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Letter from George Sibley to William Russell, May 23, 1836

George Champlin Sibley
Lindenwood College

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Linden Wood May 23rd, 1836

To Mr. Wm Russell,

Dear Sir.

Your letter of the 22nd inst addressed to Mr. Sibley, was duly recd. Last evening by the hand of Mr. Geyer; and as you require an immediate answer, I lose no time in communicating what we deem it necessary to say to you in reply, by the same conveyance. Mr. Jos. Wherry asked me when I was lately at St. Louis, if we could take as a Boarder & Pupil, a Sister of Mary Lewis, saying he had been desired to make the enquiry, by his wife, then in Arkansas, and that if we could take charge of her, he would probably bring her up when he went for Mrs. Wherry. My answer was, that she could be recd. And that if he thought fit, arrangements would be made for her &c. &c. Your letter of yesterday announces that Miss Lewis has arrived at St. Louis and that her Guardian Mr. Phillips, has placed her under your care and direction, and you wish to know whether we can receive her into our family as a Boarder & Pupil. To this enquiry, I have only to repeat what I said to Mr. Wherry.

You take occasion in your letter above referred to, to express with great clearness and emphasis your views and settled opinions, of the impropriety and wickedness of introducing, or suffering to be introduced, into schools, Religious instructions, and declare your positive objections to Youth being "either catechised or lectured by any one, no matter how eminent, worthy or virtuous upon religious instructions, nor in any way advise or encourage them in that matter, other than as regards their Moral conduct, without special or particular reference to religion" This declaration, in connection with other parts of your Letter, renders it necessary to reconcile the fixed and unalterable principle upon which we mean to conduct our school (and have hitherto conducted it) with your views, and requirements, now for the first time understood by us.

I copy from a circular long since Prepared for the Press but postponed 'till our new Buildings are ready, a sentence to show you how incompatible and irreconcilable our views are, with yours upon this particular point – "The plan upon which the Linden Wood School will be uniformly conducted, proposes a course of instruction of a through character; Intellectual, Moral and Domestic, based on the Settled principles of the Christian Religion, and carefully adapted to those on which are founded the free institutions of our Country"

This general outline of our plan, we are well persuaded, is in itself unobjectionable, and that the Public Sentiment will uphold it. Whether it be upheld or not however; we shall never modify it, or act upon any other.

I cannot suppose it necessary to remind you. That from its first inception the little School at this place, has been avowedly conducted on religious Principles from which it has never swerved for a moment. A religion bias of an intelligent rational character, unconnected with parties of Sects, has ever been encouraged and inculcated in my family – and tho' this has been done upon settled principles, and a deemed sacred duty, it has never been made a regular branch of School instruction, occupying any time usually devoted to ordinary study.

I had occasion some two years ago, to explain to you this matter very fully. Since then no change has taken place on my views on the subject, at all calculated to impair the force of what I then expressed. Mrs. Sibley and myself regret exceedingly the reasons that operate upon your mind to

remove your Daughter & Mary Lewis from our household – We have endeavored to do them justice – to rear them up as if they were our own, to “remember their Creator in the days of their youth” – to fit them for usefulness & happiness in this life, and in that which is eternal. But you’re their Guardian & most responsible friend, have become alarmed, lest they become contaminated in our family. We shall not argue this point with you, but close the subject by desiring you to take them away as soon as you conveniently can, for they nor no others can remain in our family on the terms you have prescribed in your Letter, to which this is an answer.

I remain Yours as ever,

G. C. Sibley