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Letter from George Sibley to Samuel Sibley, February 12, 1811

George Champlin Sibley
Fort Osage

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MHS
Sibley Papers
A.L.S. GCS to SHS

Fort Osage (230 miles up the Missouri Feb'y 12th 1811

My dear Brother,

I rec'd your letter of the 1st October on the 10th of Decem. and notwithstanding Some extraordinary remarks and Surmises which you have permitted yourself to make therein, it gave me on the whole Some more pleasure than pain, – I pray you present my love to your partner and bestow a Million of kisses on my little nice Ann Hopkins for me. Why do you not write me oftener? You know where your letters will always find me therefore have no excuse for such long silence. Not so with me. you have been So long on the wing as it were for Natchitoches, that I never know precisely where to address a letter to you, and that uncertainty deprives me of the pleasure I should otherwise enjoy, of writing you as often as I have leisure and opportunity. – I assure you I Should not now write you, but for the very pressing terms of your last letter which in a manner compels me to commit a reply to the very dubious chance of its even reaching you, and necessarily diminishes the pleasure that I should otherwise feel in writing you. The same cause has prevented my writing to any of the rest of the family in Carolina for a long time, but they have no better excuse than you have for observing such rigid and eternal Silence towards me. for the last 12 or 18 months. I have only heard from Carolina thro' the medium of my Father's letters from Natchitoches. He has never yet neglected me but frequently indulged me with his lengthy and affectionate letters. He does not permit the engagements of business and the pleasures of Society wholly to deprive me of his notice who from my remote Situation here in the Indian country , stand So much in need of the unceremonious and steady attentions of my relations, at least, who reside in the Settled country, and who know well enough where their letters will find me, and how much Satisfaction they always afford. – But although I certainly have good and substantial reasons to extend my complaints against against [sic] you all to a still greater length. I will forbear to do so for the present but content myself with what I have already Said to you. – Since I wrote you last I have enjoyed my health without interruption, [sic] and excepting Some disagreeable quarrels that I have been forced into with Some of the Officers of the Army, I have passed my time agreeably enough divided among my official duties and domestic concerns. – I have been twice to St. Louis by land; once I spent about a month and another time ten days in St. Louis and was out about 15 days each time in the wilderness between here and their. [sic] The country is very beautiful thro' which we traveled and I passed my time

most pleasantly I assure you. – So far I have been pretty successful in my Agency, and have every prospect of being able to render essential service to the Govt. I cannot find any diminution of confidence in me on the part of the Govt, but on the contrary am flattered with its being strengthened and increased. This affords me the greater satisfaction because I know that attempts have been made by – my enemies to injure my public name and reputation after they had discovered that their efforts were fruitless to injure my person and private character. – I have a good deal to attend to of one kind or other, but my time is chiefly engaged with Indians and Indian affairs, and having brought my business into some System now, it has ~~now~~ become rather a pleasure than a toil. – I keep a kind of Bachelor’s Hall and have my clerk (a clever young Gentleman) boarding with me. our fare is Simple, but good and wholesome. Coffee and unbuttered toast for Breakfast and frequently a change of Milk and hominy. Beef Pork or Venison and Potatoes for dinner and a dish of tea and milk and hominy for Supper always. We Breakfast at 9. Dine at 2 and Sup irregularly Sometimes early Sometimes late, frequently we are honored with an Osage Chief or War Captain to dine or Sup with us, and very often are favored with the company of the princesses and young ladies of rank decked out in all the finery of beads red ribbons and vermilion, silver ornaments and scarlet Blankets. but I am growing heartily tired of housekeeping (being utterly unfit to manage kitchen affairs myself) and am now just maturing a plan of economy on a different footing which I shall put into operation in the Spring – I Sometimes think pretty Seriously of taking a trip to Kentucky in quest of a Wife. but cannot reconcile it to myself to bring one to this place, tho’ I am very comfortably fixed, and it will not agree with my plans to give up my pursuits here yet awhile, and besides, I am not So certain that I should succeed in getting one. – I am perfectly convinced however that it is now high time for me to marry and Settle myself. – I expect to take an excursion into the Indian Country of about 2 months duration in the Spring to see some Indians on business and to examine Some natural curiosities, among which will be the famous Salt Mountain or as we more properly call it the “Grand Saline” in the whole I Shall travel not less than 1500 miles before I return. –

How much longer I shall Stay here is to me very uncertain. it depends a good deal as I have often intimated to you, on the assemblage of our Family at Natchitoches. When I hear of that being the case, I shall Soon come to a determination as to my own course, and when once I determine it will take but a few weeks for me to go down Stream to Natchitoches.

God knows how ardently I wish for the day to arrive, when I Shall turn my back on the turbid waters of Missouri, and bend (?) bend (?)

my course towards our family rendezvous. – Last year I was Somewhat in hope that Genl Mason would require me to visit the Seat of Govt, but in that I was mistaken tho' not disappointed – I have it now in contemplation, after I have performed my tour in the Spring, to apply to the Genl for leave of absence for six months, which if he grants I shall avail myself of to pay a visit to Natchitoches next fall. But a thousand accidents may intervene to defeat this hope, therefore I do not permit myself too fondly to rely on it, I am now So used to disappointments of that kind, and my Situation renders Such visions So very uncertain that I have learned to wean myself from them and not to Set my heart on any Such projects. – But I Shall endeavor to realize the trip tho' I do not at present flatter myself with the certainty of Success.

It is hardly probable I think, that I Should return here again, if once I get away, and at events I should not 'till I had Seen my dear Father. almost Nine years have elapsed Since I Saw him! Heavens what an age! I can hardly believe it. –

Feb. 14th – It is altogether un= certain when I shall Send this letter to the post officers the weather is so excessively cold, that it is rather hazardous to attempt a journe [sic] by land thro' Such extensive Prairies as their [sic] are between here and their, and the river has been blocked up with Ice and utterly impassable for Boats Since the 20th of Nov. – There is a young Man going down tho' whenever the weather will permit – In the mean time I will continue to converse with you, when I have leisure and can find anything worth your notice to write about – A man has been very unexpectedly arrived this moment express from St. Louis Sent by Genl Clark with with [sic] official dispatches for me – he has laid 3 large packets on my desk, which I must leave you for the present to examine; while the poor half frozen fellow takes a hearty dram and comfortable supper. – I hope to find Some family Letters among these bundles. – (Friday 15th --Not a Single family letter! 2 of the packages contained official communications from Washington and St. Louis, and the other contained Washington papers up to the 18th of December; the whole budget is dry and quite uninteresting – It obliges me tho to break off this Letter for the present, and will probably occupy the most of my time 'till the opportunity is past in making out Sundry reports etc (?) and writing letters. – You will not be any the by (?) it however, for except a few trifling local topics, I had very nearly exhausted my fund of matter designed to conclude this letter with. – Indeed you cannot reasonably look for much else from me than some account of my health and prospects and (?) any general Speculations on Subjects of a political or official nature would be as uninteresting to you I suspect as they would to me. – Besides, I would choose at present purposely to limit myself to familiar topics and to comprice

[sic] my observations on them even, within the narrowest limits. – because of the great uncertainty there is of this letter ever finding you.

I shall expect you to keep me well informed of your movements, as well as of your prospects and success in business, domestic occurrences, [sic] and whatever else you may suppose me to feel an interest in. If you expect to hear from me, you must necessarily let me know from time to time where you you [sic] are; and when and where you expect to become stationary; – otherwise I cannot pretend to write letters and direct them at hazard.

I believe I have addressed one letter to you already at Natchitoches, which I hope has been taken up by Father. –

I feel Strongly inclined to write to Fayetteville, but even if I had time now I Should be deterred [sic] for the above reasons. You must therefore do me the favor to present my love to the Family and inform them generally as to my Situation etc. (?) . be Sure to let them know how much I am disappointed from not hearing oftener from them. – If I thought my most cordial and respectful good wishes would be acceptable to my friends in F.V. & Wilmington (particularly Mr Winslow's & Mr Cochran's Families) after passing thro' So many hands, I would request you to tender them; at all events remember me to all who are good enough to enquire after me, and send a Million of kisses and compliments to be distributed among the Girls and my particular intimates at Fayetteville, commencing with the fire Side at home. – If any thing of moment occurs before this goes, I will note it for your information – all appears to be well among the Indians in this quarter. – Again give my love to your Wife and kiss Ann to me, and believe me to be very

affectionately yours ever

G.C.S.

Mr S.H.S.

(P.P.S. I have never yet heard a word of the remittance.

I made to Mr Winslow in August 1809 (except that the Bill was duly paid at the Indian Office.)

Pray let me know Sometime about it. G.C.S.

[Copyist's note: I am copying this from someone else's transcript. I have not reproduced his/her page numbers as they are almost certainly not part of the original document. Someone also inserted question marks above uncertain words; this proved difficult to reproduce, so I have put "floating" question marks into parenthesis and moved them to immediately follow the word which they reference.]