Ford Motor Company

FACTORY AND GENERAL OFFICES
DEARBORN, MICH.

ALEXANDRIA, VA. December 30, 1937.

#8.

Mr. F. L. Black,
The Edison Institute,
Dearborn, Michigan.

Dear Mr. Black:-

Believe I am making some progress on the John Wilkes Booth matter, but the information requested in your letter of December 24th may take a little time to gather. We are attempting to have one of our Zone Manager's, working in the Virginia territory, do what he can to check on the Shortridge and Garrett family history. If I cannot locate files of newspapers for 1858 and 1873, together with Ezekiel's "History of the Jews in Richmond", in the Congressional Library in Washington, it is my purpose to visit Richmond as soon as possible after the first of the year.

Writer had another talk with Mr. Pitts in the latter's office yesterday afternoon. He appeared considerably wrought up over the contents of Izola Forrester Page's book;particularly the references to his own activities. If I were called upon to quote Mr. Pitts' feelings in the matter, the most charitable expression would be to say "the book is teeming with inaccuracies". He was quite busy so I did not wish to interfere by requesting permission to inspect the affidavits, etc. at just that particular time. As you know, all Government departments just now are very busy assembling data dealing with appropriations to be requested of Congress, which meets in Washington next week, so I suggested that we get together the early part of next week, if convenient with him.

I believe you could secure a good story about this whole Wilkes Booth matter if you would be kind enough to write to Mr.Pitts direct. I have a "hunch" that he would like to unburden himself - particularly as the Government certainly does not intend to enter this controversial subject. The Government has the evidence, conclusive evidence that it captured and killed John Wilkes Booth, but the office of Judge Advocate General of the Army is leaving all of the back-scratching to the Izola Forrester-Otto Eisenschiml clan. You might be interested, too, in reading Mr. Eisenschiml's book review, of Izola Forrester's book "This One Mad Act", which appeared in the Chicago "Daily News" of Wednesday, December 8, 1937. Mr.Pitts had the clipping and showed it to me. You might be interested also in knowing that Mr. Eisenschiml heads his column "As One Expert to Another"! From Mr. Pitts' point of view, neither is an expert.

I called upon Mr. Garrett at the Ford Museum yesterday afternoon but, unfortunately, found him out. He is also Superintendent of the Lee Mansion at Arlington Cemetary, Va., and he was there yesterday. In addition to the photographs, I intend requesting the loan of the book by Peterson Brothers, to enable you to take photostats, if it can be done. The book is Government property and there may be some "red-tape". Intend seeing Mr. Garrett either

this afternoon or tomorrow.

Have you any idea how far back the picture of the Booth diary, to which you referred in your letter of December 21st, appeared in "Harpers" magazine? Will try and check on that at the Congressional Library, also.

Am endeavoring to secure the services of an official photographer connected with the U. S. Signal Corps to do our work in photographing the exhibits, affidavits, etc., in the possession of the Judge Advocate General. As you know, these are not permitted to leave the possession of the Custodian, even temporarily for photographic purposes.

The old bookstore operated by Mr. Coleman, to which you referred in your letter of Dec. 21st, is no longer in existance in Washington. All of the old buildings from the Capitol, on Pennsylvania Avenue, up to the old Ford Motor Co. building at John Marshall Place (4th Street) have been demolished. The north side of the Avenue is now a series of parks, while on the south side all property from the Capitol up to 15th Street is Federal, the old stores, houses, etc., having been demolished and new Governmental buildings or parks constructed. I have checked other bookstores, particularly those dealing in used, or second-hand books, but have been unable to locate Peterson & Bros. book. There is a possibility that Mr. H. L. Garrett, Superintendent, Lincoln Museum, #511 10th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., might be able to loan us the copy for a very short time, to permit of your having such portions of it as you wish photostated. However, to accomplish that purpose, it would be well, if I might suggest it, for you to write Mr. Garrett direct, thanking him for his courtesies to me, requesting the loan of the book and explaining to him that the investigation being undertaken by writer at your request, has for its purpose the function of a Museum - that it is not your intention to prepare and publish articles in newspapers or periodicals, etc. Such information will confirm present oral understanding between Mr. Garrett and myself.

The same thing might also be done with Mr. Pitts. I would also suggest that you write him, addressing Mr. Edwin B. Pitts, Chief Clerk, Office of Judge Advocate General, War Department, Room 402 Otis Building, #810 18th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. I feel sure Mr. Pitts will set you straight on this Knights of the Golden Circle matter and on other matters covered by Izola Forrester, provided his comments ARE NOT embodied in any newspaper or magazine article. I have explained to Mr. Pitts that in event he would kindly express himself in writing on this, to us, important matter, it was my thought that you would consider framing his letter so that visitors to Greenfield Village may have opportunity of adding to their individual store of knowledge. Perhaps you may feel that I have assumed too much and have exceeded my authority. If so, let me say that it has been occasioned by my real interest in this whole matter and I do want you to secure every possible bit of real information obtainable from available sources.

If you should decide to write letters to the gentlemen whom I have named, won't you kindly furnish me with copies of such letters for my file?

Very truly yours,
FORD MOTOR COMPANY,

J. W. Connolly
Traffic Department.

JWC/c