

March 15, 1932

Dear Professor Barnes:

I have your letter of February 29th, saying that you have been reading from my little book, "He Knew Lincoln," and that you have been asked whether there was such a storekeeper as Billy Brown and if it were true that Lincoln frequented his store.

Yes, it is all true but perhaps the following paragraphs which headed an article published in Collier's for February 14, 1931 will help you -

"In the thirty-five years that it has been my privilege to keep in touch with the life of Abraham Lincoln, I have known many a man and woman who had been his friend, neighbor, professional or political associate. No one among them all has left with me so strong a sense of intimate, unselfish friendship as the original of the Billy Brown of this story.

"When I knew him in the '90's, he was "keeping drug store" in Springfield, Illinois. Humorous, wise, companionable, Billy, had always drawn to him men of parts, appreciative of native, salty qualities - among them Abraham Lincoln, who in the '40's and '50's dropped in so often that he came to have a special chair by Billy's stove.

"There is hardly an important event in Mr. Lincoln's life on which Billy and I did not touch in our talks, and always he was ready with shrewd and affectionate comments.

"In the present story I have attempted to give his explanation of Mr. Lincoln's retirement from public life in '49, his return in '54."

I suppose you are using this reading unprofessionally that is, not for commercial programs. I speak of this because the rights to the use of "He Knew Lincoln" are tied up in various ways. I am not free to allow its use excepting for non-professional purposes.

Very sincerely yours

Professor John Barnes
Park College
Parkville, Missouri