

MISS IDA M. TARBELL

R. F. D. 1

BETHEL, CONNECTICUT

March 6, 1941

My dear Mr. Smith:

Of course you are not making yourself a nuisance in making an inquiry that you do about John Wilkes Booth. Briefly I want to begin by saying that my faculty for believing what isn't true will have to be greatly enlarged before I could set aside my reason for believing that John Wilkes Booth was shot in the Garrett barn wither by Boston Cavert or what I think is more lifely, by his own hand on April 26, 1865. There's a mass of evidence from a variety of people which makes it, to me, incredible that there could have been a substitute. But I haven't time to go into that. You say you are a graduate of Allegheny and live at Guys Mills. The best thing for you to do is to drive into the College some day and ask Miss Rowley of the Reis Library to let you look at a book which they have in the Lincoln Room called "The Great American Myth". If you do not want to read the chapter of what I believe to be the capture of Booth, read Chapter 12 beginning on Page 324, "False Colors and Shapes." You will see there how many Booths turned up and in how many parts of the world; and you will see how well, in my judgment, Mr. Bryan disposes of them.

If a myth of this sort is to be disproved in a reader's mind he must examine and weigh the evidence himself. That's the best thing for you to do. It does not follow because I do not believe in Mr. Bates or any other of the dozen or more of Booth's biographers that you should not.

I am glad you wrote me. I am always pleased to hear from Allegheny people.

Ask someone at the Library to explain to you what we are trying to do in building up a working Lincoln Collection there. The Garrett's around Guys Mills and vicinity no doubt held Lincoln books and pictures, possibly wartime letters which they would be glad to have saved in a respectable collection. That is the way collections grow you know.

Sincerely yours,

*Ida M. Tarbell*