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Letter from George Sibley to William Clark, November 28, 1813

George Champlin Sibley

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(Copy)

Arrow Rock Sunday, MS 28. Nov. 1813

Sir,

I assembled the chief and head men of the great and little Osage Nations at my quarters this morning, and requested their answers to the following Questions ____

1. I wish you to inform me whether or not you ever expressed any wish to waive that Article of this Treaty between your Nations, and the U.S. in which the U.S. Engage to keep up a Trading House at Fort Clark?
2. Is it your wish now that the Trading House shall be reestablished, or do you wish it entirely discontinued and have your Supplies furnished as formerly by private traders?
- 3d. If it is your desire that the Trading House be reestablished I wish you to try and settle the question between you, when it shall be filed? and let me know your determination.

Che-Sho-Hm-ga. Head chief this osage said

“All I know about the removal of the Trading House is, that at the mouth of the Osage River last Spring, Mr. Chouteau asked me to sign the papers, which I was led to believe would cause the Trading House to be placed on the Osage River agreeably to a request which I made of the President when I was last at Washington. Mr. Chouteau told me and others of my People, that if the T. House at Ft. Clark was broke up traders would be numerous in the Osage River and Goods Cheaper, and that we should see the good old times return, that traders could not go there now because the Factory sold goods too cheap. I signed the paper because I expected it would be the means of fixing the T. House on the Osage River. I wish that every part of the treaty may be strictly observed. I am not willing by any reason to wipe out that part of it which binds my Great Father to keep a constant flow of goods near my people for their accommodation. My father (White Hair) lies near this place. This Treaty was one of his last acts. He charged me on his death-bed to keep it sacred, and it is my determination to do so. If this place suits you, it suits me also. I am convinced the Osage Settlement of ____ People near this place will make it more secure for my People to trade here than at the old place, and it will also afford us many other advantages.”

Nee. Zu.mo.nee. head chief Little Osage said,

“I never consented to have the trading House removed. I never will consent to its being altogether discontinued. Gen. Clark placed it at the fire Prairie, and The President solemnly promised to keep it there. I have their Treaty now in my hand, look at it (handing the Treaty). I expect it was not their intention to trifle with us and cheat us out of our Land. It is my wish and also that of all my People that the Trading House be reestablished as soon as possible at Ft. Clark. We do not like this place.”

Sano.Oreille. head warrior Little Osage said,

“I know the Chief of the Big Osage asked the President to remove the Trading House to the Osage River + I heard the President tell him he could not. The President can do about anything he pleases, but it would be out of his power to turn bad rivers into good ones. My consent never was asked to remove or discontinue the T.H. No white man except he was a fool could ask so silly a question. I was sorry it was removed, very sorry, and I told you so before. I hope it will be fixed again at Ft. Clark, I don't like this place so well as that.”

Sano.Nerf head warrior Big Osage + father in law of the grand Chief said,

“You have heard what my Chief has said relative to the removal of the T.H. We all agree to his determination to abide by the treaty. You asked me before if I thought this place would suit, and I told you yes. We do not like Fort Clark for very good reasons, the road between that place and our village is nearly as long as the one to this place, + is a very dangerous one to travel. Our enemies lay in wait for us when we go there to trade, and have killed several of our People. I think we will be more secure coming here on account of the Cage Settlement of Americans near this, and I am in favor of this place also on account of our being able to procure provisions here from the Settlers when we need any. I wish the Trading House to be fixed somewhere as soon as possible, and hope as it is not to be on the Osage River is may be here.”

The Grey Bird. uncle of the head chief B.O. and oldest brother of “White Hair” dec? said,

“I like this place better than the old on account of the Settlement of Americans near it, which will I think afford us more security when we come to trade. The bones of my oldest brother (“White Hair”) are buried on the road between this place and my village. The bones of several of my Nation lie unburied and bleaching on the Prairies between my village + Fort Clark. They were murdered by our enemies who lay in ambush for them when they went to trade. I find it is hard for us to agree with the Little Osage on this subject. I and my nephew are wiling that you shall decide the question. I hope you will fix our on some place soon. I think you had better remain here.

The Big Soldier a distinguished warrior + orator of Little Osage said,

“Whose fault is it that these two villages are divided? The Big Red Head (Lew. Clark) built a Fort at the fire Prairie. Old White Hair as well as my Chief agreed to settle there. We have kept our promises, they have not remembered theirs. After much difficulty we have fixed our village convenient to Fork Clark, under the full expectation that the Trading House was fair. But just as we had settled ourselves, we find all broke up. I was lately on a visit to the Great American Chief. He told me that Fort Clark should be made stronger than ever, that he would plant an iron port there that could not be pulled up, and that would never decay. I fear he has forgotten that promise and instead of planting an iron port intends to let the old wooden one rot. The Trading House is not for nothing. We have given our land for it, and I tell you plainly, I think the President has done very wrong to remove it at all. I have seen him and his Country and Millions of his People, and am very certain that he is able to protect a Trading House wherever he is bound by contract to keep one. I do not like this place at all.”

Truly reported as delivered to me from the interpreters, one of whom was duly sworn.

(Signed) G. C. Sibley

Sub. Cg. Of ___ Affairs

His Excellency
Govr. Wm. Clark
St. Louis