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Evansville, Indiana,

November 17, 1922.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
c/o Alvin Scott, Jr.,
Naperville, Illinois.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Yours of the 16th received, upon which I wired
you as follows:

"Telegram received will be glad to meet you but
doubt whether you would find it worth while now.
Letter to you today above address will make it
clearer."

I have no documents. I have never had special
facilities for dealing in detail relating to Lincoln's life
or residence in Indiana, concerning which there is considerable
information, about which probably you know more than I do. I
have been much interested in historical investigation relating
to the people of southern Indiana, before and after the State
was admitted to the Union, and I have done some research work
and some writing along the line.

I was born in 1848, less than eleven years after
Edward Eggleston was born. My first schoolteacher was one of
the Quakers type who reduced cruelty to children to an exact
science, and I belong to the pioneer age. I have been for
over fifty years a trial lawyer. My grandfather sat upon the
bench as lay judge in Warrick County, and before him Pitcher
practiced. My grandfather was a Justice of the Peace within
twenty miles of Lincoln in 1825, and lived about the same dis-
tance from the Lincoln farm that Boonville is. My mother's
people were among the first settlers in the first British
settlement in Indiana, and my mother was born in England.
My father's father was a tide water Marylander. My father was
born in Kentucky, but settled in Indiana at a very early age
in 1823.

When arrangements for the Centennial of Evansville
was prepared in 1916 I was made chairman of a historical commission

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and began the work of selecting members and committees and directing the work, but the war stopped it. Meanwhile, I had read enough, quite late in life, to become very much interested in pioneer life of southwestern Indiana as both of my parents belonged to pioneer families.

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My work has been a litigating lawyer for over fifty years, and analyzing the evidence in law cases in weighing facts and searching for authority, and the qualities required in the work are analogous to the qualities required in historical investigation as to make the latter work with me very fascinating, and I find myself loaded up with work of that character generally.

Three years ago in an inaugural address as president of this society, I warned the members against the overshadowing influence of what I called "The Lincoln Inquiry" as I was afraid it would interfere with other investigation. In an address delivered two years later before the same society, I stated that I had changed my mind on this point, and was now convinced that the missing chapter in Lincoln's life in Indiana would never be properly dealt with until the missing chapter in the life of the people of Indiana during his period was properly written, and this has never been done. Therefore, it seems to me there is no short cut on getting into the Lincoln inquiry, and for myself, I make no pretensions in any such line. I have been however greatly interested in the Brackenridges and John Pitcher. Mrs. Hanby of Mt. Vernon tells me that you talked with John Pitcher.

I knew John Pitcher well, though more than fifty years his junior, and so far as I know the only living lawyer who ever heard him try a case. I am now preparing a sketch of the times of John Pitcher, not intended to be anything very elaborate, but rather to weigh the facts to which I have already called attention, and in addition to deal with John Pitcher as a man, and as he was influenced himself by his surroundings in Indiana, and as he in all probability influenced Abraham Lincoln. I hope at the January meeting of our society to have my paper on Pitcher completed so that it may be printed in the bulletin of the Indiana Historical Commission, which is printing our proceedings.

In the forthcoming bulletin of our commission, which is under the direction of Dr. John W. Oliver, Director of the State Historical Commission, State House, Indianapolis, which is now in press, will be printed in full the two addresses by me, referred to above, in each of which I deal with the Lincoln inquiry. In addition I have stimulated work in every direction on this subject. I am responsible for Mrs. Hanby's article on

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John Pitcher and Lincoln, which will also appear in the forthcoming bulletin of our State Historical Commission above mentioned. I expect to have one or two persons on the program who knew John Pitcher at the next meeting of our society in Evansville in January, and if you happen to be in this section of the woods the latter part of next January, we shall be glad to have you visit us and take a hand.

I am by this mail sending to the above address to you three copies of the Indiana Magazine of History, one copy of June 1919 on the First British Settlement in Indiana, and one the March number 1921, continued in the June number 1921 of the same magazine on the Life and Times of John Shrader. You may have seen these magazines, but if you have not, I believe the particular references will interest you, unless it be the purely biographical data relating to my ancestors, in which of course you will not be expected to take any special interest, but there are a number of references to Pitcher and to Lincoln.

My article appearing in the June 1919 number on the British settlement in Indiana, has for its title "The Coming of the English to Indiana and their Hoosier Neighbors", the latter words being added to make germane certain references to Abraham Lincoln and to his opportunities, which were furnished by the British settlement population. You will here find a respectable number of facts pointed out by me which speak for themselves, and my rule is not too strenuously insist upon conclusions where I furnish the facts. The facts will speak for themselves.

These three articles, as well as the two addresses of mine above mentioned, will make pretty clear I think what I mean, but I have been growing in the work all the time, and at the request of Mr. Moore, president of our State Historical Society, I am going to put the finishing touch on the life and times of John Pitcher from the view point of a Hoosier pioneer who knew Pitcher and had learned himself in the school in which Pitcher was both a pupil and a teacher.

I have had my attention called several times to the fact you had been in this section, and once in Indianapolis, while I was there, but I did not learn it in time. I have always wanted to meet you and am curious to know what Pitcher told you, although I do not think he told you much, and he is a man concerning whom it is somewhat unsafe to draw inferences of a negative character in this particular. He was a wonderful man, a man who came into

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the wilderness to which he was not particularly fitted, except as an intellectual giant, and prosecuting attorney, which gave him great celebrity. He was a financial failure, died in distressing poverty at a very old age, and there was a good deal of pessimism in his nature, but ^{there was} the space to go into the peculiarities of the man.

When you have examined these magazines, I will be obliged if you will return them to me as I send them in haste, and do not know how I will be fixed about them. Meanwhile, on this showing if you think it worth your while to come here I shall be glad to meet you and spend whatever time you desire with me. If not, I hope at some other date to see you.

Sincerely yours,

JEI:MM

John E. Feltner

P. S. I intended to say that my article on the English settlement is very elaborate in details because William Vaux is the only man who ever gave it a historical setting, and I am the first man since William Vaux' time who has dealt with it. I knew some of the original emigrants among my mother's people, and I knew all of their descendants worth while, and therefore was able in a way to touch up the almost faded picture. These facts are therefore a new exhibit along the line above mentioned.

I sent my telegram to you collect as directed, but for the reason only that I thought it would be more promptly delivered.

J. E. F.