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May 4, 1993

Mr. Eric Sakach
Investigator
Humane Society of the United States
P.O. Box 417220
Sacramento, California 95841

Dear Mr. Sakach:

Recollections contained in the William H. Herndon interviews with New Salem, Illinois residents indicate that cock fighting occurred in this village. None that I know of indicate that Abraham Lincoln was involved with cock fighting in any way. His love of animals is well documented and it seems unlikely that Lincoln would endorse cock fighting. In his autobiography, Lincoln indicates that he gave up hunting after shooting a turkey. The statement that Lincoln earned the moniker "Honest Abe" from judging cock fights is also incorrect. The nickname originated in New Salem but was widely used in the 1860 presidential contest. Lincoln's honesty was revealed in his dealings as a storekeeper. He once walked three miles to return money he had overcharged a woman in his store. There is also a recollection in the Herndon interviews that claims Lincoln received the title "Honest Abe" because of his fairness in judging horse races at Thomas Watkins' track outside New Salem. Regardless, the moniker is in no way related to cock fighting. In short, I know of no documentary evidence to indicate Lincoln ever participated in or endorsed cock fighting.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Schwartz

Thomas F. Schwartz
Curator, Henry Horner Lincoln Collection
(217) 785-7954

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