October 11, 1938

My dear Dr. Wayland:

Please forgive my long delay in replying to your letter of September 29th. It does not mean that I was not greatly pleased to hear from you, as was my sister. We remember with pleasure your kindness to us when we were on our Lincoln pilgrimage in the Shenandoah Valley. Of course I recall the visit to Miss Kate Pennybacker, how your car was stalled in Linville Creek, how she sent her man to pull us out, the saltiness and the forthrightness of the woman. I remember, too, some of the Lincoln pieces she showed me. It is no doubt a valuable collection.

Now as to a practical suggestion of a purchaser. I have had my wits to work, but there are only two possible buyers of whom I know in whom I feel there would be some interest. The first of these is the Lincoln National Life Association of Fort Wayne, Indiana. This Association is sponsored by a Lincoln Insurance Company. As I understand it they promised Robert Lincoln that if he would give permission to use the Lincoln name they would build there a worthy memorial. And they certainly have done their best to do it. It is an admirable collection of much valuable special material, and it is being added to constantly. Here is an interest and here are means. The only thing would be to convince the powers that be that what Miss Kate has would add something to their collection within the limits I suppose they may have set for themselves. The proper person to approach there is Dr. Louis A. Warren who would no doubt if he were interested be willing to go to Harrisonburg. If you wish you can tell him that I suggested his name.

Another possibility nearer home seems to be the Lincoln Memorial University at Harrogate, Tennessee. They have an admirable collection to which the are adding constantly and the Pennybacker collection would show something of the life Abraham Lincoln's ancestors led in that part of the world.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

That is, it would show that they were not all victims of poverty and that they did not belong to the poor white trash as politicians so liked to place them.

Dr. McClelland the President of the University writes me that he is coming north late in October by car, I believe. It might be that he would be willing to stop at Harrisonburg if you would write him and look over what Miss Kate has. I think there is a chance at least.

This is all I have to offer, dear Dr. Wayland, but I shall certainly bear this in mind and if I have a chance to talk with anybody that might offer a practical suggestion I certainly shall do it.

Thank you for writing me. It is very interesting for my sister and myself to recall the days we spent in Harrisonburg and how much we owe to you for making them worthwhile.

Very sincerely yours

Dr. John W. Wayland
Harrisonburg, Virginia

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.