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Letter from John Sibley to William Eustis, January 30, 1810

John Sibley

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Natchitoches Jany 30th 1810

Sir

Upwards of three years ago I received Instructions from your predecessor [sic] General Dearborn, and Mr Jefferson the late president likewise wrote to me himself on the Subject to Select eight or ten principal Chiefs of some of the Indian Tribes in my Agency & Come with them myself to the City of Washington, & I received Enclosed in a Tin Case all the Necessary papers & passports for the purpose, which I now have; I made the Selection of Chiefs Accordingly, had Horses & Mules provided for the Journey & Sent them Over the Mississippi to the pasture of my friend Mr. Dunbar, but just as we were about setting off the Spaniards made an Irruption [sic] into the Country on this side the River Sabine, went to the Caddo Nation, menaced the Indians, Cut down & took away with them a United States Flag which I had given the Caddo Chief, persued [sic] & turned Back an exploring party ascending Red River by order of our Government under the direction of Mr Thomas Freeman, took several Citizens of the United States Prisoners within three or four Leagues of this Town & Sent them beyond the River Grand, & Committed many Other Acts of Outrage in the face, & within the knowledge of all the Indian Tribes, who saw likewise our forbearance, which they Construed into Cowardise, or impotence in us, which had Such an effect upon the Indians that they refused to go with me, Saying when I urged them to fulfill their promise, that the Spaniards who appeared to them to be our Superiors, told them, as well as the Creole French, that the Americans would not long possess any part of this Country, that ere long we would all be driven Over the Mississippi towards the rising Sun from whence we Came, that they the Indians must See themselves our inferiority to the Spaniards. & If they ran away after us it would offend the Spaniards & then what would become of them, my voyage was of Course Suspended: But the great Caddo Chief never withdrew from me his particular Confidence & friendship, who is a man of more importance than Any other ten Chiefs on this Side of the Mississippi within my Agency, with this Man who has a Strong mind I have frequent long & friendly Conversations, in which I have entertained him in an Account of the Wars & Politicks of the World, the present & probable State of Spain etc.————

I believe now he would readily Consent to make you a Visit & it appears to me it would be politic at this time to have it effected. for if the French Should finally Succeed in destroying the government of Spain in Europe they will put in motion every engine to gain an Interest in these Spanish provinces & will no doubt have their emmissaries [sic] Among the Indians who have always had a predilection for them.

Should you be of the Opinion from these or any other Considerations that a Visit of Six or eight principal Chiefs of Some of those tribes to the Seat of Government & Some of the principal Towns in the United States would be productive of good. I will do my endeavour to effect it in as Short a Time & at as small an expence as possible.

Should this proposal meet your approbation I shall require a Renewal of those papers Sent me by General Dearborn, and Such Other Instructions as you may be pleased to give me.

We receive but little Intelligence from Our Neighbours the Spaniards Worth notice, the last report is, that a project is now on foot for the purpose of Uniting into one Kingdom all Spanish America to appoint for their king the brother of Charles the 4th late King of Spain.

I am

Sir with very great Respect

Honorable William Eustis
Secretary of War.

& Esteem
Your Obt. Servt.
John Sibley

[Spelling errors and oddities are replicated from publication in the Southwestern Historical Quarterly, even when not marked by a "sic" (as added by me). It is not always clear whether these errors were replicated from the original document or were accidentally made by a later transcriber.]