

Nancy Hanks

February 17, 1923

Rev. William E. Barton,
First Congregational Church,
Oak Park, Ill.

My dear Mr. Barton:

I hope you are not one that bears ill will because of long delayed replies to letters. If you are, I am afraid that I have been wiped entirely off your slate.

In going over a quantity of letters collected in my long absences from New York in the years 1919-1920 & letters acknowledged by my secretary, I see, but which I never, until a short time ago had read, I found two from you - interesting letters, one in regard to Lincoln's religious life, another in regard to Nancy Hanks and her origin.

I take it from your books, which I have of course read, that I would be carrying coals to New Castle to say anything on either subject now. Instead of your asking me questions, it is I that should be asking them of you. And that is what I want to do now.

I have been very much interested, as every Lincoln student has, with the newspaper accounts of your recent paper, announcing that you had cleared up, beyond controversy, in your judgment, Nancy Hark's origin, for, I gather from the unsatisfactory reports of your paper, you have found documentary evidence that Herndon was right in his theory that Nancy Hanks was the illegitimate daughter of a Lucy Hanks. May I ask, dear Mr. Barton, when your paper is to be published?

I never held either Herndon or Dennis Hanks very high as genealogists. These matters can only be finally settled of course by documentary evidence. Joseph Hark's will that Mrs. Hitchcock discovered has always seemed to me the only important record that we had - but I yield to documents always, and am glad to honor those who diligence turns them up. Will you not, then, let me know when I may hope to see published copies of the records that you have found?

And may I not hope that you will forgive me for my seeming rudeness in allowing your letters to go unanswered? They came to me at a very difficult period. I was abroad when the first came, and I have been very little in New York since that time. I hate to

confess that absence and other imperative interests should make me so neglectful, but I must do it.

Hoping that I may be forgiven, and that you will not serve me in my own coin, I am, dear Mr. Barton,

Sincerely yours,