



The Letter Books of Benjamin Harding (Part II)

(Article begins on page 2 below.)

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Article Summary: Harding's 1848 business correspondence includes requests for items that he wanted to offer for sale in his capacity as Indian trader at the Great Nemahaw Agency. He mentions the going prices for stock items and enumerates the hides, skins, and cash that he has sent to his employer. He complains that it is difficult to collect from members of tribes to whom he has sold goods on credit.

Editor's Note: [Part I](#) of this article contains earlier Harding letters.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Benjamin Harding, Joseph Robidoux, W E Rucker, Samuel M Irvin, White Cloud, J W Forman, Brichnell, Harvey, Billings, Robitaille, McDowell, Tinker, Thompson, J C Hull, Richard, Harris, No Heart, J B Roy, A J Vaughn, Storys, Croteau

Indigenous Peoples Mentioned: Ioways [sic], Sacs, Pawnees

Place Names: Great Nemaha Agency (near present-day Highland, Kansas)

THE LETTER BOOKS OF BENJAMIN HARDING

(PART II)

BY HOOVER H. JORDAN

Jan 29th 48

Dr Sir. By Brichnell I send you eight dollars.

Feb 22/48

Dr Sir. I send you accompanying this a letter written by Maj. Rucker who returned here yesterday, stating that the Indians will be paid only once a year. The instructions he speaks of I have seen and know they are just as he has stated.

Why Maj Harvey should have given such instructions and then retracted I cannot tell, but they are in black and white and may be examined by any person interested.

Brichnell will go down in a day or two and I will write again. Your license is signed and ready to be forwarded.

Feb 23/48

Dear Sir. yours of the 10th & 19th have been received. You need not have been afraid of offending Brichnell by advising him but I fear it would have been of little use. I have frequently advised him but all has done little good. He is going down tomorrow with a waggon and I will send by him all the skins I have except the hides which I think he can not get in his waggon. I expect him to bring a barrel of sugar and we are out of soap. If you have country soap send it if not send a box of family soap. It is much called for. We want a ball of candle wicking please send one and

Hoover H. Jordan is professor of English at Michigan State Normal College, Ypsilanti, Michigan. Part I of this article appeared in the September issue of this magazine. Copies of the letters in Harding's handwriting are in the possession of the author.

the Buckwheat flour if you have got it. I sent by Mr. Billings thirteen dollars. You have not informed me whether you received it. Please do so. I am sorry the Indians are not to be paid until fall. I fear it will discommode you much for Brichnell tells me you have sent to NY by J C R for goods but the error was beyond the control of any of us here. Coonskins are very scarce here, the Indians have been drinking till they have drank them all up. Mary is here and asking me to write an order to you for some flour for her. I told her I would mention it in this letter.

I send pr Brichnell

3 packs 90 Deer skins
 1 do 52 coon, 27 wolf cat &c
 1 do 10 Otter
 1 do left here at last payment

March 1/48

Dr Sir. The bearer Mr Dixon is here again with his claim. I would rather have *one dime* than all his claim. I understand McDowel is at your place. If so I wish you to see him for me. He staid at Robitailles some three or four nights since but I did not know of it till he was gone.

His account is for two green blankets \$10.00.

March 8th 1848

Dr Sir. Mesourquot is here begging me for credit to go to the Omahaws. I have refused him but he appeals to you. Whatever you direct me to do, that I will attend to but I shall not credit an Indian one dollar without positive orders from you except for burying their dead. I have not bought 20 skins of the Sacs, yet I have bought all they have brought me.

Last fall you know there was a loss of some forty dollars on their accounts.

They want vermillion we have less than a pound here.

Your waggon has not come down yet but when it comes I will send all the skins here and as many boxes as they can carry & write again.

March 9/48

Dr Sir. I have just learned that your waggons crossed the river above and passed down the other side.

Maj Rucker is going to St Joseph to-morrow and from thence he is going home but will return again before his time expires.

Mr Billings will go down next week with his waggon when I will send down the hides &c as much as he can haul.

White Cloud sent your letter to me by Robert three days ago, who stated that the Iowa's were expecting each of them a blanket &c on credit. I told him that you had written and he has not called since and I hope he will not on that errand again.

You speak of Brichnells running in debt beyond his means &c which is true. His account is large here but I have no doubt about collecting it if he is allowed to hold his office. I have represented to him the danger of his being removed when another agent comes here and he seems to be more economical now but I have just learned that J Hull has sent an account against him, here to collect of \$25. He has given me an order on the agent for \$50 out of this quarters salary but there has been no money sent here yet to pay Interpreters and I know not when there will be.

Robitaille has always paid me punctually when he got money till the last quarter when he left some ten dollars unpaid.

He tells me now he will pay all up the next time. He says I have always been kind to him and he will do right by me.

March 10 '48

Dr Sir. I send you by Brichnell 14 Deer skins & 11 coon skins all that I have.

The following articles are wanted Sugar & coffee flour thread vermilion. Send by Brichnell what he can fetch and Billings can fetch the remainder.

March 13 / 48

Dr Sir—I think I have disposed of the begging Indians for the present by giving them a little credit. I gave the Sacs 2 lbs vermilion and 8 plugs of tobacco which is charged to 10 Indians, amounting to seven dollars.

The Iowas have 3½ lbs. American vermilion and 27 plugs tobacco amounting to \$13.50 charged to 27 of the braves.

I send by Mr Billings seventeen dollars 10 hides 4 dry goods boxes and one box bees wax 26½ lbs.

Please send one half doz good brooms, some 3 point

blankets and make Mr Billings or Brichnell fetch some flour if you can get it any way.

A young lady just now requested me to send for a scrubbing brush or if it could not be got a horse brush.

Write to me if you have seen McDowell and tell the result. If you can not get the money of him I shall be after him soon if I have to go to the fort after him.

March 15th 1848

Mr M Robidoux

Dr Sir. Brichnell has just been telling me of your wishing me to try to collect a claim for you against the Ioway's. I have since been to the office where I found a document from the commissioner of Indian Affrs from which I make the following extract for your information. "There is no disposition on the part of the Government to interfere with or throw any obstacle in the way of the payment by the Indians of their just debts either individual or national. The payment of their annuities to them individually will enable them to discharge those of the first class and on its being ascertained by a full and fair investigation by the Department that any of the tribes owe any which should justly be considered of the latter class and which were justified by the circumstances and objects under and for which they were created no objections will be made to the Indians setting apart such portions of their annuity for their payment as can properly and consistently with their individual wants and necessities be spared for that purpose but all such claims must be presented prior to the first day of April next (1848) in order that they may be investigated and such arrangements made in regard to their payment as may appear to be requisite and proper prior to the annuity payment of next year (1848) and you will cause all claimants to be notified accordingly. It is a leading object with the department to have all old transactions with the Indians finally arranged and closed and that hereafter all intercourse with them may be conducted and regulated according to simple and well defined principles by which all parties may clearly understand their relative positions duties and rights."

I was not aware of any such regulations having until now or it would have been my duty to have informed my employer of it. Please do so for me now.

A claim can not now be sent to the department by the first of April but perhaps if all the circumstances are noted

together with the fact of your not being notified, it may still claim the attention of the Dept but if it is longer neglected it can never be collected, and even now it is very doubtful. The Department will not sanction the payment of any claim unless it is made to appear *clearly* not only that it is just and right, but the Indians have had a full equivalent consisting of the necessaries and comforts of Indian life.

If you will send me your note and account properly attested &c I will present them and do all that is in my power consistent with honor and duty. It will be necessary for you to send your account or a copy of it that it may be laid before the Indians for their approval. Also for the information and guidance of the Department a statement of all the facts and circumstances under which the credit was given. State fully the situation and circumstances of that band at that time. Whether they were sharing the other credits of the Ioways and whether they were receiving any annuity at all. The reason why you have not pushed your claim before. Be sure to state that you had not been informed of the before mentioned regulation of the Department, together with all the facts and circumstances that may have a tendency to force consideration of it upon the department and perhaps it would be best to certify to the whole of it under oath.

Last fall the chief of the upper band asked the agent to allow them their part of the annuity separate and that he might be allowed to pay you what he owed you, but the agents instructions were such that he could not comply with his request. That is the most I have known about your debt, except what Brichnell tells me now. The business of others I pay very little attention to unless requested.

I have said I would attend to it for you. I will do so unless my employer would consider it inconsistent with my duty to him. You had better consult him on the subject—without his consent I could do nothing.

March 16 1848

Dr Sir. There has been a regulation of the department made, which required all claims against the Indians to be presented to the department prior to the first of April 1848 which I knew nothing about until yesterday or I would certainly have informed you in time. It was the duty of Maj Rucker to inform all claimants of it but why he has neglected it I know not. I think you had better forward to me a copy of your account against the Iowa's that was made

prior to the payment of 1846 and I will do all that can be done for you.

I say send the account made prior to the payment of 1846 because I am positive that no national debts made since that time can ever be collected, and it would doubtless prove injurious to the interests of the other part of the account. It is from no motive except for *your individual interest* that I give you this advice. I know you would have me be candid with you. However should you differ in opinion from me and think proper to send it all, do not on any account keep it together but send each part separate and recollect that none of it can possibly be paid unless it receives the sanction of the department. The directions contained in my letter to Mitchel it will be necessary for you to observe as far as the circumstances will admit.

They are all of the directions I am enabled to give. Should you be of the opinion that I could be of any more service to you by going to St Joseph, please inform me and I will ride down the first of next week. Please inform me whether you would consider any assistance that I could render Mitchel inconsistent with my duty to you.

Maj Rucker will be back by the first of April and the accounts could then be forwarded immediately.

Brichnell broke his wagon some in coming up. He is now getting it repaired, and talks of starting for the Nemahaw in a day or two. I can not find anyone that is going down soon, therefore I shall hire an Indian to carry this you will please write and send him directly back.

Evening

I have opened my letter to inform you that Mr Billings has arrived with the things sent. I suppose I had made the mistake in the amount of the money for I now recollect finding one dollar on my desk after I had given him the letter and money. I should have told you in my former letter that two of the hides were from Brichnell's, all that were found of what you left there, the rest were from here.

The Ioway's were all drunk and I could not get one to go down but I think I can get one to-morrow.

If Mitchell wants to buy a riding nag I have one for sale that can not fail to suit him unless he wants a pacer.

March 24, 1848

Dr Sir. Mr Billings is going down to-morrow with a

team. He is indebted to me a few dollars which would be hard to collect any other way than by hauling. Therefore you will please give him as much as he will take.

We want Fancy Calico, Lead, Bacon and flour. State the St Joseph price of flour and bacon that I may know how to sell them here. Brichnell returned yesterday but left his waggon for Robidoux to haul rails with. Robidoux will come down with it the first of next week and go on to St Joseph. Story has been unfortunate—his feet were badly frost bitten and his camp caught fire a few days since and burned his waggon sheet, some quilts, and I know not how many other things.

Tell Michel to send me the box which I left, ½ doz large white plates, and 1½ yds of white flannel from the piece which I got from the other day. I have not got the papers ready but will have them and send them by Robidoux.

March 28/1848

Dear Sir

Yours by Joseph junior was received this day. I received by Mr Billings the flour & Bacon which you sent also 1 sett plates. But the 25 lbs. *Lead* and my box of which you speak I did not receive. I wish you to inform me whether they were actually sent. If so they must have been mixed with goods belonging to some other person at the ferry boat. Mr Billings seems to be very much hurt whenever any such mistake occurs with goods placed in his care for fear he might be thought dishonest. Indian Robidoux has not yet come down.

I have prepared your account in such way as Mr Forman and myself thought advisable. I could not conveniently get Mr Masters receipt for the goods paid him therefore I included it with some other items in the large account in such form as I thought would be most favorably considered. I do not know but I have done wrong to day in letting Joseph Robidoux have the following articles for his daughter.

1 strond 3 00 1 pair leggins 1 00 3 yds calico 75 2 lbs sugar 20 \$4.95. He requested me to state the fact to you and said he would make it right with you.

March 29/1848

Dr Sir. By Joseph Robidoux I send you a copy of your account &c for you to sign, upon consulting Mr Forman

we thought it advisable to put the account in the form which I send you—it seems positively necessary to divest it of every appearance of individual transactions.

The copy which I brought from St Joseph will do to lay before the Indians. I have not seen them yet but I expect them down in a few days when I will talk with them. Please return the papers by the first opportunity.

April 4th 1848

Dr Sir. I received yours by Brichnell this evening. I will endeavor to do all that can be done in reference to the accounts. I would like to have you come up but I can not think that your presence would be of any advantage to the accounts. Besides the box & leads which I expected Mr Billings to fetch was one yard of white flannel and some calico but as they were not mentioned in your letter I presume they were not sent to the river. You ask me to advise of the time when the Indians will be paid. We have yet received no official confirmation of any payment this spring. The last on the subject was from Maj Harvey was the 4th [?] March stating that there would be no payment until fall.

April 6th 1848

Dr Sir. I have to day presented your account to the Indians in presence of Maj Rucker. They tell him they wanted to pay you \$600 in a year or two. Maj Rucker has reported against the payment of it at all therefore it will depend entirely on Maj Harvey. Your letter to Maj Harvey has been forwarded with the other documents perhaps you had better write again to him and inform him that you understand Maj Rucker has reported against it the cause of which was probably some personal feelings he has against you. I do not state it as a fact that such was the cause, though I may be inclined to believe it. Had I been aware sooner that he was disposed to carry his resentment so far I would have sent for you. Still I do not think your presence would have made any difference. At tan toi has not yet come down. I understand he is sick, but will come down tomorrow. Brichnell talks of going down to-morrow with Robidoux. If so I shall have no one in whom I have confidence to interpret for me when At tan toi comes. He says he wants some seed potatoes and an old waggon—his waggon he had not paid for, and Mr Tinker has taken it back. Can you not send him a couple of bags of potatoes without his going down. The waggon he would be better off without.

White Cloud has told me several times that you promised to send him a box of pipes, and finally wishes me to write to you on the subject and now wants some *filling* for them.

Maj Rucker can not make the same objections to Michels claim that he did to yours and I think he will report favorably. Brichnell has engaged a waggon and I send by him 7 Hides, 19 Deer skin, 2 Otter skin, 7 wolf, 7 Coon, 2 mink, 5 Rats. Most of which I have bought of the Sac's while Me sour quot was visiting the Omahaws. He returned on Saturday and already the Sac's have stopped visiting me.

We are in want of Calicos, (Blue & Fancy) lead, Sal Eratus, wrapping paper & Twine. I send a box to be filled with Sal Eratus. I have given the Robidoux caravan 12 lbs flour & 12 do Bacon and charged to you. I send a jug which I wish you to get filled with vinegar for me. I also want one and half yd white flannel from the best piece in the store. The box which I left to be sent contained 23 lbs cheese. If there is no prospect of getting it I wish you would get a small cheese and send me. I think Hull has some. Send me a bottle of Ink. The Maj has yet no official information of any payment this spring.

April 7th. Brichnell and his squaw have had a blow up this morning and I do not know when he will be ready to start. Mr Forman thinks you had better write to W P Hall¹ and set him to attend to your accounts at the Commissioners Office.

April 11th 1848

Dr Sir. I send you by Mr Forman if he can carry them, nine hides. At tan toi has not yet come down. Maj Ruckers time expires to day consequently we shall have to let Michels acct stand until we get a new agent—which I hope will be soon and perhaps it will be best. Five o'clock. Brichnell has not yet arrived.

If you have a small box of good tea I wish you would send it by Mr Forman if not send a few [?] .

April 19th 1848

Dr Sir. Mr Tinker's going down with a team to-morrow and I think you can get him to bring the tea which Mr Forman forgot and some lead.

¹Willard P. Hall, later Governor of Missouri.

There is no news here yet, we hear nothing of the new agent.

If you are certain that we are to have a payment this spring would it not be well for you to send your goods up soon if they have arrived that we may be ready for the money should it come unexpectedly.

It is probable the new agent will bring the money with him when he comes and we may not know when he is coming until he is close upon us.

Since writing the above Dupois [?] has brought me the bacon which you sent and one pound Tea. The Box of Tea was lost on the sand bar the particulars of which you will learn by the bearer as far as I am informed.

I have cut from my Book the account of McDowel which I send you that you may dispose of it as you see fit. Charles Jasper who is collecting accounts about Oregon for Dr Winsch tells me that he has orders to pay me his account out of the first money which he gets and I have ordered him to leave it where it will be sent to me and I expect to get it soon. I will take an inventory of the goods to-morrow.

April 19th at night

Dr Sir. After sending my letter to-day, I discovered that I had failed to enclose the account of McDowel which I now enclose.

May 2/1848

Dr Sir. I have sold Mr Richard Twenty Eight bushels of sweet corn which I have lately bought at a trifle over one dollar pr bushel for \$1.40 pr bushel.

I suppose he would pay me the money for it but finally said he had not got it, but that you were to ship his robes, and had furnished him with his goods &c consequently I thought there would be no impropriety in letting him have it. I have also agreed to furnish him all that I can get until his teams return again with goods at \$1.50 pr bushel provided the amount does not exceed 100 bushels. I have now 25 bushels on hand. But the corn trade has drained my sugar barrel, and would have taken all my flour if I had not put it out of sight. I have saved near one thousand pounds for the payment. Lead has been often called for lately of which we have had none since that was lost on

the sand bar. I wish you would send me a bottle of Ink for I have been compelled to borrow.

May 2/48

Dr Sir. Yours by Mr Smith has just been received together with the two waggon loads of goods all correct. If you approve of my proceedings in the sweet corn trade, I wish you to send me a barrel of sugar. A bottle of ink I am very much in need of. By Mr Smith I send you Thirty dollars & Seventy three cents cash, also, 1 hide, 1 pack Deers hair 22 lbs 1 pack skins viz 8 wolf 11 Deer 5 coon 3 rat 1 mink 2 cat skins. Should Lead be called for I should be strongly tempted to open a box but should I do so I will keep an account of it. I send by Mr Thompson a jug which you would get filled with *first rate molasses* for me and send it again by him if he returns.

I am out of thread also. I wish you would send me some so that I can use it.

PS. I send also 3 empty Boxes. The rest have corn in them or I would send them.

May 5/ 48

Dr Sir. By Mr Thompson I have received all the articles mentioned in your letter except the Box of Tea, which is again missing. Mr Thompson complains of having had no authority for examining the way Bill, so as to know whether all was right when he received the goods.

If you send flour again I wish you would send it in barrels if you can get them, for I can not keep it from the mice in sacks. I presume another load can be sold here. It trades for sweet corn at a very good advantage. If you have not sent it I think you had better send a quantity of Brown Domestic. The Sac's and some of the Ioways perhaps will want it for Tents when they go hunting for Buffalo. Some candles will be very acceptable about the time of the payment. Why not send a box of pipes. That bottle of ink has not arrived. I shall have to stop writing soon without it.

May 8/48

Dr Sir. This time I received all the articles mentioned in your letter Tea & all. By Mr Thompson I send you 10 bushels sweet corn 1 hide 1 calf skin 1 bale containing Deers hair & 1 wolf & 4 coon skins. I have not time to weigh the hair. One bale containing 50 pair of 3 pt Blankets which was so large that I could not get it through the door there-

fore I was compelled to open it—also the big box of Kettles & Tin ware, all of which is put away out of sight. If that box contained all the tin ware which you have sent, I advise you to send more of small articles. A great many pint & quart pans can be sold at a fair profit. Flour trades for sweet corn at as fair a profit as almost anything which I sell.

Your family came here two or three days ago expecting to find you. I have let them have a little bacon & flour but told them I should not give them any more without your order.

[End of letter book. Here begins the second book entitled "Contention and Strife Make Uneasy Our Life."]

May 22/ 1848

Dear Sir By Mr Irvin I send you Fifty dollars cash and I wish you to send me by him as he has a waggon going down, one half doz brooms some thread & needles. I have traded a little with the Sacs since you left but they can not be induced to trade much on any thing like fair terms. They are not needing blankets.

I have sold some wampum and could have sold them more if I had white but you can accommodate them with that. Those Ioway's which are left here are constantly drunk.

May 22/1848

Mr J C Hull

Sir. Maj Rucker again requested me, when here, to make further inquiry of you respecting those files for the Ioway smith. He says he receipted for twelve files while Mr Tinker has only given him six. He wishes to know the number which Mr Tinker received from you and whether Mr Tinker complained to you respecting the number which he received as he told Maj Rucker when first asked for them that he had got a part of them only.

Will you send me by Mr Irvin a box of Taylors shaving soap (no other kind).

May 31/48

Dr. Sir. Yours of the 19th & 22nd inst were received in due time but I have had no opportunity for sending an answer until now. Col Vaughn returned here yesterday and to-morrow Mr Forman goes with him to your place. By them I send you Fifty dollars cash. I can not expect to get much more. You have probably heard ere this of the

cowardly attack made by the Ioways on the Pawnees. Since their return they have been drinking worse than ever. They can not even keep sober long enough to hold a regular scalp dance. Money, Blankets, and every thing else is going for whiskey, and the Sacs are worse if possible than the Ioway's. Mr Irvin did not bring the brooms & needles which I wanted probably Mr Forman can do so. Robitaille has got over his frolic and is now tending to business. I understand the major part of the Pottawattomies are on their way to St Joseph to trade. Perhaps you had better send a waggon up for a part of the goods here for them if you need them, and as they are wanting a quantity of provisions, perhaps they will want some sweet corn, and as it is uncertain whether Richard will come for it, probably it would be better to sell it to them at a lower price than run the risk of keeping it for him. You say the Sacs were wanting 2½ pt blankets. They rarely call for them here but make a great ado because I have no scarlet cloth. The fact is they do not need such goods at all. They only wish to be contentious and nothing can be gained by running after them and coaxing them. Brichnell left here a week ago with a party of Ioways who were going to visit the Foxes and has not returned yet. I endeavored to persuade him to stay here but it would not do. I have since learned that he had to marry again and probably that was the cause of his going. He never tells me of any such proceedings till they are all over. I greatly fear he will be compelled to leave the country in consequence of marrying so often. If so I think he can blame no person but himself. I have advised him until I am growing tired. Like an Indian he listens attentively to good advice promises to do good, then goes off and does as he pleases, and he often pleases to do worse. If you think proper to send a team for goods, I wish you to send me a load of flour.

June 6/48

Dr Sir. I received yours by Mr Forman just now and as he says he is going down again to-morrow I will send by him \$50 dollars cash if he can take it. Brichnell has received his salary for this quarter and paid me 30 dollars. He had agreed to pay the full amount of his account, but before he had received his money he had bought a 45 dollar horse, and since he has traded a pony which he got of the Foxes for a new Saddle and with a fine *red* Indian bridle, he is now riding about the straitest [sic] man I ever saw.

I have heard that Mr Richard had sold his Robes before he came in, the man who bought them having passed here

a day or two ago. I understand also he wants fifty Bushel of sweet corn. There is that much here and I expect he will go to you to buy it. I did not see him.

The Pottawatomies passed below here therefore I did not see them.

Should an opportunity offer soon I wish you to send me some Vermillion Thread and needles. The needles which you spoke of having sent by J W Forman² were not received with the other articles.

June 10/48

Dr Sir. By the waggoner I received your letter together with the things sent.

I send you 2 hides & 27 sacks Deer hair 1 Beaver skin for which the waggoner charges you 25 cts pr hundred. I have neither time to weigh or bind them up for I have been unable to get a girl and have to be cook nurse and every thing else.

Please inform me whether you can sell the hair and for how much.

I learned this morning that the Ioways went to Mr Forman yesterday to get him to beg for powder and lead on credit to defend themselves against the pawnees, and that he has written to you, but I hope you will refuse them. They can buy and pay for whiskey enough to keep them drunk three fourths of the time, and I would hold myself ready to take for powder and lead any thing that the whiskey sellers do.

June 11/48

Dr Sir. Another credit is wanted the particulars of which you will learn from Mr Forman. I understand him that the Sacs want 2 Bbls sugar 1 sack coffee 1 do Salt. Perhaps Mr Forman can inform you how it can be granted safely. I confess I can not. The only way I would do it would be by delivering the goods to them at once, upon condition that the whole nation agree to set apart a sufficient amount from each individuals annuity. Mr Forman acts now as Agent.

You will recollect that if you give the Sacs this, the Ioways will be sure to want as much and it is quite

²It was to J. W. Forman that Robidoux sold his trading post in December, 1848.

uncertain whether they will draw any more annuity this year after killing the pawnees.

We have here but half a Bbl sugar though there is coffee & salt.

I need not say more on the Subject of crediting Indians. You know that I am opposed to it under any circumstances that can now happen.

June 18/48

Dear Sir. By Mr Harris I send you Seventy five dollars. I wish you to send me as soon as you can some sugar and vermilion both of which we are entirely out of. Mr Forman came and got fifty five pounds of sugar for the Sac's, and there has been quite a call for it. There is still money among the Indians of both nations. I think they have given but very little money for whiskey, but many of their Blankets are gone, and some horses.

I have sold all the coarse flour which you sent and can sell more if you will send it. It sells more readily at two dollars per hundred than fine does for three, to Indians.

White Cloud started on the buffalo hunt three days ago. I gave him the things which you directed me to, and as you gave me no directions except to *give them* I have charged them to you. The powder and lead which you sent by Mr Forman is yet with me and I think we can still avoid giving it to them without giving offence.

The amount of Goods given to White Cloud is 10.70. The Ioways drove my cow off yesterday and I expect feasted on her last night.

Send me a half Doz Gallon crocks for milk.

June 22/48

Dr Sir. I received yours of yesterday together with the goods sent by the waggoner. You did not inform me whether you received the money which I sent by Mr. Harris.

I sent you six hides and one small deer skin, four of the hides are now at Robitailles one of them is green. I do not know their weight but will send steelyards over by the waggoner and he can weigh them so that I can arrange it with him.

Brichnell is still here and I am using all my influence to keep him here, for I know it is for his interest and perhaps it will keep him from running into debt as much as at other

places as he has done heretofore. He is living quite alone now. I do not know but he has a squaw. If so she does not stay much with him. I let him have just what he really needs and as little more as possible. His house in one respect presents very much the appearance of an Indian lodge, that is, there is very little in it. I can not find out by him whether he gives every thing away, or whether he lets every thing get stolen.

June 30/48

Dr Sir. Brichnell requests me to inform you that your family are here waiting your arrival.

Should you come with a waggoner I wish you would bring me a half Doz Gallon crocks.

July 1st 1848

Dr Sir. Enclosed you will find a 20 dollar note on the Bank of Missouri. By the Frenchman I send you one Otter skin.

Brichnell tells me he is going down to-morrow. I can not keep him here another day, even to take Catharine, which, he says he wants to do, and she wants to go *badly*, but he is ashamed to go to the mission and ask them to let her go on Sunday.

He says he is going to sell his horse, and says he will sell for nothing but cash. Of course if he should sell him you will get what you can of him, which I fear will be but little, for I have very little more confidence in him now than I have in an Indian. It seems lately that it suits him much better to *lie* than to *speack the truth*. His account here is now nearly Forty dollars. I have tried every way to keep it down lower except to deny him plainly & bluntly.

He also owes Mr Forman Fifteen dollars yet towards his horse. I do not know of his owing any more debts here. It is possible you can manage to get his horse & saddle by paying him a little money. Before he bought his horse, he had agreed to pay me sixty dollars out of his last quarters salary, but paid me only thirty, and gave thirty to Mr Forman. I shall now ask him before he goes to give you, Thirty dollars, to be credited on his account here if he sells his horse.

July 5/48

Dear Sir. Night before last between ten & eleven o'clock No Heart and another Ioway with Mr Irvin as Interpreter, called me up to get some powder and lead to

defend themselves against Sioux who they said were at *Mill Creek*. Their voices trembled and they seemed to be near half scared to death.

I gave them one keg powder and twenty five bars lead upon which they agreed to give me tickets enough to pay for it at the payment, or if it was not needed to return it the next morning. In the morning I found that their women & children had all come in the night to the Mission for protection, and the men did not fail to come with them. I have just now heard that they traded their powder and lead off early in the morning for whiskey.

July 11/48

Dear Sir. By Mr Forman I send you my Sal Eratus box to be filled. I have no more news to communicate except that Brichnell is feasting Indians. I suppose he is able to stand up to it.

July 17/48

Dear Sir. Indian Robidoux has been here and brought me the following goods, viz

- 4 Large Tin buckets
- 21 " pans
- 3 camp Kettles 12 lbs
- 3 Hoes & 4 axes
- 24 yds Blue & Scarlet cloth
- 1 Blue Blanket
- 1 Box Am vermilion 5½ lbs
- 17 very small mirrors

He says he has yet 1 Otter skin some powder & lead knives &c which he has saved to trade for deer skins this summer. He said he wanted to see you but his horses feet were tender and he was afraid of making them sore by going down.

P.S. I understand that Brichnell *bought another squaw* yesterday and that a young Indian stole her off before night.

July 19/48

Dr Sir. Mary tells me that you want her to go down to get some things. She wishes me to say to you that she can not go down on account of the sickness of one of her children, but will send a young man down today. I think that is all she wishes me to say.

July 21/48

Dr Sir. You ask information of me respecting your

licence, of which I know nothing. I gave it to Maj Rucker early in March or Feb. and saw him sign, fold, and direct it to the Department, since which it has not been heard from at this office. You are mistaken if you think I told you that Maj Rucker had received an answer from it.

If you can sell the sweet corn you had better send a team up for it. I would send a team down but can get none here. There is fifty bushels of it.

Had I been aware that you could sell it I would have sent it down by the teams that hauled the flour.

As to selling coarse flour, I have considerable on hand now and I rarely sell that or anything else. If you send a team for the corn perhaps you had better load it with something, but as to that you can do as you choose. I sent an account of the goods left here by Robidoux the other day, to you by Mr Tinker. Please inform me whether you received it. Mr Tinker was moving away and I have very little confidence in him.

July 22

I received yours by the Indian yesterday and saw Ne you monga to day and did your errand to him. He says he is waiting for No heart who is drunk today but they will go down to morrow. He will not send down a young man but goes himself.

I send another letter which I wish you would put into the Post Office.

Aug 10/48

Dr Sir. We have very little meat on hand. If you think proper to send bacon here to sell for 2½ cts pr pound, you had better send some up by the waggon. 2½ is all that it will sell for at present. Our Ioways have had a very lovely time today. A civil war proclaimed among them. Wolf's son (Sam) has killed the son of Capt John to-day. Pon ye cooch (Me sour quot's son) has vowed revenge, but says he will act the brave by waiting till all are sober. I understand the relatives on both sides are to have a fight to morrow, but I think their courage will fail when they get sober.

The husband of Joe Robidoux old squaw has been stabbed to day in three places.

Aug 12/48

Dr Sir. By the Waggoner I send you Two Buffalo Robes & one Otter skin. The Otter skin is one which Robi-

doux brought with his goods. We want soap, candles, and when the waggon returns perhaps you had better send another barrel of sugar. I have sold near a half barrel since you left. It may be wanted when it can not be conveniently got.

I have *paid* Brichnell for driving a team down.

Please send me once pound good *Tea*. That which we have here we can not use.

Enclosed I send you the note of J B Roy which I have redeemed.

Aug 18/48

Dr Sir. Brichnell refuses to take the pony back, but says he did not cheat you—that the pony is worth 25 dollars so I suppose you will have to keep him. He does not appear to be getting things to *give away* yet, and I will try to keep him from it but he has to buy things to replace those which he had given away before, or were stolen while he was gone down.

Some one I think one of his squaws got under his house and up through the floor and carried off nearly all that he had, if he had anything. Only one of the Robes which I sent you was painted. The two were tied together with a piece of hemp rope and put on Roy's waggon. I sold one of the painted Robes to Harris.

P.S. I have been talking with Brichnell again and he says if you will ride the pony and write up again that you was cheated he would throw off four dollars.

I understand Robidoux has killed his brother in law by cutting his head with an axe. The news was brought down by some Ottoes who say that Robidoux has run off among the Ottoes.

By Mr Forman I send you twelve dollars.

Aug 21/48

Dr Sir. Michels papers were left by Col Vaughn at the *Comm.* Office. He says they are so thronged with business that they could not examine them while he was there—they would have to wait their turn. He can write to W P Hall if he thinks best. It would probably be better for him to write than for me. But it is probable that congress has adjourned ere this and he is on his way home. Brichnell wishes me to ask you to send some *coarse* combs. He has not

combed his hair for three months at least. I think a coal rake would be best for him.

Col Vaughn caught three white men in an Indian camp last night. Vesser among them.

Aug. 23/48

Dr Sir. I received yours by the Indian this evening. Brichnell will start to-morrow morning for the Nemaha. I have had to hire a horse for him & have hired Hughes to go with him.

By the bearer Scott Rucker I send you Twenty dollars cash.

Col Vaughn has found the whiskey jug which Vesser & company brought over & hid in the hazel brush & tasted of the whiskey.

Aug 28/48

Dr Sir. Brichnell has returned from the Nemahaw without your horses. He tells me he is going to St. Joseph to-morrow so that he can tell you the particulars. I had to hire a horse of an Indian for him to ride up & pay a high price (\$1.50) and paid Hughes \$1.50 for going with him.

I wish you would send Brichnell some vermilion and coarse combs. I have been crediting the Ioways a little when they have brought orders from the Agent but he sees the folly of his course & refuses to give them any more and I am heartily glad of it. The Ioways are going to see him again to-day to beg for blankets on credit but it will be of no use. I have accepted Mr Formans orders for the Sac's amounting to some forty dollars (mostly sugar) which he has agreed to *collect*. We shall want more sugar at this rate before the payment. I am now using the last barrel. We are also nearly out of fine flour.

Aug 31/48

Dr Sir. In your last letter you gave me liberty to let the Ioways have some vermilion and tobacco and arrange it the best way I could.

I have let them have 30 lbs. Tobacco which Col Vaughn says he will see paid and kept the vermilion, which I thought was the best way that I could arrange it.

I afterwards sold Story 2 lbs. vermilion for four dollars, for which they have agreed to pay him.

Brichnell has got another *pony* for you.

Sept 5/48

Dr Sir. I have just received by the waggon the Invoice of goods which you sent.

You wish me to inform you what things we shall need. If you have got or can get a lot of Jappanned Tin it would sell well. Large pans & large plain tin buckets we have enough of, but very small pans & small buckets will sell well. If you buy your Tin in St Joseph you can probably get such as will suit. Red worsted tape & Fishhooks are often called for. Some *cheap* bridles will be wanted. The rest you will probably think of. In the morning I will gather up some things to send down. I have tried to get an Indian to carry your letter to Mr Story but could get none yet. Most of them are gone, and the rest are without horses—and what is worse the *poor devils* are afraid of the Pawnees. Knowing that *justice* requires their blood they are in constant fear. Brichnell says he will go down on thursday. The Ioways caught his horse with some others yesterday and rode them nearly down after Pawnees. If you can get them handy I wish you to get a bushel of good sour apples and send by the waggons to me. Charge to my account.

I send you 8 or 10 bunches Deer hair 8 hides and a bundle of coon & other skins.

Sept 6/48

Dr Sir. I have this day sent an Indian to Mr. Story's.

In my letter this morning I forgot to mention the 27 sacks sent. I could not keep them from the floor mice and they are badly eaten.

Col Vaughn tells me that the Ioways do not want to pay you this fall, but he has told them that *they must do it*.

Sept 9/48

Dr Sir. The goods mentioned in your letter have arrived all safe I believe. I have no news to write, the messenger has not yet returned from Story's.

Sept 19/48

Dr Sir. I have bought as much sweet corn I think as Mr Richard will want and could buy as large a quantity for Mr Shaw or any other person but perhaps it would be wrong to do it. The Indian crop was light and I am not sure but they would sell the last bushel of it this fall if any one would buy it—without thinking of the future.

I have sold them mostly Provisions & Groceries.

My *coarse* flour is all gone and I have opened the last barrel of sugar. Coffee is plenty.

Will you not send me by Brichnell some vermilion & wrapping yarn.

Sept 3d/48

Dr Sir. Yours by Croteau was just received with the vermilion.

I will see Col Vaughn this evening and tell him what you request me.

I send you by Croteau Thirty four dollars mostly in Gold. I intended giving it to you yesterday morning but forgot it.

Oct 5/48

Dr Sir. One of your waggons only came here with the bacon & sugar. Of the Bacon there is 103 pieces instead of 110. The waggoner will take only one barrel of the corn and 2 empty boxes. He says you would not pay him for hauling down or he would take more. He thinks he made a mistake in counting the Bacon when in St. Joseph.

Oct 5/48

Dr Sir. Brichnell requests me to write a letter to you for him. He says your squaw is very sick, wants something nourishing, and wishes you to send her some chickens.

Edward Brichnell is going down to see about his furniture &c and Francis wishes you to assist him. If I understand him rightly the freight has not been paid and he wishes you to pay it for him.

Oct 7/48

Dr Sir. By the waggoners I have received your goods, but they refuse to haul any thing at all down. They say you would offer them only ten cents per hundred and they refused to haul for that and I do not feel authorized to offer them any thing more. Your Squaw is some better, her mother has come and says they do not want Mr Irvin to Doctor her.

Oct 10/48

Dr Sir. Mr Croteau has just handed me your letter of yesterday. I have nothing to write more than Mr Croteau can tell you.

Col Vaughn, Mr Irvin & the Ioways have gone to the

Pawnees and expect to be absent about ten days. Mr Croteau tells me Mr Forman wishes the news about the money to be kept secret.

Oct 18/48

Dr Sir. Yours by the waggons with the goods was received this evening. I expect Col Vaughn has already given you the information you wanted respecting the treaty with the pawnees.

Mr Forman is now gone and I do not know what arrangement I can make about a house, but I presume he intends to let you have his old house for the payment which will require but little fixing. We shall look for you up in a day or two.

I send you by the waggoners

8 Barrels sweet corn
 2 packs skins—59 coon and I think 24 other skins
 1 Otter skin & 2 Beavers
 2 Hides
 2 Empty Boxes
 4 " Barrels

If you can fetch them when you come up will you not bring a half Doz Brooms.

Nov 1/48

Dr Sir. As no other opportunity is likely to offer I send an Indian to inform you that we will need more *powder* before the Ioway payment is over. I have let the Ioways have upon Mr Formans order, one keg of powder and some lead, which leaves us with less than half a keg *here*, and one keg at the Agency. I think there is lead enough here yet, some 300 lbs. I have hauled three barrels flour from the smoke house and have now only two and a half left. It is probable that more will be wanted. If you have more 3 pt white Blankets you had better send them up. Mr Forman has taken so many for the Sacs I fear there will not be enough.

Do not fail to send some Brooms.

Your Squaw is getting better. She wants some Hooks & eyes for a dress.

Brichnell tells me that you told him that you would furnish him with all the provisions he needed and he comes to me for it. I would rather have had an order from you to that effect than his word.

Perhaps you had not better keep the house you spoke of for me. Unless I can engage in some kind of business again at once, Mrs. Harding will want to visit her friends and will probably remain until I find a place.

Col Vaughn is depending on you to watch the mail for him.

Nov 5/48

Dr Sir. Brichnell wishes me to inform you that your squaw talks of starting to the Nemahaw on wednesday if you do not come up sooner and she wants a quantity of Provisions.

The amount of the order which you gave her when here she sent to her mother and now her sister has come back for more.

Nov 18/48

Dr Sir. The bearer tells me he is going to St. Joseph to-day.

We have no news from the Department yet or I would have informed you sooner. You may be sure the payment will not be made before week after next.

Should the order be received by the next mail I am confident some excuse will be found to delay the payment until Mr Formans return.

Send the mail.

24 Nov 1848

Dr Sir. I have received some four or five letters from you within the last two days, but have no news yet worth communicating. Col Vaughn has not sent for his mail this week until today and the Messenger will not be back until to-morrow. Whenever we have any news of consequence you may be sure of my sending a message to you at once. I am doing less business now than at any time within the last six months.

P.S. Brichnell sends his compliments and wishes me to tell you that he starts for caw river after Col Vaughns son next sunday morning to be gone four or five days.

I send you another letter for the Post Office.

Nov 27/48

Dr Sir. Brichnell tells me that Mr Story is at his house and going to St Joseph to-morrow with a waggon. If he can take them, I will send by him one pack skins containing 25 coon 17 wolf 4 deer and 3 or 4 other skins of little value.

We have no news here yet except that Col Vaughns

son is expected daily by way of St Joseph. Brichnell started after him but met some persons who told him that he had already left. Those Pottawattomies still living at the Bluffs returned here two days ago but they had no money to trade. Maj Harvey refused to pay them any annuity until they should move on to their land and comply with the conditions of the Treaty. Col Vaughn says he is expecting an order to pay the Ioways every day. *I think he expects Mr. Forman to bring it.*

I also send you Twenty Three dollars cash.

Dr Sir. Yours by Mr Forman was received this evening. You enquire what we will want for the payment. Not knowing what there is at the Agency I can hardly tell.

We have only a half barrel of sugar and no flour but perhaps there will not be much sugar wanted & the Indians I understand are going down in a day or two to get Twenty barrels of flour of you. If they got that before the payment you will not want any or much here.

I expect the payment will be made next week but of that Mr Forman can inform you better than I can. Col Vaughn has received the order to day by Oregon.

St Joseph Jan [?] 21/49

Col A J Vaughn

Dr Sir. Circumstances have been such that I could not go to the agency as I intended and it may not be convenient for me to go at any other suitable time, therefore I am very much in need of money at this time you will do me a great favor if you can collect the amount of the order which I gave you on J B Roy and should you collect the whole amount you can retain ten per cent by forwarding the balance to me as soon as convenient.

He may object to paying the full amount on the grounds of its being for the benefit of Indians, but his buying things of me and giving to Indians or crediting them makes no difference with the justice of my account. Had I credited the Indians with the goods the loss would have fallen on one better able to bear it, but in trying to do better for my employer I have the account thrown on my hands and now I have to content myself by doing the best I can. Ten dollars of the amount was for foods consumed by his own family mostly provisions & groceries. The only argument he can bring for refusing to pay the other is that he has received no benefit from it but that is not my fault. The fault which I committed was in crediting him at all.