

William Dunbar to Thomas Jefferson, February 2, 1805, from Thomas Jefferson and Early Western Explorers, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

William Dunbar to Thomas Jefferson

Natchez 2d February 1805

Dear Sir

I have the satisfaction to inform you, that Dr. Hunter and myself are just returned from the Washita; time does not permit the preparation of a short report of our researches before the departure of this mail. The objects which have presented themselves to us, are not of very high importance; it must however be acknowledged that the hot Springs are indeed a great natural Curiosity; the temperature of their waters is from 130 to 150 of Fahrenheit's thermometer; the heat is supposed to be greater in Summer, particularly in dry weather. In water of 130 which was comparatively in a state of repose to one side of the Spring run, I found by the aid of an excellent microscope, both Vegetable and animal life; the first a species of moss, the latter a testaceous bivalve of the size of the minutest grain of Sand; I do not despair of being able to reanimate these as soon as I can procure a little leisure. The meanders of the rivers have been carefully taken as high as we went; the latitude was ascertained every favorable day & the Longitude was not neglected at convenient or important points. A journal of occurrences occupying 200 quarto pages, (exclusive of the Courses & distances with astronomical observations) will be forwarded as fast as it can be transcribed: next post I shall transmit a Short abstract of the outlines of our researches

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and of the information we have obtained respecting the more interesting adjoining rivers, in form of a report. I am con-

-cerned that the rigorous season and other circumstances have so much retarded our return that I fear this report will only arrive just before the breaking up of Congress: at Lat: 34½ our thermometer was several times at 9 & 10 and once as low as +6: we had snow above 12 inches deep. The Season was unfavorable for botanical researches had we been better qualified in the practical part of that Science; it is believed nevertheless, that something new has been found: a species of mountain dwarf Cabbage was discovered upon the ridges, which partakes of the nature of both Cabbage and raddish, & is very agreeable to the taste, the root is white & tastes like horse raddish but much milder; there are some other objects, the description of which I shall not anticipate, as you will receive the whole as speedily as transcripts can be made: I shall only now mention that from our analysis of the water of the hot Springs, it appears to contain lime with a minute portion of iron dissolved by a small excess of Carbonic acid: this is indeed visible upon the first view of the Springs; an immense body of Calcareous matter is accumulated upon the Side of the hill, by the perpetual depositions from the hot waters, & the bed of the run is coloured by red oxid of iron or rather Carbonated iron. Every little spring which rises up in a favorable situation, forms its own calcareous Cap considerably elevated in form of a Crater.

I have the honor to be with perfect respect, Dear Sir, Your most Obedient Servant William Dunbar

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