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Letter from George Sibley to William Clark, July 22, 1811

George Champlin Sibley

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Fort Osage July 22^d. 1811.

Dr. Sir,

I Returned from my tour on the 11th. Inst. having been exactly two months out, during which time I saw all the Kansas, Pawnees, Arkansaw Osages, Little Osages and nearly all the Big Osages- The Kansas and Pawnees I saw at their Towns, the Osages at their several hunting Camps beyond the Arkansaw- They all Received me with great hospitality, and treated me with the utmost friendship and Respect, and they all gave me assurances (the most of them honest ones I believe) of their good will towards the U. States.-

I Succeeded in making a Peace between the Pawnees and Kansas, which may perhaps produce some good effects- I assure you I have great hopes of the Koneses becoming one of the best Tribes in your Agency, they have Reformed greatly, and are already as orderly as the Osages, much more so than the Big Osages, and by far better Indians- I left ~~Sur~~ ^{Star} flag at the Koneses and one flag and 6 Medals at the Pawnees. The Medals I distributed among the most influential and best disposed of the several Tribes of Pawnees- I have not time now to give you as full detail of my proceedings at the Pawnees and Koneses as I intend to do- I did not see the Ottos, they had left their Towns before I got to the Koneses.-

I used one of the flags you furnished me, out of your Agency, but hope to be excused when I have told the circumstances- Clermont, head Chief of the Arkansaw Osages Received me with the utmost hospitality, and himself, Big Track and indeed the whole of his Tribe evinced such strong proofs of good will towards the U. S. that I could not but feel much pleased with them. Clermont apologized to me for not displaying the U. S. flag, but told me it was not his fault, for he had none; I happened to have one in my baggage, and seeing his strong desire to possess some American badge, immediately had it hoisted on his Lodge, and then left it, and must leave it for you and Mr. Chouteau to

Settle.-

I was long ago aware that the Big Osages had expressed Some unwillingness to abide by the Treaty, but I never doubted but it was in consequence of false Representations made to them by persons who perhaps have an interest in destroying the Treaty- I accidentally learned Some facts while at the Arkasaw Osages, which confirmed me in this opinion- a proposal had been made to Clermont and the principal Men of his Tribe, to oppose the Treaty, but they Refused, and declared they would observe it with good faith- If I mistake not, the Big Osage are under the impression that they are to get no annuity- at all events, the U. S. must not be trifled with in this business any longer.

I embraced the opportunity while I was out, to visit and examine the famous Salines beyond the Arkansaw-

The Grand Saline is at least 30 Miles in circumference, and is a perfectly level plane, covered in dry Hot weather from 2 to 6 Inches deep with a beautiful clean white Salt, of a quality Rather Superior I think to the imported blown Salt.-

The Rook Saline is on a Smaller Scale being not more than about 500 Acres in extent.- it is also a level flat Surrounded by very high Hills formed chiefly of Gypsum of various qualities and flint and Red Clay- from the bases of these Hills, issue many Springs of Salt water, which Spreading Slowly over the flat is converted by the action of the Sun to hard Salt, which is more or less abundant according to the weather- a long continuance of very hot dry weather, produces a Solid Mass of Salt from 5 to 12 Inches thick covering an Hundred Acres, very much Resembling a large Pond of water covered with Rough Ice- There are Several Springs, which Rise within the flat, around which the Salt forms in Such Solid Masses as to defy the heaviest Storms of Rain, however often Repeated- at one of these Springs I hewed out a piece of Salt 16 Inches thick, then dug about a foot below the Surface of the ground, and Still found an almost Solid

Mass of Salt- An Indian Seeing me digging, laughing asked me if I expected to dig to the bottom- I am induced to believe there is a Solid Block of Salt of vast extent near the Surface here- At present I cannot give more Sketches of these truly great curiosities of nature- when I Shall have revised my notes, perhaps I may Resume the Subject in Some future Letter.-

You will Receive this, by Mr. Rawlings who will make a Short Stay in St. Louis. I beg leave to Refer you to him for other particulars- By his Return I hope to hear from you.

I beg leave to tender my Com^{ts}. Respectfully to Mrs. C. and to assure you of my Sincere esteem.

G. C. Sibley

Gen^l. W^m. Clark

St. Louis.