

Lindenwood University

Digital Commons@Lindenwood University

George Champlin Sibley Papers

George and Mary Easton Sibley Papers

12-1840

Letter from George Sibley to the Board of Internal Improvements, December 1840

George Champlin Sibley
Jefferson City, Missouri

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/george>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sibley, George Champlin, "Letter from George Sibley to the Board of Internal Improvements, December 1840" (1840). *George Champlin Sibley Papers*. 73.
<https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/george/73>

This Correspondence is brought to you for free and open access by the George and Mary Easton Sibley Papers at Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in George Champlin Sibley Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. For more information, please contact phuffman@lindenwood.edu.

To the Board of Internal Improvements.

In conformity with the order of the Board passed on the 10th of May 1839 appointing me their Commissioner to Superintend the Reconnoissance and Survey of a Route for a Rail Road from the City of St. Louis to the Iron Mountain; I entered immediately upon the duties assigned me; and in conjunction with the Chief Engineer caused the Survey to be commenced as Soon as the necessary preparations could be completed; which were made principally under the immediate direction of Major Morell; in whose professional experience I entirely confided to appoint and equip the party employed in that Service.

We found at the outset, that the number of Assistants Specified in the Order of the Board of the 9th May, '39, was insufficient to ensure the most expeditious and economical execution of the Survey; and also, that it was impracticable to hire any Suitable Common hands at the rate of Wages fixed on by the Board- We therefore employed an additional Assistant, and were compelled to pay Twenty-five Dollars per Month for labouring hands.- We were able however to reduce the monthly wages of the Flagman, by causing a common hand perform that duty-

The Survey was commenced at the Shore of the Mississippi River in the City of St. Louis, on the 9th day of June, and was completed at the Summit of the Iron Mountain in the County of St. Francis, on the 30th day of October 1839- I then immediately, as soon as the bad weather permitted, caused the Party with the whole equipment, to be transported across the Country to Massey's Iron Works, where they were directed to commence a Survey of the Meramec River- There I paid them all of in full to the 8th November inclusive, and transferred them with all the public property attached, to Robert White Esquire, the Commissioner of the Board under whose Superintendence the Survey of the Meramec River was to be conducted.

As the Board will look to the Chief Engineer and not to me, for a detailed Report on this Survey: I shall duly offer here a few brief Remarks, in addition to what it is my particular province to State in relation to the expense incurred in its accomplishment- The Accompanying Document (a condensed Report of the Chf: Engineer) Marked A, to which I respectfully refer the Board, will furnish those details with Sufficient precision for the present purpose-

From that Document it appears that the length of the line as Surveyed, is 115 $\frac{3}{8}$ Miles, that it passes through the heart of the Mineral Region, and also through Coal Fields and extensive Pine forests- that the greatest level to be overcome by a propelling power, (in the whole about 12 Miles) is 70 feet to the Mile; consequently requiring Engines of the largest class, and a Construction heavy and expensive in

proportion- That the Establishment of a Rail Road thereon, complete with all necessary Engines, Cars, Coaches, Shops, &c. will require an expenditure of about Three Million Dollars will be requisite to yield a clear income of Six per Cent on the Capital.

The Survey has doubtless been accurately and faithfully executed; and may be confidently relied on as the basis of any future prosecution of the Contemplated Impt. It ascertained a practicable route between the two points in the direction designated by the Legislature; and altho' it may not now be expedient either for the State or a Company to undertake the work, the time will probably soon arrive when the incalculable & inexhaustible Mineral Richs of the region through which our Survey passes, not to mention the Mt. of Iron ore at its terminus, more fully developed by Individual enterprise, will demand even more costly facilities if necessary for their diffusion- Meanwhile the State will possess all the facts, estimates &c resulting from this Survey: which will be Sufficient data for any future legislation on the Subject.-

The cost of this Survey, altho' considerably within the estimate and appropriations, was unavoidably increased not only by the employment of an extra assistant, and the higher rate of Wages paid for Labouring hands; but also by detentions consequent on Sickness in the Party, produced by their exposure during the extreme heat of Summer in the dense thickets and flinty hills among which the line of the Survey was obliged to pass. And I may add with truth and propriety, that it was also increased by the extortionate charges of many of those from whom the necessary Subsistence and other Supplies for the Party, were obliged to be purchased along the route.

The Board will perceive, that the Party engaged in this Service, was in the field Five Months, including the few days occupied in their transfer to the Meramec- The principal Assistant Engineer, and the Rodman, were in Service & under pay Six Months, being employed the first Month principally in preparing the outfit for the Rail Road, and other Surveys, for which Service they were wholly paid out of the Rail Road Appropriation in my hands. Including this last named expenditure, the Rail Road Reconnoissance & Survey has cost the Sum of Three Thousand Seven Hundred and one Dollars, and Thirty one Cents, which the Board will find exhibited in ample detail, in the Statement and accompanying Vouchers, Herewith presented, Marked B.- All which with this Report, are Respectfully Submitted.

G. C. Sibley

City of Jefferson

Dec. 1840