Lincoln City Mass 4/6 - 18

Miss Tarbell -

Your kind letter of 4/2 - is received, and I hasten to say that Col. McClure has entire liberty to use what I have said as to the Lincoln-Todd wedding in his press notices, with my name attached.

As to the matter of "Sod" cabin, I know that Mr. Lincoln is made to use the word "Sown cabin" in his campaign biography. Yet I do not believe he used the word; but, that the publishers not understanding the meaning of "Sod" cabin, used the word "Sown".

I have had an annoying experience of the sort myself. Some years ago I was employed by Chas. Scribner's Sons, to write the article "Kansas", for the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Speaking of our Kansas school fund I said: "Two sections of land (1,280 acres) are set apart in each Congressional township for school fund purposes."

Congressional "township" means a surveyed tract six miles square, containing thirty-six sections, each section one mile square - This has been the language of the United States Land Office since the beginning of the land system and system of the territory north west of the ohio ri

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But it did not apply to States east of Ohio, nor south of the Ohio River. —

The eastern publishers, not knowing what Congressional "township" meant, changed the word "town-ship" to district. And I am made to make a false statement. There are over 2,000 Congressional townships in this state; but, at that time, there were only three Congressional districts.

The sentence as I wrote it set apart over 4,000 sections of land for school purposes, but as changed by the publishers, there are but six sections of school lands in the state of Kansas.

The word Sowed or Sown corn refers to the manner of planting — as being scattered broad-cast. This plan was not practicable with new tough sod and was never attempted.

If scattered in the grass before plowing, the corn would be covered by a tough sod, 4 to 6 inches thick, and the sprouting grains would, mostly, be smothered — If sowed after plowing there would be no mellow soil on top of the tough leathery sod to cover the corn with, by any usual implement for the covering of broad-cast grain. No one would attempt the broad-cast plan of sowing corn on mild new prairie.

But the word Sod corn refers to the very kind of ground which Mr. Lincoln

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was dealing with. There were two ways of planting the corn. The first was for a boy to follow the plow and "drop the corn" in the newly made furrow, close to the left-hand side, so that the sod from the next furrow would partly cover it, and then the sod from the second subsequent furrow would complete the covering. This plan placed the corn beneath the joint or "seam" where the two sods touched, like the joints in a board floor, and there was no trouble about the young corn getting up through the seam.

For several years I was trained to drop "drop corn" behind the "prairie plow". The orders were: "Drop in the seam, every third round." That was the vernacular statement.

The second plan of planting sod corn was with an ax after the plowing was done. A heavy stroke of the ax made a "gash" in the tough inverted sod; a few grains of corn were dropped in the hole, and a light stroke of the ax, or, a tramp of the foot closed the surface and covered the corn.

You may rest assured that sod corn is correct and that sowed or sown corn is a mistake of some one who did not understand the subject.

I sent my paper on "The Seminal Act of Abraham Lincoln," March 31- in registered package - To Col S.S. McClure.

Very Cordially - John Davis -

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