Pittsburg, Penna.,
February 24, 1924.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 E. Nineteenth St.
New York City.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

Please pardon my delay in answering your letter of January 31st. It had to be forwarded to me from Decatur.

I am quite willing for you to use the letter for which you ask, and will enclose a copy which was at one time printed in a Decatur paper. It has never been published by the Illinois Historical Society, nor anywhere else unless by the W. R. P., to whom my father gave a copy shortly before his death.

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that it would give pleasure to their many descendants. I think it is fitting that their memory should be preserved. They were both women of the true pioneer spirit, putting up with hardships uncomplainingly. My grandmother was a small, frail woman, gentle and retiring, but full of Scotch-Irish pluck. She lived to be ninety-four years old, keeping to the last her active mind and cheerful disposition. I am glad that I can remember her.

You would, I think, be interested in a paper of my father's, entitled "The Pioneers of Macon Co. and the Civil War" which I sent to the Illinois Historical Society last summer. I do not know whether they have published it yet or not. He had finished it only a few weeks before his death and it was not yet copied at the time of your

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I am sorry that I have not time to make you a neat copy, but I have corrected a few misprints and marked out the newspaper interpolations. The letter was written jointly by my grandmother Marilla (Martin) Baker, and her sister Mary McDowell (Martin) Davis, to Mary Martin their mother, of West Rutherford County Tennessee. I make no apologies for their spelling. They were not uneducated women, and doubtless spelled as everyone else spelled at the time. The address given at the beginning of this copy is taken from the envelope-side of the foolscap sheet, so that the letter really began with the heading "Illinois, Macon County, June 4, 1829."

If not incompatible with your plan, I should like their names to be given, for beyond the fact

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visit to Decatur, so that you did not see it. It contains some local history never before published.

I have read with pleasure "In the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln," and shall be much interested in the new books you are planning.

Sincerely yours,

Clara Martin Baker.

300 N. Neville St.,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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Do you notice there is no mention of slaves, of the children, although there were two little girls and a boy in the two families at this time.

LETTER BY MOTHER OF N. M. BAKER TELLS OF LIFE HERE IN 1829

Stephen Decatur Chapter, D. A. R., Uncovers Correspondence of Wonderful Historical Value

In the annual meeting of Stephen Decatur chapter, D. A. R., last week, Mrs. James Kinney Stafford, historian of the chapter, gave her report for the past year, which included a number of letters, hitherto unpublished, from the pioneer settlers of Macon county, to their relatives in Tennessee. In addition to being of great interest in themselves these letters form an invaluable chapter in the early history of the county. Several of them were written by Marilla Baker, mother of the late Rev. N. M. Baker, to her mother in Tennessee. The originals of the letters are owned by the descendants of the writers.

In addition to the letters she has collected Mrs. Stafford has searched out other points of interest about Macon county. It is often wondered whether there is any record in this county of fur trading with the Indians. Smith's history of Macon county refers to Indian traders from St. Joe, Mich., who came to the "trading house" as early as 1816, and as late as 1825. This trading house was about eight miles east of Oreana on the bank of the Sangamon river, and was the first structure built in Macon county by a white man. The land on which it stood was then owned by Dr. H. C. Johns and is now owned by Dr. A. E. Benton.

About seven miles south and west of Decatur, on the old Terre Haute-Springfield state road there still stands a building known as "the old tavern," which was used in stage-coach days as an inn for travelers, and it was here that horses were changed and rested. This old building, which still stands in much the same condition of the days in which it was in use, forms an interesting landmark of the early days of the county.

The letters collected by Mrs. Stafford are as follows:

The writers of this joint letter were Mary McDowell Davis and Marilla Baker, daughters of Josiah and Mary Martin, and actual Daughters of the Revolution. They left Tennessee in the fall of 1828, and spent the winter months with friends in the Ward Settlement. This is their first letter home after their permanent location in Long Creek Township.

~~Was 50 Miles to Post Office~~

Mrs. Mary Martin,
West Tennessee, Rutherford Cty.
Jefferson Post office.
Illinois, Macon County June 4, 1829.

Dear Mother: We received Father's letter the first of May. We were glad to hear you were all well. One reason we did not get the letter sooner was becaus it is 50 Miles to the Post office. We are all well and have enjoid as good health since we came hear as we did in Tennessee. We live 60 Miles from Mr. Foster. He preached twice at Mr. Smith's in the winter and said if he could sell his place he would move up and live somewhear in these parts. There is no preacher lives near hear except one young Methodest preaches that lives Acros the river. There is no Doctor livs nearer than 30 or 40 Miles. I wish you would tel some of the Doctors they had better come hear for ther is too many there and none hear. I have not much work to do for I have neither wheal nor cottin. Tell Peggy if they come, to fetch as much cottin as she would expect to spin til they rais it, for there is none to be had hear. I was at Cousin John Warnicks yesterday, they were well, and talk of going to tennessee, but it is very uncirtin about thear going. I would be very glad to see youall, and I have a hope of seeing you, fall after next, if I should live til then, for David intends going then. We have plenty of milk and tollerble plenty of buter. We have but one cow, and can't make cheas. They have to go five miles and a half to a horse mill. We expect we have got corn enough to do us. They had to give a dollar and a quarter a barl for the last they got. We expect to have a chance of sending letters in July with Wilson Smith. Williams and us lives About as far apart as from your hous to Susan Martins. We live in the ege of the timber. The pararo is at the south side of the hous. It is A half a mile to the timber before the door. We can see trees all round. Tel Robert, David wants him to send him a quart of apple seed with Andy. Tell Robert it is well for him, he is not hear or he would brake himself downe hunting dear, and tirky, we could hear them gobbl every morning. If I could see you, I could tell you A heap more than I can write. Write to me evry chance, tel Jesse I intend to rite to him, and I want him to rite to me the first chance. I add no more, but remain your effetionate daughter

Mary Martin. Mary M. Davis.

~~Two Established Called "Decatur"~~

I have just now taken up my pen for the first time to write to you, my Dear Mother. We have seen the time when wee could converse in a more satisfactory way, but as wee cannot now, I feel glad wee have this one way left. We would have wrote sooner, but we had to wait for a chance of sending it to the office. There was no county here when we came, but there has been one laid off since, and a county Seat established 6 or 7 miles from us, which they call Decator. When Andrews letter was wrote, they expected there would soon be an ~~(Post)~~ office there, and toald you to derect your letters to Decator, but there is none there yet. If you write soon you will have to derect it to Springfield. David and William have each of them got some corn planted, tho not as much as they wanted. They thought they could brake pararo, with their four horses untill they tryed, but, they found they could do nothing with it. It was then too late to clear, and every one who had oxen was so engaged they could get but little broke. They plough with eight or ten oxen, one holds the plough and another drives them. They brake the ground, cover the corn, and lay it by all at the same time. They never attempt to work it the first year. I expect you were sorry to hear we did not stop nigh Mr. Robinsons, but we are well satisfyd as we like this place better. I would rather take a start with the rest than to be where evry one was fixt to live except us.

~~How the Illinois Pioneers Lived~~

A bedsted with one foot, or two benches with boards across them passes wonderfull well hear. A box, a chest, or a puncheon table at most, dose very well to eat off. I am almost done my cotten. We have some planted but the summer is so short here I am afraid we will not make much. If we do, we will have to make a gin of our fingers, or take it fifty miles to a better one. We have to put up with many inconvienences, we would not have had in an oalder settlement. We have no preacher, no doctor, no water grist mill, no saw mill, no cotten gin, nor tan yard, but I hope we will Jack none of these things long. We feel the want of neighbours as we have rone nigher than 3 miles and not many at that. As this place is setling verry fast, we expect to have plenty in the fall. We came here in March and I have not seen one woman since, ~~(8 mo.)~~ except Cousin Abigail and Polly. We give 10 dollars for one cow. She is large and fat. She has a large heiffer calf and gives us plenty of milk. This has been a verry dry Spring. Wee have seen verry little rain since we ieft tennessee. The sope we brought with us, lasted till we made more. The water here tastes so like it dose there, I cannot tell the odds. The grass is half leg high all over the pararo. I know it would pleas my Father to see the cows come home as full as they can hoald. William wants you to tell Andrew if he comes, to come as soon in the fall as possible that he may be better fixd for winter than we ware. As we ware at Mr. Fosters, and are now 60 miles from him, you may suppose we are that much farther from you, but we think we are considerably nigher you. We came verry much out of our way. We brought our shelfware safe. I have got a nicer smoothing iron than I left. We expect an opertunity of writing to Clarissa before long. When you write we want you to fill your sheet full, or if you get tierd let some of the rest finish it. Give my best respects to Mother Baker and all my friends. As my paper is full I must bid you farewell my Dear Mother. I remain your affectionate daughter

Marilla Baker

~~(Mother of our Rev. N. M. Baker)~~

~~To~~ Mary Martin ~~(her mother)~~.

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