September 6, 1934

Dear Mr. Thomas:

I have your letter of September 1st asking if I have a copy of the returns of the election held at New Salem, August 6, 1832 when Lincoln first ran for the State Legislature. No, I have not - at least I think not. My assistant in Springfield, J. McCann Davis, looked up the document, as I recall, but I do not think he sent a photograph as in the case of Lincoln's first vote - on Page 126 of my early Life of Lincoln. My recollection is that he tabulated the figures and it is from that report that I wrote the paragraph on Page 156.

If the official poll book has disappeared from the County Clerk's office at Springfield it probably will turn up someday in some private collection along with other valuable stolen documents. The carelessness of clerks in charge of records in the days when I was working on this Life of Lincoln was such that I am quite sure I might have now a fortune in my hands if I had not had scruples about taking what did not belong to me.

I am so glad of this chance, dear Mr. Thomas, of thanking you for the copy of Lincoln's New Salem you were good enough to send me. I only wish that you had written your name in it, that is on the front page as well as where you signed the Membership Edition. It is just the kind of a book that I have been hoping for many a day somebody would write, but I confess I did not perceive that anybody would ever do it as well as you have done it. You have put so much sober care into it and shown what is dear to me - an appreciation of the reality and dignity of the life in that little settlement. It pleases me greatly that you were willing to say you believed that I had felt from the beginning of my Lincoln studies the worthwhileness of the pioneer struggle. I have always looked on it as a creative effort, rich in its potentialities, a great school out of which came a line of splendid men and women.

Please believe me I deeply appreciate the fine honest piece of work you have done.

Very sincerely yours

Mr. Benjamin P. Thomas