April 29, 1933

Dear Mr. Townsend:

I am sorry there is so long a delay in replying to your letter of March 18th. My secretary wrote you I was out of town - illness had taken me away - and I am only just back at my desk trying to bring up neglected correspondence.

And now as to your question whether or no I ever saw the band a facsimile of which appears on Page 170 of my "Early Life of Lincoln" New Salem.

No. All of the illustrations, or practically all, for that volume were collected by J. McCann Davis who was my assistant in my Illinois Lincoln work. He was an able and ambitious young lawyer when I first met him in Springfield, familiar with the county, interested in Lincoln, and glad to earn a few extra dollars. I trust it. He was one of the most careful associates that I have ever had and thoroughly honest. His job was to collect pictures that I suggested and to write the notes. I came to have entire confidence in him as did all of the Springfield people interested in Lincoln with whom I ever talked. It was McCann Davis who turned up these documents in which you are interested. I am confident that he had originals and I am pretty sure that in the correspondence that I had with him at the time there was further explanation about where he got them then appears in the text. Unhappily I cannot prove that this is so for the correspondence which I carried on in writing my Life of Lincoln which was very extensive was left in my files at the office of McClure's Magazine with which I severed connections about 1907.

Ten years later when the magazine had changed hands, as well as location, I asked Charles Hanson Towne the then editor if he could not turn over to me the old Lincoln correspondence as well as the originals of the illustrations. I have his answer before me saying that nobody knew what had become of that correspondence and that he imagined it was destroyed before the offices were moved.

Sincerely,

[Handwritten note: typing correction]
There is the barest chance that I may have among my notes, now packed away waiting to be re-classified, something on the point, but I doubt it. If anything should ever come to light I shall certainly pass it on to you.

So far as I am concerned the authenticity of the document rests entirely on my confidence in the integrity and the astuteness - he was not easily fooled - of McCann Davis.

I am of course sorry not to be able to clear the matter up one way or another satisfactorily.

Now that I am back at my desk one of the first things I expect to do is to read your Barton. With the best of wishes.

Very sincerely,

Mr. William H. Townsend
Lexington, Kentucky