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Letter from George Sibley to Josiah Johnston, January 8, 1825

George Champlin Sibley
St. Louis

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St. Louis January 8th 1825

Dear Sir,

I wrote you a few days ago from this place in relation to a matter of debt between me + the U. States – Since then I have seen in the papers, that Mr. Barton has proposed. some new enactment to effect the final and just settlement of claims to Land under the Law of Congress of 17 Feb. 1815 for the relief of the People of New Madrid . I do not know what Mr. Barton's precise views are; but am in hopes they may embrace the case of mine, that I asked you to examine at the Gen. Land Office, which I believe Mr. Barton is acquainted with. If you Sh. Think it proper that my Section ought to be allowed and patented, and Mr. Barton's proposition does not fully and clearly embrace it and provide for it being patented, I have thought that you might easily obtain such modifications of Mr. B's plan as to affect my object; and thus save me the trouble and offence of petitioning Congress, or instituting a suit. And to that end I have used the freedom of requesting your attention to the matter if necessary + proper-

You are already apprised, that the location I claim embraces my residence near Ft. Osage, and that I have expended considerable Money and labour in Building and improvements on this Land. it is therefore a matter of no small importance to me, to obtain as soon as possible a recognition of my claim at least; so as to prevent its being sold as Public Land; in the latter event, it is more than probable I Sh. have to buy my own improvements pretty dearly, or lose them entirely/ - That I am entitled to make the location somewhere – , there is no doubt – The Govt. actually owes me 640 Acres of Land; the particular Spot I ask has no especial value, except in the improvements that I have put upon it; and I declare to you, that if I had not made those improvements, I should care very little about the Land or Situation; as I could probably find twenty other Spots equally desirable, whereon to make my location, and where I might make it without objection – There seems to be a Notion at the Gov. Land Office, that the Land I claim is immensely valuable, and embraces some very valuable Public Buildings and improvements – this is a very erroneous Supposition, and even if true, ought not to have been urged agt. my claim – If you choose to take the time + trouble to read my Letter to Mr. Crawford on this Subject, you will there find the matter fully and, as I believe, fairly discussed. That Letter is, or ought to be, in the Office of Mr. Graham, who will no doubt give it to you if you desire it. I am very anxious to hear from you, what you think of my claim, + what course I ought to pursue to perfect (?) my title, and will esteem myself much your debtor if you will do me the favour to write me as soon as convenient after you examine into the Subject. I am aware how much I ask of you, when I request your examination of so lengthy a document as if my Lt. + its accompanying papers, the more especially as you must doubtless have more important use for all your time during the Session of Congress ; I can only say, that I do not wish to intrude and shall be the better pleased with the favour you confer on me, the less it interferes with any other more important business. –

You are no doubt informed that the Trade to N. Mexico by S^{ta}. Fee is becoming an interesting and important object to the People of this State. Our Western members in Congress have, it appears, made it their duty to intercede for some protection and encouragement to their Trade, which will probably be granted by Congress. Having lately engaged in That Trade, + intending to embark in it pretty extensively (provided I can see a pretty clear prospect ahead) I feel considerable solicitude about

it. and when Congress may afford it such aid as are necessary to afford Security to those who are, or who may hereafter be engaged in it – One very important and very necessary aid, is the Appt. of a Consul or Commercial Agent to reside at S^{ta}. Fee; another would be a Military Post and Indian Agency at some suitable point between the Arkansas + the mountains. Another, some treaty arrangement with the Govt. of Mexico, placing the commercial intercourse between the two countries upon a just an liberal footing. at present the duties demanded by the Gov. of S^{ta}. Fe upon the Goods taken there by our Traders + Merchants, are very exorbitant and irregular. –

As it is more than probable that Agencies will be established at S^{ta}. Fee + on the Arkansas in reference to this Trade, I cannot omit to recommend through you to the executive (Sh. you feel any interest in the subject) two persons who are peculiarly well calculated to discharge the duties of those Agencies – For the first, I would beg to name Mr. Paul Baillio. This young Gentleman was formerly associated with me in my Agency near the Osages, so that I am well acquainted with his merits and qualifications. He Speaks + writes well, the Spanish, French + English Languages. Was educated a Merchant, Has been to South America, the West Indies +. has a pretty good knowledge of the manners + customs of the American Spaniards. He is now at S^{ta}. Fee, where he has doubtless formed many acquaintances + made some friends. He is very much esteemed + and respected here; and I am very confident that no appt. could be made that would give such general satisfaction here, as would that of Mr. Baillio - The Govt. could not in my opinion make a more judicious selection – Mr. ___ L. M. Kenney (?) (late subt. of his Trade) will take a pleasure in satisfying you further concerning this amiable + excellent young Man, whose _____ History he is acquainted with, and which will interest + entertain you exceedingly, if you think it proper to enquire for it –

The Agency on the Arkansas could not be better filled than by the Appt. of Major W. Bradford, late of the Army. That Gentleman is previously calculated for such an employment; and would, I have no doubt give entire Satisfaction to all concerned. I believe he is well known to Genl. Jackson, who will probably join in recommending him. –

If these two important Agencies should happen to fall into the hands of incompetent persons, it were far better not to have established them at all; for as much reliance will be placed in their influences and official capacity, those Trading to N. Mexico will be thrown off their guard in some degree and omit to take the customary precautions for their Security; so that if they find us and ___ protection at the hands of the Agents of the Govt. they will run the hazard of being plundered by the Indians and imposed on by the Mexican authorities at S^{ta}. Fee. ___ . – Mr. Baillio and Major Bradford would both be sufficiently active and vigilant. Major B. is well known to be uncommonly well qualified to deal with and control Indians, especially such as are wild and Savage in their habits. If Any Man can protect our March Ft. + Traders from Indian depredation on the route to S^{ta}. Fee, I am well persuaded Major B. can.

And I am equally confident that Mr. Baillio, would be found quite as efficient and useful an Agent at S^{ta}. Fe –

I have no other than a common interest in there Apts. ; I am anxious that the Agencies Shall be established and that they be filled by proper persons – Such places are too much regarded as _____ in this country, particularly the Indian agencies, and are mostly filled by Persons who can perform little or no other duty than that of signing red. + vouchers for their Salaries, and contingent expences – for the above Stations, we require able active and vigilant officers; Men who will be steadily on duty and at their posts. If such men be not app. better, for better, let matters remain as they are – .

I beg that nothing I have said here may be taken as a relinquishment of my pretensions (?) to the Public employments mentioned in my L: of the 4th __. . If I engage in Trade to N. Mex.; it will be because I fail to obtain either of the employs. above alluded to, and in that event, shall probably enter into a copartnership with Mr. Baillio, and establish a House at S^{ta}. Fee –

Please to remember me affectionately to Ann E: If I did not suppose that any thing I could write about from here (except common place domestic affairs) would affect her but very poor _____, I Sh. probably challenge her for a correspondence.

for yourself Sir, if I find you continue a Member of the Senate, I may probably trouble you now + then, with Some of my thoughts upon Indian Affairs, + the Oregon Scheme.

Yr. truly

G. c. Sibley

How: For S. Johnston }