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SOUTHWESTERN INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1920, JOHN E. IGLEHART, PRESIDENT EMERITUS

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917 Citizens Bank Bldg.,
Evansville, Indiana,

May 1, 1925.

Miss Ida Tarbell,
130 East Nineteenth Street,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

By this mail I send you a copy of the last number of the Indiana Magazine of History, which contains a fine poem by Albion Fellows Bacon, and a paper by Mrs. Bess V. Ehrmann of Rockport, on the subject of the Lincoln Inquiry which, somewhat more definitely defined, means research work relating to Abraham Lincoln in Indiana, and particularly his environments in Southwestern Indiana from 1816 to 1830, the unwritten chapter of his life. You are the only historian who has shown proper interest in this matter so far as I know, unless it be Senator Beveridge, who is giving the matter a great deal of attention, but so far as printed work is concerned you have dealt with this subject in the broadest possible manner.

Our Society is troubled a little with rivalry in this field. There is a disposition on the part of certain professionals to supervise, and without any authority whatever to assume the responsibility of putting limitations upon the work and the workers of this Society, and even seeking to minimize the value of our work, and the class of persons referred to is not large but quite influential in the historical field and in a way I have had to give battle and fight for the independence of this Society, and without any conceit I can say that I have never won a more signal victory than I have in defending the right of this Society to do its work in its own way without any limitations and without any preconceived idea other than to write the unwritten chapter in the life of the people of Southwestern Indiana, the heroic pioneers, in which both of my parents and their parents were included, and as a corollary to this work I have been driven with irresistible force to deal with the unwritten chapter in the life of Abraham Lincoln.

Our Society is attracting a great deal of attention, and the maxim laid down by me that the unwritten chapter in the life of Abraham Lincoln cannot be written properly until the unwritten chapter in the life of the people of

Southwestern Indiana where his environments were is written, is but the expression of a self-evident truth, which I announced, explaining to our workers why there was no inconsistency between the work of this Society which relates to the history of the people of Southwestern Indiana and the work of the Lincoln historians or investigators in the life of Lincoln in Indiana which I feared in the beginning would overshadow the primary work of this Society. This is fully explained by me in my published addresses. Unfortunately, the mania for writing a history of Lincoln has become very general, and you would be surprised to find the call that is made upon us and me in particular for aid and information.

The spirit of rivalry mentioned exists not only with a certain small professional element, which considers itself elected to direct the historical work in Indiana, but even in more offensive form with people who are writing or have in fact completed a history of Abraham Lincoln and who have dealt with the life of Abraham Lincoln in Indiana in a most incomplete way. The maxim above mentioned which I have laid down makes itself-evident that the time has not yet come to write a full and accurate history of Lincoln's life in Indiana. You are the only historian I have talked with who has, so far, recognized this view. You have done it, and this Society will make the propositions so clear that everyone will have to accept it, but meanwhile I have been personally pestered as has been this Society by some of these parties who have a completed history of Abraham Lincoln concealed or in the hands of the publisher where the life of Lincoln in Indiana is the same wearied repetition for the two hundredth time, and written either from the Kentucky view point or theIllinois view point, leaving Lincoln's life in Indiana a mere parenthesis. I have so far been able to take care of this element, and have faith that I will do it in the future. The entire Society is behind me; we have a splendid corps of workers selected from our ablest people, and we are having fine meetings.

Judge Kiper is our newly elected president, and our

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Miss Ida Tarbell,
#3,
May 1, 1925.

program for the 27th of May at Newburgh, where I have my country home, is full for good Lincoln material.

I am interested in having you read Mrs. Ehrmann's paper. Confidentially it was prepared at my suggestion so as to include in a limited compass and in one place what is substantially an index of our work up to this time. My English Settlement article, and several others, were prepared before the organization of this historical society, but our work, which you fully understand, will I think within a couple of years, at the rate we are going, be complete enough to leave no question about the correctness of our view and the correctness of your view as to the value and result of our work.

We would be delighted to have you attend our meeting here on the 27th of May. Do you ever come to Chicago, or in this section? If you do, let me know in advance. There are some things of interest I could tell you that I do not care to put in a letter.

Sincerely yours,

John E. Iglehart

JEI:MM

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