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7-25-1825

Letter from George Sibley to Josiah Johnston, July 25, 1825

George Champlin Sibley

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Ft. Osage July 25. 1825.

My dear Sir,

I have just addressed a L. to you on the Subject of the Road to New Mexico +, to which I refer you –

As I am just about to leave home upon a long + hazardous journey, from which I may never Return, I deem it to be my duty to drop you a line or two in relation to the debt due by Paul Baillio__ to the U States, which I am bound for – and in relation to my New Madrid Location at this place, two matters, in which I am deeply concerned, an account of mine and my late Brother's families, and which you have heretofore kindly taken Some interest in. –

As it reflects the debt, Mr. Bates, the Dist. Atty., had directed the Judgment to be entered against me, and it was So entered, before Mr. Graham's Letter reached him – Execution was also issued by direction of Mr. Bates, and by his order Returned and Suspended; and now the matter remains Suspended, and will So remain, Mr. Bates tells me, Subject to Mr. Graham's Special order on the Subject. –

The very limited trade expected last year by Mr. Boggs, has only enabled me to liquidate any pay off Some Small Debts here by P. Baillio___. at St. Louis + in this quarter, for Goods and Transportation – So that I was not able to pay Mr. Bates any thing towards the debt to the U. States. –

Since I determined to engage you in the Public Service, I have concluded to withdraw altogether from this Trade and to dispose of the remaining Stock of Indian Goods on hand, the whole proceeds of which, to be applied towards the payment of that debt. I have accordingly bargained with Mr. _____ Chouteau for the Sale of those Goods, at Cost; payable at St. Louis next Spring or Summer, the Goods to be immediately turned over to him by Mr. Boggs and the payment made immediately to Mr. Bates when due – It is impossible for me to Say what their Sales will Amt: to, as Some of the Goods are injured, + Some unsuitable for Trade, for which reasons Some deductions are to be made. All the unsaleable Goods, and other effects of the firm are to be Sold at Auction for what they will bring, + the whole proceeds of the Whole Stock of all Sorts, to be paid to Mr. Bates, without any diminutions, there being no other debts or Claims of any description against P. B. ___, except what are absolutely dependent on our adventure to S^{ta}. Fee, in the hands of Mr. Baillio, from which I have pretty good assurances of Ample Remittances, which will pay all demands, and afford a Considerable Sum besides towards the debt to U:S; - Mr. Baillio took with him in November last, an outfit amounting per the Invoices, here, at Cost to \$2300. of which he obtained \$1100. on Credit from a Merchant in Franklin. In a L. I lately Recd. from him, Mr. B. Says that he had Sold a Small part of his Goods only, for five Fur, + the quantity he names would, if now here, Sell for more than enough to pay off every demand against the firm: leaving the avails of new \$2000 worth of prime S^{ta}. Fee Goods, to go towards the payment of the debt to the U: States – I Shall See Mr. Baillio either on his way home or at S^{ta}. Fee – and Shall be able to judge of the propriety of further prosecuting that Trade with him, at least 'till I can get out of debt – The Old Stock of Goods bought from the U. States was mainly of bad quality, and a good portion of it unsuitable for Indian Trade, and it was withal badly afronted (?) - It was necessary therefore, for us to purchase other Goods from time to time, to afront (?) Such portions of the old Stock as could be brought into trade from year to year; these purchases were on Credit and were obliged to be paid, together with all the

Contingent expences of the Trade, as they fell due, or else we could not expect new Supplies; And it has even happened in this unlucky business, that there has not been more than funds Sufficient from the Sale of Furs + to pay off those Annual Accounts and Expences – The Indian Trade has been growing worse + worse Sine the abolition of the Factories; and the next year after – It is worse as to the Amt. of Receipts in Skins from the Indians, and worse as to the value of the Skins in Market; It is in fact, a very wretched report (?), very Similar to Gambling in its results, and excessively irksome and disgusting in its details. – After all the Stock belonging to P: Baillio ___ Shall have been turned to Cash + paid over to Mr. Bates, as also the net proceeds of Mr. Baillio's equipment to S^{ta}. Fee – there will yet remain Something due to the U. States, which must either be paid by future profits of Trade to S^{ta}. Fee, or as I Suppose, out of my private means –

In the latter Case, I am prepared whenever 'tis necessary, to Surrender. I owe no other debt; and have property as follows - to ___ -

800 A___ of Land near Herculaneum in this State; in the neighborhood of which valuable ___ mines have been recently discovered. –

=

640 Acres in St. Louis County, Bovine Hou_____ Settlement this Tract is not worth much at present.

=

200 _____, near to + adjoining the Town of St. Charles

=

2 Lots in the City of St. Louis.

=

640 Acres, in La Fayette County 15 Miles below here, embracing a valuable Milk (?) Sent (?). this is a New Madrid Location. Confirmed, but not yet Patented – Title, beyond a doubt good.

=

320 Acres. in Sight of Ft. Osage, on the Missouri N. Madrid Location Same as above.

=

640 Acres, claimed by virtue of a N. Madrid Location embracing old Ft. Osage, and my present Residence Some unaccountable difficulty exists at the Gen. Land Office in relation to this Claim. But it is nevertheless good Somewhere –

All the above is of course bound by the Judgment – of Personal Property, besides Household furniture + Farming Utensils + Such matters, the whole of no great value in Money, Say not over \$1000. –

I possess 1 Negress Slave Betty – 2 Men Slaves, Abraham (28yr. old a Brick Layer Waiter + (who goes with me to S^{ta}. Fee) and Henry, 19 yr. old, a good farm hand – 2 Lads. Slaves, Edward, 14 yr. old, + George 11yr. old, both House Servants – Also 3 Slaves Secured to me for debt, which are not in my possession, to wit. Kirrey a Woman + Jacob her Son, now in Callaway County + Hamilton a Lad 15 yr. old now with L. W. Boggs at Marair _____.

Of Stock I have as follows.

1 fine _____ Stud Colt 3 yr. old ___: Brown, lately bd. for \$200 trade

8 Breeding Mares – 2 Colts, 2 yr. old. 1 Sucking __, - 2 Work Horses –

2 Asses + 3 he _____. – abt. 100 Meat cattle great + small. –

=

all of which personal property, being unencumbered, and any others not here enumerated, that I may own, is Subject to this debt of U:S: agt. P. Baillis ___; not one item of which will be in any wise Sheltered (?) or unfairly made way with by me or any one by my authority or persuasion –

And all this I offer + pledge as Surety, being all I have for this debt, in the hope that I may be able Sooner or later if God Spares my life, to redeem it all by paying the debt, either by my exertions in Some Trade, or if my Services are accepted by Govt. in Some Capacity, that I am qualified to be useful in, out of the Savings of my income. – Reserving always and to the last of my power to Stipulate; the Right to provide out of the above; decent + comfortable Support + maintenance for my Wife, who Shall not want a dollar while I live, if this whole Debt is Sunk by G-d –

Not meaning by any means to countenance the least extravagance (which by the by is a Stranger within my cottage) or in fact to break in upon these Mortgaged possessions + resources with other than a proper regard for my honour and a decent Support. –

I have already communicated the above to Mr. Bates verbally, in Substance; + as I do not perceive the necessity of my reiterating the Same thing to Mr. Graham, lest he Should Suspect, I am making a parade of this matter, very little to the purpose, I Shall not at present write him. If you Sh. think it proper to let him read this Letter, be good enough to do So. – And So much for the debt.

With Respect to my claim to locate 640 Acres of Land here, by Right of a New Madrid Warrant, it is I believe pretty clearly Set forth in my Statement of the facts relating to it now on file in Mr. Grahams Office. I mean my Letter of the _ . December 1823 addressed to Mr. ___ Crawford, accompanied by Sundry documents – I have nothing further to say at present on the Subject, except that as the time approaches when this Land may be ordered for Sale; I feel the more Solicitous to have my _____ Secured. and hope at least that So much respect may be paid to my claim, as to Suspend the Sale of it for a time.

There can be no fail (?) of doubt but I have a full claim upon the Govt. for 640 Acres of Land Somewhere in the State upon the N. Madrid Warrant N:98. . And there is no doubt either but I can find 20 Spots now vacant within the Surveys not 30 Miles from here that I would prefer, either of them, to this Spot, was it not for the improvements that I have made here. All I want is to Secure my home; it is not for speculation, far from it, there is no Room for any Such thing; and I have believe that if this ground was now considered vacant, + my Buildings +. Out of the question, that it could not be Sold for more than the present Minimum Price –

That Mr. Crawford never Read my Letter at all I am persuaded from the fact that he was unable to do it, + from what Mr. Barton told me – Perhaps the New Secy Mr. Ruch (?) may be prevailed on to examine it, + in that case he may give my claim a more favourable consideration. –

If I am Spared to return from my present arduous journey, and can Spare time + money to make a Short visit to Washington, I will probably do So winter after the next, when if not too late, I may be able possibly to Settle all my business to my liking, with the Govt.

during my absence I leave my farm here in the care of an overseer. My Wife will Remain with her Relations and Friends, at St. Louis and St. Charles. - - My Brother's children frequently write me from Louisiana, and they often speak in the most grateful and affectionate manner of the kindness and

many friendly offices extended to them by Ann E. and yourself, Nothing could afford me greater happiness than to be able to do well by those children – I look upon them as almost my own, and in common with them feel grateful for any kindness Shown to them by others –

I have long entertained the wish of Removing that family to this Country, to reside here with me. My Wife would be happy if that plan could be effected, and I believe it would ere now have been done, but for the fear that my embarrassed circumstances might put it out of my power to provide properly for them; and besides, I apprehended Some inconvenience of the S_____ of Schools –

The country around here is Settling very Rapidly, I presume there are now an Hundred families, living + preparing to live, in the immediate neighborhood above this place, where 18 months ago there was Scarcely a Sign of a White Man; and it is computed that in the next 18 Months 00 families will be Settled upon a fine Tract of Country of Which this forms a part, recently purchased from the Kansas Indians. –

Please to give my love to Ann Eliza + William, + tell A.E. that at this our distances have cast a wide Space between us and circumstances deprive me of even the pleasure of the interchange of Letters, I Still Retain in perfect Soundness, the leaven of true affection, which very often Stirs within me, + then affords me real Satisfaction, the more especially as I know She is in the enjoyment of all the blessings of fortune, + knows how to appreciate + use them as She ought.

I pray you both to believe
me, incapable of forgetfulness, + that I am
yr. truly + ever

G. c. Sibley

Hon. J.S. Johnston
Washington City

[The spelling of the name “Kirrey” is not clear. Also, on the first page of this document, there is a sideways note in the left margin which reads as follows below this bracketed note (which is not original to the document). The handwriting does not appear to match the rest of the document.]

G. C. Sibley
July 25, 1825