Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

122 E. Morton Ave.,
Jacksonville, Ill.,
Feb. 8, 1934.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
New York, N.Y. - (2 grios)

Dear Miss Tarbell:-

When the boy brought my Liberty last night, I immediately dived into your piece about Lincoln. You could probably pick up a lot of data on him here in Jacksonville. Write to Mr. E. A. Olds, J. Journal-Courier Co. He has a home-made gavel used here by Lincoln. It's also for sale. He can give the history of it and when and where used.

I have something, too, and I'd like to sell it for $150.00 to some collector. It's a 12" X 16" unsigned oil portrait of Lincoln. Bust size, full-face view with beard. ½" J torn in left end of tie and patched on back; otherwise fine. It's impossible to trace, but is old. The canvas has that irregularity of weave found in home-spun. Some threads stand out bold and there are tiny tufts of fiber here and there. The frame is white pine stretched with thin wedges driven in the corners.

This painting was owned by the late Emanuel Mendonsa, Portuguese, who dropped dead a couple of years ago. I found it in his room on the second floor above an ancient drug store in an old part-2-story and part-3-story brick building here on N. Main st. ½ block north of the public square. It housed a rooming house

over:-

in the Sixties. The late owner's brother, Joe, viper, froze to death in this old drug store, where he lived, during the cold snap last Feb. I bought the painting, black with dirt and flyspecks, from the administrator of the estate. He knows nothing about it.

This building stands ½ block north of the site of the old Park Hotel (now occupied by Montgomery Ward) where Lincoln usually stopped on his numerous trips here (35 miles west of Springfield.) It may have been painted at the Park hotel and carried to Mrs. Moss' rooming house, and Lincoln may have put up at the latter place. (The drug store was owned in the '60's by a Dr. C. J. Lucas. And passed on to these Mendonca boys.)

In Lincoln's time there were many portrait painters. Some were poor and put their name on every one they turned out. Others were so adept at their art that they didn't take their work seriously enough to sign it. This portrait is as fine as a colored photo. The brush marks are small and fine and don't show at all in his face. Someone said there was too much color in his face, as he had a sallow complexion. Maybe the painter "doctored" up his face as a photographer will re-touch out lines in a negative.

There was such a sameness in Lincoln's dress at all times that there could be any number of portraits and photographs which would look like copies of one another and still all be originals. So I don't think this is necessarily a copy just because it is unsigned. Gilbert Stewart didn't sign his work, either.

Yours sincerely,

Ted J. Tyrell.

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