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5-15-1809

Letter from John Mason to George Sibley, May 15, 1809

John Mason

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George L. Sibley
No. States Factor
at Fort Osage

Indian Trade Office

Geo. Town, Wash. 15 May 1809

Sir

your several letters of 15th & 21st 6th
Sept^r 20th Nov^r 16th Jan^y 16th March and 5th April, are
all now before me, & I have given me as successively rec^d
much pleasure in marking the progress & promising
success of the establishment committed to you. The whole
has exceeded my expectations as well the quantity of goods
vended, & the profits & Fair taken in return, as the facilities
and advantages likely to be given to the neighbouring
Tribes, much of this I attribute to your management

Duplicate forwarded
17 July 1819

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and your attention to the object of the Government
in these institutions, and have reported to the
President, I am happy to inform, that he has
assented to the appointment of an assistant for your
factory - I have accordingly authorized and dispatched
to you Mr Isaac Rawlings of Maryland, (who I trust
will have the pleasure to hand you this letter and
my other dispatches) this young gentleman has
been regularly bred to mercantile business, his
connections are extremely respectable and those
who know him best, assure me he is of the most
regular and assiduous habits - I am satisfied he
will be very useful to you in your business, and I
recommend him to your attentions.

I am satisfied that you raise the salary of your
Interpreter to \$500, as you propose, since you so
highly approve of him. if you prove him to be
entirely honest and frank with you in his intercourse
with the Indians, I don't think it too much for
your post when you have several tribes to do with -
and I recommend to you to have his Son given all
the opportunities in your power to acquire the languages
of the tribes which resort to your post.

As to your own salary, I have no doubt the
President will direct it to be placed on the same footing
with that of other principal factors after the end of
the first year and on this subject you shall hear
from me in my next.

Gen^l Clark's d^t on the Secretary of war
for \$500⁰⁰ was received and paid and has been credited
your factory acc^t as has been charged, your draft
for a Choteau, for \$75⁰⁰ which was duly honored
here.

You did well to furnish Gen^l Clark the
articles producing this bill. as you will continue in
like cases to do, for small am^{ts} when it does not affect

your apartment, and in your discretion
your lead and Tobacco you will continue to procure
on the best terms you can by purchase a barter as these
are articles so much better bought near to you, than
here it will not do to think of sending them.

Before I close this, I expect to be able to say something
to you on the subject of employing soldiers to build the
factory stores &c. having already made a communication
to the Secretary of war thereon, I am satisfied of the
justice of your remarks, that you are too remote from
settles to be able to hire labour with any certainty -
and of the extravagant expence of bringing up workmen
from St. Louis, where so they must be scarce, and dear
in terms, I have considered your project for your stores,
cellars & other buildings and approve of it, from the
prospects of business you had I dont apprehend they
are too large - and I beg you will do all in your power
to push the building of them with all haste, and with the
aid of the soldiers, unless the Indians should likely to
prove troublesome in your quarter as well as in that
of St. Moine (of which we have lately heard but which
I hope will soon be over) I flatter myself you will have
them all completed close and tight before the approach
of another winter, the preservation of the publick
property which is accumulating in your hands seems
absolutely to require this -

I come now to speak of the goods I have sent you
by voice which under ^{the} cover and which left this for
Cumberland by the way of the river in charge of Mr.
Rawlings whom this will overtake by mail, say am^t
of voice to the debit of your factory \$ 10115. 26

I could not supply the whole order you furnished,
first because I rec^d it after most of my purchases were
made and next because of the difficulty this year, when
foreign commerce has been so much obstructed, to
obtain supplies for all the factories,

In the Blankets the 3 points and 1's are principally deficient in quantity - not one m. west Gun can be procured in New York Philadelphia or Baltimore.

I ordered a parcel from England last summer, but have not received them - the quality of the Blankets are the best to be procured in these times and so too with the Strouds, those sent are narrower and not of such good chord as I could wish but it can't be helped this year - Scarlet cloths are very scarce those I send are rather higher in price and quality than is desirable The Ball's Calicoes are 5c pl. yd higher this year than the last, on account of the rise in price of both the white cloth and dying dyes - we could not get all the copper Kettles you desired done in time & have in consequence sent you some small sized half kettles - to fill vacancies in the boxes these were packed in some few articles of putter not asked for have been sent & we have sent you all the enormous quantity of rampum in your list - but curtailed 50% of Vermillion because we were low in stock - you will remark in your Invoice some articles, as the Blankets for example of similar quality, and indeed the same or nearly the same intrinsic value, charged at prices different the one from the other, this is the case because during the present difficult and embarrassed times as relates to all foreign goods I have to get my supplies by several means & sometimes to pick them up as I could some I imported and others bought in the country at different times and places - Hence the fluctuation in price for the same article, I have however continued the practise of having them charged to the factories at exactly what they cost, you will equalise the prices in disposing of them after due comparison of quality as well as you can -

The quality of the Rifles and silver ware and some other articles you will find improved since

Last year, I wish if they can be procured in time to reach the Ohio before the water are too low endeavor yet to send you most of the articles you have asked, continue to be very particular in your descriptions and every pains shall be taken to suit the demand, but pray let your orders be here early, they should to give me time to prepare leave you in august for what I am to send off in april, may is full late - tell me how you like the square ax and the Buffalo knife I have had imitated from your paper pattern - the last comes I fear to high, I have sent you the wigs whimsical as the thing is as the object is to work influence thro' these said wigs - I had some thoughts of sending a third for yourself to sit in council.

I trust however you will see that those who are to wear them make use of them - I have very much more cheerfully sent you the candle moulds and large bottles to make up the Buffalo Tallow and have added one wooden stand by which you may have them made, I like this Idea of yours much and have no doubt you will succeed by proper attention to them, in the beginning the great art is to learn them to purify well the Tallow before the candles are moulded you should also learn them to dip to candles, for both kinds I presume you will find a market at St. Louis if not there at Orleans, I dont despair of introducing your Osgood Buffalo candles into the fashionable houses at Washington one of these days -

Your fur peltries I say all you take in you will send to Gen. Clarke at St. Louis and you will correspond with him in all things as the agent of this office - I shall probably as they will bear the market carriage tolerably, order your missouri Furs to St. Louis up stream for the Kentucky market, and possibly in another year as high as Rebelon and bring them here - I like the manner and the rate of your deer skins and I trust your factory will soon

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enable us to bring up some of the losses made at other places.

On the subject of your accounts which are not yet examined, and of the information you ask for as to the nature of the intercourse between the Factory & the military, Indian agents, you shall very soon hear from me. Let me hear from you frequently and particularly.

Very Respectfully &c

J. W. Smith