

January 20, 1923

Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock,
Boston, Mass.

Dear Mrs. Hitchcock:

When I saw you in Boston the other day, and was so mortified, believe me, not to recognize you (though you looked so young and blooming, how was one to recognize you after all these years?) I thought I should write you immediately, but I have been very much occupied and unable to do so.

The particular thing that I wanted to ask you was whether or no you have, where you could put your hands upon it, the letter or letters from Joseph Hanks' grandchildren. The point is just this. You remember that I read the manuscript for your book, and also that we decided to cut from it a good many extracts from letters, to make the story simpler. One of these extracts was somehow or other preserved among my old Lincoln papers. It gives a quotation from a letter from grandchildren of Joseph Hanks leaving near Quincy, Ill., in which they tell of hearing Joseph Hanks talk about his sister Nancy and telling of visits of Abraham Lincoln to Joseph Hanks. I would like to get my hands on these letters.

One reason that I want to do so is because I had, some years ago, a correspondence with Mr. J. M. Hanks of Florence, Colo., a grandson of Joseph's. I have a letter from his mother, and I have, too, a photograph which they sent me of Joseph Hanks and his wife Polly Young. You and I of course believe that this Joseph Hanks was the brother of Nancy. I want to publish this picture with the testimony of these children and grandchildren of his, their story of hearing their father and grandfather talk about a sister Nancy.

If you have anything you can give me on this point I shall be most glad.

How about the Hanks genealogy? Are you going to finish it? You certainly ought to do it. The Rev. E. Barton of Chicago is hinting at dark revelations pretty soon, declaring that he is certain that he has something that proves that Nancy Hanks was the illegitimate daughter of a Lucy Hanks as Mr. Herndon claimed. But he certainly must bring out some stronger evidence than has yet been brought out to change my opinion. I will be very grateful if you will let me hear from you at your convenience.