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Letter from George Sibley to Riordan Price, January 8, 1811

George Champlin Sibley
Fort Osage

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Fort Osage January 8th. 1811.

My dear Sir,

I wrote you on or about the 1st. Ult^o. and Sent the Letter about 30 Miles (to where the Contractor's and Mr. Cottle's Boats are froze up) by Mr. Cottel, who forwarded it to you by Jo. Morary, and I do^t not but you have duly Rec^d. it-

Mr. Hunt has just arrived here on his way to S^t. Louis and affords me an opportunity (tho' I am just now very much engaged in public business) to say a few words to you Respecting $\frac{1}{2}$ Hogs Corn &c. at this place- The harvesting of your Crop was completed on the 15th of Dec^r. the following Note is transcribed from my diary-

"Thursday December 13th.- The day pleasant and fair- finished gathering Mr. Prices corn to daye off of about 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ Acres of ground I got Somewhere about 800 Bushels of Corn housed- About 100 Bushels were destroyed thro^u the Summer and fall by the Pigs &c." Out of these 800 Bushels I have paid myself 200 Bushels that were due me by Dr Robinson and excepted in his power of Attorney to you- and I have let Mr. Audrain have 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ Bus^{les} at \$1, which he Says will he will pay you as soon as the Troops are paid off- Wells has fed away Several Bushels to your Hogs, how much I do not know, tho' I do not believe more than necessary- I have been at Some considerable pains to collect all your Hogs together and Succeeded in getting about 150 into an enclosure, where they were kept for about a fortnight and fed a little with corn.- They are now Running out, but come up pretty Regularly to be fed, they are tame and gentle enough, and would no doubt do well if let alone.- The wild gang of Hogs above the Garrison have not been brought up yet, they are frequently seen, and look extremely fat and well- I do not ~~try~~ by any means despair of getting them up yet before the winter is over- I am only waiting for a Snow to fall, when I Shall Send Wells

and a party of Active Indians to chase and tire them down, and then they can easily be driven home- I was advised to defer chasing or disturbing them until it can be done effectually, and this it Seems may be done very easily when there is a crust of Snow on the ground- Many of the old Sows have had Pigs, but very few of them have been Saved, owing to the cold weather and a variety of other causes that could not be easily guarded against.

It was out of our power to have them penned up Separately, near enough to my House to answer any good purpose- I would Require ^{one} Man's whole time to attend properly to the Sows, and after all it would ^{only} be Raising Roasting Pigs for the (two legged) Wolves.-

We declined having any of the Sows put up to fatten 'till I hear from you again on the Subject, for it might happen that after they have- had been fed awhile at a considerable expence of Corn &c. you would be obliged to turn them out again for want of a purchaser.- I am sorry to Say that I do not believe it will be easy, if at all possible to prevent many of your Hogs from being destroyed- Wells has frequently Reported to me latterly, that they come up crippled, and lately has found 2 grown Sows killed lying near the Garriess Somewhere about Mr. Audrain's Store- Wells attribtes these thing to the Soldiers and he is very probably not far from the truth- It is ~~poss~~- impossible to prove the thing against them, and until that can be done, it would only be making bad worse to make any fuss about it- InConfidence tho' I will observe to you, that I have become convinced myself of the great Risk there is in having property of any kind at this place, especially live Stock- Such wanton, unprovoked and cruel outrages are committed by the Soldiery on the property of Citizens as we are contemptuously called by them, that it is absolutely alarming ^{to} those who are interest ed or who are obliged to look on Such irregularities without the power to prevent them- The Villians take care to keep their acts hidden from the view of others, and thereby Screen themselves from the proof.- but it is

clear enough to all from whence these outrages proceed.- The unfortunate coolness that exists between myself and the Gentlemen of the Garrison, among whom I include the Suttlers) prevents my making as Strict enquiry into these matters as I Should perhaps otherwise do; and it is possible that that this coolness (which will probably ever continue, at least as far as it depends on me) may operate in Some degree to stimulate the Soldiers to do towards me many things for which they have no other motive than to gratify or ingratiate themselves with their Masters- I would however be very loth to believe that they are at all encouraged to do these things; on the contrary I think they are not.- and I only Suggest the idea for your benefit as you will very clearly perceive.- I Should certainly tho' pass Some pretty candid censure on those Gentlemen or Some of them if this coolness did not exist, but under the present circumstances candor might be mistaken for illnature, & I Should then get no credit for my pains.-

Upon the whole my dear Price, after turning and twisting the thing in all manner of Shapes, and viewing it in almost all possible positions; I am constrained by the Sincere good will I ^{have} feel for you, and the wish to Serge you all in my power, to offer it as my decided opinion, that you had better dispose of your BHogs &c. here as quick as possible; and in the meantime give them in charge to Some person whose intimacy or good understanding with the officer commanding the Soldiers, may in Some measure intimidate those fellows from their outrages- Such a person if he had an interest in the Hogs might prevent their being destroyed, and probably turn them to a good account.- In giving you this advice I Run the Risk of depriving myself of the pleasure of erving you- but what do I Say? I forget that my circumstances, my unavoidable misunderstandings with the Garrison, and above all that my official duties absolutely deprive me of the pleasure to erve you- therefore I can only expect to derive that pleasure from advising you to place your affairs in Some other person's hands, whose Situation my promise more Success to you than mine.-

It was a duty which I owed to myself and to your Sir; to have given you this candid exposition of your affairs here- I have no fear that you will mistake my motive, or that you will depreciate it.- It has arisen from circumstances which we had no Right to expect when you were here.- You may Rely on it, that whatever Service I can Render you here I will most certainly do it- I Require almost the whole time of Man Wells, but Still I make him attend more or less to your Hogs every day; and in Reality they would all do very well if they were not disturbed by our Neighbors- Wells has lately had a dispute with L^t. Brownson for confining him in the Guardhouse, and has told him he would thrash him if he ever caught him out Side of his ^(and) Sentinels; this has caused Some irritation among Some of the most abandoned of the Soldiers, and it is since this affair that the 2 Hogs were killed- I mention this, that you may be able to Judge of the propriety of Sending up a Man to take care of the Hogs- but take notice; if you do Send one, let him be an easy kind of ~~person~~- body who can occasionally Submit to be cast into prison and yet be honest and careful of his trust.- for it is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for an Independent American to live near an outpost like this, and keep on good terms with those who command the Garrison- This I lay down as one of my indisputable facts.- Have I Said ^{enough} or have I Said too much to you on these Matters?-

I had an hour to devote to you, and I determined to use it most for your profit, even tho' I Should disclose Some things that I am by no means over Solicitous to have known too publicly.- do not Suppose tho' that we have had any difficulties here lately more than common- except a most mortal and ^(sic) invincible coldness, we go on pretty well considering all things- each one attends chiefly to his own concerns I believe, and does not meddle any more in his neighbor's affairs than may perhaps be consistent with the true Spirit of Gossiping.-

Cottle will not give me a ~~bid~~- bid for the Hogs- I talked with him

about them this very day and pressed him to write to you on the Subject. He Says he "will buy them if you will make the payment easy, and let him have them on Such terms as that he can make Something on them." These are his very words I believe. I also proposed to him to take the management of them on Shares, but this he appears to decline.- You had better make up your mind what you will take for them and make an offer of them to him and Audrain- I Suspect Audrain would buy Some of them and perhaps the whole, tho' I have never Spoken to him on the Subject- I wish you to come to some conclusion about these things as quick as possible and let me hear from you- In the meantime I Shall pay as much attention to your affairs as I can properly do- Nothing Shall be Sacrificed to my knowledge without an effort to Save it. If my ability half equalled my disposition to render you Service, I Should not now have troubled you with So lengthy an Epistle about Hogs, Pigs, Sows, Soldiers &c.

I have not been able yet to Sell the House and fields.- Cottle will not buy them; and- nor do I expect any body ever will.- I wish I could meet with Some fool who would give me \$250 for them- I Should think myself well out of the Scrape I assure you- I am Sometimes tempted to Set fire to the whole lot, and Rid myself of the plague.- I Suspect I feel nearly the Same uneasiness about my valuable possession at this most delectable and promising of all possible places; that a certain tall, handsome, blue-devilish, lady-loving friend and acquaintance of mine does about 180 Swine, 2 Bulls and an old Horse that he has (God help them) at the said delectable and most promising of all possible places.- I like to Joke about Such Serious matters, it does no manner of harm, but lighten^d my cares and Raises my Spirits amazingly.- I Shall Send the Glass down by the first boat, the pipes I have given you credit for, in our private account. Mr. Hunt will deliver you a Bay Horse of yours, I thought it would be best to Send him down to you by So good an opportunity. Yrs. &c. G. C. Sibley
Mr. Risdon H^l Price, St. Louis.