2-2-1819

# Letter from George Sibley to William Clark, February 2, 1819

George Champlin Sibley

His Excellency
Gov.r Wm. Clarke
St. Louis

Fort Osage 2d. February 1819.

Dr. Sir,

Having ascertained that a chief of the ~~of the~~ Sacs who is lately returned from a visit to the British Agency in Upper Canada, has been passing through the Osage Camps and Villages, and inviting all the Osages to a grand Council to be held at the Sac Camp on the Missouri a little below this, & that the Osages had accepted the invitation, I deemed it proper for me to take measures to acquaint myself with the object of said counsil -- I therefore sent ~~to acquaint myself with the object~~ for the head chief of the Sacs the (Lance) and some of the principal men & caused them to have a meeting with the Osages in my presence -- when I inquired of them & the Osages the object of the proposed council. The Osages declared that they knew not the object -- And the Sacs evaded my question by saying that they had no object in view that could displease their Gt. Father The Prest. of the U. S. -- On the Osages asking them the same question, they told them every thing would be explained at the council repeated their invitation, and declined any further explanation. It had been hinted to me that the Sacs were trying to get the Osages to join them to go to war against the Pawnees & Ottos early next spring. I mentioned to them that I had heard so; and told them if such was their intention & object, they must desist from it unless they chose to incur the displeasure of the President. and I told them plainly that I should send a messenger to the Pawnees & Ottos to advise them of their danger & to prepare to meet it.--

It is probable I think that a war against the Pawnees, is one object of the Sacs; and I am inclined to think they will now give it up -- I shall notwithstanding take care to put the Pawnees on their guard -- But I do not believe that the discussions at the Council now meeting, will be confined to that subject -- From a variety of circumstances that have occured within my notice, I am irresistably led to the conclusion that the British Agency in Canada is again intermeddling in the Indian concerns of the Missouri, and is making great exertions to extend its (Poisonous) influence far and wide among the heretofore simple & well disposed Tribes west of the Mississippi.-- The Sacs are in continual habits of intimacy with that agency and they are made the medium of communication to the Missouri nations -- I am well informed that the Sacs have been invited to go next spring in a body to Canada, they have been told by the Agent there to bring all their Women & Children and that they shall all receive liberal presents of Clothing &c. -- perhaps the Sacs are authorized to invite the Osages also, and is it not probable that this extraordinary exertion to obtain influence among our Missouri Tribes may be connected with their known wishes to obstruct the extension of our Trade to the heads of the River, and to interfere with the present military expedition to the Yellow Stone River -- such is my belief and I hesitate not to avow it -- I have uniformly discouraged the Osages from contracting too great an intimacy with the Sacs. I have more than hinted to them that the Sacs will in the end cheat & drive them out of their country, if they are not very cautious -- and I believe I have been successful in making the Osages think as I do -- But let them once

get a taste of British presents, and poisoned with British politics and I predict that the blood of thousands of inocent people will stain the Shores & crimson the waters of the Missouri.

The Little Osages are now here Trading. I believe they will go to the Sacs when they leave here, in a few days. The G.t Osages are now there. Noel Mograine the Interpreter has gone by my directions to watch their proceedings. He is to report to me the results &c. &c.

The Little Osages have applied to me for their annuity; which I refused to pay them agreeably to your instructions & told them the reason. They complain bitterly that they must suffer for the bad conduct of the other Tribes and have asked me to apply to you for leave to pay them. I think they ought to be paid.

I have been also requested by the Chiefs of the L. Osages to ask you if the Commissioner did require of them at the Counsil last summer, to remove their Villages to the Osage River, they say the Interpreters told them so -- but they do not believe it was by your directions they appear to be much opposed to the removal. I have nothing to complain of the conduct of the neighbouring Indians. -- I learn from young Julien with whom I have just been conversing & who has just arrived from the Platt that the most abominable and villainous abuses daily occur among the traders in that quarter of the whiskey licence -- The limited quantity which they are permited to take into the Indian Country ostensibly for the use of their hired men, is every drop made use of in presents and in traffic to the Indians. M.r Julien tells me he saw among the Ottos a great number crippled and wounded in Drunken frolics. This shameful & destructive practice can only

be effectually stopped by prohibiting the Traders from taking even one Gallon of Liquor past this post on any pretence whatever and it will be a reproach to the Government if some measure is not adopted effectually to stop it -- A Law or regulation prohibiting this Article entirely and forfeiting the licence of a Trader detected in evading it with an order to the officer Commanding the Post to cause a strict & scrutinous search of every Boat, might have the desired effect. Some of the Traders would attempt to evade it, by packing whiskey in bottles in their Bales & boxes of merchandise (as I am told has actually happened), it would therefore be necessary to order every package opened, and if any such attempt was discovered to order the Trader back out of the Indian Country. Very respectfully &c. &c.

(Signed) G. C. Sibley

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