LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

DR. JOHN SIBLEY AND THE LOUISIANA-TEXAS FRONTIER, 1803-1814

JULIA KATHRYN GARRETT

(Continued)

LETTER 12

Natchitoches May 8th, 1809

Sir:

I have Observed in the proceedings of the last Session of Congress In Consequence of a representation from Governor Claiborne, affording relief to the Tribe of allibamis Indians Relative to their Lands has been a Subject of Consideration. I could have wished that the cases of all these Indian Tribes in this Territory, who have no land Could have been Considered at the same time. The Boluxes [Biloxis] who in the year 1805 lived on Bayou Beauf in the County of Rapides on lands they Inherited from their Ancestors, have Since been removed from their Lands by a Company of Individuals who claim them under a purchase said to have been made of the Indians while Louisiana was in the hands of the Government of Spain & Sanctioned by it. They have since been Rambling about the Neighbourhood of Avoyal [Avoyelles], and the White Inhabitants Complain of their encroachments. There is another Tribe Called Huani Choctaws, who emigrated from the Huani Choctaw Town on the East Side of Mississippi upwards of 15 years ago, who with the Permission of the Boluxes Settled Near them on the Bayou Beauf on Lands then belonging to the Boluxes, who have been likewise with them Removed; They since (or part of them) Settled Themselves at the Cooks Prairie about 40 Miles Southard of Natchitoches between Red River and the Sabine where they fenced fields & Cultivated them with the Plow, Built Comfortable Huts, and were Collecting about them Some Stocks of Domestic Animals; when some Surveyors were Sent Out, who Surveyed the Lands they Occupied, Ordered the Indians off; & the Claimants have Since Sent Out Labourers to fence in the Lands & Built Houses on them & one Man has fixed there

69The village of Avoyelles was nineteen leagues from the Mississippi, and the Parish along the waters of Red River. It included over one hundred and twenty families, principally French. Carter, Territorial Papers of the United States, IX, 63, 729.
a Large Stock of Cattle.—— The Chactoos—a Very Ancient Tribe of Louisiana Indians are in a Similar Situation to the Boluxos. The Principal Village of the Pascagolas [Pascagoulas] is on Red River about 50 Miles below Natchitoches On Lands Given them by the Spanish Government More than 40 Years Ago when they emigrated from the Pascagoloches [Pascagoula] River on the East Side of the Mississippi. Their Lands are Claimed by an Individual Under an Indian purchase Sanctioned by the Spanish Government. In Consequence of which The Tribe have become divided & Scattered. One party of them Under a Chief or leader has Gone & Settled themselves On Lands belonging to the United States below Avoyal Partly between Oppolousas [Opelousas] & Pointe Cupe [Pointe Coupée]. Another party of them have Ascended, & Settled On Red River about 50 Miles above Natchitoches on Lands of the United States in the Vicinity of the Compte Settlement, a Small distance above where the Natchitoches Indians now live. The Neighbouring white Inhabitants Complain of their Killing up their Stocks of Cattle, Hogs etc & those of them who Still Remain at the Old Village are Urged to Move off by the Claimant of their Lands.———The Lands Occupied by the Tensaw [Tenisaw] or Appelach Indians On Red River a few Leagues above the Rapides are Claimed by the Same Company who have Succeeded in Removing the Boluxas & the Huani Choctaws. There are likewise Several Rambling Tribes of Choctaws in this Territory who have no Lands (viz) in the Parishes of Washita, Acatahola, on Bay Chico in the Parish of Oppolousas [Opelousas], about Rapides and between this Town & the Sabine.———There are likewise Several parties of emigrant Vagabond Creeks, Commonly Called Conchettas, one party of them with Some Alibamis have Settled on Red River about Latitude 32° 40'; Another On the East Side of the River Sabine about 70 Miles South westwardly from Natchitoches, Some On the West Side of the Sabine, & Some who have no fixed place of residence.—Difficulties of one Kind & Another occur almost every day between Some of these tribes, or between some of those & other Settled Tribes or Nations, or between them & the White Inhabitants, or they have Some wants [manuscript illegible] Nation or Tribe to represent, which Claims an attent-

61In 1805 Sibley described the Chactoos as living on the Bayou Boeuf about ten miles south of Bayou Rapides on Red River towards Opelousas, that they were aborigines of the country, and that the lands they claimed were "inferior to no part of Louisiana in fertility and richness of soil, and growth of timber." Hackett, Pichardo's Treatise, II, 272.

62In Sibley's historical sketches he spells the word Apalachies, and does not make the Apalaches and the Tenisaws the same tribe. The Tenisaw, he said, emigrated from a river by that name, which emptied into Mobile Bay, and that they had lived on Red River for about forty years. The Apalaches he described as emigrants from West Florida, where they had lived on a river which bears their name, and that they had come to Red River about the same time as the Biloxes. Ibid., II, 270, 272.
tion Rendered perplexing & difficult, by their Scattered & Unsettled Condition which destroys all National responsibility or Pledges of their Good behavior. If they are urged to adopt more Civilised habits by immitating their white Neighbours, or Some of their Red brethren towards the Rising Sun by Cultivating fields of Corn & Cotton & making Cloth they reply “Give us land & Protect us in the peaceable possession of it from your own people & we will then take your Advise.” I think all of Each Nation Should be brought to live together. Lands Should be Allotted them subordination to their Chiefs should be encouraged, & to place in Our Government & Laws an entire Confidence, by which they Should always find protection, justice & impartiality. Should you be of the Opinion that the Subject of this letter merits Attention. I beg you to have the goodness to Submit the Same to the proper department for Consideration.

I am
Sir
with very great
Respect & Esteem
Your Obt. Hble Servant
John Sibley. Indian Agent
For Orleans Territory

The Honourable
The Secretary of War.

LETTER 13

Natchitoches May 10th 1809

Sir

I had the honor to receive a Copy of your Circular of the 15th of March Enclosing the Acts of Congress relative to public Accounts etc., by the last Mail, and shall in future punctually Observe the provisions of the Law in Such accounts & expenditures as may accrue in that Section of the Indian department of which I am Agent. previously to the receipt of those Instructions I have drawn on the Secretary of War for the sum of $500 in favour of Mr Thomas Irwin late Assistant Factor at this place, my letter of advice I believe expressed only (as usual) “Contingencies” of this department. The Bill was drawn to pay to Mr Gaspard Philebere $270 for Nine Months Service as Interpreter of Indian Languages, for which I hold his duplicate receipt for Nine Months preceeding 30th March 1809. the Balance was to pay the Armorer I have employed to repair Indian Guns etc. I hold Likewise his receipts. Mr Irwin the late Assistant Factor left this place for Philadelphia On the

13th Instant. Mr Linnard not having Returned nor no person to Take Charge of the Factory, An Inventory was made Out. I gave Mr Irwin my receipt for the whole & have since performed the duty of Factor, with the assistance of Mr Philebere the Interpreter (who is a good man) & we shall Continue to do the Same in a manner Accomodating to the Indians who are Coming in in Considerable numbers at this Season of the year to trade, & Shall do all in my power to prevent the Interest of the United States from Suffering till Mr Linnard Arrives who I anxiously expect Daily. There being I believe about ten Thousand Deer & Bear Skins On hand, I have persons employed to beat them to prevent their being Destroyed by Worms.—A Return of the amt of Stock on hand Should have been made before now Agreeable to the Instructions of the Superintendent of trade this I Shall Still defer doing for Some Short time in expectation of Mr Linnard's Arrival.

Since the first day of January last I have in Addition to the $30 a Month Salary to Mr Philebere the Indian Interpreter Given him two Rations a day which the Contractor here has Issued on my Order this Addition was made in Consequence of Mr Philebere having got married & finding his Salary Insufficient for his support & Could have done better than remain in Our Service without that addition, he is a faithful, Honest, Sober, attentive Man, & Can Interpret for Any Indians who visit us & there are within the Limits of my Agency More than Twenty different Tribes of Indians, most of whom speak Languages peculiar to Each Tribe & he serves in a Double Capacity; as Interpreter to me & likewise to the Factory; & is never Out of the way, when he is wanted; his place Could not be well Supplied in Any Other One Man. I hope therefore this Additional Small Allowance to his Salary will meet your Approbation.

Capt Glass has just returned here from a Trading Voyage Amongst the Panis & Hietan Nations of Indians, who Inhabit the Country towards the head of Red River, and reports that the Panis & Hietans appear particularly Attached to the Government & People of the United States, during his Travels & residence amongst the Indians where he spent more than Eight Months he was Conducted by Indians to a place where he Saw in Large Masses of many thousands of pounds weight a Singular Kind of Mineral, it in colour resembles Iron but whiter, it is hard as Steel, Yet—as gold or silver, it is obedient to the Magnet, but less so than Iron. Neither the Nitric Sulphuric nor Muriatic Acid will touch it, it is not Flexible in the greatest heat that Can be produced in a Blacksmith's furnace, it will neither Corrode nor Rust by exposure to the Atmosphere, it receives a polish as Brilliant as a diamond & of a quicksilver

*Sibley had granted Glass a license for this trading expedition. He set out from Natchitoches on June 20, 1808. Sibley to Secretary of War, November 20, 1808, MS., O.R.W.D.
Colour, it is found in a Limestone Country & entirely unmixed with any mineral or other matter. If it is not Platina, I do not know what it is; I have Some of it in my possession & have Sent a piece of it to Philadelphia to be tried. Capt. Glass says an hundred Thousand pounds of it Could be Obtained should it prove Valuable; he Saw several other Curiosities which I find noticed in his Journal which he has permitted me to peruse.———Capt Glass farther Says that when he left the Panis Nation a party of Panis & Hietans to the number of about one Thousand Warriors had gone to War Against the Ozages on the River Arkensa, with a determination to exterminate that Band of Robbers; who are Constantly stealing their Horses; a party of them stole from Capt. Glass 36 Valuable Horses from Near the Panis Village, and during the last year he believes they Stole from the Panis Near One Thousand head. These Ozages are regarded by all white & Red people in this quarter as a Common peste to mankind.—

I am

Sir with Great Esteem
Your Obt. Servant
John Sibley Indn Agent

The Honourable
Secretary of War

LETTER 14

Natchitoches July 5th 1809

Sir

More than two Years ago I was specially Instructed by the late President of the U. S. to endeavour to procure an Interview with the Several tribes of Indians Inhabiting the Sea Coast Along the Bay of St. Bernard I sent Messengers amongst them several times with tokens & friendly invitations to visit Natchitoches; & different Parties of them at different times set off to come here & were turned back by the Spaniards. I have lately Succeeded in procuring a friendly visit from three parties. (viz) a Chief & ten principal Men from a Village of A Tribe called Attakapos who live near the Mouth of the Trinity River at or near the Accokesacos [Orcoquizas]. Also a chief & 23 principal persons of a Tribe called Man Eaters who live farther South at the Bay of St Bernard; & also a chief &

65President Thomas Jefferson.
66Matagorda Bay.
67In Sibley's historical sketches, he spells the name Attakapas. The Spanish form Attacapa is commonly used. Bolton, Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century, 3, 334.
68Karankawan tribe.