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Letter from George Sibley to Josiah Johnston, January 17, 1832

George Champlin Sibley
Lindenwood College

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Linden Wood Near St. Charles Mis,
January 17th 1832

My dear Sir.

Ever Since the 18th. of June last, I have been almost unremittingly engaged /in conjunction with Cols. Reeves + Mather the two Gentlemen who were associated with me to mark out the Road to New Mexico) in Searching out and collecting a new Set of Vouchers, to cover the Amt. expended on that object + enable us to Settle our Acct. at the Treasury – You may judge of the trouble and cost of this labour, when I tell you, that for one item, it has occasioned us, journeys that in the aggregate exceed Six Hundred Miles – A great part of this Labour + expense was caused by the loss of a Packet of 63 Vouchers, Sent three years ago to Washington by Mail. Lost either on the passage, or mislaid after their receipt, the latter most probably, – We have however Succeeded in collecting a Complete Set; which I have now here in my possession; and which I Shall take care to present in person to the proper Offices at Washington City ere long.

It was my intention to have St out on this journey abt. Christmas = but Sickness in my family, the excessive cold weather, and other causes, prevented it - and Some of those causes (Sickness) will probably delay my departure yet a week or two longer. We have the influenza literally raging among us; from which no one, can expect to escape – And now, as the weather has greatly moderated, many of my friends Strongly urge me to wait a little longer, ‘till, as they believe, the river will be open So that I may get to Wheelen, [last letter of “Wheelen” uncertain] easier, quicker, and much Cheaper, than by taking the Stages all the way.

Unless the Influenza cuts me off, I expect to be at Washington, before the Middle of February. there is not the least reason to doubt – but I Shall be able Settle that Amount without any difficulty –

Another object which I propound to effect by this journey; is the final Settlement of my Security Debt, or at least to make Some equitable arrangement with the Govt. to mitigate, if not relieve me of, this burthen – With this view, I was very anxious to be at Washington, even by this time, in order to either effect a Settlement or to obtain an Order. to the Dist. Attorney to Suspend any further proceedings against me ‘till the result of my application can be finally known. – I am fearful that Mr. Shannon the Dist. Attorney will order execution and that during my absence, my property may be Sold for a mere trifle – Our Dist. Court Sits at Jefferson City (a very Remote place) the 1st (?) Monday in March next, when and where Sales of property under exection must be Sold – No execution has issued yet that I know of, but I believe it is Shannon’s intention to do it –

An immediate order, will reach here in time to prevent the Shameful + useless Sacrifice of my property, and I am perswaded that a word from you would procure it. – If when, I make my personal application, I cannot effect a final Settlement, I Shall be prepared to Submit to whatever course it may be thought proper to pursue – No possible advantage, can arise to Govt. by forcing the Sale of my property – it would not yield a tythe of the Amt. due (tho’ worth a great deal more). and when Sacrificed, what has the Govt. for it? the Debt lost, and a Citizen prostrated, and Some Scoundrel of a Spectulator enriched – all these effects are absolutely certain. –

Mr. Shannon has been authorised, in a very restricted Sense, to make Some arrangement with me +., but he is timid, fears responsibility; and Somehow or other, I find it impracticable to Settle with him: (tho’ we are on very good terms, and I think he is not at all unfriendly to me) So that Mr. Mapeys (?)

liberal disposition Seems to avail me nothing – As I am Soon to be at Washington, I must prefer to Settle, on Some terms ,at head quarters; and I think after Some explanation, it will not be difficult to do So. But I Shall probably be deprived of this opp.y, if an order is not immediately issued directing Shannon to Suspend proceedings, which order Shd. leave washington, before the 12th. of February or at any rate the 16th. And as much Sooner as possible – I hope you will pardon me this trouble; I believe I Shall not feel obliged to call upon you again in this way.

Sometime about the Middle of Feb.y, I think I Shall have the pleasure to See you all, and hope I may find you in good health – I write this while much afflicted with fever +head ache, my wife lies near me with a burning fever + sore throat.

please present us, Sick or well, affectionately to Ann Eliza.

Yrs. ever +truly

G. c. Sibley

Hon. J. S. Johnston.

[The word “burning” appears to be the word “burn” followed by a dash connected to the word and dotted as for an “i”. The same applies to the word “directing.” A similar effect occurs in the case of the word “long” at the conclusion of the first paragraph; the “n” does not show up and the “g” is very clumsy. In these cases, Sibley probably did not bother to carefully spell out the conclusion of the word, especially since he was feverish, so I have written in what the word was clearly supposed to say, and include this note for clarification. In several other places, Sibley did misspell a word, and where I could be certain of the misspelling this transcription reflects that fact. As a final note, the word “good” in the second to last paragraph is so smudged that it can mostly only be guessed from the overall shape of the smudge.]