564 Woodbine Ave.
Warren, Ohio
Aug. 11, 1925

Mr. W. C. Gaines
Sathrop, Mo.

My dear Cousin:-

This morning I received from A. E. Ewing of Grand Rapids, Michigan, a very interesting letter which you had written to him, and he has asked me to answer as many of your questions as I can. I do not know just why our Cousin A. E. should so honor me for I am quite sure he has delved much longer in Hawk-Hawker records than I have and it is to him that such honors should go. Being an invalid and not able to do much else, I have, however, made a very intensive study of old Hawker records during the past three years - having, you must remember, all of Mr. Ewing's fine records to start with - and, while the returns have seemed very slow at times, I must confess the combined results of our efforts are very gratifying.

To me, the most gratifying thing about your letter was the mention of the fact that your

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

Grandfather Moses Knapp's bible gives the name of William Hank's wife as Susanna Berry. I have long known that her name was Susanna Berry but I had never heard of a single bible that so stated it. That Knapp bible is priceless for it is the one proof, that I know of, of our great-great-grandmother's name that will stand in court. Cousin John Hanks of Jackson, Ohio, was mistaken about the name being "Margaret". We talked it over when he visited me a year ago and he said he had always known that his grandmother's name was Susanna and couldn't remember just where he had lately picked up the "Margaret". I then asked him if such a thing as his confusing the name of his grandmother, Susanna, with that of his great-grandmother, Margaret, were possible and he decided that that was just what he had done, in fact he knew that his great-grandmother's name was Margaret for his

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

father, Isabella, had often told him that his father, William Hanke, had asked him to name his third daughter for her great-grandmother who was Margaret Williams-Hanke. To prove all this I received only a few weeks ago a letter from Margaret McClure Honold, a granddaughter of Margaret W. Hanke-Cherrington, in which she says: "My grandmother, Margaret Williams-Hanke-Cherrington, was named by her grandfather, William Hanke, for his mother, Margaret Williams-Hanke." A letter from Wilbur F. Hanke, a grandson of William, to O. E. Ewing, in 1900, says: "Great-grandfather's name was John." The Cherrington records call William's sister, Margaret, "a daughter of John and Margaret Hanke," and they say she was born in Pennsylvania April 10, 1755. From the above evidence I think we may safely conclude that Williams wife was Susanna Berry while

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

his mother was Margaret Williams. It is rather interesting to know that Williams's name was not William but Williams, - his mother's maiden name; he, however, dropped the 's' from his given as well as his surname and was always called William Hank. Both of the girls named for Margaret - her daughter (b. 1755) and her great-granddaughter (b. 1815) - married Cherrington men.

John and Margaret Williams Hanks of Pennsylvania and Rockingham Co., Virginia, had three other children besides William and Margaret. Their oldest son was John, who was born in Pennsylvania in 1738; he served in the French and Indian War from his native state in 1759, and he enlisted in 1776, for three years' service in the Revolution, from Virginia. This, to my mind, shows that the Hanks's migration into the Shenandoah Valley took place between the years 1759 and 1776. John served in the famous 8th Virginia Regiment, sometimes

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

called the "German Regiment", commanded by Abraham Bowman. This regiment was almost filled with recruits from what was then known as Augusta County. Rockingham County was not created until in October, 1777. John fought at Trenton, Brandywine, etc., and was reported sick at Valley Forge. He never married. Caleb was their second son; he married but died soon afterwards, without heirs. The fifth child was Hannah who, in 1787, married Asa Lupton of Frederick Co., Va.. In the marriage record she is called "Hannah Hank, dau. of John of Rockingham."

Now I suppose you are wondering where a Nancy comes in and I have often wondered too, for many biographers have insisted that Abraham Lincoln's mother was a daughter of John Hanks of Rockingham. However, they have never been able to prove this. In 1900, Caroline Hanks Hitchcock of Cambridge, Mass., found in Kentucky a will of one Joseph Hanks of Nelson County. There were eight children mentioned in the

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

wife, the youngest of whom was a Nancy. Many biographers now agree that this Nancy was the mother of Abraham Lincoln. Joseph calls his wife Nannie. John Hanks of Rockingham had a brother named Joseph and called by his nieces and nephews "Uncle Joe". This Uncle Joe built the third house in Reading, Pa., when John lived on the Perkiomen turnpike six miles east of Reading just before going south into what is now Rockingham County, Virginia. Tradition has it that John and Joseph and their families went southward together and that later "Uncle Joe" and his wife, "Aunt Nancy", migrated to Kentucky. Could not this Uncle Joe and Aunt Nancy Hanks have been the Joseph and Nannie Hanks of Nelson County, Kentucky?

That John of Pennsylvania and Rockingham County, Virginia, (b. 1712) and Joseph of Reading, Pennsylvania, (b. 1725) were sons of John and Sarah Evans Hanks of White-

marsh township, Pennsylvania, is proven by the senior John's will, probated May 31, 1731, and the marriage records pertaining to the Friends of Gwynedd township; also by the Evans and Roberts genealogical notes to be found in Howard M. Jenkins' "Historical Collections Relating to Gwynedd", which book may be borrowed under the conditions of an inter-library loan from the Free Library in Philadelphia.

You ask about the Berrys. Many have done so, and many and contradictory have been the answers received. This family, like the Hauk-Hawkes, is sadly in need of an able genealogist. When Cousin John was here he told me, too, of Nancy Hanks' having stayed with an Uncle John Berry in West Virginia the winter before her marriage to Thomas Lincoln, - said he had read it in a newspaper. I happened to have this very clipping to which I thought she referred and I

read it to him. "That's it!" he said. The article had been written some years ago by Ida M. Tarbell, and the uncle was Richard, not John, Berry, and he lived in Kentucky, not Virginia. We must remember, too, that there was no West Virginia in Nancy Hanks-Lincoln's time. Miss Tarbell, since writing the article mentioned above, has retracted her statement that Richard Berry was Nancy Hanks' uncle; she does not know what relation, if any, Richard was to Nancy. Richard is said to have been from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia; our Berrys - Susanna, Benjamin, and Jane - were from the same place. Susanna, as you know, was William Hanks's wife; Benjamin was her crippled bachelor brother, a soldier of the Revolution, who, like William's brother John, made his home with William and Susanna; and Jane was the wife of William Wathews - their daughter, Mary Ann, was the third wife of Caleb Hanks, son of William. Jane and Susanna knew

they were related but did not know just how. They were, of course, both grandmothers of Mary Ann and Caleb Hanks's children. In Dr. J. W. Wayland's History of Rockingham County, Virginia, I find a number of Berrys mentioned in the marriage records and war lists and one Benjamin Berry is named as one of the greatest land owners in 1789, but I can not determine what relation existed between any two of them.

Among her descendants Susanna Berry is described at the time of her marriage to William Hanks, in 1786 or 87, as a Scotch Presbyterian woman of Rockingham county, Virginia. She could not accept William's Quaker beliefs and he could not subscribe to the creed of the Presbyterian church, so they compromised on the Wesleyan faith and later joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Susanna was a well educated woman for her time and a great Bible student. She secretly

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

owing to the interpretations of John Knox and one tradition has it that her hearth was almost broken when two of her five sons became Methodist ministers. The Hardy home in Monroe County, now West Virginia, seems to have been headquarters for all the missionaries that crossed the mountains in those early days. One can easily imagine the religious controversies that were held there too, particularly between the crippled ex-soldiers - one a Presbyterian and the other a Quaker, for all his fine war records. Is it to be wondered at that William finally built each one a log room to himself in opposite corners of the yard in which his own house sat? Dear brave Susanna! It was not enough that she leave her home in Rockingham County, in 1791 and carry her babies, David and Caleb, aged three and two respectively, into a wilderness where she

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

was destined to bear five more babies and there rear these children under the greatest of difficulties, but she must be a nurse and make a home for these crippled brothers. There were no slates in Dixie nor Monroe County homes - these were to come later - and Susanna did all the home work. We who allow our impatience to mother the greater part of our adversities would do well to sit and think of this pioneer woman who spun and wove and tailored, washed and ironed, cooked for eleven over a fire-place, tutored, nursed, and entertained the missionaries. Her life story is paralleled by that of thousands of other pioneer women whose daily lives were integral parts of the great task of opening up the West. When David was thirteen years old and her baby, John, only a few months old, Susanna, overcome by ten years of homesickness, took these two back

with her on horseback to see her old home and visit her people in old Rockingham. In this day of easy travel it is hard even to imagine Susanna's fatigue at the end of the four-day journey, and one may suppose that the rôle of protector had even begun to fall upon stout-hearted David. Would that we knew more of these Berrys of Rockingham county, whom this little party had come to visit! In Wayland's history, in the chapter on roads, I find mention of one David Berry who, on May 27, 1783, was appointed overseer of one section of the new road then being built from the region of Brock's Gap to Harrisonburg. Could this David "Berry" be none other than David Barry, the father of Susanna, and he for whom she had named her eldest son?

For further light on the Berry-Hank-Lincoln question I suggest,

Mr. Gaines, that you get Miss Tarbell's newest Lincoln book - "In the Footsteps of the Lincolns" - and read very carefully the chapter pertaining to the mother of Abraham Lincoln. To my mind that chapter is the finest thing that has ever been written on the subject. For other views on the same subject - very positive ones with very little backing except the determination of the authors - you should read Caroline Hanks Hitchcock's "Nancy Hanks" and Wm E. Barton's "Abraham Lincoln". Mrs. Hitchcock has done a wonderful work in finding the Joseph Hanks will, but her arbitrary arrangement of Hanks - Berry - Shipley lines back of the will has done almost irreparable harm. My small son brought home from the school library a small book called "Nancy Hanks", not long ago, the whole story of which was built around Mrs. Hitchcock's theory of Berry, Shipley, Thompson, Hanks and Mitchell lines. Every child who has passed through the fourth grade in Warren has read this book and, because the story is

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

not labelled "Fairy" and is in print", it is absolutely true to every child who has read it. Dr. Barton is a great Lincoln student, but it takes more than merely a man's convictions to prove the parentage of Nancy Hanks. The fact that Dr. Barton has found mention of a Lucy Hanks in some court records does not for one minute prove that she was the mother of an illegitimate child whom she named Nancy. However, the findings of both Hitchcock and Barton, minus their own opinions, have thrown much light on a subject sadly in need of light.

I do not know the magazine writer, Mrs. Cecilia Farwell, who you say is planning to take up this matter, hoping to interest Miss Tarbell. Has she made a study of the matter, or is she just contemplating it? Miss Tarbell has practically all of Mr. Irving and my Hanks-Hanks data in which she would be at all interested, and as

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

for her taking up the question of Nancy Hanks's parentage, kind and generous lover of Abraham Lincoln that she is, she has been very much "taken up" with it for over thirty years - ever since her first Lincoln articles appeared in McClure's Magazine in the 90's. What I have written you is from one cousin to another and not to be put into print until such time as Mr. Ewing and I feel that certain questions are definitely settled - which may never be. There are already too many guesses and mere surmises in print today concerning the parentage of Nancy Hanks and I should dislike very much to be the instigator of another. I am, however, delighted to find in you another cousin afflicted with the same form of "ancestralitis" as Mr. Ewing and myself and if you are interested in our findings, as a family affair, I shall be pleased to send them from time to time.

No doubt you are wonder-

ing who I am. I am the daughter of Charles Elmer Hawk, brother of Son Hawk of Holden, Missouri. They are sons of George Berry Hawk, who was a son of David, son of William and Susanna. You and I are third cousins. When I was a little girl I met your Aunt Mary and Aunt Alice Knapp at Uncle Lou's. Alice was so delightfully interested in little girls that other people though she were bores that she certainly impressed me. I dearly loved her.

Very Sincerely Yours,

Myra Hawk Rudolph.