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**Letter from Auguste Chouteau to George Sibley, December 8,
1816**

Auguste Chouteau

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St. Louis December The 8th 1816

Sir

I have received your official letter by which you notify to me the orders which you have received of the honble (?) Secretary of war relative to the Agents employed in the Indian Department, who are ordered to reside in the Villages of the Indian nations to whom they are respectively appointed, I shall always be ready to comply with the instructions and wishes of the Government but nevertheless at this time, I think it my duty to submit to you some objections which I believe are justly grounded.

The Osages are divided in Three different tribes whereof the interests are entirely divided, a party very numerous and of which the dispositions are too often uncertain resides on the Arkansas river, if I was residing in the village of the White hairs on the Osage river, which is the most consequent Settlement, the other tribe would be dissatisfied, It would not be in my power to watch their conduct and I should certainly lose their confidence as my influence over them.

The great Osages as well as the other Indians of their nation do not remain constantly at their villages on the contrary after having sowed their corn in the month of April, they start in the first days of May for hunting buffaloes at a distance of about three hundred miles from their settlements and they do not return before the end of the month of August, In September they gather their corn and immediately after they start to hunt beavers, deers &- and pass all the winter scattered in the woods and do not come back at their village before the 10th or 15th of March. In the course of a full year, the Osages are no more than three months in their vilalges, which during the time of their absence are exposed to the depredations of other Indian nations. The Black Smith granted by the government to the Osages is obliged to follow them on their hunting excursions and for the safety of the tools and other objects which he cannot bring with him he conceals them with the greatest care to prevent them to be stolen or destroyed by the Indian party of hostile nations, who consider the white peoples residing among their enemies as being themselves their enemies. If in conformity of your last order I was going to reside at the village of the white hairs, I should be obliged to follow from one place to another some of their bands in their hunting party, and without any doubt I should be entirely useless to the government and in the same time I should lose all the consideration and power which untill now I have conserved over them.

If some difficulties were arising between the Osages and the United States, being not in the possibility to receive your immediate instructions, I should be at a loss to know what I should have to do and I should not dare to make any promise or threats according to circumstances being not acquainted with your opinion

Finally if I was permanently residing amongst the Osages they should be constantly at my house begging for food, tobacco, liquor & and by your own experience you know that it should not be in my power to refuse them constantly, those expences should be consequent and without any real advantage for the United States.

For the best and true interest of the United States I believe that it is necessary that an interpreter whose character should be proved by experience, reside constantly with the Osages with order to give immediate notice of every essential facts or things coming to his knowledge and I believe that the interpreter now appointed, by his character, his birth and habit with the Indians is the proper man for that office, When I might remain at St. Louis to receive your Orders, being always ready to start for the Osage river or Arkasnas river or for any other places withoutany restriction for which you may command me.

Whatever may be your decision be assured of my submission to your orders. In this circumstance I am not actuated by any personal interest but by a full conviction that my residence at the Osage Village should be not only useless but contrary to the interest of the United States.

I am respectfully

Sir

Your obed Servant

A Chouteau