

### Nancy Hanks

Have been reading Weik. The credit he gives Denis Hanks as a witness seems to me preposterous. Hanks was born, according to his own story, in 1799. When Herendon interviewed him, therefore, he was 67 years old. He could read and write but one can see from his answers to Herendon's questions how really ignorant and how purely garrulous he was. No allowance whatever is made for the fact that people do not remember correctly what happened in their youth, and that they are particularly inaccurate in their stories of relationship when they have no documents back of them.

Hanks was a common-minded person and vulgar to a degree. Perhaps not shiftless, but never able to take a real grip - a hanger on in the Lincoln family - tolerated, I should say, because of his ineffectiveness. He tells yarns which have been building up throughout his life, away from Kentucky, and not real sources of information for it must be remembered that he left Kentucky when he was only about 16.

If Nall's recollections, made for Nicolay and Hay are full of errors, how much more likely Denis Hanks'. Nall had remained in Kentucky. He was a fairly well educated man, he had been a member of the Kentucky legislature in 1872-3, he lived close to the Lincolns. He was a grand-nephew of Thomas Lincoln. Thomas Lincoln's sister Nancy married a Brumfield; one of her daughters, a Nall. Mr. Nall had always been interested in family genealogy. The story he tells is circumstantial. He believed it, but from the documents which we have, we know that he makes many mistakes. If this is true of a man like Nall, who had remained on the scene, how little have we to expect from a garrulous, uneducated, individual like Denis Hanks? who had left Kentucky when he was a boy and never, until he was at least 60 years old, had had any occasion to remember what he had heard there. To make him a serious witness has always seemed to me a little absurd.

*Samuel H.*