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**Letter from George Sibley to the American Farmer Periodical,
September 12, 1824**

George Champlin Sibley

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CULTIVATED AND NATURAL PRODUCTIONS OF MISSOURI.

Fountain Cottage, near Fort Osage, (Mis'sri)

Sept. 12th, 1824.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AMERICAN FARMER.

Sir—You must be aware, that in this remote section of the country, agriculture is yet in a very rude state. A tract of country comprising four counties, and not less than two thousand square miles,

contained less than thirty families eight years ago; and I do not believe there is one field within the whole tract, that has been regularly cultivated five years (except at this place); and as the far greater number have opened their farms in the Wild Woods, in preference to the Prairies, you may well suppose that there are yet innumerable huge stumps and dead trees on most of even the oldest farms. Until very lately, little or no attention has been paid to small grain and tobacco; the chief aim has been plenty of hog and hominy. Since the lands have been surveyed and offered for sale, and most of us have got upon our own soil, a very different spirit prevails; and I am happy to say, that there now exists, generally, a very strong disposition to introduce the culture of tobacco, all kinds of small grain, fruit trees, &c. &c.; and it is very desirable that in the offset, we should obtain the best seed that we can. It is probable that tobacco and hemp will be the staple productions of the soil of Missouri; and I am of opinion that the fine yellow tobacco, (now almost exclusively raised in Maryland) may be produced here to some advantage; and if I can procure some *genuine fresh* seed in time, I will try the experiment, and prevail on some of our experienced tobacco planters to try it also next season. Our fields are yet too new and fresh, to expect even tolerable crops of wheat from them—very few of them, however, have been seeded, and scarcely any of them properly prepared for wheat. An opinion seems to be gaining ground, that fall wheat will not answer here, and that we must sooner or later adopt spring wheat—I am a little apprehensive myself, that such may be the final result, but will not yet give over the hope, that when our fields are a little more worn and better prepared, fall crops will succeed extremely well. Meanwhile, I am desirous of trying the *white flint wheat*, which from the account given of it by your correspondent, appears to me to be extremely well calculated for this soil and climate, and I have no doubt will be a very valuable acquisition to our farmers; and I have not the least doubt but you will, after this explanation, send me, as requested, some of that, and the yellow tobacco seed.

I observed some time ago in the Farmer, an enquiry for a grape that ripens in July, and requesting information of such an one if known. We have a grape of that description here; indeed, it is quite common along the shores of the Missouri—It is known by the name of *stue* grape, which it obtained from its being chiefly found along the banks of the narrow channels, or as they are commonly called, *stues* of the Missouri, behind the islands and large sand-bars. It is a small grape about the size of a large buck shot, grows in rich clusters or bunches, rather too acid for the table though pretty good for the season. It ripens from the 10th to the 20th of July generally—The vine runs and spreads immensely, covering the trees with its rich foliage, and exhibits a beautiful sight when its fruit is ripe and ripening.

I have no doubt but this grape may be much improved by cultivation; with this view, I have removed about a dozen young roots (from layers) into my garden, where they are growing very luxuriantly, and will probably bear fruit summer after next. If this grape is thought desirable in your quarter, it will afford me much pleasure to send some slips and young roots to Baltimore, if the means of conveyance can be had.

This district of country abounds with wild grapes in very great variety; some as large as musket balls, others of the size of poke berries; some of them are extremely sweet and rich and spicy, surpassing as I think any grapes I have ever seen elsewhere. Some, though too acid, are very juicy and may be good wine grapes—culti-

vation will doubtless ameliorate and improve any of them. I have several kinds already transferred from the woods to my garden, and shall continue to make other transfers, as I discover new and valuable varieties. It is very difficult, I find, to propagate these native vines from cuttings; I have probably tried *five hundred*, and have succeeded with two only; I lost much time by these attempts, and regret that I persevered so long, and neglected the mode by layers, which I now find invariably succeeds.

The great usefulness of the "American Farmer" is conspicuous in this—that it affords the medium for an interchange of the valuable productions of the most remote, and relatively, distant parts of the union. Thus we may obtain in Missouri, the seeds of such plants as are found by the experience of the farmers in New York, to be most valuable; and it may happen, that some of the valuable *native* productions of our Missouri forests will be translated to the gardens and vineyards of Maryland, New York, &c. These facilities would hardly exist, but for your spirited and truly benevolent exertions, and the excellent paper you publish, the subscription cost of which is repaid an hundred fold, in my estimation, by these very facilities, independent of the great mass of valuable matter it contains.

I remain, sir, most respectfully,

Your ob't servant,

G. C. SIBLEY.