

2. *Horace White to WHH*

Chicago, May 17. 1865.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 15th instant is received. The apostrophe to the Declaration of Independence, to which you refer, was written by myself from a vivid recollection of Mr Lincoln's speech at Beardstown, August 12th 1858. On the day following the delivery of the speech, as Mr Lincoln & myself were proceeding by steamer from Beardstown to Havana I said to him that I had been greatly impressed by his concluding remarks of the day previous, & that if he would write them out for me I felt confident their publication would be highly beneficial to our cause as well as honorable to his own fame. He replied that he had but a faint recollection of any portion of the speech — that, like all his campaign speeches, it was necessarily extemporaneous, & that its good or bad effect depended upon the inspiration of the moment. He added that I had probably overestimated the value of the remarks referred to. In reply to my question whether he had any objection to my writing them out from memory and putting them in the form of a verbatim report, he said "none at all". I accordingly did so. I felt confident then, & I feel equally assured now, that I transcribed the peroration with absolute fidelity as to ideas, and with commendable fidelity as to language. I certainly aimed to reproduce his exact words, and my recollection of the passage as spoken was very clear. After I had finished writing I read it to Mr Lincoln. When I had finished the reading he said: "Well, those are my views, & if I said anything on the subject I must have said substantially that, but not nearly so well as that is said." I remember this remark quite distinctly, and if the old steamer *Editor* is still in existence I could show the place where we were sitting. Having secured his assent to the publication I forwarded it to our paper, but inasmuch as my report of the Beardstown meeting had been already mailed, I incorporated the remarks on the Declaration of Independence in my letter from Lewistown two or three days subsequently.¹

Although a matter of little moment I have given you the facts thus in detail because you seem specially interested in it. Looking at the passage now I discover that it is not exactly in Mr Lincoln's style, which I deem unfortunate as it fails to convey the tremendous *directness* which he always gave to his utterances on those occasions when he rose to impassioned eloquence. And I will say here that, in such moments, I have never heard his equal, & I believe I have listened at times to nearly all the public speakers of considerable reputation in this country. I cannot conceive that Patrick Henry, Mirabeau, or Vergniaud ever surpassed him on those occasions when his great soul was inspired with the thought of human rights and Divine justice. I presume that your suspicions in regard to the passage on the Declaration of Independence have been aroused by noticing a slight aberration from his style, as I do not remember ever having related these facts before, although they have often recurred to me as I have seen the peroration resuscitated again &

1. For Lincoln's apostrophe on the Declaration of Independence, as printed in White's paper, the *Press and Tribune*, see *CW* 2:545–47. This account suggests that the apostrophe was delivered in Lewistown on August 17, 1858, rather than at Beardstown on August 12, as White indicates, and is signed "G.P."