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Letter from George Sibley to Josiah Johnston, April 6, 1828

George Champlin Sibley
St. Charles, Missouri

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St. Charles, Missouri, April 6. 1828

My dear Sir,

The only letter that I wrote you from Louisiana was burned with the mail in the mail boat Columbia at St. John's below N. Orleans.

The provincial circumstances of our recent visit to your state were briefly there. On the 21st of Nov. left home. 10th Dec: embarked for N. Orleans in the steam boat Jubilee, to wit; my wife, Miss Easton & myself. 19th reached N. Orleans. There met O. _ Sibley recently off on Asst. serving in the army, extremely glad to see him, and think he would accompany us up to Alex. Natchitoches, having leave of absence from duty. 21st set out for Alex in the planter. 23rd Arrived at Alex. invited to spend some days at Mr. Carson's where we found Henry's wife & his five children. Saw Kevin Johnston the same evening. Attended a ball at Alex. on the 27th. Saw at Mr. [name] King's excellent self portrait of Anna Eliza, was struck by the great resemblance to the original as she appeared when I last saw her in North Carolina. On the 1st of Jan. Arr. at Natchitoches after night, find all well except father, who was just getting out of danger from a very serious illness. Spent a few days at County _ and returned to Natchitoches about the 18th of January. Find father recovering very rapidly; he has his usual flow of humorous and buoyant spirits. Spent the time agreeably 'till 21st of Feb. when we set out for home via New Orleans in the Bracer, Margaret, Ann & Henry accompany us. Arr. at N.O. on 24th, found the Liberator just ready to sail for St. Louis, went right on board from the Bracer. The next day found us should be delayed a day or two longer, which afforded us Opportunity To visit the St. Charles Sight house, Battle ground _ ; for aid in these matters, we are all extremely obliged to Henry Johnston, who is here in character of legislator. Left N.O. for StL. On 29th Feb. River unusually full; very nearly running over the levee. Arr. At St. Louis 10th March, after a pleasant voyage. Staid at St. Louis 'till the 1st of April. Then came here to spend a few days with my wife's relation previous to our return to Ft. Osage. Had the pleasure to see Albert Johnston at St. Louis. Since our arrival there, having a few days leisure; I took occasion to examine a small tract of land that I have near this village with the view of improving and _ to it if I liked the situation & find it will suit pretty well and determined on the removal of snow as possible. In the meantime my family will reside here very comfortably, from where they may occasionally visit St. Louis (Distance Avg. 18 miles) where I have many friends & where the society is very good. I have intervened on this removal partly because it will be of advantage Ann & Henry. And partly because it will enable me to give up without any very great inconvenience, my establishment at Ft. Osage, to go to the payment of the Govt. debt, should it be decided by the treasury Dept. to accept of my offer of lands in payment, which I am greatly in hopes will be the case. By giving up my valuable farm at Ft. Osage in lieu of the small unimproved tract near the village, I may hope to pay off the whole debt at once, provided my offer is accepted; on which subject I am extremely anxious to hear. For nothing on earth so depressed me as this cursed debt, which I will make almost any sacrifice to pay off. But I am sensible that I have already inflicted enough of my waiting on you in regard to this matter, and very well know that you will not wait to obtain the decision of the proper office as soon as it can be had. And in confident reliance on the favourable decision of the Secy. of the treasury, I shall set out from here in course of tomorrow for St. Osage, for the purpose of removing my servants & household goods down here immediately. I expect to effect this by the 1st of May; leaving my stark & great part of my farming tools 'till next fall, or perhaps till the spring following as they will be in safe & careful hands, and improving in value there till I can provide for their maintenance here.

Margaret and Ann Seem to be quite well satisfied here; I have no doubt that they will both be more and more pleased as they become better acquainted with the county & extend the circle of their acquaintances. It is my purpose to do the best I am able for them all, Ann is a very fine girl; and Henry a promising boy of his age, after I return from Ft. Osage, I shall put Henry to a school at St. Louis, I hope you will desire his brother John to write him occasionally. It will be a mutual advantage to them to write to each other. I have been for some time thinking of writing a long letter to Ann E. but somehow or other I can never command quiet & leisure enough to make the attempt. She will not be meaningful however I trust of her correspondent Margaret, by which medium I promise myself the pleasure of carrying on some sort of individual correspondence with her.

I made a report to the Govt. last fall of the road to New Mexico, for myself & colleagues, but have never seen or heard of it more. I expected it would surely been published before now, as it certainly ought to be, for whatever may be thought of the matter at Washington, it is here thought of with some interest I assure you. If it should be printed I should thank you for a copy of it.

I hope that the congress may by this time have ceased their political wrangling, & get serious about the public business, it is really disgusting to see such culpable neglect of duty, & wanton waste of time in congress upon insignificant party disputes that gentlemen should be ashamed to discuss even in a common tavern. This tack-code attempt to subvert the Govt. certainly produces some very strange occurrences, it seems to be everywhere on the decline however, in this state, and I do not at all doubt but it will fail in every other state. At least so far as to prostrate the hero of the force. It is much to be regretted indeed that Gen. Jackson should have suffered his wild & undisciplined ambition to precipitate him and his (slaves) in this race for high civil office. For whether he wins or loses the race, his fame is tarnished irretrievably. This violent & unusual attack upon Mr. Clay, and his electioneering trip to New Orleans have in my mind canceled every claim that his military achievements gave him on the good will & respect of the people. He falls back naturally into his old character of a swaggering jockey & bully.

I wish he had kept quick with his glory, for that I took pride as an American, and for it added to the national character. But it is proven to have been a jewel as unfit for his wearing, as a diamond ring would be on the nose of a hog.

I shall write you again after my return from Ft. Osage, for the journey thither I must now go to make some necessary preparations. Present us affectionately to your wife, your son & to John, and believe me.

Very truly & ever yours

G.C. Sibley.

Hon. J. S. Johnston

Washington City.