

GEORGE CHAMPLIN SIBLEY: THE PRAIRIE PURITAN (1782-1863)

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CHAPTER I

THE PURITAN STRAIN



The origin of the surname, Sibley, can be traced as far back as the 13th century in the founding records of several counties in England. The word sib means peace, while the term lea denotes field. Thus, "peace-field" is not an improbable compound and like many surnames originated in some unrecorded incident in local English history long since forgotten. The first Sibley to migrate to the New World from England was a John Sibley who came to Salem during the great Puritan migration of 1628-29.¹ From the time of his arrival to the passing of the American frontier, many of his descendants edged their way westward, pushing first into the interior of the Massachusetts colony, then into North Carolina, and, at the turn of the 19th century, were among the first Americans to settle in the Louisiana territory.

In 1720, five Sibley brothers and their families left Salem and moved to Sutton, Massachusetts. The son of the oldest brother, John, married "Anne, daughter of Benjamin Waite," and reared a large family of fifteen children.² Years later, Christopher Baldwin, writing to one of these children then living in Louisiana, related that the old inhabitants of Sutton remembered John as one who did not give up the dress of the old days, but continued to wear a "cocked hat, wig and small clothes to the very last."³ Baldwin also wrote that the Sibleys

¹ Andrew P. Peabody, "Memoir of John Langdon Sibley, A.M.," Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, II (1885-1886), 487.

² Christopher Columbus Baldwin to John Sibley, November 15, 1832, Sibley Mss.

³ Christopher Columbus Baldwin to John Sibley, August 30, 1832, Sibley Mss.

along with two other families "sent to one school the same day thirty-six
of their own children."⁴ Among these children was John Sutton Sibley,
who was born on May 19, 1757.⁵

From the beginning of the American Revolution to its close,
John Sutton Sibley served in various Massachusetts regiments as a
Surgeon's Mate.⁶ Following the war, he came to Great Barrington, a
Puritan community in western Massachusetts which had been established
in 1726 on the banks of the Housatonic River in the awesomely beautiful
country of the southern Berkshires. There he married Elizabeth, the
eldest daughter of the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Hopkins. Their first
son, George Champlin, was born on April 1, 1782, followed in 1784 by
their second son whom they named Samuel Hopkins.⁷ The naming of their
first son is couched in mystery. Why did they name him George Champlin

⁴ Christopher Columbus Baldwin to John Sibley, November 15, 1832, Sibley Mss.

⁵G.P. Whittington, "Dr. John Sibley of Natchitoches, 1757-1837," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, X (January-October, 1927), 470; Albert T. Witbeck, "John Sibley, May 19, 1757-April 8, 1837," Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, 22 volumes, XVII (New York, 1935), 144.

⁶From Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, XIV (1906), 194. The war record of John Sutton Sibley was as follows: "Surgeon's Mate, Col. Ephraim Wehlock's regt., return of commissioned officers dated Ticonderoga, Oct. 11, 1776, also Surgeon's Mate, Col. Danforth Keyes, Rgt..., appointed June 27, 1777, term 6 months from July 1, 1777-roll dated Providence; also same regt.-regimental pay abstract made up from Dec. 1, 1775 to end of service, including allowance home."

⁷Charles J. Taylor, The History of Great Barrington (1882), 329; Malone, ed., DAB, XVII, 144.

instead of the obviously popular Sibley name of John, or the name of Elizabeth's prominent father, Samuel Hopkins? While the Rev. Mr. Hopkins was minister of the Congregational Church at Newport, Rhode Island, Elizabeth may have known and admired George Champlin, a patriotic leader and wealthy merchant of that town. Champlin fought in the American Revolution, and later served in the Continental Congress and the Rhode Island Legislature.⁸ In the Sibley letters and diaries there are, however, no clues as to the source of his name. In 1784, not long after Samuel's birth, Elizabeth presented her two sons for baptism. Samuel Hopkins baptized them in his church in Newport.⁹

John Sibley decided to seek opportunity elsewhere, and in 1784, he left his family to establish himself in Fayetteville, North Carolina. In Sibley's absence, Elizabeth and her two infant sons lived first with her father and mother in Newport. They also stayed for a brief time in the home of David Hopkins, Elizabeth's wealthy brother who lived six miles from Baltimore,¹⁰ and, just before they joined John in Fayetteville in 1788, they lived with Samuel Sibley, John's brother in Great Barrington.¹¹

For most of this time, however, George lived in the home of one of the most influential Puritan clergymen in the history of the

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Fh. in C.A. Collins, 3rd ed., "James Brown Diary, 1787-1789," Rhode Island History, VII (April, 1948), 52.

⁹Elizabeth Hopkins to Samuel H. Sibley, March 8, 1811, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰George C. Sibley to Cyrus and Origen Sibley, 1851, Sibley Mss.

¹¹Ibid.

Congregational Church in New England.¹² The tender years of this boy's life were surrounded by the outward and subtle mediations of a Puritan environment characterized by high moral demands, respect for learning, and an ever-present insistence on duty to God and man. It was only natural for the boy to turn to the example of his grandfather and to be molded by it. A key to an understanding of George's Puritan make-up and outlook can be discerned in his early childhood in the home of the Rev. Mr. Hopkins.

Samuel Hopkins was a member of one of the most distinguished families of New England. His uncle, for whom he was named, was a graduate of Yale and had married Esther, the sister of the great Puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards.¹³ His younger brother, Mark, after graduation from Yale practiced law in Great Barrington and married Electra Sergeant, daughter of the missionary to the Stockbridge Indians. They became the parents of Archibald, who in turn, became the father of Mark and Albert Hopkins whose names were later prominent in American education.¹⁴

Born on Sunday, September 17, 1721, in Waterbury, Connecticut, the young Hopkins entered Yale when he was sixteen years old. He was awarded the A.B. degree in 1741. After his graduation, he studied with Jonathan

¹²William Warren Sweet, "Religious Thought and Writings," James Truslow Adams, ed., Dictionary of American History, 5 vols. (1942), IV, 446.

¹³Joseph Emerson's Diary, 1748-1749, "Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, XLIV (1910-1911), p.n., 267.

¹⁴From the notes and correspondence of Dr. Kate L. Gregg, Sibley Mss.

Edwards, preached in the surrounding communities near Northampton, and taught school.¹⁵

In June, 1743, Hopkins accepted an invitation to preach at Great Barrington. He left Northampton and traveled an old Indian trail that twisted through the forest and mountains. The journey was tiring, and before his trip was over he complained of the bad travel conditions and of a "tired body." Despite these hardships, he wanted nothing more than the assurance that he was doing his duty. All the rest would take care of itself.¹⁶

At first, the congregation seemed "serious and attentive." However, the longer he remained the less impressed he was with the people and the village. In his diary, he recorded his feelings. The people appeared "senseless and stupid"; there was more going on at the local tavern than anywhere else; the village was plagued with fever and ague from "which few people escape" who lived there. But it was the religious apathy which concerned him the most. "The circumstances of this place," he declared, "appear more and more dreadful to me; there seems to be no religion here..."¹⁷ His negative attitude toward the people and the village was undoubtedly increased by his overwhelming sense of being alone and isolated.

Disturbing questions such as these must have probed the mind of the young clergyman: Would the response of his congregation stir the intellectual and spiritual fires within him and inspire him to think more

¹⁵ Taylor, Great Barrington, 385.

¹⁶ Ibid., 90-91.

¹⁷ Ibid., 91.

deeply and preach more profoundly? What was there in this primitive setting which would appeal to his sensitive and cultured nature? Would he be able to endure the physical and intellectual isolation of this remote part of Massachusetts? He must have felt that eventually his background and education would come into conflict with the harsh realities of a frontier existence. "They are a contentious people," he wrote, "and I am in no way qualified for such a work."¹⁸

In spite of his uncertainties, he was convinced of one thing: God wanted him to do his duty in all respects. His duty was, as he saw it, to remain in Great Barrington and to be their minister.

Finally, by September, 1743, the congregation and Hopkins had agreed on sixty pounds settlement money for the building of a house and barn, a modest yearly income of forty-five pounds, and an annual supply of firewood. Hopkins was ordained and by the end of the year a church had been officially organized.¹⁹

In this remote settlement, Hopkins began his career as a frontier Puritan preacher. Early in his residence he planted apple trees, built a house and barn²⁰ and, in 1748, married Joanna Ingersoll, the daughter of one of his parishioners. They reared a large family of eight children, five boys and three girls.²¹

¹⁸

Ibid., 94.

¹⁹

Ibid.

²⁰

Ibid., 187.

²¹

Samuel Hopkins married twice. His first wife, Joanna, whom he married on January 13, 1748, died on August 31, 1793. Their children were David, Moses, Levi, Elizabeth, Joanna, Samuel, Rhoda and Daniel. See Taylor, Great Barrington, 386-387.

The construction of the meeting house had been underway before Hopkins' arrival, and he led in its completion. He studied, preached, and carried on the pastoral routine. Like most of his people, he feared the diseases that stalked the primitive settlement. Nagged by a feeling of ineffectiveness as he worked among a people who exhibited little evidence of religious enthusiasm, Hopkins nevertheless endured, sustained by the belief that he had been called to this work.²²

While Hopkins lived in Great Barrington, the French and the English struggled for supremacy in North America. Great Barrington was never far from the scene of Indians on the warpath and soldiers moving from one place to another. During King George's War, 1740-1748, Hopkins was a minister to a people who were often afraid and insecure. In 1745, he recorded in his diary that he preached in "Coorod Burghardt's Fort" because the people feared the Indians.²³ On another occasion, he served as a chaplain to a party of white men and friendly Indians who protected Great Barrington from a band of hostile Indians.²⁴ Exaggerated rumors about Indian depredations occasionally terminated religious gatherings and sent the people scurrying home, anxious and afraid. Once, while Hopkins read the Psalms in Church, news reached the congregation that Stockbridge was "beset by an army of Indians, and on fire which broke up the assembly in an instant." Hopkins described the scene:

²² Taylor, Great Barrington, 91.

²³ Ibid., 138.

²⁴ Ibid.

What shall we do? Not a gun to defend us; not a fort to flee to, and few guns and little ammunition in that place. Some ran one way and some another, but the general course was southward.... The troops that came to our assistance are now drawing off; and what have they done? They have been to Stockbridge and eaten up all their provisions, and fatigued themselves, and that's all....In short the case of New England looks very dark, especially on the frontiers.²⁵

The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, October 18, 1748, brought a temporary respite from the Indian threat.

By 1754 the frontier once again throbbed with danger as a result of the French and Indian War. The English settlers on the borders of Massachusetts and New York lived in constant fear of the French and Indians. In the summer of 1755 Hopkins reported that two or three Indians had chased a man about a mile and a half west of his house.²⁶ This episode prompted him to uproot his family and to move them to a more secure place to be "out of the way of fears from the Indians."²⁷

For twenty-five years, Samuel Hopkins labored in Great Barrington and shared the dangers of the New England frontier. In Taylor's history of Great Barrington, Hopkins was remembered for his preaching, which was argumentative and doctrinal, but even more for his hard work and industry among the people.²⁸ The frontier experience, however, did not stifle completely his intellectual pursuits. Egbert C. Smythe believed that Hopkins wrote the earliest biography of

²⁵ Ibid., 139.

²⁶ Ibid., 140.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 140.

Jonathan Edwards, which was published in 1765 while Hopkins was still living in Great Barrington.²⁹

There is, however, no reason to believe that Hopkins ever modified his original impression of the people and the village. He wrote in his diary,

I had no great success in the ministry. A small number were hopefully converted and a number of Christians moved into this place in this time, which increased the number in the Church...the congregation, in general, did not attend public worship, except sometimes; and were not willing to support the gospel.³⁰

By 1769 Hopkins faced an impossible financial situation. The congregation had not been able to meet his salary payments and had fallen farther and farther behind. Conflicting religious backgrounds among the local inhabitants had added to the problems. People of Dutch ancestry had migrated to the settlement, had helped to finish the building of the meeting house, and had contributed to the support of a minister. They requested permission to have Dutch preaching in the meeting house, and Hopkins refused. He supposedly assured them quite pointedly that "there never would be Dutch preaching there."³¹ The Dutch, outraged at what they must have thought was a classic display of intolerance and prejudice, withdrew their financial support and

²⁹ Egbert C. Smythe, "Some Early Writings of Jonathan Edwards, A.D., 1714-1726," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, X (April, 1895-October, 1895), 221.

³⁰ Taylor, Great Barrington, 193-194.

³¹ Louis Hasbroucke von Shaler, ed., St. James Church Records, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, (n.d.), 155-156.

refused to attend religious services. Then, too, Hopkins was an outspoken Whig and this antagonized a strong Tory element in the community.³² Moreover, additional churches had been organized and these competed with the Congregational Church for members. Confronted by these realities and the failure of the congregation to pay his salary, Hopkins asked to be relieved. The people agreed, and on January 18, 1769, he was dismissed.³³

From the frontier settlement of Great Barrington, Hopkins moved East to the settled community of Newport, Rhode Island, where he became the minister of the Congregational Church.³⁴ As a key commercial center and the principal port of entry for the slave trade, Newport brimmed with the growing controversy between the Americans and the English.³⁵ Like most Congregational preachers, Hopkins took an active stand on the side of the American patriots.³⁶ When war finally came in 1776, the British occupied the city and Hopkins left with his family for Great Barrington.

In the spring of 1780 the minister went back to Newport to rebuild his broken congregation. He found the church building in a deplorable condition as it had been used by British troops for barracks.

³² Taylor, Great Barrington, 187

³³ Ibid., 193-194.

³⁴ Richard Mather Bayles, ed., History of Newport County Rhode Island (1886), 446.

³⁵ Richard B. Morris, ed., and Henry Steele Commager, chief consultant editor, Encyclopedia of American History (New York, 1965), 542.

³⁶ Bayles, History of Newport County, 446.

The pulpit, pews, and fixtures were all demolished and the bell had been sent to England.³⁷

Prior to the American Revolution, Hopkins had been active in the anti-slavery movement. In A Dialogue Showing It to Be the Duty and Interest of the American States to Emancipate All Their African Slaves, published in 1776, Hopkins indicated Rhode Island as a colony that "has enslaved more of the poor Africans than any other colony in New England."³⁸ Many of his rich parishioners had undoubtedly made their fortunes in "rum, niggers, and molasses." According to Hopkins, the enslaved Negro, at the time of the Revolution, represented a threat to the American struggle for political freedom. The British attempted to turn Negroes against the Americans by promising them their liberty. To combat this "threatening evil," Hopkins advocated that Americans take the initiative, set the Negro free, and encourage him to labor and to fight for the American cause. This course of action would not only be just; it also would confuse the British in their evil endeavors to recruit a Negro force against the Americans.³⁹ On his return in 1780 he continued to be active in his opposition to slavery and was a major factor in bringing New England Congregationalism to an active anti-slavery position.⁴⁰

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Ibid.

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Samuel Hopkins, "A Dialogue concerning Slavery of Africans," quoted in Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, IV (October, 1885-April, 1887), 212.

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Samuel Hopkins, "A Dialogue concerning the Slavery of Africans," quoted in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, VI (1862-1863), 181.

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William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York, 1930), 245; also William Warren Sweet, "Attitude of the Church to Slavery," Adams, ed., Dictionary of American History, V, 97.

During the struggle over adoption of the Constitution Hopkins energetically supported its ratification. As far as he was concerned, the anti-Federalists were "unclean spirits, like frogs--they like the Furies of the poets, are spreading discord, and exciting men to contention and war, wherever they go; and they can spoil the best Constitution that can be formed."⁴¹ Only in its failure to abolish slavery did the Constitution fall short of Hopkins' full approval. The constitutional provision which provided for the end of the slave trade in 1808 simply did not go far enough. He asked, "How does it appear in the sight of Heaven and of all good men, well informed, that these states, who have been fighting for liberty, and consider themselves as the highest and most noble example of zeal for it, cannot agree in any political Constitution, unless it indulge and authorize them to enslave their fellowmen?"⁴² Recognizing the need for a Constitution, he remained apprehensive about its failure to outlaw human slavery: "...if this Constitution is not adopted...we shall be in a state of anarchy...Therefore, I wish to have it adopted, but still, as I said, I fear..."⁴³

During his later years, Hopkins achieved recognition as the author of "Hopkinsianism", a modification of Calvinism. William Sweet, the noted church historian, described it as a "new emphasis in New England

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Dr. Samuel Hopkins to Dr. Hart, January 29, 1788 quoted in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, VI (1863), 170.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

theology."⁴⁴ Andrew Peabody suggested that it was "an important stage of progress from the earlier Calvinism to the new theology of Andover and New Haven."⁴⁵ The essence of this new theology was outlined in Hopkins' System of Doctrine contained in Divine Revelation Explained and Defended, published in 1793.

Hopkins denied that "In Adam's fall, we sinned all." Adam's sin was not imputed to human posterity, but the tendency toward sin was inherited from Adam. Man was a free agent but he was only right and moral when he had been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, man's salvation was not only dependent on his "election," but also on the regenerative power of God's spirit in his life. Hopkins believed that the locus of human sin was selfishness. A sinful man was a selfish man, but the virtuous and righteous man was one who expressed "disinterested benevolence embracing the entire universe." This disinterested benevolence was man's willingness to subordinate his own private interest to the general good. The essence of Hopkinsianism can best be seen in the modification of the Calvinistic concepts of imputed sin and man's dependence on God's election for his ultimate salvation.⁴⁶

By the early part of the decade of the 1780's, Samuel Hopkins had approached the apex of his career. His long life, that in a sense had spanned two worlds--the world of the New England frontier with its

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William Warren Sweet, "Religious Thought and Writings," Adams, ed., Dictionary of American History, IV, 446.

⁴⁵ Andrew Peabody, "Hopkinsianism," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, V (October, 1887-October, 1888), 440.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 437-461.

hardships and dangers, and the world of a more sophisticated and settled eastern society--had gained recognition. His vigorous leadership in the cause of the emancipation of slaves was rewarded when the Rhode Island legislature abolished slavery in the year 1784.⁴⁷ The outlines of his theological thought had become well known. He had corresponded with such prominent men as Roger Sherman on various points of his theological interpretations,⁴⁸ and had pursued an energetic course in favor of the new Constitution. At Great Barrington during the first half of his life Hopkins had been isolated and far removed from the main currents of social conflict, theological debate, and political controversy. But his life in Newport had involved him in some of the most important issues that ever confronted the nation.

Into Hopkins' busy, productive and religious household Elizabeth Sibley brought her two sons, George and Samuel. It was a household dominated by the person of the grandfather and where the Bible was read daily in the presence of the gathered family. The Bible was a book to read and to study as the authoritative word of God. Later on while George was attending an academy in North Carolina, his grandfather wrote him a letter urging him to study his Bible and to "pay attention" to its truth.⁴⁹ Thus, George's practice of Bible study developed early and continued throughout his adult life.

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Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History, 543.

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Samuel Hopkins to Roger Sherman, August 2, 1790 quoted in Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, V (October, 1887-October, 1888), 448.

⁴⁹

Samuel Hopkins to Master George Sibley, May 11, 1797, Sibley Mss.

The Puritan morality focused on duty to God and man. All men died and were judged on whether or not they had performed their duty. George was warned by his grandfather that death awaited every man and that he should make ready. George was to beware of idle and profane boys who might lead him astray. The grandfather also admonished him to "grow up to be a good man."⁵⁰

Learning was emphasized in the household of Samuel Hopkins. The Hopkins family was never far removed from the educational circles of New England. Samuel Hopkins had taught school following his graduation from Yale, and numbered among his friends men who were actively engaged in the education of ministers.⁵¹ At one time, he was considered for the presidency of New Jersey College, now Princeton.⁵² Hopkins sent Elizabeth to a Boston school when she was thirteen years old.⁵³ While George was a student, his grandfather encouraged him to take advantage of his educational opportunities.⁵⁴

George's stay in the home of Samuel Hopkins ended when he, his infant brother Samuel, and his mother Elizabeth departed for Fayetteville to be with John. There is no evidence that George ever saw his grandfather again. In time, the memory of him became clouded and the years

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Samuel Hopkins to Master George Sibley, February 11, 1797, Sibley Mss.

⁵¹From the notes and correspondence of Dr. Kate L. Gregg, Sibley Mss.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Elizabeth Hopkins to Samuel H. Sibley, March 8, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁴Samuel Hopkins to Master George Sibley, February 9, 1797, Sibley Mss.

which were spent in his home faded into the indistinct past of childhood. But the Puritan strain had been passed on and had been so deeply implanted that it would influence George C. Sibley's actions in a frontier environment. In less than two decades after George left his grandfather's house, he moved to what many believed was the end of the world, but he never moved completely away from the shadowy presence and influence of his Puritan ancestor.

CHAPTER II

THE FINEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

On the streets of Fayetteville, North Carolina, in the late 1780's one could still hear the burr of the Scotch Highlanders who had settled in large numbers in that area.¹ As an outfitting post, the town was filled with hunters and trappers in buckskin, and with emigrants making the necessary preparations to push on to Cumberland Gap and to what lay beyond the mountains.²

John Sibley moved there in 1784 and began publishing a newspaper, The Fayetteville Gazette.³ His partner was a printer by the name of Caleb Howard. The reasons which motivated him to leave his family behind and to come to Fayetteville remain obscure. By 1788, Elizabeth and her two sons had arrived and the family was united, but not for long. Elizabeth died of unknown causes in the fall of 1790. The following notice appeared in the Gazette on October 25, 1790:

Died-This morning, Mrs. Elizabeth Sibley, the wife of Doctor Sibley, and daughter of the Reverend Samuel Hopkins of Newport, Rhode Island. She has left a husband with two little sons, to lament her death. As a wife, a Christian and friend, she was exceeded by few; but as a mother, by none.⁴

¹ Guion Griffis Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina (Chapel Hill, 1937), 11.

² Fayetteville was laid out in 1746 and became one of the most important markets in colonial and ante-bellum North Carolina. See Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 11.

³ Taylor, Great Barrington, 329; From the notes and correspondence of Dr. Kate L. Gregg, Sibley Mss.; also Albert T. Wibeck, "John Sibley," Dumas Malone, ed. Dictionary of American Biography, XVII, 146-147.

⁴ Quoted in The North Carolina Review, VIII (April, 1931), 219.

The next day at eleven o'clock Elizabeth was buried in a land of strangers.

George was only eight years old when his mother died. When Elizabeth at the age of thirteen went to Baltimore to attend school, she had lived in the home of the woman who later became the second wife of Samuel Hopkins. Years later in a letter to Samuel Sibley, Mrs. Hopkins recalled that Elizabeth was a very attractive woman with an agreeable disposition and pleasant manners. She bravely sustained the trials that besieged her and was "one of the best of mothers." Perhaps the most discerning characteristic of all was Elizabeth's Christian faith.⁵

Nearly fifty years after the death of Sibley's young mother,⁶ he wrote to a man who had criticized the stand he had taken in regard to religious teachings at Lindenwood Female Seminary in St. Charles, Missouri. The letter reveals the one thing that Sibley remembered most about his mother. She was deeply religious and taught him the story of Christ and to pray. He recalled her counsel to follow in the footsteps of Christ. He claimed that as a youth he had paid little attention to these lessons, but in his mature years the "force and truth" of them had deeply influenced his life.⁷ It would be difficult to prove to what extent Elizabeth had shaped her son's life, but that she was a channel of the Puritan strain cannot be argued.

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Elizabeth Hopkins to Samuel H. Sibley, March 8, 1811, Sibley Mss.

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Elizabeth Hopkins Sibley was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts on March 6, 1755. See Taylor, Great Barrington, 386-387.

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George C. Sibley to William Russell, June 1, 1836, Sibley Mss.

After his mother's death, George, along with his brother, was sent to live with an old friend of John Sibley's, a Colonel Shepherd who resided in Orange County, North Carolina.⁸ After John remarried in 1791, George and Samuel returned to attend school in Fayetteville.⁹

In 1795, the two brothers were sent to the Pittsboro Academy in Chatham County, North Carolina, where Dr. William Bingham was in charge of the school. Educated at Glasgow, Scotland, Dr. Bingham was a leading educator, and the academy flourished for a time under his leadership.¹⁰ Like many such schools, however, it ultimately ran into difficulties. At the turn of the 19th century, the Raleigh Register described such schools as existing on "effusions of generosity," the uncertainty of which led the editor also to remark, rhetorically, "What are they now?"¹¹

After four years in the Pittsboro Academy, George transferred to the Fayetteville Academy, where Dr. William Ker was head master. He was also a minister in the Presbyterian Church. Later he became the first president of the University of North Carolina, which was established in 1795.¹² Ker's academy was one of the most successful in the state.

The academy was situated near the Presbyterian and Episcopal Churches in the heart of Fayetteville on a large, well-shaded lot joined with the street by a stile. The main building contained classrooms and an apartment that could house one family. It was three stories high, had

⁸George C. Sibley to Cyrus and Origen Sibley, 1851, Sibley Mss.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Quoted in Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 285.

¹²Ibid., 285.

a double portico in front and a beautiful belfry. The building was said to be large enough to accomodate at least 200 scholars and one family.¹³

Like most academies, the Fayetteville institution did not attract boarding students because it lacked proper facilities to house them.¹⁴ It depended upon the generally accepted method of financing, subscriptions and "effusions of generosity." It had been chartered by the Legislature and was governed by a board of trustees.¹⁵ In keeping with the traditional curriculum, the academy emphasized Latin and Greek, or, as the more practical-minded Raleigh Register saw fit to label them, the "dead languages."¹⁶ In addition, there was reading, writing, and arithmetic. Some people criticized the institution for not emphasizing geography, history, and philosophy, but most probably approved of its stress on religious training as one of its foremost duties.¹⁷

Sibley continued his studies at the Fayetteville Academy until 1800. We can assume that his educational career was strongly shaded toward the classical languages, writing (his Grandfather Hopkins complimented him once on his improved penmanship), reading and arithmetic. Perhaps his saturation during this period with formal religion may explain why he delayed becoming an official member of the Presbyterian Church until his early forties. For a young man on the edge of the frontier, he received an education which was far above the average.

¹³Charles Lee Coon, ed., North Carolina Schools and Academies, 1790-1840 (Raleigh, 1908), 187.

¹⁴Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 287.

¹⁵Ibid., 284.

¹⁶Raleigh Register, March 25, 1800.

¹⁷Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 316.

After 1800, he became an apprentice in the counting house of John Winslow, a merchant of Fayetteville, to learn practical book-keeping. Believing that a man was not fully educated without training in commerce and finances, John Sibley paid Winslow a premium for George's training.¹⁸ What the young Sibley learned in the counting house of John Winslow was to prove invaluable to him in later years as a factor at Fort Osage and a businessman-farmer in St. Charles, Missouri.

While in Fayetteville, John Sibley became a part of the growing Democratic-Republican party, working with leading Fayetteville Democrats such as David Ker, Caleb Howard, and Guilford Dudley.¹⁹ Earlier he had rallied behind North Carolina's ratification of the Constitution. Only four issues of his paper, the Gazette, remain in existence but they clearly reveal its pro-Constitution position.²⁰

In 1794 he served on a committee to "draw up an address" to be read at a public meeting and then sent to Fayetteville's representative in Congress. The document left no doubt that its sponsors considered Great Britain guilty of supporting European tyrants who were threatening the rising spirit of liberty on that continent. It condemned England for attempting to discourage the French Revolution against a "wicked aristocracy" and for even going farther to thwart the liberty of her own citizens. Primarily, however, the address castigated the British for interfering with American trade, during the process of which they had

¹⁸ George C. Sibley to Cyrus and Origen Sibley, 1851, Sibley Mss.

¹⁹ Eugene Link, "The Democratic Societies of the Carolinas," The North Carolina Review, XVIII (July, 1941), 265-266.

²⁰ Charles Christopher Crittenden, "North Carolina Newspapers Before 1790," The James Sprunt Historical Studies, XX (1926), 39.

"inveigled our ships into their ports, and had condemned them by mock trials and arbitrary regulations." For these reasons the authors of the address considered a war with Great Britain "just and necessary."²¹ John's strong anti-British sentiments definitely placed him on the side of the ascending Democratic-Republican party in the decade of the 1790's. George shared his father's anti-British feeling and, in later years, supported American attempts to defang the British lion.

John Sibley's second wife, Mary Winslow, the widow of Edward Winslow, whom he married on November 10, 1791, gave birth to two children, Henry Robert and Ann Elizabeth.²² George called his step-mother "mama," and from the available information there are no reasons to believe that any serious conflicts arose between them. There is a belief, however, that the husband and wife were incompatible since early in 1800 John decided to leave North Carolina and to head west to Louisiana.²³ Although he did not send for Mary, he did, on occasion, send her money. However, many years later, he wrote that he had lost by fire "all his houses and printing office" in Fayetteville.²⁴ Thus, the

²¹From a report of a public meeting held in Fayetteville, North Carolina, April 17, 18, 1794 quoted in The North Carolina Review, VI (July, 1929), 319-322.

²²G.P. Whittington, "Dr. John Sibley of Natchitoches, 1757-1837," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, X (January-October, 1927), 445; also, Witbeck, "John Sibley," Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, XVII, 146-147.

²³George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, November 11, 1804, Sibley Mss.

²⁴John Sibley to Christopher C. Baldwin, May 28, 1834 quoted in The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, X (January-October, 1927), 474.

desire to recoup his financial loss in a land of greater opportunity may have been the major reason for his departure.

John left by way of Charleston, South Carolina, on July 21, 1802, and arrived in New Orleans in September. The French culture and the people of New Orleans made a lasting impression on him. He had been told that the estimated population of the city was fifteen thousand, with the French making up seven-eighths. As he walked the streets, he noticed the well-dressed, handsome people and the priests "with long beards, big hats and robes tied in the middle." The city was excellently laid out and contained many strongly built, elegant houses, some of brick, others of stone. The latter had plastered fronts and were painted white. The fertility of the surrounding countryside impressed John: "nothing is put into the ground that don't grow in the most luxuriant manner."²⁵ Moreover, his letters to his family in North Carolina pictured Louisiana as "the finest country in the world."²⁶

Early in 1803, John made his first voyage up the Red River in an open boat.²⁷ He scanned and studied the geography of this country which few Americans had seen. What he saw and experienced formed the basis of a report which was later sent to Thomas Jefferson and also submitted by President Jefferson to Congress. On his ascension of the

²⁵"The Journal of Dr. John Sibley, July-October, 1802," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, X (January-October, 1927), 474.

²⁶John Sibley to Samuel Hopkins Sibley, February 28, 1803, Sibley Mss.

²⁷G.P. Whittington to Dr. Lucinda Templin, n.d., Sibley Mss. See also John Sibley to General Henry Dearborn, Secretary of War, April 10, 1805, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I (Washington, 1832), 725.

Red River, John was impressed by the prairies, the plantations along the river, the animals, the climate and the water. "I have seen few parts of the world," he wrote, "more inviting to settlers." John settled at Natchitoches, which had been founded nearly one hundred years previously by Louis de St. Denis, a French trader, at the site of an old Indian village about three hundred miles from New Orleans.²⁸ John's only negative comment about Natchitoches was that the water made bad tea.²⁹

The Louisiana Purchase was consummated in April, 1803, and the news reached New Orleans in August. When the United States began to administer Louisiana, a detachment of American troops was dispatched to Natchitoches to protect the citizens and to discourage the Spaniards, the French and the Indians from causing any trouble. At this time, the government employed John as a "contract surgeon" to doctor the troops.³⁰

W.C.C. Claiborne, the first governor of the territory, knowing that John had located at Natchitoches, requested information from him about the country, the people, and the activity of the Spaniards in that area.³¹ Sibley replied in a letter on October 10, 1803, that the land abounded in economic possibilities and should not be abandoned to the Indians. Cotton could be grown; trappers would find fur-bearing

²⁸ See Ross Phares, Cavalier in the Wilderness (Baton Rouge, 1952).

²⁹ John Sibley to General Henry Dearborn, Secretary of War, April 10, 1805, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 726.

³⁰ John Sibley to George C. Sibley, November 8, 1804, Sibley Mss.

³¹ John Sibley to Governor W.C.C. Claiborne, October 10, 1803 quoted in Dunbar Rowland, ed., Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, 3 vols. (Jackson, Mississippi, 1917), II, 315.

animals in huge numbers; horses, cattle, and pork could be raised on the excellent grass lands. "Red River alone below Natchitoches," he predicted, "is Capable of making more tobacco than is made at present in all the United States, & of a Superior quality, and at one fourth part of the Labour..."³²

The land yielded, according to common calculation, 2000 pounds of tobacco per acre. He passed on some bits of intelligence concerning the Spaniards, and recommended various points on the Red River frontier where government outposts should be built. He had serious misgivings about the people and whether they would be able to adjust to a democratic government. In his opinion, since they had known only a commandant who had exercised military and civil authority for such a long time, the practice of democracy among them would be farcical.³³

During the year 1804, John also corresponded with President Thomas Jefferson, with whom he shared information which he had collected on Indian ways and languages. Jefferson was particularly interested in these subjects. The President theorized that language was "the remaining monument of connection with other nations," and that by comparing basic words in the Indian vocabularies with basic words in the other languages it might be possible to trace the origin of the American Indians.³⁴ That Jefferson pondered John's letters is evidenced in a

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Thomas Jefferson to Dr. John Sibley, May 27, 1805, Andrew A. Lipscomb, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (Washington, D.C., 1905), 79. See also E.K. Williams, "Jefferson's Theories of Language," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1948.

letter from him in the spring of 1805.³⁵ Other officials in Washington also were aware of John's presence on the Louisiana frontier.

Claiborne had informed James Madison that Sibley was alert to the intrigues of the Spaniards who were encouraging slaves to leave the service of their masters.³⁶ This letter probably was instrumental in securing for John an appointment from the War Department in December, 1804, to serve occasionally as an Agent for the United States, "holding conferences with Chiefs and others of the several tribes in vicinity of Natchitoches."³⁷ John was to receive \$300 worth of goods to be used for presents. The government wanted him to persuade the Indians to break off relations with other powers and to rely on the "White Father" alone.³⁸

In 1805, John's account of the Red River frontier was sent to Thomas Jefferson.³⁹ These reports represented a vast store of knowledge about the country and the Indians in Louisiana and made a

³⁵Thomas Jefferson to Dr. John Sibley, May 27, 1805, Lipscomb, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 79.

³⁶W.C.C. Claiborne to James Madison, September 1, 1804, Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, II, 315.

³⁷The War Department to Dr. John C. Sibley, December 13, 1804, Sibley Mss.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹W.C.C. Claiborne to John Sibley, June 10, 1805, Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, III, 87. The report on the Red River was also published in Annals of Congress, 9th Congress, Second Session and in American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I. "Historical Sketches of the Several Indian Tribes in Louisiana South of the Arkansas River, and between the Mississippi and the River Grande" also was published in the above publications.

contribution to an understanding of the newly purchased territory.⁴⁰
 Since the William Dunbar and John Hunter expedition of 1804 had
 failed to ascend the Red River to its source⁴¹ and Lewis and Clark
 had not yet returned from the Far West, the Sibley reports were
 among the earliest observations on Louisiana to reach Jefferson.⁴²
 Zebulon M. Pike in preparing for his expedition in 1806 may have seen
 the Sibley reports presented to Congress on February 19, 1806.⁴³

In his reports John discussed the legends, the languages, and
 customs of the Indians. He estimated the size of the various tribes,
 gave their approximate location, and even attempted to analyze the
 nature of each tribe. Some of the tribes were friendly; others, he
 warned, were not to be trusted. He thought that some tribes would
 make good farmers, but others he considered no better than bandits and
 raiders. Being a doctor, he was aware of their physical features and
 of the diseases that decimated them, such as small pox and measles.
 He also reported on the relationship among tribes, and the connection
 of each with the Spaniards and French.⁴⁴

The government rewarded John in October, 1805, for his valuable
 work by appointing him "Indian Agent for part of the Territory of Orleans,

⁴⁰Thomas Jefferson to the Senate and the House of Representatives,
 February 19, 1806 quoted in American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I,
 706.

⁴¹Issac J. Cox, "The Exploration of the Louisiana Frontier,
 1803-1806," Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the
Year 1904 (Washington, 1905), 159.

⁴²Ibid., 151.

⁴³Ibid., 151-152.

⁴⁴American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 721-730.

West of the lower Mississippi." His salary was to be \$1,000 a year and "a subsistence at 4 rations per day."⁴⁵ One of his first responsibilities was to attempt to bring the chiefs to Washington. John remained an Indian agent until he was dismissed in 1814 for overstepping his authority.⁴⁶

Although John wrote letters to his family in Fayetteville and at times sent them drafts for as much as a hundred dollars, he gave no indication that he planned to return home. Meanwhile, his son George continued to live in the family home and to work for Mary's brother, John Winslow. There he enjoyed the rounds of tea parties, dances, four in one week, and the pretty girls whom he called "angels" because they kept his social life bubbling.⁴⁷ Being the eldest, George assumed his share of family chores and did not hesitate to give advice, especially to his younger brother, Samuel, whom he implored on one occasion to use good judgement and, above all, to shun the mere gratification of "foolish and expensive desires."⁴⁸

George treasured his father's letters and made certain that other members of the family read them. The available letters are, more or less, what one would expect an absent father to write to his family. However, some of them contained comments likely to excite a

⁴⁵The War Department to Dr. John Sibley, October 17, 1805, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁶W.C.C. Claiborne to James Monroe, December 20, 1814, Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, IV, 327-328.

⁴⁷George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, November 11, 1804, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁸Ibid.

young man's imagination and desire--lines that spoke of a land where men still dueled to defend their honor, where savages stalked the wilderness, where brave men could still place their feet on virgin land, could still cast their eyes on scenes untouched and unmarked by a white man's civilization, and where beyond the Great River there lay opportunity and adventure.⁴⁹ In such letters, John Sibley, perhaps unknowingly, kindled in his oldest son a longing to be with his father in that new land and to make a career there.

As an Indian agent, John Sibley learned of the government's intention to establish a government trading post for the Indians in the vicinity of Natchitoches on the Red River. There is no way of knowing, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that John sensed in George's letters to his father a desire to join him in Louisiana and encouraged him to seek a position as the assistant factor at the newly proposed trading house. Be that as it may, George in 1805 wrote to the Secretary of War, Henry Dearborn, and requested an appointment as an assistant factor at the newly proposed trading house to be established at Natchitoches.⁵⁰ Thus, the young George Sibley initiated a series of events which would bring him from North Carolina to the frontier and launch him on his career as a government factor.

⁴⁹ John Sibley to George C. Sibley, November 8, 1804, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁰ The Secretary of War to George C. Sibley, August 17, 1805, Edwin Carter, ed., The Territorial Papers of the United States: The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1803-1806, XIII (Washington, D.C., 1948, 187.

On April 18, 1796, the Congress of the United States passed the Indian Trade Law which structured the government's Indian Factory System.⁵¹ This act provided for the President to establish factories (trading posts or stores) within the national frontier, and to appoint a factor or storekeeper for each factory. Congress appropriated \$150,000 to implement the law.

In a sense, the factory system as conceived by the government was a pacification program among the Indians. Its main objective was to keep peace with the Indians. Henry Dearborn in 1801 noted that a well-managed factory had "a salutary effect on the minds of the Indians."⁵² John Mason, Superintendent of Indian Trade, counseled a young factor that the main purpose of the system was to "secure the friendship of the Indians."⁵³ By setting up these factories at convenient locations for the Indians, staffing them with honest and experienced civilian storekeepers, and providing them with good quality Indian trade goods, the government would take an important and positive step toward maintaining peace with the Indians on the western frontier.

In addition to this purpose, the government also hoped that by establishing a network of factories on the western frontier it would be able to discourage the encroachments of foreign powers among the Indians, enforce the licensing of private traders, and reduce the constant

⁵¹Annals of the Congress of the United States (Washington, D.C., 1834-1856), IV, 1262-1264.

⁵²General Henry Dearborn to Congress, December 8, 1801, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 654.

⁵³John Mason to John Johnson, May 20, 1808 Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 185.

warfare among the tribes. Although the government did not enter the Indian trade primarily to make money, it did believe that the system would hold its own economically and provide certain guaranteed markets for Indian trade goods.⁵⁴

The first two trading houses were established in Georgia and on the boundary between the state of Tennessee and the Cherokee nation. As the American frontier expanded westward, so did the factory system. The government in 1802 built factories at Fort Stevens in the Mississippi Territory, at Fort Wayne in the Indiana Territory and at Detroit in the Michigan Territory. In 1805, the government established a factory at Chicago in the Indiana Territory. The Louisiana Purchase opened the door to the founding of factories on the Arkansas River, at the mouth of the Missouri River in the Louisiana Territory (Fort Bellefonaine), and at Natchitoches on the Red River.⁵⁵ George Sibley hoped to be a part of the factory operation at Natchitoches, to be established late in 1805.

The Secretary of War informed George that the factory at Natchitoches was so small that it would need only a "young lad" to assist the factor. However, the Secretary offered a position as assistant at the factory already in operation near St. Louis, Missouri, at a salary of \$500 annually, and \$180 a year more for subsistence. He instructed George to execute a bond of \$4000, to be signed by himself and two sureties, and to take an oath of office before a competent

⁵⁴General Henry Dearborn to Congress, December 8, 1801, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 654.

⁵⁵American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 768.

magistrate. George was told that he would receive \$250 in travel money for his trip to St. Louis and that he should arrive there by October 10, 1805. Rudolph Tillier, the principal factor, would meet him in St. Louis.⁵⁶

George obtained John Winslow, his former employer, and John Hay as securities on his bond. He took the oath of office on August 26, 1805 before the Justices of Cumberland County, swearing to

faithfully and honestly execute the Trust committed to me, and that I will not directly or indirectly be concerned or interested in any Trade, Commerce, or barter with the Indians whatever, but on the public account.⁵⁷

George's appointment surely hinged on the name and reputation of his father. John Sibley had corresponded with the President and had provided him and Congress with illuminating reports of the Louisiana Territory. The government thought well enough of John to make him an Indian agent. W.C.C. Claiborne praised Sibley to James Madison and expressed great confidence in the Doctor. Thus, George Sibley came into the government's factory system riding his father's coattails.

Following his decision to accept his appointment, George prepared for his trek west and for his new career by arranging to have

⁵⁶The Secretary of War to George C. Sibley, August 17, 1805, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1803-1806, XIII, 187.

⁵⁷Oath of Office of George C. Sibley, Assistant Factor at St. Louis, August 26, 1805, "sworn before the Subscriber, one of the Justices for the County of Cumberland aforesaid, this twenty-sixth day of August in the year of our Lord, One thousand Eight hundred and five. John Hay," Sibley Mss. Also, see the Secretary of War to George C. Sibley, August 17, 1805, Carter, The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1803-1806, XIII, 187.

his mail sent to St. Louis, and by taking care of some necessary financial matters. In a farewell letter to his brother he admitted that his departure would be sad, but declared that his new situation would undoubtedly be a good one, the society would be pleasant, and that in time a promotion would undoubtedly occur.⁵⁸ Promising his brother that he would bear up "like a man," and not betray himself by "sniveling, sobbing and crying," George set out for the Louisiana Territory and for a land which he had been led to believe was the "finest in the world."

⁵⁸ George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, 1805, Sibley Mss.

CHAPTER III

FORT OSAGE

When the young George Sibley reached Fort Bellefontaine late in 1805, St. Louis was a small French village on the banks of the Mississippi River with a population of less than a thousand.¹ Beyond, lay the mysterious and spacious Louisiana Territory where Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, on their famed expedition, pressed toward the Pacific Ocean and did not return to St. Louis until the fall of 1806. Thomas Jefferson who had engineered the Louisiana Purchase and who had persuaded Congress to appropriate funds for its exploration had begun his second four years in office. These years proved frustrating and disappointing to the pacifist President because he was unable to resolve the worsening controversies between the United States and Great Britain over American neutrality on the high seas and British involvement with the Indians on the western frontier. Only a few Americans had crossed over the broad Mississippi River and had inched their way into this land known only by the Indians and by a handful of French and Spaniards.

Fort Bellefontaine, established by Lieut.-Col. Jacob Kingsbury in 1805 on the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River four miles above its confluence with the Mississippi River, was the first post of the Indian Factory System west of the Mississippi River and marked the initiation of the government's plan to secure with military and trading posts the vast territory of the Louisiana Purchase.² In May, 1804,

¹R.L. Kirkpatrick, "Professional, Religious, and Social Aspects of St. Louis Life, 1804-1816," Missouri Historical Review, XLIV (1949-1950), 373.

²See Kate L. Gregg, "Building of the First American Fort West of the Mississippi," Missouri Historical Review, XXX (July, 1936).

Lewis and Clark described the site as being an excellent location for a fort. Later, General Wilkinson, inspecting the fort under construction, commented that it was near "a fountain of pure water competent to supply 1,000 men daily." This beautiful spring of water provided the fort with its name, Bellefontaine.³

The buildings were crudely constructed of green logs, without nails, without flooring in the men's quarters, and with roofs of oak shingles held down by logs.⁴ The factory buildings consisted of a "magazine, 3 stores cellar included, lodging House, two Out houses & a kitchen."⁵ Five and a half acres of ground belonged to the factory. At the factory, the factor and his assistant traded blankets, beads, knives and cloth to the Indians for skins, pelts, fresh meats and wild fowl. Rudolph Tillier, an old, experienced trader, was in charge of the factory and six companies of Col. Thomas Hunt occupied the fort.⁶

Sibley came to these austere surroundings late in 1805 to assume his position as assistant factor of Fort Bellefontaine. He confronted an environment of traders, soldiers, Indians and adventurers. Small in stature, delicate in health, well educated and disciplined,

³ Harry T. Brundidge, "Fort Bellefontaine," St. Louis Star, May 2, 1932 taken from the Fort Bellefontaine File in the personal collection of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John Mason, Superintendent of Indian Trade to William Clark, December, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 248.

⁶ Brundidge, "Fort Bellefontaine," St. Louis Star, May 2, 1932.

Sibley found himself in a world where, as Frederick Bates observed, men were often "turbulent and ungovernable" and settled their differences of opinion by "breaking each others heads with a cudgel."⁷ One wonders how the men at the Fort reacted when the new assistant unpacked his gear, which included a frying pan, a kettle and a Webster's Dictionary.⁸

The first year at Fort Bellefontaine was a trying one. In a revealing letter to his brother in 1806, Sibley pictured the loneliness at Bellefontaine during a long winter filled with solitude and inactivity. To keep up his "dragging spirits," he had ordered newspapers, and he implored his brother to write more about family and friends. He hinted at his unhappy working conditions which centered around the growing tension between Sibley and his superior, Rudolph Tillier, over the latter's bookkeeping system.⁹

His main responsibility was to trade with the Indians, but, like his father, he showed a genuine interest in them and their customs. He saw the day when a profitable trade would grow up between the United States and the Far East, but thought that the government must extend its line of forts farther up the Missouri River and forge a connecting link to the Pacific Coast to achieve this. He closed his letter by disclosing his intention to remain in the government service and by affirming that he had a duty to perform regardless of hardships.¹⁰

⁷Thomas M. Marshall, ed., The Life and Papers of Frederick Bates, 2 vols. (1926), I, 113-114.

⁸Kate L. Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe (Albuquerque, 1952), 14.

⁹George C. Sibley to Samuel Hopkins Sibley, October 25, 1806, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰Ibid.

The enterprising and ambitious Sibley brought to his new task a Puritan outlook which, in time, clashed with Tillier's half-hearted and casual way of keeping records. The emerging conflict between the two grew in intensity until on November 5, 1807, Tillier dismissed Sibley on the grounds of insubordination.¹¹ There were a number of underlying causes which led to Tillier's firing of his assistant: the natural antagonism of youth versus age, Sibley's self-righteous air,¹² Tillier's belief that education in schools did not replace experience in life, Tillier's increasing concern for "poor business," and the chief factor's deepening distrust of the ambitious assistant who seemed to be waiting in the wings to take over. Dr. Kate Gregg points out, however, that the crux of the conflict was Tillier's irregular bookkeeping which appalled Sibley. Tillier, it seemed, took merchandise out of the business for use by his wife and five children and entered this on the credit side of the ledger.¹³

Evidently the feud between the two was common knowledge at the Fort. A month prior to Sibley's dismissal, his friend, Captain James House, second in command of the troops stationed at Fort Bellefontaine, wrote Frederick Bates, the Acting-Governor, and solicited his aid in behalf of Sibley. House believed that it was

¹¹George C. Sibley to Secretary of War, November 6, 1807, Secretary of War Document Files, National Archives. See also Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 14.

¹²Lindenwood College Bulletin (April, 1835), 3.

¹³Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 14.

for a man such as Sibley, sooner or later, to become a victim of Tillier's "gusts of passions and splenetic [sic] humours." House praised Sibley's interest in the factory, his propriety, and his patience and discretion under intolerable conditions.¹⁴ At the time Sibley was discharged, Governor Bates echoed House's sentiments in a letter to the Secretary of War, expressing the belief that the inquiry which Sibley had requested would remove any doubts about Sibley's character and would reveal the "impatient temper of Mr. Tillier." Bates indicated that their disagreement stemmed from "subjects of punctilio, which, in a mind less petulent [sic] than Mr. Tillier's, would have been thought unworthy of regard."¹⁵ Tillier's side of the controversy was smothered by Sibley's friends and their articulate defense of his case. However, sometime later, John Mason, Superintendent of Indian Trade, remarked to Meriwether Lewis that he regarded Tillier as "a man of great honor and respectability" who had seen better days.¹⁶

Desiring to defend his own name and to remain in government service, Sibley enclosed his letter of dismissal with a request for an

¹⁴ James House to Frederick Bates, October, 1807, Marshall, ed., Life and Papers of Frederick Bates, I, 225.

¹⁵ Acting-Governor Frederick Bates to the Secretary of War, November 7, 1807, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 151.

¹⁶ John Mason to Meriwether Lewis, May 17, 1809, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 275.

inquiry and sent them to the proper authorities in Washington.¹⁷ In turn, the Secretary of War wrote to Frederick Bates and William Clark and solicited their opinions on the difficulties at Fort Bellefontaine and their evaluations of the relative fitness of both men involved.¹⁸ Believing that he could plead his own case more effectively, Sibley, at his own expense, purchased a bay horse in St. Louis and rode horseback all the way to Washington. Unknown to him, the doors of a larger opportunity were about to swing open.

An urgent need to extend the factory system farther up the Missouri River, as well as farther north on the Mississippi River, became increasingly clear to the government. President Jefferson had promised the Osage Indians in 1804, and again in 1806, that trading houses would be established among them. Fort Bellefontaine partially fulfilled his promises. However, the Fort was so inconveniently located that the Indians which it was meant to serve had to pass through white settlements on their way to trade. This tended to discourage the Indians, who wanted little to do with the white settlers.¹⁹ Moreover, the whites were fearful of bands of Indians who had been known to steal horses and cattle, smash furniture with their tomahawks, and rip feather beds with their knives.²⁰ Thus, the Fort consistently had done poor business and had failed to pacify the Indians.

¹⁷George C. Sibley to Secretary of War, November 6, 1807, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, f.n., 151.

¹⁸Secretary of War to Acting-Governor Bates and William Clark, December 9, 1807, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana, 1806-1814, XIV, 155.

¹⁹Kate L. Gregg, Westward with Dragoons (Fulton, 1937), 4-5.

²⁰Frederick Bates to Henry Dearborn, October 22, 1807, Marshall, ed., Life and Papers of Frederick Bates, I, 222-223.

In May, 1807, William Clark in a letter to the Secretary of War summarized the problems facing the government in regard to the Indians west of the Mississippi River. He noted, first of all, the dissatisfaction of the Osage Indians. They were disgruntled because they believed the government had forgotten them. No trade had been established between them and the United States. Frontier intelligence had informed Clark that the Spaniards in the southwest were making overtures to the Osage and were attempting to gain their allegiance. General Wilkinson and a Mr. Pike had purchased horses from the Indians with drafts no one would pay. And worst of all, Clark reported that practically all of the rich furs and peltries were falling into the hands of British traders and being carried off to Canada.²¹ Added to these problems was the threat of inter-tribal wars between the Osage and their enemies, the Sauks and the Potowatomies.²² The time had arrived for the government to extend the factory system deeper into the Louisiana Territory at a strategic location designed to reach the Osage, Kansas, Sauks, Ioways, Arkansas, and Missouri tribes.

Early in February, 1808, while high government officials mulled over the existing conditions in the Louisiana Territory, Sibley arrived in Washington to defend himself before John Mason, Superintendent of Indian Trade.²³ Because of the expansion of the factory system, Congress, in 1806, had authorized the creation of the office of ✓

²¹William Clark to Secretary of War, May 18, 1807, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 122-124.

²²Ibid.

²³George C. Sibley to Col. John Pickett, October 20, 1808, Sibley Mss.

Superintendent of Indian Trade to handle the purchasing and ordering of merchandise for the factories, the auditing of all accounts, the filing of field reports with proper officials, and the writing of letters to factors, agents, newspaper editors, merchants, prospective buyers, bankers, commanding officers, and the numerous religious and educational groups that wanted to educate the Indians or convert them to the Christian Faith.²⁴ As Superintendent, Mason was also responsible for dealing with the personal and organizational problems that arose in such a system. The Tillier-Sibley controversy at Fort Bellefontaine, therefore, became his concern.

Already alert to the conditions at Fort Bellefontaine, to the crisis among the Osage Indians, and to the confidential reports on Tillier and Sibley made by Clark and Bates, Mason considered the growing complexity of the overall situation. Early in March, the government decided to establish trading houses on the Osage River and at the mouth of the La Moine River on the Mississippi. A military post would also be established at each factory.²⁵ Furthermore, Fort Bellefontaine would be discontinued as a factory, but kept active as a military post. The stores at Fort Bellefontaine would be divided between the two new factories.²⁶ Because of Sibley's businesslike approach, youthful dedication, and his two years of experience at

²⁴Ora Peake, A History of the United States Indian Factory System, 1795-1822 (Denver, 1954), 39-40.

²⁵Henry Dearborn to Col. Thomas Hunt, March 17, 1808, Secretary of War Document Files, National Archives.

²⁶John Mason to Rudolph Tillier, May 27, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 188.

Fort Bellefontaine, he received appointment as chief-factor at the proposed factory on the Osage River in the hunting grounds of the Grand Osage and Little Osage tribes.²⁷ John Johnson received an appointment to direct the factory farther north on the Mississippi River at present-day Fort Madison.²⁸

Sibley's salary was set at \$800 annually, plus \$365 annually in lieu of subsistence, \$200 for the purchase of furniture, dishware, cooking utensils and other household items, and \$25 annually for the same needs after the first year.²⁹ Sibley took his new oath of office on May 19, 1808, and during the following week, secured his bond, cleared up some financial matters, and made ready for his return journey to St. Louis.³⁰

On May 20, 1808, Mason wrote letters to Sibley and John Johnson outlining the guidelines and the policies of the Factory System. He pointed out to them that the main purpose of the Factory System was to gain the friendship of the Indians. In high-minded phraseology, Mason instructed them to use every means and opportunity to impress the Indians with the integrity and faith of the United States government. They were not to cheat the Indians, nor resort to trickery or fraud to

²⁷ John Mason to George C. Sibley, May 24, 1808, Sibley Mss.

²⁸ John Mason to John Johnson, May 10, 1808, Office of Indian Trade, Superintendent's File, Letters Sent, Book A, National Archives.

²⁹ John Mason to George C. Sibley, May 24, 1808, Sibley Mss.

³⁰ The account of Sibley's return trip to St. Louis, May 19, 1808 to July 1, 1808 is found in Sibley's Diary, Sibley Mss.

unload defective Indian goods. While promoting good feelings, they were, however, to be alert to the attempts of the Indians to cheat them.³¹

The prices put on goods sold and traded at the factory were to be based on a standard advance of 60 to 100 percent on the prices charged in the invoices received from the Indian Trade Office. By estimating the cost of transportation and the amount of profit needed to enable his factory to operate without a loss, the factor determined the necessary percentage to add to invoice charges. The price paid to the Indians for their skins and furs was to be governed, in most cases, by what they had been accustomed to receive and by what would make them happy and contented. Mason warned the factors that the raising and reducing of prices were left to their "discretion and prudence," but that they were to make enough to prevent the factories from operating at a deficit.³²

Other rules governing the factor's job were: factory goods were to be sold to Indians and not to whites except in extenuating circumstances; factors were not to sell to traders any goods or articles that might be wanted by the Indians; factors were not to sell to Indians on credit, with the exception of certain chiefs in good standing; liquor was not to be sold; and the factor was prohibited by law from carrying on any trade on his own account or that of any other person except for the United States.³³

³¹John Mason to George C. Sibley and John Johnson, May 27, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 185-187.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

Bookkeeping procedures involved the ordering of goods from the Indian Trade Office once a year. All records were to be kept in a specified form for examination by the Superintendent. These included a Day Book Journal, in which every transaction of the day was to be recorded, an Invoice Book, and a Cash Book. All letters written and received pertaining to the business of the factory were to be filed in a Letter Book. In March, June, September, and December the factor rendered an account of all money, goods and property which had passed through his hands and these reports went both to the Office of Indian Trade and the Secretary of the Treasury.³⁴

In regard to the furs and peltries, the factor was responsible for paying the Indians fair prices, for seeing that their condition was good, and for proper methods of preserving them. The furs and peltries were to be carefully packed and shipped in the early Spring or late Fall to avoid warm weather and worms. Mason cautioned the factors to be on the lookout for deceitful traders who used Indians to unload inferior furs on the government factories. The furs and peltries were to be transported by way of St. Louis to New Orleans.³⁵

Mason's instructive letter contained inferences as to the qualities the government desired in its factors. It wanted men of integrity who would so act in their dealings with the Indians as to bring honor and respect to the United States. The factors had to be men with some business acumen. Keeping books, making reports, adjusting

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

prices, trading and bartering, ordering merchandise, and making enough to prevent the factory from being a losing operation were all a part of the business end of the Factory System. The practical aspects of the factor's job were not overlooked. They needed some understanding of the Indians with whom they were to deal, as well as the ability to carry on with a variety of human beings ranging from soldiers to scientists, settlers, to sutlers, private traders to government officials. Furthermore, they had to have some skill in judging and handling furs and peltries.

Although just twenty-six years old when the government appointed him to his post at the new factory on the Osage River, Sibley was well-prepared for the task. His Puritan background had fashioned a man who was highly moral and honest. In the seventeen years he served as a government factor no one ever questioned his integrity. His education enabled him to fill the long, lonely hours on the frontier by reading newspapers and books and in writing letters. His early training in the accounting house of John Winslow gave him the technical knowledge necessary to keep books and to make reports. His two years at Fort Bellefontaine had introduced him to the world of the frontier and the Factory System. There, under the tutelage of Rudolph Tillier, Sibley learned the art of trade and barter, as well as how to handle furs and peltries. Well qualified to be a government factor and excited about his new assignment, Sibley completed his preparations for the trip back to St. Louis.

Leaving Washington on May 26, he stopped at Baltimore for a few days, where he purchased some clothes for himself, a pistol, flints,

powder, flask, a sword cane, and a treatise on mineralogy.³⁶ When he arrived in Philadelphia, he met Major Zebulon Pike who was planning to set off for St. Louis within ten days. No doubt in their conversations, Pike briefed the young factor concerning the land and the people he would find in the country west of the Mississippi River. The next leg of Sibley's journey was by stage to Pittsburgh, which he reached on June 6. For the next four days, Sibley, with \$400 to outfit a boat and to hire hands, made haste to complete arrangements for his descent of the Ohio River. The government had decided that a keel boat would be necessary for operation of the new factory, which would be so far removed from the Mississippi River. The keel-boat, built in Pittsburgh, was turned over to him on June 9, and was later christened "Osage Factor." He signed-on five men who agreed to go as far as St. Louis, one of whom was a free Negro. At sunrise, June 10, he set sail.

Forced to wait nearly two weeks at Wheeling for nails, glass and hinges to be used in the buildings for the troops at the new military posts and trading houses,³⁷ Sibley had a shelter built on the boat. In the process, he became very angry at the carpenters who more than once showed up inebriated. After nearly two weeks, Sibley, his patience tested, accused them of "insolence, impudence, and villainy." By June 23, with the shelter completed and with the stores loaded, Sibley was on his way, drifting along, and making comments in

³⁶Sibley's Diary, May 19, 1808, Sibley Mss.

³⁷The Secretary of War to Col. Thomas Hunt, May 17, 1808, Secretary of War Document Files, Letters Sent, Book 3, National Archives.

his diary about the river towns and villages bordering the stream. It was not until July 12 that he left the Ohio River and entered the Mississippi to begin what was to prove a slow, difficult, and tragic ascent to St. Louis. It took twenty days to navigate the 120 miles from the mouth of the Ohio River to St. Louis. Just fifteen miles from his destination, the swift current swept away two of his hired hands, a white man and a Negro, who were attempting to dislodge the boat from a sand bar. Their bodies were never found.³⁸

Landing in St. Louis on July 31, Sibley went immediately to General William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, to deliver letters from the Secretary of War and to confer with him on the proposed factory. Clark had been requested to select the site and to accompany Sibley with a body of troops. He informed Sibley that the site had been changed from near or at the mouth of the Osage River to "the bank of the Missouri above that river [Osage] near prairie de feu or Fire Prairie."³⁹ The reasons that dictated the change in sites were that the Osage River was extremely difficult to navigate and was often in a flooded state, and that the new location would be more central and convenient to the Osage Indians. Both Clark and Governor Lewis concurred that the change in sites was necessary. Pierre Chouteau, a prominent private trader out of St. Louis who had years of experience in trading with the Osage, provided the information on the Osage River which was instrumental in

³⁸Sibley's Diary, July 29, 1808, Sibley Mss.

³⁹William Clark to the Secretary of War, June 25, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 194; also see Sibley's Diary, July 31, 1808, Sibley Mss.

leading Clark and Lewis to suggest the change to the Secretary of War and John Mason.⁴⁰ Sibley told Clark that his own instructions contained nothing concerning selection of the site. He did, however, request that Capt. Eli B. Clemson, who was to command the Fort's garrison, wait until Sibley was ready in order that the trading goods could go with the "whole body of troops."⁴¹

Sibley then went to Fort Bellefontaine to divide the stores and to pack and stow them for their new destinations. He and Johnson completed their work by August 8, at which time Captain Clemson and his troops of the First United States Infantry, eighty-one in all, left by boat for St. Charles, where they were to camp and wait for Sibley. There were six boats, four of which were filled with military stores and trade goods. Of the other two, one belonged to a Mr. Prince, a sutler appointed by the government to supply the articles and luxuries which were not furnished by the government,⁴² and the other to William Morrison who was under government contract to supply food for the troops.⁴³

The following day, Sibley gave Tillier a receipt for "the public property received of him amounting to \$14,042.08."⁴⁴ On August 11,

⁴⁰ William Clark to the Secretary of War, June 26, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 194; Sibley's Diary, July 31, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁴¹ Sibley's Diary, July 31, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁴² Gregg, Westward with Dragoons, 7.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Sibley's Diary, August 9, 1808, Sibley Mss.

Sibley rode overland to St. Charles, arriving late at night in a driving rain. The following morning he joined Capt. Clemson at his camp above St. Charles and started the tiring voyage up the River, averaging only fifteen miles per day.⁴⁵

In the meantime, Clark prepared to travel overland from St. Charles with eighty mounted Rifleman and Dragoons.⁴⁶ Before noon on August 25, his detachment rode out of St. Charles "to protect and assist in the building of the intended Fort."⁴⁷ Clark's expedition had a two-fold purpose: first, to fix the location of the new fort and factory, and second, to remain on the scene until the work on both got underway and Capt. Clemson could adequately defend himself.⁴⁸

Sibley and Capt. Clemson reached Fire Prairie on September 2. The next day they took Reuben Lewis, the brother of Meriwether, and two other men in a canoe and paddled up the river about three miles to the bluff on which the fort was to be constructed. Sibley later described the site, as being "330 miles by water above the mouth of the

⁴⁵Ibid., August 11, 1808.

⁴⁶William Clark to the Secretary of War, August 18, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 210.

⁴⁷The following note appeared in the Missouri Gazette, Tuesday, July 26, 1808: "It is with heart felt pleasure we announce the patriotism displayed by the St. Charles troop of horse [sic], a few days ago; they offered their services to accompany Gen. Clark up the Missouri, in order to protect and assist in the building of the intended Fort, at or near the Osage River."

⁴⁸William Clark to Secretary of War, August 18, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 210.

River, and about 220 by land from St. Louis situated on a high bluff 70 feet above high water mark on the left bank; at a point where the River is very narrow (about 350 yards)...⁴⁹ Both men were elated and agreed that the location was excellent from a military standpoint. From the bluff a long view up and down the river was commanding. Atop the bluff the fort would be easy to defend. Sibley and Clemson decided to move the boats to the site, to make camp, and then to wait for the arrival of General Clark, which occurred on September 4. The site was as Clark had remembered it when he and Lewis had passed by on their expedition to the Far West in 1804.⁵⁰

The General wasted no time in ordering that the boats be unloaded, in distributing tools among the men, in sending hunters into the forest for fresh meat, and in posting a guard of twenty men. Soon the silence of the forest was replaced by the sounds of men's voices, the crashing of chopped trees, and by sawing and hammering. Sibley later wrote his brother, "how cheerful and pleasing a sight it is to see 200 men cutting a village out of an almost impenetrable forest."⁵¹ Clark immediately dispatched Nathan Boone, the son of Daniel Boone, and Paul Loise, an interpreter, to the village of the Grand Osage to find out if the Indians planned to settle near the Fort.⁵²

⁴⁹George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, September 16, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁰From the Journal of William Clark, August 25 to September 22, 1808 quoted in Gregg, Westward with Dragoons, 34.

⁵¹George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, September 16, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁵²From the Journal of William Clark, September 5, 1808, Gregg, Westward with Dragoons, 35.

The fort was laid off in a "square defended by four strong Block-houses & the out work defended by one on a small point."⁵³ Day by day, the buildings rose out of the clearing. By September 9, two block-houses and a room for the factory had reached the first-story level. A number of obstacles hindered progress, such as the difficulty in hauling logs and building stones from the river, lack of tools, reluctance of some of the men to do their full share of the work, a nagging fear of Indian attack, dysentery, and a violent rainstorm, but the work continued at a consistent pace. The prairie, stretching from the bluff for about a mile and filled with wild game and wild fruits, impressed Sibley, as did the rich, fertile soil and the plentiful, straight timber consisting of "Black Oak, chiefly, cotton, wood, hycory [*sic*], black walnut, Linn, white oak and many other kinds."⁵⁴ The young factor could, in truth, tell his brother, "...we have a most charming view."⁵⁵

On September 12, work continued on the block-houses, but toward evening a hush fell across the clearing as men looked up from their work and saw emerging from the forest two Osage chieftians and about seventy-five warriors, all moving in the direction of the fort. They had come with Nathan Boone and Paul Loise to see the General. Clark promised to confer with them the next morning and urged them to camp overnight nearby.⁵⁶ They sang and danced throughout the night,

⁵³ Ibid., 35-36.

⁵⁴ George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, September 16, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ From the Journal of William Clark, September 12, 1808, Gregg, Westward with Dragoons, 403.

a haunting, if not fearful experience for those men who had never heard savage chants or observed jerking Indian bodies by firelight.

Clark, weak from dysentery and the resultant loss of sleep, conferred with the Osage chiefs the next morning and outlined some of the major points in a proposed treaty. He described the boundaries of the land they were to relinquish. He also explained that he would propose a line to be drawn from the fort south to the Arkansas River. The Indians were to hunt on the west side of the line, while the whites would be free to hunt east of the line without fear of Indian attack. He made it plain that if the Indians were to enjoy the protection of the fort and the advantages of the factory they must abandon "Theft Murder and Robory" of white settlers. He closed the council by imploring them to think about what he had said and "if any thing Dwelt on their minds to speak it & not to be bashful."⁵⁷

While the Indians "hollered and Sung the great part of the Night," Clark framed the treaty which was to be read, explained and, hopefully, accepted by the Osage chiefs the next day. It was September 14 when Clark, his officers, Sibley, the two chiefs, White Hair and The Walking Rain, and the other Indians assembled on "the banks of the Missouri about five miles above Fire Prairie to consider the treaty."⁵⁸

Clark's treaty contained twelve articles. They were in summary: (1) The United States would build a fort and factory to promote peace, friendship and intercourse with the Osage Tribes of Indians, and would assist and protect them from their enemies; (2) The United States would provide a "large store" where Indians could exchange peltries and furs

⁵⁷Ibid., 38-39.

⁵⁸Ibid., 40-41.

for goods which they needed; (3) The United States would furnish a blacksmith, would build a water mill, would provide plows, and would construct a block-house for each chief in his village; (4) Private traders would be permitted to trade with the Indians, but under governmental supervision; (5) No Indian tribe not at peace with the United States would be allowed to trade at the factory.

The sixth article dealt with the area of land to be relinquished by the Osage Indians to the United States. According to the treaty, the land involved was within a line from the fort south to the Arkansas River, then east along the Arkansas to the Mississippi River, and finally, west along the north bank of the Missouri to the fort. This represented two-thirds of the now existing state of Missouri and the north-eastern half of the state of Arkansas, a total land area conservatively estimated at 75,000 square miles.⁵⁹

Article 7 provided for the land on which the fort and factory were to be erected. Articles 8 and 9 stated that the United States would recognize the Osage hunting grounds west of the line running south to the Arkansas River, and that no citizen could pass through that area without permission from the President of the United States. Article 10 pointed out that since white hunters in the land of the Osage Indians had at times been "robbed, plundered and sent naked in cold weather without means of procuring food," a line from Arrow Rock running south to the Arkansas River would be the dividing line between white hunters and the Osage Indians, and, further, if any white hunter were captured west of that line, he was to be brought to the fort. The

⁵⁹Two-thirds of Missouri's 69,686 square miles is 46,456. One-half of Arkansas' 53,104 square miles is 26,552. The total is 73,008 square miles.

last two articles stipulated that the line between the United States and the Osage hunting grounds would be surveyed and the treaty would go into effect as soon as it was approved by the President of the United States.⁶⁰

It took the following day, September 15, to complete the transaction. In the presence of fourteen witnesses, General Clark and the chiefs signed the treaty. The General, desiring to demonstrate his good faith, gave rifles to the chiefs and to the others tobacco, blankets, powder, lead, paint and knives from Sibley's stores, totaling \$317.74.⁶¹ After the treaty signing, Clark prepared for his return trip to St. Louis. Toward the end of the day, September 15, 1808, a crooked finger of smoke on the horizon signaled the coming of some more Indians.

Clark, in a letter to the Secretary of War, September 23, 1808, reported one block-house as completed, except for the upper floor and daubery; three block-houses, 18 x 20 feet square on three angles of the fort nearly complete, except for floor and cover; and one block-house on the fourth angle of the fort as started. The workmen had roofed and virtually finished two houses for the factory goods, and also the cellar.⁶² John Mason had listed three essentials for the factory buildings: proper accommodations for the merchandise, "tolerable comfort" for

⁶⁰The text of the treaty is in the Sibley Mss. and is also included in full in Gregg, Westward with Dragoons, 64-68.

⁶¹Sibley Diary, September 15, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁶²William Clark to the Secretary of War, September 23, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 224-228.

the factor, and a "good airy cellar...for the Furs and Peltry."⁶³ The barracks were under construction, the pit for making charcoal was nearly dug, and a road was being built. As for arms, a three-pounder and four swivel guns had been placed in position.⁶⁴ Clark appointed Reuben Lewis as Indian Sub-Agent to enforce the regulations on private traders and hunters. The past abuses and dangerous practices of the traders and hunters concerned Clark and he believed that Sibley would be too heavily burdened with factory business to be able to keep them in line.⁶⁵

At sunrise, September 16, 1808, Clark's main force, under the command of Capt. M. Wherry, departed by land for St. Charles. The General left by barge at 2 o'clock that afternoon and was out of sight of the fort within the hour.⁶⁶

As a first-hand observer of the treaty-making process, Sibley reacted optimistically to what had taken place. Clark had not forced the treaty on the Indians and, it seemed, that he had made it clear to them the stipulations involved. Clark had patiently read and explained the treaty to all Indians present. "It requires time and a little smoking with Indians," he once commented, "if you wish to have peace

⁶³John Mason to George C. Sibley, September 24, 1808, Sibley Mss. Also quoted in Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 30.

⁶⁴William Clark to the Secretary of War, September 23, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 224-228.

⁶⁵William Clark to the Secretary of War, September 23, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 224-228.

⁶⁶From the Journal of William Clark, September 16, 1808, Gregg, Westward with Dragoons, 43-44.

with them."⁶⁷ This approach toward the Indians characterized Clark's career in Indian affairs. From the Indians he gained respect and the nickname, "Redhead," but the politicians censured him for being "too good to the Indians."⁶⁸

Clark's manner and conduct of the treaty-making event impressed the Osage factor. So much so that Sibley ventured to predict that if the United States would keep its part of the treaty, the Indians would remain peaceful and friendly. He interpreted the responsibility of the factor and Indian agents as being that of seeing to the fulfillment of "every promise made them by the government."⁶⁹ He believed that if he and his associates lived up to all promises on the part of the government, the Indians would be impressed with a "high sense of honor and good faith of the United States without which no permanent arrangement can be expected."⁷⁰ However, in the white man's rapid movement across the continent such an attitude could not be sustained. Those men who advocated time, patience, justice, kept promises, and a "little smoking" with the Indians became, in truth, voices in the wilderness.

In the closing days of September, 1808, the Indians filtered in from the forest and began to pitch their tents in the vicinity of the fort. Sibley estimated the number present as in the neighborhood of

⁶⁷Quoted in Harlow Lindley, "William Clark-The Indian Agent," Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (1907-1909), II, 65.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Sibley's Diary, September 15, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁷⁰Ibid.

4000 and believed that at this "great rendezvous" at least 5000 would eventually camp.⁷¹ As the number of Indians present increased, so did Sibley's anxiety, for he feared that they might be tempted to steal his factory goods. Not until "all goods were under lock and key," did Sibley's fears diminish. He informed the Indians that he would extend no credit and would always expect them to pay for goods in furs and peltries taken by traps and guns he would furnish them.⁷² Although there was no regulation requiring the factor to receive only furs and peltries trapped with government traps or killed with government guns, Sibley evidently thought by stating the matter in that way he would increase his trade and tie the Indians more closely to the factory. On one occasion he ate with the chiefs of the Little Osage and fired a swivel gun for their benefit. Trading operations began October 1, and his first response to the Osage Indians was a simple one--"find them very poor and troublesome." But when the Kansas tribe came to the fort, they forced Sibley to suspend operation for a time because they were very unruly, insolent and violent in their conduct.⁷³

At the time of the signing of the treaty in September, 1808, seventy-four Osage Indians were in St. Louis delivering up to the government some stolen horses. On Clark's return to St. Louis with the treaty in hand, these Indians objected to the treaty. Although they had not seen it, they claimed that it was invalid because they had not

⁷¹George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, September 16, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁷²Sibley's Diary, September 27, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁷³Ibid., October 10, 1808.

participated in its signing.⁷⁴ Fearing that the dissatisfaction of these Osage Indians might stir up trouble on the frontier, Governor Lewis decided to draft a new treaty and arrange for another council with them. Lewis drafted the treaty himself and on October 2, 1808, sent Pierre Chouteau to the new fort to secure its acceptance. Lewis expressed great confidence in Chouteau's influence over the Osage.⁷⁵

Chouteau appeared at the fort on November 7, 1808, and led in the treaty-signing event.⁷⁶ According to Sibley, the second treaty did not differ materially from the one made by General Clark.⁷⁷ In his observation he was not altogether accurate for there were two major differences. The second treaty provided annuities of \$1,000 in merchandise for the Great Osage, and to the Little Osage \$500 in merchandise. In addition to this change, the second treaty stipulated that the Osage were to give up claims on their land north of the Missouri River, as well as to the lands south of it to the Arkansas River.⁷⁸ The Osage signed the treaty on November 10, 1808.

⁷⁴William Clark to the Secretary of War, December 2, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 242-243; Governor Meriwether Lewis to the President of the United States, December 15, 1808, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 766-767; and William Clark to William Eustis, Secretary of War, February 20, 1810, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 765.

⁷⁵Governor Meriwether Lewis to Pierre Chouteau, October 3, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 229.

⁷⁶Sibley's Diary, November 7, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸The text of the treaty is in American State Papers, I, 763-764; also quoted in full in Gregg, Westward with Dragoons, 69-75.

Sibley was very critical of Chouteau's handling of the treaty-signing. He felt that Chouteau had rushed the treaty and had used threats to make the Indians sign it. Sibley quoted Chouteau as saying,

You have heard this treaty explained to you; those who come forward and sign it shall be considered the friends of the United States, and treated accordingly. Those who refuse to come forward and sign it shall be considered the enemies of the United States and treated accordingly.⁷⁹

Sibley also stated that he was asked to sign the treaty as a witness, but "peremptorily refused."⁸⁰

In Sibley's opinion, Chouteau had lacked the patience and understanding shown by General Clark. Whether Chouteau was right or wrong in the manner in which he handled the assignment would be difficult to assess. However, one thing was certain, Chouteau was following orders. Lewis had instructed him to tell the Osage that if they did accept the treaty--"all will be well." On the other hand, if they refused Chouteau was to inform the Governor as quickly as possible, so that he could place the frontier "in the best state of defence, and make the necessary preparation for an expedition against them."⁸¹ If Chouteau was doing what his superior had told him to do, why was Sibley so cool toward him and so critical of his performance?

The answer to this question is not found in the Sibley papers, but appears in Clark's letter to the Secretary of War, December 2, 1808,

⁷⁹Quoted from Fred L. Lee, "Signing of the Indian Treaty," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, VI, No. 18 (December, 1965), 11.

⁸⁰Sibley Diary, November 11, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁸¹Governor Meriwether Lewis to Pierre Chouteau, October 3, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 229.

and in Governor Lewis' letter to the President of the United States, December 15, 1808. Lewis pointed out to the President that Chouteau came to him after Clark's treaty had been signed by the Osage and asked Lewis to draft a new treaty which would forever secure his land claim of 30,000 acres on the south side of the Missouri River which had been given to him by the Indians. When the Osage pressed for a new treaty to replace Clark's, both Lewis and Clark suspected that Chouteau was responsible for stirring them up. There existed between Chouteau and Clark "a want of cordiality and confidence..."⁸²

Reuben Lewis, Indian sub-agent at Fort Osage, wrote Clark about Chouteau's land claim which served to augment Clark's suspicion that Chouteau was up to no good.⁸³ There was, however, nothing in the second treaty that recognized Chouteau's land claims. If Reuben Lewis was aware of the Chouteau intrigue, then so was the Osage factor. Sibley's hostility to Chouteau was not really against his high-handed methods, but rather against the rumor that the St. Louis fur trader had attempted to use selfishly the United States Government to secure his land claims south of the Missouri River.

As the startling colors of autumn faded into what Sibley called "the dreary season" of winter, the work of the factory moved ahead. On November 13, 1808, although the fort and factory were not as yet

⁸² Governor Meriwether Lewis to the President of the United States, December 15, 1808, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 766-767.

⁸³ Quoted in William Clark to the Secretary of War, December 2, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 243.

completed, they were christened Fort Osage in military style.⁸⁴ By the first of December, Sibley, because of a lack of space in the buildings he was using for a factory, was forced to discontinue trading operations. He needed time to pack the furs and send them on to St. Louis. The Kansas Indians continued to stir up trouble at the factory and to steal cattle from the white inhabitants near there.⁸⁵ Sibley complained of poor postal service which deprived him of the "principal pleasure that I calculated on enjoying in this distant and obscure wilderness."⁸⁶ Added to these problems was the growing concern of Sibley and the other whites at Fort Osage over the lack of supplies. There was talk about a march to St. Louis for meat and flour to supply the men throughout the long winter. Just before the river iced over, supplies arrived "in the nick of time."⁸⁷ Sibley, the factor, and Clemson, the commander, and their men settled down for the winter in their fort and factory above the icy river.

⁸⁴Sibley Diary, November 13, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁸⁵William Clark to the Secretary of War, December 2, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 242.

⁸⁶George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, December 13, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁸⁷Sibley's Diary, December 10, 1808, Sibley Mss.

CHAPTER IV

THE OSAGE FACTOR

Sentinel-like against the cold gray sky, the unfinished fort looked upon a bleak Missouri landscape. For Sibley, the winter season of 1809 was a depressing one, which was reflected in a letter to his brother. Probably to hide his loneliness and boredom, he wrote belligerently about the mounting crisis between the United States and Great Britain. "I would sooner go to war twenty times," he hawkishly commented, "than to submit to the insolent and dishonorable terms of that overbearing nation."¹ In the event of war, he believed that Spain would become an ally of Great Britain, thus giving the United States the opportunity to march into Spanish territory and to take Santa Fe in twenty days. However, toward the close of his crusty letter his mood changed, and he confessed his longing to be with his family and friends and to put an end to his own ramblings.

The approach of milder weather brought increased activity at the fort. The soldiers intensified their work on the fort itself, but little was done toward the construction of the factory buildings. By the month of May, only "two indifferent cabins were available for cover for goods and peltries collected."²

One of the first major problems which the Osage factor confronted was the inability to gain the cooperation of Captain Clemson and his troops to work on the factory buildings and to help with the furs and skins. When the Indians brought skins and furs to the

¹George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, January 18, 1809, Sibley Mss.

²John Mason to the Secretary of War, May 13, 1809, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 273-274.

factory, they brought them in poor condition. The furs had to be cleaned, sorted, and packed. Soldiers, for the most part, resented doing the work of the factor. They had enlisted for military purposes and not for manual labor.³ The government paid the soldiers for doing chores about the factory, and the factor would often give them whiskey as an extra treat, but these enticements were not enough to enlist the wholehearted assistance of the military.⁴ It was planned to teach the Indians to clean the furs before bringing them to the factory. After repeated failures, John Mason moaned that he "despaired of ever teaching the Indians to clean furs."⁵ As the furs and peltries increased in volume at Fort Osage and Sibley kept after the soldiers for their help, antagonism brewed between him and Clemson.

Angered and indignant by the military's behavior toward the factory chores and lack of work on the factory buildings, Sibley turned to John Mason and requested his intervention. Mason responded by asking the Secretary of War to direct the commanding officers of the various posts to furnish the factors "such and as many men as they have occasion for from time for public purposes say in building and repairing the Stores, beating [a process by which the furs were flattened for packing purposes], packing skins & they the factors

³Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 248-249.

⁴From Sibley's Factory Account Book, February-March, 1810, Sibley Mss.

⁵Quoted in Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 249.

paying the men so employed a small sum."⁶ The suggested sum was 10¢ a day--hardly an amount to arouse unbounded enthusiasm. Mason also urged the Secretary of War to make a special point of ordering the commanding officer at Fort Osage to conform to this ruling.⁷

Sibley received only the minimum of cooperation. While the work on the fort moved ahead steadily, progress on the factory buildings lagged far behind. At this point the breach between the fort's commanding officer and the civilian administrator of the factory widened, and, throughout the early history of Fort Osage, continued to plague Sibley and the conduct of the factor's business.⁸ The irresolvable conflicts which arose between the military and the civilian, between those trained to make war and those committed to keep the peace, between those who saw the Indian as an enemy to defeat in battle and those who sought to win his friendship through trade and diplomacy, were not unique with Sibley and Fort Osage. Other factors and factories with garrisons suffered as well.⁹

On June 30, 1809, Captain Clemson reported that the fort had been completed, except "some finishing off by Carpenters."¹⁰ Twenty-six

⁶ John Mason to the Secretary of War, May 13, 1809, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 273-274.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Sibley Diary, November 6, 1810; George C. Sibley to Risdon Price, January 8, 1811; George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, February 12, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁹ See Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, f.n., 460.

¹⁰ Eli B. Clemson to William Linnard, June 30, 1809, Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General, National Archives.

men had labored on the fort as sawyers, masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, teamsters, plasterer, and house joiner. A list of these men shows how many hours they worked, how much they were paid, and that only eight of the twenty-six men were able to sign their names on payrolls, the others being illiterate.

The year was marked by the arrival of two new faces at the fort. In March, Dr. John Robinson replaced Reuben Lewis as Indian Agent. Lewis, a member of the newly organized Missouri Fur Company, desired to give his full time and active participation to the new organization.¹¹ Dr. Robinson had been with Zebulon Pike on his trip to the southwest in 1806 as a surgeon. While there he had been captured by the Spaniards, thrown in jail at Chihuahua, and finally returned to the United States with a very good map of the southwest. After 1809, Sibley boarded with the Robinson family.¹² According to one historian, Dr. Robinson gave Sibley considerable information about the Southwest and Santa Fe which Sibley put to good advantage in later years when he surveyed the Santa Fe Trail.¹³

¹¹Sibley Diary, March 13, 1809, Sibley Mss. "The Missouri Fur Company lately formed here, has every prospect of becoming a source of incalculable advantage, not only to the individuals engaged in the enterprise, but the community at large. Their extensive preparations, and the respectable forces they intend to ascend the Missouri with, may bid defiance to any hostile band they meet with; the streams which descend from the Rocky Mountains afford the finest hunting, and here we learn they intend to build their fort. They have engaged to convey Shehekah, the Mandan Chief, to his nation." From the Missouri Gazette, Wednesday, March 8, 1809.

¹²Kate L. Gregg, "The History of Fort Osage," Missouri Historical Review, XXXIV (1939-1940), 446. See also Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 1-2.

¹³Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 1-2.

Isacc Rawlings came in September to serve as Sibley's assistant.¹⁴ The general qualifications for an assistant factor were good character, a williness to tend to business, knowledge of accounts and of trade and barter.¹⁵ In later years, Rawlings, like Sibley, left Osage and headed for a settlement in the new West, Memphis, where he became a leading citizen, operated a store, served as a magistrate, served several terms as mayor, and took a significant part in banking and insurance interests.¹⁶

During the year, 1809, Sibley's energies focused mainly on a lively trade with the Indians and on "keeping the peace." The estimated gain and loss on each of the United States' Factories from December 31, 1807 to September 30, 1811 give some indication of how lively the Indian trade was at Fort Osage. The highest gain in profit was at Fort Wayne with \$10,502.77, followed by Fort Osage with \$10,291.40, and in third place was Fort Madison with \$10,026.39. During the same period of time, Fort Madison stood first in the value of furs, peltries, and other items sold at \$28,912.30, followed by Fort Osage with \$20,272.44, and Chickasaw Bluffs with \$16,387.59.¹⁷

In some years it was extremely difficult for the Factory System to show a profit. A glutted market in furs, losses of furs and skins

¹⁴Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 459.

¹⁵Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 40.

¹⁶John B. Davis, The History of the City of Memphis (Memphis, 1873), 57-67; J.M. Keating, History of Memphis (Syracuse, 1888), 190-191.

¹⁷American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 784.

in shipment, and increased costs of Indian trade goods made the year 1809 such a time.¹⁸ In good season and bad, however, Fort Osage managed to keep its operations in the black prior to 1813. The reasons for this, John Mason believed, was that Fort Osage dealt primarily in hatters' furs, such as beaver, which usually had a good market.¹⁹ Shaved deer skins, another large trade item at Fort Osage, stood shipment better than other furs and peltries, and suffered less in a dull market.²⁰

Fort Osage showed a profit also partially because of the subsidiary project of making soap and candles from buffalo tallow.²¹ Sibley directed some of the Osage squaws in this candle-dipping project.²² Although John Mason complimented the project, he displayed little enthusiasm for the product which Sibley sent to him for examination. Mason encouraged Sibley to continue this work, but reminded him that the sample candles were "no great proofs of skill" and expressed the hope that the "red women" would become "more neat in execution."²³

Such sideline projects also occasionally developed at other factory ports. At Michilimackinac, for example, maple sugar was

¹⁸Ibid., 756.

¹⁹Ibid., 784.

²⁰Ibid., 788.

²¹Ibid., 784.

²²Sibley Diary, January 9, 1811, Sibley Mss.

²³John Mason to George C. Sibley, July 22, 1811, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 458-459.

manufactured and at Fort Madison Indians dug for ore and melted down lead. Still other factories collected beeswax and snakeroot.²⁴

During the year 1809 Sibley devoted much attention to preparing furs received in trade at the fort for shipment. Before the end of the summer he had sent packs of beaver, otter, raccoon, wolf, bear, and deer skins to St. Louis.²⁵ He also planted a garden, raised corn, and pestered Capt. Clemson and his men to work on the factory buildings.

In October of 1809, the Sibley-Clemson controversy broke out again, and also involved Dr. Robinson. Two French traders, Joseph Robidoux and Francois Dorion came up the River in two boats on their way to the hunting grounds on the upper Missouri. They were greeted at the Fort Osage landing by some disgruntled Osage Indians who threatened to rob the two traders. Hearing the commotion made by the Indians and the frightened Frenchmen, Robinson and Sibley went to the landing in "the dark and rain" to investigate. They were able to calm the Indians and to send them back to their camp. Sibley told Sans Orielle, the Osage chieftain, that if the boats were molested by the Indians he would close the door of the factory to further trade.

The Frenchmen left, but not too far from the Fort their boats grounded on a sandbar. Having followed the boats upstream by keeping sight of them from the river bank, the Indians were now able to renew the quarrel. In doing so, one of them was struck with an oar, which enraged them so much they drove the traders back downstream to Fort Osage. Once again Sibley and Robinson intervened at a tense moment and prevented

²⁴ American State Paper, Indian Affairs, I, 784.

²⁵ William Clark to George C. Sibley, August 19, 1809, Sibley Mss.

the Indians from harming the two traders and damaging their boats. Sibley firmly announced that the factory was temporarily closed to the Indians.²⁶

The next day, Sibley and Robinson asked Capt. Clemson why he had not helped out during the fracas. He answered, "Such affairs are common and of no consequence."²⁷ This disagreement over the episode continued to rankle tempers at Fort Osage, and in the summer of 1810 Clemson accused Sibley and Robinson of having incited the Osage to attack the two trading boats.²⁸ In a letter to John Mason, Sibley defended his action by pointing out his punishment of the Indians by "shutting the factory to one of the bands of the Osages."²⁹ Mason requested General Clark to make an investigation of the matter.³⁰ Since Robinson had left Fort Osage early in 1810, Sibley bore the brunt of Clemson's charges. The results of Clark's investigation are not known. However, the fact that Sibley remained as factor at Fort Osage indicates that both Mason and Clark had confidence in him. Sibley later commented to a friend concerning the episode that "It is

²⁶The Sibley-Clemson controversy is discussed in Kate L. Gregg, "The History of Fort Osage," 453-455.

²⁷Quoted in Gregg, "The History of Fort Osage," 454.

²⁸Eli B. Clemson to the Secretary of War, July 20, 1810, Carter, ed., The Territory of Missouri-Louisiana, 1806-1814, XIV, f.n. 400.

²⁹John Mason to George C. Sibley, July 2, 1811, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 459.

³⁰Ibid., f.n., 459.

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."³¹

By the year 1812 Sibley had been involved in three serious difficulties with his associates. First, Sibley's quarrel with Tillier had resulted in the latter firing him from his position as assistant factor at Fort Bellefontaine. When Pierre Chouteau negotiated the second treaty with the Osage Indians in November, 1808, Sibley had remained cool and disapproving toward him. In his diary he had criticized Chouteau's handling of the treaty-signing event. His third disquieting controversy had concerned Capt. Clemson's lack of cooperation in building the factory and reluctance to assist in the handling and preparation of the furs and skins.

Sibley was not without blame. His rigid and unbending moral code encouraged him to judge men and events in terms of black and white and to defend his own actions to the fullest. His critical attitude toward Tillier's methods of bookkeeping must have driven that worried factor to many sleepless nights. Moreover, there is no indication that Sibley ever approached Pierre Chouteau with an open mind and a willingness to hear his version of the rumors concerning his supposed desire to involve the United States government in his efforts to secure large land claims from the Indians. Sibley also badgered Clemson and his men to rush construction of the factory and to assist in caring for furs. Both officers and enlisted men must have resented

³¹George C. Sibley to Risdon H. Price, January 8, 1811, Sibley Mss.

Sibley's enlistment of Mason's influence with the Secretary of War to force them into doing work of a non-military nature. While civilian and military authorities also clashed at posts other than Fort Osage, Sibley seems to have been overly punctilious and at times given to self-righteousness concerning his own small physical stature.

On the other hand, Sibley got along well with many associates, and always had support from men in positions to advance his career. After Robinson left Fort Osage the two men carried on a friendly correspondence for a time. Isacc Rawlings became a close friend of Sibley's, and, years later, when Sibley's fortunes were low, Rawlings wrote him letters from Memphis to bolster his spirits. James Audrain and Ira Cottle, early settlers in the vicinity of Fort Osage, had a high regard for Sibley. At Fort Bellefontaine, Captain James House had thought enough of Sibley to write a letter in his behalf to Frederick Bates prior to Sibley's dismissal. In turn, Bates defended Sibley in a letter to the Secretary of War at the time of his rift with Tillier. John Mason and William Clark thought highly of Sibley and his work as the Osage factor. All in all, Sibley, like most men in positions of responsibility, had both friends and enemies. However, his long tenure at Fort Osage and the respect which he gained from his superior officers demonstrated his ability to function effectively in position of responsibility.

In June, 1810, Sibley finished the factory building with the help of the soldiers and hired hands.³² They enclosed the building,

³²George C. Sibley, June 30, 1810, Office of Indian Trade File, National Archives.

installed glass, and completed the roof and the flooring. Later in the year, they constructed an apartment in the cellar for the storage of gunpowder and added gutters to the main factory building.³³ Sibley sarcastically recorded that he gave out whiskey to the soldiers as extra treats "for their faithful services, while disagreeably employed at work about the factory."³⁴

A stone foundation supported the factory building, and the one-and-a-half story above ground was constructed of hewed white-oak logs. A six and one-half foot gallery surrounded the building on all but the north end, and a sturdy white-oak, joint-shingle roof covered the entire structure. The dimensions of the factory store were 35 x 20 feet while Sibley's living quarters measured 14 x 20 feet.³⁵ Among the many items of trade goods stocked by the factory were blankets, calico, vermilion, mock garnets, tobacco, strouds, and cloth.³⁶

In his office Sibley had a desk, two writing tables and a book case which he estimated as being worth \$15.³⁷ There he kept his records and books, wrote business and personal letters, and penned his

³³Fort Osage, December 31, 1810, Office of Indian Trade File, National Archives.

³⁴Sibley Diary, February, 1810, Sibley Mss.

³⁵James H. Audrain and Wilson P. Hunt, January 12, 1811, Survey and Appraisement of Buildings at Fort Osage Belonging to the United States Government, Office of Indian Trade File, National Archives.

³⁶Sibley Diary, n.d., Sibley Mss.

³⁷George C. Sibley, Inventory of Stock, March 31, 1810, Office of Indian Trade File, National Archives.

diary. The extensive record keeping required by the government and his own addiction to reading and personal correspondence must have kept him occupied many a night in his candle-lighted office.

During the early years of the factory system the government allotted a factor \$200 to buy furniture for his quarters, and \$25 annually thereafter for its upkeep. When a factor relinquished his position, such equipment went to his successor.³⁸ The government allotment enabled Sibley to purchase adequate and comfortable furniture for his living quarters. He had four chairs, a bedstead, a walnut cupboard, candle sticks, a candle box, a table, a washstand, stone jugs, and a looking glass. Other domestic items enumerated in his inventory were cups, saucers, plates, glasses, sugar dishes, decanters, knives and forks, a brush, a broom, a teakettle, a waffle iron, a frying pan, a chafing dish, a coffee boiler, a tin kettle, tin tumblers, and tin pans.³⁹

Early in the year, 1811, Sibley wrote to his brother that having "brought my business into some system now, it has become rather a pleasure than a toil."⁴⁰ He and his clerk followed a rather simple routine. They breakfasted at nine, a somewhat leisurely hour for men on the frontier, on coffee and unbuttered toast. For lunch at two, they usually dined on beef, pork or venison, potatoes, hominy and milk. In the evening they snacked on milk and hominy.⁴¹

³⁸ Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 35.

³⁹ George C. Sibley, Inventory of Stock, March 31, 1810, Office of Indian Trade File, National Archives.

⁴⁰ George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, February 12, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Beside Sibley's trading responsibilities and contact with Indian affairs, various activities filled his day. He read newspapers, tended a garden, pickled beef, salted pork, and even doctored "with a powerful dose of salts" Wells, his hired hand, who had a prodigious appetite for whiskey.⁴² Often in the evenings he and Rawlings dined with the Osage chiefs, and "very often...with the company of princesses and young ladies of Rank dressed out in all the finery of beads, red ribbons and vermillion, silver ornaments and scarlet blankets."⁴³ Entries in his diary indicate that though the Osage factor did not enjoy all the comforts of home, neither did he suffer all the discomforts and hardships of wilderness living.

When General Clark pulled away from Fort Osage in 1808, he had in his possession a request from Sibley for a few hogs, some cattle, and 12 to 15 chickens.⁴⁴ Sometime during the year, 1809, cattle made their appearance at Fort Osage.⁴⁵ In time Sibley was raising both hogs and cattle at Fort Osage. Not long after Dr. Robinson arrived there, he and a partner, Risdon Price, started a hog-raising project to furnish pork for the garrison.⁴⁶ When Robinson left Fort Osage early in 1810, Sibley evidently purchased

⁴²Sibley Diary, November 10, 1810, Sibley Mss.

⁴³George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, February 12, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁴Sibley Diary, September 16, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁵Eli B. Clemson to William Linnard, June 30, 1809, Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General, National Archives.

⁴⁶Gregg, "The History of Fort Osage," 454.

his share in the project. Motivated by profit, and perhaps also to demonstrate to the Indians the advantages of raising livestock, Sibley invested considerable time and effort in the project. The problems of raising livestock in such a primitive setting, however, distressed him. Some of his hogs were killed by the soldiers or the Indians, some were stolen, and others were injured and crawled away to die. On one occasion culprits set many of his hogs free and Sibley had to devote a full day rounding them up. Assisted by a band of Indians, he spent what must have been one of the wildest days of his life. For the Indians it was a time of happy diversion; for the hogs it was a time to squeal, to snort and to dash madly for the underbrush; for Sibley it was a time of testing, frustration, and utter confusion.⁴⁷

Sibley sold his part of the project in February, 1811, to James Audrain for a bay horse and a gray mare, worth \$120. Sibley continued his efforts to save Price's share of the investment, but informed him in March that his hogs were being "daily destroyed."⁴⁸ When he sold Price's hogs that same month, he soberly observed that "time and chance happeneth to all things and we must not wonder if speculations go backwards at this Savage place, when we find it so frequently the case among Civilized Christians in a land of liberty and law."⁴⁹

⁴⁷Sibley Diary, March 11, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁸George C. Sibley to Risdon H. Price, March 18, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁹Ibid.

As time went on, Sibley became increasingly involved in Indian relations that went beyond mere matters of trade. His efforts to discourage inter-tribal warfare between the Osage and their traditional enemies, the Ioways, Potowatomies, and Ottoes made it advisable for him to attend Indian councils. In May, 1809, John Mason sent wigs to Sibley to be used in councils with the Indians. The "whimsical wigs," as Mason described them, were intended to impress the Indians with the high honor and good faith of the United States government.⁵⁰

In an effort to economize the Secretary of War relieved Dr. John Robinson as Indian agent in 1809.⁵¹ Since this left Fort Osage without the services of an agent, William Clark asked Sibley if he would be willing to assume the additional burden that would be involved.⁵²

Indian agents and sub-agents⁵³ performed a number of functions. They served as intermediaries between the government and the Indians,

⁵⁰ John Mason to George C. Sibley, May 15, 1809 quoted in Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 76.

⁵¹The Secretary of War to William Clark, August 7, 1809, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 289.

⁵²William Clark to the Secretary of War, September 12, 1810, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 412.

⁵³See Ruth A. Gallagher, "The Indian Agent in the United States Before 1850," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, IV (1916), 32-33. Gallagher points out that "the only difference between the agents and the sub-agents seems to have been a matter of salary and position. The officer sent to one place to another place might be listed as a sub-agent and paid about half as much as the agent, although he seems to have had about the same duties to perform. Provided originally as assistants to the agents, the sub-agents soon came to have special posts assigned them where they became virtually independent in their administration of affairs. Like the agents they reported to the superintendents or to the Secretary of War." Gallagher, "The Indian Agent," 33.

confiscated whiskey and merchandise of unlicensed traders, delivered annuities and presents to the Indians, negotiated treaties, promoted harmonious relationships between the Indians and the white settlers, and tried to ward off inter-tribal warfare.⁵⁴

Sibley enthusiastically accepted Clark's offer, partially because he saw the advantage of combining the work of both factor and agent. The factor, finger-tip close to the Indian scene, was often the first to sense trouble and to learn of dissension that might break the peace and send the Indians on the warpath. As agent, the factor could then take the most expedient measures to prevent trouble. Sibley believed that such an arrangement would save the government much difficulty and confusion, and would make it easier for the factor to achieve the "humane and benevolent objectives of the Government in their Trading House."⁵⁵ Thus, the government trader would become "the only sure instrument in the hands of the Govt. in times of peace to govern distant Indian Tribes...the great Lever [sic] by which to move and to direct their policy and conduct toward us."⁵⁶

Moreover, because of conflicts between military agents in areas served by factories, Sibley believed that only one official at each trading house should be authorized to speak to the Indians on public

⁵⁴Gallagher, "The Indian Agent," 33.

⁵⁵George C. Sibley to William Clark enclosed in William Clark to the Secretary of War, September 10, 1810, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 414.

⁵⁶Ibid.

business and should be held responsible for his words and acts. This, he argued, would lessen the discord among factor, agent, and military commander.

However, Sibley became one of only a few factors who doubled in the role of Indian agent. This added responsibility enlarged his job and made him more of a pivotal figure among the Osage Indians.⁵⁷ Sibley could truthfully say, "I have a good deal to attend to of one kind or another, but my time is chiefly engaged with Indians and Indian affairs."⁵⁸

The Indians with whom Sibley was most directly associated were the Osage. The Osage belonged to that broad category of Plains Indians who inhabited the region now commonly labelled as Middle West.^{am 59} It would include Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Missouri, and part of the Dakotas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. These Indians farmed, lived in permanent villages for a part of the year, and hunted buffalo, as well as other animals.⁶⁰ Called village tribes, or more colloquially, the old settlers, they comprised two language stocks. First, the Siouan, a word which stands for "feathered fighters," claimed such tribes as

⁵⁷John Joseph Mathews, The Osages (University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 413.

⁵⁸George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, February 12, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁹Harold E. Driver, Indians of North America (University of Chicago Press, 1961), 16.

⁶⁰Ibid.

the Mandans, Omahas, and Osage. The second, the Caddoan, included
⁶¹
 Pawnees, Wichitas, and the Caddos.

Sometime between 1200 A.D. and 1600 A.D. these Indians settled the middle area of America. Before the coming of the white man, some of these tribes pushed their way north along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Among them were the Wazhazhe who settled along the Osage River and its tributaries in present-day Missouri. Prior to the advent of the French fur traders, the ^{Marquette} Wazhazhe ^{+ Joliet} divided into ^{"upstream people"} three tribes. The French called them the Grand Osage, the Little Osage, and the Arkansas Osage. These tribes were friendly and had their villages close together. ⁶² "home villages" in ^{Pike's} ^{descrip}

^{the name}
^{through}
^{the}
^{Osage}
 The Osage were partially agriculturalists. Sibley wrote in 1820 to Thomas L. McKenney, then Superintendent of Indian Trade, and described some of their agricultural methods. ⁶³ The Osage were primitive farmers who neither fenced nor hoed their gardens. ^{Raised corn beans pumpkins} The women carried on the farming chores. When Sibley was at Fort Osage, the Osage squaws tended his garden, gathered his corn, and dipped his candles. The Osage Indians left their villages in March for a spring hunt, but returned to plant their crops in May. They staged another hunt during the summer and then returned to their villages late in August or early September to gather their crops, and also walnuts,

⁶¹ Ruth Murray Underhill, Red Man's America: A History of the Indians in the United States (University of Chicago Press, 1953), 147.

⁶² See Kate L. Gregg, "Notes on the Osage Indians," Sibley Mss.

⁶³ George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, October 1, 1820, Sibley Mss. Also see George C. Sibley, "Indian Mode of Life in Missouri and Kansas," Missouri Historical Review, IX (October-July, 1914-1915), 47.

hazlenuts, pecans, grapes, papaws, hog potatoes, roots, and acorns. Sibley once remarked that he "feasted daintily on the preparation of acorns and Buffalo grease. I had the advantage, however, of a good appetite, well whetted by nearly two days abstinence from food."⁶⁴ From early fall until about Christmas the Osage hunted again but during the bitter months of January and February they remained in their villages.

In their village life, the men dominated. Bravery gave distinction and so there was much competition in that respect. Honors came from bringing stolen horses or the scalps of enemies.⁶⁵ The Osage tribes had clans and various societies, and so represented a considerable degree of social organization.⁶⁶ *family org* → The head chief of a tribe was appointed for life by the chiefs of the various villages.⁶⁷

The buffalo and the horse had become extremely important to the Osage way of life by the time Sibley came in contact with them. The buffalo provided many of their necessities, such as meat, covering for portable living quarters during hunts, bone tools, and clothing. Horses facilitated the Osage hunting ventures, but the Osage war parties went to war on foot. They became excellent horsemen. They obtained their horses by trading with other Indians, by stealing, and, to some extent, by capturing them wild on the plains.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Underhill, Red Man's America, 157.

⁶⁶Ibid., 152.

⁶⁷Ibid., 157.

The Osage were among the more attractive Indians physically.

Even the high-minded Sibley noticed the beauty of the young Osage

women.⁶⁸ When the young scientist, John Bradbury, visited Fort Osage

in 1811, he described the Osage as tall, robust, broad-shouldered

people, resembling giants.⁶⁹ [The men shaved their heads, and

decorated and painted them.] They lived in lodges of "an oblong form,

the frame of timber, covering mats, made of the leaves of flags or

typha palustris."⁷⁰ Another visitor to Fort Osage described the

Osage lodges as being "circular in form, constructed by placing mats
of coarse rushes over forks and poles."⁷¹

Visitors to the West found the Osage a highly interesting people and so reported vividly, though not always accurately their observations. The Osage made it a point of etiquette to show an unmoved demeanor in public. However, according to one observer, the death of a friend, a favorite mount, a relative, or a dog, they would demonstratively wail and cry. John Bradbury, awakened at dawn by the loud lamentations of the Osage, desired a closer look. He wrapped a

⁶⁸ George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, September 16, 1808, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁹ John Bradbury, Bradbury's Travels in the Interior of America, 1809-1811, Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, 1748-1846 (30 volumes, 1904-1906), V (1904), 62.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ H.M. Brackenridge, Journal of a Voyage Up the River Missouri Performed in Eighteen Hundred and Eleven by H.M. Brackenridge, Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, VI (1904), 59-60.

more on dress

blanket around him, tied a black handkerchief around his head, and stuck a tomahawk in his belt. Thus disguised, he walked into an Osage village to watch the Indians lament their dead.⁷² — *Treaties*

While Sibley was factor at Fort Osage, he familiarized himself with the Osage way of life. He knew what they did, but seldom asked the deeper question of why? Like most 19th century Americans, Sibley saw the Indians as a savage and primitive people. But at the same time, he did not believe that they should be the victims of the government's broken promises or exploited by the white man's greed. Admittedly self-righteous and convinced that the white man's civilization was superior to that of the Indian, Sibley nevertheless believed that the Indians could and should acquire the habits of white civilization.

Life at Fort Osage with the Indians, soldiers, and his assistant, Isacc Rawlings, had its pleasant moments, its excitement, and its challenges in an important work. But there were also times when Sibley felt the need for feminine companionship and a home life touched by a woman's hand. He confessed that he seriously contemplated visiting Kentucky to seek a wife, but, though he was comfortably fixed himself, the harshness and the isolation of frontier life stifled this enticing thought.⁷³

⁷²Bradbury, Bradbury's Travels, Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, V, 63.

⁷³George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, February 12, 1811, Sibley Mss.

CHAPTER V

INDIAN COUNTRY

Although the Americans had navigated the great rivers and their tributaries in their relentless penetration of the frontier, for a fleeting moment in history the last outpost of civilization planted on the bluffs of the Missouri was Fort Osage. Once the travelers, trappers, explorers, scientists, soldiers, missionaries, and adventurers ascending the river pulled beyond Fort Osage, a largely unknown and mysterious land lay in waiting. For those descending the river, the sight of the fort towering above them welcomed them to a friendlier land. Throughout the early history of the fort, Sibley met, extended acts of hospitality, and said farewell to many who moved up and down the river.

During the summer of 1809, the newly organized Missouri Fur Company made an expedition up the River under the leadership of Pierre Chouteau. The government had engaged the Company to transport the Mandan Chief Shehekehah, and his family back to their tribal territory for a sum of \$7,000.¹ Sibley recorded in his diary that forty men had deserted the company since leaving St. Louis on their way to the hunting grounds on the upper Missouri.

Wilson P. Hunt and a party of men arrived in November, 1810, and remained for two days before proceeding on the first leg of their famed overland Astorian expedition to assist in the construction of a trading post at the mouth of the Columbia River. Hunt, a St. Louis store keeper with little actual frontier experience, had been chosen to lead the expedition by John Jacob Astor. By planting a trading post on the Pacific Coast; Astor planned to open trade with the Far East. The plan,

¹Sibley Diary, July 8, 1809, Sibley Mss.

preparation, and the skill exhibited by Hunt and his party impressed the Osage factor and made him confident of their ultimate success. They wintered on the Platte River about 150 miles from the fort.²

Three months later, Hunt returned on his way back to St. Louis to make additional preparation and to secure more men for the journey. While at the Fort, he assisted James Audrain in making a survey and appraisal of buildings and stock which had been requested by the Indian Trade Office.³ In St. Louis, Hunt added more men to the expedition and reappeared at the fort early in the Spring of 1811. This time he was accompanied by the young John Bradbury who catalogued a number of Osage customs, and also interrogated Sibley about them. Together, Bradbury and Sibley attended an Osage scalp dance in which the Indians were dressed in all their ornaments and performed while carrying scalps of enemies killed in battle, arranged on sticks with raccoon tails hanging weirdly from them.⁴ On Bradbury's return trip to Fort Osage a few months later, Sibley reported that the young scientist had collected "upwards of 1500 new plants...more than a thousand of which he has yet in vegetative state in boxes."⁵

A few days after the departure of Hunt and Bradbury, Manuel Lisa of the Missouri Fur Company stopped briefly at the fort on his way

²Ibid., November 1, 1810.

³James H. Audrain and Wilson P. Hunt, January 12, 1811, Survey and Appraisal of Buildings at Fort Osage Belonging to the United States Government, Office of Indian Trade Files, National Archives.

⁴Bradbury, Bradbury's Travels, Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, V, 66.

⁵Sibley Diary, July 27, 1811, Sibley Mss.

to overtake the Astorians. Fearing that for competitive reason they might try to incite the Indians against the Missouri Fur Company, Lisa was wasting no time on his way up the river. Sibley noted that it had taken Lisa only twenty-one days to reach the fort from St. Charles.⁶ Although at the beginning he was 450 miles behind Hunt, Lisa was catching up. Along with him was H.M. Brackenridge, another traveler who, according to Sibley, wanted "to indulge his curiosity in a view of the country, its production and curiosities...an account of which it is said he intends to publish. He is said to be a young Gentleman of handsome acquirements and to possess a happy facility in writing."⁷

Brackenridge gained an unfavorable impression of the Indians around Fort Osage, describing them as "filthy, greasy and gaping" individuals dressed in buffalo robes.⁸ While Lisa and Sibley engaged in business matters, Brackenridge and an interpreter visited an Osage village to deliver to Sans Orielle, its Osage chief, a pipe of peace from William Clark. Brackenridge described Fort Osage as "handsomely situated, about one hundred feet above the level of the river, which makes an elbow at this place, giving an extensive view up and down the river. Its form is triangular, its size but small not calculated for more than a company of men."⁹ Actually, Fort Osage compared favorably in size with other factories but Brackenridge was thinking in terms of other government outposts designed specifically for military purposes.

⁶ Ibid., April 25, 1811.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Brackenridge, Journal of a Voyage, Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, VI, 57-58.

⁹ Ibid., 59.

Brackenridge pulled out with Lisa, but returned in July with Bradbury. The two travelers shared their experiences with Sibley. The visits of these two men reflected two important services of the Osage factor to men on the frontier--hospitality and information.

Dr. Kate L. Gregg, in her excellent monograph on 'The History of Fort Osage,' states that the visits of Bradbury and Brackenridge inspired Sibley to take a trip on his own into the Indian country.¹⁰ Actually, Sibley had informed a friend as early as January of his intention to make "a serious jaunt next Spring thro' the Indian country."¹¹ While Bradbury and Brackenridge were at Fort Osage in April, Sibley invited them to go with him on his excursion into the Indian country.¹²

Sibley's purposes were both official and personal. The government wanted him to try to arrange "a peace between the Osages, Kansas, Pawnees, and Ottoes" and to encourage them to trade at the United States trading house at Fort Osage. General Clark furnished Sibley with three flags and eight medals to distribute to the several nations on his visit. Clark also instructed Sibley to "speak to the Indians in his name, in a style suitable to the principles and policies of the Government of the United States."¹³ Sibley also desired to explore "the

¹⁰Gregg, "The History of Fort Osage," 446.

¹¹George C. Sibley to John C. Comegys, January 8, 1811, Sibley Mss.

¹²Bradbury, Bradbury's Travels, Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, V, 66

¹³Sibley Diary, May 11, 1811, Sibley Mss.

celebrated salines beyond the Arkansas" and to inform himself of the country, its inhabitants, productions and resources. His expedition to the salines was carried out at his own expense.¹⁴

On May 11, 1811, Sibley's small party set out. It consisted of Sibley; James Henderson, the hostler and waiter; Gabriel Lorr, the Osage interpreter; Sans Orielle, the Osage chief who had consented to guide Sibley; Little Fire, Cow Tail and two other Osage warriors who went along as scouts and hunters. The party carried with it two bundles of Indian presents and fifty pounds of clothing, ammunition and provisions. Sibley, Henderson, and Lorr rode horseback, the Indians walked, and one horse carried the gear.¹⁵

From Fort Osage the party traveled in a southwesterly direction about seventy-five miles to a large camp of the Osage located on the branch of the Marais de Cygne River. They spent a day and two nights there, and then struck north across the high prairie country, alive with game and rimmed by "lofty, rugged, naked hills," toward the villages of the Kansas and Pawnees. Before they reached the Kansas village, Sibley sent a messenger into the camp to tell the Indians of his arrival, a formality always expected. About one hundred warriors met his party at the river and escorted it into their camp. There followed the customary Indian ceremony and feasting which Sibley enjoyed to the fullest.¹⁶

¹⁴George R. Brooks, ed., "George C. Sibley's Journal of a Trip to the Salines in 1811," Bulletin, Missouri Historical Society, XXI, No. 3 (April, 1965), 200.

¹⁵Sibley's Diary, May 11, 1811, Sibley Mss.

¹⁶Brooks, ed., "Sibley's Journal," 173.

The Kansas were friendly despite the fact that Sibley had on occasion been forced to close the factory to them because of depredations and cruelties they had committed against white people. Sans Orielle, perhaps because he was in the camp of unfriendly Indians, warned Sibley to be watchful lest they attempt to poison him.

Several American flags fluttering in the prairie wind above the Indian lodges gave Sibley added confidence in his safety. The village consisted of "about one hundred and twenty-eight houses or lodges sixty feet long and twenty-five feet wide constructed of stout saplings in form of a common garden arbor and covered with skins, bark and mats." When they left on their hunts, the Indians stripped the skins from the poles and left the skeleton framework standing. The village stood on the north bank of the Kansas River, which served to delineate the land claims of the Kansas Indians. According to Sibley, all land watered by the Kansas River and its tributaries belonged to that tribe. Although they were limited to this area for their hunting grounds, it was a common understanding among Indian tribes in the surrounding region that a more extensive area was open to all for purposes of hunting the buffalo.¹⁷

The combustible nature of the lodges prompted Sibley to comment in his journal on a matter of Indian policy. Sibley wrote that he had heard "wise men, members of Congress, senators" advocate the burning of Indian villages as an effectual means of punishment. While this could easily be done and would cause the Indians some temporary discomfort and

¹⁷Brooks, ed., "Sibley's Journal," 174.

inconvenience, Sibley felt that the Indians would gladly burn their own villages for half the cost of equipping and sending United State troops to do the job.¹⁸ In this facetious comment tucked away in his journal, Sibley may well have touched on one of the major reasons American policy toward the Indians in the 19th century fell short of success-- too many who did not know, understand, or care for the Indians formulated policy.

At the time of Sibley's visit, the Kansas were preparing for their summer hunt. They had finished planting corn, beans and pumpkins. They had no fences, nor farming equipment except for hoes. The only domestic animals in the camp were horses and dogs. The Kansas Indians were led by a chief and a head council made up of the oldest and most distinguished warriors. Sibley characterized Shone-gee-ne-gare, the chief, as being a man of "sense and firmness, as well as a great warrior."¹⁹

In his journal Sibley made some demographic comments about the Kansas Tribe. Based on what he had seen and heard, the population of the Kansas Indians was declining because of inter-tribal warfare, disease, and "...evil habits arising from their intercourse with civilized (?) men."²⁰ Sibley's comments indicated his developing sensitivity to America's problem with the Indians.

While in the Kansas village, Sibley talked to their head men and encouraged them to trade with the United States factory at Fort Osage. There, he assured them they would receive fair prices for their furs. Sibley believed that one of the most significant causes of difficulties

¹⁸ Ibid., 175.

¹⁹ Ibid., 173.

²⁰ Ibid.

between the Indians and the white man stemmed from the dishonesty of private white traders. "The factory system," Sibley remarked, "was designed to obviate this evil."²¹

Leaving the Kansas village on May 22, Sibley's party headed northwest into the plains, the land of the Pawnee warriors.²² With the addition of a number of Kansas Indians, the party had grown in size to twenty. They forded the muddy, rapid but shallow Platte, which seldom rose above the knees of the horses, and camped on the north bank of that stream within ten miles of the Pawnee Republican Town, near present-day Fullerton, Nebraska.²³

On the hot and sultry day of May 28 a troop of "well mounted, and gaudily dressed" Pawnee warriors, led by their chief, joined the expedition about five miles from their town. Together they crossed the river, whose banks were lined with "swarms of dirty, half-naked women and children" and entered the village.²⁴

The Pawnee village was situated on the north bank of the Otto, a fork of the Platte River, in a meadow mile wide between the river's bank and a range of hills running parallel to that stream. Sibley's interest in horticulture led him to comment about the wild dwarf-plum trees in the hills which the Pawnees carefully nurtured. The Indians also husbanded and protected from injury the few forest trees,

²¹Ibid., 178.

²²Ibid., 173.

²³Ibid., f.n., 179.

²⁴Ibid.

mostly black walnuts, willows, and cottonwoods,²⁵ which grew near their village.

The Pawnee lodges, more sturdy in construction than those of the Kansas, were covered with a long, soft dry grass which had been mixed with clay. Sibley counted 170 lodges and noticed more being constructed. The Pawnee chief, Sharitarish, estimated that in time there would be 360 lodges accomodating 4000 Indians. In the construction of their lodges, which required as much as two months to complete, the women performed most of the labor. The women also made jars and pitchers from red clay and flint which were capable of withstanding great amounts of heat.²⁶

The Pawnees hunted and ranged widely over the plains. Because of the lack of navigable streams in their land, it was extremely difficult for traders to reach them. Sibley calculated that it would take the Indians at least a month to visit Santa Fe to trade with the Spaniards. For this reason, the Indians concentrated on the buffalo to obtain their abundance of food and clothing.

North of the Pawnee Republican Town lay the village of the Loups or Wolf Pawnees. The three tribes in the Republican village and the Loups were amicable and enjoyed considerable contact.

Sibley described the Pawnee warriors as furious, unexcelled horsemen, but of ordinary size. While he was among them, he became ill and was nursed by the wife and daughter of the chief.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., 180.

²⁶ Ibid., 180-182.

²⁷ Ibid., 185.

While in the Pawnee village, Sibley advised them to dissolve their relationship with the Spaniards, and to make peace with the Osage and Kansas so all could pass freely and safely back and forth to trade at the fort. On the first of May, Sibley had met with the head men of the four tribes of Pawnees, and with the chiefs from the Osage and Kansas. At that council he implored them to "bury the tomahawk" so that all the tribes could enjoy the advantages and benefits of the factory at Fort Osage. When they agreed, Sibley distributed flags and medals among them.²⁸

On June 4, as Sibley made ready to depart from the Pawnee Republican Town, he discovered thirty horses tied to the door of his lodge, a gift from the Pawnees. He kept one beautiful mount for himself and gave the rest to his Osage companions. Sibley's party moved south toward the hunting grounds of the Osage, located in the vicinity of present-day Wichita, Kansas, and joined them while they were still on their summer buffalo hunt.²⁹

Sibley and his men were exhausted, his horses had become jaded, and he also desired to observe more carefully the ways and customs of the Osage, so Sibley decided to remain in their camp for a week or so. For the Indians, the summer buffalo hunt was a time of joy. The happy camp prompted Sibley to comment that when the Indians were hunting on the vast prairie they were performing their most enjoyable and meaningful

²⁸ Ibid., 189.

²⁹ Ibid.

chore. Their very existence depended on the buffalo hunt and its results.³⁰

White men had heard of the Grand Saline and the Rock Saline, which was sometimes called Salt Mountain or "Jefferson's Salt Mountain," but according to the Indians no white man had been known to visit that spot.³¹ Apparently the Grand Saline was situated on the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River in northern Oklahoma in what is known as the Great Salt Plains Reservation near present-day Cherokee, Oklahoma.³² As for the Rock Saline, or "Jefferson's Mountain," Sibley's journal notes were so vague as to its exact location that later scholars have disagreed on that point. However, one commentator believes that the Rock Saline was "in either Woodward or Harper Counties," Oklahoma.³³

During his stay in the Osage camp, the Indians had warned Sibley that he must not go to the Rock Saline without at least "eighty or a hundred men equipped in all things as a war party."³⁴ They spoke of constant danger from roaming bands of Paducas and Comanches who drifted down into that area to hunt. Sibley's informants told him "that no Osage ever thought of going to that famous place, or into the surrounding region so full of wonders, except in strong force" because of the threat of hostile Indians. In view of these dire warnings,

³⁰ Ibid., 190.

³¹ Ibid., 191.

³² Ibid., f.n., 193.

³³ Ibid., f.n., 200.

³⁴ Ibid., 191.

Sibley planned to visit the Grand Saline first, and then return to the Osage hunting camp to organize a party of one hundred or so men before setting out to explore the Rock Saline.

On the trip to the Grand Saline, Sibley's party consisted of nine persons: Sibley, Henderson, an interpreter, Sans Orielle, and five Osage warriors. They crossed the Arkansas River and continued on in a southerly direction until they reached the camp of the Shainers,³⁵ a tribe of the Osage. From the camp of the Shainers they veered west to the Great Salt Plains in the northwestern part of Oklahoma. Sibley said of this natural wonder that it was

situated about 280 miles southwest of Fort Osage, between two forks of a small branch of the Arkansas River, one of which washes its southern extremity, and the other, the principal one, runs parallel, within a mile of its opposite side. It is a hard level plain of reddish colored sand, and of an irregular or mixed figure. Its greatest length is from northwest to southeast, and its circumference about thirty miles. From the appearance of the drift wood that is scattered over, it would seem the whole plain is at times inundated by the overflowing streams that pass near it. This plain is entirely covered in dry hot weather, from two to six inches deep with a crust of beautiful clean white salt, of a quality rather superior to the imported blown salt. It bears a striking resemblance to a field of brilliant snow after rain, with a light crust on its top.³⁶

While on the salt plain, Sibley stripped down to his waist, jumped on one of the Pawnee ponies, and with a young Osage warrior rode after buffalo. "I had often participated with the Osage and Kansas in

³⁵ Matthews, The Osages, 456.

³⁶ Brooks, ed., "Sibley's Journal," 194; also quoted by Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, II, 353.

buffalo chases," he once wrote, "but always on a larger scale."³⁷ His companion on the chase, girded with a scarlet cloth around his loins, a string of wampum beads around his neck, his ears and chest tinged with vermillion, and with a scarlet deer tail hanging from his scalp lock, clenched two arrows in his mouth and carried another in his bow. Although Sibley failed to kill a buffalo, the Indian took two, and the party feasted on their choice parts.³⁸

Sibley's scouts reported seeing horsemen in the hills. Fearing Paducas or Comanches who had waylaid and killed some Osage in that vicinity, Sans Orielle urged Sibley to depart for the Osage hunting camp.³⁹

On June 25, Sibley arrived at the Osage camps and organized and equipped ninety Osage Indians at his own expense for the journey to the Rock Saline. According to Sibley's calculations, the Rock Saline was sixty miles southwest of the Osage camp.

The party set out on June 28 across a country which Sibley described as "endless in variety."⁴⁰ The meadows and grassy ridges swarmed with large herds of buffalo, and also wild cattle and horses. With his spy glass Sibley surveyed the scene for miles around and did not seem to weary of the exciting and awesome beauty of the prairie country. He estimated one herd of buffalo at 30,000, so large that the deafening noise made by it echoed through the barren hills. Sibley

³⁷Brooks, ed., "Sibley's Journal," 196.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 198.

⁴⁰Ibid., 202.

and the Osage charged the herd and sent them pounding across the prairie and out of view, but the noise of the disappearing herd continued for an hour afterward.⁴¹

On his first sight of the Rock Saline country, Sibley confessed that no pen of his could do the view justice: "What a rich field there is, for the geologist, the naturalist, the mineralogist and botanist, as well as for the painter and poet!"⁴² The beauty of the country was marred only by the bloody conflicts which erupted when enemy tribes contested for the buffalo and salt. As long as the Indians fought over the ground, Sibley observed, there would be little opportunity for men of science to explore and to examine the area. Sibley wanted to remain in the vicinity longer, but the Osage, fearing again the lurking Comanches, caused the factor, after just three hours, to return to the previous night's camp. Thus, his party returned to the Osage camp on July 3, after only five days on the excursion to the Rock Saline.⁴³

On July 5, Sibley and his party started their journey homeward. On the way they encountered swarming green flies on the prairie which blanketed the men and horses. Sibley's magnificent white Pawnee pony, to which he had grown attached, became so irritated by the flies that it broke loose, plunged into a swamp, and drowned.⁴⁴ On July 11, after two months of hard travel, Sibley reached his home base at Fort Osage.

⁴¹ Ibid., 204.

⁴² Ibid., 205.

⁴³ Ibid., 206.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Sibley traveled an estimated thousand miles, saw a great many Indians, lived with them in their villages and hunting camps, viewed a country west of the Missouri still largely unknown, and, if the Indians were correct, was the first white man to see the Grand and Rock Salines.⁴⁵ His trip through the land of the Osage, Kansas, and Pawnee Indians benefited him years later when he passed through part of that country on his survey of the Santa Fe Trail for the United States government. The knowledge gained from his association with the Kansas and Osage during his trip may also have helped him in negotiating treaties with these tribes for a right of way for the Santa Fe traders in 1825.

Although Sibley's account of his trip remained unpublished during his lifetime, he shared what he had learned with a number of individuals prominent in the history of the American frontier. Sibley sent William Clark a report of the journey, which appeared in two issues of the Louisiana Gazette in May 1812.⁴⁶ He also told John Bradbury and H. M. Brackenridge about his trip. Bradbury included extracts from Sibley's journal in his travel account,⁴⁷ as did Brackenridge.⁴⁸ Josiah Gregg quoted Sibley in his Commerce of the Prairies.⁴⁹ Less than a year after his return from the Salines, Sibley

⁴⁵Ibid., 169.

⁴⁶Ibid., 168.

⁴⁷Bradbury, Bradbury's Travels, Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, V, 190.

⁴⁸Brackenridge, Journal of a Voyage, Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, VI, 151.

⁴⁹Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, II, 353.

visited his father at Natchitoches and undoubtedly saw Zebulon Pike who was stopping there for a couple of weeks.⁵⁰ Since Pike had explored much of the same country and had had some interesting experiences with the Pawnees, the two men probably discussed the Indians and the Indian country west of the Missouri River.

In July, 1814, Sibley wrote William Rector, principal deputy surveyor at St. Louis, about the Grand and Rock Salines, apparently at Rector's request.⁵¹ Sibley expressed the opinion that salt could be wagoned out of the Grand Saline, but at the Rock Saline it would be difficult because of the surrounding mountains. His letter was forwarded to Joseph Meigs, Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington, D.C. Sibley had been able to add to the information about the land, the inhabitants, and the economic possibilities of the Louisiana Purchase.

The diplomatic value of the trip remains questionable. It failed to establish peace between the Kansas and Pawnee Indians. In a battle with the Pawnees in 1812 the Kansas Indians killed the Pawnee chief in whose lodge Sibley had been nursed during his illness.⁵² There is no evidence that the Pawnees crossed the prairie in droves to trade at the government trading house at Fort Osage. It is also doubtful that Sibley did much to wean the Pawnees away from the Spaniards or to draw them into a stronger allegiance to the United States.

⁵⁰ Brooks, ed., "Sibley's Journal," f.n., 191-192.

⁵¹ George C. Sibley to William Rector, July 29, 1814, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana and Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 780-781.

⁵² Brooks, ed., "Sibley's Journal," f.n., 180.

The journal itself was well written. It must be read with the understanding that Sibley recorded what he saw and experienced, rather than attempting to explain or interpret. The journal also poses an interesting problem. In April, 1860, Sibley, then seventy-eight years old, sat down to recopy his original account of the trip which he had sent to his father in Louisiana in 1811.⁵³ In doing so, Sibley edited and added to the original manuscript. Some of the journal, therefore, represents the thinking of a seventy-eight-year-old man, rather than that of a young, enthusiastic government worker on the western prairie.

For example, George R. Brooks, who edited the Sibley journal for publication in 1965, believes that Sibley's reference to Christianity as being necessary in the process of civilizing the Indians came from the pen of the elderly Sibley, who had grown more deeply religious in his later years.⁵⁴

In one part of his journal, Sibley wrote glowingly of "anglo-Saxon enterprise" transforming the Indian country.⁵⁵ On the other hand, he also referred to the declining Indian population which he attributed to contact with "civilized (?) men..." He touchingly described the joy of the happy, innocent children of nature in their hunting camp, a scene which would in time be swept away "before the pernicious influence and example of cupidity and licentiousness [sic]

⁵³Ibid., 207.

⁵⁴Ibid., 185.

⁵⁵Ibid., 205.

inseparable [sic] from the initiatory stages of what is commonly called civilization (?)."⁵⁶ The young Sibley had gloried in "anglo-Saxon enterprise," while the elderly Sibley, aware of the tragic results for the American Indians, had developed some strong reservations concerning the outcome.

Sibley's attitude toward the Indians was tempered by his experience in the Indian country. How could a man subscribe to the theory that the only good Indian was a dead one when the wife and child of the Pawnee chief nursed him during his illness, when the Pawnees gave him horses as a gesture of friendship, when Sans Orielle warned him to be on guard lest the Kansas Indians poison him, and when he shared the happiness of the Osage in their hunting camps?

In April, 1860, Sibley sat down to recopy his original account of the trip which he had sent to his father in Louisiana.⁵⁷ In those hours, as the old man poured over the "worn, torn, faded" manuscript, he had an opportunity to relive again those days in the Pawnee Town and the Osage hunting camps and to recall from a memory still green and clear his Pawnee pony and his ride after the buffalo across the Grand Saline.

On his return to Fort Osage in July, 1811, Sibley resumed his more prosaic duties of trading for furs and peltries, and his keeping of the factory records. In August he delivered annuities to the Grand

⁵⁶Ibid., 199.

⁵⁷Ibid., 207.

Osage and the Little Osage in accordance with the treaty of 1808.⁵⁸

He wrestled with the annual order of Indian goods, pondering what effect the interruption of American commerce might have on securing supplies. Would the British traders who were well supplied gain the upper hand and woo the Indians away from the United States? This possibility grew daily, and so did Sibley's concern.⁵⁹

Late in August, his diary seemed to reflect a sigh of relief on his part: "Today, all the Osages departed for the Winter Hunt, leaving us at Fort Osage in peace and quiet."⁶⁰ Sibley then began to prepare for his furlough, which he had requested in May and which had been granted by John Mason in July. Sibley left Fort Osage in November to visit his father in Louisiana and other relatives. Arriving in Louisiana on January 14, 1812, he remained for a month, and then left for Washington. In doing so, he followed the road across the Creek nation which, he later warned his brothers, was a dangerous route.⁶¹ As he made his journey, the course of world events moved toward war between the United States and Great Britain, a war that was to have a profound effect on the Osage factor and Fort Osage.

⁵⁸ Sibley's Diary, August 25, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁹ George C. Sibley to William Clark, August 26, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁰ Sibley's Diary, August 29, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁶¹ George C. Sibley to Louis Sibley, April 23, 1812, Sibley Mss.

CHAPTER VI

THE YEARS OF CRISIS

John Mason granted Sibley's furlough, beginning in November, 1811 and ending in April, 1812, a slack season at Fort Osage. Sibley had requested the furlough on the grounds of health and business.¹ Why he went to Washington after his visit with his father in Louisiana remains unclear. There is no record that the Office of Indian Trade called him to Washington or that it made a practice of bringing government factors to Washington for a period of service in the national office. Nevertheless, Sibley was in the Office of Indian Trade when he learned that war between the United States and Great Britain was inevitable.²

Sibley's experiences as a government factor in the Louisiana Territory had tempered his attitude toward Great Britain and the impending war. Like many westerners, Sibley believed that peace among the Indian Tribes, continued settlement, and economic prosperity on the western frontier depended in large measure on the forcible removal of British traders, companies, and agents from frontier areas.³

On the Missouri frontier in the early part of the nineteenth century Americans and the British competed for the Indian trade. In this competition, the British held the upper hand. Great Britain

¹George C. Sibley to John Mason, May 10, 1811, Sibley Mss.

²George C. Sibley to Louis H. Sibley, April 23, 1812, Sibley Mss.

³George C. Sibley to Governor William Clark, July 9, 1813, Sibley Mss.; George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, January 18, 1809, Sibley Mss.; William C. Barr to Frederick Bates, July 9, 1812, Marshall, ed., Life and Letters of Frederick Bates, II, 227-228; John Coburn to John Graham, January 23, 1812, Marshall, ed., Life and Papers of Frederick Bates, II, 215.

adequately supplied her traders and agents with Indian goods, such as blankets, strouds, binding, flannel cloth, pewter basins, knives, vermilion, wampum, verdegris, and awls.⁴ Americans, on the other hand, often found themselves in the unenviable position of competing with the British at a time when American goods were scarce. In October, 1807, Frederick Bates pointed out to the Secretary of War, Henry Dearborn, that British traders had departed from the Missouri frontier and that the Indians had become restless and discontented because they missed the blankets and other items which the British traders had supplied. Bates maintained that if the United States expected to compete profitably, it had to take up the slack created by the departure of the British traders. British traders had spread rumors among the Indians that the "American Father is too poor to supply them with a blanket."⁵

This heavy burden of competing with the British for the Indian trade often taxed Sibley's patience. To make matters worse, the United States passed a law in 1810 prohibiting the importation of British goods into the country.⁶ Since government factories had used

⁴Listed in Sibley's Letter Book, 1809-1810, Sibley Mss.

⁵Frederick Bates to Henry Dearborn, October 27, 1807, Marshall, ed., Life and Papers of Frederick Bates, I, 221-223.

⁶On May 1, 1810, Macon's Bill No. 2 passed the House of Representatives 64-27. It provided that if either England or France revoked or modified their edicts so as to cease violations of American shipping before March 3, 1811, the United States would prohibit trade with the other. Believing that the French had revoked the Berlin and Milan decrees in August, 1810, Madison reopened trade with France and declared that trade with Great Britain would cease on February 2, 1811. This was sanctioned by Congress on March 2, 1811.

British goods, this served to increase the scarcity of Indian trade goods. Interruption of American commerce on the high seas by the British forced government factors to order their goods far in advance but still without any assurance that they would be supplied.⁷ Sibley wrote in 1811 that this interruption would make it "unusually difficult to procure Indian goods in our Atlantic Cities, and it will therefore Require more time than usual to furnish the orders from the different trading houses..."⁸ This would afford the British more time to trade with the Indians, to discredit the Americans, and to stir up hostile feelings among the Indians toward the Americans.⁹

John Mason, Superintendent of Indian Trade, fearing that the British would be angered by Macon's Bill Number 2 and would retaliate by attempting to incite the Indians against the factories, wrote a circular letter to the Indian factors. Thinking that the British would picture the law as an attack against the Indians, Mason ordered the factors at the various American posts to counter by redoubling their efforts to "please the Indians and to explain to the chiefs how the measure had been brought about." It was imperative, Mason wrote, that the Indians be made to see that the United States government intended to punish the British, not the Indians, for the manner in which the British had violated American rights. He also wanted the Indians to understand that the law was designed to prevent war with Britain. The

⁷ George C. Sibley to William Clark, August 26, 1811, Sibley Mss.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Indians must understand that the reason for American ports being closed to British goods was the fault of the British rather than of the Americans.¹⁰

Once the United States declared war, it became increasingly difficult to secure goods, fill orders for the factors, and the orders which were completed were often composed of American goods inferior in quality to those of the British. In 1813, Mason wrote that "poor blankets cost more than good ones before the declaration of war."¹¹ In June, 1814, Sibley reported that "Indian goods are extremely scarce here, and are immensely dear."¹²

The Indians were caught in the economic cross fire between the Americans and the British. Many Americans believed that the British had deliberately encouraged the enemies of the Osage Indians to commit depredations against them on their hunting grounds. Throughout his years at Fort Osage, Sibley had to contend with the bloody results of this savage competition. By the Treaty of 1808, the United States government had become an ally of the Osage, and one of General Clark's most effective arguments at the time of the negotiations had been that the United States would protect the Osage from their enemies. Clark wrote

What pleased most was the idea I suggested [sic] that it was better that they should be on the

¹⁰Circular Letter to Indian Factors from John Mason, April 16, 1811, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 450-451.

¹¹John Mason to George C. Sibley, May 22, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, f.n., 775.

¹²George C. Sibley to John Mason, June 21, 1814, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 775.

lands of the United States where they could hunt without fear of other Indians attacking them for their Country, than being in continual dread of all the eastern Tribes whom they knew wished to destroy them and possess their Country.¹³

The Treaty, however, did not eliminate the bloody conflicts and brutal skirmishes of the Osage with their traditional enemies, the Sacs, Fox, and Iowas.¹⁴ Sibley's diary, letters and reports affirmed this. In February, 1811, Sibley listed for General Clark the acts committed against the Osage by their enemies and pleaded with him "to interfere in behalf of the Osage against these tribes."¹⁵ He warned the General that if the United States did not abide by its pledge to defend the Osage from attacks, they would be forced to take up the "tomahawk and scalping knife" in a full-scale war against their enemies.¹⁶

From Fort Osage in March, 1811, Sibley watched a well-armed and well-equipped Osage war party being escorted across the river by soldiers in search of the enemy and to strike "a sore blow...should they find them unapprised of their approach."¹⁷ This same war party later returned with eight scalps and a horse taken from the Iowas.¹⁸ In May, 1811, a formidable party of Iowas lurked in the forest near the

¹³Kate L. Gregg, "The War of 1812 on the Missouri Frontier," Missouri Historical Review, XXXIII (October, 1938), 5.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵From the Letter Book of George C. Sibley, February, n.d., 1811, Sibley Mss.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Sibley Diary, March 11, 1811, Sibley Mss.

¹⁸Sibley Diary, March 19, 1811, Sibley Mss.

Osage camp not far from the fort, stole horse, and even became bold enough to send a spy into the Osage camp. An Osage spotted the unfortunate Iowa and sounded the alarm. In an instant, Osage warriors fell upon him, hacking him to pieces within 300 yards of the garrison. One of the Osage warriors decapitated him and mounted his head on a stick. With a torch in one hand and the mounted head in the other, he barged into the factor's sleeping quarters to hold before the startled Sibley his grisly trophy.¹⁹

Fear of these enemies north of the Missouri River forced about sixty families of the Little Osage to relocate their camp on the Neosho River about a hundred miles southwest of the fort.²⁰ The extent of British responsibility for encouraging the enemies of the Osage to strike a blow against them and the Americans is difficult to ascertain. However, Sibley, along with countless other westerners, believed that the British fomented Indian attacks and conflicts, and that the time had come to rid the frontier of their evil influence and aggressive competition. When the United States chose war in 1812, Sibley marched in step with the nationalistic trend of the Madison administration.

Sibley left Washington before Congress declared war on June 18, 1812 to return to his post at Fort Osage.²¹ He remained there until June, 1813, at which time the government abandoned the fort for military and diplomatic reasons during the remainder of the war.

¹⁹George C. Sibley to William Clark, May 4, 1811, Sibley Mss.

²⁰George C. Sibley to William Clark, August 26, 1811, Sibley Mss.

²¹George C. Sibley to Louis H. Sibley, April 23, 1812, Sibley Mss.

In June, 1812, Congress had created the Missouri Territory and had admitted Louisiana as a state. The legislative power of the Territory had been vested in a bicameral general assembly composed of a legislative council of nine men, appointed for five years by the President, and a house of representatives elected for two years by the people of the Territory. The territorial governor became superintendent of Indian affairs "within the confines of his jurisdiction," and also commander-in-chief of the territorial militia. Sibley, now responsible to the Governor of the Territory as well as to the authorities in Washington, made his reports to both.²² In fact, Sibley and other government factors in the territories had two bosses-- the constitutional officer of the territory, and the government officials in Washington concerned with the administration of the factory system. The working relationship between these two was never defined by law.²³ The factors, therefore, were burdened with the problems associated with serving two masters.²⁴

During the summer months of 1812 there was little trading or military activity at Fort Osage. Captain Eli B. Clemson, the garrison's commander, complained of this, declaring that he would rather serve before the "wall of Quebec than at a place so cut off from every person and thing."²⁵ Clemson felt that the fort at its current location served

²²United States Statutes at Large, II, 743-747.

²³Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, f.n., 774.

²⁴George C. Sibley to John Mason, June 21, 1814, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 773-775.

²⁵Eli B. Clemson to Thomas M. Cushing, October 1, 1812, Records of the Adjutant General, Records Group No. 94, National Archives.

no useful purpose for, he argued, its location was inconvenient to the Osage and to other tribes, and it was too far removed from white settlements to protect them effectively. In his opinion, Fort Osage was "a moth on the public purse."²⁶ In July, he noted the absence of Osage and friendly Indians around the place for nearly four months. There is no record that Sibley defended the location of Fort Osage as a trading post or as a military site. His major concern was that regardless of what happened to Fort Osage the United States government was still bound by the provisions of the Treaty of 1808.²⁷

Although there was little excitement at Fort Osage in the summer of 1812, other government factories had more than their share. Mason warned the factors at Chicago, Fort Wayne, Michilimackinac, and Sandusky that war had been declared and advised them to be on guard for British moves against them.²⁸ Mason also urged the factors to heed the advice of General William Hull, Governor of Michigan Territory. If a factory were in danger, Hull instructed the factor to cease trading with the Indians, to pack his goods, and to move with haste to a place of safety.²⁹

Peake reports that the factories at Michilimackinac, Chicago, and Sandusky were wiped out by November, 1812. Michilimackinac lost

²⁶ Eli B. Clemson to John Brownson, July 16, 1812, Records of the Adjutant General, Records Group No. 94, National Archives.

²⁷ George C. Sibley to William Clark, July 9, 1813, Sibley Mss.

²⁸ Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 158.

²⁹ Ibid.

its goods, furniture and money. The British massacred the Chicago garrison. At Sandusky the English and the Canadians stole and destroyed property worth \$3,821.72. The British and their Indian allies menaced Fort Wayne and Fort Madison, and eventually destroyed considerable property.³⁰ With the action against Fort Madison and Fort Wayne, the War of 1812 edged its way closer to Fort Osage.

As early as October, 1812, Mason ordered Sibley to be alert to Indian trouble, and to be prepared to evacuate the Fort and to move to St. Louis if an Indian attack seemed likely. The Secretary of War had left it to the discretion of Governor Benjamin Howard of the Missouri Territory to make the final decision about the evacuation of Fort Osage.³¹ Governor Howard had informed the Secretary of War that the failure of American arms on the Great Lakes had placed the Missouri Territory in a dangerous position. He feared that the British would be able to incite the Indians on Missouri's northern frontier and would strike disastrous blows at Prairie du Chien, Fort Madison, and St. Louis.³² By December, 1812, there was a growing sentiment among the military leaders in Missouri in favor of evacuating Fort Osage and Fort Madison for a better and stronger defence of the Missouri frontier. Daniel Bissell, commander of the garrison at Fort Bellefontaine, believed that a better

³⁰Ibid., 159-160.

³¹John Mason to George C. Sibley, October 13, 1812, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 613.

³²Governor Benjamin Howard to the Secretary of War, September 20, 1812, Carter, The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 593.

disposition of the garrisons at Fort Madison and Fort Osage could be made by establishing them at more strategic locations nearer St. Louis.³³

Throughout the winter of 1812-1813, Sibley secretly prepared his plans to evacuate the Fort so as not to alarm the Indians. This meant that all the furs, public goods, books and papers pertaining to the factory had to be packed in crates, boxes and tierces, coppered to make them waterproof. By March, 1813, he was ready to leave in the event the Fort was threatened.³⁴

In the meantime, Acting-Governor Frederick Bates dispatched Pierre Chouteau early in March, 1813, to the Osage Indians to seek their help against the hostile Indians "nations of the Mississippi who are Bordering upon our Settlements."³⁵ The idea of enlisting the aid of the Osage against the enemies of the United States originated with Chouteau.³⁶ Chouteau visited the Osage towns, enlisted 260 warriors, and prepared to march back to St. Louis. However, before the force could get under way, Governor Howard countermanded Bates' order and instructed Chouteau to seek for a repeal of the Treaty of 1808 which

³³ Daniel Bissell to the Secretary of War, December 28, 1812, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 612-613.

³⁴ Daniel Bissell to the Secretary of War, March 30, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 646.

³⁵ Pierre Chouteau to the Secretary of War, March 5, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 639.

³⁶ Frederick Bates to Pierre Chouteau, March 4, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 673.

would allow the government to abandon the Fort and factory during the duration of the war. The Indians agreed to the evacuation of the Osage post on the following conditions: (1) that the government pay their annuities by July; (2) that the blockhouses promised them be constructed in their villages; (3) that when the factory was re-established it would not be located on the Missouri River below the current site.³⁷ About seventy Indians and Chouteau signed the treaty on May 4, 1813.³⁸

There are no indications that Sibley played a part in Chouteau's dealings with the Osage Indians. Early in the spring of 1813 the decision to evacuate Fort Osage came from Governor Benjamin Howard on the grounds that it served no military purpose in protecting the frontier, and that the Indians in the vicinity of the fort appeared friendly and at peace with the United States.³⁹ Sibley did not oppose the evacuation of the fort, but did feel that the factory should be relocated at another point. To Clark he wrote, "I will do myself the honor of communicating to the Superintendent of Indian Trade whatever plan you may recommend or sanction for re-establishing the Osage trading house."⁴⁰ Since Clark was now Governor of the Missouri

³⁷ Pierre Chouteau to the Secretary of War, May 20, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 671-672.

³⁸ Ibid., f.n., 672.

³⁹ Governor Benjamin Howard to Daniel Bissell, April 4, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 662.

⁴⁰ George C. Sibley to William Clark, July 9, 1813, Sibley Mss.

Territory,⁴¹ Sibley had to rely on both the Governor and the authorities in Washington for his instructions. Sibley's arguments favoring re-establishment of the Osage factory were communicated to Clark in a letter dated July 9, 1813. In the first place, he believed that it was the best policy of the United States "to keep up the influence of trade over them (Osage), by means of which they may be retained as friends and kept out of the intrigues of the Hostile Indians and British Agents."⁴² Furthermore, the United States had a moral obligation to stand by its Treaty commitments to the Osage. The government had given its word at Fire Prairie back in 1808, and by that word it should stand.

Although ice on the river delayed Sibley's departure from Fort Osage, he was finally able to deliver the factory goods, papers, and books to St. Louis by June, 1813.⁴³ His inventory included beds, bureau, bookcase, desk, walnut tables, ten windsor chairs and a settee valued at \$200. He rented a room in St. Louis from William Christy for five dollars a month to store the official books and papers. The government continued to pay the salaries of all factors who had been forced to leave their factories and seek places of safety. If little chance existed that a factory would be reopened after the war, the

⁴¹ William Clark was appointed governor of the Missouri Territory to replace General Benjamin Howard in June, 1813. See Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, f.n., 657.

⁴² George C. Sibley to William Clark, July 9, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁴³ George C. Sibley Inventory, Inventory of factory goods brought to St. Louis from Fort Osage, June 30, 1813, Office of Indian Trade File, National Archives.

factor was compensated for the remainder of the quarter and then dismissed.⁴⁴

Life in St. Louis did not appeal to Sibley. To his brother he complained that it was a "sickly place," "dull to idlers."⁴⁵ His social life must have been frustrating since he claimed he had little opportunity to meet members of the opposite sex. It was at this time that he mentioned to his brother that he owned a slave, George, who was married and had begun to work on "multiplication with very considerable success for young beginners." He also commented that slaves in Missouri were well fed, clothed, and kindly treated. Slaves in Missouri, he believed were not so much employed to

amass wealth for their owners as to provide substantial comforts, make domestic improvements and render life easy, comfortable and happy. Ten good, sleek well fed and well clothed Blacks are amply sufficient for these purposes.⁴⁶

While at Fort Osage, Sibley had made a number of trips down the river to St. Louis for business reasons. In 1809, he traveled from Fort Osage by land to Arrow Rock, where, he claimed, he swam the Missouri River in the winter time, and continued on to St. Louis.⁴⁷ He returned to his post in February, 1810. Later in 1810, he made another journey to St. Louis to pick up the necessary building supplies to complete the Osage factory buildings. In 1811 he passed through

⁴⁴Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 161.

⁴⁵George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, September 25, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Extract from a letter of George C. Sibley, Kansas City Star, February 15, 1925, quoted in Gregg, "The History of Fort Osage,"⁴⁴⁷.

St. Louis on his way to visit his father in Louisiana. In the spring of 1812, he stopped off at St. Louis on his way back to Fort Osage. During these visits to St. Louis, Sibley speculated in land. He told his brother in 1813 that he intended to continue investing in land for the day was coming when the war would be over and increasing immigration into the Territory would enhance the value of land.⁴⁸

By 1813 Sibley had acquired several tracts of land. One of his properties was located about thirty miles from St. Louis, probably in the vicinity of St. Charles. He described it as being near a very wealthy settlement on the Missouri River, with a good house, orchard, fences, spring, and mill site. It contained 250 acres of rich fertile soil and some woodland. At the town of Herculaneum on Flatten Creek, thirty miles below St. Louis, Sibley had purchased 800 arpens. The third tract of land was 120 arpens adjoining the town of St. Charles, Missouri. The total cost to him of the three tracts of land was \$900.⁴⁹

Sibley's land speculation did not bring him the wealth he expected, but it did in time provide an economic underpinning for an educational enterprise in which he became involved by the mid 1850's in St. Charles.

By August, 1813, Mason and Clark had decided to send Sibley to Arrow Rock for the winter of 1813-1814 to establish a trading post among

⁴⁸ George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, September 25, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

the Osage Indians.⁵⁰ He was instructed to pay the Osage annuities, to carry on trade with them, to cement Osage and American relationships, which had been friendly, to discover if the Osage wanted the government to continue a trading post, and, if so, to inform Sibley where they wanted the post located. Sibley felt so strongly about the government keeping its treaty with the Osage that he was willing to risk the danger of going into the Indian country. From a letter of Sibley's to William Clark one gathers the impression that there was some confusion about Chouteau's treaty with the Osage the previous May abrogating that part of the Treaty of 1808 in which the United States had agreed to maintain a trading house at Fort Osage.⁵¹ Chouteau's correspondence had been with the War Department, rather than with the Office of Indian Trade or General Clark. There may have been a breakdown in communications among these various agencies. Nevertheless, Sibley planned to hear for himself what the Osage desired the government to do about the trading post.⁵²

Although the Osage were friendly toward the United States, Sibley put together a rather impressive arsenal to take with him into the Indian country. From William Christy he purchased a blunderbuss for twenty dollars, supplanted later by still another blunderbuss and a mounted swivel. William Clark provided a brass-barrelled blunderbuss.

⁵⁰George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, September 25, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁵¹George C. Sibley to William Clark, November 30, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 711-714.

⁵²Ibid.

Sibley purchased for himself a "spotted roan" for \$130. To his supplies he added tools, playing cards, whiskey and tobacco for the men who were to accompany him. Simon Brouster made a strong chest for his books and papers and weatherboarded his keel boat, The Osage Factor.⁵³ Sibley left sixty-five boxes, bales, and tierces in storage, along with some furniture. On September 21, 1813, a worker moved thirty-eight cart loads, nine of which were guns, from the St. Louis warehouse to the boat. Sibley started upriver on September 24, taking with him three Kansas Indians, one of whom was seriously ill, who were returning to their nation after a visit with Governor Clark.⁵⁴ At the mouth of the Missouri, a violent storm drove them to cover for a day.

The Sibley party reached its destination, Arrow Rock, by the middle of October. He immediately began to supervise the building of a blockhouse and huts, to purchase potatoes and hominy from near-by settlers to tide his party over the winter months, and to carry on discussions with the Osage for a period of two weeks in November on the subject of a Trading House.⁵⁵

The Arrow Rock location was convenient to the Osage hunting camps. In his inventory to the government at the close of the year, Sibley described the post as consisting of

A block house 30 feet long by 20 feet wide, 2 stories high built of large cottonwood trees,

⁵³ Simon Brouster to George C. Sibley, September 10, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁴ Sibley's Journal, September 30, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁵ George C. Sibley to William Clark, November 30, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 711-714.

roofed with oak slabs, well-secured by hickory splints spiked on--armed with 1 swivel and three blunderbusses affording sufficient rooms for goods, for Trading and for fighting. A line of double huts built as the above affording quarters for myself, interpreter, 5 engagees, and servant. The whole probably sell for about 200 in the spring thou' worth much more.⁵⁶

According to Sibley's journal, a number of men worked on the buildings. The Arrow Rock operation included, in addition to Sibley, his assistant, Isacc Rawlings, an interpreter, Antoine Burda, and five men who constituted the garrison.⁵⁷ In December, 1813, William Clark notified John Mason that Sibley was safe in his winter quarters and was ready for trade with the Indians.⁵⁸ In the last quarter of 1813, Sibley's calculations showed that he transacted \$491.21 in trade with the Indians. This amount was much smaller than his previous quarterly averages of \$2,500 at Fort Osage.⁵⁹

In a long report to William Clark, Sibley gave an account of his discussions with the Osage Indians on the matter of the trading post. Sibley asked the Osage chiefs to discuss in their councils the following questions:

⁵⁶George C. Sibley's Inventory to the Government, December 31, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸William Clark to John Mason, September 13, 1813 quoted in Dr. Kate L. Gregg, "Sibley's Post at Arrow Rock," Missouri Historical Review, XXXIV (October, 1939), 141.

⁵⁹The value of furs and peltries shipped from Fort Osage in the year 1809 was \$9,711.50. See American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 272. For the years 1810 and 1811, the value of furs and peltries at Fort Osage amounted to \$20,272.44. See Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 275. For the three-year period the total value of furs and peltries collected at Fort Osage was \$29,983.94, or a quarterly average of \$2,498.66.

I wish you to inform me whether or not you ever expressed any wish to wave that Article of the Treaty between your Nations and the U.S., in which the U.S. engage to keep up a Trading House at Fort Clark?

Is it your wish now, that the Trading House shall be reestablished, or do you wish it entirely discontinued, and have your Supplies furnished by private traders?

If it is your desire that the Trading House be reestablished I wish you to try and settle the question between you, where it shall be fixed? and let me have your determination.⁶⁰

On November 26, 1813, six Osage chiefs responded to Sibley's questions, and took their answers down in writing--although neither the Grand nor the Little Osage wanted the Trading House discontinued, the Little Osage chiefs wanted the factory to be re-established at Fort Osage, while the Grand Osage chiefs preferred to have it at Arrow Rock or on the Osage River. Fort Osage was so far from the villages of the Grand Osage that their enemies attacked them on their way to trade.⁶¹

Sibley's meeting with the Osage chiefs at Arrow Rock in the fall of 1813 convinced him more than ever of the moral obligation of the United States to abide by the treaty of 1808. Sibley sent the report to Clark as evidence that the Osage upheld their end of the treaty, and that the United States government could do no less. If peace and

⁶⁰ George C. Sibley to William Clark, November 30, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 711-714.

⁶¹ Ibid.

friendship with the Indians constituted the policy of the government, the government in turn must not break its promises to the Indians.⁶²

Sibley believed this so strongly that he was willing to go up the Missouri in 1813 to trade with the Indians at a time when, as a result of the War of 1812, the frontier was reported to be aflame with hostile Indians.

Throughout the winter of 1813-1814 Sibley met with little difficulty at Arrow Rock but by spring his situation had become more precarious. The Osage committed some depredations and murders against American settlers, and William Clark sent Pierre Chouteau to demand surrender of the murderers in accordance with treaty provisions. In addition to these hostile outbreaks, the Sac and Fox Indians north of the Missouri River went on the warpath, forcing Clark to withdraw Sibley from Arrow Rock and John Johnson from his outpost on the Little Moniteau to St. Louis in April, 1814.⁶³

Antoine Burda had command of The Osage Factor on its return trip to St. Louis, but ran it aground on a sand bar near the mouth of the Missouri. Soldiers at Fort Bellefontaine worked hard to save most of the items which had fallen into the river and to dig out the barge from its muddy moorings. Sibley dried out the furs, repacked them, oiled the guns with bear grease, and continued on his way to St. Louis.⁶⁴ An

⁶²George C. Sibley to William Clark, November 30, 1813, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 711-714.

⁶³Gregg, "Sibley's Post," 142.

⁶⁴George C. Sibley to Office of Indian Trade, April 1, 1814, Sibley Mss.

invoice of furs delivered to James Kennerly, the transport agent for the Department of Indian Trade, in June amounted to \$3,499.83 $\frac{1}{2}$.⁶⁵ Considering the handicaps, such as the time involved in getting established, meetings with the Indians, the winter weather, and the threat of deprivations, Sibley's trade efforts at Arrow Rock were impressive.

After his return to St. Louis in the summer of 1814 Sibley continued to insist that the government should furnish the Osage Indians with goods as nearly as possible in conformity with treaty agreements. Sibley talked with Clark about the matter and was told to write John Mason for instructions.⁶⁶ In his letter to Mason, Sibley requested permission to return to the Indian country with enough goods to supply the Osage and to pay their annuities. Sibley's letter serves to illustrate once again how the duties and activities of the territorial governor in Indian affairs overlapped those of the Superintendent of Indian Trade, this compelling Sibley to look in two directions for his instructions. Mason sanctioned Sibley's request to leave St. Louis in August, 1814, for the Osage towns to supply the Indians and pay their annuities, but advised him that Indian goods were scarce and that adequate transportation to carry them to St. Louis was also questionable.⁶⁷ Mason added that he still considered Arrow Rock as the best location for the Osage factory, but instructed Sibley to follow the advice of General Clark on that matter.

⁶⁵George C. Sibley to John Mason, June 21, 1814, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 773.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷John Mason to George C. Sibley, July 11, 1814, Sibley Mss.

By August, Sibley's prospects for returning to the Indian country had dimmed. He wrote his brother that the Territory was being "very seriously threatened with invasion by an immense savage force which required the use of all our means to repel."⁶⁸ Under the circumstances, Clark suggested that Sibley go to Washington "to make some arrangements with the Gov't for the better protection of this frontier--I do not much relish the journey...but the Governor prefers me to go..."⁶⁹

Thus, instead of pushing west into the Indian Country in August of 1814, Sibley went to Washington. Aware of rumors of impending peace, Sibley thought that they were probably illusory. Moreover, he gained the impression that Washington was demoralized and disheartened, and agreed with some observers that the nation was in danger of dissolution. If Jackson did not succeed in defending New Orleans against the British, then, Sibley grimly predicted, the Eastern states would make peace with the enemy and would disrupt the Union. Regardless of the outcome at New Orleans, Sibley thought that the western states would continue to defy England and would never submit to any terms of peace inconsistent with their rights and their duty to the Union.⁷⁰ Sibley must have reflected the sentiments of the nation's leadership, which was unaware at the time of the results of the peace negotiations at Ghent.

⁶⁸ George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, August 12, 1814, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, January 21, 1815, Sibley Mss.

In view of the dejected and discouraged state of the nation's morale, Jackson's military victory at New Orleans, January 8, 1815, took on a significance far beyond its military results. It gave to the nation a genuine hero in Andrew Jackson, infused new life into Congress, bolstered American nationalism, served to discredit the extremists in New England who had talked of secession, and encouraged the reckless and restless surge of Americans into the West. The signing of the Treaty of Ghent and Jackson's triumph at New Orleans drenched the nation in good news in 1815.⁷¹

Sibley shared in the rejoicing, but the state of his own personal affairs worried him. Uncertain about his future in the government's service, he contemplated changing his vocation. His financial condition was such that he could not help his father, who was in danger of losing his estate, Grand Encore, near Natchitoches, because of poor management.⁷² Nevertheless, Sibley returned to St. Louis in the early spring of 1815.

The War of 1812 had severely disrupted the Indian Factory System. Its property losses amounted to \$43,369.61, and its trade with the Indians had dropped off as much as five thousand dollars per year.⁷³ Since all factors had continued on salary throughout the war, even when their posts were closed, no savings had been effected on that item

⁷¹John William Ward, Andrew Jackson-Symbol for an Age (New York, 1962), 5.

⁷²George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, January 21, 1815, Sibley Mss.

⁷³Peake, A History of the Indian Factory System, 164-165.

of cost. When Sibley later returned to Fort Osage, he found the buildings badly deteriorated and in need of considerable time and expenditure for restoration.

After the War, the government attempted to revitalize its Indian policy by reopening and restocking factories that had been closed during the conflict. New treaties were negotiated with Indians who had remained loyal to the United States, as well as with those who had been hostile.⁷⁴ In July, 1815, the Indian Trade Office instructed Sibley to consult with Clark and to follow his advice as to the best possible location for the Osage factory. Mason recognized that the Osage Treaty of 1808 bound the United States to maintain the factory at Fort Osage and, if Clark decided to relocate it at some other place, it must be done with the consent of the Osage Tribes. Finally, the decision was made to keep the factory at its old location.⁷⁵ In September, 1815, the government advanced Sibley \$600 "to meet and defray the expenses or Re-establishing the Osage Trading House."⁷⁶ Sibley's return to Fort Osage promised to be more pleasant for him as he took along his recent bride, Mary Easton Sibley.

Born on January 24, 1800 in Rome, New York, Mary Easton had been brought to St. Louis by her father and mother, Rufus and Abial Abby Easton in 1804, when Thomas Jefferson appointed Easton to serve as a

⁷⁴James Monroe to William Clark, March 25, 1815, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 2.

⁷⁵John Mason to George C. Sibley, July 30, 1815, Sibley Mss.

⁷⁶Office of Indian Trade Files, September 22, 1815, Office of Indian Trade, National Archives.

judge in the new Territory. When Easton's term expired in 1806, he was appointed the first United States Postmaster at St. Louis.

Elected as a delegate to Congress from the Missouri Territory in 1814, he served two two-year terms. Upon the organization of the Missouri state government in 1821, Easton became state Attorney General and continued in that office until 1826.⁷⁷

Sibley probably became acquainted with the Easton family while still assistant factor at Fort Bellefontaine or during one of his trips to St. Louis from Fort Osage. When Sibley returned to St. Louis from Washington in the summer of 1815, Mary had reached the age of fifteen and quickly succumbed to Sibley's courtship.

The wedding took place in the Easton home at 7:00 in the evening, August 19, 1815.⁷⁸ Sibley described his bride as having an "amiable disposition, acquirements and personal accomplishments and most excellent bringup..." He was confident that she was "eminently qualified for the task she has with pleasure and zeal undertaken, to make me happy."⁸⁰ In a letter to his brother, he anticipated the question he knew would be on the minds of his relatives and friends: "Do you intend to take this charming wife with you among the Indians?" He answered

She has long ago expressed her perfect willingness to live any where with me and until I can

⁷⁷From the file of Rufus Easton in the possession of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁷⁸Missouri Gazette, September 16, 1815.

⁷⁹George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, August 20, 1815, Sibley Mss.

⁸⁰Ibid.

withdraw from the Indian Service, she will willingly share with me the privations of a forest life. I mean to have a very comfortable establishment...in the howling wilderness.⁸¹

Mary was a handsome, gay, happy, and out-going girl. A member of the family, writing many years after Mary's death, remembered "Aunt Mary" telling her that before her marriage to Sibley she and a girl friend "thought nothing of riding horseback all day to reach an army post, dancing with the officers of the ball and returning the next day on the rested-up horses, filled with the memories of a pleasant evening."⁸² Rufus Easton and his daughter had also traveled extensively, going on one occasion to Washington, and then by boat to Shelbyville, Kentucky, where she attended Mrs. Tevis' boarding school.⁸³ Throughout her life she displayed a great deal of personal initiative and drive, traits that her husband fully encouraged. An excellent horsewoman, a good pianist, and adequately educated for a young woman in 1815, Mary took with her her saddle horse, an organ, some furniture, and her library to Fort Osage.⁸⁴

The Sibleys left St. Louis on October 1, 1815 on The Osage Factor for their new home. Mary described the journey as one

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Letter of Mrs. V.G. Carpenter to Frank _____, n.d., Sibley Mss.

⁸³ From the file of Mary Easton Sibley in the possession of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁸⁴ Quoted from F.C. Shoemaker, "Sketch of Sibley's Life," St. Charles Banner News, March 27, 1931.

"fraught with danger and excitement and discomforts."⁸⁵ However, she confessed that the journey fascinated her and satisfied her zest for adventure. One can only imagine her thoughts as they rounded the bend in the Missouri River and she saw for the first time the outlines of her new home high on the bluff above them. There they were to live for the next fourteen years, during two of which Sibley would be absent on a government survey of the Santa Fe Trail. Her new acquaintances would be soldiers, the white settlers who had begun to drift into that area in ever-increasing numbers, hunters and trappers who paddled the river on their way to the hunting grounds, and the Osage Indians who traded at the factory.

On arrival, Sibley began immediately to repair the factory and fort which had been neglected since 1813 and to put in order their living quarters.⁸⁶

In December, the couple returned to St. Louis. While there, Sibley tended to business and evidently escorted Mary through a maze of lively balls and parties.⁸⁷ Mary wrote her father in Washington, "Mr. Solomon has opened his Drawing Room, where everyone who pays a dollar and a half is admitted to eat tough pancakes and dance as long as they please."⁸⁸ In a more sober and bussinesslike manner, Sibley

⁸⁵ From the file of Mary Easton Sibley in possession of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁸⁶ George C. Sibley's Day Book, October-November, 1815, Sibley Mss.

⁸⁷ Mary Easton Sibley to Rufus Easton, February 11, 1816, Sibley Mss.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

asked his father-in-law to do what he legally could to keep British Traders out of the country.⁸⁹ In March, 1816, the Sibleys returned to Fort Osage, bringing with them Louisa, Mary's younger sister.⁹⁰

Sibley described their living quarters at the fort as being "very comfortable, and with the aid of very fine gardens, a well stocked Poultry yard and an Ice House we are enabled to live well."⁹¹ He also praised Missouri Territory as a place where a man could "fix himself for life."⁹² Like most people on the frontier, he expected to profit greatly from land speculation. During the summer of 1815 he had purchased land for as low as sixty cents an acre and within a year considered it worth eight dollars an acre. He catalogued for his brother the many products that the mild climate and fertile soil of Missouri produced in abundance. Sibley noted that St. Louis continued to expand and soon would be linked with another western city, New Orleans, by steamboats on the Mississippi River. Moreover, he was pleased at the presence of some good preparatory schools in St. Louis, and with plans in that city to establish a new academy under the leadership of a "respectable clergyman...at a salary of \$1500 a year..."⁹³ Sibley's comments throbbled with his awareness of the growth and progress of the Missouri Territory and with his enthusiasm for the country.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, July 26, 1816, Sibley Mss.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, January 14, 1816, Sibley Mss.

⁹³ George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, September 28, 1816, Sibley Mss.

During this period Sibley also found his personal relations highly rewarding. Mary found time to instruct her younger sister, Louisa, on the piano and to play for the Osage who, according to Sibley, "literally idolize her since they have seen her play."⁹⁴ Mary and George also read newspapers and books, and on occasion entertained visitors.

During the Spring of 1816 Daniel Boone stopped off at Fort Osage while on his way to the Platte River to hunt.⁹⁵ Boone, still vigorous and active at eighty-two, along with a Negro companion whom he had bound in written agreement to take care of him and to bring him home dead or alive, remained at the Fort for two weeks. The account of his visit to Fort Osage appeared in the Niles' Weekly Register. As a life-long subscriber to that journal, Sibley probably sent it the following description of the celebrated frontiersman:⁹⁶

Col. Boone is eighty five years of age,⁹⁷ five feet seven inches high, stoutly made, and active for one of his years; is still vigorous of mind and is pretty well informed. He has taken part in all the

⁹⁴George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, July 26, 1816, Sibley Mss.

⁹⁵Niles' Weekly Register, June 15, 1816; Reuben Gold Thwaites, Daniel Boone (New York, 1911), 231.

⁹⁶I believe Sibley was responsible for the news item about Boone's visit to Fort Osage because he was a life-long subscriber to the Niles' Weekly Register, the item appears in the Sibley Mss., and the wording of the clipping is in Sibley's literary style.

⁹⁷Here Sibley was mistaken. According to reliable sources, Daniel Boone was born on November 2, 1734, which would have made him 82 years old at the time of his visit to Fort Osage.

wars of America from Braddock's war to the present hour. He has held respectable State appointments, both civil and military; has been a colonel, a legislator, and a magistrate; he might have accumulated riches as readily as any man in Kentucky; but he prefers the woods, where you see him in the dress of the roughest, poorest hunter.⁹⁸

The two men differed greatly in dress. Boone garbed himself in the clothing of a hunter, but the more polished Osage factor wore fashionable coats, pantaloons and black silk vests which he ordered from a tailor in Washington.⁹⁹

Boone and Sibley discussed a variety of subjects. They probably talked about Sibley's journey to the Salines in 1811, a trip which would have appealed to the old hunter whose eyes were always on far horizons. Two years after his visit to Fort Osage, Boone wrote that he intended by "next Autumn to take two or three whites and a party of Osage Indians to visit the Salt Mountains...and see the natural curiosities. They are about five or six hundred miles from here."¹⁰⁰ Boone never fulfilled that ambition.

⁹⁸Niles' Weekly Register, June 15, 1816.

⁹⁹George C. Sibley to a Mr. Melvin of Georgetown, November 30, 1817, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰⁰Quoted in Thwaites, Daniel Boone, 232. Thwaites believed that Salt Mountain was in the Indian Territory. John Bakeless, Daniel Boone, Master of the Wilderness (New York, 1939), wrote, "The old man had heard tales of Salt Lake, perhaps from Kit Carson, who is said to have been a kinsman of the Boones." Salt Lake was considerably farther from Boone's residence near St. Charles, Missouri than the deposit, reported at a distance of 500-600 miles. It is unlikely that one going to Salt Lake would have taken Osage Indians for guides, but, like Sibley, would have gone with them to the Salt Mountain country, an area they knew.

Although the Sibleys led an interesting and comfortable life at Fort Osage, one concern, like an advancing shadow, began to trouble them. Sibley discerned the passing of the Indian Factory System. To his brother he reported that he was "quite indifferent how they dispose of my Trading House. I shall give it up with cheerfulness, whenever it may be thought expedient to abolish it."¹⁰¹

After 1815 the residents at Fort Osage found themselves progressively less isolated. From his factory, Sibley witnessed the "peopleing" of the Territory by immigrants from Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky who settled the land, exploited the natural resources, built new towns, and pushed aside the Indians. He saw the Territory grow rapidly in population until it was ready to take its place in the Union as a state, thus experiencing those forces that steadily transformed a red man's land into a white man's civilization. Wherever he turned, Sibley confronted the evidences of the rush of civilization-- a post office at Fort Osage,¹⁰² a newspaper at New Franklin,¹⁰³ an Indian mission school not far from the gates of the Fort,¹⁰⁴ steamboats on the Missouri,¹⁰⁵ and Mary playing the piano for the Osage and teaching Indian children to read and write.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, September 28, 1816, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰²Sibley was appointed postmaster at Fort Osage, August 5, 1820.

¹⁰³William H. Lyon, The Pioneer Editor in Missouri, 1808-1860 (1965), 8.

¹⁰⁴William W. Graves, The First Osage Mission (1949), 142.

¹⁰⁵St. Louis Enquirer, June 16, 1819.

¹⁰⁶From the file of Mary Easton Sibley in the possession of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

On the Indian frontier the factor and the factory had helped to promote peace among the Indians through trade and diplomacy, but in the advance and growth of the white man's way of life they no longer had a place. Committed to keeping peace among the Indians, how could they now adjust to broken treaties, land-hungry settlers, and the powerful inroads of private enterprise? The paradoxical theme of Sibley's life between 1815 and 1822 was that of a man caught up in the life of a developing country while still wedded to a frontier institution which was passing away.

CHAPTER VII

THE PASSING OF A FRONTIER INSTITUTION

By 1816, Sibley had served eleven years, nearly one-third of his life, in government service. However, he saw the decline of the factory system of which he was a part. He thought that if he could find an opportunity equally profitable, he would not hesitate to give up his career with the government. To his brother, Samuel, he even went so far as to suggest the possibility of his father-in-law, Rufus Easton, his brother and himself forming a partnership and entering the mercantile business at St. Louis.¹ Behind this suggestion lay Sibley's feeling that the two vocations for which he was best suited were farming and trading.

During the year, 1816, a conflict between the Arkansas Osage and the Cherokee nation had moved from Alabama and Georgia to lands along the Arkansas and White Rivers. By 1817 approximately two or three thousand Cherokees were living in the hunting lands of the Arkansas Osage.² This invasion resulted in some bloody skirmishes and brutal encounters between the Osage and the Cherokees.

Although Sibley and Fort Osage were removed from the scenes of conflict, Clark kept Sibley informed of the developments. The Governor requested Sibley to "keep a watchful eye on the Osage" and to do anything which he felt might head off a war between the Osage and the Cherokees.³ Clark feared that if some check were not put on the impending

¹George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, January 14, 1826, Sibley Mss.

²Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, Indian Tribes of North America, 3 Vol., I (New York, 1933), f.n., 342.

³William Clark to George C. Sibley, April 14, 1816, Sibley Mss.

war between the Osage and the Cherokees, the government would have to use force to control the Indians.⁴ Clark wanted to avoid this, if possible, but he sensed that the threats of Indian wars and unrest would continue as long as the Indians confronted the pressure of the white man's emigration and the removal of the Indians east of the Mississippi to lands west of the great River. As Governor of the Missouri Territory, Clark hoped for peace between Indian tribes and between the Indians and the white settlers, but, as he later recognized, this was not to be so long as the desperate Red man had to defend his home and hunting grounds from the encroachment of other tribes and the whites.⁵

In this time of crisis, Thomas L. McKenney succeeded John Mason as Superintendent of Indian Trade.⁶ McKenney served in this capacity until the factory system was discontinued in 1822. In 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was organized within the War Department and McKenney was appointed as its first chief. He continued in that position until his removal in 1830.⁷ Throughout his career in Indian affairs, he was a controversial figure. He became the favorite target of those who desired to see the factory system abolished and the fur trade with the Indians left to private enterprise. Thomas Hart Benton, the factory system's most powerful adversary, charged him with

⁴William Clark to George C. Sibley, January 11, 1817, Sibley Mss.

⁵William Clark to James Barbour, March 1, 1826, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 653.

⁶John Mason to George C. Sibley, April 7, 1816, Sibley Mss.; Dorothy Dondore, "McKenney, Thomas Lorraine (March 21, 1785-February 20, 1859)," Dumas Malone, editor, Dictionary of American Biography, XII, 89.

favoritism, abuse, and corruption.⁸ In time, McKenney was investigated by Congress and was absolved, although the doubt and suspicion raised by such an investigation plagued him as long as he remained in government service.⁹

While McKenney was Superintendent of Indian Trade he, and Sibley held many similar ideas on how the Indians should be treated. Like Sibley, McKenney appears to have had a great sympathy for the Indians and a desire for a humane and fair policy toward them. In one of his early communiques to Sibley, he manifested a concern for the troublesome Iowas and asked what might be done to pacify them.¹⁰ He approved of Sibley's construction of a building to house the Indians who came great distances in the winter to trade at his factory.¹¹

McKenney, like most nineteenth century Americans, believed that the white man's way of life was far superior to the red man's. The Indians, unlettered, untutored, and crude, needed, above all else, the molding hand of civilization. At a particularly difficult time in Indian affairs, McKenney asked Sibley the agonizing question, "Isn't there some way to wean them away from their barbarism?"¹² He answered

⁸ Frederick Webb Hodge in the Introduction to Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, Indian Tribes of North America, I, ix.

⁹ Dondore, "McKenney," DAB, XII, 89; American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 424.

¹⁰ Thomas L. McKenney to George C. Sibley, September 2, 1816, Sibley Mss.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Thomas L. McKenney to George C. Sibley, September 24, 1817, Sibley Mss.

his own question when he wrote, "There can be no doubt but time will be required to divert them into the practice of agriculture and arts of civilized life."¹³

The new Superintendent of Indian Trade saw the role of the factor in expanded terms. The government factor should be more than a trader of furs; he should be a teacher of a gospel of agriculture and domestic arts; and he should function as a means of civilizing the Indians.

Many men who had undergone extensive experience with the Indians believed that they could be civilized, but some at least doubted if McKenney's plans for using factors as agents of civilization would succeed. Ben O'Fallon, for example, who served many years as a United States Indian agent reported to Thomas Hart Benton that the factories had done little to civilize the Indians.¹⁴ John R. Bell, who accompanied Major S. H. Long on his expedition in 1819-1820, expressed much the same opinion.¹⁵ John Biddle, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, in 1822 told his colleagues that the factory system had done nothing to elevate the Indian from savagery.¹⁶

While Superintendent of Indian Trade McKenney also tried to promote education among the Indians. For that reason he carried on an

¹³Thomas L. McKenney to George C. Sibley, October 21, 1816, Sibley Mss.

¹⁴Ben O'Fallon to Thomas Hart Benton, January 21, 1822, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 328.

¹⁵John R. Bell to Thomas Hart Benton, January 21, 1822, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 329.

¹⁶John Biddle to the Senate, 17th Congress, 1st Session, January 19, 1822, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 327.

extensive correspondence with individual missionaries and teachers in mission schools, and encouraged missionary societies to think seriously of establishing mission schools among the Indians.¹⁷ In a government report, 1817, he recommended government aid in establishing schools among the Indians and expansion of the factory system as an additional means of civilizing them.¹⁸ On January 22, 1818, the House Committee on Indian Affairs followed his lead and recommended the establishment of schools among tribes friendly to the United States. "In the present state of our country," the Committee stated, "one of two things seems to be necessary: either that those sons of the forest should be moralized or exterminated."¹⁹ The report frowned on the alternative of extermination and hopefully pronounced that if primers and hoes were put into the hands of Indian children, in time they would turn to the "Bible and the plow."²⁰ On March 3, 1819, Congress inaugurated an annual appropriation of \$10,000 to promote civilization among Indian Tribes adjoining the frontier.²¹ Most of this money was used to subsidize church schools among the Indians, and by 1830 some 1800 Indian children were in attendance.²²

¹⁷ Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy: The Formative Years (Harvard University Press, 1962), 220.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 150-151.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ George Dewey Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs (North Carolina Press, 1941), 161; Dondore, "McKenney," DAB, XII, 89.

²² Dondore, "McKenney," DAB, XII, 89.

On August 19, 1820, Sibley received a circular letter from the Superintendent requesting that all factors answer the following questions: (1) What tribes traded with the factory? (2) Where were the tribes located? (3) How many villages were there? (4) What was the population of the tribes? (5) Where were their hunting grounds? In addition to these questions, McKenney sought information "relative to their progress toward civilization and agriculture and whether they see necessity for making any change of their habits for those of civilization?"²³ McKenney's questionnaire afforded Sibley an opportunity to disclose his ideas concerning the Indians, the process of civilization, and the government's policy toward them.

Sibley fully agreed with McKenney's view that the Indian could be changed from a savage to a more highly civilized human being. Thus, he linked himself with the long history of men and women who believed that the Indian was a legitimate object of the civilizing process. He recognized that little had been accomplished in that direction but felt that it was natural for the Indian "to live without toil and upon the bounties of nature, rather than to submit to what he considered the degradation of labor in order to procure sustenance."²⁴ In his opinion, men cling to nature as long as they can and turn to other means of support only when nature fails them. The Indian, therefore, would hold tenaciously to his way of life as long as the buffalo roamed

²³Thomas L. McKenney to George C. Sibley, August 9, 1820, Sibley Mss.

²⁴George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, October 1, 1820, Sibley Mss.; also a copy of this letter appears in the Missouri Historical Review, IX (October-July, 1914-1915), 47-49.

the prairie, the deer and the elk crowded the forests, the wilderness yielded its hand-outs of roots, berries, nuts, and wild fruits, the streams provided fish, and the sky sent down its wild birds. In the "inexhaustible resources" of Mother Nature lay the clue to the Indians' wild and uncivilized way of life. Few mature Indians, if "any of those above fifteen, will ever wholly abandon their present savage pursuits."²⁵

Sibley believed that the response of the Indian to the white man's offer of civilization and agriculture had been summed up in the words of the Osage chieftain, Big Soldier, whom he reported as having said

I see and admire your manner of living, your good warm houses, your extensive fields of corn, your gardens, your cows, oxen, work-houses, wagons, and a thousand machines, that I know not the use of. I see that you are able to clothe yourselves, even from weeds and grass. In short you even do almost what you choose. You whites possess the power of subduing almost every animal to your use. You are surrounded by slaves. Everything about you is in chains, and you are slaves yourselves. I fear if I should exchange my pursuits for yours, I too should become a slave. Talk to my sons, perhaps they may be persuaded to adopt your fashions...but for myself I was born free, was raised free, and wish to die free.²⁶

In the face of the adult Indians' dependence on Mother Nature for their subsistence and their hardened reluctance to accept the white man's culture, Sibley, like McKenney and a host of

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Quoted in George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, October 1, 1820, Sibley Mss.

others, counted on the teaching of the Christian religion as a means of overcoming these obstacles. From the time Christ had spoken to his followers the words, "Go forth and make all nations my disciples,"²⁷ there was set in motion the massive missionary enterprise of the Church. Into the New World, centuries later, came the Spanish priests walking beside the Conquistadors, the Jesuits penetrating the forests of New France, John Eliot, a Puritan, taking the Bible to the Indians in the Massachusetts wilderness, David Brainerd, a Presbyterian, establishing missions among the savages of New Jersey, and many others who obeyed their Lord's command to convert the world. In the long history of Christianity's encounter with the unconverted there emerged the idea that to Christianize was to civilize.²⁸

Naturally, the Christian religious orientation of Americans found its way into the policy of the government toward the Indians. In 1794, the government made a treaty with the Oneida, Tuscora, and Stockbridge Indians which included a grant of \$1,000 to be used for the establishment of a church.²⁹ The treaty with the Kaskaskias, August 13, 1803, provided for a sum of \$100 a year for seven years to support a Roman Catholic priest.³⁰ McKenney's efforts in this direction bore fruit in the civilization fund which was used largely to subsidize mission schools.³¹

²⁷The Gospel According to St. Matthew 28:19. The New English Bible (Oxford, 1961).

²⁸Prucha, American Indian Policy, 211-249.

²⁹Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs, 158.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Prucha, American Indian Policy, 220.

Sibley believed "that with judicious means and efforts, the benign light of Christianity may be very easily set up...among North American tribes."³² Although adult Indians were adverse to the white's instruction, they were by no means hostile to having their children taught by whites.³³ Big Soldier had said, "Talk to my sons, perhaps they may be persuaded...." In 1821, the United Foreign Mission Society of New York founded Harmony Mission on the north bank of the Marais des Cygnes River about five miles above its confluence with the Marmaton River.³⁴ This mission was about eighty miles south of Fort Osage.³⁵

Sibley aided the missionaries in selecting a site³⁶ and wrote to McKenney that "the missionary establishment now forming near Osage, I have no doubt will tend very much to promote civilization of these tribes."³⁷ The Sibleys continued to aid the project by helping the

³²George R. Brooks, editor, "George C. Sibley's Journal of a Trip to the Salines in 1811," Bulletin, Missouri Historical Society, XXI (April, 1965), 105.

³³George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, October 1, 1820, Sibley Mss.

³⁴William W. Graves, The First Protestant Osage Missions, 1820-1837 (Oswego, Kansas, 1949), 138.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Kate L. Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe (University of New Mexico Press, 1952), f.n., 266-267.

³⁷George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, October 1, 1820, Sibley Mss.

missionaries in times of illness and by sending wagon-loads of potatoes to keep them from starving.³⁸ They also enrolled a thirteen-year-old Osage girl named Mary E. Sibley in the school.³⁹ In 1824, Sibley told the missionaries that the improvement of the Indian children in the school had "exceeded anything which he was prepared to witness."⁴⁰ Because Sibley had been so cooperative and helpful to the beleaguered missionaries on the banks of the Marais des Cygnes during the winter of 1824-1825, the head of the mission, a Reverend Mr. Dodge, urged the government to appoint Sibley as Indian Agent to the Osages in place of A. P. Chouteau.⁴¹ Undoubtedly, the Harmony Mission strengthened Sibley's conviction that

...all attempts to civilize any of these tribes or materially to ameliorate their condition, will prove unavailing until the religion of Jesus Christ, in all its sublime simplicity and beauty, shall be fixed in their hearts and understandings, and made the prime law of their actions. There can be no true civilization without Christianity. Very few of these people ever yet heard of the Christian God.⁴²

McKenney, Sibley, and others were also persuaded that the introduction of agriculture among the savages would facilitate the

³⁸Gregg, Road to Santa Fe, f.n., 267.

³⁹Graves, The First Protestant Osage Missions, 171.

⁴⁰Ibid., 142.

⁴¹Rev. Joseph Tracy, Rev. Solomon Peck, Rev. Enoch Mulci, Rev. William Cutler, Rev. Enoch Mack, History of American Missions to the Heathen from their Commencement to the Present Time (Worcester, 1840), 340-341.

⁴²Brooks, ed., "Sibley's Journal of a Trip to the Salines," 185.

"scheme of civilization."⁴³ A Treaty with the Osage made at Fort Osage, November 10, 1808, as in other Indian treaties, contained stipulations designed to encourage the Indians to farm. The United States agreed to furnish a blacksmith and the necessary tools for him to repair hoes, plows, and axes for the Indians, to build a water mill, and to provide ploughs.⁴⁴

Throughout his career as Osage factor Sibley engaged in agricultural pursuits, both for his own comfort and convenience and as a model of the importance and advantages of husbandry over the hunting, gathering, and fishing activities of the Indians. He grew grain, raised a garden, pickled beef, salted pork, acquired livestock and chickens, and erected fences to protect his domestic animals and crops. As a means of keeping abreast of agricultural advances, Sibley subscribed to the American Farmer,⁴⁵ a farm journal established in 1819.⁴⁶

Aside from what he might do personally to encourage the practice of agriculture among the Indians, in 1820 Sibley outlined a series of recommendations as to how the government might promote husbandry among them. Indian lands should be carefully surveyed and distinctly marked. Then, when an Indian gave serious indication that he intended to settle

⁴³George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, October 1, 1820, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁴Treaty with the Osage Indians made at Fort Osage, November 10, 1808, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 763-764.

⁴⁵Sibley's Common-Place Book, January 1, 1820, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁶Thomas Cochran, "Agriculture," Richard B. Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History (New York, 1965), 505.

down and become civilized, the government should allot a portion of this land to him and his family. The amount of land so granted should range between 160 and 640 acres. In addition, the government should protect the Indian, his family, and his land, and should secure the land for him and his family forever. Moreover, under no circumstances should the Indian be permitted to dispose of his land or use it for the paying of debts. Sibley wrote

I believe that by locating each Indian family, disposed to adopt our mode of living, on a tract of land of their own, distinctly marked out, and permanently secured to them, the Government would greatly promote the scheme of civilization.⁴⁷

Believing that the Indian would respond to this kind of a policy, would become more interested in land and agriculture, would build a home, and would "sit under his own vine and fig tree, and have none to make him afraid," Sibley thus proposed a specific plan for achieving the philosophical and idealistic ideas of those concerned about the American Indians early in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Sibley warned, however, that time was running out. Already the whites, pouring into Indian lands, narrowing their limits, and hemming them in like a herd of buffaloes, had caused the Indians to react with despair, frustration, and violence. Sibley lamented that only after we have broken their spirits and have deprived them of home and country do we "importune them to become farmers."⁴⁹

⁴⁷George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, October 1, 1820, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

In Sibley's proposals one recognizes the plan of granting the Indians allotments of land to be held in severalty. John Eliot, a missionary to the Massachusetts Indians early in the seventeenth century, had procured allotments of land and settled Indians upon them. Eliot's plan, however, had not been successful for the Indian could not grasp the meaning of individual land ownership and male inheritance.⁵⁰ The white visualized land in terms of individual, private ownership; the red man asked another question, who belongs to the land?⁵¹

Secretary of War William H. Crawford, a contemporary of George Sibley, in March, 1816, devised a plan which he believed would solve the problems associated with Indian lands and the desire of white settlers to move in and dispossess them. First, Crawford advocated granting citizenship to the Indians. Then, the United States government should grant to the Indians separate titles to their improvements, thus placing them on the same footing as other citizens. Crawford further suggested that the Indians be assured by the United States government in any treaty involving the purchase of lands from the respective tribes a reservation of one mile square of land for each Indian head of a family. After a certain number of years of actual residence and cultivation of the land it would belong to the Indian family occupying it.⁵² Although Crawford's plan never materialized, the idea of granting every Indian family title to its land as a means of encouraging agriculture and civilization continued to be advocated.

⁵⁰ Esther Fager Cooper, "The Genesis and Application of the Dawes Act," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Iowa, 1924, 34.

⁵¹ Ibid., 3-4.

⁵² American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 26-28.

Not until 1887, in one of America's periodic displays of shame for the way she had treated minority groups, did the Dawes Severalty Act incorporate the views of men who had long since passed away.⁵³ It contained many of the suggestions made earlier by Sibley and other Americans concerned with justice for the Indian. The Dawes Severalty Act provided that

...the President...be authorized, whenever in his opinion any reservation or any part thereof of such Indians is advantageous for agriculture and grazing purposes to cause said reservation or any part thereof, to be surveyed.⁵⁴

The act also stipulated that an Indian should be qualified to receive a portion of such land when he had "adopted the habits of civilized life." Such allotments were to consist of a quarter section, 160 acres, and the government was to hold title to the land for a period of twenty-five years "in trust for the sole use and benefit of the Indian to whom such an allotment shall have been made."⁵⁵

Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act as the frontier period in American history was coming to a close. By then the government's policy toward the Indians had demonstrated the accuracy of Sibley's observations in 1820. The Indians had lost their lands, had become strangers in their own country, and had become a frustrated and despondent people with broken spirits.⁵⁶

⁵³Congress passed the act on February 8, 1887. See Henry Steele Commager, Documents of American History, I (New York, 1962), 574-575.

⁵⁴Ibid., 574.

⁵⁵Ibid., 575.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Whether Sibley's recommendations in 1820 would have made a difference in the tragic outcome of the Indians' confrontation with the land-hungry Americans, soon to be imbued with the spirit of Manifest Destiny, is a question that will never be answered. The few voices that were lifted in behalf of the Indians in the early part of the nineteenth century were soon to be drowned in the lamentations of Indians being pushed from their hunting grounds into the country beyond the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, in the noise of settlers moving west, and in the sounds of all those who came to find their fortunes. By the mid-1820's, Sibley himself, resigned to what he believed was a hopeless cause, urged the removal of the Indians to lands farther west, and hoped that in the isolation of the vast plains they would be free from white man's interference. He saw no alternative because of the "growing up of civilization around him."⁵⁷

During the early part of 1817 Sibley visited St. Louis on another business trip.⁵⁸ Again he wrote his brother an eloquent account of the advancement and prosperity of the Missouri Territory. On the trip he stopped off at Franklin in Howard County. Sibley commented that towns like Franklin were being laid out in what had been "corn fields a year ago." Many of these new towns had larger and better assortments of merchandise than "St. Louis contained" when Sibley had arrived there in 1805. St. Louis, he continued, would rival any town in the West with the exception of New Orleans. Professional people abounded in the territory. In this same letter, Sibley ruled out

⁵⁷George C. Sibley to David Barton, January 10, 1824, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁸George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, June 18, 1817, Sibley Mss.

the possibility of going into merchandising with his brother and father-in-law because there was now too much competition from the increased number of traders in British goods which had flooded the market since the end of the war. He still hoped that in a year or two he would be in a position to discontinue his career as a government employee and transfer his activities to a more profitable occupation.

The appearance of steamboats on the Missouri River provided dramatic evidence of the continued extension of American activity in the Missouri Territory. On December 2, 1818, John C. Calhoun, Secretary of War in President Monroe's cabinet, proposed the establishment of a military post at the mouth of the Yellowstone River or at some suitable point to impress the Indians and British fur traders with the might and power of the United States.⁵⁹ To accomplish this plan, the government contracted with James Johnson of Kentucky to transport troops and provisions up the Missouri River in steamboats to the selected site.⁶⁰ Sibley favored the project, but his years of experience on the Missouri River prompted him to suggest that while steamboats might navigate the swift current of the Missouri, they would have to be of "peculiar construction and have greater power than those used elsewhere."⁶¹

The expedition consisted of three steamboats and a number of keel boats. One steamboat, The Expedition, reached Fort Osage on August 18,

⁵⁹Vivian K. McLarty, "The First Steamboats on the Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, LI (July, 1957), 374.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, July 10, 1819, Sibley Mss.

1819.⁶² Plagued by a host of difficulties and mechanical breakdowns, the steamboats were abandoned. What a sight they must have been to the Indians peering from behind trees and brush along the banks! The St. Louis Enquirer described one of the boats as a "huge serpent, black and scaly" and to the "eye of Ignorance" appearing as a "monster of the deep...smoking with fatigue and lashing the waves with violent exertion"⁶³ Although the steamboats failed in carrying out their part of the expedition, they had penetrated by river the wilderness beyond the Mississippi and had signaled by "lashing waves" and "vomiting smoke" the relentless advance of the white man's civilization.

Because of the rapidly changing economic picture evidenced even at Fort Osage, Sibley's plans for the future began to crystallize. He thought more and more of exchanging his life at the factory for a career as a farmer-merchant.⁶⁴ He thought that a farm strategically located along some major route where he could raise livestock, gardens and grain, and also build a saw mill and a grist mill, would enable him to supply meat, flour, lumber, and other products to private traders, nearby military garrisons, and white immigrants pushing into the country. The whole operation, he envisioned, could be handled from his front door. To his brother he wrote

An outlet and good market, for vast quantities of flour, pork, and whiskey, will exist for many years to come among the numerous traders, Garrisons, and on the Missouri above this,

⁶²H.P. Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 1815-1846 (University of Pennsylvania, 1935), 43.

⁶³St. Louis Enquirer, June 16, 1819.

⁶⁴George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, July 10, 1819, Sibley Mss.

besides what may be sent below. As soon as I get my stock farm, and mills going, I shall hope to be able to furnish from 2 to 3 thousand dollars worth of provisions.⁶⁵

In the summer of 1819, Sibley began construction of a "rather extensive saw and grist mill" about a half-mile from Fort Osage, evidently as a step toward the achievement of his long-range plans.⁶⁶ However, he did not concentrate fully on such plans until the factory system ended in 1822.

While Sibley was contemplating his future and giving considerable thought to leaving government service, he continued his work as factor and Indian agent at Fort Osage. In September, 1818, he made preliminary arrangements for a treaty with the Kansas Indians which was not completed until after Sibley had retired as Indian agent.⁶⁷ Sibley also kept Clark informed as to the plight of the Iowas who had requested him to present their protests against the government for taking away lands claimed by them.⁶⁸ Sibley felt that the Iowas had been abused, and so he petitioned Clark to obtain an annuity of \$500 yearly to compensate them. In his appeal to Clark, Sibley touched on one of the most complex problems associated with the acquisition of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Memorandum of a preliminary arrangement for the purchase and sale of lands on the 30th day of September, 1818 at Fort Osage between George C. Sibley, Agent of Indian Affairs for the United States, acting in this matter under instruction of His Excellency Governor Clark, on the one part, and the chiefs and Head Men of the Kansas Nation on the other part, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁸ George C. Sibley to William Clark, February 3, 1819, Sibley Mss.

land from the Indians. Sibley wrote, "The claims of our Indian Tribes to lands are so extremely vague, and undefined, so conflicting and intermixed, that I cannot conceive a much more difficult task than to assign to each Tribe its proper limits."⁶⁹

During the factory system's infancy the government had provided military protection for the various forts by stationing troops at or near them. From 1808 until its abandonment during the War of 1812 troops regularly were garrisoned at Fort Osage. At the outbreak of the War, sixty-three regular troops lived at the Fort.⁷⁰ When Sibley went to Arrow Rock late in 1813, he was accompanied by a small detachment of five soldiers.⁷¹ After the War the government re-established Fort Osage and also stationed there the command of Captain James Dorman of the 8th Infantry.⁷² During the year 1818 Colonel Arthur P. Hayne recommended the withdrawal of the military force at Fort Osage on the grounds that its location no longer strategically served the expanding western frontier.⁷³

In a letter to the Superintendent of Indian Trade, 1819, Sibley argued that it would be unwise to remove troops from the Fort because white settlements in the vicinity could not protect themselves from

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰American State Papers, Military Affairs, I, 320.

⁷¹Kate L. Gregg, "Sibley's Post at Arrow Rock," Missouri Historical Review, XXXIV (October, 1939), 141.

⁷²Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 38.

⁷³Edgar B. Wesley, Guarding the Frontier: A Study of Frontier Defense from 1815-1825 (University of Minnesota Press, 1935), 140.

the Indians. Sibley believed that soldiers were needed to control wild and lawless Indians, suppress riots, keep order, and prevent drunkenness.⁷⁴

Despite Sibley's plea for continued military protection at Fort Osage, the number of troops decreased in 1818 to forty-six.⁷⁵ When the Yellowstone Expedition ascended the river in 1819, the garrison consisted of twenty-two men. Fifteen of them were attached to the main force going up the river, leaving only seven men to guard the factory.⁷⁶ In the waning years of the factory system, the military force at Fort Osage all but disappeared. Joseph Fowler, who stopped off at Fort Osage in 1822, reported that the garrison officially consisted of two enlisted men and an officer, but that, "Both of them Haveing [sic] disarted [sic] a few days ago and Carreyed [sic] off all his amention [sic]." ⁷⁷ A small force remained at the Fort until 1822, after which it was occupied by a company of the 6th Infantry on an irregular basis until 1827, at which time it was abandoned because of the founding of Fort Leavenworth farther west on the frontier.⁷⁸

Following the War of 1812, a major threat to the continuance of the factory system developed out of increasing competition and

⁷⁴George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, February 2, 1819, Sibley Mss.

⁷⁵Wesley, Guarding the Frontier, 140.

⁷⁶Order of August 29, 1819, Department Orders, Old Records Division, Adjutant General's Office, National Archives.

⁷⁷Quoted in Wesley, Guarding the Frontier, 140.

⁷⁸The Adjutant General to Colonel John B. Barnes, March 24, 1938, Records of the Secretary of War, Record Group 94, National Archives.

growing hostility from privately financed trade. Private traders, fur companies, and manufacturers, resentful of what they labeled "public monopoly" of the Indian fur trade, carried on a determined effort to undermine and eventually eliminate the government's factory system as a competitor.

Sibley had recognized the menace of private traders, and prior to his return to Fort Osage early in 1816 had urged his father-in-law, Rufus Easton, territorial delegate from Missouri, to seek legislation to "keep British Canada Traders out of our Country...."⁷⁹ In 1817 Clark wrote Sibley that he was convinced of the "hostility of our Traders toward the Factories...."⁸⁰ McKenney also feared the "influence and power" of private traders, and felt that unless something was done to strengthen the hand and the position of the government factors, "the factory must recede at last before the private traders."⁸¹

Private traders and fur companies opposed the factory system primarily for economic reasons. A small number of government workers associated with the Indian factory system disliked the private traders, but primarily for diplomatic and business reasons. "The factories are not designed by the Government as sources of revenue," McKenney stated, "but as means by which the Indians may be relieved and benefited, as well in relation to their wants, as to their habits."⁸² If private enterprise succeeded in wooing the Indians away from the factory, the

⁷⁹ Mary Easton Sibley to Rufus Easton, February 11, 1816, Sibley Mss.

⁸⁰ William Clark to George C. Sibley, April 4, 1817, Sibley Mss.

⁸¹ Thomas L. McKenney to Isacc Rawlings, May 27, 1817, Indian Trade Office, Letter Book D, National Archives.

⁸² Ibid.

government would lose one of its main means of controlling, mediating, and handling Indian problems on the western frontier. It was not simply a matter of losing trade and money, it was a matter of losing the Indians.

Sibley saw his role as a government factor in the larger framework of trade and diplomacy. He once pictured the Indian factory system as a great lever "by which to alter and direct the policy and conduct of the Indians toward the United States."⁸³ In his account of his trip to the Salines in 1811, he wrote that many of the difficulties between the Indians and the whites could be traced to the extortions and dishonest conduct of white traders: "The factory system was designed to obviate this evil."⁸⁴ On another occasion he stated that the government trader served as an official instrument to "govern the distant Indian Tribes."⁸⁵

During the struggle between the factory system and private enterprise for the Indian's trade and allegiance, private enterprise held a number of distinct advantages which it parlayed into a winning combination. Private traders had access to superior goods which, in most cases, were British. John Johnson, the factor at Prairie du Chien and Sibley's close personal friend, had expressed the opinion that British goods were superior to American goods.⁸⁶ Matthew Irwin of the Green Bay factory told McKenney that one of the major obstacles

⁸³Quoted from Nettie T. Grove, "Fort Osage," Annals of Kansas City, I (October 3, 1921), 62-63.

⁸⁴Brooks, ed., "Sibley's Journal of a Trip to the Salines," 178.

⁸⁵Grove, "Fort Osage," 63.

⁸⁶John W. Johnson to George C. Sibley, April 26, 1817, Sibley Mss.

to successful operation of the factory system came from the necessity of using American-made trade goods.⁸⁷ Sibley reported in 1818 the hopeful note that he thought American goods were improving.⁸⁸ However, soon thereafter the Indian Trade Office sent yarn to the Osage factor which it described as the best "that could be had in the United States, but fear it will not please you."⁸⁹ The private traders did not hesitate to spread such information about trade goods among the Indians, although the latter were shrewd enough to see and feel the difference for themselves. In his study of the Wisconsin fur trade Frederick Jackson Turner argued that the superior goods of the private traders was one of the more significant advantages of private enterprise over the factory system.⁹⁰

McKenney also accused private traders and fur companies of attempting to interrupt or hinder the shipment of trade goods to the factories by bribing boat crews on the Ohio River. Their only interest, he wrote Sibley, "is to shackle our policy."⁹¹

In May, 1820, Sibley reported to McKenney that a group of Osage Indians had come to him to demand payment of their annuity for 1820.

⁸⁷ Matthew Irwin to Thomas L. McKenney, September 29, 1817, Sibley Mss.

⁸⁸ George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, February 3, 1818, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 363.

⁸⁹ John W. Bronaugh to George C. Sibley, May 9, 1818, Ora Peake, History of the United States Indian Factory System, 53.

⁹⁰ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade," Johns Hopkins University Studies (Baltimore, 1891).

⁹¹ Thomas L. McKenney to George C. Sibley, February 18, 1818, Office of Indian Trade, Letter Book D, National Archives.

However, Sibley had refused to comply on the grounds that payment was not as yet due, that he had no instructions to change the time of payment, and that the small number of Indians making the demand did not fairly represent the whole Osage Tribe. Angrily, the group departed. According to Sibley, the incident resulted from "an underhanded scheme of a few traders who desired to discredit the United States government in the eyes of the Indians."⁹² In righteous indignation, Sibley closed his communique to McKenney with the dire prophecy that

...if those peddlers are not kept from among the Indians, they will most inevitable, all be totally ruined; cruel wars will be excited; our frontier will bleed; and the wretched Indians crushed. Mark me, sir, these things are near at hand.⁹³

For Sibley, this was a clear-cut example of a deliberate attempt on the part of private traders to interfere with the government's handling of Indian affairs. As for the British traders, Sibley believed that they made determined efforts to incite the Indians against American settlers and the government factories in order to protect their fur-trading interests and to discourage the advance of American settlement on the western frontier.⁹⁴

Another advantage enjoyed by the private trader was his use of liquor in dealing with the Indians. Although this had been unlawful since 1802, private traders had been permitted to take small

⁹²George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, May 16, 1820, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 363.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴George C. Sibley to William Clark, February 2, 1819, Sibley Mss.

quantities of whiskey into the Indian country for the use of their employees.⁹⁵ Unprincipled traders, however, would use every drop in presents and trade with the Indians. If caught abusing this privilege, they had to forfeit their trade licenses. Sibley had been told by traders of the tragic results of the liquor traffic with the Indians. One told him of seeing "among the Ottoes a great number of crippled and wounded in drunken frolics."⁹⁶ Clark and Sibley agreed that the liquor traffic could only mean mischief because it would undermine the benevolent policy of the government, bring misery to the Indians, and endanger their peace and safety.⁹⁷

In October, 1817, Clark, discouraged and troubled over the increased liquor problem, requested Sibley to do all within his power to control it and also asked for any ideas he might have on how the traffic could be more effectively restrained. Sibley suggested that Indian agents and commanding officers be authorized to search every boat and pack train going into the Indian country for whiskey which might be hidden in bales or packages; that traders violating regulations should have their licenses suspended; and that the military should expel such men from Indian country.⁹⁸

Government efforts to suppress the liquor traffic failed primarily because private traders could easily circumvent the law. While some scholars have argued that illegal use of liquor by such

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ William Clark to George C. Sibley, April 29, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁹⁸ George C. Sibley to William Clark, February 2, 1819, Sibley Mss.

men has been overemphasized in accounting for the economic decline of the factory system,⁹⁹ it did demoralize the Indians and lessened government influence over them. Inability of government agents to control this illegal traffic constituted a major weakness of the federal system of control.

Moreover, private traders were mobile, enabling them to go to the Indians, rather than the Indians coming to them to trade, as they had to do with the government factors.¹⁰⁰ A standard history of the factory system lists only two official accounts of factors making trips among the Indians: Major George C. Sibley in 1811, and John Fowler of Natchitoches in 1817.¹⁰¹ When Sibley constructed a building to house Indians who visited his factory to trade during the winter season, he undoubtedly had in mind the idea of offsetting the advantages of private traders in addition to the welfare of the Indians.¹⁰²

Private traders also were often more experienced and sensitive in their relations with the Indians. Sibley recognized this as early as 1810 when, with only five years of experience as a government factor, he noted that

Custom has established as a law with the Osages a practice of soliciting from Traders and other white people near them, especially public agents,

⁹⁹Peake, History of the United States Indian Factory System, 223.

¹⁰⁰Turner, "The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade,".

¹⁰¹Peake, History of the United States Indian Factory System., 176.

¹⁰²Thomas L. McKenney to George C. Sibley, September 2, 1816, Sibley Mss.

small presents of tobacco, paint, ribbon, calico, whenever strangers of distinction visit them, when they are departing for or just returned from a hunt, whenever a principal warrior dies or is killed in battle, as private traders always respect these sacred customs, it would look ill for the United States factor to disregard them.¹⁰³

Some private traders lived with the Indians and married among them.¹⁰⁴

Many were energetic, not overly scrupulous, and given to menacing Indian agents.¹⁰⁵ Against this kind of competition, the small number of government factors were unable to hold back the sweep of private enterprise into the western frontier.

In one of the most scathing and sarcastic letters Sibley ever wrote, he denounced private traders as destroyers of the factory system which constituted the best possible defense for American settlers because it served to keep the Indians peaceful and friendly.¹⁰⁶ He predicted that if the factory system ceased to operate, white settlers would be at the mercy of savage Indians and the "hungry traders."¹⁰⁷ In Sibley's opinion, the latter cared nothing for the settlers. They were willing to see property destroyed, families murdered, and farms desolated as long as they had the right and freedom to pursue profits from the fur trade without interference from the United States Government. "What is the bleeding scalp of an infant,"

¹⁰³George C. Sibley to the Office of Indian Trade, July 1, 1810, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰⁴Turner, "The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade," 97.

¹⁰⁵Matthew Irwin to Thomas L. McKenney, September 29, 1817, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰⁶George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, April 16, 1819, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 362-363.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

Sibley asked, "compared with the rich full fur of a beaver skin?"¹⁰⁸

Sibley declared that American farmers as "the pioneers of civilization" would be doomed to destruction, desolation, and death on the frontier if the government abandoned the factory system and left the private traders to their own selfish and evil designs, and Indians to their savage and untamed ways.¹⁰⁹

Sibley's views were included in the documents submitted to the United States Senate by the Committee on Indian Affairs in 1822 when Congress was considering the question of whether to continue or abolish the factory system.¹¹⁰ Thomas Hempstead, an opponent of the factory system, rebutted Sibley's portrait of the private traders as distorted, unwarranted, and unfair. He accused Sibley of a "bold insanity" to have made such statements. The "arrogance" of Sibley amazed him, especially in view of how insignificantly the Osage factor had behaved "during the late war, cooped up in good quarters with perhaps a company of United States troops to guard him and who never saw the smoke of a hostile gun during the war."¹¹¹

As opposition to the factory system continued to mount in high places and private traders continued to lure Indians away from the factories, Sibley recognized more clearly the frailty of the system. Writing to McKenney in 1819, he granted that the system deserved much

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 362-363.

¹¹¹ Thomas Hempstead to John C. Calhoun, 1822, quoted in Louis Houck, A History of Missouri, III (Chicago, 1908), 149.

of the criticism it had received, but, considering the limited support it had been given, "it was amazing that it had achieved as much as it had."¹¹² In his opinion, for the factory system to operate effectively the conduct of the private traders must be regulated, Congress must be more decisive and extend the system beyond a year at a time, more funds must be appropriated, and more protection must be given. Sibley's assessment of the system in 1819 was that it "was no more like a system than the yells of an Indian are like music."¹¹³

After 1820 the factory system deteriorated rapidly despite McKenney's ambitions to establish eight additional factories.¹¹⁴ Evidence of the system's breakdown can be seen in Sibley's pitiful request for funds to renew and to replace some of the buildings at Fort Osage.¹¹⁵ McKenney responded by stating that he would authorize no such expenditures until Congress acted in regard to the extension of the system. In the meantime, McKenney instructed Sibley to nail on boards and to prop up the buildings to keep them from falling down. "This is one of the evils of keeping the system but partially alive," wrote the Superintendent of Indian Trade, "and then only from year to year."¹¹⁶

¹¹² George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, April 16, 1819, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 362-363.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Edgar B. Wesley, "The Government Factory System Among The Indians, 1795-1822," Journal of Economic and Business History, IV (May, 1932), 496.

¹¹⁵ Thomas L. McKenney to George C. Sibley, September 4, 1820, Sibley Mss.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

In March, 1822, the 17th Congress in its first session considered the termination of the Indian Factory System. Congress studied documents submitted by the Committee on Indian Affairs¹¹⁷ and a report prepared by John C. Calhoun listing the number of agents, their compensation, and the amount of money put into the hands of each Superintendent of Indian Affairs since January 1, 1820.¹¹⁸ Congress listened to the powerful voice of Thomas Hart Benton and also felt the pressure of the fur-trading lobbies. In the ensuing investigation, opponents of the factory system presented many arguments. They spoke of the financial burden on the treasury, accused factors of losing control and influence over the Indians, and deplored government competition with private traders. They pictured factors as growing rich in government service, and they claimed that defenders of the system had grossly exaggerated misbehavior by private traders.¹¹⁹ On May 6, 1822, Congress voted to abolish the factory system and to authorize the President of the United States to appoint a Superintendent of Indian Affairs West of the Mississippi whose residence would be in St. Louis.¹²⁰ The Osage Trading house closed on June 3, 1822, although a financial accounting did not take place until later in the year.¹²¹

¹¹⁷See American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 326-354.

¹¹⁸John C. Calhoun, Report on the Indian Department, April 11, 1822, Executive Papers, 17th Congress, 1st Session, VI.

¹¹⁹Documentary material on the Factory System presented by Thomas Hart Benton is found in American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 326-354.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Office of Indian Trade, Fort Osage Indian Trade File, September 30, 1823, National Archives.

Since his return to Fort Osage in 1816, Sibley had been aware that the Indian Factory System was a failing institution and had prepared himself for its eventual demise.¹²² It came, therefore, as no traumatic experience to find himself after seventeen years in the government's service and at the age of forty with his career cut from beneath him. Before the doors of the factory were closed he had purchased land near the Fort and had made plans to launch a new career as an independent farmer.

¹²²George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, January 14, 1816, Sibley Mss.

CHAPTER VIII

HANDS TO THE PLOW

After twenty-six years, the Indian Factory System on the western frontier passed away. Hiram Martin Chittenden in his classic study of the American fur trade of the far west concluded that the system as conceived would have succeeded. Instead he argued, "The government did not have the courage of its convictions. It should have taken the field to itself..."¹ It temporized by granting licenses to private traders, many of whom were "irresponsible and frequently lawless," and then entered the field only as a competitor. This fatal error deprived "the government of the power to carry out its better ideas, and at once degraded it to the standards of business employed against it."²

As a competitor for the Indian fur trade, the factory system in its latter stages could not match the private traders who enjoyed a number of telling advantages. When the factory system ended, only eight factories were still in existence and were trying to compete with one hundred and twenty-six highly mobile licensed private traders.³

Financial records kept by the various factories from 1816 to 1821 showed an overall decline in the amount of furs and peltries handled. The factory at Prairie du Chien in 1818 collected \$24,375.55 worth of furs and peltries.⁴ Business at that same factory by 1821

¹ Hiram M. Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West 3 Vols., I (New York, 1935), 14.

² Ibid., 16.

³ George Dewey Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs, 1789-1850, 130.

⁴ American State Papers, Indian Affairs, 208.

had dropped to \$6,317.41.⁵ At Chickasaw Bluffs in 1816 factory business amounted to \$11,670.84, but by 1821 that factory no longer existed.⁶ Business at the Chicago factory dropped from \$4,598.00 in 1817 to \$329.98 by 1821.⁷ A very dramatic decrease can be seen in the records of Fort Osage. In 1816, the first year after its re-establishment, the Osage factor recorded business totaling \$7,509.28.⁸ This increased to \$19,445.22 in 1818, a peak year in sales, but had dropped off to a mere \$1,566.64 by 1821.⁹ The only factory in the system which continued to show a substantial gain in the sale of furs and peltries was Choctaw, which reached its peak in 1821.¹⁰ By then the private traders elsewhere had "taken the field for themselves." One of the pointed arguments against the factory system in 1822 was that economically it had become a drain on the public purse.¹¹

However, the most compelling reason the factory system came to an end was because it was not designed to serve the ambitious interests of the new masters, American expansion and private enterprise. William Clark, in a letter to the Secretary of War in 1826, touch on this when he wrote

⁵Ibid., 352.

⁶Ibid., 208.

⁷Ibid., 352.

⁸Ibid., 208.

⁹Ibid., 352.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., 326-354; William N. Chambers, Old Bullion Benton, Senator from the New West (Boston, 1956), 110-111.

The events of the last twenty-two or three years, from General Wayne's campaign in 1794, to the end of the operations against the southern tribes, in 1818, have entirely changed our position with regard to the Indians. Before these events, the tribes nearest our settlements were a formidable and terrible enemy; since then, their power has been broken, their war-like spirit subdued, and themselves sunk into objects of pity and commiseration. While strong and hostile, it has been our obvious policy to weaken them; now that they are weak and harmless, and most of their lands fallen into our hands, justice and humanity require us to befriend and cherish them.¹²

As long as the Indians were "strong and hostile," the government factory system through its trade could "keep peace," govern the distant tribes, and gain their confidence. Now that they had become "weak and harmless," no longer a roadblock to the thrust of American expansion and the sweep of private enterprise, the factory system had lost its purpose. In the ensuing years Sibley aligned himself with the new forces which were shaping the course of American history.

Once the decision had been made to discard the floundering factory system, the government acted with haste. George Graham received appointment as Superintendent of Indian Trade, replacing T. L. McKenney, with responsibility for terminating the affairs of the factory system. He selected eight special agents, one for each factory, to liquidate its business. Samuel Blount was assigned to Fort Osage.¹³

Blount was also made responsible for closing out the Marais de Cygnes factory. In 1820 a deputation of Osage Indians had visited

¹²

William Clark to James Barbour, March 1, 1826, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 653; Harlow Lindley, "William Clark-the Indian Agent," Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (1907-1909), II, 65.

¹³ American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II 514.

Washington to ask for a factory to be established farther south than Fort Osage, and thus resulted in the government creating a branch factory of Fort Osage on the Marais de Cygnes River in September, 1820.¹⁴ At first, Sibley made reports for both the main factory and its branch, with Paul Baillio serving as assistant at Marais de Cygnes. By 1822, however, the branch factory had become an independent operation and Baillio was receiving a full factor's salary.¹⁵ According to Peake, branch factories were not encouraged, and only Fort Osage and Fort Madison ever had branches.¹⁶

The final liquidation of the factory system showed that Prairie du Chien carried the largest inventory (\$52,041.77) at the time the system was abolished, followed by Fort Osage (\$26,015.77) and Green Bay (\$22,521.25).¹⁷ Of the existing factories, Fort Osage had the highest value of buildings (\$6,203.00). The buildings of the branch factory at Marais de Cygnes were included in this figure. Prairie du Chien was second (\$4,598.00).¹⁸ The records show that in the amount of sales of furs and peltries, Fort Osage, from the time of its founding to 1812, and again from 1816 to its abandonment, was consistently in the top three. Over a four-year period (1816-1819) Fort Osage exceeded any other port in the value of furs and peltries collected.¹⁹

¹⁴Ora Peake, History of the Indian Factory System, 23.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 514.

¹⁸Ora Peake, History of the Indian Factory System, 32.

¹⁹American State Papers, II, 208.

On June 3, 1822, Fort Osage was closed and a final inventory was made on November 22, 1822:

Merchandise on hand, furniture, tools, etc.	
.....	\$17,609.25
Furs, peltries, dressed skins, Tallow,	
.....	\$3,722.02
Buildings.....	\$6,203.00
Outstanding debts owed to post....	\$4,105.80
Cash advanced.....	\$ 762.72
Total.....	\$32,366.79 ²⁰

Blount made arrangements for the furs, valued at \$2,033.32, to be sent to St. Louis from where they were forwarded to New Orleans and sold at public auction. They brought \$1,288.83, a loss on the sale of \$744.16.²¹ Indian goods left over in the various factories were sent to St. Louis or New York to be sold at auction. William Clark suggested that some of the goods be used as Indian presents or sold to private traders on credit.²² The factory buildings at Chicago and on the Arkansas and Red Rivers were sold.²³ The others were retained for use by military units still stationed in their vicinity.

According to the Indian Trade Office and Sibley's own assessment of his years as Osage factor, his post made a net profit of

²⁰ Ibid., 514. "When the Osage factory was closed, one hundred eighty-six Indians among the Great Osages, Little Osage, Kansas and Missouri Indians had contracted debts at a branch of the Osage factory, located at Marais des Cygnes." From Peake, History of the Indian Factory System, 222.

²¹ American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 519.

²² William Clark to George Graham, December 18, 1822, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 536.

²³ Ibid., 532.

\$25,544.61.²⁴ In 1832, ten years after his departure from the factory system, Sibley wrote

...as an Agent of the Indian Trade at Fort Osage from October 1, 1808 to June, 1822 during which time I conducted entirely on Public Account a very large establishment, requiring expensive buildings, the aid of assistants, Clerks, Interpreters and Labourers, and necessarily involving a great expense for contingencies innumerable. On closing this establishment, and settling all its accounts it appears from the Books that there was a net profit to the United States of \$25,544.61 after salary and subsistence as allowed by law. This is exclusive of the profits arising from the sale of Furs and Peltries taken in at the establishment. What that profit was I have no means of ascertaining exactly, but I am sure it cannot be less than \$18,000 after deducting all expenses of transportation, commissions, losses, etc. At any rate, I may say, very safely, that the whole net gain of the Osage Trading House, is not less than \$43,000.²⁵

On this basis Sibley reasoned that since he had been paid \$12,000 for his services to the government, he had been responsible for the government clearing \$31,000.²⁶ From the record, it seems clear that the Osage Trading House under Sibley's direction had made a profit for the government, had been among the top three factories in volume of trade, and had been located in a key area among the Indians on the western frontier. On December 31, 1822, Sibley also resigned as Sub-Indian agent at Fort Osage, thus ending his long career in the government service.²⁷

²⁴Fort Osage, September 30, 1823, Office of Indian Trade, National Archives.

²⁵Sibley's Diary, June 4, 1832, Sibley Mss.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Department of War to George C. Sibley, June 5, 1823, Sibley Mss.

For a period of seventeen years (1805-1822), Sibley had been one of a number of competent and experienced government factors. Among these were Matthew Irwin, Jacob Varnum, John Johnson, John Johnston, John B. Treat, and Isacc Rawlings.²⁸ Along with the Superintendent of Indian Trade, transportation agents, assistant factors, clerks, interpreters and other employees, the factors were nineteenth-century organizational men working within and representing a government agency designed to keep peace with the Indians and to secure their friendship.

Sibley commenced his career at the bottom of the organization as an assistant factor at Fort Bellefontaine. For two years Roger Tillier, an experienced factor, trained him in the duties of the system. Sibley impressed his superior officers and they rewarded him with the opportunity to build and to manage his own factory among the Osage Indians in western Missouri. Before Sibley left Washington in 1808 to assume his new responsibilities, John Mason, the Superintendent of Indian Trade, instructed him in the policies and functions of the factory system.²⁹ Although Sibley manifested on numerous occasions a very aggressive nature, a driving ambition, and definite ideas, there is no evidence that he ever knowingly disregarded the regulations of the factory system.

²⁸Biographical sketches of some of the leading factors can be found in Peake, The History of the Indian Factory System.

²⁹John Mason to George C. Sibley, May 27, 1808, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, XIV, 185-187.

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²⁵Sibley's Diary, June 4, 1832, Sibley Mss.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Department of War to George C. Sibley, June 5, 1823, Sibley Mss.

the comforts of civilization at Fort Osage and elsewhere on the frontier to every possible extent. This urge for comfort and his somewhat haughty manner at times offended frontiersmen and common soldiers but seem not to have seriously damaged or undermined the work in which he engaged. As an organizational man, he fitted himself into the work of the factory system, and he urged the government to expand and improve the system of dealing with the Indians still more in the period when the factory system was being destroyed by its competitors and enemies.³⁰ By doing so, he stood with other government agents and missionaries who sought to make the westward movement a more orderly process in which justice would moderate unbridled personal greed.

In October, 1822, Sibley took his first step in a private trading venture by endorsing notes signed by the Paul Baillio Company agreeing to pay the United States Government \$4,782.00 on June 4, 1823 for the remaining stock of Indian goods at Fort Osage. Later, he became liable for an additional \$9,600.60, to be paid on May 30, 1824. The new trading company consisted of Sibley, Paul Baillio, and Lilburn W. Boggs, Sibley's former assistant at Fort Osage.³¹ Boggs, a Kentuckian, had migrated to Franklin, Missouri. After the failure of the new trading company, Boggs moved to Jackson County and was elected governor of Missouri in 1836.³² Well acquainted with the

³⁰ George C. Sibley to Thomas L. McKenney, April 16, 1819, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 362-363.

³¹ From a statement prepared by George C. Sibley for the United States Government, June 1, 1832, Sibley Mss.

³² Lyman L. Palmer, History of Napa and Lake Counties, California (San Francisco, 1881), 373-386.

Osage Indians, stocked with an ample inventory of Indian goods, and experienced in trade and barter, these men embarked upon what appeared to be a profitable trade venture.

In addition to his involvement in the private fur trade in the early 1820's, Sibley intensified his efforts as a farmer. Before the collapse of the Factory system, Sibley had invested in land in the vicinity of Fort Osage. In the fall of 1820 Sibley took a New Madrid claim on 320 acres of Jackson County land, Sections 34 and 35, Range 30, Township 51.³³ He also added 640 acres in Lilliard County, later called Lafayette County, Sections 24 and 26, Township 50 North.³⁴ Sibley began erecting a dwelling house a mile west of the Fort in the summer of 1820. He informed Henry Atkinson that his new residence, which he called Fountain Cottage, would provide more comfort for his family than did the factory building.³⁵ In 1824 he owned five slaves, five mares, a jennet, a pony, and thirty head of cattle.³⁶ Thus, he lost little time in expanding his agricultural activities following the termination of his government service.

Sibley displayed a marked interest in suggestions for agricultural improvements. He filled his private papers with newspaper clippings and notations from farm journals on various agricultural

³³George C. Sibley to Beverly Allen, October 25, 1829, Sibley Mss.

³⁴Tax list for Lafayette County, 1823, Sibley's Common Place Book, February 2, 1824, Sibley Mss.

³⁵Henry Atkinson to Secretary of War, November 23, 1820, Carter, ed., The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1815-1821, XIV, 671-672.

³⁶Tax list for Lafayette County, 1823, Sibley's Common Place Book, February 2, 1824, Sibley Mss.

topics. For example, Sibley clipped items on how to produce better fruit and on the mechanics of building a worm fence. He also noted the dangers and hardships confronting prairie farmers. Livestock needed constant attention and feeding. Dry grass ignited by a flash of lightning or by smouldering campfires could turn the prairie into a roaring inferno. Destructive insects could plague the countryside.³⁷

On one occasion, while digging in his garden, Sibley found masses of grasshopper eggs. "Wishing to satisfy myself," he wrote, "as to what they will produce," he filled a glass pitcher with dirt, deposited the eggs, and proceeded to note their hatching. From his experiment, he concluded that it behooved the farmers in the area "to pitch their crops earlier than common, that they may be out of reach of the grasshoppers when they assemble to lay their eggs in September."³⁸

Sibley grew and experimented with a variety of fruits and vegetables, a practice which he was to follow throughout his life as a Missouri farmer. He kept a careful record of his plantings, graftings, and transplants in his garden and nursery. He ordered special seeds and kept a record of where they were purchased. He laid out his garden in numbered rows, with notations at each row as to what had been planted. He experimented with different varieties of apples, pears, crab apples, plums and nectarines. The journal, American Farmer,

³⁷Sibley's Common Place Book, April 28, 1821 and January 1, 1820, Sibley Mss.

³⁸Ibid., February 27, 1821.

came regularly to his home and from it he often quoted. He butchered and smokecured beef, pork, and venison.³⁹

By the summer of 1824 the Paul Baillio Company was virtually bankrupt, having met with one reversal after another until its cause appeared hopeless. The price of furs had dropped drastically. Boggs informed Sibley in July, 1824, that furs and peltries exported by them to St. Louis had brought low prices, that half of them had not been sold, and had no "probability of being sold for anything near their present value there being no competition."⁴⁰ The unsettled state of the Osage Indians did not help matters, as well as the fact that the company had lost many of its furs and peltries from damage and robberies.⁴¹

Already in debt and faced with a trading venture on the verge of ruin, Sibley's financial situation became desperate. The government began to put pressure on him to pay for the goods he had purchased in 1822. However, all he could do in 1824 was to secure the debt by the inventory of stock in trade and the offer of his own property: "...the debt shall be secured...", he wrote, "if I have to Reduce myself to beggary."⁴² He added, however, that he hoped the government would not force him to this. In the years immediately ahead Sibley's debt to the United States Government bothered him greatly, and undoubtedly stimulated his efforts to find more profitable lines of activity.

³⁹Ibid., March n.d., 1825.

⁴⁰Lilburn W. Boggs to George C. Sibley, June 30, 1824, Sibley Mss.

⁴¹George C. Sibley to George Graham, July 12, 1824, Sibley Mss.

⁴²Ibid.

A return to government service appealed to him as one possible solution to his financial problems. When the U. S. House of Representatives passed a bill in April, 1824, for the appointment of an Indian agent at or near Fort Osage, a friend informed Sibley that if the Senate approved the bill he would be recommended for the post. Sibley's hopes for a new assignment rose. Deeply hurt and disappointed when he did not receive the appointment, Sibley wrote to his former superior, T.L. McKenney, that he supposed "some improper influence had been excited against him."⁴³ In his letter to McKenny, Sibley did not indicate the possible source of opposition, but his spirited defense of the Factory system back in 1822 may have resulted in a few powerful enemies who enjoyed defeating his attempt to secure a government position.

At about the same time, Senator David Barton of Missouri, in a half-hearted letter to John C. Calhoun, recommended Sibley for a mission to be organized to restore peace and commerce with Indians on the upper Missouri. In his letter of recommendation, Barton "presumed Sibley was well qualified to do the job."⁴⁴ Calhoun by-passed Sibley and entrusted the mission to General H. Atkinson and Ben O'Fallon, men with equal experience in Indian affairs and more palatable to those who had opposed the Factory system.⁴⁵ At every turn, Sibley's efforts to find ways of increasing his income seemed to end in frustration.

⁴³George C. Sibley to T.L. McKenney, n.d., 1824, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁴David Barton to John C. Calhoun, May 26, 1824, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁵David Barton to George C. Sibley, June 2, 1824, Sibley Mss.

While Sibley retained a lively interest in Indian affairs, he began to see Indians not as a government factor committed to their well-being, but rather as an "independent farmer" who had come to the western frontier to settle. In January, 1824, Sibley asked Senator Barton to use his influence to procure an appropriation of money for the "extinguishment of the Indian Title to the land claimed by the Kansas Indians on the south side of the Missouri within the bounds of the state." In a clear, precise manner, Sibley argued that the land was like a garden, with good soil, natural advantages, and great possibilities. He further stated that the white settlers were anxiously waiting to move into the area once it was vacated by the Indians. He also pointed out that the Indians were ready to sell. In fact, in a later letter to Barton Sibley declared that the Indians had all but abandoned the land because they believed that in a short time it would belong to the United States. Sibley urged Barton to act with haste because if the government failed to purchase the land legally and fairly, squatters, "homeless wanderers," and semi-savages would occupy it anyway. He capped his arguments with the language of the civilized expansionist who saw God's work in creating a land "designed for use of civilized man." The savages had not made good use of the land, and thus, had betrayed nature. "For myself," he closed his letter, "I assure you sir I have no other interest in this matter than as one settled in the country and who feels a desire to see something like civilized Society grow up around him."⁴⁶

⁴⁶George C. Sibley to David Barton, January 10, 1824, Sibley Mss.

The government did purchase the land from the Kansas Indians in 1825, but the treaty failed to satisfy the land-hungry white migrants. People began to occupy even the land reserved for the Kansas,⁴⁷ a treaty violation which Sibley called to General Henry Atkinson's attention in 1825:

I deem to inform you that Several Persons have moved over the line into the Territory of the Kansas, and are erecting Houses and clearing land there-many others talk of following and I am apprehensive that the movement will be pretty extensive unless it is immediately checked by the government. I give you this information this early to Save you an increase of trouble in the discharge of an unpleasant duty, and to Save from great loss and Ruin many of those poor and indiscreet People, who in despite of every friendly warning appear to be determined on Settling with their families in the Kansas territory.⁴⁸

Although his letter concerned the welfare of white settlers moving into forbidden land, there remained in the mind of the retired factor a desire to see the treaty with the Indians upheld by the United States Government.

At mid-decade in the 1820's, Sibley was deeply troubled and beset by discouragements. His career in the government's service had

⁴⁷ On September 30, 1818, Sibley drew up preliminary arrangements for the purchase and sale of lands of the Kansas Nation, acting under the instructions of William Clark. In this draft, Sibley provided for the land that was brought into question by his letter to David Barton, January 10, 1824. The final treaty, however, was not effected until 1825. Article I "ceded to the United States all lands lying within the state of Missouri." Article II provided for a "reservation for the use of the Kansas Nation of Indians shall be made of a tract of land...from the cession" described in the treaty. It was the reservation of land to which Sibley referred in his letter to General Henry Atkinson. (American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 589.)

⁴⁸ George C. Sibley to General Henry Atkinson, February 20, 1825, Sibley Mss.

seemingly come to an end. His efforts to secure another governmental position had come to nothing. His health was not robust and his debt of over \$14,000 to the government remained unpaid. The magnitude of that debt can best be understood when one realizes that the highest salary he had ever received from the government was \$1300 a year. As a man in his early forties, retired from a position that he had held for a period of fifteen years, involved in efforts to launch a new career in farming, and saddled with a huge debt, Sibley faced a situation that would have tried the energies of men much younger. And to add to his miseries, in the election year of 1824 he backed the presidential candidate who lost, Henry Clay.⁴⁹

While Sibley labored on at Fountain Cottage, fretting about his problems, and measuring the mountains of affliction which seemed to block his way to economic prosperity and personal fulfillment, another man, Thomas Hart Benton, Senator from Missouri, had been contemplating a "highway between nations," a road that would cross the prairies, pass through the Indian country, ford the rivers and streams, bend around the mountains, and link the western frontier of Missouri with Santa Fe in Mexico, thus stimulating commercial travel that would profit both the United States and Mexico.⁵⁰ Benton's dream became the means by which Sibley returned to government service. The Road to Santa Fe would, in time, also enable Sibley to find his way to financial stability.

⁴⁹Missouri Intelligencer, August 24, 1824.

⁵⁰Chambers, Old Bullion Benton, 127-128.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROAD TO SANTA FE

Early in 1824 Senator Thomas Hart Benton, chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, presented to Congress petitions from his fellow Missourians on the subject of trade between Missouri's western frontier and Santa Fe and the Mexican provinces. These petitions, according to Dr. Kate L. Gregg, were largely inspired by Senator Benton.¹ Alexander McNair, governor of Missouri, also communicated with the Secretary of War, outlining for him the benefits which would result from an active trade with Mexico.² On May 12, 1824, John Scott, the representative from Missouri, offered a resolution that the President be requested to make known all correspondence and material he had received related to trade with Mexico by way of Santa Fe.³

¹Kate L. Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe (University of New Mexico Press, 1952), 3. Dr. Kate L. Gregg late professor of English language and literature at Lindenwood College, St. Charles, Missouri, devoted many hours in her scholarly pursuits to George C. Sibley, the western frontier, and related subjects. Before her untimely death, it may well have been Dr. Gregg's intention to put in book form the vast amount of material she had gathered so meticulously and carefully on the above subjects. From her research, however, there resulted a number of articles and two books, Westward with Dragoons (Ovid Bell Press, 1937), and The Road to Santa Fe. In the first book she edited the Journal of William Clark's expedition to establish Fort Osage. In The Road to Santa Fe she edited the Journals and Diaries of George C. Sibley and others pertaining to the surveying and marking of a road from the Missouri frontier to the settlements of New Mexico, 1825-1827. This book represents an exhaustive study of the events leading up to the survey, of those involved, and of their experiences on the road to Santa Fe. Photostatic copies of the material used in the book can be found in the Sibley Mss., Missouri Historical Society of St. Louis, Missouri. Anyone desiring to know the full and complete story of the survey must turn to these materials or to Dr. Gregg's book. In the preparation of this chapter, I am greatly indebted to the invaluable work she performed in the editing of The Road to Santa Fe.

²Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States, 18th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, 1856), 2703.

³Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 3.

Throughout the autumn of 1824, petitioners continued to seek for the right of unmolested passage, a designated route, treaties with hostile Indians, and a military post and Indian agency to be established at the intersection of the Arkansas River and the "proposed route."⁴ On January 24, 1825, Missouri Senator David Barton informed Abiel Leonard that he had presented a petition from Boone County, Missouri on the subject of where military outposts should be founded along the road to Santa Fe.⁵

It took Benton a year to lay the groundwork for "the highway between nations." He had educated his constituency, pressured his colleagues, and convinced many congressmen of the vital need for such a road. On January 3, 1825, Benton presented to the United States Senate a paper which he had received from Augustus Storrs, who had furnished answers to twenty-two questions raised by Benton concerning the Santa Fe trade.⁶ Storrs had migrated from New Hampshire to Franklin, Missouri, where he became the postmaster. In May-June, 1824, Storrs visited Santa Fe. According to the Missouri Intelligencer's report of his trip, it was like "a romance to hear of caravans of men, horses, and wagons traversing with their merchandise the vast plains which lie between the Mississippi and the Rio del Norte."⁷ In the same story, the Intelligencer may have hit

⁴Missouri Intelligencer, January 25, 1825.

⁵David Barton to Abiel Leonard, January 24, 1825, Leonard Collection, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

⁶See Senate Documents, No. 7, 18th Congress, 2nd Session; F.F. Stephens, "Missouri and the Santa Fe Trade," Missouri Historical Review, X, 241; Chambers, Old Bullion Benton, 127; Gregg, The Road To Santa Fe, 4-5.

⁷Missouri Intelligencer, February 8, 1825.

solidly what really motivated Benton and others in their quest for the road when it stated that the Santa Fe trade might be seen as "the extension of America's invincible citizens."⁸ Trade and expansion were twin bedfellows in American development for years to come. The Storrs article was added to material to be perused by the Senate and the Committee on Indian Affairs.

On January 11, 1825, the Committee on Indian Affairs made its report on the proposed survey. Four days later, Benton introduced a bill in the Senate authorizing a commission to mark a road from Missouri to the Mexican border and on to Santa Fe. His bill also provided funds for the project and for necessary treaties with the Indians to assure peaceful travel through their territory.⁹ The surveying party was to consist of three commissioners, a clerk, a surveyor, two chain carriers, six laborers, and fifteen riflemen for guard and hunting duty. The three commissioners were to be paid at the rate of eight dollars per day, and were given authority to select the other members of their expedition.¹⁰

The Senate passed Benton's bill by a vote of 30-12.¹¹ Confident that the House of Representatives would concur, Benton wrote the Missouri Intelligencer that he believed the article by Augustus Storrs

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ George C. Sibley to Owen Simpson, May 1, 1825, Sibley Mss.; Chambers, Old Bullion Benton, 128; Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 214-216.

¹⁰ Thomas Hart Benton to the Editor, Missouri Intelligencer, January 25, 1825 in Missouri Intelligencer, March 1, 1825.

¹¹ Chambers, Old Bullion Benton, 128.

had provided the "solid foundation of fact" most instrumental in the successful passage of the bill.¹² After House approval of the bill, President James Monroe added his signature on March 3, 1825. However, selection of the three commissioners fell to Monroe's successor, President John Quincy Adams.¹³

Undoubtedly, Sibley had followed the progress of Benton's legislative efforts to obtain a survey of the Santa Fe road. He regularly subscribed to Niles' Register and the Missouri Intelligencer, both of which carried reports concerning Benton's work and about the proposed road. Storr's report had appeared in Niles' Register, and the Missouri Intelligencer contained news about companies and caravans on their way to and from Santa Fe. One such item read:

A company of five persons, of which he (a Mr. Cooper) was one, left the Province of New Mexico for this state in November last. On their way in, one of their number was murdered by the Osage Indians. The party suffered extremely from the cold & hunger, and at one time were compelled to subsist on their mules....From this it appears that the prospect held out to future adventurers to that country is very gloomy.¹⁴

Moreover, Sibley's location on the Missouri frontier stimulated his interest in the Southwest. As early as 1808, he had commented in

¹²Thomas Hart Benton to the Editor, Missouri Intelligencer, January 25, 1825 in Missouri Intelligencer, March 1, 1825.

¹³William R. Manning, "Diplomacy Concerning the Santa Fe Road," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, I (June, 1914-March, 1915), 518; Buford Rowland, ed., "Report of the Commissioners on the Road from Missouri to New Mexico, October, 1827," New Mexico Historical Review, XIV (July, 1939), 215.

¹⁴Missouri Intelligencer, January 25, 1825.

a letter to his brother that within a twenty-day period the United States could take Santa Fe and the rich resources of that region.¹⁵ Dr. John Robinson, who had joined Sibley at Fort Osage as Indian agent in 1809, had been with Zebulon Pike when that explorer marched to Santa Fe in 1806. In the opinion of Dr. Gregg, Robinson and Sibley shared many moments of conversation about Santa Fe and "how to get there and why."¹⁶ Sibley knew William Becknell and credited him with being the "first to begin trade on the trail to Mexico."¹⁷ Becknell, a salt maker and merchant, left Fort Osage in 1821 for Santa Fe with a small inventory of trade goods. On his return, he aroused the interest of others in the Santa Fe trade.¹⁸ Thus, Sibley had observed the beginning of the trade and the tendency for larger and better organized caravans to visit Santa Fe. Sibley gave serious thought about entering the trade himself, and wrote his brother-in-law, Josiah Johnston, that he was glad Congress was considering the marking of the road and the protection of travelers from Indian marauders.¹⁹

Sibley's past experience, his residence at Fort Osage near the Santa Fe trail, his keen interest in the prospect of engaging in the Santa Fe trade, and his reading of papers and journals made him very knowledgeable about the subject. Realistic enough to know that the

¹⁵George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, January 18, 1809, Sibley Mss.

¹⁶Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 1.

¹⁷George C. Sibley to Owen Simpson, May 1, 1825, Sibley Mss.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, February 25, 1825 quoted in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 24-25.

appointment of commissioners to carry out the Congressional mandate of 1825 would be political, and that Senator Benton would encourage the appointment of his own political supporters as commissioners, Sibley gave no indication that he saw himself as having even an outside chance for consideration.

However, on March 16, 1825, Benjamin Reeves, Pierre Menard, and George C. Sibley received notice that the President had appointed them to conduct the survey of the road to Santa Fe.²⁰ Before news of his appointment could reach him, Sibley had left Fort Osage on his way to St. Louis "for his family" and to look after "private business."²¹ The private business may well have concerned his debt to the government and his hopes of obtaining a reasonable delay in paying it off.²² On the way to St. Louis, he met Thomas J. Boggs who was riding to Fort Osage to ask Sibley to appoint him as secretary to the commissioners.²³ Boggs gave him the news, Sibley proceeded on to St. Louis still undecided about whether to accept the assignment. En route, he wrote Benjamin Reeves that

I shall be glad to hear from you at St. Louis, if you should receive any official communication from Washington. I beg leave to suggest to you not to give any positive encouragement to any applicant 'till we all confer on the Subject: Altho' I am not yet decided to accept this

²⁰Manning, "Diplomacy Concerning the Santa Fe Road," 518.

²¹George C. Sibley to Owen Simpson, May 1, 1825, Sibley Mss.

²²Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 24.

²³George C. Sibley to Benjamin Reeves, May 29, 1825, quoted in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 220-224.

service (if offered) I am rather of the opinion I shall do so. I shall soon decide when I reach St. Louis.²⁴

By April 25, Sibley had received his official appointment, as well as a letter from Thomas Hart Benton containing suggestions as to preparations for the survey. Benton urged Sibley to keep a journal "in which the soil, timber, water courses, grasses, minerals, fossils, fall of the country, and everything calculated to increase of geographical information, should be carefully noted."²⁵ Benton also wanted to know how much water transportation was available between Missouri and Mexico.

Benton's suggestion of a journal to be kept by Sibley may well explain why Sibley was chosen as one of the commissioners. Dr. Gregg has suggested that Benton knew of Sibley's ability to organize and present reports. While Benton was engaged in his fight against the factory system, he undoubtedly had read Sibley's defense of that institution. As Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, Benton had also possibly seen some of Sibley's descriptions of the Indian tribes near Fort Osage. Thus impressed by Sibley's literary talent, Benton may well have favored his appointment.²⁶

On the other hand, the Adams administration appointed the commissioners. Henry Clay, the Secretary of State, was, in all probability, aware of Sibley's outspoken support for him in 1824 and may have suggested him to President Adams. Although the record does

²⁴George C. Sibley to Benjamin Reeves, April 13, 1825, quoted in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 25-26.

²⁵Thomas Hart Benton to George C. Sibley, April 12, 1825, Sibley Mss.

²⁶Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 10.

not make clear how and why Sibley received the appointment, it seems likely, in view of Sibley's lifelong devotion to the great Kentuckian, that Henry Clay's political power, rather than Benton's admiration for Sibley's literary talent, brought Sibley back into government service. In any event, Sibley's appointment imposed on him the task of keeping a journal, as well as the major burden of leadership.

Sibley gave several reasons for his decision to accept appointment as one of the commissioners. He considered it an honor, and "force of circumstances" also influenced his decision. The additional income would bring some relief to his acute financial problems. In addition, "a principal reason for my entering upon this duty is the hope and belief that it may be beneficial to my health, which tho' not exactly bad at this time, is & has been for 3 or 4 years indifferent."²⁷ There was honor; there was the need for income; there was the opportunity for renewed health and vigor. But there was also that Puritan persuasion, issuing from his past and imbedding itself deeply into his mind, that no man should turn his back on a challenging opportunity:

"I will go on...without looking back; and if God gives me health and power, I will go through with the enterprise, & do all in my power to make it useful to the country and honourable to those concerned within it."²⁸

By May 10, Reeves had arrived in St. Louis and the two commissioners, acting without Pierre Menard who had refused appointment

²⁷ George C. Sibley to Owen Simpson, May 1, 1825, Sibley Mss.

²⁸ George C. Sibley to Benjamin Reeves, May 29, 1825, quoted in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 220-224.

on the grounds that his personal affairs were too demanding,²⁹ selected Joseph C. Brown as surveyor, and Archibald Gamble as secretary. Thomas Mather was later appointed as the third commissioner in place of Menard.³⁰ Sibley and Reeves set the middle of June as the target date for their departure.³¹ The two commissioners then decided on a division of labor. Sibley would remain in St. Louis, tending to supplies and wagons, and processing applications of those applying to join the expedition. Reeves would visit the countryside to buy horses and mules, and also to look for additional hands to accompany the expedition. However, Reeves returned almost immediately to Franklin. This imposed additional work on Sibley for now he had to coordinate the work of the two commissioners by mail.

On May 15, Sibley wrote Reeves that the new wagons would not be ready until the 12th of June.³² As to wages for the hired hands, Sibley felt that \$20 a month would be sufficient. He outlined for Reeves the kind of men he was seeking. He did not want "Gentlemen coffee drinkers, who cannot even cook their own victuals or saddle their own horses."³³ Sibley harbored no doubts that he would be

²⁹Pierre Menard to James Barbour, Retired File, Indian Office, Santa Fe Folder, National Archives quoted in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 9.

³⁰Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 9.

³¹George C. Sibley to Benjamin Reeves, May 11, 1825, Sibley Mss.

³²George C. Sibley to Benjamin Reeves, May 15, 1825, Sibley Mss.

³³Ibid.

able to find an abundance of "hardy men, accustomed to labour, & to live on substantial food..."³⁴ Sibley also placed a premium on versatility. "I conceive it highly important," he wrote, "that every man should be a rifleman & hunter, and at the same time qualified to serve as chain carriers, axeman, etc. and who can submit cheerfully to all the necessary privations of the trip."³⁵ Sibley also believed that the hired hands should be told quite candidly and honestly what was expected of them. By doing so, he expected to minimize any future misunderstandings or problems of discipline. Moreover, the men hired must understand that the commissioners were "under no obligation to show any favours to one more than another in consequence of their rank in society, but will be perfectly free to make such distinction or not as they may feel inclined."³⁶ There had to be a "line of distinction between the Commissioners and those who are to serve under them," but this line was to be drawn in the best interest of the expedition and in terms of each man's own responsibility for its success. Sibley thus expressed, a belief in what might be termed "qualified equality." Every man was as good as the next so long as he followed orders, assumed his responsibilities, and performed his duty.

During the latter part of May, Sibley continued preparations for the trip while weeding through the "host of applications" for jobs

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

as hired hands.³⁷ One of his best acquisitions was Ben Jones, the man who had piloted the Wilson P. Hunt party to the head waters of the Yellowstone in 1810-1811.³⁸ Reeves, in the meantime, had engaged Stephen Cooper as "chief of the working party," a man who had some knowledge of the country through which they would pass.³⁹

After nearly two months of preparation, Sibley moved the wagons out of St. Louis on June 22. There were "seven strong light wagons, two of which were drawn by four horses each and 5 by two horses."⁴⁰ Heavily laden with tools, Indian goods, supplies of rice, flour, groceries, coarse clothing and the private baggage of the commissioners, the wagons slowly moved toward St. Charles. As the Missouri Republican had predicted:

The hot weather, the number of flies, and the difficulty of getting their wagons through a tractless country will oblige them to travel slow, and it will be some time before they complete the work.⁴¹

On Saturday, June 25, Sibley went from St. Louis to St. Charles. The wagons, which had preceded him, had suffered from breakdowns and inclement weather and had barely inched their way a few miles on the other side of St. Charles. Archibald Gamble and Joseph Brown joined Sibley in St. Charles and on Monday morning, June 27, they left

³⁷George C. Sibley to Benjamin Reeves, May 29, 1825, quoted in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 220-224.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 29.

⁴⁰George C. Sibley to Owen Simpson, June 23, 1825, Sibley Mss.

⁴¹Missouri Republican, June 27, 1825.

together to catch up with the wagons.⁴² Sibley described the moment of his parting as "the most painful and distressing of the kind that I ever endured."⁴³ He confessed to a friend that he

summoned all my firmness & philosophy to my aid; and I dare say Seemed to those who know me not, quite as happy & unconcerned as tho' I had only set out for an evening's excursion. I need not say to you, my friend, who knows me so well, how much I can suffer, & how little Seem to suffer; you often wondered at and admired, what you once called the Stoicism of my nature, but which afterwards termed firmness and Philosophy,⁴⁴

Sibley not only had to combat his sadness at leaving his family and friends, but also "very strong bilious symptoms."⁴⁵

As they rolled on to Fort Osage, they were forced on occasion to travel by night in order to avoid the flies.⁴⁶ On July 2 they reached Franklin where they were detained for repairs and alterations. On July 4, the commissioners participated in the Franklin July 4th celebrations. In reporting the occasion, the Missouri Intelligencer mentioned Sibley's toast to the locality: "A few years since, I saw it a trackless wilderness; now it is the left arm of the state."⁴⁷

⁴² George C. Sibley to Owen Simpson, June 23, 1825, Sibley Mss.

⁴³ George C. Sibley to Owen Simpson, July 27, 1825, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "The Journal of George C. Sibley on an expedition to survey and mark a road from the Missouri Frontier to the settlements in Mexico, St. Louis, June 22, to Santa Fe, November 30, 1825," Kate L. Gregg, editor, The Road to Santa Fe, June 27, 1825. The original manuscript is found in the National Archives. A photostatic copy is located in the Sibley Mss. The complete journal is also in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 49-136. Citations from this journal will hereafter read, Sibley's Journal, date.

⁴⁶ Sibley's Journal, June 25, 1825.

⁴⁷ Missouri Intelligencer, July 9, 1825.

Reeves' toast was somewhat more nationalistic: "Our country-it advances to its brilliant destinies under the auspicious reign of Liberty and Law."⁴⁸ The editor himself hailed "the task of marking out a trace a distance of four or five hundred miles thro' a prairie country" as one of "considerable magnitude."⁴⁹

After leaving Franklin that afternoon the party nearly experienced disaster at the Arrow Rock crossing when a tremendous storm and a pouring rain drove them to cover.⁵⁰ By July 9, however, they had reached the friendly confines of Fountain Cottage. The respite at Fountain Cottage was filled with repairing wagons, shoeing horses, purchasing more horses, and the hiring of five additional men. Their party now consisted of thirty-three hired hands, including Captain Cooper, and "our aggregate strength is 38, exclusive of two servants."⁵¹ Horses and mules totaled fifty-seven. The expedition also had seven baggage wagons, and a good supply of provisions, tools and ammunition.⁵²

Though Sibley remained behind temporarily to tend to business, the expedition moved on from the camp near Fort Osage on July 17. Sibley wrote letters to United States senators and to a member of the House of Representatives, urging additional appropriation of \$12,000

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Sibley's Journal, July 6, 1825.

⁵¹ Ibid., July 12, 1825.

⁵² Ibid.

to cover expenses being incurred by the expedition.⁵³ On Friday, July 29, he left Fountain Cottage in the company of one of the hired hands and his Negro servant, Abram, and by August 3 had caught up with the main company.⁵⁴ Because their horses were in bad shape from the intense heat and the flies, the caravan halted for rest. During that time Gamble visited the Osage villages to invite them to "meet with the Commissioners at some convenient point on the Road farther West"⁵⁵ to negotiate a treaty for a right of way through their land. On August 4, the main party broke camp and pushed on to the main branch of the Neosho River where it waited for the arrival of Gamble and the Osage.

The Indians came on the evening of August 8. There were "Fifty of the principal Chiefs and Warriors of the Great and Little Osages, & Wm. S. Williams, the Interpreter."⁵⁶ The next day they met in council and the commissioners explained to them "fully and clearly" the need for a free access road through their land. For this the commissioners offered the Indians \$800 as compensation. Favorable to the Treaty, the Osage signed it and the commissioners then paid them goods to the value of \$300 "St. Louis cost" and gave them an order on Mr. Augustus Chouteau, who was at their village, for goods amounting to \$500.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid., July 25, 1825.

⁵⁴ Ibid., July 29, 1825.

⁵⁵ Ibid., August 3, 1825.

⁵⁶ Ibid., August 9, 1825; American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 610-611.

⁵⁷ Sibley's Journal, August 10, 1825.

Before breaking camp, the commissioners hired Bill Williams better known as Old Bill Williams, the famous mountain man,⁵⁸ as an interpreter, runner, and hunter, and immediately sent him to the Kansas village to invite the chiefs and head men to meet the commissioners at some convenient place this "side of the Arkansas."⁵⁹ The expedition crossed the Neosho River without difficulty and "entered immediately upon an almost boundless Prairie."⁶⁰ They met with the Kansas on August 15 and proposed to them precisely the same terms offered the Osage at Council Grove a week earlier. The Kansas accepted,⁶¹ and the expedition moved on and pitched its tents on the Little Arkansas River on August 16. As the men journeyed across the prairie, they found the heat uncomfortable, the game scarce, the pasturage for the horses poor, and the flies unbearable. For all that, Sibley's journal said nothing of poor morale or grumbling among the men.

Sibley collected information on both fauna and flora as he rode deeper into the prairie country. In his journal he listed the birds and animals he saw, such as killdeers, buffalo, prairie dogs, night hawks, horses, goats, snakes, yellow hammers, gray sparrows, and field larks.⁶² The absence of hawks, buzzards, ravens, crows and wolves indicated a scarcity of game. Even in his field journal, Sibley

⁵⁸Alpheus H. Favour, Old Bill Williams, Mountain Man (University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).

⁵⁹Sibley's Journal, August 11, 1825.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., August 15, 1825; American State Papers, Indian Affairs, II, 610-611.

⁶²Sibley's Journal, August 14, 1825.

avoided words that might offend a modest reader. When he wrote about using buffalo manure for firewood, he prudishly referred to it as "Buffalo D__g to cook with."⁶³ In addition to keeping his journal, he took time to study at length a prairie dog village, to write letters, and to engage in the important chore of gathering seeds.⁶⁴

By August 28, following along the north side of the Arkansas River, the expedition neared the area of the great bend of the Arkansas. On August 30, Gamble and Sibley rode out to Pawnee Rock and explored the surrounding countryside. The next day the expedition passed Pawnee Rock and camped on the north side of the Arkansas River near present-day Larned, Kansas.⁶⁵

They had traveled 330 miles from Fort Osage by September 1, averaging about eight miles per day. During the early days of September, they followed the Arkansas River in a southwesterly direction. Sibley made a practice of outriding in order to obtain a panoramic view of the terrain.⁶⁶ By so doing, he was better able to describe the country through which the expedition was passing.

On September 8, 1825, the party approached the border between the United States and Mexico which had been established by the Florida Treaty of 1819.⁶⁷ On the 9th the surveyor calculated that they were

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., September 22, 1825.

⁶⁵Ibid., August 30, 1825.

⁶⁶Ibid., September 3, 1825.

⁶⁷See "The Florida Treaty," Article III, Document 120, Henry Steale Commager, ed., Documents of American History, I (New York, 1958), 224.

near 100° longitude west, which would have placed them in the vicinity of modern-day Dodge City, Kansas. The party paused there to wait "for further instructions from our government."⁶⁸

The original plan provided that the road from the international boundary to Santa Fe would be surveyed and marked "under regulations to be agreed upon between the two governments."⁶⁹ Due to Mexico's internal political problems, the United States Department of State had been unsuccessful in making the necessary arrangements prior to the departure of the Santa Fe expedition. The commissioners, therefore, left with the understanding that the State Department would continue its efforts to reach an agreement with the Mexican government as to the surveying and marking of the road in Mexican territory, and would inform the commissioners of this agreement before they reached the international boundary.

After camping six days near the international boundary without hearing from the government, the commissioners met as a "board of business" to come to some decision as to their future course. Reeves and Mather felt that the party should remain where it was until definite instructions came from the U. S. government. Sibley disagreed, arguing that they should move on to Santa Fe and winter there while waiting for the United States to secure permission from the Mexican government to survey and mark the road in Mexican territory. "I was opposed altogether," Sibley wrote in his journal, "to returning,

⁶⁸ Sibley's Journal, September 11, 1825.

⁶⁹ W.P. Manning, "Diplomacy Concerning the Santa Fe Road," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, I, (June, 1914-March, 1915), 518.

in any event, until the road was completed."⁷⁰ The commissioners postponed making a decision, but agreed to meet again on the 17th.

When they met again Sibley presented a resolution, to wit: That the party remain at that place until the 26th; if at that time there was still no word from the U.S. government, a party of men and wagons should head to Santa Fe for winter quarters, and the rest of the party should return to Missouri, discharge the men, secure the wagons, and provide for or sell the horses. Prepared to defend his resolutions with figures and calculations designed to show how this could be accomplished with the funds appropriated, Sibley had written out his argument with the intention of having it included in the official journal. The commissioners stalled once again in making a final decision, but did set the 20th as the day to make their next major move. Reeves and Mather, tired and afraid of the approaching winter engulfing them far from home, wavered, while Sibley's determination to finish the task they had set out to do spurred him on.⁷¹

Finally on the 20th, the commissioners decided that Sibley would select nine men, two wagons, nineteen horses, and the needed goods and supplies, and strike out for Santa Fe. He would also take the surveyor and the interpreter. On his way to Santa Fe he would be able to "get a lay of the land." The rest of the party would return home. If Sibley had not heard from the government by July 1, 1826, he was to return home without having completed the survey between the international boundary and Santa Fe.⁷²

⁷⁰Sibley's Journal, September 14, 1825.

⁷¹Ibid., September 17, 1825.

⁷²Ibid., September 20, 1825.

That night Sibley and the others made preparations for their separate journeys. Sibley recorded in his journal that he

...sat up very late last night writing letters home to my wife and friends. I made up a packet of seeds of many different sorts that I had collected in the prairies, consisting of Flowers chiefly, and sent them by Mr. Gamble to Mrs. S. together with a number of letters."⁷³

Gamble took leave of Sibley on the 22nd and caught up with the returning party which had left the day before. The Sibley party moved out at 9:15 on the 22nd for Santa Fe.

By September 25, Sibley's group had crossed the Arkansas River and for the first time entered Mexican Territory, moving in a southwesterly direction toward the Cimarron River.⁷⁴ They crossed the Cimarron and trudged on, plagued by strong winds, driving sand, lack of water, and tired horses. The weather became cooler as they reached higher elevations, and Sibley found the more mountainous country "romantic and pretty."⁷⁵

On the 19th of October, Sibley sent John Walker and S. Vaughn ahead to San Fernando to secure "10 packing mules, Saddles, etc. & Sufficient number of Packers and a Person to pilot the Waggon over the Mountain."⁷⁶ On the 24th the men returned with the mules and a pilot who informed Sibley that he could take the wagons safely over the mountains. Sibley's party arrived at the village of San Fernando, October 30, "having completed our long journey within the time expected

⁷³
Ibid., September 22, 1825.

⁷⁴Ibid., September 25, 1825.

⁷⁵Ibid., October 16, 1825.

⁷⁶Ibid., October 19, 1825.

& with as little loss & difficulty as anyone could have anticipated."⁷⁷

There Sibley found a letter from Reeves and Mather, with a letter from the War Department enclosed. These communications had been delivered by a trading party which had met Reeves and Mather on the prairie and had reached San Fernando a day earlier than Sibley. The letter from the War Department informed the commissioners that Joel Poinsett, appointed Minister to Mexico shortly after the passage of the bill authorizing the marking of the road to Santa Fe, had not been able to obtain consent from the Mexican authorities to continue the survey of the road in Mexican territory.⁷⁸ Therefore, the commissioners were to confine their operations according to the first section of the Act authorizing the survey.⁷⁹ Sibley technically had not violated the instructions for he had not engaged in surveying or marking the road on his way to Santa Fe.

While in San Fernando Sibley decided to pursue the matter further in a letter to Governor Antonio Narbona, Mexican governor of New Mexico whose headquarters were at Santa Fe. In Narbona's letter, Sibley acquainted the governor with his mission and inquired if permission to survey the road had come from Mexico.⁸⁰ He also wrote Poinsett as to what had been done and requested, as soon as possible, the Mexican government's decision as to the survey

⁷⁷ Ibid., October 30, 1825.

⁷⁸ James Barbour to George C. Sibley, September 19, 1825, Sibley Mss.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Sibley's Journal, October 30, 1825.

of the road in their territory.⁸¹ In the meantime, Sibley decided to go on from San Fernando to Santa Fe, made preparations to do so, paid off some of the men, and obtained provisions for the horses. Sibley's reduced party left San Fernando on the 27th of November and reached Santa Fe on the 29th. That night he met with Governor Narbona, who called on him to offer whatever assistance he could to secure his government's permission to complete the survey.⁸²

Thus began a period in Sibley's life which he must have viewed with mixed emotions. Far from home, in strange country, confronted by frustrating delay, his business-like determination to complete his task scuttled almost daily by the "manana" attitude of the Mexican authorities, he, nevertheless, fell into a whirl of dinners with the Governor, fandangoes, festivals, weddings, and merry and noisy political celebrations. Never again would Sibley experience a world in which, clearly, pleasure came before business.

From Sibley's diary, one gathers the impression that he participated widely in the social life of Santa Fe. He attended funerals, weddings, and baptisms. He saw first hand the terrible effects of a measles epidemic and was revolted by the presence of a

⁸¹George C. Sibley to Joel Poinsett, November 12, 1825, quoted in Manning, "Diplomacy Concerning the Santa Fe Road," 525-526.

⁸²Sibley's Journal, November 29, 1825.

"Quack Doctor...from Kentucky" who made matters even worse.⁸³ The oldest child of the family with whom he lodged died from complications from measles.⁸⁴

Sibley also showed an interest in possible opportunities for personal financial investments. Although committed to finishing the survey of the road, he realized that he might gain valuable information concerning trading opportunities in the future. If he were ever to pay off the debt owed to the government, a profitable venture in the Santa Fe trade would be extremely helpful. With this in mind, he continued to gather seed, to inspect wool and yarn, and to send seeds of wheat to friends in St. Louis and Franklin for their evaluation.⁸⁵

Having surveyed local opportunities, on February 16, 1826, Sibley once again entered into a co-partnership with Paul Baillio to engage in the woolen trade in the southwest. Baillio went to St. Louis to procure the necessary trade goods on, as usual, Sibley's credit.⁸⁶ However, the outcome of this venture remains a mystery.

⁸³"Diary of George C. Sibley, Santa Fe and Taos, January 1, 1826-March 31, 1826," January 22, 1826, Sibley Mss. The original diary is in the Sibley Mss. in the Missouri Historical Society Archives in St. Louis. The complete diary is also included in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 137-161. Further citations will read Sibley's Diary No. 5, date.

⁸⁴Sibley's Diary, No. 5, January 27, 1826.

⁸⁵Ibid., February 10, 1826.

⁸⁶Ibid., February 16, 1826.

Late in February, Sibley received a letter from Joel Poinsett that he had failed to obtain the cooperation of the Mexican authorities for a survey of the road. Poinsett, however, continued to work for permission, maintaining in a letter to the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations that "it would be a subject of regret that the expense of making the journey to Santa Fe with surveyors and the necessary instruments should have been incurred in vain..."⁸⁷

Finally on May 13, 1826, S. Comancho, Secretary of War for Mexico, wrote Poinsett that the President of Mexico had given permission for Sibley to survey the road, but not to undertake any cuttings, markings or to establish "any works of any kind whatever." In addition, the President hoped that the United States would grant the Mexicans the right of examining the eastern part of the road at a suitable time.⁸⁸ Governor Narbona eventually told Sibley of this decision on June 14. Sibley acknowledged receipt of the permission, but expressed disappointment in not being allowed to carry on a full-scale survey of the road.⁸⁹ Henry Clay, Secretary of State, in a letter to Poinsett, expressed the opinion that the restrictions imposed on Sibley would greatly lessen the value of his work.⁹⁰ Sibley

⁸⁷ Joel Poinsett to the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations, April 17, 1826, quoted in Manning, "Diplomacy Concerning the Santa Fe Road," 528.

⁸⁸ S. Comancho to Joel Poinsett, May 13, 1826, Sibley Mss.

⁸⁹ George C. Sibley to Joel Poinsett, June 18, 1826, quoted in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 234-235.

⁹⁰ Henry Clay to Joel Poinsett, June 23, 1826, quoted in Manning, "Diplomacy Concerning the Santa Fe Road," 529.

waited in Santa Fe until August for the other commissioners. When they did not arrive, he launched out on his own to complete the examination of the road. Sibley's diary of the return trip to Missouri has been lost, but he reached Fort Osage by October 12, 1826.⁹¹

A few details still remained to be settled. It would be necessary to connect the survey between Walnut Creek and Fort Osage, to settle financial accounts, and to prepare a final report to the United States government.⁹² Early in January, 1827, the three commissioners met in St. Louis and agreed that Sibley would take the responsibility for settling all accounts, handle corrections of the survey as far as the funds warranted, and write a final report.

The illness of Reeves' wife and Mather's reluctance to set out on another trip had led Sibley to offer to make the corrections on his own. "I shall with your concurrence," he wrote Reeves, "proceed as early in May as I can get ready, to complete the 'marking out' of the Road in the best manner I can do it..."⁹³

On May 12, 1827, the twelve men who were to help Sibley with the correction of the original survey gathered at Fountain Cottage. Each man took a mule, except the waggoner, and set forth on the

⁹¹ Missouri Republican, October 26, 1826. In the same item the paper reported that "It will be recollected that this is the party who were supposed to have been murdered by the Indians."

⁹² Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 44.

⁹³ George C. Sibley to Benjamin Reeves, March 23, 1827, Leonard Collection, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

18th.⁹⁴ Sibley left a few days later and caught up with his men by the 22nd. Once again Sibley's health was poor and he found the trip most uncomfortable. The party moved slowly, marking the road as it went. Sibley recorded in his diary that the prairies were "rich and beautiful."⁹⁵ As to the land near the Marais Des Cygnes River, Sibley commented that "...I should judge from all that I can See and learn of it that it would afford Room for Several Hundred families of thrifty farmers."⁹⁶ By Saturday, June 2, the party had traveled ninety-seven miles by survey from Fort Osage.⁹⁷ Their hardships consisted of worrisome Indian beggars along the way, a few violent thunderstorms that rolled across the plains, stinging flies, and mosquitoes. When the party reached Council Grove on June 7, 165 miles from Fort Osage, Sibley's illness still had not abated.⁹⁸

On the 11th, Sibley, tired, sick, and convinced he had done all that was possible, decided to head back to Fort Osage. On the return trip he planned to make the necessary Surveys to connect recent alterations made by him with the old survey.⁹⁹ He noted that

⁹⁴"Journal of George C. Sibley on correction and making of report, May 12 to October 27, 1827," Sibley Mss. Also found in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 175-195. Citations from this journal will hereafter read, Sibley's 1827 Journal.

⁹⁵Sibley's 1827 Journal, May 25, 1827.

⁹⁶Ibid., June 1, 1827.

⁹⁷Sibley's 1827 Journal, May 25, 1827.

⁹⁸Ibid., June 7, 1827.

⁹⁹Ibid., June 11, 1827.

the road was so well-traveled that the ruts left by wagon tracks clearly marked the correct route for travelers and that the mounds and posts erected by his men would in all probability be torn up by the Indians or trampled under the hooves of buffaloes. By the middle of June, the first signs of disloyalty within his party occurred when three of his men left the party and went their separate ways.¹⁰⁰

Hampered by the weather and flies, the work on the return trip slowed down. Even Sibley's granite-like patience cracked a mite when the hunters failed to bring back game.¹⁰¹

Disgusted at the hunters who had failed to kill sufficient game, drained by his illness, and irritated by the troublesome flies, Sibley confessed, "I am most heartily tired, and wish myself at home an hundred times a day."¹⁰² On June 29, he wrote, "I here discharge four of my men having more than I want, and they wishing to Return..."¹⁰³ By July 1 the party had completed its work as far as the Missouri state line. Good progress continued until the 5th of July when a vicious thunderstorm forced the men to pitch their tents and to wait until it had subsided.¹⁰⁴ While waiting in his tent Sibley read "Stern [sic]."¹⁰⁵ The rains continued into the next day. Toward late afternoon, a bolt of lightning struck the corner of Sibley's tent, splintered

¹⁰⁰Ibid., June 19, 1827.

¹⁰¹Ibid., June 21, 1827.

¹⁰²Ibid., June 26, 1827.

¹⁰³Ibid., June 29, 1827.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., July 5, 1827.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. Here Sibley most likely meant that he was reading Sterne, rather than Stern. Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), author of Tristram Shandy.

the upright, barely missing some gun powder, ripped through an iron trunk, melted a compass, and filled the tent with smoke and splinters. Asleep at the time, Sibley came to his senses with his ears whining and his feet feeling like jelly. One member of the party was knocked from his feet, while another was severely shocked. "My own escape," Sibley said, "was wonderful indeed."¹⁰⁶

Since the compass had been destroyed by the lightning, the survey could not be continued back to the Fort. Sibley left the campsite on July 7 and arrived home by noon the next day. An entry in his diary the following day revealed his feeling that he had performed well: "And thus ends a most disagreeable trip; in which I have effected every object I had in view, & in less time than I expected to have done it."¹⁰⁷

On August 18, Sibley sold at public auction the mules, horses, wagons and other items for \$686.91.¹⁰⁸

The remaining task of the commissioners consisted of an official report to the government on the two-year project of marking and surveying the road to Santa Fe. They set October 20, 1827 in St. Louis for their final meeting.¹⁰⁹ Early in October, still unwell and suffering from a painful bruise on his knee, Sibley went to St. Charles. Unable to continue on, he wrote Mather to meet him there. Reeves could not come. While waiting for Mather, Sibley completed

¹⁰⁶ Sibley's 1827 Journal, July 6, 1827.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., July 8, 1827.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., August 18, 1827.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., September 20, 1827.

the first draft of the report.¹¹⁰ On October 27, Mather arrived, read the report, and together they signed their names and the name of Reeves. They forwarded the document immediately to Washington.¹¹¹

The final report of the commissioners was, in reality, Sibley's work. Reeves read it in the first draft and Mather signed it after reading it for the first time. The report outlined the preparations for the expedition and some of the reasons for the delay in getting started.¹¹² It also explained why Sibley had to return to correct the survey of the first 160 miles. Flies had forced the party to travel by night, and "This irregular way of traveling not only harassed the horses and mules excessively, but Rendered a Satisfactory view and Survey of the country impracticable at the time..."¹¹³ Sibley included in the report copies of treaties with the Great and Little Osage and the Kansas Indians. He also summarized the decision on the prairie for Sibley to go on to Santa Fe and the other commissioners to return home in September, 1825.¹¹⁴ Sibley's time in Santa Fe and Taos, as well as the many difficulties which frustrated his efforts to secure permission from the Mexican government to continue the survey,

¹¹⁰ Ibid., October 18, 1827.

¹¹¹ Ibid., October 27, 1827.

¹¹² Report of the Commissioners to James Barbour, October 27, 1827, Sibley Mss. Copies of this report also appear in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 197-211, and Buford Rowland, ed., "The Report of the Commissioners on the Road from Missouri to New Mexico, October, 1827," New Mexico Historical Review, XIV (July, 1939), 213-229. Citations from this report will hereafter read Report, Sibley Mss.

¹¹³ Report, Sibley Mss.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

were also discussed.¹¹⁵ The expedition from May to July, 1827, to correct the survey was briefly discussed.

Sibley's report also included some recommendations on how the "highway between Nations" might be rendered more useful and safe.¹¹⁶ It pointed out that few physical or natural barriers existed on the road to Santa Fe. The most serious danger was human. Roving bands of Indians stole horses, mules and other property. Those causing the most trouble were the Pawnees, Arapahoes, Kiowas, Comanches, Apaches, and Utahs. The commissioners recommended military posts as deterrents to Indian thievery and also military escorts on occasion. They also pointed out that protection of the road might be more effective if the Mexican and American governments would work in harmony. Joint announcements of protective measures and occasional expeditions by troops to arrest those who interfered with the flow of commerce would be helpful.¹¹⁷

On April 12, 1825, Thomas Hart Benton had asked Sibley to investigate the possibilities of water transportation. In that regard, the report pointed out three facts. The Rio Colorado was not the head branch of the Red River of Natchitoches, but rather the main branch of the Canadian that emptied into the Arkansas about forty miles below Fort Gibson. The source of the Red River was not in the "shining mountains" as had been supposed, nor was there any navigable branch of that stream within 300 miles of Santa Fe. The Rio Grande del Norte from the mountains near Taos to the Gulf of Mexico

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

will not afford safe or certain navigation, so that it may be safely asserted, that the nearest approaches that can be made to Santa Fe or the other settlements of New Mexico, by water, for the purposes of Commerce are by the Missouri and Kansas Rivers and the Gulf of California at Guaymas.¹¹⁸

The report ended on a hopeful note:

When the highway, now opened from Missouri to Santa Fe shall be cleared of the Pirates of the Plains, there is good reason to believe that the Trade between the two countries in that direction, will assume a character, & employ an amount of Capital, not only greatly advantageous to those immediately engaged in it, but beneficial in no trifling degree to Some of the manufacturing interests of the United States.¹¹⁹

On December 7, 1827, Reeves and Sibley sent to Washington "duplicate copies of the accounts and two packages of maps, field books, etc., etc."¹²⁰ According to Buford Rowland, the official report was lent to Colonel A.H. Sevier, delegate from Arkansas Territory, and he in turn gave it to the secretary of the Senate in whose files it remained until a hundred years later when the Senate records were transferred to the national archives.¹²¹ Sibley's Journal was also included, not as a part of the report, but with the other materials which were sent to Washington. He had written the journal in ink in order "to preserve the notes that were taken in pencil from day to day."¹²² This journal

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 47.

¹²¹ Rowland, "The Report," 215.

¹²² Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 49.

did not come to light until it was also discovered by Buford Rowland in 1938 in a Senate Committee Room.¹²³

By no stretch of the imagination can the survey and marking of the Santa Fe trail be interpreted as a major achievement in American history. It may well have been part and parcel of Manifest Destiny, but it did not change destiny. There is no evidence that it had any effect whatsoever on Congress or on the men who used the Santa Fe Road. According to Hubert Howe Bancroft "It does not appear, however, that the traders ever made use of the road surveyed, preferring to follow the earlier trail, with such modifications as conditions of water and grass suggested."¹²⁴ The journal was lost and the Report was filed away into anonymity.

But this adventure did reveal something about Sibley, the prairie Puritan. One cannot avoid the conclusion that his vanity and his desperate need for cash prompted him to accept the office of commissioner. Nevertheless, at a very low point in his life, weighted down by debt, hampered by poor health, and seemingly finished in his government career, he accepted and carried through a hazardous and arduous task for the government. Largely due to his persistent efforts and undying determination, the job was completed. One may question his motives or even disparage the event and its results, but one cannot question that quality in his life that drove him on.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴ Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1885 (San Francisco, 1889), 334.

CHAPTER X

MRS. SIBLEY'S SCHOOL

At the time he and Colonel Mather forwarded the Report of the Commissioners to Washington in October, 1827, Sibley wrote to Senator Josiah Stoddard Johnston, his brother-in-law, that "The moment I have got this road off my hands, I start home to Fort Osage where I left my family in bad health, and I fear I shall find them still so."¹

Still plagued by his debt to the United States government Sibley informed Johnston that he would be receptive to government employment if anything turned up that would be suitable. After his experience on the Santa Fe road, Sibley thought that with Johnston's influence he might be considered for appointment as Commissioner to mark the boundary line between the United States and Mexico. In response to the rumor that the Osage Agency would soon be left vacant by the resignation of the current incumbent, whom the Osage Indians disliked, Sibley stated, "I cannot help believing that the Osage ought to be under my charge, and that the Government has not consulted the interest of their policy or that of the Osage by overlooking me."²

The burden of his debt drove Sibley to explore every possibility that might add to his income.

¹George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, October 27, 1827, Sibley Mss. Senator Johnston married Sibley's sister, Elizabeth, of Natchitoches, Louisiana, in 1814. He was elected to the United States Senate from Louisiana in 1825 and served until 1833. During his senatorial career he served on the Committee on Commerce and the Committee on Finance. He was, like Sibley, an ardent and enthusiastic supporter of Henry Clay. Sibley and Johnston became close friends and corresponded regularly. Senator Johnston was tragically killed in a steamboat explosion on the Red River on the morning of May 19, 1833. (Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1928, 1158.

²George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, October 27, 1827, Sibley Mss.

While Sibley was absent from home making the survey and marking the Santa Fe road the government had made no effort to collect the debt. Edward Bates, Attorney-General of Missouri, summarized the government's attitude when, in a letter to George Graham, December 3, 1825, he wrote:

Mr. Sibley is now in Santa Fe & will not return till some time next year. On leaving this last summer, he proposed to make payments from time to time to the credit of the judgement, and I, in return, told him that I should issue no execution in his absence, unless by order of my superiors...³

Bates believed that if Sibley were given more time he would pay the debt in full.

Once Sibley returned to his Fountain Cottage farm, he immediately turned his attention to paying off his debt. He offered Bates his land holdings to satisfy the government's judgement against him.

Sibley's land holdings included the following: "640 acres on Wild Horse Creek,⁴ 800 acres adjoining Plattin Creek near Herculaneum,⁵

³Edward Bates to George Graham, December 3, 1825, quoted in Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 40.

⁴Purchased by Sibley in 1813, he described the land as follows: "A mile square-30 miles from St. Louis in a very wealthy settlement near the Missouri, on which is a good house, orchard, fences, Spring and Mill Seat and body of 250 acres of very first quality land." (George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, September 25, 1813, Sibley Mss.) Sibley received the deed on August 31, 1814. (Deed, Thomas F. Riddick and wife to George C. Sibley, August 31, 1814, Sibley Mss.) He attempted to sell the land in the summer of 1818, but was unsuccessful. (Missouri Gazette, July 31, 1818).

⁵Described by Sibley as being "5 miles from the town of Herculaneum, on Plattin Creek, 3 miles from a Merchant Mill and 5 from the Mississippi and 30 below St. Louis..." (George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, September 30, 1813, Sibley Mss.)

200 acres near the village of St. Charles,⁶ two lots in St. Louis,⁷ 640 acres on Sny Ebores Creek in Lafayette County,⁸ and 320 acres in Jackson County." "All I have," he wrote, "except an unconfirmed claim to the tract on which I live in Jackson County."⁹ Sibley's wealth, like that of so many of his contemporaries, was tied up in land, and he lacked the cash to pay off his debt to the government.

The Attorney-General's reply offered Sibley some encouragement. There was a precedent, Bates told him, for the Treasury Department to receive "certain lands and other real property" in discharge of debts owed to the United States government.¹⁰ With this information

⁶Original lease, dated 1792, for 200 acres. The first owner, Louis Blanchette, leased it to his cousins. Survey No. 185 of the Prairie Haute Common Fields. The next owners, Edward Hempstead and wife, deeded the property to Thomas F. Riddick. (Deed, Edward Hempstead and wife to Thomas F. Riddick, October 30, 1813, Sibley Mss.) Riddick sold it to Sibley. (Deed, Thomas F. Riddick, to George C. Sibley, August 31, 1814, Sibley Mss.) Sibley acquired an additional 80 acres from Thomas Copes, making the 280 acres of land near St. Charles by 1829. The buildings of present-day Linden Wood College for Women stand on this acreage. (Deed, Thomas P. Copes and wife to George C. Sibley, April 20, 1829, Sibley Mss.; Ben L. Emmons to Stella M. Drumm, August 27, 1925, Sibley Mss.)

⁷Deed, Uriah T. Devore and Betsey H. Devore to George C. Sibley, June 24, 1818, Sibley Mss.

⁸Under the conditions of the Land Act of 1820, Sibley could have purchased this land for a minimum price of \$1.25 an acre. Total cost-\$800. This land comprised Section 24, Range 28 west, Township 50 north in Lafayette County, which adjoins Jackson County.

⁹Sibley claimed his Jackson County property under a New Madrid Certificate, probably in 1818. It is not clear when the government confirmed this land holding. On this land Sibley built his Fountain Cottage. The property included Sections 34 and 35, Range 30, Township 57, Jackson County, Missouri.

¹⁰George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, October 27, 1827, Sibley Mss.

in hand, Sibley wrote Johnston and shared with him the hope that he would "be once again free and out of difficulty, and would be able to look upon myself as an independent farmer..."¹¹

On December 10, 1827, Sibley, Mary, and Rusella Easton embarked from St. Louis for a trip to Natchitoches to visit Sibley's ailing father.¹² This was to be Mary's first and last meeting with her husband's father. They spent a pleasant month with the elderly gentleman. After their departure from Natchitoches, the party spent a few delightful days in New Orleans where they attended the theater, visited a light house, and saw the famous battlefield where in an American victory over the British the legend of Andrew Jackson was born. The Sibleys brought Margaret and Henry Sibley, Sibley's niece and nephew, to Missouri in order to provide them with educational opportunities. On March 10, 1828, they arrived in St. Louis and visited with friends until the 1st of April. Moving on to St. Charles, they visited with Mary's relatives before returning to Fort Osage.¹³

While in St. Charles, Sibley took the opportunity to ride out to his acreage near the village. Evidently, Sibley had been thinking for some time about moving from Fort Osage to St. Charles. In this growing settlement on the banks of the Missouri River there would be more ways and means which an energetic and enterprising man might take to rebuild his financial stability. And then, being near

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, April 6, 1828, Sibley Mss.

¹³ Ibid.

St. Louis, the Sibleys could take advantage of a number of cultural and educational opportunities. The move would also bring his family closer to relatives and friends in St. Charles. However, the uppermost thought that lay on his mind was that if the Treasury Department accepted his offer of land in payment of his debt, his establishment at Fort Osage would probably suffice to cover the entire amount. Thus, Sibley reasoned, "By giving up my valuable farm at Fort Osage in lieu of the small unimproved tract near this village would pay off the whole debt at once."¹⁴

Sibley had reached the point where he was willing to move or to make "almost any sacrifice" to get out from under the debt. In a letter to George Graham, April 7, 1828, he made the above offer. Since the government had acted favorably to his first proposition, he saw no reason why his offer would be refused.¹⁵ Believing this, he left his family in St. Charles and headed for Fort Osage to make arrangements to move his household servants and goods by the 1st of May. Leaving his stock and farming implements at Fort Osage, Sibley returned to St. Charles early in May.¹⁶ The Sibleys rented a house built by John Rochester in 1817. Their new residence, a two-story brick structure, with oval windows, a flat roof, and white trim, stood near the center of the village.¹⁷

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵George C. Sibley to George Graham, April 7, 1828, Sibley Mss.

¹⁶Sibley's Diary, May 6, 1828, Sibley Mss.

¹⁷Edna McElhiney Olson, Historical Saint Charles, Missouri (St. Charles, Missouri, 1967), pages are not numbered.

By 1828 the village of St. Charles had already become an important settlement on the banks of the Missouri River. Founded by Louis Blanchette le Chasseur, a French-Canadian fur trapper and trader, under the authority granted to him by the Spanish Governor of Upper Louisiana, St. Charles became the first permanent white settlement on the Missouri River.¹⁸

From a charming lithograph made about the time the Sibleys moved to St. Charles, one can obtain an impression of how the little village might have looked to the Sibleys. In the lithograph, a steamboat churned the water of the Missouri River on its way to St. Louis, while a ferry unloaded passengers on the east bank of the river. The residences of the townspeople rested south of the village center and along the river front. A few buildings clung to the hill that gently sloped to the river. Several impressive buildings topped the hill. The Catholic Church and Convent were north of the village and away from the river. Beyond the hills lay Sibley's tract of land.¹⁹

At one time St. Charles had been the seat of the state government, but it had since been moved to Jefferson City. The stage line from St. Louis, which had been extended to Fort Osage in 1821, a distance of 275 miles, and the road west passed through the village. The Farmer's Tavern, built in 1805, advertised such tempting and inviting bargains to travelers as "Lodging 2 bits a night. I

¹⁸Louis Houck, A History of Missouri from Earliest Explorations and Settlement Until the Admittance of the State Into the Union (Three volumes, Chicago, 1908), II, 80.

¹⁹Olson, Historical Saint Charles, Missouri, n.p.

specialize in good food. Corn Bread and Common Fixings--2 bits a meal. White Bread with Chicken Fixings--3 bits...²⁰ St. Charles boasted of a cooperage, a lime kiln, an ice house, a post office, a newspaper, a wagon factory, and a lumber yard. Drs. Jeremiah and Seth Millington, early physicians, provided an abundance of the all-time cure-all, castor oil.²¹ The Catholics were numerically the strongest religious group, followed by small struggling congregations of Methodists and Presbyterians. When the Germans began to migrate to St. Charles, they founded the Lutheran Church which grew rapidly in membership and prestige.

During the summer of 1828, Sibley began clearing land on his tract just outside the village. By January, 1829, he had twenty acres ready for cultivation. His main objective seemed to be to clear just enough "in order to obtain a view of the land and its situation."²² Throughout 1829, Sibley worked his tract of land with the help of a couple of hired hands. In May, he planted a garden of corn and potatoes. In August, he started to build a log house. He had his livestock, consisting of horses, mules, asses, and cattle brought from Fort Osage the previous November. During this time the Sibleys began to call their new farm "Linden Wood" because of the

²⁰ Ibid., n.p.

²¹ Ibid., n.p.

²² Sibley's Diary, May 6, 1828, Sibley Mss.

large grove of Linden trees that grew there.²³ By December 23, 1829, the Sibleys had moved from St. Charles to the new farm.²⁴

While readying his Linden Wood property for occupancy during 1829, Sibley also sought to get the government to reimburse the commissioners the \$1,504.54 which Sibley had advanced from his own pocket to complete the survey of the Santa Fe Road. Unsuccessful at first, he turned to Reeves and Mather and asked if it would be possible for them to pay him their share of the sum because of his precarious financial condition? "I am suffering very grievous inconvenience," he declared, "by the delay..."²⁵ They replied that at the moment they could not come to his rescue. To their credit, however, it should be pointed out that both Mather and Reeves did their share in the ensuing hard struggle to obtain the \$1,504.54 from the United States government.

In regard to Sibley's other nagging financial problem, his debt to the government, Senator Josiah Johnston, member of the Senate finance committee,²⁶ had informed him that in all likelihood the government would look with favor on accepting a portion of his land

²³As far as I can tell, Sibley never stated the reason for the name Lindenwood. In the beginning the name of their estate was spelled Linden Wood, but was later changed to one word-Lindenwood.

²⁴Sibley's Diary, December 30, 1829, Sibley Mss.

²⁵George C. Sibley to B.H. Reeves and Thomas Mather, April 20, 1829, Sibley Mss.

²⁶Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927, 1158.

holdings in payment of his debt. However, Johnston told Sibley that the government would place his property on the auction block.²⁷ This raised another problem for Sibley. If the government sold his property at public auction, Sibley saw no prospect of raising the full amount of his debt because land would probably bring considerably higher prices through private sale than at public auction. Thus, added to the burden of trying to free himself from debt, was the struggle to keep his land holdings off the auction block.

Through a misunderstanding, a Mr. Pleasanton, an agent for the Treasury Department, directed Beverly Allen, the District Attorney, to demand of Sibley payment of his balance, and, if he defaulted, "to proceed by execution to obtain it."²⁸ Sibley immediately wrote the District Attorney to say

That I am unable to pay in money and that a sale of my property under-execution must inevitably leave the far greater part of the debt unpaid and put it utterly out of my power to pay it--that I have reason to hope that by a proper management of my capital (all of which is in property) I shall be able eventually by degrees to pay off the whole debt--that I am ready to give such security on my property as I am able & as it accrues--And I requested copies of my letters to be sent Mr. Pleasanton, which I presume have been done.²⁹

Sibley also offered to turn over to the government his Fountain Cottage farm for \$7 an acre or for "whatever sum it may be valued by the

²⁷ Josiah Stoddard Johnston to George C. Sibley, March 13, 1828, Sibley Mss.

²⁸ George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, December 15, 1829, Sibley Mss.

²⁹ George C. Sibley to Beverly Allen, September 4, 1829, Sibley Mss.

government."³⁰ Sibley desperately sought an extension of time for settling his debt with the government.

In the Fall of 1829 another possible solution came to mind, and Sibley sought to apply it. In a letter to Senator Johnston he wrote

General Leavenworth, Col. Baker, Maj. Kearney and several other officers of the army who have been up the Missouri, have expressed their strong wish to have permanent Garrison removed from its present position at Cantonment Leavenworth to the old scite [sic] at Fort Osage, and I have advised General Leavenworth that if the War Department deemed it proper to make the move, I will let the Government have my 640 acres for whatever Sum agreed on by a board of officers in discharge of what I still owe as Security of Paul Baillio and Co. ³¹

Unfortunately, those who were to make the final decision about Fort Leavenworth's relocation did not regard Sibley's suggestion as satisfactory. In the first place, Sibley's property at Fort Osage was now too far in the settlements. It was no longer a frontier outpost. Furthermore, the government did not believe that military protection on the Santa Fe Road from Fort Osage to Council Grove was necessary.³² And so, another straw slipped through his fingers in his attempts to overcome his debt.

At the end of 1829, Sibley expressed in a long letter to Senator Johnston the belief that one of the legitimate purposes of a free

³⁰ George C. Sibley to Beverly Allen, October 25, 1829, Sibley Mss.

³¹ George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, December 15, 1829, Sibley Mss.

³² F. Lee to George C. Sibley, January 6, 1830, Sibley Mss.

government was to extend to its citizenship every possible favour not incompatible with the safety and welfare of the whole. With this in mind, Sibley hoped the government would grant him the necessary time to pay off his debt without resorting to putting his Fort Osage property on the auction block. He told Johnston that he needed time to dispose of his property at a fair price.³³ There the matter rested as the Sibleys faced the winter of 1829-1830 at Linden Wood.

Sibley continued to face financial disaster throughout his early years at Linden Wood. In May, 1830, the partnership of Baillio, Boggs, and Sibley was dissolved. To Baillio, who was upset by the whole affair, Sibley expressed his continued friendship and consoled him with the belief that if it had not been for Baillio, Sibley's losses would have been greater.³⁴

Another indication of his sore financial condition was that Sibley went farther in debt by borrowing \$1500 from Thomas C. Biddle of St. Louis, and secured this debt by mortgaging his 280-acre Linden Wood farm and his six slaves.³⁵ He was also forced to mortgage his livestock and farm implements to secure a \$890 note with the St. Louis firm of Tracey and Wahrendorff.³⁶

From the deeds which were drawn to secure the above debts, one can reconstruct the extent of Sibley's operation at Linden Wood. His

³³George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, December 15, 1829, Sibley Mss.

³⁴George C. Sibley to Paul Baillio, May 16, 1830, Sibley Mss.

³⁵George C. Sibley and wife to Thomas Biddle, Deed of Mortgage, May 16, 1829, Sibley Mss.

³⁶George C. Sibley and wife to Tracy and Wahrendorff, Deed of Mortgage, August 4, 1829, Sibley Mss.

tract of land contained 280 acres and he owned four male and two female slaves. His livestock consisted of two stallions, ten brood mares and their foals, fifteen colts, three mules, fifty-six asses, ten oxen, seven milk cows, and twelve young cattle. Farm implements included one wagon, one ox cart, five plows with chains, and harness.³⁷

Finally the government granted Sibley until April 1, 1834, to discharge the balance of his debt. Nevertheless, he kept urging the government to take his Fountain Cottage tract in full payment.³⁸ If they did this, however, the one condition was that it still would be sold at public auction in Jefferson City. Convinced that if this occurred he would lose his land to speculators and still be far from discharging the full amount of his debt to the government, Sibley felt almost paralyzed. Was there no way out of this disturbing impasse? Was all his labor, his pleadings, his move to St. Charles, and his offer to the government of his Fountain Cottage property to end in defeat?

Sibley's debt to the United States Government strongly influenced three very important decisions in his life. It caused him to accept the dangerous assignment of surveying and marking the Santa Fe Road. He wanted to be in on the ground floor of the Santa Fe trade which he believed would become a lucrative business. His debt also influenced his decision to move from Fort Osage to St. Charles.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ George C. Sibley to George Shannon, December 23, 1830, Sibley Mss.

He stated his belief that by giving up his improved farm at Fort Osage to the United States Government he would be able to discharge his debt in full. Both of these decisions made by Sibley were the efforts of a man to free himself from debt.

His financial problems also influenced Mary's and his decision to start at Lindenwood a private boarding school for young ladies. The long history of Lindenwood College for Women at St. Charles can be traced back to the Sibleys, harried and frustrated by debt, who saw in a private school an acceptable and legitimate way to make money. Certainly there were other factors that brought the Sibleys to this decision: their interest in education, Mary's special talent for teaching, their affection for young people, the proximity of Lindenwood to St. Louis and other growing towns east and west of the Mississippi River, and an increasing awareness of the need for women to be educated in that age of the common man. These factors cannot be discounted, but, it seems to me, that the Sibleys, weighted down by debt, were determinedly seeking means of overcoming that problem. Thus, above all else, this was the driving force that led them to launch their school at Linden Wood.

The Sibleys believed in education. In his autobiography, Sibley recalled his own advantages of schooling.³⁹ Mary had attended a boarding school in Kentucky for a time and had taken her library along with her to Fort Osage. Both the Sibleys took an interest in the school at Harmony Mission. Sibley publicly advocated

³⁹George C. Sibley to Origen Sibley, Blakely, Alabama, 1851, Sibley Mss.

education for the Indians. When Sibley brought his niece and nephew to Missouri from Louisiana, he wanted to be near St. Louis where they might enjoy the educational opportunities. Not long after his move to St. Charles, Sibley began actively to support the St. Charles Benevolent Society for the education of poor girls.⁴⁰ Thus, the Sibleys displayed an interest and a belief in education.

One of the stories associated with Mary's talent for teaching has to do with the German migration into the St. Charles area. When the Germans first arrived and settled in a little community not far from St. Charles, Mary rode out to meet them. There she found the newcomers homesick and unable to speak English. Mary decided to teach them English by using her Bible, which was filled with pictures. She named the resulting endeavor the English Bible class.⁴¹ On one occasion, Mary headed a subscription to a Sunday School Library by selling shares at an annual cost of 25¢ and 12½¢.⁴² The Post Office account of George Sibley from March 16, 1830 to April 22, 1835 contained charges for Mary's Sunday School Visitors, papers used for Sunday School teaching.⁴³

⁴⁰ Sibley's Diary, October 18, 1833, Sibley Mss.

⁴¹ This anecdote was quoted from the Historical File on Mary Easton Sibley in the private collection of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁴² This item appeared in the Original Papers of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, 1833-1840. These papers are on file at the St. Charles Presbyterian Church. The letters, Session Books, reports, etc., have not been completely organized. Further citations from the source will read, Original Papers.

⁴³ The original Post Office Account kept by John Lilly, a tailor and the postmaster at St. Charles, is in the possession of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri. Sibley's account from March 16, 1830 to April 22, 1835 can be found in this document.

The Sibleys may have compensated for not having children of their own by starting a school for young girls. They had shown interest in and affection for young people throughout their married life. When Sibley brought Mary to Fort Osage, they were accompanied by Louisa, Mary's younger sister. In 1824 the Sibleys enrolled a thirteen-year-old Osage girl in the Harmony Mission School.⁴⁴ In later years, the Sibleys legally adopted children and helped to raise another Easton daughter.⁴⁵

A possible answer as to why the Sibleys never had children of their own may be found in a casual remark in a letter of James Kennerly, a forwarding agent for the factory system, in the Spring of 1821. Writing to Sibley, he mentioned that since Mrs. Sibley had departed St. Louis, it had been "dull." He closed his letter with the wish, "I hope you met Mrs. Sibley and found her in health & I hope in a few months you may be in as fair a way for having an heir as I am."⁴⁶ Kennerly's concern for Mary's physical condition might have indicated an expectant Mary. Sibley made no mention of it in any of his letters or notations in his diary. However, during the 1820's Sibley made numerous comments about his family's health which leads one to believe that both he and Mary were not robust.⁴⁷ In their failure to have

⁴⁴ William W. Graves, The First Protestant Osage Mission, 1820-1837, 171.

⁴⁵ From the notes and correspondence of Dr. Kate L. Gregg, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁶ James Kennerly to George C. Sibley, May 4, 1821, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁷ George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, October 27, 1827, Sibley Mss.

children, the Sibleys may have found great satisfaction in showering their love and concern on other people's children.

Others in the state of Missouri had started private schools, and so the Sibleys had a number of examples to follow. Thomas Woody, in his encyclopedic A History of Women's Education in the United State, observed that even before Missouri became a state it had encouraged female seminaries.⁴⁸ The female seminary movement was well underway in the state by the time the Sibleys started their school at Linden Wood.

Clearly the demand for women's education existed in Missouri. John Mason Peck in his A Guide for Emigrants wrote that on the frontier 'Many adults, especially females are unable to read or write, and many more, who are able to read a little cannot readily understand what they attempt to read, and therefore take no pleasure in books and study.'⁴⁹

Sibley's Diary, July 3, 1835, contained an item copied from the Richmond Compiler which reflected his sentiments concerning female education and also his great belief in its value:

Woman is the most important Sex, and if but one half of our Race Can be educated let it be woman instead of man. Woman forms our Character. She watches us in Sickness, Soothes us in distress, and Cheers us in the melancholy of old age. Her rank determines that of the

⁴⁸Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States, I (New York, 1929), 379.

⁴⁹John M. Peck, A Guide for Emigrants (Boston, 1831), 243.

Race. If she be highminded and virtuous, with a soul thirsting for that which is lofty, true, and disinterested; So it is with the Race. If she be light and vain, with her heart Set on trifles, fond only of pleasure, Alas, for the Community when She is So. It is ruined!⁵⁰

It was to the Sibleys' credit that they held to this advanced idea.

They were in step with what de Tocqueville defined as "the true principle of democratic improvement,"⁵¹ the right of every human being to a better and richer life. "Mrs. Sibley's School," as it was sometimes called, represented the combined efforts of two entrepreneurs who believed in the great value of their undertaking.

The first building at Linden Wood was a log cabin that housed the Sibleys in one of its wings and accomodated twenty boarders in the other.⁵² Thus, for a number of years the Sibleys lived in close proximity to their students.

Ann Russell, the only child of socially prominent and wealthy William Russell of St. Louis, became one of the first students at Linden Wood.⁵³ In a letter dated July 10, 1831, Russell requested Sibley to send him information concerning the cost of educating and

⁵⁰Quoted in Sibley's Diary, July 3, 1835, Sibley Mss.

⁵¹Quoted in Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought, (New York, 1943), 388.

⁵²From the Historical File on Mary Easton Sibley in the private collection of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁵³A wealthy land speculator in St. Louis. Ann Russell married Thomas Allen, who became the owner of the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railway and managed the vast estate accumulated by his father-in-law. (John Hollum, Biographical and Pictorial History of Arkansas (Albany, New York, 1887), 121.

taking care of his daughter. Russell wanted his daughter to "acquire all the intelligence, and improvement of mind, and all the learning, useful, domestic and ornamental, that she is capable of." He stated in his letter that he would furnish "a bureau, a bedstead, a mattress, shoes, bonnets, combs, etc." The kind of education he sought for Ann would place "morals, and improvement of mind, and strict sense of honor and propriety in all things" above what he termed "school learning." Russell was also anxious that she learn some of the practical arts, such as knitting, sewing, house keeping, personal grooming, reading, and proper posture. He preferred for her to avoid reading novels. "I do not object to play," he wrote, "provided it is with good little girls." But Ann was not to attend public balls or the theater.⁵⁴ Since Ann came to Linden Wood and remained there at least until 1836, its educational activities apparently satisfied Russell's requirements.⁵⁵

During the early days of Linden Wood the Sibleys operated it as a team effort. As the only teacher in the beginning, Mary had the responsibility for classroom activity. Sibley remarked to a parental client that the "pupils here are engaged in the ordinary exercises of the School many hours more every day, than at any other School I ever saw, and besides, they often bring those exercises into the family sitting room."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ William Russell to George C. Sibley, July 10, 1831, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁵ Sibley's correspondence with William Russell on Ann's education at Linden Wood continued throughout 1836.

⁵⁶ George C. Sibley to William Russell, October 24, 1834, Sibley Mss.

The daily classroom activity began with the girls reciting from the Bible,⁵⁷ which the Sibleys praised as a "classic," the foundation of civil liberty, a great history book, great literature, and a teacher of morals.⁵⁸ Aside from morning recitations from the Bible, however, there is no evidence that religion was formally taught in the school. On this point, Sibley once wrote to William Russell:

I cannot suppose it necessary to Remind you, that from its first inception the little School at this place, has been avowedly conducted on Religious principles from which it has never swerved for a moment. A Religious bias of an intelligent Rational character, unconnected with parties or sects, has ever been encouraged and inculcated in my family. And tho' this has been done upon Settled principles, and deemed a sacred duty, it has never been made a Regular branch of School instruction, occupying any time usually devoted to ordinary study.⁵⁹

The study of the Bible and religion was left to the Sunday School and to public worship. "In the school room," Sibley commented, "and during the proper hours of study, a strict regard is paid to the advancement of her [Mrs. Sibley's] pupils, agreeably to the expressed wishes of their parents or Guardians."⁶⁰

Sibley's role lay outside the classroom. He tended to the farm, raised a garden, planted an orchard, and cared for his livestock.⁶¹ The farm served as the primary source of food for the

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹George C. Sibley to William Russell, May 23, 1836, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁰George C. Sibley to William Russell, October 24, 1834, Sibley Mss.

school's young constituency. Sibley also kept books and handled correspondence with parents and guardians. A few slaves, including a Negro Cook, Mary, did the necessary chores on the farm and in the kitchen.⁶² The farm was a key element in the total operation of the Linden Wood Seminary and Sibley managed it well.

With a small enrollment, never exceeding thirty prior to 1841,⁶³ the Sibleys were able to maintain a home-like atmosphere. In the evening, the pupils gathered in the Sibley parlor to study and engage in other activities. They attended Sunday School and public worship together. Fanny B. Audrain wrote her mother in 1834, "I go to church every Sunday."⁶⁴ The rule at Linden Wood in regard to Sunday School and Church held that unless

Parents and guardians direct the contrary, their daughters and wards will be required to attend the usual services of the Sunday School, either at Linden Wood or St. Charles, as we may find it most fit and convenient for them...and all the pupils must go together to the place of worship unless particular places are assigned by Parents for particular individuals.⁶⁵

⁶²Original Papers, May, 1836.

⁶³Vivian K. McClarty, ed., "A Missionary Wife Looks at Missouri: The Letters of Julia Barnard Strong," Missouri Historical Review, XLVII (July, 1953), 330-333.

⁶⁴Fanny B. Audrain to her mother, December 3, 1834, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁵George C. Sibley to William Russell, June 1, 1836, Sibley Mss.

The old St. Charles Presbyterian record books show that some of the pupils at Linden Wood became members of that Church.⁶⁶

Sibley's statement of Linden Wood's policy in 1836 reflected both his educational philosophy and hopes:

The plan upon which the Linden Wood School will be uniformly conducted, proposes a course of Instruction of a thorough character: Intellectual, Moral, and Domestic-Based on settled principles of the Christian religion, and carefully adapted to those on which are founded the free institutions of our Country.⁶⁷

By 1835-1836 Sibley had made improvements on the physical facilities of the school,⁶⁸ although his records fail to reveal the nature of these. In addition, the Sibleys had increased the faculty by adding Mrs. Julia Strong, the wife of a Presbyterian clergyman who had come to Missouri to preach, teach, and distribute tracts.⁶⁹ The Strongs lived at Linden Wood, and the Reverend Mr. Strong also did some teaching when not engaged in ministerial activities. Since the enrollment had increased, the school seemed to be prospering.⁷⁰

In 1837, an eastern girl, Miss E.D. Rosseter, came to Linden Wood and assumed a major part of the teaching.⁷¹ Mrs. Strong

⁶⁶Session Book Number 2, Original Papers, n.d.

⁶⁷George C. Sibley to William Russell, May 23, 1836, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁸George C. Sibley to V. Maxey, February 27, 1836, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁹McClarty, ed., "A Missionary Wife Looks at Missouri," 330.

⁷⁰Ibid., 333.

⁷¹Ibid.

evaluated Miss Rosseter as "highly esteemed by all, and does much to give influence and respectability to the school."⁷² Mary kept alert to those who might be enlisted to teach at Linden Wood. She invited Mrs. Strong's sister-in-law, who was teaching in Callaway County, Missouri, to join her staff at a salary of \$300 per year but failed to persuade her to move.⁷³ By 1838, the school had grown to "30 young ladies" and the curriculum included "all the branches of education which are taught in Eastern Female Seminaries."⁷⁴

An advertisement in the Missouri Daily Argus of August 5, 1840 reveals something of the eastern tone so derived at Linden Wood:

The Boarding School
For Young Ladies at Linden Wood
(One mile from the town of St. Charles)

Is a permanent Institution, under the direction of Mrs. Mary E. Sibley & Miss E.D. Rosseter, with competent assistants in every department; affording ample facilities for the acquirements of a good Education with every desirable accomplishment. The most convenient seasons for entrance, are the first weeks in September and February in every year..⁷⁵

It appears that from the beginning of Linden Wood there were two school terms, one starting in late winter and the other in the Fall, with seven to eight weeks of vacation in between. At the close of each term, the teachers conducted public examinations of the students.⁷⁶

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., 338.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Missouri Daily Argus, August 5, 1840.

⁷⁶Sibley's Diary, March 28-29, 1838, Sibley Mss.

Mrs. Sibley approached the Strongs in 1839 about taking over the major burden of directing the school. Mrs. Strong reported in 1839 that

The school in Mrs. Sibley's hands has been unpopular. She thinks with our energetic and judicious management we could make it equal to any in the western states at least. We are pleased with this mark of regard and confidence from them, but do not covet the charge.⁷⁷

In her statement Mrs. Strong failed to offer any explanation for the school's unpopularity and she may have simply been referring to its decreased enrollment and financial difficulties which must have resulted in part from the general financial problems following the panic of 1837. At any rate, Sibley wrote in his diary in April, 1841, that "The Linden Wood School for Young Ladies was this day closed, and altogether discontinued."⁷⁸ This marked the end of the first chapter in that school's significant history, but a new chapter was about to begin.

Although information concerning the early history of Linden Wood College for Women is far from abundant, a few summary observations can be made. It was Mrs. Sibley's school in that she carried the whole teaching burden for a time. Moreover, the Sibleys started the school at least partially because they were struggling to free themselves from debt and saw in a boarding school an opportunity to make more out of Linden Wood than just a farm. The school was neither daring nor unique but followed the patterns already set by other female seminaries in the state of Missouri. With the arrival

⁷⁷McClarty, ed., "A Missionary Wife Looks at Missouri," 341.

⁷⁸Sibley's Diary, April 39, 1841, Sibley Mss.

of Miss Rosseter, the school became more imitative of eastern seminaries. The enrollment reached thirty at one time, but evidently decreased steadily after 1838 until the school was closed temporarily in 1841. A family atmosphere prevailed, with the pupils using the Sibley sitting room in the evenings for study and conversation. Sibley devoted his attention to the business records, letter writing, and other activities in which a gentleman farmer near a village might participate. As in most schools of that day, the guiding principles were the tenets of the Christian religion.

CHAPTER XI

EARLY YEARS IN ST. CHARLES

It took the government over a year to reply to Sibley's argument of December 23, 1830, against selling his Fountain Cottage property at a public auction in Jefferson City, and his request to pay off the balance of his debt in lands at fair evaluation.¹ The answer came in June, 1832, informing Sibley that there was no law permitting the Department of the Treasury to receive lands at fair valuation in payment of debts owed to the United States Government. The letter further stated that Sibley's case was such that it would justify the acceptance of his proposition if there existed any law to sanction the receipt of lands in payment of debts to the government.²

Sibley immediately answered that since there was no law on the books which sanctioned the receipt of lands in payment of debts due the government, he proposed, therefore, to

make application to Congress for an act to authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to compromise and settle with G.C. Sibley as Security of Baillio and Co. in such manner as he may consider most just and equitable and most for the benefit of the United States.³

He further petitioned that all proceedings in his case be suspended from July 15, 1832 for a period of three years. In turn, he would give the government a mortgage or a Deed of Trust on the Fountain Cottage property.⁴

¹George C. Sibley to V. Maxey, Solicitor of the Treasury, June 15, 1831, Sibley Mss. This letter summarized earlier correspondence from the United States Government.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Sibley's efforts met with success. The government suspended proceedings on his case in order to give Congress time to consider his proposals and also to provide him time to try to sell his property to the best advantage. With the approbation of the District Attorney, Sibley was instructed to execute a Deed of Trust to the United States for the Fountain Cottage property.⁵ There the matter rested in the summer of 1832, with Sibley still owing the government \$5,896.24.⁶

The first in a series of related and tragic events occurred in May, 1833, when Josiah Stoddard Johnston was killed in a steamboat explosion on the Red River.⁷ From January 24, 1825, Johnston and Sibley had carried on an interesting correspondence that ranged across many different subjects, but mostly on national politics.⁸ An ardent supporter of Henry Clay, Johnston may have stimulated Sibley's devotion to the great statesman from Kentucky. In the matter of Sibley's debt to the government, Johnston, a one-time member of the Senate's Committee on Finance, had been Sibley's man in court and had on occasion intervened in his behalf. When Sibley needed a government job, he had turned to Senator Johnston for help, although the

⁵V. Maxey to George C. Sibley, April 19, 1832, Sibley Mss.

⁶A Statement that Exhibits the True Situation of the Account of George C. Sibley to the United States up to June 1, 1832, Sibley Mss.

⁷William Preston Johnston, Life of General Albert Sidney Johnston (New York, 1879), 7; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927, 1158.

⁸Twenty Letters from George C. Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, 1821-1832, Josiah Stoddard Johnston Papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Senator had been unsuccessful in that matter.⁹ A few years after Johnston's death, his widow, Elizabeth, married Henry Gilpin, a prominent lawyer of Philadelphia.¹⁰

During the early 1830's, cholera epidemics decimated the population in the St. Louis area. Rufus Easton, Mary Sibley's father, died of cholera on July 5, 1834 at the age of sixty.¹¹ A few weeks after Easton's death, cholera also killed Dr. Seth Millington, a prominent St. Charles physician and Sibley's closest neighbor.¹² Thus, some of Sibley's most influential supporters were lost to him. Moreover, the horrifying threat of this dreaded disease must have caused the Sibleys many anxious moments as they contemplated the danger to their young charges at the school. The record, however, shows that neither the Sibleys nor the students were ever stricken by the disease.

In May, 1834, Sibley went to Fort Osage to try to sell his Fountain Cottage property. On his arrival there he found that the threat of the Mormon War in Jackson County had decreased the rate of immigration into the country. This, he claimed, prevented him from disposing of his property, and so he had to return to Linden Wood without achieving his purpose.¹³

⁹Josiah Stoddard Johnston to George C. Sibley, December 15, 1828, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰In 1844, Sibley on his way back from the Whig Convention held in Baltimore visited in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gilpin.

¹¹Sibley's Diary, July 5, 1834, Sibley Mss.

¹²Ibid., August 4, 1834.

¹³Ibid., June 11, 1834.

By January, 1836, the government had become insistent that Sibley settle his obligation to it. Sibley went to St. Louis early in January to surrender himself and all he possessed to the officers of the law and to avail himself of the Act of Congress for "the relief of certain insolvent debtors of the United States."¹⁴ Archibald Gamble, Sibley's brother-in-law and close personal friend, stepped in to prevent the liquidation of Sibley's property holdings. With Gamble's assistance Sibley was able to offer as security for his one last debt "the bonds of Messrs. Archibald Gamble and William Russell of this City; drawn payable in One, Two and Three years in equal installments."¹⁵ Gamble and Russell took control of the Fountain Cottage property with the intention of starting a town and selling lots. Later on Gamble purchased Russell's share of the property¹⁶ and asked Sibley for suggestions for the name of the new town. Sibley with some modesty suggested two names: Sibley and Osage. There was no question that Sibley really preferred that the town bear his name for, as he reminded Gamble, he had cut the first tree, "and as a Public servant, dwelt nearly Twenty Years on the Spot."¹⁷ He also advised Gamble to begin selling lots no later than June or July and to move ahead with rapidity. "Jump whilst the maggot bites," was Sibley's admonition to his friend Gamble.¹⁸

¹⁴ George C. Sibley to V. Maxey, January 14, 1836, Sibley Mss.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Transfer of Mortgage from William Russell to Archibald Gamble, July 7, 1839, Sibley Mss.

¹⁷ George C. Sibley to Archibald Gamble, April 11, 1836, Sibley Mss.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Still another matter reached a final settlement when the government reimbursed the commissioners for their outlay on the marking of the Santa Fe Road. For seven years the three commissioners, headed by Sibley, had worked to get the government to pay them back. In the process the government lost two sets of vouchers, forcing Sibley and Reeves to submit still a third set in triplicate. Sibley also had found it necessary to visit Washington in person for interrogation, all of which irritated him so much that he labelled the highway between nations, "Benton's damned Santa Fe Road!"¹⁹ In 1836 a special act of Congress reimbursed the Commissioners for the money that Sibley had advanced in 1826-1827, and the long struggle came to an end.²⁰ In January, 1837, Sibley recorded the following in his diary:

The Debt I owed to the United States as Surety for Paul Baillio and Co. (I never owed them any other) has been all paid, and fully discharged--and my claim for \$1,504.54 for advances on the Mexican Road has all been settled and paid--and we are now even.²¹

The move to St. Charles in 1828 had brought the Sibleys into a new relationship and experience with an organized, institutional Church. There had been no Church at Fort Osage, although the Sibleys had encouraged Harmony Mission and had shared to a degree in its operation. Sibley had been an admirer of what he called "the simple

¹⁹ Quoted from Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 48.

²⁰ Buford Rowland, ed., "Report of the Commissioners on the Road from Missouri to New Mexico, October, 1827," New Mexico Historical Review, XIV (July, 1939), 226.

²¹ Sibley's Diary, January 1, 1837, Sibley Mss.

and sublime character of Christ,¹ and an adherent to a Puritan code of ethics, but classified himself as "merely an unbeliever and not a violent opposer" to the Christian religion. Mary came from a family that had shown little interest in formal religion and had not been a member of a church. Mrs. V.G. Carpenter, Mary's niece, recalled that her Aunt Mary had once told her that "she saw a vision of an angel who asked why she (Mrs. Sibley) was not a Christian working for the benefit of the human race?"²² Although Mary did not describe this religious experience in her diary, she became a very active member of the Presbyterian Church, taught a Dutch Sunday School, raised money for a church building, kept a diary which she filled with confessions and requests for spiritual growth, and, evidently, influenced her husband to take more of an interest in the Church. Mary joined the St. Charles Presbyterian Church on March 28, 1832.²³ Sibley, whom Mary once described as a man who found fault with the church, finally united with the Presbyterian Church on January 30, 1836.²⁴ Even before that, however, Sibley had taken an increasing interest in the life and activity of the church.

²²This letter from Mrs. V.G. Carpenter is addressed to Frank (but no last name). Frank, according to the letter, was the grandson of Archibald and Louisa Gamble. There is no date on the letter. Sibley Mss. Mary Sibley's Journal, March 20, 1832, Sibley Mss.

²³Church Membership Roll Book, 1818-1849, March 28, 1832, Original Papers.

²⁴Ibid., January 30, 1836.

The beginning of the Presbyterian Church in St. Charles occurred in the summer of 1818 when Solomon Giddings, a Presbyterian missionary from St. Louis, organized a Sunday School.²⁵ There were nine persons who covenanted to take the Holy Bible as their authority in spiritual matters and to abide by the Westminster Confession of Faith.²⁶

About the time the Sibleys began to show an interest in the Presbyterian Church it was facing a serious division. Hiram C. Chamberlain, commissioned by the United Domestic Missionary Society to labor in Missouri, arrived in St. Charles in the spring of 1829, preached for a time in the local church, and a minority of the congregation wanted to call him as pastor. Opposed by the ruling elder, Thomas Lindsay, Hiram Chamberlain moved on to other fields of endeavor. Lindsay's opposition to Chamberlain rested on theological grounds.²⁷

Thomas Lindsay had migrated from Scotland, and for a number of years lived near Columbia, South Carolina. Not long after the Louisiana Purchase he moved west and settled near St. Charles, bringing with him Negro slaves to carry on his extensive farming operations.²⁸ While Sibley lived at Fort Osage he had purchased seeds

²⁵ Early History of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, Original Papers; also see The Missouri Presbyterian, III (February, 1944), 85.

²⁶ Session Book, No. 1, August 30, 1818, Original Papers.

²⁷ George C. Sibley, "The Presbyterian Church of St. Charles, Missouri; Its Recent History and Disturbance," Original Papers.

²⁸ Taken from Anne Gauss, "Scrapbook," August 1, 1913, Original Papers.

from Lindsay. A strict, hard-core, orthodox Scotch Presbyterian, Lindsay devoted many hours to studying the Bible and entered wholeheartedly into the life of the Presbyterian Church. He and his wife, Margaret, signed the original covenant at St. Charles and his wife taught a large number of Negroes to read the Bible. The Sibleys' friendship with the Lindsays grew into a great admiration of the venerable elder and his wife. Sibley said of Lindsay that he possessed "a more thorough knowledge of an experience in Church matters, and most exemplary piety, that he is esteemed as the 'Father of the Church of St. Charles.'"²⁹

The conflict that flared between Lindsay, the ruling elder, and Chamberlain, the itinerant missionary, represented more than just a difference in views and personality since their differences reflected in microcosm the source of a devastating conflict which in time would divide the Presbyterian Church in the United States.³⁰ During the 1830's, men like Lindsay and Chamberlain disagreed, debated, argued, and eventually provoked a bitter conflict and controversy that split the Presbyterian Church.

The dispute involved the working out of a Plan of Union for Presbyterian and Congregational Churches and for future operations of the American Home Missionary Society. The Plan of Union had been

²⁹Sibley, "The Presbyterian Church of St. Charles," Original Papers.

³⁰See Ernest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, 1607-1861, I (Richmond, Virginia, 1963), 350-376; William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York, 1939), 375-379, for discussions of the causes of division between the Old and New Presbyterians.

approved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the General Association of Connecticut (Congregational) in 1801, and provided that Congregational and Presbyterian Churches on the advancing frontier could employ ministers affiliated with either one of the two denominations. It also stipulated that churches containing both Congregationalists and Presbyterians could elect standing committees, in lieu of a session, and that these committees could represent their Churches in the presbyteries and serve as ruling elders, although they were not ordained church officers. The structure of this plan reflected the need for cooperation among major Church denominations in America confronting the vast needs and challenges of the American frontier. For staunch Presbyterians, however, the Plan of Union seemed to open the door to certain elements that threatened the purity and the orthodoxy of the Church.³¹

On the other hand, the American Home Missionary Society, organized in 1826, composed of both Congregationalists and Presbyterians, was beyond ecclesiastical control. In time, the American Home Missionary Society began to compete with the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions. As an eminent historian of Presbyterian Church history, Ernest Trice, has put it, "...it was inevitable that the issue must be faced and resolved--shall the benevolent work of the church be carried on by voluntary societies cutting across denominational lines, which are beyond the church's control, or by boards which are the agencies of the church."³²

³¹Sweet, The Story of Religion, 375.

³²Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, 352.

By the 1830's, theological differences had intensified the conflict. Orthodox, old-line, Scotch Presbyterians like Thomas Lindsay adhered to the old doctrines and tested ways embodied in the Westminster Confession of Faith. They looked askance at the Plan of Union, the American Home Missionary Society, and the new theology, and were pleased to be known as the Old School Presbyterians. On the other hand, the New School Presbyterians, drawing from the ranks of the Congregationalists and eastern liberals, favored a theology which emphasized man's freedom of will and his consequent responsibility.³³ They were modifiers of Calvinism, determined to make it less rigid, less stern and more appealing to the age of the common man. With two such elements within the Church, its unity was tested, and eventually a schism occurred. When the struggle erupted in the Presbyterian Church at St. Charles the Sibleys sided with Thomas Lindsay and the other Old School devotees.

Despite the difficulties in the church, it grew in membership and was fortunate to secure the services of several well-educated and devoted pastors. On January 9, 1833, the session considered building a new House of Worship, appointed a committee to purchase a lot, and provided for a subscription list to be drawn.³⁵ The small congregation had been meeting in a building loaned to it by Mrs. Catherine Collier, an active Methodist.³⁶ The Presbyterian Church

³³Ibid., 352-353.

³⁴Early History of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, November 7, 1818-September 25, 1818, Original Papers.

³⁵Session Book, No. 1, January 9, 1833, Original Papers.

³⁶Olson, Historical St. Charles, n.p.

later had obtained the hall where the state legislature had formerly met.³⁷ The session now felt that the time had arrived to build its own church building.

Mary was appointed to the subscription committee, while Sibley, though not as yet a member of the congregation, was selected along with one of the members to contract for the building of the church. Although Sibley and his fellow committeeman were to be paid a modest sum for their time and services, some unknown person later noted in the official record of the church that "Mr. Wardlow served a few days only for which he charged and was paid \$5. George C. Sibley done all the rest but charged nothing at all for many days and weeks attention."³⁸ It is unlikely that Sibley wrote the comment because its grammatical misconstruction would have been foreign to him.

The congregation expected to spend around \$3000 to erect a stone-and-brick structure fifty-eight feet long and forty-five feet wide, and with a combined seating capacity of five hundred on the ground floor and in the gallery.³⁹ Mary subscribed \$20 to the new building.⁴⁰

Under Sibley's careful and serious direction, the building of the church moved ahead until late in the year 1833 when the cholera

³⁷Early History of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, Original Papers.

³⁸Session Book, No. 1, June 4, 1833, Original Papers.

³⁹From the Original Subscription List for "Old Blue" Church, 1833, Original Papers.

⁴⁰Ibid.

epidemic and the return of Hiram Chamberlain halted the project and set in motion the forces of division.⁴¹

The Reverend Mr. W.W. Hall, pastor of the church, commented on the terrifying epidemic and its effect on the church. He wrote

The House of God deserted. Our Sabbath Schools shut up. Our Bible classes discontinued. Our catechism laid aside. The building of our church retarded. Desolation has spread its evil wings.⁴²

Hall left St. Charles late in 1833, and Hiram Chamberlain again assumed the church pastorate at that time. The controversial Chamberlain stirred up so much trouble among the members of the congregation that the session, controlled by the Old School adherents, turned to the St. Charles Presbytery for help and guidance. After considering the problem, the Presbytery made the following recommendation:

That this Presbytery do in the fear of God earnestly request Mr. Chamberlain to retire from the troubled region. And moreover that they do not recognize his act in electing new elders.⁴³

Undaunted, and feeling that justice had not been served, Chamberlain appealed his case to the Synod of Missouri. Emotions were so intense that people feared for the lives of the investigators who came to St. Charles to view first hand the "troubled region." The

⁴¹Early History of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, Original Papers.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Sibley, "The Presbyterian Church of St. Charles," Original Papers.

Synod, meeting at Marion College in northeastern Missouri on October 15, 1835, decided on the basis of a full investigation of the matter that Chamberlain had not been guilty of violating any moral principles, but that he had shown poor judgement in his attempt to divide and conquer the Presbyterian Church of St. Charles.⁴⁴ The Synod advised Chamberlain to seek another field of labor, and encouraged the church to bury its differences and to unite in the love of Christ.⁴⁵ While Chamberlain did leave St. Charles, there remained a legacy of hard feelings, disunity, and an uneasy truce between Old School and New School factions whose differences he had helped to sharpen. Throughout the Chamberlain case, Sibley gave his full support to Thomas Lindsay and the other Old School Presbyterians who firmly believed that Chamberlain was the apostle of discord and heresy.

Largely because of the division in the church, the building project remained unfinished.⁴⁶ It was not until early in 1837 that the Session turned its attention once again to the completion of the church building. The Session prevailed on Sibley to act again as agent and treasurer for the project.⁴⁷ Because of the critical financial situation resulting from the Panic of 1837, Sibley found it

⁴⁴Session Book No. 1, April 28, 1835, Original Papers.

⁴⁵Sibley, "The Presbyterian Church of St. Charles," Original Papers.

⁴⁶Session Book, 1837, May 10, 1837, Original Papers.

⁴⁷Ibid.

almost impossible to raise adequate funds, although he gave generously himself and attempted to raise money from outside sources. Sibley did manage to complete enough of the church building to enable the congregation to begin services in it by the Spring of 1838. Cholera epidemics, the Chamberlain controversy, and the hard times had modified the imposing plans for the church building that the congregation had first conceived.

On January 3, 1839, Sibley gave his financial report, which showed the total cost of the building to be \$1,859.43, funds received, \$1,315.36, and a deficit of \$544.07 which Sibley himself had made up. Sibley suggested that if the church would pay him immediately \$160, he would cancel the remaining balance of \$384.07. The Session gladly accepted. The record of contributions to the building project shows that the Sibleys gave a total of \$712.12,⁴⁸ which made them the largest contributors.

The new Presbyterian Church in St. Charles became known as "Old Blue," as the blue glass in the church gave a bluish cast to the brick exterior. An unknown author wrote this charming sketch of the building:

There was a graveyard about 'Old Blue' and a bell was suspended in a tall tree. The Church was brick and had one room. There was a door on each side of the pulpit and as the congregation faced the doors, persons arriving could be inspected as to their fashions and mannerisms. There was a man who always scraped his shoes carefully on the door mats, however dry the weather. In winter old Mrs. Cummins came with a little

⁴⁸ George C. Sibley to Elders and Deacons of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, January 3, 1839, Original Papers.

nigger carrying a foot stove and the high pulpit was reached by several additional steps. Back of the pulpit was sofa. At the rear of the room three or four pews were on a higher level than the others....There was an organ...collection was taken in brown velvet bags at the end of long poles....there were sand boxes for chewers of tobacco.⁴⁹

In the General Assembly of 1838 the Old School Presbyterians gained control and by refusing to recognize the New School delegates forced them to leave the Presbyterian denomination and to form a new and separate church.⁵⁰ After the split in Missouri, the Old School and New School Presbyterians went their separate ways and began to expand along their own guidelines.

The final break in the Presbyterian Church of St. Charles did not come until April, 1840.⁵¹ Thomas Lindsay, now old and infirm, wrote to Sibley, who had become one of the staunch defenders of the Old School position in the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, as follows:

My dear friend I have felt much on this subject and still feel and am willing to do what I can (and this is but little in these declining days) to support and defend the truth and preaching of the true gospel among us. I love our church. I love her doctrines-her order and her discipline and have no inclination to follow those who are given to change.⁵²

The Sibleys stood by Lindsay, readying themselves for the attempt of the New School faction to defeat the resolution before the St. Charles

⁴⁹From the Early History of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, Original Papers.

⁵⁰Sweet, The Story of Religion, 378-379.

⁵¹Report of a Congregational Meeting, April 28, 1840, Original Papers.

⁵²Thomas Lindsay to George C. Sibley, December 4, 1839, Original Papers.

Presbyterian Church to the effect that the General Assembly which had convened in Philadelphia in the year 1838 was the "only true General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States for year 1838."⁵³

At a local church meeting on April 28, 1840, chaired by Sibley, the congregation voted twenty-four in favor, seventeen against, and five abstentions, and the above resolution passed. Steps then were taken for the dissenting members to leave the church and to form, if they desired, another congregation. "The trial," Sibley said, "was indeed severe, but the triumph of principle was complete."⁵⁴ Eventually the dissenting members did remove themselves, built the Constitution Presbyterian Church in 1842, and called James Gallaher, the former controversial New School minister of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church, as its minister.⁵⁵

Throughout the remainder of his life Sibley held to the orthodox theological position of the Old School Presbyterians. In his religious writings he used theological phrases from Old School Calvinism, such as, "Mankind in their fallen and degraded state," "man is naturally prone to evil," "men are sinful in all their propensities," and man is "unfit to enjoy happiness in this world."⁵⁶

⁵³George C. Sibley, "The Reverend James Gallaher and the St. Charles Presbyterian Church of St. Charles, Missouri," (Unpublished manuscript, October 28, 1840), Original Papers.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Olson, Historical St. Charles, n.d.

⁵⁶George C. Sibley to William Russell, June 1, 1836, Sibley Mss.

These phrases reflected the Calvinistic idea of original sin and guilt. But man was not completely helpless, Sibley believed, for God had sent His Son into the world to call man to repentance and to faith in His Son. This was the way to eternal life. Since Christ was the answer, "We must look to God thro' Christ, for the light of truth to conduct us safely thro' this to a better world. This light he has given."⁵⁷

Sibley saw the Christian religion as sublime in its simplicity. He believed that children of a tender age could understand the truths of the Christian religion. To him, Christianity was universal in nature, and thus it had to be adapted to the understanding of simple people. People did not need a lifetime to figure it out. In Sibley's view, as compared with "abstruse or [sic] propositions in Algebra, Geometry, Music...the understanding of the Christian religion is plainness itself."⁵⁸

From 1832 until the end of his life Sibley remained a devout, faithful, and active member of the Presbyterian Church, revered its traditions, agreed with its theology, and upheld the Westminster Confession of Faith. His Presbyterianism was not only vital to him, but in the future history of Lindenwood College it was to play a most important role.

⁵⁷ George C. Sibley to William Russell, June 1, 1836, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Moreover, Sibley's growing religiosity in later life had some bearing on his views on slavery. He had been a slave owner since 1813.⁵⁹ After the Factory System closed in 1822 Sibley farmed near Fort Osage, and his 1824 tax list showed that he owned five slaves-- a man, a woman, and three boys.⁶⁰ A Negro servant accompanied him on the road to Santa Fe in 1827.⁶¹ When Mrs. Henry Leavenworth was on her way to join her husband in 1829, Mary Sibley loaned her Clara, Mary's personal slave.⁶²

Sibley continued to own slaves at Linden Wood and also hired slaves from other people at the going rate of \$120 a year.⁶³ At one period the Sibleys owned at least six slaves but on the eve of the Civil War had only two, a man and his wife. Although the Sibleys freed this couple prior to legal emancipation, Sibley apparently believed that "the best position for the Negroes for their own good, is that of domestic slavery and strict subordination to the white race."⁶⁴

Sibley became active in the American Colonization Society after his move to St. Charles, a reflection perhaps of his growing interest

⁵⁹George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, September 25, 1813, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁰George C. Sibley's Tax List, Lillard County, 1824, Sibley Mss.

⁶¹Gregg, The Road to Santa Fe, 55.

⁶²General Henry Leavenworth to George C. Sibley, August 22, 1829, Sibley Mss.

⁶³George C. Sibley to Dr. Arch Dorsey, August 29, 1827, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁴Sibley's Diary, September 1, 1859, Sibley Mss.

in the Presbyterian Church. According to the 1832 Church budget, the item, colonization, appeared as a missionary and benevolent expense.⁶⁵ While Sibley must have known about the Society earlier, he did not have an opportunity to participate actively in its work until he moved to St. Charles and became associated with the Presbyterian Church. The Sibleys attended colonization meetings, subscribed to the African Repository, the Society's journal, and in 1844, Sibley took the freed slaves of Thomas Lindsay to New Orleans. There, in accordance with Lindsay's will, he made arrangements for the Colonization Society to relocate the slaves in Liberia.⁶⁶

The program of the American Colonization Society fitted well with the Sibley family background. John's father had owned slaves in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and continued to do so in Louisiana. Any Southerner who wished to emancipate his slaves found in colonization the means of removing them from white society and thereby also escaped possible censure from neighbors who disliked having free Negroes in their community.⁶⁷ These pragmatic solutions to disturbing questions attracted the support of many southern slave owners.

Moreover, the colonization movement appealed to Sibley's basic conservatism by maintaining a middle course between radical abolitionism and defenders of the status quo. Sibley opposed the abolitionists. In April, 1837, Sibley stopped his subscription to

⁶⁵Session Book, No. 1, May 7, 1832, Original Papers.

⁶⁶Sibley's Diary, March 4, 1844, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁷Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860 (Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 20-21.

Elijah P. Lovejoy's newspaper on the grounds that it stirred up controversy and trouble. However, in the Fall of 1837, Sibley saved Lovejoy from an outraged St. Charles mob by providing him with a horse to make a get-away.⁶⁸

The colonization movement did something else for Sibley. On the surface, he seemed to have no qualms about the morality of slavery. However, Samuel Hopkins, his grandfather, had spearheaded the antislavery movement in Rhode Island after the American Revolution. Such an influence must have, at times, pricked his conscience concerning the evils of human slavery. Therefore, the colonization movement may have served as Sibley's compromise with conscience. Taking a course that was in his mind orderly, peaceful, fair to slave owners, and conducive to the emancipation of slaves enabled Sibley to continue to believe that the Negro's position should be inferior to that of the white man but also to support gradual abolition and colonization of slaves.

St. Charles was not like Fort Osage. Involved in new experiences and relationships, the Sibleys found the early years in that thriving community on the banks of the Missouri River often trying and burdensome, but not without reward. The years were marked by a continual improvement of the Sibley farm at Linden Wood. For the first time in their lives the Sibleys became immersed in Church life, feuds, and unrest. They became members of a Sunday School, attended prayer meetings, supported the St. Charles Bible Society, and went

⁶⁸ Merton L. Dillon, Elijah P. Lovejoy, Abolitionist Editor (University of Illinois Press, 1961), 123-124.

to Temperance Meetings where, on a number of occasions, they were mightily impressed when known serious drinkers signed the pledge.⁶⁹

In retrospect, it would appear that the creation of Linden Wood College was by all odds the most significant achievement of the Sibley's early years in St. Charles. Unquestionably, this will be secured when they began that school beneath the Linden trees on their farm outside the village of St. Charles.

But there was surely another achievement which George C. Sibley must have looked upon as perhaps his greatest victory. Not the farm, not the school, not the church, but that victory of which he wrote in his thumb-nail autobiography in the year 1851:

I settled my accounts with the government, and now have the satisfaction of being able to show complete acquittance from every pecuniary obligation that I ever owed the government...⁷⁰

⁶⁹Sibley's Diary, January 13, 1842, Sibley Mss.

⁷⁰George C. Sibley to Origen Sibley, 1851, Sibley Mss.

CHAPTER XII

A CLAY MAN IN MISSOURI

During Sibley's years with the United States Government Factory System he said very little about territorial and national political issues except for an expressed hostility toward Great Britain. Sibley, like Henry Clay and the War Hawks, resented British traders in American territory and the violation of American neutrality on the high seas before the outbreak of the War of 1812.¹

Sibley came by his enmity toward Great Britain from his family and from a first-hand experience with the British on the western frontier. Sibley's grandfather, Samuel Hopkins, had thundered against the "Mother Country" from his Puritan pulpit in Newport, Rhode Island, until the British forced him to seek the safety of the back country of Massachusetts during the American Revolution.² Sibley's father, John, while a newspaper editor in Fayetteville, North Carolina, joined in protests leveled at high-handed British treatment of American shipping and England's "wicked aristocracy" which supposedly threatened the surge of freedom both on the continent and in America.³

Sibley's anti-British feeling increased whenever the British incited the Indians against the Americans or competed too vigorously for the Indian fur trade on the frontier. When Sibley urged his

¹George C. Sibley to William Clark, July 9, 1813, Sibley Mss; Clement Eaton, Henry Clay and the Art of American Politics (Boston, 1957), 25.

²Richard Mather Bayles, ed., History of Newport County, Rhode Island (Newport, 1886), 446.

³From a report of a public meeting held in Fayetteville, North Carolina, April 17, 18, 1794 quoted in The North Carolina Review, VI (July, 1929), 319-322.

father-in-law, Rufus Easton, territorial delegate from Missouri, to press for a law in 1816 to bar British traders from the western frontier he manifested a temper shared by a majority of westerners toward Great Britain.⁴ From this groundswell of anti-British sentiment emerged the great Kentuckian, Henry Clay, who best represented such feelings and used them to good advantage in his rise to national leadership.⁵

Aside from Sibley's outspoken dislike for Great Britain, his papers from 1805 to 1819 indicated that he remained silent in regard to political figures and issues. During those years he recorded no opinions concerning men of political prominence, such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay. Nor did he record convictions about such political questions as the second national bank, tariff, internal improvements, development of a strong army and navy, and American expansion. Although cautious and hesitant to take a definite stand on political issues and personalities, his papers did manifest his understanding and interest in regard to many of the contemporary problems of the day: Indians, land, slavery, speculation, town development and agriculture.

Moreover, Sibley's great interest in politics and politicians accounted for his avid reading of contemporary newspapers. As a

⁴Mary Easton Sibley to Rufus Easton, February 11, 1816, Sibley Mss.

⁵Eaton, Henry Clay, 26.

young and inexperienced assistant factor at Fort Bellefontaine in 1806, Sibley ordered newspapers to bolster his morale.⁶ The National Intelligencer, founded in 1800, and the Niles' Weekly Register, founded in 1811, were delivered to Fort Osage. He also read the Missouri Gazette and the Missouri Intelligencer. Sibley was also a subscription representative for the Missouri Intelligencer while at Fort Osage.⁷ Filled with information and points of view on major territorial, and later on stage, and national "measures and men," these papers kept Sibley in touch with the "outside" political world and were instrumental in the molding of his political philosophy.

Sibley once wrote to James H. Birch, the editor of the Western Monitor, 1827, that

We backwoods clodhoppers want correct information, sir, upon matters of public concern; and more especially in relation to the great party dispute that seems to pervade the Union as to measures and men. Very few of us can have any other interest in this dispute than to qualify ourselves to vote at the polls, for those men who may move more likely to serve us faithfully, according to the well established principles of the constitutional laws of the land.⁸

Moreover, Sibley believed that by reading newspapers he was better informed than most of his neighbors.⁹ Josiah Stoddard Johnston, Sibley's close friend and political confidant, once told him that in

⁶George C. Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, October 25, 1806, Sibley Mss.

⁷Missouri Intelligencer, April 22, 1820.

⁸George C. Sibley to the Editor of the Western Monitor, September 20, 1827 and also appearing in the Missouri Intelligencer and Boon's Lick Advertiser, October 12, 1827.

⁹Ibid.

Washington "little is known...except what is found in papers or reflections made on what is known."¹⁰ By devouring newspapers while in the government's service on the western frontier, Sibley kept abreast of political developments, discerned the positions of the politicians, and formed his own political persuasion on which he was to take an unequivocal stand.

Early in 1819, the Enabling Act for Missouri's statehood came before Congress. A crisis developed when Representative James Tallmadge of New York moved that the Enabling Act be amended by prohibiting the further introduction of slavery into the proposed state of Missouri and by freeing all slave children presently in Missouri when they reached the age of twenty-five.¹¹ The Tallmadge Amendment, passed by the House of Representatives, but defeated in the Senate, aroused every section of the nation. To his brother, Samuel, in July, 1819, Sibley declared that "no question has ever been agitated since '76 so delicate and deeply interesting to the whole Union as this one I allude to."¹² The division in the country over the question of slavery portended tragedy. Clay termed the crisis a "critical moment,"¹³ while the venerable Thomas Jefferson

¹⁰John Stoddard Johnston to George C. Sibley, January 10, 1830, Sibley Mss.

¹¹The Tallmadge Amendment, February 13, 1819, Henry Steele Commager, ed., Documents in American History, I (New York, 1958), 225.

¹²George Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, July 10, 1819, Sibley Mss.

¹³Quoted in Alfred Lightfoot, "Henry Clay and the Missouri Question, 1819-1821," Missouri Historical Review, LXI (January, 1967), 146.

described the question of slavery as like a man who has a wolf by the ears, he "can neither hold...nor safely let it go."¹⁴ The somber New England statesman, John Quincy Adams, saw in the controversy a "title page to a great tragic volume."¹⁵ Sibley echoed these opinions when he wrote, "God only knows what will be the consequences—perhaps on this hangs the permanency or dissolution of the Union."¹⁶

Sibley was not opposed to slavery, and yet, in 1819 he supported restrictions on slavery in Missouri. "Should the restriction," he stated to his brother, "proposed by Congress be finally adopted (as I most heartily wish may be the case) we shall be the happiest State in the world."¹⁷ Fearing that Congress would not exercise its sovereignty over the admission of a new state, Sibley believed that Missouri might become a "mere colony of the Southern Slave States."¹⁸ His attitude stemmed from his belief that the Union must be preserved, and further, that the twin pillars upholding unionism were the Constitution and a Congress acting forcibly within its constitutional limits.

During the early part of 1820 Congress sought various means of resolving the Missouri question. On February 18, 1820, the Senate

¹⁴Ibid., 147.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶George Sibley to Samuel H. Sibley, July 10, 1819, Sibley Mss.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

agreed to admit Maine as a free state on the condition that Missouri enter as a slave state. However, the House of Representatives quickly rejected the Senate bill and then approved John Taylor's amendment forbidding the further introduction of slavery. Deadlocked in what appeared to be a hopeless situation, the forces of compromise began to ebb and flow in back rooms and in the corridors of government buildings until the Senate passed a bill admitting Maine as a free state and Missouri as a slave state, but with slavery excluded from the Louisiana Purchase elsewhere above the line 36°30'. The House by a vote of 134-42 agreed to this famous Missouri Compromise.¹⁹

On March 6, 1820, Congress granted permission for Missouri to proceed with the drafting and adoption of a state constitution. Missouri arranged for a Constitutional Convention to convene in St. Louis on June 12, 1820 and for the election of delegates. In the Missouri Intelligencer, April 12, 1820, Sibley announced his candidacy as a delegate to the convention from Cooper County.²⁰

In his announcement, Sibley stated his views on major issues. First of all, he favored the inclusion of a provision in the Constitution guaranteeing universal manhood suffrage. Feeling that some convention delegates might oppose this principle, he declared that he would never "consent, being most decidedly in favor of allowing every citizen, whether rich or poor, an equal right to vote for those who are to make and administer the laws by which he is to be governed."²¹

¹⁹Commager, ed., Documents in American History, I, 224-225.

²⁰Missouri Intelligencer, April 12, 1820.

²¹Ibid.

Second, Sibley believed that the western limit of the state should be extended "so as to cross the Missouri River at least fifty miles above the mouth of the Kansas River." The Enabling Act had already set the boundaries of the state, but Sibley pledged that he would work for a change.²²

Third, on the slavery question, Sibley affirmed that he would "never consent to any clause in the Missouri Constitution that shall have the most indirect tendency to infringe on, or impair the rights of property." Furthermore, he stated his "fixed and unalterable opposition to any clause that would "allow or tolerate a free black population within the state." He then proclaimed a guideline which he was later to follow as a member of the American Colonization Society, to-wit:

So long as there are blacks among us, so long, I think, they ought to be held slaves. So soon as they are freed, so soon, I think, they ought to be sent out of the state and out of the United States.²³

Sibley had supported a restriction on slavery in 1819 when Missouri's future hung in the balance in regard to statehood, but not through any conviction that slavery was morally wrong. Rather, he believed that exclusion of slavery from the new state would save it from

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

great trouble and possible division in the future. However, in 1820, the restriction had been swept aside by Congress and Missouri had been admitted to the Union as a slave state. Thus, the question of whether Missouri was to be slave or free had been settled, and in his letter to the people of Cooper County, Sibley pledged his intention of abiding by that decision. Throughout his life, Sibley remained consistent in his position on slavery and also somewhat prophetic in believing that the question of slavery would in time test the unity of the nation. However, not being widely known in Cooper County, Sibley failed in his bid for election as a delegate to the convention.²⁴

In the presidential election year of 1824 Sibley championed Henry Clay for the Presidency, and thus began his long and active political allegiance to the Kentucky statesman. In a letter to the Missouri Intelligencer on August 22, 1824, Sibley announced his candidacy for the office of elector for the first electoral district in Missouri. "If I shall be elected," he declared, "my vote will be given to Henry Clay of Kentucky, to be President of the United States, and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina to be Vice-President."²⁵ Before the election, he withdrew his name in favor of another and better-known Clay supporter, Judge David Todd of Franklin.²⁶

²⁴In the list of elected delegates appearing in the Missouri Intelligencer, June 3, 1820, Sibley's name does not appear.

²⁵George Sibley to the Editor, Missouri Intelligencer, August 24, 1824.

²⁶Missouri Intelligencer, October 23, 1824.

The roots of Sibley's political loyalty to Clay extended back beyond the War of 1812. Clay's anti-British posture, reported in the newspapers which the young Osage factor read, had squared with his own views toward the British. Clay's advocacy of internal improvements also appealed to Sibley. He agreed with Clay's idea that the building of roads, the construction of canals, the clearing of rivers, and the improvement of harbors would facilitate the transportation of western agricultural products to eastern markets. A tariff would encourage American manufactures and stimulate the growth of new markets for the agricultural west. Thus, Sibley saw Clay's proposed American System as a great benefit to the West of which Sibley was now so much a part.²⁷

Josiah Stoddard Johnston also may have strengthened Sibley's intention to support Clay for the Presidency.²⁸ Moreover, Clay's leadership in the American Colonization Society,²⁹ an organization to which Sibley later belonged, indicates that the two men held similar views on the question of slavery. As one historian has suggested, Clay reshaped his former Jeffersonian Republicanism into an overall program that appealed to Westerners like Sibley.³⁰ Clement Eaton has depicted Clay's philosophy as an

amalgam of Jeffersonian and Federalist principles. He had little sympathy with the Federalist scorn of the common man. Nor did he agree with their

²⁷Missouri Intelligencer, January 29, 1831.

²⁸Josiah Stoddard Johnston served Clay informally as his campaign manager. Eaton, Henry Clay, 50.

²⁹Richard B. Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History, (New York, 1965), 543.

³⁰Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston, 1945), 11-12.

opposition to territorial expansion of the nation. But he accepted the progressive elements of their program, namely, a flexible interpretation of the Constitution and a belief that the Federal government should play a positive role in the economic development of the nation.³¹

For all such reasons, Sibley marched to the 'fife and drum' of Henry Clay's political leadership and philosophy until political defeats and old age stilled them both.

However, Whiggery, as an organized, structured political party, came late to Missouri.³² Not until 1839 did opponents of Andrew Jackson and the Democrats hold their first state convention, and in the years to come they had to operate more as a pressure group than as an influential political party. The Whigs aspired less to fill offices from their own party than to elect candidates, regardless of party, who most closely agreed with their overall policies.³³ Thus, from 1831 to 1839 the Whig supporters of Clay in Missouri "resembled a pressure group more than a political party."³⁴ Thomas Hart Benton, the powerful Democratic Senator from Missouri, stated correctly the strategy of the opposition during this period when he wrote

...the Adams party here are delirious with joy at their success in the election. They now

³¹Eaton, Henry Clay, 47.

³²John V. Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri (Columbia, 1967),

3.

³³Ibid., 27.

³⁴Ibid., 27.

boast openly that they will dissolve the organization of the Jackson party by running Jackson men against Jackson measures.³⁵

Sibley's political career in Missouri from 1828-1848

illustrates the "pressure-group" nature of Whiggery in that state: Its late start as a party;³⁶ its pressure-group strategy;³⁷ and its eventual decline, not directly because of the slavery issue but indirectly over which faction of the Democratic party to support.³⁸ It must be emphasized, however, that as a Clay man in Missouri, Sibley represented a minority view within the Whig forces. The majority of Whigs worked to "elect Jackson men to defeat Jackson's measures." Aware of their lack of strength and numbers, they realistically chose to go through the back door of the palace to dethrone "King Andrew." Sibley and a few other Whigs labored to elect Clay men to carry out Clay's program. They stormed the main gate of the palace. They were the idealists. Although he ran for public office three times between 1833 and 1844, Sibley never won an election. His political defeats illustrated the practice that has pervaded American political life even to this day. Americans admire the idealists and place them on pedestals, but seldom elect them to public office.

³⁵ Thomas Hart Benton to Finis Ewing, November 12, 1831, "Thomas Hart Benton Papers," Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis Missouri, quoted in James Earl Moss, "William Henry Ashley: A Jackson Man With Feet of Clay," Missouri Historical Review, LXI (October, 1966), 19.

³⁶ See Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 1-9.

³⁷ Ibid., 28-40.

³⁸ Ibid., 201-211.

After returning from the Santa Fe Road project, completing the report of the Commissioners, and moving to St. Charles in the Spring of 1826, Sibley took an active part in politics. He evaluated the political situation for Johnston in 1827 by stating that the "sober and reflecting people," the men of "standing and intelligence" favored Adams' administration.³⁹ Sibley told Johnston that only the "tag rag bobtail family" supported Jackson. He predicted that Adams would receive the "whole vote of the state."⁴⁰ Later, in the Spring of 1828, in another letter to Johnston, Sibley's cockiness deserted him and he could only express his rage against the Jacksonians. Jackson was "wild" and "undisciplined;" his violent attacks on Henry Clay had tarnished his fame; he was nothing more than a "swaggering jockey and Bully."⁴¹ In the election of 1828 the "tag rag bobtail family" won a resounding victory. In Missouri, Jackson received 8,372 votes to Adams' 3,407 and carried every county in the state.⁴² From the time of this overwhelming defeat, the Adams-Clay men in Missouri turned increasingly to the strategy of a pressure group and, as one scholar has said, offered their support "to the highest Jacksonian bidder."⁴³ With the "tag rag bobtail family" in the political driver's seat in Missouri, the "sober and reflecting people" moved toward the politics of expediency and realism.

³⁹ George Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnson, October 27, 1827, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ George Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, April 6, 1828, Sibley Mss.

⁴² Missouri Republican, November 18, 1828.

⁴³ Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 18.

On January 8, 1831, Sibley joined with a number of other Clay men in St. Charles to seek ways to increase the cooperation and support of Clay men throughout the state.⁴⁴ They believed that the time had come to organize the anti-Jackson forces on a statewide basis and to work for Clay's election in 1832. Rufus Easton chaired the meeting and appointed Sibley and four others to draw up a Preamble and a set of Resolutions. The preamble called for the improvements of rivers, roads and canals, and the erection of beacons and lighthouses; a tariff to supply funds for improvements which would benefit the "the Great West;" and a reaffirmation of the duty of the national government to carry out the purposes of government as prescribed by the Constitution. The resolutions advocated the formation of a state organization of Clay men, endorsed Henry Clay for the Presidency in 1832, sought the cooperation of other Clay supporters by setting up a Committee of Correspondence, on which Sibley served, and forwarded the preamble and resolutions to the Missouri Republican, St. Louis Times, and the Missouri Intelligencer.⁴⁵ There was to be cooperation, but not of the kind the St. Charles people had in mind in January, 1831. As one scholar has pointed out, in Missouri politics the cooperation was to be between Jackson men sympathetic to the American system and 'Missouri's pre-Whigs.'⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Missouri Intelligencer, January 29, 1831.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 29.

In a special election in October, 1831, to elect a Congressman from Missouri to fill the vacancy created when Spencer D. Pettis was killed in a duel with Thomas Biddle, William Henry Ashley, a Jacksonian with leanings toward the American System, emerged victorious. Ashley served as a good example of a so-called Jackson man endorsed by the opposition.⁴⁷

In 1833, Missouri confronted another special election to fill the additional congressional seat the state picked up as a result of the 1830 census.⁴⁸ In this election the minority of Clay men who wanted a genuine anti-Jackson, pro-American System candidate made an effort to put one in the contest. Sibley became the sacrificial goat.

He announced his candidacy for Congress on June 15, 1833.⁴⁹

The late Josiah Stoddard Johnston had advised Sibley against a political career, reminding him that it was a life filled with "many disappointments, mortifications & vexations."⁵⁰ It did not take long for Sibley to find this out for himself.

Sibley outlined a specific program on which he would seek election. He favored a tariff, arguing that Congress had the duty to protect the manufacturing and agricultural interests of the United States. He supported internal improvements at the government's

⁴⁷ See James Earl Moss, "William Henry Ashley: A Jackson Man with Feet of Clay," Missouri Historical Review, LXI (October, 1966) 2-20.

⁴⁸ Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 21.

⁴⁹ George C. Sibley to the Editor, Missouri Intelligencer, June 15, 1833.

⁵⁰ Josiah Stoddard Johnston to George Sibley, January 10, 1830, Sibley Mss.

expense, and declared that he had always been in favor of this. He opposed nullification because it would lead to disunity and subversion of the Constitution. "States Rights," he said, "minority rights are current themes upon which demagogues employ their mischievous talents." Sibley further aligned himself with the current Congressional representative, William Ashley, with whom he did not differ materially.⁵¹

Sibley asked the voters to apply the Jeffersonian test to a candidate for public office: Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he steady and temperate in habits? Is he faithful to the Constitution?⁵² Sibley certainly took an unequivocal stand, and one that seemed politically inept to the anti-Jackson forces who were throwing their support to John Bull, a man enthusiastic over the National Bank, but "with professed devotion to Andrew Jackson."⁵³ For Sibley this appeared to be nothing more than the political man trying to serve two masters.⁵⁴

Pressure for Sibley to withdraw from the election mounted. On July 6, 1833, a letter appeared in the Missouri Intelligencer from the "friends" of Sibley requesting his withdrawal from the contest in favor of John Bull.⁵⁵ Sibley replied that he could not withdraw because he had committed himself to the election. He criticized Bull

⁵¹Missouri Intelligencer, June 29, 1833.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Missouri Intelligencer, July 13, 1833.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., July 6, 1833.

for favoring a re-chartering of the National Bank, internal improvements and a protective tariff, while hanging at the same time to the coat tails of Andrew Jackson who denounced these measures. Sibley, never very good at political side-stepping, made a qualifying statement about supporting Jackson so far as he and his administration were "consistent with the national honor and prosperity and promotive of the interests of Missouri."⁵⁶ The editor of the Missouri Intelligencer expressed the opinion that Sibley could not win but would draw support from John Bull and bring about his defeat. In one of the first references to party, the editorial went on to say that the party had not asked Sibley to run, that the decision had been Sibley's own, and that Sibley was being duped into believing that he could win by the very people who opposed him.⁵⁷

The cholera epidemic in St. Charles during the time Sibley should have been campaigning confined him to his home⁵⁸ and it became increasingly apparent that he had no chance to win. At a very late moment, July 31, 1833, Sibley announced his withdrawal from the contest.⁵⁹ However, the Missouri Intelligencer did not receive his letter until after the August 5th election. The Missouri Republican and the St. Louis Times were able to publish the news of his withdrawal

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., July 20, 1833.

⁵⁸ Ibid., July 13, 1833.

⁵⁹ Ibid., August 10, 1833.

before the election.⁶⁰ Sibley showed no hostility to Bull and endorsed his election. The final tally of the election gave John Bull 3,671 votes, while his nearest competitors, George Shannon and J. B. Strother, captured 3,430 and 3,630 respectively. Sibley stood at the bottom with 392 votes. In his home county of St. Charles, which knew about his withdrawal, he received four votes.⁶¹ From 1833 to 1840 Sibley remained active in Whig politics, but not to any great or spectacular degree. In February, 1834, Sibley published a prospectus for a proposed newspaper to be called the Weekly Journal.⁶² Motivated by a need for money and a desire to express himself politically, Sibley visualized a paper which would be marked by a "perfect independence and entire exemption from the influence of party or factious foolery; a due observance of the obligations of courtesy; and an unceasing regard for the dignity of Truth." He also planned to include information on agriculture, trade, commerce, arts, manufactures, politics and religion, to report the news, and to comment on "passing events of the day." Because of his interest in education, he proposed to publish news concerning it. The political position of the paper would be as follows:

So far as the paper may obtain influence over public sentiment, in respect to our National and State concerns, its uniform tendency shall

⁶⁰ Missouri Intelligencer, August 10, 1833.

⁶¹ Ibid., September 14, 1833.

⁶² Prospectus for the Weekly Journal, February 1, 1834, Sibley

be to preserve and strengthen the Union of the States entire; and to maintain the principles of the Federal Constitution, as defined and acted on by the great Republican majority, up to the year 1828.⁶³

Sibley intended to buy printing apparatus of the latest make and to use paper equal in size and quality to that of any newspaper published in Missouri. The cost was to be \$3.00 a year, or \$4.00 if paid over a period of six months. Sibley made no reference to the project after publishing his prospectus and no copy of the Weekly Journal has been found. Evidently his lack of funds prevented him from ever carrying out the publication of the Weekly Journal.

After 1836, the "pressure-group" tactics of the Missouri Whigs began to lose their momentum. The death of William Henry Ashley and a growing awareness of a need for organization among the Missouri Whigs caused the opponents of Andrew Jackson to begin to move in the direction of party organization. Largely encouraged by St. Louis Whigs, Whig delegates from around the state met in St. Louis and organized a full-scale Whig party in October, 1839. Their first major political battle shaped up in the forthcoming elections of 1840.⁶⁴

In the convention of 1839, four nominees were selected to carry the Whig banner in the important elections of 1840. John B. Clark accepted the nomination for governor and remained in the campaign, but the candidate for lieutenant governor informed the Whigs that he would

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 49-50.

remain in the race only if he did not have to leave his family and business to campaign.⁶⁵ The two Whig nominees for Congress, Thornton Grimsley and Woodson Moss, had both withdrawn by February, 1840, emaciating the Whig ticket. Desperately, the Whigs turned to other possibilities, including James S. Rollins, Edward Bates, Henry S. Geyer and Beverly Allen, only to find that these men were not available to run.⁶⁶

Into the breach stepped Sibley and E. M. Samuel, a wealthy Clay County merchant, and offered themselves as candidates for congress. Before making his decision to enter the congressional race, Sibley wrote A. B. Chalmers, editor of the Missouri Republican, asking for his assessment of the Whig chances in the August election. Chalmers' answer gave Sibley little hope. He recognized that changes were taking place throughout Missouri, but not great enough to change the outcome of the election. "We can carry the legislature," Chalmers wrote, "but that is all."⁶⁷ Thus, Sibley and Samuel launched their campaigns with virtually no hope of victory.⁶⁸ But as Sibley observed in his minature autobiography in 1851, "it was deemed best to try so as to aid Harrison at the presidential election in November."⁶⁹

⁶⁵Ibid., 89-90.

⁶⁶Ibid., 90.

⁶⁷A.B. Chalmers to George C. Sibley, May 12, 1840, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁸George Sibley to Cyrus and Origen Sibley, 1851, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁹Ibid.

In June, 1840, Sibley issued handbills to "The Free and Independent Voters of Missouri" which stated his platform.⁷⁰ He opposed an increase in executive power and patronage, the Sub-Treasury scheme, and the national guard. In his endorsement of William Henry Harrison, Sibley said that "our old friend" was supporting the best interest of the West, especially the protection of frontier settlements. Sibley also favored opening the public lands to settlement, internal improvements, paper currency, a National Bank, post-office reform, and a change in the administration of Indian affairs. He labeled abolitionism as a "silly though mischievous humbug."⁷¹

Sibley's platform illustrated both the similarity and the difference in the political positions of the opposing parties in Missouri. They both favored settlement of land in the West by means of low prices and easy terms and also internal improvements of roads and rivers. But on economic problems they differed. The Whigs favored a paper currency and a National Bank, but opposed the Sub-Treasury idea introduced by the Van Buren administration. Missouri Democrats tended to fear the re-establishment of a National Bank.

Sibley carried on an active campaign. Of the campaign he wrote:

We had but two representatives then and they had to be elected by general ticket. So I had to 'stump it' all over Missouri, very nearly.... The result was that my colleague Samuel and I

⁷⁰Sibley's announcement and platform for election to Congress appeared in the form of a handbill, June, 1840, Sibley Mss.

⁷¹Ibid.

received upwards of 21,000 votes (the heaviest vote ever cast in the state). We were beaten, but the loco-foco majority was reduced more than 4,000.⁷²

The Whig victory in the log-cabin presidential campaign of 1840 was short-lived. Pneumonia struck Harrison down after only a month in office, thus completely changing the character of the new administration and also lessened Sibley's chances for political preferment.⁷³ Sibley's brother-in-law, Archibald Gamble, informed him that he had drawn up a recommendation for Sibley to be Superintendent of Indian Affairs, but gave him little encouragement that it would go through. Gamble bemoaned the changed situation in Washington resulting from the unsympathetic John Tyler now occupying the presidential chair. The Whigs were now divided and rivalries for office were growing. Gamble said, "Indeed I have almost come to doubt, whether the country has gained much by the late political revolution."⁷⁴

By September, 1841, Sibley had sensed the irony of the Whig predicament on the national scene. They had won a national presidential election only to find that "The Whigs cannot now be said to have a President in whom, as a great party, they Confide."⁷⁵ Sibley believed that the party had no recourse but to rally around Clay for the next

⁷²George Sibley to Cyrus and Origen Sibley, 1851, Sibley Mss.

⁷³Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 93.

⁷⁴Archibald Gamble to George C. Sibley, July 12, 1841, Sibley Mss.

⁷⁵Sibley's Diary, September 25, 1841, Sibley Mss.

Presidency. Sibley felt that the Whigs would never support Tyler and that the Democrats would also avoid him. Thus, Tyler was a President without a party, and in the American political system this could only spell a floundering and confused administration.⁷⁶

In November, 1843, Sibley was appointed a Whig delegate from St. Charles Township to attend the district Whig convention in Hannibal.⁷⁷ At this meeting during the latter part of November the convention chose Sibley as one of the delegates to attend the national Whig convention to be held later in Baltimore. The Missouri delegates were instructed by the Hannibal convention to "use all honorable exertions in said convention to procure the nomination of Henry Clay and 'Honest' John Davis of Massachusetts."⁷⁸ Sibley was greatly pleased by his selection, and also by the "entire harmony...throughout the Sessions of the Convention."⁷⁹ The national convention was to be held in May.

Sibley left for Baltimore on April 13, 1844.⁸⁰ At St. Louis, he joined other delegates on board the steamboat, Manhattan. The passenger list included Whigs, Loco-focos, Mormons, and the famous dwarf General Tom Thumb, who was touring the United States with his mother and father.⁸¹ The Manhattan landed at Cincinnati on Saturday,

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., November 18, 1843.

⁷⁸Ibid., November 23, 1843.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Sibley's Common Place Book, April 13, 1844., Sibley Mss.

⁸¹Ibid., April 16, 1844.

April 20, and many of the Whigs went ashore for an evening of revelry. Sibley declined to go with them, fearful that they would desecrate the Sabbath.⁸² The next day they went on to Wheeling, Virginia. From Wheeling they traveled to Washington, and then to Cumberland where they boarded the railroad for Baltimore, 180 miles away. They completed the trip to Baltimore in eight days.⁸³

The Missouri delegation met in Sibley's room at the Eutaw House on April 30th and appointed Sibley and A. Ewing to serve on a committee to nominate the officers of the Convention. They also settled on John Davis as their nominee for the vice-presidency.⁸⁴

The next day, May 1st, 273 Whig delegates met in the Universalist Church, confirmed Judge Ambrose Spencer of New York as president of the convention, and listened to his address. Following Judge Spencer, Benjamin Watkins Leigh of Virginia, rose, gave a short address and offered the following resolution: "That Henry Clay of Kentucky was the unanimous choice of this convention, as the Whig candidate for the Presidency of the United States, and that he be recommended to the People as such."⁸⁵ Overwhelmingly adopting the resolution, the delegates then took three votes to settle on Theodore

⁸² Ibid., April 20, 1844.

⁸³ Ibid., April 25, 1844.

⁸⁴ Ibid., April 30, 1844.

⁸⁵ Ibid., May 1, 1844.

Frelinghuysen of New Jersey for the vice-presidency.⁸⁶ The convention had in one day nominated a presidential and a vice-presidential candidate. Sibley summed up his impression of the convention as being orderly, harmonious, and dignified. He wrote in his diary, "As a whole I am proud to testify that it was conducted throughout with that Dignity and Solemnity that befitted the great political party there represented."⁸⁷

On the following day, black rain clouds hovered above the city as Sibley made his way to the place where the Whigs were gathering for their parade through the streets of Baltimore. Anxious about the threatening weather and worn by the excitement of the preceding day, Sibley returned to his hotel room, locked the door, seated himself at a window and waited for the parade to pass below.⁸⁸ The weather cleared and the sun suddenly broke through the clouds on a scene filled with "thousands of Whigs (male and female) that now thronged the beautiful street."⁸⁹ In the distance, Sibley heard the faint sounds of marching bands and, as he scanned the view before him, he noticed with pride the "Stars and Stripes" that floated above the housetops and buildings. It took an hour and a half for the parade to march by his window.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., May 2, 1844.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

On the same day, the second convention of Ratification was held to include those Whigs who were not among the official 273 delegates. They met, heard from Daniel Webster, and cheered the nomination of Clay and Frelinghuysen. Sibley estimated that a crowd of between sixty and seventy thousand Whigs attended the second convention.⁹⁰ Sibley evaluated the Whig Convention as:

the greatest and most imposing party political affair that ever assembled in the Union—considering the numbers present, the entire unity of purpose, the uninterrupted harmony of all the proceedings, to say nothing of the Rank and Character of the multitudes thus brought together, or the happy and cheering prospect resulting from the whole.⁹¹

Thus, Sibley was present at the moment when the Whig Party reached its high tide. Moreover, the Baltimore Convention had nominated Clay, to whom Sibley had given loyalty and all the support of which he was capable. On his return trip home, Sibley wrote in his diary as one who had come a long way and was on the verge of seeing his fondest hopes realized:

No citizen of the Union, has longer or more ardently and constantly desired to see Mr. Clay at the head of our Govt. than I have. I urged and advocated his claims when the last term of Mr. Monroe expired (1824). Altho' I Regretted the apparent necessity of running Gen. Harrison in his Stead in 1840, I zealously supported that nomination; feeling perfectly Sure, that if alive in '44 Mr. Clay would be the Successful, unrivaled Whig Candidate, & So he is.⁹²

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Sibley's Common Place Book, May 7, 1844, Sibley Mss.

Sibley's return trip turned out to be a most pleasant and rewarding one. He stopped off in Philadelphia to visit his half-sister, Ann Elizabeth, who was now married to Henry D. Gilpin.⁹³ Mrs. Gilpin's first husband had been Sibley's close, personal friend, Josiah Stoddard Johnston. The Gilpins were most hospitable and prevailed on Sibley to remain as their guest for a few days. This he did.

From Philadelphia, Sibley went by rail to New York where he met James S. Rollins and A. B. Chalmers. Together they paid their respects to Mr. Frelinghuysen. They found the vice-presidential candidate in good health, cheerful and social and "by no means averse to expressing himself freely in Relation to public affairs."⁹⁴

By the next day, May 16, Sibley had made arrangements for his passage on the steamboat, Knickerbocker, which was to take him to Albany. At Albany he boarded a train for Buffalo and enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the countryside as his train sped along at "15 Ms an hour nearly the whole way."⁹⁵ Sibley went by steamboat from Buffalo to Chicago, arriving there on May 26.⁹⁶ He traveled by stage to Peru, Illinois where he boarded another steamboat for the trip down

⁹³ Henry D. Gilpin had a distinguished career in public service and served in 1840 as Attorney General of the United States. (Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History, 423.

⁹⁴ Ibid., May 15, 1844.

⁹⁵ Ibid., May 16, 1844.

⁹⁶ Ibid., May 26, 1844.

the Mississippi to St. Louis. Arriving in St. Louis on the 17th of May, he stayed in the home of Archibald Gamble.⁹⁷

Since there was to be a meeting of Whigs on June 3, Sibley decided to remain over and attend the convention. Following the convention, Sibley returned to Linden Wood on June 4, 1844 after an absence of fifty-two days, a journey of 4,000 miles, and an expense of \$252.63. Heavy rains had set the crops back and had threatened the country with flooding.⁹⁸

The trip to the Baltimore Convention increased Sibley's enthusiasm for Henry Clay and the Whig cause, and also encouraged him to make his final venture into the political arena. On June 20, 1844 the following notice appeared in the St. Charles Advertiser:

George C. Sibley hereby respectfully tenders his services to the People of St. Charles and Warren Counties, to represent them in the Senate of Missouri as the Successor of William Campbell, Esquire.⁹⁹

Just home from a long and tiring trip, what motivated the sixty-two year old Sibley to offer himself for the Whig cause? "I have taken this step of my own motion," he said, "knowing it to be in accordance with the wishes of many voters, that I or Some other Whig should come out as a candidate for the Senate."¹⁰⁰

In some districts Whigs entered their own candidates when the chances appeared good for victory, but in others Whigs resorted to

⁹⁷ Ibid., May 27, 1844.

⁹⁸ Ibid., June 4, 1844.

⁹⁹ St. Charles Advertiser, June 20, 1844, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

their former pressure-tactics and supported anti-Benton democrats. Mering points out that it was "sadly ironical" that the Whigs in St. Charles and Warren Counties decided not to run one of their own men, but to support Carty Wells, a "soft" or anti-Benton Democrat.¹⁰¹ Sibley believed that it would be "hurtful to the Whig cause, to suffer either a Hard or a Soft Loco-foco to succeed our favorite old Whig Senator Campbell, if we can help it."¹⁰² Even in the rough-and-tumble activity of politics, Sibley saw a moral principle at stake. The Whigs of his district should have the opportunity to vote for a real Whig, rather than a Democrat who, although he had a few Whig leanings, was still a "half-breed Democrat."¹⁰³ The same story repeated itself again with Sibley offering himself, "there appearing to be no probability that any one else will Step forward from our Ranks,"¹⁰⁴ to carry the Whig cause to the voters. Sibley's procedure of storming "Old Bullion's" fortress by a frontal attack clearly ran against the grain of the more pragmatic Whigs.

Sibley's Diary indicated that the campaign trail in 1844 was hot and arduous, involving stump meetings, horseback rides to surrounding villages, two-hour speeches, late nights, and long days. As far away as Springfield, Missouri Whigs urged Sibley to withdraw and to support Liberal Democrats.¹⁰⁵ Even Benton Democrats of his district

¹⁰¹Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 118.

¹⁰²St. Charles Advertiser, June 20, 1844, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰³Ibid., July 4, 1844.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., June 20, 1844.

¹⁰⁵John Waddell to George C. Sibley, July 17, 1844, Sibley Mss.

offered to make a deal to insure the defeat of Wells, whom they de-
 tested as a "turncoat."¹⁰⁶ "There is much mean trickery already in
 operation," Sibley wrote, "touching my election."¹⁰⁷ As he rode
 throughout the two counties, he discovered the hopelessness of his
 cause. At Portage de Sioux he found strong support for Wells and
 later appraised his situation as hopeless.¹⁰⁸ On August 3, the eve
 of the election, he made his last political speech. In his diary he
 summed up his position:

I am now convinced from all I see and hear that
 I shall have but a very Slim Support from the
 Whigs. The Hards talk some of voting for me to
 prevent the election of Wells-but I prefer to be
 left entirely in the hands of my friends. If
 they think fit to Sacrifice me for an Ultra Loco-
 foco; let them do it, and let them take the
 Responsibility of the defeat, if a defeat awaits
 them, as I believe it does. There appears to be
 very great excitement everywhere; and I hope it
 may all Result in good to the Whig cause.¹⁰⁹

P. H. Shelton, the Benton Democrat, won the election by a plurality
 of 49 votes.¹¹⁰ Sibley made a dire prediction for the Whig cause in
 St. Charles County as a result of the race:

Under the mixed influence of Soft Loco-focoism &
 Soft Whiggism; the Whig Party has been completely
 thrown into chaos; and I fear it is well nigh
 ruined in St. Charles County- not a single election
 has been conducted on Whig principles.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Sibley's Common Place Book, July 31, 1844, Sibley Mss.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., July 20, 1844.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., July 30, 1844.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., August 3, 1844.

¹¹⁰ The returns of the local election are not accessible. (Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 120.); Sibley wrote in his diary that Wells had been defeated by a plurality of 49 votes. (Sibley's Common Place Book, August 12, 1844, Sibley Mss.).

¹¹¹ Sibley's Common Place Book, August 6, 1844, Sibley Mss.

Sibley's prediction proved to be accurate for, beginning with the election of 1844, St. Charles, which had produced a strong Whig vote in the elections of 1836 and 1840, consistently went Democratic.¹¹²

In the national election of 1844 James K. Polk and Manifest Destiny won the field, thus frustrating Clay's final chance for the highest office in the land. Disappointed by Clay's defeat and discouraged by the chaos in the Whig ranks in his own area, Sibley, in 1845, turned to the Native American movement. (X)

Launched in Washington in 1837, the Native American Association grew stronger from the nativistic tendencies of many Americans.¹¹³ At the forefront of its prejudices were Catholics and immigrants who were looked upon as a serious threat to the American way of life and freedom. Playing on these fears, the Association evolved into the American Republican Party by June, 1843. The most detailed account of the origins of American nativism can be found in Ray Allen Billington's, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860. Billington points out that the party advocated changing the immigration laws to require twenty-five years of residence in the United States prior to naturalization, restricting authority over naturalization to the federal courts, and reform of gross abuses arising from party corruption.¹¹⁴ Billington also cites other minor reforms proposed by the party:

¹¹²Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 121.

¹¹³Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History, 187. — out

¹¹⁴Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860 (New York, 1938), 203. out

...a restriction of public officeholding to natives, a continuation of the Bible as a school-book, the prevention of all union between church and state, a lessening of the number of street riots and election disorders, a guarantee of the right to worship 'the God of our fathers according to the dictates of our own consciences, with out the restraints of a Romish priest, or the threats of a Hellish Inquisition.'¹¹⁵

The objectives of the American Republican Party would, at least, in the beginning appeal strongly to a man like Sibley. In the first place, Sibley, being a staunch Protestant, looked with favor on the religious objectives of the organization. The patriotic principles, although overly strong and stemming from fear, would attract a man with Sibley's proclivities toward American nationalism. The platform also courted Sibley's nativistic strains against Catholics and immigrants.

Sibley had no love or admiration for the Roman Catholic Church, although he lived in a community where Catholics abounded.¹¹⁶ In a letter to Thomas Lindsay on February, 1831, Sibley had expressed a toleration for the Roman Catholic Church, its hierarchy and its laity.¹¹⁷ He later changed his opinion, and on the copy of the letter a year later scrawled the words: "I am now convinced of the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church and that the Jesuits are now, what they were when Pascall¹¹⁸ wrote, and what he Represents them to have been in

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶R. A. Campbell, ed., Campbell's Gazetteer of Missouri, 489.

¹¹⁷George C. Sibley to Thomas Lindsay, February __, 1831, Sibley Mss.

¹¹⁸Sibley had read Blaise Pascal, The Provincial Letters. Sibley to Lindsay, February __, 1821, Sibley Mss.

his time.¹¹⁹ Scattered throughout his papers were brief comments exposing his prejudice against the Catholics. One of his most scathing comments was made after seeing a parade of Sunday School children in St. Louis on the Fourth of July:

How strange, that the Jesuits whose prime object among us, is to enslave our Country; Should place themselves foremost in the front ranks of our own people, and pretend to Rejoice with us on this our political Sabbath.¹²⁰

In his anti-Catholic bias, Sibley was no different than a countless number of Protestants who genuinely feared the inroads of "popery", the threat of Catholicism to free American institutions, and the undermining of the Protestant church by the Catholic hierarchy. (After 1845 the nativist movement became less virulent but in the 1850's it made a brief come-back under the guise of the Know-Nothing Party. Sibley did vote in 1845 for a "Native American" to attend a convention to amend the State Constitution because he did not "agree with the views of the Whig or Democratic candidate."^{121/13} Throughout the autumn of 1845, Sibley attended a number of local lectures sponsored by the Native Americans. The lecturers came from St. Louis. In October, Sibley observed that the Native Americans were making "a stir."^{114/122} An organizational meeting was held in November and several others lectures followed after this. On December 9, 1845,

¹¹⁹ Ibid. - cut

¹²⁰ Sibley's Common Place Book. July 4, 1845, Sibley Mss. cut

^{113/121} Ibid., August 4, 1845.

^{114/122} Ibid., October 31, 1845.

Sibley made the last notation to appear in his Diary and in his papers about the Native Americans, "Howard Douglas addressed a small gathering for an hour or so."^{115 123} There is nothing to indicate after 1845 that Sibley deserted the Whig Party or that he joined with the Know Nothings in the 1850's.

In 1851 Sibley wrote to his cousins, Origen and Cyrus Sibley, that "I have now done with politics except as a voter, and with all desires for public offices and honors."^{116 124} By the mid-1850's, Sibley's political castles, built from the sands of Whig principles, had all but crumbled. Sibley's sporadic diaries of the 1850's do not reveal his political activity after 1851. Most likely he remained a Whig until the party virtually disapproved in 1855.^{117 125} By 1860, weak from illness, Sibley probably did not bother to consider the political alternatives which were open to him.

Clinton Rossiter's penetrating study of Conservatism in America lists five principles at work in the American Mind in the 19th century. First, there was traditionalism, a reverence for the values inherited from the Founding Fathers, Second, there was unity, a belief that loyalty to common values should transcend particular interest. Third, there was the belief that American rights were enshrined in the Constitution. Fourth, there prevailed a belief that Christian religion

^{115 123} Ibid., December 9, 1845.

^{116 124} George C. Sibley to Cyrus and Origen Sibley, 1851, Sibley Mss.

^{117 125} Mering, The Whig Party in Missouri, 211.

was a bulwark of democracy. And lastly there was the belief that the protection of private property was a cornerstone for all American rights.^{116 126}

Although Sibley was a minor political character in Missouri, he represented these principles as they affected the thinking of many individuals. His life suggests the truth of de Tocqueville's observation that the average American was a "venturous conservative."^{119 127} In the American political tradition, characterized by optimism, idealism and a belief in progress, there has been the strain of conservatism wrapped up in the political experience of men like George Sibley.

"I believe with Thomas Jefferson," Sibley said, "that this is the Strongest government on earth."^{121 128} When the doctrine of nullification threatened the unity of the nation, he unalterably opposed it, agreeing with many others that it would lead to disunity and the consequent subversion of the Constitution.^{124 129} In the prospectus of his proposed newspaper, the Weekly Journal, he had stated that its "uniform tendency shall be to preserve and strengthen the Union of the States entire; and to maintain the principles of the federal Constitution."^{123 130} In a letter to William Russell in 1836 Sibley argued that the "Settled principles of religion" were the foundation on which the

^{116 126} Clinton Rossiter, Conservatism in America (New York, 1955).

^{119 127} Quoted in Irving H. Bartlett, The American Mind in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (New York, 1967), 55-56.

^{120 128} George Sibley to D. D. Barnard, December 21, 1843, Sibley Mss.

^{121 129} Missouri Intelligencer, June 29, 1833.

^{122 130} Prospectus for the Weekly Journal, February, 1834, Sibley Mss.

"Government and the Civil institutions" of this country were constructed.¹²³₁₃₁ Moreover, on one occasion, he promised the voters of

Missouri that he would never support any cause which might infringe

on, "or impair property rights."¹²⁴₁₃₂ Sibley was a textbook case of the

American Mind as molded by the principles of conservatism.

¹²³₁₃₁ George C. Sibley to William Russell, June 1, 1836, Sibley
Mss.

¹²⁴₁₃₂ Missouri Intelligencer, April 12, 1820.

CHAPTER XIII

LINDEN WOOD

Between 1822 and the time of Sibley's semi-retirement in the mid-1850's he devoted himself primarily to agriculture. Although he surveyed the Santa Fe Trail, dabbled in politics, sought government jobs, and, with his wife, operated a female seminary, he was first and foremost a farmer. The education of women did not replace farming as Linden Wood's primary business until ill health and advancing age forced him to lessen his physical activity.¹

One of the major reasons for Sibley's move from Fountain Cottage to St. Charles was the latter's proximity to St. Louis, a growing urban area which offered more opportunity for commercial farming. Essential to commercial agriculture were markets and the means of getting farm products to them. St. Charles could offer both.

It took Sibley nearly two years after his move to St. Charles in 1828 to prepare the way for his occupancy of the Linden Wood tract of land. In time, Linden Wood became a profitable farm operation, for he operated his farm according to sound business practices. He was, in every sense, a country businessman.

Diversification marked Sibley's farming operation at Linden Wood. While still at Fort Osage, he had experimented in the growing of different varieties of fruit. There he learned the art of grafting from trees and of planting the grafts instead of seeds, thereby advancing the maturity of plantings by two to three years. Using this knowledge and experience, Sibley planted extensive orchards at Linden Wood. On one occasion he boasted of picking 500 bushels of apples from 289 trees. Baltimore, one of his slaves, hauled the apples to St. Louis.

¹Sibley's Diary, April 1, 1852, Sibley Mss.

The main expense was ferriage across the Missouri River.² Sibley hired experienced men to prune, scrape, whitewash, and paint the wounds of his fruit trees. Other fruit grown at Linden Wood included pears, peaches, cherries, grapes, quince, currants, and gooseberries.

As for livestock, Sibley concentrated primarily on swine. Different breeds of hogs, such as Bedford, Irish Glazier, and Berkshire, filled his pens. On a number of occasions Sibley purchased expensive breeding stock. He also cross bred with the intention of raising a distinct stock of swine for his own use and sale.³ Although St. Charles contained a pork-packing establishment which slaughtered on the average of 4000 hogs annually,⁴ Sibley pickled much of his own pork.

Wheat was Sibley's primary grain crop at Linden Wood. For years the average yield of wheat ran twenty bushels to an acre in St. Charles County.⁵ By 1845, Sibley had started using machinery to thresh his wheat. It took eight full days with machinery to thresh 590 bushels of wheat at an estimated cost of $9\frac{1}{2}\phi$ a bushel. Although Sibley complained of the waste in threshing wheat by machine, he estimated that a good machine, well handled, and with a strong four-horse team could thresh out between 100-120 bushels of wheat a day.⁶ Sibley sold his wheat in St. Charles where the five large

²Sibley's Diary, August 24, 1841, Sibley Mss.

³Ibid., October 27, 1841.

⁴R. A. Campbell, Campbell's Gazetteer of Missouri (St. Louis, 1874), 489.

⁵Ibid., 485.

⁶Sibley's Diary, August 8, 1845, Sibley Mss.

merchant flouring-mills could turn out a thousand barrels every twenty-four hours.⁷

In addition to wheat, Sibley grew tobacco, hemp, and corn at Linden Wood. He even experimented with silkworms, ordering the eggs from his cousin in Blakely, Alabama.⁸ Sibley never evaluated his own silkworm project, although in St. Charles there was a firm that raised silkworms and from the silk manufactured gloves and stockings.⁹ Sibley also raised chickens, horses and cows, and maintained hives of bees at Linden Wood. His water supply came from deep wells that ran dry only once during his lifetime.

Campbell's Gazetteer of Missouri described Linden Wood as one "of the many beautiful sites found in such abundance near St. Charles."¹⁰ From Sibley's comments in his diary, Linden Wood must have been a farm of rare natural beauty. In the Spring flowers splashed the place with many different colors. Among the many different varieties of flowers growing at Linden Wood were roses, lilies, peonies, snowballs, jonquils, honey suckle, columbine, iris, myrtle, and hyacinths. Shade and flowering trees reached out across the landscape, enriching the scene. Some of the trees catalogued in Sibley's diary were the Linden, Oak, Red Bud, Flowering Almond, Willow, English Walnut, Hawthorn, Hazel, and a large Plum in the middle of the chicken yard. Picnics and social

⁷Campbell's Gazetteer, 489.

⁸Sibley's Diary, January 25, 1841, Sibley Mss.

⁹Campbell's Gazetteer, 489.

¹⁰Ibid.

events were held at Linden Wood, as well as a number of family weddings.¹¹ In 1853, the Sibleys donated a small area of Linden Wood to the St. Charles Presbyterian Church to use as a burial ground. One of the conditions specified in the deed was that the "fine forest trees growing in the ground" should not under any circumstances be removed.¹² Thus, Linden Wood was both a producing farm and a place of pastoral charm and grace.

As a country businessman, Sibley kept abreast of the latest developments in agriculture. For years he had fertilized his land by using "manure and tillage."¹³ Sibley recorded in his diary numerous "how to" articles, such as how to deal with moles, how to build a rail fence, and how to cure a horse of surfeit. He mended his fences, and, when the need arose, built new ones. When one of his out-buildings began to look "run downish" he constructed a new one.¹⁴ Linden Wood had the appearance of a well-managed and well-cared-for farm.

Sibley's political beliefs reflected his devotion to agriculture. He supported internal improvements because good roads, rivers cleared of snags, and an adequate canal system would facilitate the transportation of the farmer's products to market and open new outlets as well. He believed that a tariff on agricultural imports would

¹¹ Sibley's Diary, October 23, 1844, Sibley Mss.

¹² Copy of quit Claim Deed, January 27, 1853, Session Book No. 2, St. Charles Presbyterian Church Historical Papers.

¹³ George C. Sibley to Arch Dorsey, August 29, 1827, Sibley Mss.

¹⁴ Sibley's Diary, June 11, 1847, Sibley Mss.

strengthen the farmer's hope of sharing in national prosperity. He advocated for St. Charles County a plan of plank roads which would link the outlying farm areas with the town of St. Charles.¹⁵ He believed in adequate protection for frontier communities.

Philosophically, too, Sibley believed in the virtues of the agricultural way of life. His liking for the old Jeffersonian creed of the yeoman farmer revealed itself in a letter to his friend, Josiah Stoddard Johnston, stating that he wanted nothing more from life than to be free from his debt to the United States Government and to look upon himself as an independent farmer.¹⁶ On another occasion, he declared that the three necessary ingredients for a contented life were a "humble cabin," "a little farm," and "the occupation of cultivating it."¹⁷ Johnston reinforced Sibley's philosophy in 1830, at a time when Sibley was considering a political career, by reminding him that politicians suffered disappointments, mortifications and defeats, where as Sibley's understanding of agrarian philosophy could make him truly happy on his farm.¹⁸

Moreover, Sibley knew how to employ agrarianism idealism in support of his own needs. When he was struggling to overcome his debt to the government and desperately needed more time to dispose of his

¹⁵A political circular to the Free and Independent Voters of Missouri, George C. Sibley, June, 1840, Sibley Mss.

¹⁶George Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, October 27, 1827, Sibley Mss.

¹⁷George Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, December 15, 1829, Sibley Mss.

¹⁸Josiah Stoddard Johnston to George C. Sibley, January 10, 1830, Sibley Mss.

Fountain Cottage property at a fair and equitable price, he argued that as a yeoman he had the right to "ask and receive favours from my government."¹⁹

Sibley added, as well, to the myth of the frontier as a garden of the world, to borrow a phrase from Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land*.²⁰ While still at Fountain Cottage in 1824, Sibley urged David Barton, Senator from Missouri, to exert his influence to procure an appropriation of money with which to purchase land claims from the Kansas Indians on the south side of the Missouri River within the bounds of the state. He described the land as "the Garden of Missouri" with good soil, natural advantages, and laden with possibilities. Thousands of American farmers, Sibley wrote, were posed, ready to move into the land" God had designed for the use of civilized man."²¹ The United States Government would be in step with God's will by buying the Kansas land and making it available to the farmers.

In a letter to Arch Dorsey in Maryland in 1827, Sibley pictured Missouri land as fertile and productive. He also sought to correct Dorsey's impression, shared by many easterners, that Missouri consisted of vast swamps and marshes harboring poisonous snakes. On the contrary, he said, Missouri was a good land, suitable for growing hemp and tobacco, and when properly fertilized, would "grow anything."²²

¹⁹George Sibley to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, December 15, 1829, Sibley Mss.

²⁰Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (New York, 1950).

²¹George Sibley to Senator David Barton, January 10, 1824, Sibley Mss.

²²George Sibley to Arch Dorsey, August 29, 1827, Sibley Mss.

Although Sibley knew and endorsed the myth of the sturdy yeoman farmer, from his earlier agricultural effort at his Fountain Cottage farm on through his agricultural career at Linden Wood Sibley sought profit rather than self-sufficiency. As a businessman who had chosen farming as his business, Sibley hired employees, adopted new methods and techniques to increase production, supported plank roads to facilitate transportation of his products, kept his out-buildings and fences in good repair, and favored mechanization of farm operations wherever profitable.

Advancing age and increasing satisfaction with his way of life at Linden Wood made Sibley less avid for public office. In 1851 he did accept an appointment to the Board of Managers of the State Lunatic Asylum located at Fulton, Missouri.²³ However, he found his first two trips to Fulton for board meetings overly tiring because of rain, bad roads, and his own declining energy. Prior to the third board meeting in June, 1851, Sibley sent his resignation to the Governor.²⁴

A year later, on April 1, 1852, Sibley noted in his diary that the day started his seventy-first year. As he pondered the passing year, he noted the effects of increasing age. "My sight and hearing," he wrote, "are but little impaired, but my bodily strength and vigour seem to be some what relaxing..."²⁵

²³Sibley's Diary, March 14, 1851, Sibley Mss.

²⁴Ibid., June 3, 1851.

²⁵Ibid., April 1, 1852.

As the Sibleys grew older, they increasingly focused their attention on the little school at Linden Wood. After having temporarily closed in 1841 for lack of scholars, the school reopened in 1842 but it continued to struggle for survival. In the minds of the Sibleys however, there was emerging what they called their "college scheme."²⁶

Asahel Munson, a young licentiate from Hanover, Indiana had arrived in St. Charles seeking a place to preach. The St. Charles Presbyterian Church, being at the time without the services of a pastor, called the young man, and ordained and installed him in the Christian ministry on April 15, 1841.²⁷ In April, 1842 Sibley leased Linden Wood school to the young pastor and his wife for a modest sum. Sibley and Munson hoped that the latter could successfully combine ministerial and educational work and that a change in reliance on boarding students to day students from St. Charles would provide an adequate student body. However, Munson had only seven day students in attendance when the school reopened on April 18, 1842, and within a few months terminated his lease and abandoned his first venture in education.²⁸ But the school had been revived!

By the end of the summer, a Mr. E. Root, an itinerant teacher with a family of nine from Gainesville, Alabama, arrived in St. Charles with the intention of starting a school. Instead, Root leased the

²⁶ Ibid., April 3, 1855.

²⁷ Session Book No. 2, April 15, 1841, St. Charles Presbyterian Church Historical Papers.

²⁸ Sibley's Diary, April 18, 1842, Sibley Mss.

Linden Wood school premises from Sibley for one year at annual rate of \$300.00. Like Munson, he too failed, but Sibley refused to be discouraged, feeling that Root's financial need to support a large family had prevented him from being able to continue the school long enough to establish his reputation as a teacher. Root ceased teaching in February, 1843, but lingered on at Linden Wood, with Sibley paying his fuel bill. Sibley had also reduced Root's financial obligation under terms of the lease to \$130.00, but Root became convinced that he could do better financially by moving to St. Louis.²⁹

From the records, it appears that Mrs. Sibley and a Miss Rosseter operated the school in 1844.³⁰ Naomi Barron, one of the students in 1844, had come to Missouri with her parents in a covered wagon from Bladensburg, Maryland. Her father, Ninian Barron, had conducted a school in the St. Charles Methodist Church until he entered business. He sent Naomi to Linden Wood when she was thirteen years old. Years later, Naomi recalled that the twenty students at Linden Wood in 1844 studied a curriculum consisting of astronomy, history, spelling penmanship and music, but no foreign language. The pupils were forbidden to dance or to "engage in any unladylike" games because Mrs. Sibley, as a strict Presbyterian, opposed such activities. Instead, the girls listened to sermons given by Presbyterian ministers

²⁹Ibid., August 10, 1842, September 1, 1842, February 14, 1843, May 2, 1843.

³⁰Ibid., October 1, 1842.

from St. Louis,³¹ the Sibleys being anxious to establish school ties with Presbyterians in the larger city. In 1845 Miss Rosseter headed the school at Linden Wood, and Miss Elizabeth Ott, from Albany, New York, taught an additional thirty children in the village. The two schools employed the efforts of Mrs. Sibley, Miss Rosseter, Miss Ott, and an assistant teacher, Miss Mary Butler of St. Louis. Monthly examinations and reviews were held both in the town branch and at Linden Wood, and the joint arrangement continued at least through 1847.³²

The family atmosphere at Linden Wood school still prevailed. There were picnics, weddings, and special celebrations on the Fourth of July. The girls still attended church in a body. Once, in the Spring of 1848, while Mrs. Sibley was in the East visiting her sister, Sibley took the girls to a circus. They stayed out until the unbelievable hour of 11:00 o'clock. Sibley felt ashamed that he had subjected the girls and himself to such tomfoolery, and he promised himself he would never again be drawn into a circus exhibition.³³

While the school depended heavily on local students, some came from as far as Illinois, and a considerable number from St. Louis. Some of Sibley's relatives, like Archibald and Louisa Gamble of St.

³¹Interview with Miss Naomi Barron, St. Louis Republican, February 7, 1915 and included in the St. Charles Presbyterian Church Historical Papers.

³²Sibley's Diary, October 30, 1845, February 26, 1847, Sibley Mss.

³³Ibid., May 13, 1848. Also see Elbert R. Bowen, "The Circus in Early Rural Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, XLVII (1952-1953), 12.

Louis, sent their daughters to Linden Wood. Still other students were from small villages like Dardenne, Lincoln, Farmington, and from a farm in St. Francois County.³⁴ Only families who could afford the tuition sent their daughters to Linden Wood. Thus, in terms of class and wealth, the small student body was homogeneous.

By 1851, the Sibleys, along with a few other St. Charles residents, were beginning to think in terms of expanding Linden Wood to include a normal school. Sibley met with a few personal friends on a blustery day in January to discuss the expediency and practicality of establishing a good girl's school in St. Charles.³⁵ Although nothing was decided, Sibley felt sufficiently encouraged to ask Solomon Jenkins of Fulton, Missouri, to submit plans and estimated cost for "a handsome edifice suitable for a female academy--say 100 feet long by 40 feet wide and 3 stories high."³⁶

Sibley and his St. Charles supporters must have had some awareness of the difficulties they would face in realizing their hopes. Frederick Rudolph had estimated that as many as seven hundred colleges failed prior to the Civil War.³⁷ In fact, so many colleges were crowding into the picture that it led one contemporary observer to say, "Our country is to be a land of colleges."³⁸

³⁴Compilation of the names of students appearing in the Sibley Diary from 1830-1850, Sibley Mss.

³⁵Sibley's Diary, January 25, 1851, Sibley Mss.

³⁶Ibid., February 17, 1851.

³⁷Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University: A History (New York, 1962), 47.

³⁸Quoted in Rudolph, The American College and University, 47.

In the case of Linden Wood, however, close ties between the Sibleys and the Presbyterian Church provided some hope. Rooted deeply in the Puritan heritage, which placed a high priority on education, the Presbyterian denomination accepted as a part of its missionary responsibility the elimination of illiteracy and ignorance. The Presbyterians preferred an educated ministry over those preachers who boasted that "their backs had never been rubbed against the walls of a college."³⁹ According to one church historian, of the sixty-six permanent colleges in the South in 1861, seventeen had been established by the Presbyterian denomination. Two of these, Linden Wood Female College and Westminster College, were located in Missouri.⁴⁰

In 1841, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church recommended that every presbytery maintain at least one "Grammar School" or academy.⁴¹ In 1847, the General Assembly recommended that each presbytery and synod devise measures for the establishment of parochial and presbyterial schools. The movement to establish academies or high schools under the direction of the presbyteries thus picked up momentum. The general strategy of the denomination was to put parochial schools in charge of local churches, academies under the care of the presbyteries, and colleges under the care of the synods.⁴²

³⁹James Gallaher, "Memoir," Presbyterian Recorder, VI (November, 1866), 166-167.

⁴⁰Ernest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, 1607-1861, I (Richmond, 1963), 251.

⁴¹Ibid., 489.

⁴²Ibid.

When the Sibleys drew up their plan for Linden Wood Female College, they made it plain that they had been influenced by the recommendations of the General Assembly.⁴³

In time St. Charles' citizens became involved in the hopes for a local college, an example perhaps, of the tie between "town boosterism" and education which one historian had noted.⁴⁴ A newspaper and a good hotel were important to a town's progressive image. In addition to these, if a town had a college to boast and to boost, it had taken a giant stride toward adding to its stature, enriching its cultural life, and impressing others with its advancement. The college became a symbol of a town coming of age.

Aside from the Presbyterian Church and the secular forces of "boosterism," the temper of the times was becoming increasingly cordial to education for women. On the national scene, women like Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, and Mary Lyon spearheaded the movement. In 1837, Oberlin College admitted four women to its freshman class. Colleges for women began to appear in places such as Macon, Georgia and Elmira, Ohio. In 1852, Catherine Beecher played an important role in the formation of the American Women's Educational Association.⁴⁵

Higher education for women was justified on the grounds that as human beings in a democracy they were entitled to a cultural

⁴³Copy of Quit Claim Deed, July 4, 1856, Sibley Mss.

⁴⁴Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience (New York, 1965), 152-161.

⁴⁵Rudolph, The American College and University, 310-312.

enrichment and training, and also in a practical sense because education would make women more useful members of society, more effective home-makers, and also create a supply of school teachers at very reasonable cost. George and Mary Sibley endorsed these ideas. As early as 1837, Sibley advertised the Boarding School at Linden Wood by quoting an article from the Richmond Compiler which argued that since women were the most important sex, they should be educated.⁴⁶ Moreover, the Sibley's quit claim deed to Linden Wood on July 4, 1856, declared their purpose to "present a School or Schools wherein female youth...may be properly educated, and qualified for the important duties of Christian Mothers and School Teachers."⁴⁷ The Sibleys were clearly regional leaders in the movement toward higher education for women.

On April 15, 1852, a crucial event occurred in the history of Linden Wood Female College. Sibley, seventy-years old and feeling the encroachments of age and ill health, redrew his will. The third article of that document bequeathed his Linden Wood tract of land to the Linden Wood Female College as a permanent endowment.⁴⁸ The one condition stated in the will was that Mary Easton Sibley would remain in possession of the land and would use and enjoy it during her natural life. Having done this, Sibley asked the St. Louis Presbytery

⁴⁶Missouri Republican, April 19, 1847.

⁴⁷Copy of Quit Claim Deed, July 4, 1856, Sibley Mss. See also Merle Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (New York, 1935), 173.

⁴⁸George C. Sibley to the Reverend Presbytery of St. Louis, July 4, 1856, Sibley Mss.

to take over the direction and care of the proposed college, which it agreed to do. Thus in February, 1853, Linden Wood Female College was incorporated by the legislature of the State of Missouri.⁴⁹

In this charter the college was placed under the care and supervision of the Presbytery of St. Louis, with full rights of appointment of Directors and of management of the College.⁵⁰

The St. Louis Presbytery agreed to the following guide lines suggested by the Sibleys. (1) The college was to consist of primary, high and normal schools; (2) It was to include both a domestic and a boarding department; (3) The tuition was to be as low as practicable; (4) The Holy Bible was to have a prominent place and was to be a permanent classbook; (5) The instruction and discipline were to be based on the Christian religion and the Westminster Confession of Faith; (6) The program was to develop the intellectual, moral and physical faculties of female students and to lead them to useful membership in society.⁵¹

The regular school continued, but Sibley's illness, the lack of funds, and the need for an educational leader prevented immediate organization of Linden Wood Female College. There were, however, some attempts made to raise funds for the erection of an adequate college building.⁵²

⁴⁹ Copy of Quit Claim Deed, July 4, 1856, Sibley Mss.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Sibley's Diary, April 3, 1855, Sibley Mss.

Finally, in 1855, a step was taken to revive the college scheme. The St. Charles Presbyterian Church had called the Reverend William McCalla to be its minister, and he and his family lived at Linden Wood rent free. Becoming impressed with McCalla, Sibley decided to let him take the initiative in organizing the college. It was believed that with a little exertion the college might be opened for both day and boarding scholars.⁵³

With the help of John Jay Johns, B. A. Alderson and Samuel Watson, all prominent St. Charles citizens, the Sibleys and the McCallas worked out plans for opening the school. Mr. and Mrs. McCalla assumed responsibility for the boarding department and McCalla volunteered to teach French and Latin.⁵⁴ It was also agreed that Johns, Alderson and Watson should handle financial matters. They settled the cost of tuition and board in keeping with Sibley's desire to be as lenient in this as was financially possible. They also arranged for the printing of circulars and placed announcements of the college's opening in several newspapers. Throughout they agreed that nothing would be done that was inconsistent with the plans and objectives outlined in the charter. And, finally, they agreed that the St. Louis Presbytery should assume control of the school as soon as it could do so.⁵⁵

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

Miss Isabella Gibson, who was teaching in Kirkwood, near St. Louis, was engaged as a teacher in the school for a ten month's period for a salary of \$400, board and room. Miss Gibson accepted the position and came to Linden Wood highly recommended.⁵⁶

The unexpected success of the school pleased the Sibleys greatly, and they asked that a special effort be made to erect a permanent college building in the immediate future. In his enthusiasm, Sibley predicted that with concerted effort this could be done by December. Sibley believed that an additional \$3000 added to the funds already raised would be sufficient to get the building project underway.⁵⁷ The money came in slowly, however, and the building project was, for the time being, shelved.

Throughout the Spring of 1855, the attendance rose. By the middle of April, forty-four scholars were attending Linden Wood. In April, Mrs. Sibley went to St. Louis to visit friends and raise funds for the college. Although she achieved little success in that venture, the enrollment climbed to forty-five by the end of May.⁵⁸ Although McCalla left the school in the fall of 1855, it continued to prosper under Miss Gibson, Mrs. Elinor Sheffield, and Mrs. Durfree.⁵⁹

Early in 1856, the Sibleys, encouraged by the school's continued success, renewed their efforts to have a building erected. I. O. Sawyer, a St. Louis architect, was hired to draw up plans for a

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., April 17, 1855.

⁵⁸Ibid., May 9, 1855.

⁵⁹Ibid., May 8, 1855.

building. These were accepted by the Sibleys and the trustees, but when the bids were made all were too high to proceed with construction. About ten thousand dollars had been raised but the building designed by Sawyer would require in the neighborhood of \$14,000. Faced with these figures, Sibley said, "In this emergency I Resolved that the long cherished project should not be abandoned."⁶⁰ Again, Mrs. Sibley solicited Churches and the friends of female education in St. Louis, but with little success.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Sibleys vowed to press on with their "cherished project," recognizing that "the enterprise will mainly, if not entirely depend on our almost unaided exertion and influence."⁶²

Finally in June, 1856, Jotham Biegelow and Son proposed to erect the college building for \$13,800, according to the plans and specifications of I. O. Sawyer. Their offer was accepted and excavation was begun on June 3, 1856.⁶³

A month later, on the Fourth of July, 1856, an important event in the life of Linden Wood College took place. Following a picnic near the site of the new building, the Sibleys presented to the Board of Trustees of Linden Wood Female College a quit claim deed to 120 acres of the Linden Wood tract of land.⁶⁴ Sibley explained his action in the following words:

⁶⁰ Ibid., May __, 1856.

⁶¹ Sibley's Diary, May __, 1856, Sibley Mss.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., May 24, 1856.

⁶⁴ Copy of Quit Claim Deed, July 4, 1856, Sibley Mss.

Mrs. Sibley and I have ever been averse to the too common practice among good people of 'holding on' to the end of their lives to their worldly estates which they intend to give to the aid of good and proper public objects after their decease, to be Secured by Will: which instruments are always liable more or less to be misinterpreted, or mislaid, or disputed and Set aside; and the purpose of the dying man defeated-- Now altho' my beloved wife and I cannot approve of such a course, which we are very sure is in general, indefensible...We have today executed and delivered to the Directors of Linden Wood Female College our Quit Claim Deed to the 120 acres promised...⁶⁵

The Board accepted the Deed, and then executed a Deed of lease to the Sibleys for 108 acres of the land. This lease provided that the Sibleys could remain at Linden Wood, their home for over twenty-five years.⁶⁶ Both the Sibleys and the Board felt that their presence at Linden Wood would be beneficial to the college.

After the reading of the Declaration of Independence and an address, the crowd assembled for the laying of the cornerstone.

The first annual catalogue of Linden Wood Female College, published in June 1858, provided considerable factual data on the status of the school at the time. President A.V.C. Schenck had a faculty of seven teachers. The three departments, normal, collegiate, and preparatory, had a total enrollment of seventy-four students. The collegiate department comprised four classes: primary, sophomore, junior and senior. The collegiate curriculum offered history, English

⁶⁵ George C. Sibley to the Reverend Presbytery of St. Louis, July 4, 1856, Sibley Mss.

⁶⁶ Deed of Lease, St. Charles County Court House, Book E, 157.

grammar, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, natural history, composition, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, physiology, mental philosophy, chemistry, and evidences of Christianity. In the preparatory department, the course of study included spelling, reading, geography, arithmetic, English exercises, writing and grammar.⁶⁷

In 1858 there was only one girl enrolled in the Normal division of the school. However, the catalogue pointed out that the normal department furnished facilities for graduates and others preparing themselves for teaching. The faculty of the school would give special testimonials to those who became proficient in any branch of this department. The school would also serve as a placement agency for such students since it received frequent requests for school teachers.

Board and tuition cost \$175.00 a year, which included a furnished room, heat and gas light. There were additional costs for piano and guitar lessons, ancient and modern languages, drawing, crayoning, and painting. Ministers received a discount for their children. Bills were payable one-half on entrance and one-half in the middle of the year. The school year began on the second Monday in September and continued for forty-one weeks. A public examination closed the school year.⁶⁸

Some of the General Regulations of the school were:

All the members of the College are required to be neat in their dress, lady-like in manner, to avoid

⁶⁷ First Annual Catalogue of Lindenwood Female College (June, 1858), Sibley Mss. Apparently from this time on, Linden Wood became one word-Lindenwood.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

extravagance in their expenses, and to conform promptly and cheerfully to all regulations which may be announced for the internal government of the College.

Damages to furniture, etc, will be charged to the student or to the occupants of the room.

Money in the hands of the students should be deposited in the safe, whence it can be drawn as occasion requires.

No visits are given or received on the Sabbath by any one connected with the College. Visits of others than parents or guardians are at the option of the President.

The Bible is a book of daily use. A Bible class lesson is required of boarding students on the Sabbath.

All works of doubtful tendency are expressly prohibited.

Neither boarding nor day students are permitted to attend parties or places of amusement incompatible with habits of study or refinement.

Young ladies from a distance are required to board in the College building.

Each student must be provided with towels, napkins, napkin-ring, umbrella and high overshoes. All these should be marked with her name. No articles will be received into the Laundry unless plainly marked with name in full.⁶⁹

The Sibleys continued to live at Linden Wood, but in the latter part of 1858 they sub-leased the 108 acres back to the school for an annual rent of \$800.⁷⁰ They then moved just a short distance from Linden Wood, where they lived until Sibley's death in 1863.

Their interest in the school continued to be strong. When, for example, the college sold some of its land to pay debts and incidental

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Deed of Lease, April 19, 1858, Sibley Mss.

expenses, Sibley felt justified in writing a stinging letter to John Jay Johns, then on the Board of Directors, to the effect that the college had committed a grave error. It was wrong, he stormed for the college to sell land which had been given as an endowment. Sibley wrote, "The property should be husbanded with judicious care, for the sole object of aiding and increasing the Endowment."⁷¹

Prior to the Civil War, many colleges were founded, survived for a brief time, and then failed. Lindenwood Female College survived, and its survival can be attributed to a number of factors. The Presbyterian Church, although hampered by dissension in the 1860's, offered some financial assistance and leadership. Sound, capable business men such as Samuel Watson, B. A. Alderson, and John Jay Johns served on the first Board of Directors. Watson, for example, gave in excess of \$5000 to the college at a time when the Sibleys' college scheme was far from being realized.⁷²

Extensive and varied, with meadow, grove, garden and orchard, the Linden Wood land was a very valuable piece of property. From an aesthetic point of view, the surroundings were matchless. From the observatory atop the college edifice, the two great rivers, the Missouri and the Mississippi, the bluffs of the Illinois shore, and the rolling land of St. Louis County could be viewed.⁷³ Coupled with Linden Wood's natural attractiveness, was the fact that Linden Wood was still a producing farm. Much of the college's food supply was

⁷¹George C. Sibley to John Jay Johns, June 3, 1859, Sibley Mss.

⁷²George C. Sibley to the Reverend Presbytery of St. Louis, July 4, 1856, Sibley Mss.

⁷³First Annual Catalogue of Lindenwood Female College (June, 1858), Sibley Mss.

provided by the farm. The gas used for light was manufactured on the premises from resin oil. Cisterns and wells provided an adequate water supply. Since so many improvements had been made and some buildings had been constructed before Linden Wood became a college, the costs of physical facilities remained relatively moderate. The Sibleys had given Linden Wood an acreage of both rare natural beauty and economic value.

Linden Wood's geographical location also contributed to its survival. Of the seventy-four scholars enrolled in 1858, sixty-two came from St. Charles, St. Louis, St. Charles County, and St. Louis County. By 1860 St. Charles was only an hour from St. Louis by rail. A proposed railroad was soon to connect the upper part of the state with the town.⁷⁴ Linden Wood's proximity to a growing urban area and its easy accessibility were distinct advantages.

Linden Wood was free from controversy that wrecked many struggling colleges before the War. Marion College, in Northeastern Missouri, for example, was torn to shreds by the slavery question.⁷⁵ Although the Presbyterians split in the 1860's, Linden Wood was somehow relatively free from the divisive pressures. Other colleges, however, were not as fortunate.

Finally, one cannot discount the intangible contributions of George and Mary Sibley to the college. They gave the land, but to a

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, I, 273.

remarkable degree they also gave themselves. Both of them firmly believed that women should be educated, that women's education should be quality education, and that future homemakers, mothers and school teachers should not be ignorant of history, mathematics, and philosophy. Sibley's personal imprint was in his unbending insistence on good, sound business practices. Sibley knew that man "did not live by bread alone," but he also was wise enough to know that "bread" was vitally important to an educational institution if it were to live at all. Mary, motivated by the desire for women's education, provided the drive to keep the "college scheme" alive.

By 1860, Sibley had become a frail, delicate-looking man with white hair. Although his physical health declined steadily, he remained mentally alert. A Sibley relative who attended Linden Wood in the late 1850's remembered seeing Sibley in the family home, propped up with pillows in bed, reading and writing. Occasionally, the Sibleys ate in the college dining room where Sibley impressed the girls by coming to the table in a long dressing gown and by drinking from a silver tube.⁷⁶

Because Sibley discontinued his diary late in life, it is difficult to formulate any idea as to how he actually felt about the crisis leading to the Civil War. Although he freed his two slaves, Baltimore and his wife Rachel, in 1859, he also asserted that he still believed that the "best position for the Negro for their own

⁷⁶Recollections of Major George C. Sibley from the Historical File on George Sibley in the collection of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

good, is that of domestic slavery and strict subordination to the White Race."⁷⁷ When the Civil War erupted, the old patriot chose the Union.

Sibley's health declined steadily until he died quietly in his sleep on January 31, 1863. In an old Session and Roll Book of the St. Charles Presbyterian Church an unknown person wrote beside Sibley's name "To all appearance he died without a struggle or pain."⁷⁸

Sibley was buried at Linden Wood in a plot set aside for the family. His grave, shaded by forest trees, rests on a slope that sweeps into what once was the prairie.

Mary survived her husband for fifteen years. She lived in a "two story red brick house" surrounded by Linden Wood's beautiful acreage. As she grew older, it became necessary for her to move from the larger house to a small cottage standing closer to the Linden Wood Campus.⁷⁹ Her home was filled with good furniture, books and pictures.⁸⁰ A graduate of Linden Wood in the 1860's recalled that, despite Mary's stern religious outlook, she wore gay colored clothes and hair ribbons and refused to wear black even after her husband's death.⁸¹

⁷⁷Sibley's Diary, September 1, 1859, Sibley Mss.

⁷⁸Session Book No. 2, January 31, 1863, St. Charles Presbyterian Church Historical Papers.

⁷⁹Recollections of Major George C. Sibley from the Historical File on George C. Sibley in the collection of Edna McElhiney Olson, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁸⁰Mary Easton Sibley's Will, Will Records, Number 4, 1873-1887, St. Charles County Probate Court, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁸¹Mrs. H. L. Conn, "Reminiscences of Mary E. Sibley," Lindenwood College Bulletin, XXCVIII (February, 1936), 86.

In 1870 the Linden Wood Charter was amended and the school was placed under the control of the Presbyterian Synod of Missouri, U.S.A. Mary's interest in the college never waned. In her later years, she became an ardent Second Adventist, believed that the righteous would be resurrected at the second coming of Christ, and when she was seventy years old decided to go to Japan as a missionary. She got as far as California before fatigue and illness forced her to return to Missouri.⁸² In spite of increasing deafness, she refused to retreat from life and remained active in St. Charles' religious and school affairs. An ear trumpet, prominently perched on her right ear when needed, became a constant aid. A few months before her death she wrote in her will that she had befriended an orphan girl and desired that a part of her remaining estate should be used to educate this girl at Linden Wood.⁸³

On June 20, 1878 Mary died and was buried next to her husband.⁸⁴ Just up the hill from their graves stands the college building that bears their name as partial testimony as to why the Sibleys deserve a permanent place in Missouri history and in the broad movement for female education.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Mary Easton Sibley's Will, Will Records, Number 4, 1873-1887, St. Charles County Probate Court, St. Charles, Missouri.

⁸⁴Ibid.

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