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8-18-1811

## Letter from George Sibley to John Sibley, August 18, 1811

George Champlin Sibley

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Notes of an Official excursion from Fort Osage to the  
Konsees - Pawnees - Osages - the Grand Saline and Rock  
Saline, In May - June and July 1811- By G. C. Sibley  
Agent of Indian Trade & Indian Affairs-

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Fort Osage, 300 Miles up the Missouri River, 18th August, 1811

My dear Father,

At the date of my last letter, early in May, I was just on the eve of Setting out on an excursion, Official I may Say, to the wild Indian Country, "on this Side" of the Missouri- that is to Say North westerly and South westerly from this post- I did Set out on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May and on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July got back here Safely- having been exactly two months out= in which time I travelled in various directions, very nearly a thousand Miles altogether; Saw a great many Indians of many different Tribes, at their Towns and hunting camps= and among the "Wonders of Nature" that exist in the wild and hitherto but partially explored country through which I passed; I took occasion to visit and examine (Rather hurriedly however) the famous Salines beyond the Arkansaw River; heretofore entirely unknown I believe, except to the roaming Indians.- I Received the most friendly and Respectful treatment from all the natives that I met with- The weather was for the most part, quite pleasant; and excepting a few days indisposition with my old complaint, Sick head-ache, whilst at the Pawnee Towns, I enjoyed my usual robust health and activity= and on the whole, had an agreeable tour, marked by fewer difficulties than I had anticipated, and was prepared to encounter-

The following is a brief account of my excursion written off from my pencil Notes, of what I Saw, and what I did; with Some occasional

Reflections= which I Send you in compliance with your particular Request.-

From Fort Osage (which is in Lat: 39° 10' 19"- Lon: 93° 51' 5" from Greenwich) I travelled South 60°. West near about 75 Miles, along the Osage Summer hunting tract; over a Country almost entirely open prairie; well watered by numerous Small Rivers, Creeks and Rivulets, tributaries of the Osage & Kansas (more properly Konsee) Rivers- these Small Streams all afford more or less of forest growth; consisting of Several kinds of Oak- Hickory- Cottonwood- Elm- Walnut &c- and Some of the larger branches of the Osage afford fine bodies of most excellent land for Cultivation; which will at no distant day hold out attractions irresistible, to many of our frontier loving Settlers, commonly called Squatters.

This large and beautiful tract possesses a Sufficient variety of Surface and Scenery, to Render it quite pleasing, and even delightful at many points; to the eye of the mere Rambler; and will doubtless at Some period not very far distant, offer inducements even, for permanent Christian Settlements- At present it abounds with wild animals, Elk- Deer- Bear, and Some Buffalo - besides a variety of Water fowl, with Beaver & Otters in the Rivers and ponds-

At this distance (75 Miles) from Ft. Osage, I found a large Camp of Osages, temporarily located on a very pretty Creek, a branch of the Marais de Cygne, which is a principal branch of the Osage River; which last empties into the Missouri about 125 Miles, by water, above the junction of the Missouri & Mississippi- (Here by way of parenthesis, I must write a few words in defence of the Name, extent and character, of the Missouri River; tho' I am not So presumptuous as to expect to be able to do justice in the premises, by any thing that I may Say here

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on the Subject- It is a common, universal, error, to class the Missouri as a tributary of the Mississippi; when in truth, it is just the Reverse- the latter is a branch of the former- Let any one embark on the Missouri at the entrance of the Yellow Stone, 1880 Miles above St. Louis, and descend to the Gulf of Mexico, 3200 in the whole, and he will find Missouri characteristics invariably, and at no place to be mistaken, in the whole long distance; except partially for about twenty Miles, on the Eastern Shore, below what I shall call, the true mouth of the Mississippi- From the Yellow Stone down to the Gulf, this most Remarkable River, bears the very Same character- Current Rapid, Running in continuous whirls and Surges; the Surface changes from top to bottom as the flood literally Rolls on, within about every half mile; and as the heavy tide of turbid waters Rushes on, dashing from bend to bend, and from point to point, against the alluvial banks, and constantly wearing them away, and depositing Sand bars and mud banks all along; the Water itself becomes Saturated with a variety of Substances, that are Received from the loose Soil of the banks, and Stirred up from the bottom; and always held in Solution by the peculiar Rolling motion of the Current.- The water tho' consequently Roily, is nevertheless when even but partially Settled, very wholesome for drinking & cooking, and being much cooler in hot weather, than any other River water, is by no means unpleasant to drink, as just dipped up from the River- when well Settled, it is inferiour to no other Water whatever.

Now the Mississippi, above its junction with the Missouri, possesses a character altogether different- its current is gentle, Smooth and placid; never changing the Surface, except when much agitated by Winds, Running over obstructions &c.- Seldom or ever Cuts away the Banks- Its water is quite clear, and during the hot Summer months,

when the River is low, becomes filthy, almost putrid, Sometimes; very unpleasant, & unwholesome- generating four air very extensively (which the Missouri never does)- even when filtered and cooled with ice, the water of this River is inferiour to that of the Missouri taken up fresh from the Stream)-

Excuse this lengthened, out of the way digression; much longer than I intended- I will now Resume my narrative- I Remained a whole day and two nights, with the Osages in their Camp; making Some necessary preparations to Strike off more Northerly towards the KONSEE TOWNS, and to enlist Some of the principal Men to accompany me to those towns and to the Pawnees; having in view, as one main object of my trip, to effect a peace between the Osages, Konsees- Pawnees and Ottoes- The great War Chief, Sans Oreille, and two other Osages, of the tribe called U-jet-tas, agreed to go with me on that Mission- Another, who Speaks the Pawnee language- My Osage and French interpreter- My Servant Jemmy Henderson an Irishman, and myself, Six of us in all, well equipped, and well mounted, formed my party proper.- Several others joined us however, but they went along upon their own hook, to hunt and traffic with the Konsees and Pawnees under my protection- On the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> May quite early, the Camp was broke up.- The Osages with their families pursued their way Southerly towards their Summer Buffalo hunting Ranges, with all possible merriment and glee- I and my Small Company Set out in a different direction, at the Same time-

On a general Course of North 70° West, we travelled 65 Miles, and arrived at the Konsee Town- Our way led through a wild, but extremely beautiful, high prairie Country, pretty well watered, and variegated with Strips of Woodland, ranges of quite lofty, Rugged, naked hills, overlooking very extensive tracts of level low ground prairie- Deer and Elk we found in plenty, and I frequently noticed Antelopes Skipping

over the verdant hills and Vallies, with almost Bird-like Speed-

Some distance before we Reached the River opposite the Town, the Head Chief with about One hundred of his Warriors, met us on horseback (I had dispatched a Runer the day before to announce my approach, a formality always expected)- The River was Rising and barely fordable; So that our escort did not cross without Some little confusion, and the derangement of the gaudy trappings of many of the Cavalier beaux, who were in the most haste to get over- I had all the assistance that could be Rendered, and effected the crossing Safely and dryly- We were Received at the Village in the most friendly and Respectful manner, in the Indian Style; with all the courtly etiquette and Ceremony used by these people on what they consider great and very important occasions- from the River to the town our Mounted escort conducted us in considerable State, thro' an avenue of Curious, gaping, wondering females of all ages; old men, boys & children- a motley multitude truly- On entering an Indian Village, one is Surprised always, to See So large a proportion of Children; and a naturel conclusion would Seem to be, that those people must Surely be rapidly increasing- But alas! this is not the case- Wars among themselves- pestilential diseases- evil habits arising from their intercourse with Civilized (?) Men, and other causes; unite not only to prevent any increase Substantially; but to produce a gradual and Sure diminution- As a general fact: the deaths are most numerous than the births, one year with another, and in any period of ten years, the decrease is very apparent.-

After a good deal of Ceremony, of which I became heartily tired, I and my party (fifteen persons in all, including Nine young men who joined as irregular Attaches) were conducted to the Lodge of the Grand Chief Shone-gee-ne-gare: where we found a feast prepared for us; of which I partook most cheerfully and heartily; an excellent variety of good



eatables, well Served, and a good appetite combining to Render it very acceptable.

The old Chief and his eldest Son, (a Remarkably fine young Man of about 22) were unceasing in their kind attentions to myself and my people, to make us Comfortable-- I was particularly gratified to observe Several Flags with the Stars and Stripes, flying in different parts of the Town, besides the large and very handsome one that gracefully waved over the Lodge of the Great Chief- This marked hospitality was much more than I had at all expected from these people= for it had been my duty, quite Recently, to treat the whole Tribe with So much (official) Severity, in consequence of Some depredations and cruelties they had Committed on White people Repeatedly that I had been advised, and even Seriously and earnestly cautioned, not to trust myself among them- My friend Sans Oreille had also cautioned me, and was really So much concerned for my Safety, that he Scarcely ever left my Side during the first day and night of my Stay among them= And here allow me another digression- It is due to my friendship for this genuine friend and excellent Man, and brave Warrior; to State that he accompanied me throughout my whole tour, and was never wearied in his watchful care of my person day or night, for a Moment- More than once or twice has this friend been the Means of Rescuing me from great peril, at no little hazard of his own Safety, and once most probably from destruction- But I have no Reason to believe that any of the Kon-Sees entertained any other than friendly feelings towards me; except one very wicked old Man (hated by his whole tribe) who, as Sans Oreille told me, made a cunning effort to poison me; and but for his watchful interposition, would without doubt have accomplished his purpose= ----- The Kon-See town or Village Stands immediately on the North bank of the Kon-See River, about One hundred miles by its courses, above its junction with

the Missouri, (which junction is 30 Miles above Ft. Osage)- it is Seated in a beautiful prairie of moderate extent, which is encircled very nearly, by the Main River on one Side, a Small Creek Westerly,- The North fork just above, and a chain of romantic prairie hills North-erly- which last give a very pleasing effect to the whole of this beautiful Location- The Town, when I was there, contained One hundred and twenty eight Houses or Lodges, as they are most commonly called- These are generally about Sixty feet long and twenty-five feet wide; Constructed of Stout Saplings and Poles, arranged in form of a common Garden Arbour, and covered with Skins, Bark and Mats- they are commodious and comfortable- The place for fire and cooking, is Simply a hole dug in the earth Right under the Ridge pole of the Roof, where a Small opening is left to let out the Smoke- All the larger Lodges (Some of them are 80 or 100 ft. long) have two, three or four fire places; one for each family dwelling in it- Such dwellings are of course incapable of any long duration- the Skeletons are left entirely naked when the Indians go off on their great hunts; The covering being needed for their hunting camps, which are built very much like the Village as to Size & Comfort; tho' with much less Strength- These Lodges (the best of them in the town) are to Some extent carpeted with Mats and Skins, and as already Remarkd, are quite comfortable, and Commodious- The town is built without much Regard to order- there are no Regular Streets or Avenues- The Lodges are Set up pretty compactly together, in crooked Rows, allowing barely Space Sufficient for a Man to pass between them- The avenues between those irregular lines are kept usually, in tolerably decent order- And the whole Village is, upon the whole, Rather neat and cleanly than otherwise- There is perhaps as much attention paid in the Indian Towns generally, to this department of police duty (cleanliness) as is admissible, or attainable, under the Circumstances in which they are obliged to live-

Certainly they are by no means insensible to the virtue and importance of cleanliness- Judging from the description I have given of a Konsee Town, the combustible nature of the materials of which it is built, and the manner in which the Lodges are huddled together, one would conclude at once, that destructive fires must be frequent among them- This is not the case however- The burning of an Indian Village is quite a Rare occurrence- and you will easily perceive that whenever Such a misfortune Should befall, it can be easily and Speedily Repaired- Much of the covering would always be Saved, and not a few of the Skeletons - But if the whole Should be consumed, but little time would be necessary to erect new and better Lodges- inconvenience, and Suffering to Some extent, would doubtless be experienced- but not in any degree as great as many people are apt to imagine- I have heard wise Men, members of Congress, Senators, prescribing "effectual means" for punishing and Subduing the Indians; and their grand infallible method was, to Send a Strong cavalry force, to dash into their towne and "burn them with fire" destroy their growing crops, and drive the inhabitants out; Such portion as they could not capture or kill- Such an assault, if properly conducted, would certainly cause much distress to the Indians for a little while- The Towns could be easily burned, and their little crops cut down and destroyed- it is highly improbable however, that any of the Indians would be caught or killed- And as for the Rest, I will venture to Say that almost any of the tribes, especially Such as build as do the Konsees and Osages, might, without much persuasion, be induced to enter into a treaty compact with good old Uncle Sam, to burn their towns and cut down their crops, (or not to plant any) annually, for less than it would Cost the Government to equip and Send out a Military force, Such as Some of our Wise ones at Washington have proposed- At present, whilst these people enjoy the apparently inexhaustible Resources of the Buffalo hunt,

and of other game abounding around them; as well as a great variety of very good vegetable food furnished them indiginously from the forests and prairies- (as Nuts, Roots, &c.) not to mention fish- they can do very well without any of those cultivated Vegetables, in use among Some of them; tho' not all; for there are Some Nations that never attempt to provide any portion of their food, by Cultivating fields or gardens- Doubtless the time will come, when the main reliance of all these Races, that may Survive, must be from agriculture, and with Regard to Some of the tribes; that time cannot be far distant.- The Konsees had just finished planting their Corn, Beans, and Pumpkins (their whole variety), and were preparing to Start out, in a few days, with all their families, for the Summer hunt among the Buffaloes- Their little garden patches could be seen in all directions at Convenient distances around the Village- The whole together, would not be equal to One Hundred Acres- As they have no domestic Animals except Horses, Mules, and Dogs, which they take with them always when they move, they have no need of any fencing around their Crops- All the cultivation they attempt is with Hoes: done by the Women, just previously to their departure for the general Buffalo hunt.-

Their Horses and Mules, generally in very good condition, were Swarming in the beautiful Prairie, in Sight of the town, herded and well watched, by hundreds of Boys- All was bustle "busy hum" and merriment- They were Soon to Set out to the Buffalo hunt; by far the greatest enjoyment of their lives- The Kon-See River, at the Town, is about 300 ft: wide, and is I believe nearly always navigable for Keel Boats thus far up- its main branches flow in from the North Side, and above the town- One or two enter from the South, which interlock with Some of the waters of the Osage, and fall in below the town- its

mouth, as before Stated, is about 30 Miles above Fort Osage- It is a gentle Stream, and waters a fine, Rich, and very beautiful Country of very great extent- The Konsees have a Sort of conventional claim to all the Territory that is watered by their beautiful River; in accordance with the Common usage among the Ab-original tribes- Such claims, it is understood, limit the extent of their Common Hunting grounds, for Beaver, Deer, Elk, Bear &c.- But a much more extensive Range is allowed, tacitly for the Buffalo hunt.

The Kon-Sees (So I call them, because they call themselves So. Not Kansas) and the Osages, (Wa-shash, as they call themselves) are undoubtedly from the Same original Stock; tho' they cannot, as they tell me, fairly make out from tradition, a kindred genealogy- their language is So nearly the Same, that the difference is hardly discernible; and that very Slight difference consists altogether in a peculiar drawling tone of pronunciation with the Kon-Sees- In their manners and customs, they differ only in Some very few local peculiarities- At this time the Kon-Sees may probably number about Two hundred and fifty fighting men, with a full proportion of Women, and more than a fair proportion of Children- They are governed by a "Head Chief", and the Counsel and influence of the oldest and most distinguished Warriors- A Simple Patriarchal Government- The Office of Chief being hereditary, tho' not always Strictly So- At the present time their councils are much distracted by Jealousies arising from the Ambition, and turbulent disposition of Some of the Warriors and Minor Chiefs- But there is good Reason to believe that the head chief, who is a man of Sense and firmness, as well as a great Warrior, will be able Soon, to effect a Reconciliation of the leading partisans; and thus be able to exercise a Controlling influence, for good, over the Tribe- Of late years, these people have Scarcely ever been at peace with any of their Neighbours, except the

Osages; with whom there appears to be now a cordial good feeling, which will probably be lasting; as they are constantly becoming more and more intimately connected by intermarriages. Not many years ago, the most bitter hostility existed between them and the Osages, and they were rapidly destroying one another- Policy at length united them in their mutual defence against the perpetual attacks of the Pawnees, and more especially the Ioways, Sacs and Pottawattamies- The Konsees are a Stout, hardy, handsome Race- more active and energetic and enterprising, than the Osages even, and they have long been noted for their bravery, ferocity and heroic daring, when engaged in active warfare; and they are thus engaged more or less, nearly all the time- They maintain their independence (equally at least, with other tribes) against the Pawnees- Ottoes- Missouris- and other tribes, with whom they are continually at War; entirely by their personal bravery, and Superior Skill as Warriors- They are by no means ignorant of the position they occupy among the neighbouring tribes, in Respect of their Warlike character; and this consciousness has the natural effect (not confined to ignorant Savages), of rendering them extremely overbearing, quarrelsome and ferocious- Previously to the cession of Louisiana to the United States, the Konsees, committed frequent acts of violence upon the French Traders, who visited them, or were passing up the Missouri to other tribes- robbing, beating, and otherwise cruelly abusing them; not unfrequently murdering them- One instance is Related of their having burned Some frenchmen alive, after having Seized and confiscated their Boat and Goods- Their constant practice was, to way-lay the River in Strong parties in the fall of the year when the trading Batteaus were passing up; detain them if they could, to trade with them; or else Seize and divide their Goods, as on a forced credit.- Sometimes, tho' very seldom, paying, or much oftener Robbing the unlucky trader, out

and out.- Whenever they were able to prevent it, They nevered Suffered a Boat to pass them carrying Guns and Ammunition; lest, as they Said, their enemies Should be better prepared to fight them= In Short the Konsees insignificant as they have always been as to numbers, were the terror of the lower Missouri- But they are now undergoing a Reformation, under the wholesome advice of Gov<sup>r</sup>. Lewis and Gen<sup>l</sup>. Clark, & the powerful influence of a better Regulated Trade-

The trade with these people is Reckoned valuable at present= The traders carry them Milled Blankets- Blue & Red Strouding- Scarlet & Blue Cloth- Brass & Copper Kettles- N. W. Fusils- Powder- Lead- Vermillion- Silver ornaments- Wampum & glass beads- Tobacco- Axes- Hoes- Knives- Cotton prints- Blk: Silk Hkfs:- Needles- Awls &c. &c. which they exchange for Beaver- Otter- Bear- Raccoon & Shaved Deer Skins- Some Buffalo Robes- Bear's Oil- Tallow &c. &c.- A Single Trader with an equipment of \$3000 St. Louis Cost; will usually collect from ten to twenty five packs of fine Furs of 100 lbs. each, with a large proportion of inferior furs and peltries, worth probably at St. Louis, from eight to twelve thousand Dollars- But the next Trader who ventures there may expect a very different Result= The extortion of the traders are always so exorbitant, that 'tis not at all Surprising that the Indians Sometimes Retort by Robbery- In truth, the most of the difficulties that arise between the Indians and the Whites may be traced to this very cause- The Factory System as established by Mr. Jefferson, was designed to obviate this evil; and to a great extent it has had that effect= The Konsees are getting more and more in the way of trading at the Factory at Ft. Osage= In four days they can come here Safely with their packs & having to pass through no enemy's country, and when here are Sure to obtain for their Furs and Peltries their full value,

in Such Goods as they want, at prices less than half what the Traders extort from them-

I left the Konsees on the 22<sup>d</sup> day of May for the Pawnees; Our Course was North about 40°. West- distance abt. 120 Miles the Country over which we traveled, is all prairie= for abt. 25 Miles it is hilly and well watered. The hills then wear away into an immense level plain to which the eye can find no bounds, and but little to please= there are but few water Streams, and the Most of those are So Sluggish as to be Scarcely drinkable- More than once or twice we were put to Some difficulty to find water fit to drink= Where Wood and water are Scarce, game cannot of course be very plenty- We were fortunate however in meeting with Several droves of Buffaloes and Elks, from which we Supplied ourselves abundantly for our whole journey to the Pawnees.

Our Course brought us to the Platt (Ne-bras-ca- Shallow water) 110 Miles from the Konsee towns, and abt. 140 Miles above its junction with the Missouri- It is a Mile wide where we crossed it, and So Shallow, that we forded it with ease; in no place did it Reach the girths, and Seldom above the knees of the Horses- The Platt, or Nebraska, is a turbid River- very broad, very Muddy and very Rapid- full of Islets- Not a tree to be Seen where I crossed it, except a few on Some of the Islets- It is Subject to Sudden floods, which frequently Remove the Sandbars and change the channels, the bed is a Sort of quicksand: My Horse Standing belly deep less than two Minutes; was near Swimming in a hole by the washing out of the bottom under his feet- It affords no navigation= nearly all its principal branches flow in from the North Side-

Our party (now augmented to 20 persons, by the addition of Several Konsee Chiefs & Warriors) crossed the Ne-bras-ca Safely and camped for



the night on the North bank- Beine now within 10 Miles of the Pawnee Republican town, I dispatched an Interpreter early the Next Morning to apprise the Pawnees of our approach. This was the 28th day of May- 17 days from Fort Osage and 6 from the Konsee towns- Our Course to the Pawnee town was a little West of our course hitherto, and lay over an almost dead level prairie- the day was oppressively Sultry- When we had got within 5 Miles of Town, a dashing troop of Horsemen met us; Sent out by the Chief to escort us- This troop was well mounted, and gaudily dressed and accoutered; and Really acquitted themselves quite handsomely- On our Coming in Sight of the town (which Stands on the North Side of the Otto fork of the Nebraska) the Grand Chief himself dashed across the River at the head of 200 Men on Horseback; and thus we were Received and conducted over the River, with much ceremony and courtesy- the River bank was crowded with Swarms of dirty, half naked women & children. When we arrived at the Skirt of the Village, the Chief desired us to halt to allow him to dispose of our company- which he Soon billeted in convenient Squads; Reserving myself & attendants (including Sans Oreille) for his own family and hospitality; this matter being Settled, we entered the town; and I Soon found myself quite comfortable; tho' I felt feverish, and had Some headache- It was now late in the day, and of course no business was entered upon- I had my pallet prepared, and attempted to take Some Repose, determined to keep as quiet as I could, till the Morrow-

The Pawnee Republican Town is Seated on the North bank of the North, or Otto, fork of the Ne-bras-ca, or Platt River; about 100 Miles, by its courses, above the Confluence. It is built immediately on the Bank, in an elevated level Prairie, which is hemmed in on the North by a Range of pretty lofty hills; which Run parallel with the River a considerable distance, above & below, leaving a Strip of

beautiful level Meadow or pasture ground, half a Mile wide, next to the River= This branch is 160 yards wide at this place, it is a pretty Stream- Rapid but not muddy-nearly at all times fordable= only navigable downward for canoes & Small periaegers- Wood is Scarce- the principal growth is the Cotton Tree, a few Black-Walnuts & Willows= The adjacent Hills produce abundance of Dwarf Plum bushes, which yield a great quantity of very delicious fruit- This Shrubbery and the few Scattering forest Trees, appear to be very carefully husbanded & preserved from injury by the Pawnees= The Soil does not appear to be very fertile; tho' it certainly does produce excellent pasture= This pasture, when I observed it was literally Swarming with Horses and Mules, occupying an area of fully two miles by half a mile, between the hills and River-- The town is now inhabited by three Tribes of the Pawnees= The Successive incursions of the Konsees, compelled them to abandon that position, about two years ago, and to Seek protection under the powerful & noted Chief Cher-i-ta-reesh of the Republican tribe, So called from their location= whose authority over the whole, appears to be firmly established= At this time the Town consists of just 170 lodges (I had them counted by Henderson & the Interpreter) many families who have lived with their Relatives & friends Since their Removal, are but just preparing to build for themselves- The Chief Says that when the town Shall be completed, it will contain 360 Houses and about 4000 People, with abt. 1000 Warriors-

Building with this People, is not, as with the Konsees & Wasashees a job of only a few days= It is a Serious undertaking= The process is nearly as follows- the necessary materials being provided- by no means a light matter= a Circle of from 80 to 100 feet in circumference is Sunk two feet below the Surface of the ground, entirely excavated, and handsomely leveled and well pounded- Stout forks 8 feet long are then planted

2 feet deep & about 8 feet apart just on the outer edge of the circle, their tops inclining a little inward= these forks are Supported inside by a Sufficient number of braces, and are connected at the top by Strong poles & ties, forming in the whole a circular Scaffold 8 feet high inside= this is covered from the ground up, outside, with Small poles, on which is Secured with much care and neatness, a thick covering of long dry Soft grass= this is the body of the House- Now for the Roof- 8 very Stout forks are planted upright about 6 feet apart Round the center of circle; which are connected at the tip by Stout poles and cords- thus we have two circular Scaffolds, one within the other= the inner one is enough higher than the other to give a proper Slope for the Roof= long Straight poles the thickness of a Man's arm are then placed about 18 inches apart, with great neatness and Regularity from one Scaffold to the other, the ends extending above the inner Scaffold, forming a Small circular Orifice to let out the Smoke- the butts also project a foot or more outside; this frame is then covered transversely with Smaller poles 6 or 8 inches apart, and the whole made Secure by tiers of bark or withes= No Small care is used to place the projecting ends of the larger Roof poles all Square and even- the Roof is now very compactely covered with Clay Cats (Small bundles of long dry Soft grass, well filled with Clay Mortar) - these Cats are carefully Smothed by hand, inside & out, as they are laid on, and firmly Stuck together= the Side walls are plaistered over in the Same manner; So that the whole Structure has a compact covering of tough grass and tough clay, Some 4 or 5 inches thick= this being completed, a covering of damp dirt and Sticky Clay-mortar is laid on about 12 inches thick, and the whole building is then neatly Sodded, with hardy perennial grass that abounds in the Prairies= The entrance is by a covered way connected with, and neatly joined to

the main body 5 or 6 feet wide, & extending 10 or 15 feet out; and covered in the Same manner as the Rest- These Houses are very Strong and durable; commodious and comfortable; and in the Season of vegetation present quite a pretty appearance- So many cones of verdure- Inside, they are quite tastefully adorned with a Sort of wicker-work, (made of Rushes or flags Such as their Mats are made of) coloured in gay figures- Suspended from the Roof about 4 feet from the wall, nearly all Round. Behind this Curtain are the Sleeping places of the family- and depositories of their valuables- The best houses are carpetted very neatly with Mats and Skins- The town is not built with much Regard to order; the houses are placed pretty close together- only leaving narrow crooked pass ways- there is Some attention paid to general cleanliness= tho' I must Say without any marked Success beyond the actual limits of the town-- These people make their travelling tents of well dressed & Smoked Buffalo Skins- they are conical in form- Roomy & comfortable; many of them quite tastily painted in figures Regularly drawn- In the construction of these Lodges and tents, the far greater part of the labour is performed by the Women- It takes from two to four Months from first to last, to complete one House-

With a composition of Red Clay, of a peculiar quality, and finely powdered Flint; they manufacture with considerable Skill and neatness, a Sort of wide mouthed Jars or Pitchers, of various Shapes & Sizes; capable of enduring great heat, which they find a good Substitute for cooking Kettles-

The Pawnees hunt and Range over a very extensive tract of Country, abounding, at present, with Buffalo- Elk- Antelopes- Some Bears- Horses- and Some Deer- besides the Smaller Animals- Wolves- Foxes- Raccoons &c. and is believed to be, in Some parts, Rich in fine Furs- Their Trade would be very lucrative if they were Settled on a Navigable Stream-

What few Goods they get are transported more than a hundred Miles over land, from the Missouri River= The Risk and expense attending this portage deters the Traders from visiting them often; and then only with Scant Supplies= They get no Goods from the Spanish Settlements, unless they go for them, which they very seldom do= a trading trip to Santa Feé and back, would Require fully a Month- what little they ever get from that quarter, is mostly in presents to their Chiefs and leading Men- With So uncertain a vent for their Furs and Peltries, their attention is chiefly confined to the Buffalo hunt; which furnishes them abundance of food and clothing &c. and is much the least hazardous and laborious- They do furnish Some fine furs however- (Beaver & Otter) but in a very Small proportion to other Skins= Buffalo Robes is the Staple article of their trade, these they dress and manufacture exceedingly well; and ornament a large portion of them very handsomely, with paint and dyed Porcupine quills-

Ten Miles higher up the North fork, above the Republicans, is the Village of the Loups- or Wolf Pawnees, or as they call themselves Ske-nees- their Town is less than the other, tho' better built, & in the Same Style. A perfectly good understanding exists between this band & the others= In fact they are all one people, and are all essentially under the general Sway of Cher-a-t-Reesh- The four bands living in the two towns, could I think turn out twelve hundred very active fighting Men- and there is a large proportion of Women and Children= My impression is, that they are increasing in numbers= There are other branches of the Pawnee Stock- One or perhaps two on the Red River, high up- and another on the Missouri, not far below the Mandans; known by the Name of Re-ca-ras= But the Ne-bras-ca-tribes have very little, if any intercourse with the others; and Seem

to know or care but little about them: They are known to Speak the Same language, or very nearly So- this language is unpleasant to the ear, & hard to learn- From my conversation with Cher-a-ta-Reesh, and inspection of certain documents in his possession, which he put into my hands for that purpose; it would Seem that he has been much courted by the Spanish Authorities of New Mexico at Santa Fee, and has been often invited by the Governour of that Province to visit him; which however, he has always declined to do-

In looking over the Papers, above alluded to, I was Surprised to find letters, dated in 1807, to the old Chief & his people, from the Governors of New Mexico and Baton Rouge; expressive of their Satisfaction of their loyalty &c.- these letters the Chief Says were accompanied with Flags and Medals; which he gave up to Lieut. Pike- The papers I Returned- but told the Chief that henceforward, he Should keep aloof from the authorities of New Mexico, and So instruct his people; which he promised to do.- (I Should have Noted, that among those papers, was a Letter from the Gov<sup>r</sup>. of N. Mex<sup>o</sup> addressed to "White Hair grand Chief of the Osages", of the Same tenor and date of the others- which Cher-a-ta-Reesh Says White Hair Refused to Receive, or to Receive the Flags and Medals that accompanied it. I presume the Pawnee Chief tells the truth about the affair). I could find but two American (U. S.) Badges among the Pawnees- a Small, half worn, Ragged Flag left by Lt. Pike; and a medal of the Smallest Size, that Some trader had given to a Man of Some Note for his good Offices, influence &c. Cher-a-ta-Reesh Said that medal has never been Regarded in any other light than a Mere Ornament-

In 1804 two Pawnee youths Rambled off to Washington on their "own hook" without the knowledge of any of the Tribe; and Some how or other obtained the Recognition of President Jefferson as Delegates- They

Returned home each with a Medal and many other Marks of distinction; and bore also a written address from the President to all the Pawnees= they had passed themselves off for Chiefs, and had evidently humbugged Mr. Jefferson and many others= But their unauthorized Mission gave great offence to their Chief, and the effect produced was decidedly injurious- The young Men (who were of no Note in their Nation) were treated with Scorn & derision by all= nothing that they Said was believed; they were Stripped of their finery, and forbidden to wear their Medals= these they Sold to Some trader, and were never Seen again among the Pawnees= The address was preserved by a Relative of one of the youths, and put into my hands, (Indians are all fond of Showing their "Papers") it had never been explained to any of them, and its contents were totally unknown to them= I availed myself of the opportunity, to have it fully interpreted to the Chief and a few of the principal Warriors, who Seemed much pleased and promised to explain it to all others- I Relate this matter to Show how easily our dignitaries at Washington may be Indian-hum-bugged - As far as I could do it, I Remedied the Mistake, tho'Rather late-

The Pawnees having had little or no intercourse with our people, or communication with our Gov<sup>t</sup>. Agencies; whilst they have been familiar with the Spanish authorities in New Mexico, by whom they have always been much courted; it is not Surprising that hitherto they have been a good deal under the influence of the latter- It is true that the few acquaintances they have made with Americans (Such as Bob. McClelland and John Dougherty) have impressed them most favourably of our bravery and power; an impression that is exactly Reversed as Respects the Spaniards- and it is high time, I think, to cultivate a better acquaintance with those Tribes- which is best done by trade &

friendly intercourse- this I am endeavoring to promote-

The PAWNEES are a Sober Minded and well disposed people, naturally- The Men are in general above the ordinary Size of our white people; but they are decidedly inferior in that Respect to the Konsees and Wau-sash-ees (or Osages), and are also less active and enterprising- As Warriors they are by no means inferior- and as Horsemen are unequalled- The Women appeared to me Rather untidy in their persons and with Some few exceptions, come under that class by the Yankees denominated homely- But I must do them the justice to Say that they are industrious, and quite neat in their household economy; And I Should be ungrateful were I to omit my testimony to the Motherly and Sisterly kindness & attention of the Wife and Daughter of the great Chief Cher-a-ta-Reesh, whilst I lay Sick in his family, and during my whole Stay among them= ----- Their views of a future existence, like those of all the "Red Skins" in North America in a State of Nature, are dark and confused; and to themselves very unsatisfactory; but like all others of the Native American Race that I have known; they have a decided Religious bias towards a Supreme Being; on whom they depend for all things and on whom they call daily and fervently for help= Much Superstition, and no little of Rank idolatry is mingled with their Religious worship; but it Seems to me, that with judicious means and efforts, the benign light of Christianity may be very easily Set up, not only among the Pawnees, but also among the other North American tribes= I express this opinion deliberately and firmly, after long and close observation; the opinions of Some very wise and learned theorists to the contrary notwithstanding= And I will here Remark also; with equal confidence that all attempts to civilize any of those tribes (in the proper Sense and meaning of the term) 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 have yet heard of the Christian God.

The Pawnees wage an unceasing warfare against the I-tarn, (or Hie-tans) from whom they plunder great number of Horses and Mules; many of which in turn fall into the hands of the Kon-Sees - Wau-Sashes & other tribes of the Missouri, by theft or purchase-

They Sometimes push their predatory excursions to the frontier Settlements of New Mexico- the Skee-nees committed Such daring and Serious depredations there about four years ago, as induced the Governor of that province to Send a Strong detachment of Mounted local Militia, to punish them; and to overawe the Pawnees & other tribes- The commander of this force (a Colonel of the Spanish Army) consulted Cher-a-ta-Reesh, on his arrival at the Pawnee town, as to the proper course to be pursued towards the offending band; and was easily persuaded (as the old Chief told me) to Spare them, & Return home peaceably. Not long after this "Spanish Rabble" as the Chief called them, had departed, Lieut. Z. M. Pike of the U. S. Army, arrived there with his exploring party of about twenty five men including Lieut. Wilkinson (Son of Gen. W.) and Dr. John H. Robinson- Lieut. Pike Remained eight or ten days with Cher-a-ta-Reesh Resting his party, purchasing Horses &c. and was kindly & Respectfully treated- When he at length announced his intention of pursuing his journey across the plaines towards the Spanish Settlements of New Mexico; the old Chief promptly objected; Saying he had promised the Spanish Officer who had So Recently left him, to forbid and prevent any American party from passing through his country towards the Spanish possessions; and that he felt bound to

Redeem his promise. Pike Replied, that as his chief had ordered him to make a tour in that direction (certainly with no hostile or unfriendly intention) he Should do So, or die in the attempt= "Why", Said Cher-a-ta-Reesh, "you have only twenty-five warriors here, whilst I can command a thousand, and have them assembled here immediately; how then can you go if I forbid it? You are a brave young Chief, and your Men are all brave also I am Sure; but what can So few do in opposition to my orders? I Respect you- I love you as my Son,- Cher-a-ta-Reesh loves brave Men- do not oblige me to hurt you my Son, you must not- you cannot pass that way-" Still Pike persisted; and having all things in Readiness, he Solemnly announced to the Chief and his people, that on the following morning he Should pursue his journey as ordered; and at the Same time he tendered his warmest thanks for the hospitality & kindness that he and his men had Received from the Pawnees- The morning came, and the Rising Sun found Pike with his men all mounted, well armed and equipped; their heavy broad Swords drawn= The old Warrior Chief had Summoned his forces also; and there they Stood, more than Five hundred in number; armed with Bows & arrows, Spears and tomahawks, in gloomy Silence; each party waiting in painful Suspense the order of their Respective Chiefs= Cher-a-ta-Reesh, unarmed and on foot, approached to the Side of Pike, and with more emotion than an Indian Warrior usually allows himself to manifest; again most earnestly urged him to desist from his Rash purpose= but all in vain- pointing to the Sun, just above the horizon, and to a Small blue Spot in the Sky just above, he thus addressed the venerable Chief- "Brave Chief and Respected friend, when the Sun Reaches yon point in his daily journey, I Shall Set out upon mine, to fulfil my duty- I and my brave comrades here will then Start, and nothing but death can Stop us- it is my duty as I have already fully explained to you- if you think it is yours to obey the

Spaniard, and to Stop me, be it So= but be assured that the attempt will cost the lives of many brave Men= this you may be Sure of"= Not five minutes Remained= The Chief Stood in thoughtful Silence; whilst Pike addressed his little band- All were Ready= the Soldiers braced themselves firmly in their Saddles; the Indian Warriors had Strung their Bows, and Some had fixed their arrows (more Sure & deadly than bullets); Pike's hand grasped his Sword hilt, yet in its Scabbard, (its being drawn was the appointed Signal for the onset, for the Indians entirely Surrounded him & his Men)- What a Moment! in a few minutes probably, an hundred men or more would "bite the dust". One word from the Pawnee Chief was only wanting to prevent this Senseless waste of human life- The good Sense & humanity of the Chief prevailed= he ordered his people to put up their Arms, to open the way and permit the little band to pass freely, and go unmolested in whatever direction their young Chief chose to lead them- Then turning to Pike he Said "Brave young Chief, you are free to pursue your journey- were I now to Stop you by destroying you & your comrades; the only way I am convinced that it can be done; I Should feel myself a coward; but Cher-a-ta-Reesh is no coward, no man alive dare call him So- the Spanish Chief with his five hundred men was afraid to Strike the Ske-nees, tho' they had Robbed him= I only whispered in his ear a few words, and he went home again as he came; If he wishes you Stopped, let him do it himself if he is able - Cher-a-ta-Reesh will no longer interfere- Behold, the Sun and the blue Sky have met; farewell my Son, may the Great Spirit guide and protect you". After Some friendly adieus Pike and his party Set forward in order, at a brisk gait, and Soon left the Pawnees out of Sight, but not out of mind; for they loved long afterwards to Speak of the brave young American Chief- (See Pikes Journal Vol. II, p.418)

I have Related these incidents just as they were told to me by the Chief- He further informed me, as in connection, that during Pike's Stay with him, he had Surrendered to him at his Request, and demand, all his Spanish Medals and Flags; upon his promise that they Should be Replaced by others from his great American Father; but he had not yet Seen or heard anything more about them; he feared they had been forgotten-- All this conversation about Pike took place the day after my arrival at the Pawnees; and whilst I lay on my pallet, indisposed, in the Chief's lodge; before I had entered upon any business, or even intimated distinctly, why I had visited him and his people- Nothing could have been more opportune than this previous communication from the Chief concerning my friend Pike, and his promise of Medals and Flags; all of which was entirely new to me, as it was also to all other Agents of the Government- Nor did I doubt the truth of all he had told me So circumstantially-- Now, as my main business with the Pawnees was to explain to them their new Relations towards our Government, and to advise them of the entire dissolution of all their dependence on, and allegiance to the Spanish Authorities of New Mexico; (as well as to make peace between the Osages, Konsees and Pawnees, So that the latter might Safely visit the Factory at Fort Osage), I had been careful to provide myself amply with American Flags and Medals (besides other things) to be used as I might find occasion- When therefore, Cher-a-ta-Reesh had concluded his interesting Narrative, which ended by telling me about the Medals and Flags promised him by Lieut. Pike; I instantly Seized on the coincidence, not only to aid my own views; but also at the Same time to vindicate Pike, and make good his promises as claimed by the old Chief: I therefore quickly informed him that I was prepared to Redeem the promises of my friend Pike; and

would deliver the Flags and Medals that were due before I left; and that I would place them in his hands that very day, Sick as I was, if he desired it: This he declined however, Saying he was perfectly Satisfied, now he was Sure they had not been forgotten; and would wait 'till I felt better, and could conveniently deliver them; and in the meantime would Send our Criers to announce to all the Pawnees, that the Stranger just arrived was the brother of "the brave young American Chief" (they all knew Pike by that name) and had brought the long promised American Flags & Medals; and this to them interesting piece of News was Speedily promulged far and wide, even to the Ske-nees- I was fully aware at the time, that the peculiar circumstances of Pike after he left the Pawnees, and ever Since, had put it entirely out of his power to Redeem his pledge to Cher-a-ta-Reesh; and I explained it all Satisfactorily to the Chief- (and I will here add, that I have Since met Pike, and told him of this whole transaction, my visit to the Pawnees &c. and he assured me that the old Chief's Story is Substantially true.)-

Feeling much Relieved of my fever and headache the next day, I had my baggage unpacked, So as to Select three large handsome Flags, one for each tribe in the town, which I presented to the Chief, and in a very Short time the Stars & the Stripes were flying high over the Town- I Sent one also the Same day to the Ske-nees --

On the last day of May, I held a grand council with all the Chiefs and head men of all the four tribes of Pawnees- there were present also, Chiefs Representing the Wau-Sash-ees and Konsees; who came with me for the purpose of making peace= (The Konsees were more particularly anxious to effect that object); I used what influence I could in the Council to promote their views; and after I had fully Set forth the

advantages that would inure to them all from a free and uninterrupted intercourse for trade, with the U. S. Factory at Ft. Osage; they very Readily agreed to bury the tomahawk= How long it will continue So, Remains to be proved- On this occasion I Said all I had to Say to the Pawnees; and after due enquiry as to fit persons, I distributed a number of Medals of the three different Sizes; besides those claimed by the Chiefs in place of the Spanish badges that they had Surrendered to Lieutenant Pike= But I fear I am fatiguing you with these details= I am desirous of preserving them however, in this letter, even at the Risk of appearing a little too verbose= It is proper to note here, that it was very natural for the Pawnee Chief to be less Reserved towards me, than he otherwise might have been, after he identified me with Pike, whom he So much admired- When he introduced me to his people as the brother of Pike, he meant, and was of course So understood, merely to Say that I was his Countryman; and the good old Man evidently considered it Sufficient honour for any man to be known as "the countryman of Pike"--- Being entirely Recovered from my indisposition, and having finished all my business with the Pawnees Satisfactorily; I left them on the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> of June. On leaving the Chief's lodge, I found thirty Horses tied at the door, a present to me, after the Indian custom- all good looking animals- these I gave in charge of the Osages who were with me, and Subsequently distributed them among my Indian escort; except one beautiful White "War Horse", that I wished to take home= but in this I was disappointed, for he died on the way-- After we had crossed the River at the town; we Struck a course South 16<sup>o</sup>. East. across the level plain that intervenes, (about 12 Miles) to the Ne-bras-ca, which we forded conveniently, and then camped for the day= Some arrangements had to be made concerning the

gift Horses, and other matters, before we proceeded on our journey= all this was done before Night= The next day, the 5th, and So on, we continued on the Same general course, Say 165 Miles to the U-jet-ta, hunting camp on the bank of the Arkansaw- Our Route from the Nebraska to the Arkansaw lay thro' a pretty tract, all prairie. At the distance of about Sixty Miles, to the North fork of the Konsee River, it is Rather level, and but indifferently watered- afterwards the Surface is much more broken, or "Rolling" as 'tis called= Besides the North fork, we crossed two other considerable branches of the Konsee; and Several Smaller tributaries= We crossed the Konsee River about 100 Miles from the Nebraska- here the Konsee Chief and his men left us, and hastened on to where they expected to find the whole tribe encamped for the Summer Buffalo hunt= we were met by a troop of Some 50 horsemen about the middle of the afternoon, who had been dispatched to conduct us to the camp; being fatigued and hungry I accepted very willingly the invitation= Found the whole tribe encamped in an elevated prairie near a Small creek, they were all busily engaged jerking and drying Buffalo beef (having killed as they Said, more than an hundred fat ones) and feasting= and truly I enjoyed myself very much for the Short time I Staid among them= they were especially thankful to me for having made peace for them with their old enemies the Pawnees; and all Seemed eager to manifest their gratitude- I left the Konsee camp at Nine o'clock the next morning and at 3 p.m. arrived Safely at the hunting camp of the U-jet-tas- their camp occupied a most lovely position on the bank of the Arkansaw- here they had been about 10 days; had abundance of good eatables, having Slaughtered upwards of 200 Buffaloes; besides other choice game= As they proposed to continue their Route towards the Grand Saline in a few days, and my Horses were Somewhat jaded, I concluded to Remain with them 'till they moved on, and to

travel with them a day, in order to witness leisurely and intelligibly, what I was curious to note, a whole tribe, men- women- youth- children- horses and dogs, with all their moveable effects, in the full enjoyment of the Summer Buffalo Hunt, in the vast prairies of the West= for this great hunt, is literally a Season of enjoyment, with all these Roaming tribes- When thus engaged they appear to most advantage- they are then at home- I passed the time during my Sojourn among these my old friends, very pleasantly; they treated me with a kind of Sober hospitality bordering on affection; Shewing that I was not Regarded as a Stranger among them- The Arkansaw at this place is about 200 yards wide- Rapid- Shallow and Red- nearly always fordable= It is Remarkable that as Soon as you Set foot on the South West Side of this River, wherever I Saw it, you discover a very Striking difference in the whole face of the country- its tributaries from that Side are nearly all deeply tinged with Red, (as is the Soil) and are generally deficient in wood- whilst on the N.S. Side, its branches are clear and pretty well wooded= The Arkansaw itself is but Scantly wooded, with a few Scattering Cotton Trees 'till you descend to the Verdigrise, a branch from the North, on which the Sha-neers, a tribe of Osage live- I was with the U-jet-tas in camp and on the March, eleven days- one object that I had in view, was to organize a party of about One hundred active Osages to accompany me to the Rock Saline after I Should Rejoin them from my visit to the Grand Saline; the latter of which, I intended first to visit with only a Small party= I was assured that it would be extremely hazardous to go to the Rock Saline (Sometimes called "Jefferson's Salt Mountain" with less than eighty or a hundred men, organized and equipped in all things as a War party; that no Indians ever thought of going to that famous place, or into the Surrounding Region "So full of wonders" except in Strong



force; and even then with great caution. I found that with the influence of my faithful friend Sans Oreille (the celebrated war Chief) who offered to go himself, that I might now accomplish this favorite and long cherished object; and fearing to lose So good an opportunity that might never again occur; I was the more urgent now in making all necessary preparations for the trip- No White man, as Sans Oreille and all the Chiefs assured me, had ever yet been known to have visited either the Grand or Rock Saline, certainly not the latter; and all that was known of them at all, was through Some vague Indian Stories, told with much exaggeration by a waggish Spanish Trader to Major Stoddard, whose well known credulity in all that Relates to the wonderful in the wild West; was frequently imposed upon- This Story, passing through the medium of the Major's pen, (with Such embellishments as his imagination would naturally give it,) to Mr. Jefferson who was himself Rather inclined to the marvellous in Relation to his new purchase of Louisiana; undoubtedly gave Rise to the famous "Salt Mountain Story"-- The opportunity now presented to me to look into these matters for my own gratification at least; was too favorable to admit of any omission on my part to profit by it. Having at length though not without much difficulty and Some expense, arranged all things Satisfactorily for the trip to the "Salt Mountain" as Soon as I Should Return from the Grand Saline; and the Osages having Struck their camp- we all crossed the River, a day's journey, about 8 Miles below the camp- My party now consisted of only Nine persons- Sans Oreille and five other Osages- Gabriel the Interpreter- Henderson & myself-

We immediately after crossing the River Set out pretty briskly on a course S<sup>o</sup>.50 W. and travelled 20 Miles to a Small Creek in the prairie; Say 28 Miles from the Camp. The Country from the Arkansaw to

this point is all naked prairie, the Soil Red; we crossed two Small branches- each about 30 yards wide- Rapid- Shallow and Red- Also two or three Smaller Streams- none of these afford much wood; a few Scattering Cotton Trees, Elms and Dwarf plum trees; from the appearance, one would Suppose that the whole land must have been Recently overrun with Buffaloes- the grass was cropped close as an old Sheep pasture; and the whole plain covered like a cattle yard with their excrement. But the animals had fled far away; only a few Remained, of which one was killed by an Indian- We pursued our way S<sup>o</sup>. 40<sup>o</sup> E. 30 Miles and arrived at the camp of the Great Osages, White Hair's Band, over a tract Such as last described- crossing two Small Creeks, one 20 the other 30 yds. wide; Rapid- Red & Shallow- Running into the Arkansaw- White Hair and his people Received us very kindly; We Staid with them from 2 p. m. 'till Sunrise next morning.

S<sup>o</sup>. 15<sup>o</sup> E. 20 Miles thro' broken prairie, crossing two Small branches of Arkansaw- country and creeks the Same in appearance as before; naked, Red, &c. We now, at 2 p.m. arrived at the camp of the Sha-nees, another tribe of Wau-Sash-ees (Osages) by whom we were Received and entertained most hospitably. Both of these last named bands were abounding in Buffalo meat and other good things; feasting was the order of the day and of the Night also- On leaving the Shanees the next morning at 10, we Steered very nearly due West; and in that direction travelled about 32 Miles, over very broken prairie, crossing Several Small Streams, all of which are Rapid, Shallow and Red; and on most of them are Some Scattering Elms; under one of which we camped for the Night, not a little fatigued; Having now come to a Sandy Region, by which the Grand Saline is entirely envired- In the morning very early, we pursued our way, due west, across the Sandy Belt, 8 Miles- these 8 Miles lay chiefly over a Range of barren Sandhills, on the Sides of which were

here and there a few dwarf plum bushes, not over a yard in height, loaded with large, Red, delicious plums, many of which we appropriated= A number of Small Rivulets of fine water, clear as chrystal, and perfectly fresh; pass among these Sands in deep beds, affording on their margins Some Scattering clumps of plum bushes, and Small cotton trees= From the last Ridge of these Sand hills on our Route, I had an imperfect view of the Saline; intercepted however, by an intervening Skirt of cotton trees, extending thro' a low flat prairie, that lies nearly parallel with the Salt plain and the Sand hills, and extends two or three Miles- My Indian conductors were unusually alert, as we traversed this wood= there might be Some lurking danger there= Some of his people (Sans Oreille told me) had been waylaid and killed there by a band of Pa-du-cas= not far from where we were then passing= But we neither Saw nor heard of anything to molest us= we passed quietly through, and came to a Small River of Arkansaw, Running S<sup>o</sup>. West, along the S<sup>o</sup>. Eastern border of a plain of hard Reddish Sand. Where we crossed this Stream we found it divided into three channels by Sand bars, each channel about twenty yards wide- its waters is Red-blackish= current quite Rapid- It was not quite Swimming to our horses= So we forded it very Readily, tho' the edges of the bars, and the banks, being a Sort of quicksand obliged us to be brisk in our movements= Being at length fairly over this Singular Stream, I found myself at once on a level, hard, Sandy plain; the Southern Side of the GRAND SALINE, and I had leisure quietly to contemplate the wonderful Scene before me; far Surpassing in the Reality anything that I had ever pictured to myself from Indian descriptions-

It is a perfectly Smooth and almost level plain of Red Sand, So hard on the Surfact that our horses hoofs Scarcely made any impression, except on the crust of Salt with which it was entirely covered. As our horses moved about, the idea of Riding over Smooth hard ground covered

with Sleet occurred to us all= and we Remarked with one voice as it were, the very Striking Similitude- I endeavored to ascertain as nearly as I was able, circumstanced as I then was= the probable extent of this vast plain of Salt= My eye is pretty well practised in making estimates of distances in the great prairies; but here it was impossible, from the nature of the Surface, white and Shining in the Sunshine, to arrive at any Satisfactory conclusion from mere visual observation= I had no instruments with me fit for the purpose= I questioned Sans Oreille, who had often been there, as to how long it might take a man to Ride Round it, on the outer Sandy margin, at the usual travelling gait? He had never been Round it, but Supposed it would Require a whole day= and in this all the other Indians present agreed- Some of them thought that if the horse went pretty fast he could get Round in less than a day and one Said he could Ride Round in half a day, if he Started very early- none of them, except Sans Oreille and Mo-no-Soo-je had ever been there before. My own conclusion, from all that I Saw and heard on the Spot, and at the Osage Camp afterwards; is, that the The Grand Saline is fully thirty Miles in its circumference. I mean the great Sand plain that I Saw covered entirely with Salt, on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1811.- In this estimate I am persuaded that I am Safely within the Mark-- The figure of this plain is an irregular one, much the widest at the South western extremity, and narrowing towards the north-eastern arm, when I crossed it; at which point it is certainly more than three Miles wide-

The Salt crust that covered this plain when I Saw it, was pretty uniformly of the thickness of a thick Wafer= In Some places it was thrice that thickness= and all this was the production of about twenty four hours of only tolerably fair Sunny Weather= For ten days previous to my arrival at the Saline, until two or three days before, it

had been excessively Rainy in that vicinity (we encountered Several drenching Rain Storms where we were)= Such torrents had fallen that the two Small Rivers that Run, one on each Side, were, after 24 hours cessation, nearly Swimming to our horses- Ordinarily, as the Indians assured me, they have not water enough in their channels "to Swim a dog"= The whole plain, as Sans Oreille confidently affirmed, had been very Recently inundated, which indeed, appeared plain enough, from the driftwood that lay Scattered over it; and yet more evidently from a little Fish that I picked up more than a mile from either River--

If then I had been there two days Sooner, I Should have found but a very slight appearance of Salt- probably none at all and the whole plain flooded= but if I had got there fifteen days earlier, I Should have found it entirely covered over with a beautiful clean, white crust of Salt, from two to Six inches thick; of a quality nearly, if not quite equal to the imported "blown Salt"; clean and fit for use= In this Stage the Grand Saline bears a very Striking Resemblance to a brilliant field of Snow, with a crust on it after a Rain- Had I arrived the next day after the overflow, I Should have found vast quantities of mush Salt, So to call it, collected in hollows and furrows near the lower angle of the plain= of this I saw and examined Specimens from masses of many thousands of bushels, as I Should guess; but it was all of a Reddish tinge, occasioned by a Slight mixture of Red Sand; which effect is also produced Sometimes, by violent wind Storms.- These conclusions, drawn from what I Saw on the Spot; and from what I was told on the Spot, by Sans Oreille; and Subsequently by other Osages who had been there frequently, and witnessed all its various Stages of operation; may, I am quite Sure, be Relied on for their general accuracy; at any Rate I am Satisfied myself with these deductions-- It

may probably be many years before any other Rambler will enjoy even So good an opportunity as I had, to examine and inquire about this truly magnificent Salt depository- Altho' I was not there to witness the Grand Saline in its most perfect State, for the Reasons already Stated; yet I was highly gratified to find So many incontestable proofs touching the Rapidity and great extent of its operations- The whole plain equal in its area to a plat enclosed in a circle thirty miles in circumference was perfectly covered with a brilliant white crust of excellent Salt- So that So far as Regards its general appearance to the view, it was very nearly the Same as if it had been in its highest perfection- So the Osages assured me, and my own observations confirmed what they Said of it. Indeed, I Rather concur with Sans Oreille, in the opinion, that all things considered (not forgetting the mush Salt), I could not have visited the Saline under any more favorable circumstances-

This beautifully dazzling white Surface, has the effect of looming, as the Sailors call it, in a very Remarkable degree; producing to the impractical eye, very Surprising deceptions; especially when the Sun Shines brightly on it, as was the case whilst I was there- The plain when we Reached it, was dotted over with Small herds of Buffaloes- there may have been Six or eight Hundred, the most of them far off to the westward- one only of those detached herds which was to the leward of us, on our Right, was in the least disturbed by our presence, as we Stood on the Southeast verge of the plain; that one, consisting of Some thirty or forty, Seemed to my vision So fairly within Striking distance as they Ran crossing our course, towards the other droves, though not yet opposite to us by two or three miles, as it turned out, that I could not Resist the temptation for a chase;

tho' warned by Sans Oreille of the Real distance the game was from us- A Buffalo chase on the Grand Saline, was not an every day affair however- My Buffalo Horse, a present from Cher-a-ta-Reesh the Pawnee Chief; was fleet and experienced, and pretty fresh, not having been Ridden for Several days past; was brought forward by Henderson and I was quickly on his back, disincumbered of all useless furniture, including Sundry garments; and calling on Mo-no-Soo-gee - a fine young Osage, who was mounted on a trained Buffalo chaser, and equipped with Bow and Arrows (far preferable to any other weapon) to accompany me, he instantly prepared himself, and away we went "full tilt"-- The Buffaloes were crossing our course nearly at Right angles with our position (these animals are not easily put out of their course) aiming to Rejoin the other herds at the upper part of the plain; and were Running at about half Speed when we Started- What I had Supposed could not exceed half a mile to intercept them, proved to be more than a mile- We met the chase considerably to the Right of where we left our party- Mo-no-Soo-gee had purposely kept a little behind me, to allow me the first Shot- I discharged two pistols, and only crippled, not badly, one Buffalo- I then wheeled off, and Reined in a little, in order, if possible, to Reload- but I could not: an empty pistol is of no more use in a Buffalo chase than an Indian pipe; and but little better when well charged- all this I very well knew long before from experience- Yet the exercise and excitement, with me at least, of the mere chase, were abundant compensation for my failure to kill a Buffalo- just as I wheeled off Mo-no-Soo-Je dashed past me- both he and the beautiful Barb he Sat on with inimitable grace, were Naked; except the ornamented Scarlet cloth belted around his loins &c. and a Sort of bridle halter, made of White Horsehair; and both Horse and Rider were equally animated- The

young U-jet-ta (one of the finest models of manly beauty) wore Around his neck loosely, a handsome collar of Wampum beads, composed of Some twenty blue and white Strands; his ears and jet black hair, and his bosom, were tastily tinged with vermillion, and Set off with Silver ornaments; and to his Scalplock was appended the Warrior's badge, (the Deer tail dyed Scarlet.)- In his mouth he carried two arrows; and one on his bowstring, Ready for instant use- As his horse was guided and governed almost entirely by well understood pressure of the Rider's knees; and the Reins lay loosely on his neck, the whole man was perfectly free and unincumbered- As he passed by me, he cried out adje tumbo, Wau-Sash-ee chetoga-tse- "See how Wau-Sash-ees deal with the Buffaloes," and away he Sped Swiftly into the herd; Rapidly discharged two arrows, and wheeled off- the herd Ran off minus two of their number; fat cows, in each was an Arrow, penetrating the vitals, which Soon caused the blood to choke and Strangle them- They both fell dead- not fifty yards apart; and but little to the left of our course- We saw the frightened herd as they Ran, full half an hour, apparently almost within gunshot; So great and deceptive is the looming on the grand Saline- I had often participated with Wau-Sash-ees and Konsees in Buffalo chases, but always on a large Scale- In this instance however, having a field of Such a novel character, and the whole of it to ourselves (Mo-no-soo-je and I), I enjoyed it with more than a double Relish- whilst Still under this pleasureable excitement, it occurred to me that any genuine Sportsman (as we understand the term out here in the wild far west,) might well afford to make the journey from the Atlantic, to accompany Such a lad as Mo-no-Soo-je in a Buffalo Chase on the Grand Saline---- As Soon as Sans Oreille and the Rest of the party joined us at the dead Buffaloes- and we had helped ourselves to



Some choice pieces for our Supper and breakfast we pursued our way leisurely over the crusty plain: We crossed a narrow neck (course No.W.) which judging by our time and gait, I think would measure more than three miles over- the great body of the plain was on our left, and presented a Singular view; almost boundless; terminated by a Range of Hills, dimly Seen, Slightly tinged with green- Leaving the Saline, now late in the day, we crossed over a flat marshy prairie, about a mile over; and came to a branch of the Arkansaw, about Sixty feet wide, Running Rapidly in a deep channel; it was evidently beyond its usual depth, though not quite Swimming to our horses: This Stream Runs nearly parallel with the Northwest Side of the Saline, and un- ties with that on the opposite Side, that we crossed in the morning; a Short distance below the eastern point of the plain; So Sans Oreille told me, for I did not See it myself- Relying on his intelligence and accuracy, I desired Sans Oreille to draw a Map of the grand Saline and its environs, according to what he knew of them; which he very Readily executed with the point of an Arrow on the Crust at the dead Buffaloes; whilst the Rest of the Men were Cutting and packing beef- From the Sketch thus drawn, with what I Saw and heard; I think I have a pretty Reliable understanding of this Remarkable place.-

The Grand Saline is probably not over Eighty miles from a naviga- ble part of the Arkansaw; and I am of opinion that an excellent waggon Road might be made from one to the other, on a line nearly direct- The country is generally pretty Smooth and the intervening Streams easily bridged-- Whether any attempt will ever be made to draw this inexhaustible Store of Ready made Salt into the channels of commerce, or not, need not be now discussed; but if it Should be found expedient and desirable to do So; I do not entertain a doubt of its practicabi- lity- Nothing 'tis Said, in Nature is formed in vain, certain I am,

She has placed no material obstacles between this grand deposit of Salt, and commercial enterprise= and has clearly provided thus munificently for Some wise and beneficent purpose connected with the comfort of Man-

Our Scouts, for we had to be very vigilant, Reported that they had Seen horsemen in the hills Southwest of us; and thought it very probable that there was a band of Camanches or Padoucas over in that direction= After questioning them pretty closely, Sans Oreille came to the Same conclusion= I could form no judgment myself, as to the fact Reported, but upon Sans Oreille's opinion that it was most probably true, (for he Said the young men would not Speak falsely to him) I at once decided that my party was entirely too weak to justify our longer Stay in that vicinity, against the decided counsel of Sans Oreille= there were only Nine of us- a troop of mounted Pacoucas or Ca-man-ches (who are always at war with the Wau-Sash-ees) would have made Short work of us at a Sudden dash; taking us all, of course, for Indians- With much Reluctance therefore, I gave up my purpose of Spending Several days at, and in the neighborhood of the Grand Saline= I now Regretted that I had not, as I could have had, a party of Fifty instead of nine men= but Regrets were unavailing and useless; the evidence appeared good and conclusive, that the prowlers were near us in force, and had very probably already Seen us- We therefore Struck North-westerly towards where Sans Oreille expected to find his people, at one of their favorite Summer camping places= which has often been extolled to me for its eligibility and Romantic beauty= We Rode about twelve miles on our course, and then camped for the night to hours after Night-fall- The next day (the 25th June) we travelled twenty eight Miles, N<sup>o</sup>. West, over very broken prairie, and many Rough places, and arrived early after Noon, at the U-jet-ta camp; where they had been

several days, and intended to Remain two or three weeks. They had indeed chosen a most lovely Spot for their temporary Sojourn; on a commanding prairie hill, at the foot of which Runs a bold gravelly Creek, of clear, excellent water (Some people have the very mistaken notion, that the Indians are indifferent about the mere natural beauties and attractions of their localities; the notion is not only erroneous in point of fact, but is unnatural, and quite unphilosophical

I found my good friends, I Suppose there were a thousand Souls in the camp, in the full and free indulgence of all the luxuries of their Rude condition= their position was deemed Secure- there were none Sick, and their Supplies were abundant= The more aged warriors were not unmindful of a proper vigilance; the elder married women, were busily employed jerking and curing on Scaffolds, the flesh of the fat Buffalo; the young men and maidens were flaunting around in Small groups; dressed, painted and adorned in the highest Style of fashion, (their best apparel and finery they always Reserve to be worn in their Summer camps)- The larger boys were herding and watching the thousand horses; the younger girls nursing and helping their mothers; whilst other Swarms of children were Swimming in the creek or gambolling over the beautiful green prairie- They were living most luxuriously on fat Buffalo- Elk- Deer-marrow bones-tongues-hominy- beans- dried pumpkin- plums and other dainties- Mirth and hearty merriment prevailed- Never had I witnessed Such general happiness in any community as prevailed here- It was truly an interesting Scene to look upon.----- Feeling myself pretty much at home among the U-Jet-tas: I entered cordially into the very Spirit of their innocent enjoyments; and quite freely participated in them; as much So at least as I thought consistent with my Station- a consideration that I have ever invariably made it a point of duty Strictly to ob-

serve- and here I must Remark, that it is highly improper in my opinion, for any Man claiming to be civilized, and educated in a Christian community, (and infinitely more So if he holds an official trust among them) So far to forget himself in the presence of Indians on any occasion, as to compromit the proper Respect he owes to his position, by any frivolity of conduct or conversation; Nor do I consider it much more proper, to assume a cold, Stiff, overtrained Sort of mock dignity before those Shrewd children of Nature; either extreme is pretty Sure to discredit the White Man, both in his official and private Standing-- And I will also mention two others of the various observations that I have noted in Relation to these people. The first is, their attention to personal cleanliness, whenever their circumstances and employments will admit of it- This virtue is practiced and enjoyed by them habitually during the Summer hunting Season- by means of frequent ablutions in the Streams near which they pitch their Regular camps= They are never unmindful of this particular convenience in the Selection of their camp grounds- The Females in troops, almost daily, indulge themselves in this luxury without the least apprehension of intrusion or improper observation= It would assuredly jeopard the personal comfort, if not his ease, of any offender in this Respect= not only from the offended dames and damsels, but from the Chiefs and head men= All Such curiosity being Strictly forbidden, and Rigidly punished if detected- The other observation alluded to, Relates to the Still higher virtue of Chastity- I doubt much if there is any Nation or tribe or community in existence, who are more justly entitled to the praise of this virtue in its due observance from principle, than the Wau-Sash-ee tribes- It is painful to Reflect how Soon this State of comparative innocence must yield and give way before the pernicious influence and example of cupidity and licencious-

ness inseparable from the initiatory Stages of what is commonly called civilization (?)

On my Return to the U-jet-ta camp from the Grand Saline (25<sup>th</sup> June) I found my War party all Ready and anxious to be off- Wau-be-Soon-je, a warrior of Some celebrity, had been chosen to be our leader; Supported by Shin-ga-was-sa, a genuine Son of Chivalry of the Stock of Sans Oreille- The party consisted of Ninety vigorous, active Indians, well equipped; besides the leaders and cooks- They Set out on the march the Second day after my Return; all on foot, (the Wau-Sash-ees always go to war on foot), and I was to join them with Sans Oreille and the Interpreter the next day at a place appointed.- I had Seen these people in all Situations, except in their military capacity in actual Service; and now behold me, as a Sort of Supernumerary volunteer, about to join the command of Capt. Wau-be-Soon-je in an expedition to the "Salt Mountain". As I had organized this company, (at my own expense) only for my protection against any unlawful assault or hindrance, in an excursion that I was Sure I had a Right to make; I joined it, not only without any misgiving of Official propriety; but with a clear Sense of duty, circumstanced as I then was.

Early on the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup>, I Set out as above Stated; and overtook the war party after two hours travel, at their camp; and immediately the whole company moved on, at a brisk Rate; our horses being kept pretty busy to keep pace with the footmen; for the country we had now entered, was extremely broken and hilly- Our course from the U-jet-ta camp, was South 40<sup>o</sup> West, to the Rock Saline; the distance near about 60 Miles -- I will here describe this most wonderful place as well as I can; before I attempt a description of the very Strange country through which we had to pass to get to it= The

Rock Saline is a level flat of Redish colored Sand, (like that of the Grand Saline), containing, as I guessed, about 500 Acres; longitudinally intersected by a Small Stream that Runs into a branch of the Arkansaw, called I believe, Rock Salt River- It is bounded from S<sup>o</sup>. E to N<sup>o</sup>. N<sup>o</sup> West by very lofty hills, whose Sides next to the Sandy flat, are for the most part perpendicular, and faced with Rugged Rocks of Gypsum of different kinds, intermixed with Red Clay and flint- these hills are entirely naked; otherwise they might be Ranked as mountains= immense numbers of Swallows have their nests in the crevices of these Rocks- From the bases of these hills issue many Springs of Salt water, which flow over about 100 Acres of the adjacent flat, namely, that Section of it which lies on the Southerly Side of the dividing Stream mentioned above= There is good Reason to believe that this Section Rests on a Solid Mass of Salt; in Some places not over two feet, in others three or four perhaps, below the hard Surface, and to what depth not known; this belief prevails with the Indians at any Rate; and I Saw nothing myself to authorize me to gainsay their opinion- There are four Springs that Rise near the base of the Rocky bluff, within the flat, the water of which is perfectly Saturated- (Salt will not dissolve in it), these afford Some aid to the numerous Small Springs that issue from the foot of the Mountain, and together with them, keep up a Sufficient Supply of water over the flat for the Sun's evaporation- The whole of this Region had been lately Repeatedly deluged by heavy Rains= the little Creek that divides the hard Sandy flat, usually not ancle deep, was now nearly Swimming to our Horses= We got there the Second day after the Rains had ceased, on a bright Sunny day, and found the Saline Renewing its operations under a beaming hot Sun; the Rain water had all been either washed from the plain or had been absorbed by the Sand- The Springs

were flowing over, and had already formed a Shallow pond next to the hills, half an inch deep, on which was collecting a Sort of Ice of Salt, So to call it, in particles like fish Scales, producing a very Striking Resemblance to the effect produced by throwing hot tallow into a tub of cold water; the Scales of Salt Rising and forming on the Surface of the pond, as tallow will in the tub= this is the beginning of the process- Sans Oreille and others, told me that if there Sh<sup>d</sup>. be a continuance of Six or eight or ten days of dry hot westher, the whole of the Small Section would be covered with a Solid Rock of Salt from five to eight inches thick; and that immediately Round each of the four big Springs, would be formed a kind of hollow cone of Salt, open at the top, more than two feet above the Surface of the Sand- This assertion was Supported by the unanimous voice of the Indians present, who assured me they had often Seen it in that State- Indeed Strange as the fact may Seem, it was abundantly plain to my mind, and may be fairly deduced from what I Saw myself= Notwithstanding the great floods of Rain that had So Recently drenched the plain, (the evidences of which were all around us,) there Remained large masses of Salt around the four large Springs, probably a ton weight,- At one of these I cut out with my tomahawk a block of beautiful White Salt fifteen inches Square, (which I carried home)= I then dug in the Spring, a foot below the Surface, and haul'd out large lumps of clean Salt, as large and white as hen's eggs- Some of the Indians who were observing my operations, asked me, laughing, if I expected to dig through the Rock? If I had been provided with a mattock, I Should certainly have entered much more deeply into the Subject- The larger Section of the plain, produces Salt Similar to that of the Grand Saline, but not in the Same abundance in proportion to its extent.- The Rock Salt is unquestionably the best that I have

ever Seen; it is beautifully clear and white, and heavier than the best imported alum Salt- Some of Wau-be-soon-gee's Scouts came in whilst Sans Oreille and I were digging, and Reported that they had discovered Some quite fresh Signs not far off, of Padoucas in considerable numbers, probably Some hundreds, Men and Women, this interruption I much Regretted; for the Captain quickly Summoned his men; and they all, except two who were detained by Sans Oreille, left us in pursuit of "the enemy"-- There was not the least doubt but a large number of Indians had been at the Saline Since the Rain; but as there were evidences that Some of them were women, and that they were only in quest of Salt; I tried to dissuade Capt: Wau-be-soon-gee from pursuing them; but in vain; "they might catch Some Stragglers and obtain a few Scalps"- Sans Oreille now expressed Some uneasiness as to our Safety if we Remained any longer at the Saline, and urged our Return at once to our last Nights's camp; for, Said he, "this is always a dangerous place for a Small party; a few lurking Pa-du-cas or Ca-man-ches might Surprise us"- I had Spent upwards of three hours at the place, and had Seen and learned all about it, that I could; as I was circumstanced; and though disappointed that I was unable to make a more extensive examination Round about the Saline; I was much gratified that I had been as Successful as I had been in So brief a visit- Yielding to the advice of my trusty and experienced friend; our little party, only five of us in all, and two of the five on foot, left the Saline- We Returned to the U-jet-ta camp by nearly the Same Route that brought us out- Five days were Spent in this excursion- which brought us to the end of the 3<sup>d</sup> day of July-- Before I Set my face homeward; I must endeavour to give you Some descriptive account of my Journey to the Rock Saline; and the extremely



interesting country thro' which I passed. The distance as before noted is about Sixty Miles, it may be more, Say 75- It would be next to impossible to ascertain that matter very accurately, even with chain and compass-

The general course of our travel was 40 degrees West of South; the whole distance lay over a country Remarkably Rugged and broken; affording the most Romantic and picturesque Scenery imaginable; and in endless variety- It is all naked prairie, the grass eaten down by the Buffaloes like an old Sheep pasture= A tract of about Seventy Miles Square, as nearly as I could ascertain, in which nature has displayed an astonishing variety of the Strangest and most whimsical vagaries= It is an assemblage of barren hills, fertile meadows, and grassy Ridges, thrown together in the utmost apparent disorder, and presenting in every direction an endless variety and Succession of curious and interesting objects.-

After winding along for Some miles in zigzag directions on elevated Ridges; we would Suddenly descend by an almost perpendicular declivity of Rocks and clay and gravel, into a Series of fertile meadows, watered by beautiful Rivulets, and here and there adorned with clumps of thrifty cotton trees, Elms and Cedars- these meadows are partitioned off from each other by chains of Red clay and huge masses of Gypsum, with here and there a pyramid of gravel- Standing in the middle of one of those meadows, the contemplation of the Surrounding Scene, would lead one to imagine himself in the midst of the Magnificent Ruins of Some Ancient City; and that the plain in which he Stands had been Sunk by Some convulsion of Nature, more than a hundred feet below its former level; for the chains that divide and Surround the vallies, are composed of huge blocks of Red clay, Some of which Rise to the height of

nearly 100 feet; and are capped with Rocks of Gypsum, which the hand of time is ever crumbling off, and Strewing in beautiful transparent flakes over their Sides; glittering in the Sun-shine like So many mirrors.- Some of those blocks Stand alone and Rise in figures the most grotesque- here a huge column crumbling to decay; there a clump of broken and disfigured pyramids, laboring under great masses of Gypsum Rocks, hanging in Shelves, and often broken loose by Rain and wind, and precipitated into the plain below; where they lay Strewed around in fragments of a ton's weight or more- There are numerous gaps or passes thro' those dividing chains, which conduct you on the Same plane, from one meadow to another- Some of those thro' which we passed, were not over 50 feet broad; faced on both Sides with Rude columns of Gypsum, clay and gravel, and upwards of 60 feet high- passing these, we came to extensive levels of Say ten Acres, handsomely gravelled over, and Surrounded by towers of Rock and clay; Reminding one of Some Romance description of the court yards of Some Ancient Castle in Ruins- On passing thro' one of those "Courts" there was actually a hollow Sound beneath the heavy tread of our Horses, and Stout Osage Warriors; which produced a feeling of awe; not a word was Spoken as we hurried through: the Indians manifesting a Sort of Reverence for the place, and I too felt very strangely I confess- Sans Oreille Says there are Several other Such places among the Hills and vallies of this Region.

For many Miles together, we Sometimes found the picture exactly Reversed; that is, the grassy levels were elevated above the broken columns of clay &c.; or Rather the latter were furrowed out of the former in an infinite variety of figures- Hollows from 30 to 50 feet deep, formed by numerous converging furrows, in funnel like Shapes-

innumerable gullies intersecting each other, leaving great piles of Red clay &c. Strewed over with glittering gypsum in flakes, with here and there Some clumps of dwarf Cedars, to animate Somewhat the picture- We crossed in our Route, three considerable tributaries of the Arkansaw, and also Several Small creeks- The meadows and grassy Ridges, are at this Season Swarming with Buffaloes and wild Horses= from the Summits of the highest Ridges, the views are almost boundless= Hills and Ridges Rising as it were in endless Succession in all directions= all of which, as well as the intervening vallies and meadows are enriched and animated by the immense herds of cattle and Horses= Not a tree to be Seen to intercept the view; you always command a prospect of a Number of the declivities of Ridges facing you, and often overlook Some of the beautiful meadows; and look which way you will, you always See large droves of Buffaloes, quietly grazing or Reposing, too far off to be disturbed by the presence of intruders thus overlooking them- With a good Spy glass I greatly enjoyed this charming & exciting Scenery-

It is actually worth a journey from New York to See the Buffaloes about 10 o'clock in the morning, pouring from the hills down into the vallies for water= Passing through one of the most extensive of those vallies on the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, I was highly gratified with a Scene of that description= We were now near the center of a level valley or meadow, probably a mile Square, enclosed by a very high Ridge, whose inner Sides were nearly perpendicular; its form appeared to be Somewhat circular; So that one might have traced a man quite Round, had one walked on the brow of the Ridge; It was about nine o'ck:, and a fine morning= for some 30 or 40 Minutes there was a heavy Rumbling noise like distant thunder; and I at first thought it was thunder; tho'

the Sky was perfectly clear; very Soon however, the cause was quite plain on the Ridge above and around us; we were literally Surrounded= the height was black with Buffaloes all Rushing in two opposite currents, to the well known passes into the valley= I am Sure that I am Safe in writing the numbers thus exposed to my view, with the aid of my glass, at twenty thousand- Yes, I might Say 50,000 and not much exaggerate- The noise they made was almost deafening; what with their heavy tramp and the bellowing of Some thousands of Bulls- The Several breaks or gaps by which they entered the meadow, necessarily divided them into as many droves- Before they had many of them descended I proposed to Capt: Way-be-Soon-je and Sans Oreille to have a grand battle; which was at once agreed to; and preparations were quickly made, to attack a detachment of Some two or three thousand that was coming directly towards us- We had the wind of them, & were hidden out of their Sight under the banks of the creek that Runs thro' the valley; the assault was well managed- In five minutes the action commenced= about 80 active Osages well armed, against two to three thousand Buffaloes= I could by no means Remain an idle looker on- My Horse, a Regular chaser, carried me Rapidly into the midst of the gang; and I discharged my pistols with Some effect= The firing of 80 guns, the yells of the excited Indians, and the tremendous Roaring of So many affrighted Buffaloes, many thousands, altogether, made up a Scene not easily described- The valley was Soon cleared; but the thundering of the Retreating animals was heard for an hour afterwards- The issue of the affair was 27 Buffaloes killed, many wounded, and two of the Indians hurt by being Run over- We had Several other Skirmishes, on a Smaller Scale; but being useless Sacrifices gave me more pain than pleasure.- It is within fifteen miles of the South western extremity of the wild and Romantic tract that I have been so

imperfectly describing, that the Rock Saline, or "Salt Mountain"  
is Situated-

As to a description of that Region no pen can do it; certainly not mine- That is a picture that the pencil of a first class artist only, can draw with any thing like truth- What a Rich field is there, for the Geologist, the Naturalist, Mineralogist and Botanist; as well as for the Painter and the Poet! Months might be usefully and pleasantly employed there, by persons properly qualified; provided they could be Secure from interruption of marauding Indians; which I fear it would be difficult, or Rather impracticable, to effect just now, or within a period of many years to come- But the time will come undoubtedly, when a thorough exploration will take place there, Resulting in Rich and Remunerating developements. (And I am visionary enough to imagine, that the heights and vallies, many of them, will, in the irresistible progress of Anglo Saxon enterprise, be occupied by as Splendid Aristocratic Residences as any in America- This prophesy you will probably credit to a Rather Romantic imagination - time will test the matter)-

The country between the Arkansaw and Red River, below the 38th degree of North latitude, or thereabouts, appears to be held by the Ottos- Korsees and Osages on the one Side; and on the other by the Pawnees of Red River- Hietans- Camanches and Padoucas; as their hunting grounds; and is the Seat of the most inveterate and unceasing warfare among those tribes; and So will continue most assuredly, 'till the Buffaloes and Indians are exterminated or driven out- Those tribes annually visit the great Salines and Surrounding country, for Buffalo-Horses- and Salt; and Seldom a year passes that is not marked by Some bloody conflict; more particularly and frequently between the Pawnees

and Osages- Thus it happens that the district in which the Grand and Rock Salines are Situated, has become the general battle ground of those tribes; which Renders it almost impracticable for a corps of Scientific men to explore it without a Strong guard, and at considerable expense.

I have to Regret very much, that I had not provided myself better with means to take more accurate Notes for a Map of the country between the Nebraska- Arkansaw- Missouri and Osage Rivers; and that part west of the Arkansaw that I traversed, including the great Salines- I Should in that case, have been much more particular in all my observations than I have been. But in truth there were no instruments in the country to be had for the occasion, Such as I wanted, except a good Pocket Compass, procured with difficulty thro' a friend at St. Louis-- But as my Route lay, I may Say, entirely over open prairie (I do not believe we travelled Six miles, certainly not ten, thro' wood-land, in our whole journeying) it was not difficult to keep a pretty true account of the courses, with my pocket compass- and with due attention to the gait of my horse, three miles an hour, and to my watch; I was able to compute distances with tolerable accuracy; in all which I done the best I could- You will Readily conclude that I can make no pretensions to precision in Respect of the courses and distances noted- This I mention by way of cautioning you not to put too much confidence in the Sketch or Map that may probably accompany this (I fear to you) tedious narrative- It is certainly not exactly correct; yet I think it may be Relied on for a tolerable Sketch of my tour, and may afford a pretty good idea of the country, and more especially the Relative positions of the most Remarkable points visited by me, in my extensive excursion-

When I Returned to the U-jet-ta camp I found all my horses quite

Recruited, (I had left them in charge of Henderson at the camp, and used borrowed horses for the trip to the Rock Saline), and on the 5th July Set out homeward- the general course was North 60 East, distance Say 260 Miles; which we accomplished on the 11th.- this last journey was attended with more trouble and disaster than all the preceding put together. As Soon as we passed the Buffalo Range, and entered the tall grass, we encountered the green flies of the prairie in myriads of myriads, for Some 170 Miles; a plague that no one can half understand who has not experienced the annoyance- These voracious blood Suckers literally killed my beautiful, noble, Splendid Horse, presented me by the great Pawnee Chief- His milk-white, Silk like coat, were peculiarly attractive to those tormentors; and being entirely unused to any Such, he became furious and ungovernable and finally broke loose, Ran madly to a Swampy Morass, plunged in and perished there- I could not Save him-

Perhaps you may not think me too particular in my Notice of this Horse, when I tell you that he was a Rare Specimen of that class whose noble Nature fits them for becoming the friends of Man- and that a thousand dollars could not have tempted me to part from him- My other horses being of dark colors and tougher, endured the Scourging better; but they were all Seriously damaged, and will not Soon Recover-

Having now given you a pretty general Narration of my two months' Ramble, I will here let you off for the present; begging your pardon for inflicting on you So tedious a Yarn.-

My Notes Suggest many other details; which however, I will Reserve for Some future communication.

ever affectionately yours

To Dr. John Sibley  
Natchitoches, La.

Geo: C. Sibley.

Note- The foregoing narrative contained in 71 pages of this book, has been carefully copied from the original communication to my Father; which was found among his papers after his decease by my Brother, and by my Request Returned to me- It was So worn- torn and faded, that it became necessary for me to Re-write it, or to lose it altogether (as I kept no copy of it)- I wished to preserve it however, for future Reference- Much of the original was written out Rather hurriedly from my pencil notes- Some verbal and other corrections have been made herein.

G. C. Sibley.

Elma April 1860

The map that accompanied this Journal originally (a very rough affair) was lost--- that which is herewith annexed (also pretty rough) has been much more carefully prepared, and may probably answer the purpose for which it is intended.-- April '60.