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Letter from George Sibley to Josiah Johnston, February 6, 1829

George Champlin Sibley

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St. Charles February 6. 1829.

My dear Sir,

Yesterday I heard from Mr. Bates, indirectly, that Mr. M. Duffie (?) had informed him, that The Committee of Ways + Means felt great reluctance to report an Appropriation for the extra Expenses of the Road to New Mexico; and that he, Mr. Bates, was apprehensive that the appropriation would not be made, altho' it had been recommended by the Secretary of War – Mr. Bates has not written to me yet, on the Subject. – I can Scarcely realize to myself. that I am destined again to be disappointed in the receipt of the money, I So much need, that I actually advanced out of my own Pocket. to complete the work ordered by an Act of Congress – The disappointment will embarrass and perplex me exceedingly – Altho' I can hardly expect this Letter to reach you before the adjournment of Congress; yet as it may by good luck do So; I think I ought to forward it, with the Papers it encloses; which, if they do not arrive too late may probably be of Some use – I would Send them to Mr. Bates, but fearing he may have left Washington before they could reach him, there might be Some danger of their getting lost, which I would be glad to guard against, as they may possibly be wanted for Some future occasion — Col: Benton's Letter to me, one of the Papers herein Enclosed, certainly had no influence whatever, with me or with my Colleagues, in fixing on our original plan of proceeding; which was very carefully adapted to the means placed at our disposal by the Act of Congress, and to the Instructions given us by the Government; which will show that we had no reason whatever to apprehend the delay that took place in consequence of the tardiness of the Mexican Government.

It was this delay, So entirely unexpected, and improbable, that occasioned the extra expense; and these facts are Set forth not only in our General Report, but in the Statement of our Acct. of the expenditures +. – It was ascertained a little before we had completed our whole work, that the appropriation would fall Short; and tho' we could devise no plan of economy to avoid Such result entirely; we did not consider it proper for that reason, to decline altogether, the completion of the Work, or to defer it –

In coming to this determination, Col: Benton's assurances doubtless had Some influence; with me at least, they had – tho' it is not improbable, that I should have agreed to incur the risk of the extra expense, without those assurances: relying as I think I very justly had a right to do, on the unavoidable necessity, that led to it. thro' the unexpected delay of the Mexican Government, which we were warranted in not anticipating, by assurances from the Secretary of War, as well as by the extreme unreasonableness of Such an occurrence.- Inasmuch, therefore as the Comm^{rs}. were drawn into their expenditure, by circumstances, they could neither foresee, or controul; which they were not only not warned against, but instructed not to apprehend; and inasmuch as it became their duty, under all the circumstances, to complete the Work confided to them; and as

. . The last necessary process of "Marking" the Road, was undertaken + completed, by one of the Commrs. Above, without the aid of a Surveyor (he performing that laborious duty himself) and with only a very Small Party of Men – This reduced the expense not less than Two thousand Dollars – one proof at least, that economy was practised.

[This marks the end of the second page of the letter. This apparent footnote occurs at the bottom of the second page of the letter, and the third page continues by finishing the sentence ending with “to complete the Work confided to them; and as,” where the transcription picks up immediately following this note. To the immediate left of the two periods (or dots) opening the paragraph above, is a small drawn figure. It may be only a flourish, but it appears to be a rough symbol of a hand, pointing with an index finger to the sentence immediately following it. As for the long double line immediately above this paragraph, it appears to be a border separating this apparent footnote from the rest of the letter.]

their Accounts of disbursements are rendered in a form Sufficiently detailed, and its truth and correctness assured, in the Solemn manner prescribed by the Secretary of War, and will admit of no doubt; it appears to me very Strange that The Committee of ways and means, Should feel any reluctance to report in favour of the Appropriation –

If I could have imagined any, the least difficulty in this matter, I Should have long ago adapted my application to the emergency: and instead of asking in courteous terms, what I might demand as Right, Should have assumed (however awkwardly) a Mendicant Style + attitude, too commonly adopted now a days, by freemen, whose rights are at the disposal of their Agents at Washington - I Shall not be without hope however, that if their Communication Should reach you in time, provision will be made to pay the Sum of \$1504 54/100 that is justly due (with a year’s interest) from the U. States to me, for monies actually advanced and paid away in their Service, under circumstances that ought to have forbidden all higgling, and a moment’s hesitation or delay. –

Yours very truly

G. c. Sibley.

Hon: Josiah S. Johnston.