it was when he went up it last Summer, the Boats might have been easily brought down, I shall attend carefully to any Instructions I may receive about them, Should it be concluded to have the Boats brought down it will require 25 Men, it will be Expensive hiring hands here, & the commanding officer will require an Order to furnish them.

Inclosed is a Small Acct. for ten nights & days Service in attending the Sick at this Post while the troops were at the Sabine River. I had a great deal of fatiague with them. You will please dispose of it as you May think proper.

Am

Sir Most Respectfully

Your Obt. Hble Serv.

John Sibley.

General Dearborn

[This is copied from a typed transcription published in the Southwestern Historical Quarterly. All single-word spelling corrections or other single-word clarifications which appear within square brackets [] are copied as such directly from this source. Other brackets (specifically, this one and the one correcting "robed" to "robbed") are added by me.]