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9-25-1813

Letter from George Sibley to Samuel Sibley, September 25, 1813

George Champlin Sibley

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Mr. Sam^l. H. Sibley
Natchitoches
Louisiana
St. Louis, October 3

Geo. C. Sibley

On Board the Osage Factor lying at
the Mouth of the Missouri-
25th September 1813-

Dr. Brother,

A little before I left St. Louis yesterday Morning, your Letter dated 15th Aug^t. came to hand- As soon as the Storm abates which obliges me to lay here, I Shall proceed with all possible haste up the Missouri, as far as the Arrow Rock, (which is 230 Miles from here), where I shall remain in Camp till about the middle of June next.

Altho' I have but very little confidence in the Mails, (by which I have I know lost Several Letters that I forwarded to you Since June last) I had determined to write Some of you, after I got Started on this Voyage, and forward my Letter from the post office St. Charles- It is barely possible at least it is hardly probable (judging from the information that I have had of the interruption of the mails) that any of my Letters could have escaped & reached you- I will therefore briefly tell you now for the third time, that early in last June Ft. Osage was evacuated and the Factory broke up- on the 13th June we all reached St. Louis bag & baggage- where I have Resided ever Since, till yesterday when I Set out on the present Voyage at the Request of the Governor, to Settle the Osage Annuities and Remain near them 'till next Spring- during my Stay at St. Louis my time passes only So So, for the greater part of it I had nothing to do & St. Louis is extremely dull to idlers- the last 3 weeks went off rather better, but I was then on the other extreme and had too much to do, however I

felt much better Satisfied- my health was good all the while 'tho St. Louis is very Sickly this year- If I had met with an object to my taste, I might have improved my idle time perhaps to Some advantage and got me a Wife- but my intercourse with the Ladies was very limited and it So happened that among those with whom I Sometimes passed an hour or an evening, there was not one, that I thought would Suit me. So I am now once more going to be buried alive in the woods with not a Soul about me who cares a fig whether I am comfortable or not, whether I be dead or alive- I must however do George the justice to say of him, that he is much attached to me, is faithful industrious and attentive, for which I cheerfully allow him every comfort and indulgence that he ought to have- I have a Black Servant Girl who I purchased from Gen^l, Mason when I was last in Georgetown She and George entered into partnership Soon after they got to Ft. Osage last year and have began the work of multiplication with very considerable Success for young beginners, So that I am obliged to leave Mrs. Betty in St. Louis to complete her part of the work, while George has willingly undertaken to act as cook and man Servant-

I am extremely Sorry that you give yourself So much trouble and uneasiness concerning the marriage of our Father and permit yourself to indulge in So Severe Remarks as you do, on that Subject- Altho' I am perfectly Sensible that the Sage Remark of old D^r. Johnson applies but too aptly to the case before us, which is I think in nearly the following words "There is nothing against which an old man Should be so much upon his guard as putting himself to nurse- Innumerable have been the instances of men once distinguished for firmness, Resolution & Spirit, who in their later days have been

governed like children by interested female artifice" Yet it is not for you or I to censure Such an act, however much we may for his Sake, lament it- and I Recommend you earnestly to lose no time in Representing to our Father Respectfully and without disguise the true State of his Affairs and Solicit of him permission to take them into your own hands for the purpose if possible of Retrieving them- For my part I can discover no obstacle in your way, that ought to deter you from a firm attempt at least to Straighten those affairs, in which you of all others are by far the most interested - I confess to you that there is at present but a very faint hope of my being able to give you any aid in such an undertaking- and I think it more than probable that I Shall fix myself in this country- at any Rate appearances are very much in favor of Such a Supposition just now- You know that my expectations of making an arrangement at Natchitoches when I was there, were very much disappointed, and how much I was mortified at the coldness and indifference with which F. Read & listened to my once favorite project of uniting all our Family in one interest at Natchitoches- Just 13 months ago I addressed myself very lengthily to F. on the Same Subject and intreated him to name the Terms of my Removing to Natchitoches, and to Say what assistance I might rely on from him if I Should go and Settle there, Stating that it was very material to me to know immediately, for I had Resolved to Settle myself Somewhere in the course of 18 months or 2 years- I again wrote to him for advice as to the policy of my vesting the net Surplus of my Salary (abt. \$1000 & over:) in Land on Red River- I Rec^d. his acknowledgements of the Rec^d. of both of those Letters; but he did not think proper to Say one Single word on the Subjects that I had

particularly asked his advice on- I Shall not presume to enquire the reasons for his Silence, or utter one breath of censure or complaint-

It has compelled me however to a very different course from the one I had So long and with Such pleasure marked out for myself. During my late Stay in St. Louis I have appropriated all my ready money to the purchase of Lands and improvements in this Territory- and I now hold in three parcels, near 1000 arpens of valuable Land near St. Louis & St. Charles, and I Shall continue to buy Land with great part of my Salary, So long as I can meet with as good & Sure bargains as are those I have already bought- for it is morally certain that as Soon as the War is over, the emigration to this Territory will be immense, which will you know enhance the value of Lands very much- I do not mean tho by any means to become a Land Speculator- So far I have proceeded with great Caution, have Secured good & Sufficient titles and good bargains my purchases are- 1^t. A Mile Square 30 Miles from S. Louis in a very wealthy Settlement near the Missouri, on which is a good House, Orchard, fences, Spring and Mill Seat & body of 250 acres of very first quality land- the Rest is 2^d quality wood Land Suitable for Wheat, &s.- 2^d. 800 Arpens- 5 Miles from the Town of Herculaneum, on Platten Creek, 3 Miles from a Merchant Mill and 5 from the Mississippi & 30 below St. Louis- This Tract possesses according to my taste, all the Requisites for an elegant and pleasant country Residence, and may probably become mine in a year or two- It is Surrounded by Some of the most tasty and opulent Farmers in this Territory- has a most charming foundtain of Water near a fine Seits for Building, great variety of Soil (300 acres first rate) and is Said to contain a Lead Mine- Herculaneum will

certainly become a place of consequence in a few years, it is here that all the Lead Trade of the Country centers to an immense amount- It now has 2 Towers for making Shot, and another commencing. It is a most beautiful & healthy Situation- 3^d.- 120 arpens of first rate Land adjoining the Town of St^t Charles on the Missouri- These three tracts cost me only \$900. either one of which except the last would have commanded the money 6 months before the War. Thus you see what probability there is of my ever becoming a Resident of Red River.

I am upon the whole better pleased with this country than that. I confess I like the climate & prospects of growing rich there the more, but there are Some very Solid & in my mind almost insuperable objections to that Country, one of the principal of which is, the great number of Slaves there- now it does not by any means comport with my ideas of comfort and worldly happiness to be at all times Surrounded by a great majority of miserable wretches, who only want a Safe opportunity to cut the throats of their master in whom there is little or no dependence- It is very different here- we have but few Slaves, who are all well fed & cloathed & kindly treated, are not So much employed to amass Wealth for their owner as to provide Substantial comforts, make domestic improvements & render life easy, comfortable, and happy- Ten good, Sleek well fed and well clothed Blacks are amply sufficient for these purposes- I might enlarge on this Subject, but 'tis not worthwhile- you perfectly understand me.

It just occurs to me to mention a circumstance that lately occurred at St^t, Louis, probably it may be useful to you, or at least to Father, who is peculiarly liable to be imposed on by Genteel Gentlemanly looking Strangers, - A Young Man by the name

of John Wadsworth (says he is son of Old Wadsworth late a member of Congress, & brother to the Lt. Wadsworth who blew himself up in the Mediterranean under Preble, & also brother of Lt. Wadsworth of the Navy who lately commanded at Ft. Warburton near Washington City) boarded Since last June 'till a few days ago, in the Same house with me- He Supported the Standing of a Young Gentleman of very handsome talents & acquirements, was modest & unassuming, Said he was traveling for his health- A few Nights ago he Suddenly disappeared, Stole a canoe and proceeded down the Mississippi, leaving his tavery Bill & Sundry other Acc^{ts}. unpaid- The day before he eloped he was very particular in his enquiries of me concerning Natchitoches from which it is Supposed he will endeavor to get there, and may perhaps be able to impose on Some of our friends, if not checked in time. Since his departure, it has been ascertained that he is the Same person who was dismissed from the Army last year for an attempt to extort money from a Lady in New York- it has also been suggested here that he is a British Spy- At all events he is an imposter, and Should be exposed as Such wherever he goes- He is about 26 years of age or perhaps younger- Black Hair & Whiskers, (the latter he is in the habit of combing very often) round face & comely features- about your height perhaps rather taller, & well proportioned- very plain & rather Singular in his dress, while at St. Louis he usually wore a Suit of olive or Dk: Col^d. Speckled (frog egg) nankeen, his pantaloons always over his boots, and I never once saw him with Shoes on- Sometimes he wore a Short Yellow Striped Coatee, & Sometimes an old Blue Cloth Coat & Blue Stockinette pantaloons- and on cool days, a Roundabout or Spencer of Dk: Fearnought over his Coat- Says he

cannot Stand a cold climate, or Cold weather- Says but little on political questions but from what he does say, you can easily See he is federal. Has Received a classical education, read much, & traveled in England and acquits himself handsomely in a literary conversation, but is not very forward- Sometimes recites Scraps of Poetry Such as

"He who Turnips Cries

"And Cries not when his Father dies

"Shews that he had rather

"Have a Turnip than his Father."

He is in Short a Connecticut Yankee, and tho' he has traveled much, yet retains much of the Yankee- his manners are easy & confident, and his whole deportment genteel- His conversation with Young Men is very much Marked with Such expressions as the following, Such & Such, is "a correct observation" or is not a "correct observation" "You take my idea" or "I take your idea"- "Hear him" Hear him" and Such like, which he applies with much Yankee Smartness in the course of conversation- from the above Sketch you may perhaps be able to Recognize Mr. Wadsworth, if he Should appear among you and keep him at a distance or blow him as you may think proper, the latter you had certainly best do if you can identify him with Certainty.

He did not impose upon me, for my usual caution of all Strangers not introduced to me by known friends, prevented my being at all intimate with him, any farther than common civility Required.

I will thank you to present my best wishes to Judge Johnson and my love to Ann Eliza, I am glad they are united- Present me affectionately to Father; Margaret, Henry & your Sweet Little Ones.

Write to me as usual, directed to St. Louis, Missouri

Territory- Scold me no more for not writing you- it is not my fault that the mails miscarry or are lost- I certainly have as much reason to complain as you have, but know very well now where the cause lies- Perhaps you may occasionally hear from me from my Winter quarters, if I sh^d. find any opportunities to Send to St. Louis.-

Very affectionately
yrs.

G.C.S.

Mr. S. H. S.