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December 1, 1942

Mr. Fred L. Black
Box 46 Monroe Boulevard Station
Dearborn, Michigan

Dear Mr. Black:

In an article that you wrote in the Dearborn Independent March 21, 1925 concerning the escape and capture of John Wilkes Booth, you stated that a book on this subject by Finas L. Bates, published in 1907, sold 75,000 copies.

Do you recall your source of information for this number of sales? That a book of this nature should rank in sales with the best Lincoln books is an interesting commentary.

Yours very truly,

J. Monaghan

Editor

December 4, 1942.

Mr. J. Monaghan,
Illinois State Historical Library,
Springfield, Illinois.

Dear Mr. Monaghan:

Finas L. Bates published his "Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth" in a paper edition and also cloth-bound. As I remember, the paper edition sold for 75¢ or a $1.00. The body of David George, which he exhibited as the body of Booth throughout the South and South-West, was accompanied with stacks of these books. A charge was made to see the body, and the barker also plugged the books.

Bates told me that 75,000 copies had been published and most of them sold in this manner. Others were sold through news stands and book stores. He had more than one printing made, but I have no record of the various printing concerns who did his work.

I had a number of conversations with Bates in 1920 and 1921. I tried to keep fairly careful notes on what he told me. I still have these in a mass of Lincoln material, but doubt if I will have an opportunity to go over it for some time.

I am inclined to take Bates' word in this connection. He was discussing the number of copies sold at one time and complained about how little he got out of it since, he said, so many of the people to whom he leased the body for exhibition tried to cheat on the sale of books. Naturally, he was dealing with a rather shady crowd.

The best Lincoln books are sold in the ordinary way, and Bates' book would not have been a best-seller had he used regular channels.

Yours very truly,

flb/ms

Fred L. Black.