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Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 East Nineteenth St.,
New York, N.Y.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

I wish I could answer your query about the surname of Martha, the wife of Samuel Lincoln, the Hingham settler. I have searched everywhere that I could think of for it without success. It may be discovered sometime in a land or probate record, but too late, I fear, for my use in a Lincoln genealogy, which I am about to publish.

I am sorry to say that I am obliged to modify my faith in the accuracy of Mrs. Hitchcock's conclusions as to the parentage of Nancy Hanks, the wife of Thomas Lincoln. I have always regretted that she did not give her authorities for her statements and now that they are being questioned it is most unfortunate that she did not do so. I called on her recently to ask for her original papers but she said they were where she could not get at them, but it appeared from her conversation that her sole authority for the parentage and birth of Nancy was Mrs. Vawter, who is now deceased. I have learned that Mrs. Vawter's papers are probably in the possession of her daughter, who is now in Europe working for the Red Cross.

I have no desire to re-open the question of Nancy Hanks' parentage but I shall be obliged to refer to Mrs. Hitchcock's book as an attempt to prove Nancy's parentage, but without sufficient evidence to make it certain. I had accepted Mrs. Hitchcock's book, as you did, with ~~entire~~ ^{active} confidence in its accuracy and had written my account of the family on that basis. I shall now be obliged to re-write it with some modifications.

The conditions in Kentucky at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries are most unsatisfactory for genealogical study. There were few Bible records kept, for the reason that few could read and fewer could write. The Court and County records are the only reliable authorities and they are far from satisfactory. Family tradition, the worst possible authority, was evidently relied upon by Mrs. Vawter and is now being used to disprove her. We will have to make the best of a bad case.

I shall be very glad to hear further from you.

Yours very truly

Waldo Lincoln