

The Lincoln Assassination:
Facts, Fiction and Frankly Crazyiness
Class 1: Assassination 101

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Intro

You might think you know
what happened on 10th
Street NW in DC on April
14, 1865, but.....

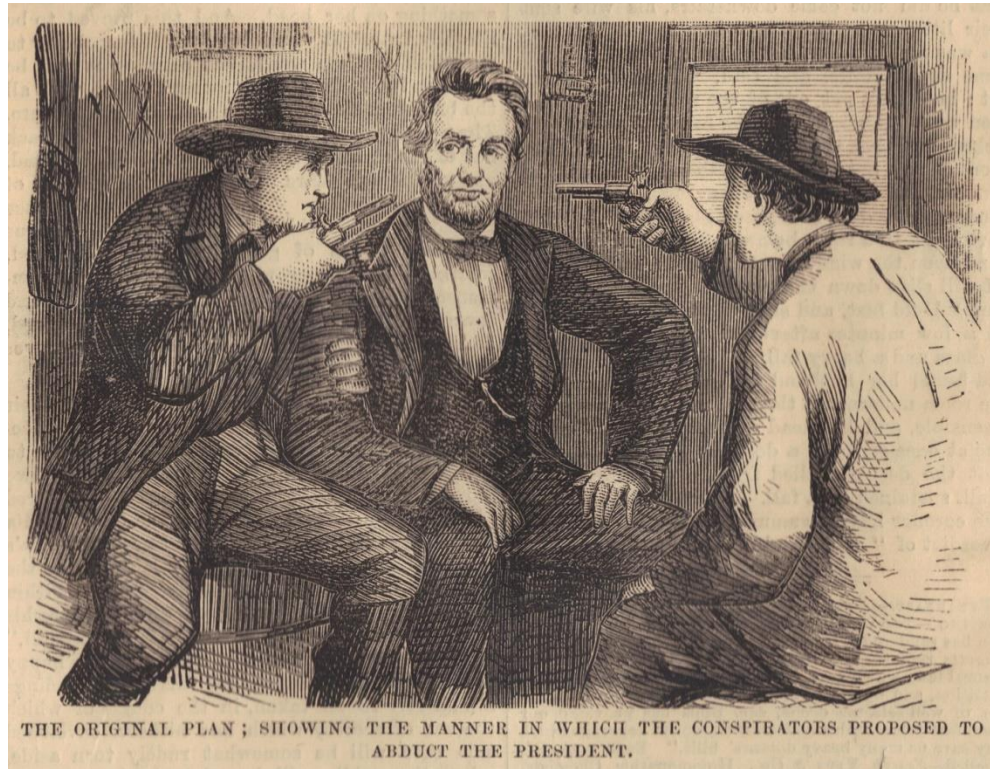
Structure of the class

1. Lincoln Assassination 101
2. Dramatis Personae
3. You want conspiracies – we've got conspiracies
4. The Lincoln Assassination in culture

This class

1. The Kidnap plot
2. The Assassination
3. Booth Escape
4. Trial and Executions

Kidnap Plot



First – let's look back

- August 1864:
 - Grant has, at the cost of thousands of casualties, forced Lee into a siege at Petersburg
 - Sherman has marched from Chattanooga to Atlanta, but has been unable to take the city

First – let's look back

- August 1864:
 - Lincoln has been renominated, to face George McClellan
 - However, he is pessimistic about his chances for reelection

The kidnap plot develops

- Booth recruits two Maryland friends, Sam Arnold and Michael O'Laughlen, into the kidnap plot
- The idea is that if they can kidnap Lincoln and bring him to the South they can exchange him for Confederate POWs
- Earlier in 1864, realizing the South's manpower shortage, General Grant has suspended POW exchanges

The kidnap plot develops

- There was no Secret Service as such in the 1860's and Lincoln consistently refused bodyguards
- He often went to the Soldiers Home in northern DC, riding the roads north alone

The kidnap plot develops

- The idea was to grab Lincoln on one of these rides, and bring him south through Maryland to Virginia
- However, by the time they were able to put this plan into action, Lincoln was now accompanied by a company of Cavalry.

Fall of 1864

- During the fall of 1864, there were a number of sweeping victories by the North
 - September 1864 – Atlanta is ours, and fairly won
 - October 1864 – Sheridan's ride and the victory at Cedar Creek

Fall of 1864

- As a result, Lincoln is overwhelming reelected in 1864
- As the cartoon to the right shows, long Lincoln gets even longer
- The South thus now knows the North is in for the long haul



Kidnap plot

- In October 1864, shortly before the election, Booth visits with Confederate Secret Service agents in Montreal
- No doubt the kidnap plot is discussed

Kidnap plot

- In January 1865, the plotters plan to kidnap Lincoln while he is attending a play at Ford's theater
- Arnold and McLaughlen drop out at this point, calling such a plot suicidal
- By now, Booth has enlisted other conspirators
- However, the weather that night is stormy, so the Lincolns stay home

Kidnap plot

- A second plot is hatched later in 1865, when Lincoln will be attending a play at a military hospital
- Again, the plot is foiled when Lincoln does not go to the hospital but rather attends a ceremony to receive Confederate battle flags

Assassination





Lincoln's Second Inaugural – March 4, 1865

Lincoln's Second Inaugural – March 4, 1865

- Booth attends the Inaugural with a ticket provided by Lucy Hale, the daughter of a US Senator and one of Booth's many girlfriends
- Booth early in April said: *What an excellent chance I had to kill the President, if I had wished, on Inauguration Day!*

April 9, 1865

- The siege of Petersburg is finally broken after the Battle of Five Forks on April 1, 1865, and Lee abandons the trenches and moves west
- In perhaps the classic example of pursuit, Grant and the Union Army follow Lee west, finally trapping him at Appomattox Court House
- There, Lee surrenders the Army of Northern Virginia on April 9, Palm Sunday.



April 1865

- While there are still Confederate armies in the field, Lee's surrender signals the imminent end of the war
- Wild celebrations begin in the North

April 1865

- On Sunday the 9th, Lincoln, in response to requests for a speech, asks the band to play “Dixie” as it is now a prize of war.
- Two days later, on Tuesday, April 11, he gives a longer speech at the White House, noting that educated blacks or those that fought in the Union Army should be given the vote



April 1865

- In the audience is Booth, who shouts to his friend Lewis Powell *That means n****r citizenship. Now, by God, I'll put him through. That is the last speech he will ever make.*
- And in fact it was



April 1865

- By now, Booth has assembled a motley band of associates, who meet regularly at Mary Surratt's boarding house at 541 H St NW
- These include
 - John Surratt Jr (In Elmira NY in April 1865)
 - Lewis Paine, a former Confederate soldier
 - David Herold, a pharmacist's clerk from DC
 - George Atzerodt, a boatman from Port Tobacco MD
 - Arnold and McLaughlen have dropped out after the failure of the kidnap plot

April 14, 1865

- Lincoln holds a cabinet meeting that morning at 11 AM
- Afterwards, he takes a carriage ride with his wife Mary, and they discuss their post Presidential life, to include trips to the Pacific and the Holy Land
- Mary later says she never saw Lincoln more cheerful
- Later that afternoon, they decide to attend the performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's theater

April 14, 1865

- A messenger is dispatched to Ford's for tickets, and to allow Ford's to advertise the Lincolns' attendance
- It is Good Friday, normally one of the slowest days on the theater calendar
- The Fords quickly assemble fly bills, and notify the afternoon papers

April 14, 1865

- Booth, like many actors, has no permanent residence, and mail is sent to him at various theaters
- On that Friday afternoon, while picking up his mail at Fords', he finds out about the Lincolns attendance
- He then springs into action

April 14, 1865

- The Lincolns plan to invite another couple to the theater, but are turned down one after another
 - General and Mrs. Grant – feud between the wives
 - Secretary of War Stanton – ditto
 - Major Thomas Eckert – Stanton had work for him

April 14, 1865

- The Lincolns plan to invite another couple to the theater, but are turned down one after another
 - Speaker of the House Schuyler Colfax – leaving for the Pacific the next day
 - Captain Robert Lincoln – wanted to spend time with friends
 - And a least half a dozen others

April 14, 1865

- Finally, the Lincolns succeed in getting Clara Harris, the daughter of Senator Ira Harris of New York, and her step brother/fiancée
- By the time they leave the White House, the play has already begun

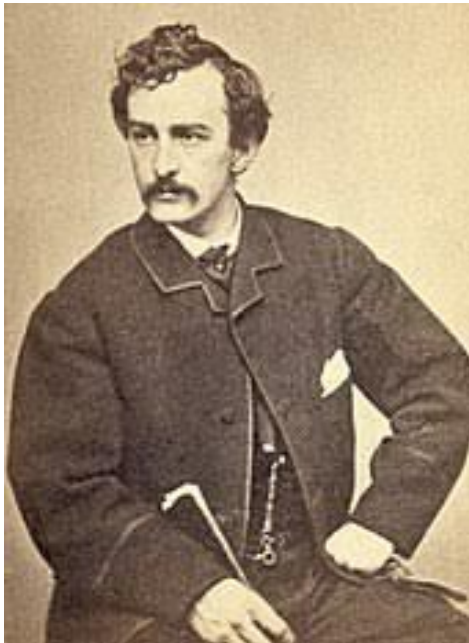


April 14, 1865

- Meanwhile, Booth is meeting with his conspirators and putting the final touch on his plan
- It is astonishing to think that the entire plan to assassinate the President and other high ranking officials came together in a matter of hours

Roles

John Wilkes Booth – Kill the President



Lewis Powell – Kill the Secretary of State



Roles

**George Atzerodt – Kill the
VP**



**David Herold – guide
Powell**



Attempt on VP Johnson

- In 1865, there was no formal residence for the VP, so Johnson was staying at the Kirkwood house, a hotel
- Earlier that day, Booth sent up a card to Johnson's secretary "Don't want to disturb you. Are you at home? J. Wilkes Booth"
- Was this an attempt to implicate Johnson?

Attempt on VP Johnson

- Atzerodt was to kill Johnson at 10:15, so that the assassinations all took place at the same time.
- He checked into the hotel, and obtained a room directly above Johnson's
- He spent the evening drinking and trying, unsuccessfully, to build up his nerve

Attempt on VP Johnson

- Failing in that, he left the Kirkwood and spent the night in another hotel
- Johnson was never aware of how close he came to being killed

Attempt on Secretary of State Seward

- Shortly before, on April 5, Seward had been in a carriage accident, sustaining a broken jaw, a concussion and a broken arm
- On the night of April 14, he was confined to bed in his house on Lafayette Square, just across from the White House

Attempt on Secretary of State Seward

- Herold, as directed, led Powell to the Seward House
- Powell knocked on the door, saying that he was from a pharmacy with medicine for Seward
- When the butler answered the door and offered to take the medicine to Seward, Powell said he had to, and pushed his way upstairs

Attempt on Secretary of State Seward

- At the top of the staircase, Powell was met by Frederick Seward, his son and Asst Secretary
- When Fanny, the Seward's daughter came out, Powell now knew where Seward was

Attempt on Secretary of State Seward

- Powell cocked his pistol to shoot young Seward, but when it misfired, he clubbed Seward over his head, rendering him unconscious
- He then entered Seward's room, and tried to stab Seward, who was protected by his neck brace

Attempt on Secretary of State Seward

- Hearing the screams, Seward's other son, Augustus, and an Army Sgt tried to stop the bloodletting
- Powell then rushed back down the stairs screaming "I'm mad! I'm mad!"

Attempt on Secretary of State Seward

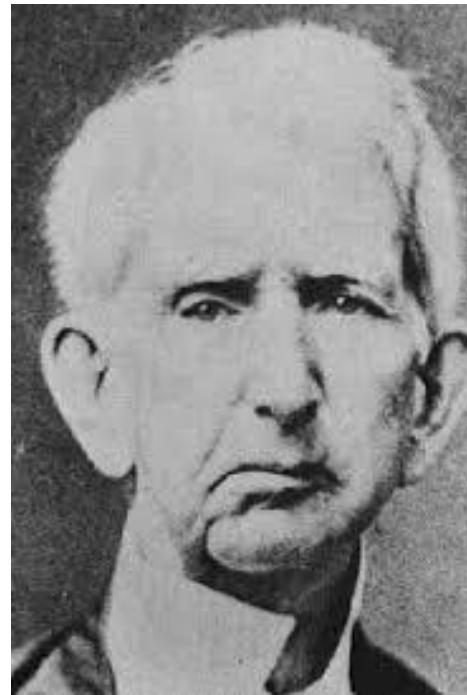
- Herold, hearing all the noise, abandoned Powell and fled
- Powell escaped, but not knowing the city, ending up hiding in a cemetery for two days.
- Seward survived, but upon seeing him after the assassination attempt, his doctor said "he looked like an exsanguinated corpse"

Seward – before and after the attempt

Seward – pre April 1865



Seward – post April 1865



Lincoln Assassination

- As noted, the Lincoln party arrived after the play had begun
- Upon arrival, the orchestra struck up “Hail to the Chief” and Lincoln acknowledged the applause of the crowd before settling back in his rocking chair

Lincoln Assassination

- Booth had been at the theater earlier and bore a hole into the door leading into the President's box, and left a stick in the vestibule at that time
- He entered the vestibule at about 1015 and wedged the stick to block entry
- The Metropolitan Police Officer assigned to Lincoln, John Parker, left for a drink at intermission and was not back at his post at this time

Lincoln Assassination

- On the other side of the door, Lincoln took Mary's hand in his.
- Teasingly, Mary said "What will Miss Harris think of my hanging on to you so"
- With a smile, Lincoln replied, "She won't think anything about it."
- Those were the last words Lincoln ever spoke

Lincoln Assassination

- Booth, armed with a derringer and a knife, waited until Henry Hawk, playing Asa Trenchard, was alone on the stage.
- After Mrs. Murchison left in a huff, Asa had the big laugh line of the play:

Don't know the manners of good society? Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal; you sockdologizing old man-trap!

Lincoln Assassination

- Booth then entered the box, fired the derringer into the back of Lincoln's head.
- MAJ Rathbone tried to wrestle Booth, who stabbed the MAJ in the arm down to the bone



Lincoln

Assassination

- After shooting Lincoln, Booth leaped the 10 feet from the box, catching his spur in the flag decorating the front of the box, breaking his ankle
- As he stood on the stage, he shouted out “Sic semper tyrannis! The South is avenged!”



Lincoln

Assassination

- Booth used his intimate knowledge of the backstage to make it to the back alley, where his horse was waiting
- He spurred the horse to begin to make good his escape



Booth Escape



Follow along on the Escape Route Handout

Booth Escape Route Tour

- Twice a year, the Surratt Society has Booth Escape Route tour
- Information about the Surratt Society and the tour are by the sign in sheet
- Be prepared – the tours last 13 hours and involved more than a bit of walking!



Booth Escape

- After he eluded pursuers in Baptist Alley behind Ford's, Booth turned on F Street, skirting past the Capitol and heading for the Navy Yard Bridge.
- The Navy Yard Bridge had been closed during the war, and while it was still guarded, security was lax, and Booth was allowed to pass (after giving his real name)
- Shortly afterwards, Herold crossed, and the two reunited at Soper's Hill in Prince George's County

Booth Escape – Surratt House

- The first stop was the Surratt Tavern, then in Surrattsville, now in Clinton MD
- Herold got off his horse (Booth could not stand because of his injury) and knocked on the door



Booth Escape – Surratt House

- When tavern keeper John Lloyd answered, Herold demanded the items Mary Surratt had left – field glasses, whiskey, and “shooting irons”
- This would become a major issue in Mrs. Surratt’s trial



Booth Escape

– Dr. Mudd

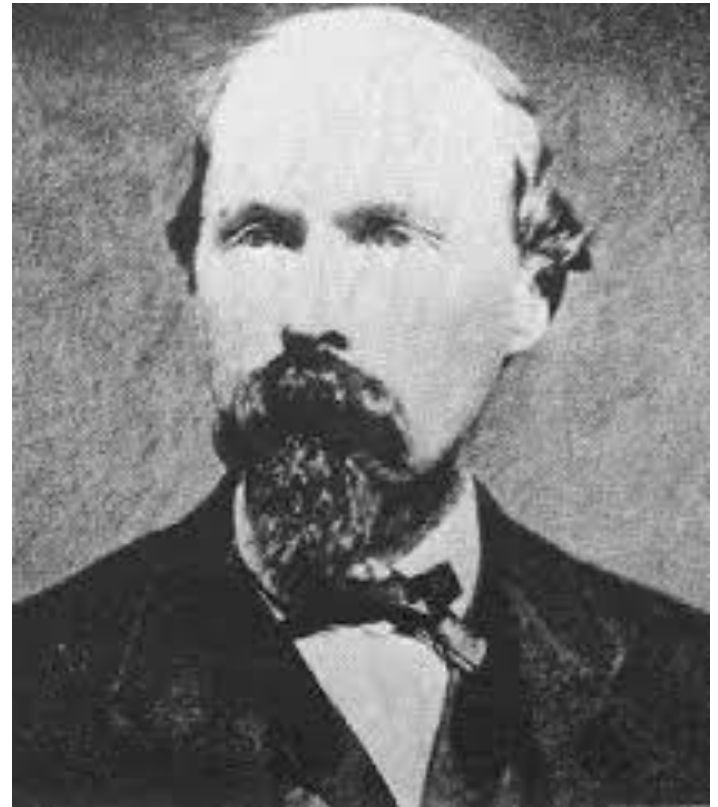
- The next stop, at 4 AM Saturday morning, was at the farmhouse of Dr. Samuel Mudd
- Booth knew Mudd from a horse buying expedition in 1864 (and possibly Mudd's involvement in the kidnap plot)



Booth Escape

– Dr. Mudd

- Mudd (r) set Booth's broken leg, using slats and then with the help of one of his farmhands, designed a crude set of crutches
- Booth then went to sleep in the upstairs bedroom



Booth Escape – Dr. Mudd

- That Saturday, Mudd went to Bryantown to run some errands, and soon found that Lincoln had been shot, and Booth was suspected of being the assassin
- He then returned home and instructed Booth and Herold to leave, telling them to move on to another house along the Confederate line
- On Easter Sunday, Mudd asked his cousin to tell authorities that two men had come to his house, and where they went (the opposite of where Booth and Herold actually went)

Booth Escape – Dr. Mudd

- Mudd's failure to immediately notify authorities and his inconsistent answers shed suspicion on him
- When the authorities came on April 21 to question him further, they found a boot (which Dr. Mudd had cut off to get to the broken bone) with "J. Wilkes" inside the boot
- This was enough to add Mudd to the list of arrested conspirators

Booth Escape

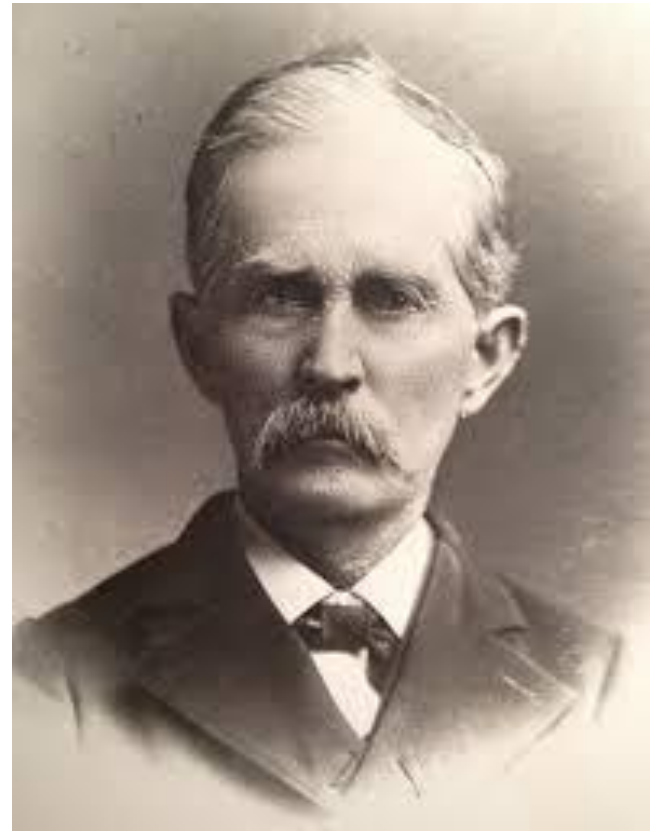
– Samuel Cox

- The next stop for Booth and Herold was the home of Samuel Cox and his son, Samuel Cox Jr.
- Both were members of the Confederate underground
- Cox knew that Thomas Jones was an expert not only on the area, but on crossing the Potomac.
- So that was the fugitives next stop



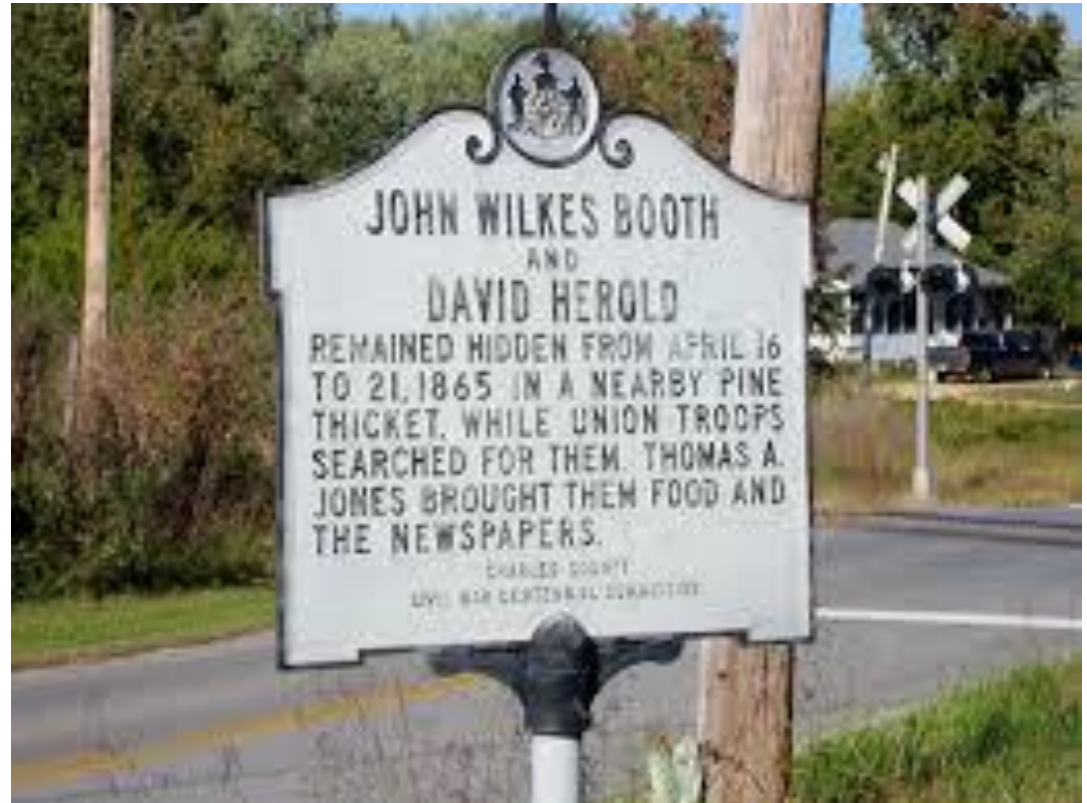
Booth Escape – Thomas Jones

- Jones knew of a way to get Booth and Herold to VA.
- But he came up with an ingenuous plan to keep the pursuers at bay
- He would hide Booth and Herold in a pine thicket, and wait for the pursuit to pass



Booth Escape – Thomas Jones

- Booth and Herold remained hidden in the pine thicket from April 16 to April 21
- During that time, a number of patrols passed
- While Jones brought food and drink, what Booth was most hungry for were newspaper accounts of the assassination



Booth Escape – Thomas Jones

- Much to his amazement, all the newspapers Booth read condemned him for what they called a cowardly act.
- Taking a page from his datebook, Booth replied:

I am here in despair. And why; For doing what Brutus was honored for ... And yet I for striking down a greater tyrant than they ever knew am looked upon as a common cutthroat

Booth Escape – Thomas Jones

- Finally, on the night of April 21, Jones leads the two fugitives to the Potomac, where there is a boat for them to cross.
- Booth has a compass, and a candle, but with Federal boats patrolling the Potomac, he cannot use the candle

Booth Escape – Thomas Jones

- In a pitch black night, Herold rowed towards what he thought was the VA shore, only to find out on the morning of the 22nd that they had rowed back to MD
- The fugitives sought shelter from Col Hughes, the son in law of a Confederate sympathizer, and again crossed the Potomac, landing near Machodoc Creek before dawn on April 23

Booth Escape

– Into Virginia

- Having made it to Virginia, the fugitives met up with Confederate agents, who sent them to the home of Dr. Richard Stuart at Cleydeal House
- Stuart provided them with food, but did not allow them to stay in the his house
- To add insult to injury, the fugitives were sent to the home of a black man to spend the night.



Dr. Stuart

- Not only had Dr. Stuart sent Booth, a white supremacist, to the house of a black man, he had been ungracious in providing dinner
- Booth later wrote a note, signed “Stranger”

...I was sick and tired, with a broken leg...I would not have turned a dog from my door in such a condition. However, you were kind enough to give me something to eat...It is not the substance but the manner in which a kindness is extended that makes one happy in the acceptance thereof. The sauce in meat is ceremony....

Crossing the Rappahannock

- Booth and Herold were taken by the son of the black man south to Port Conway where the ferry across the Rappahannock was
- Here he met a fisherman, William Rollins, who offered to take the fugitives south, but told them they would have to wait until he got his nets in
- This was a tempting offer, since there was a railroad at Bowling Green where Booth and Herold could head further south.

Crossing the Rappahannock

- While Booth and Herold were waiting for Rollins, they met three demobilized Confederate soldiers, Mortimer Ruggles, Absalom Bainbridge and Willie Jett (r)
- Taking them into their confidence, Herold told them they were the assassins of the President



Crossing the Rappahannock

- The Confederate soldiers accompanied Booth and Herold onto a ferry across the Rappahannock
- Their first stop was the home of Sarah Peyton, who, while initially was willing to take the fugitives in, later decided against it since she was a single woman with two strange men.
- Jett then suggested the Garrett Farm, just down the road.



The Garrett Farm

- Here, Herold and Booth said they were Confederate soldiers looking to continue the fight
- They were welcomed into the house, and had a hot meal and a comfortable bed after days of deprivation



The Garrett Farm

- All was going well until a troop of Federals (see below) passed the farm, and Booth and Herold fled to the woods
- Now suspicious, the Garretts refused to let the fugitives sleep in the house, but rather sent them to the barn
- To provide more security, the Garretts locked them in the barn.



The Manhunt

- Meanwhile, Federal authorities in DC got a tip that two men had crossed the Potomac at night and landed in VA
- While it was at the same time Booth and Herold crossed, it was two different men.
- However, this tip would lead to the capture of Booth
- A squad of cavalry under the command of Lt. Edward Doherty was ordered into the field.

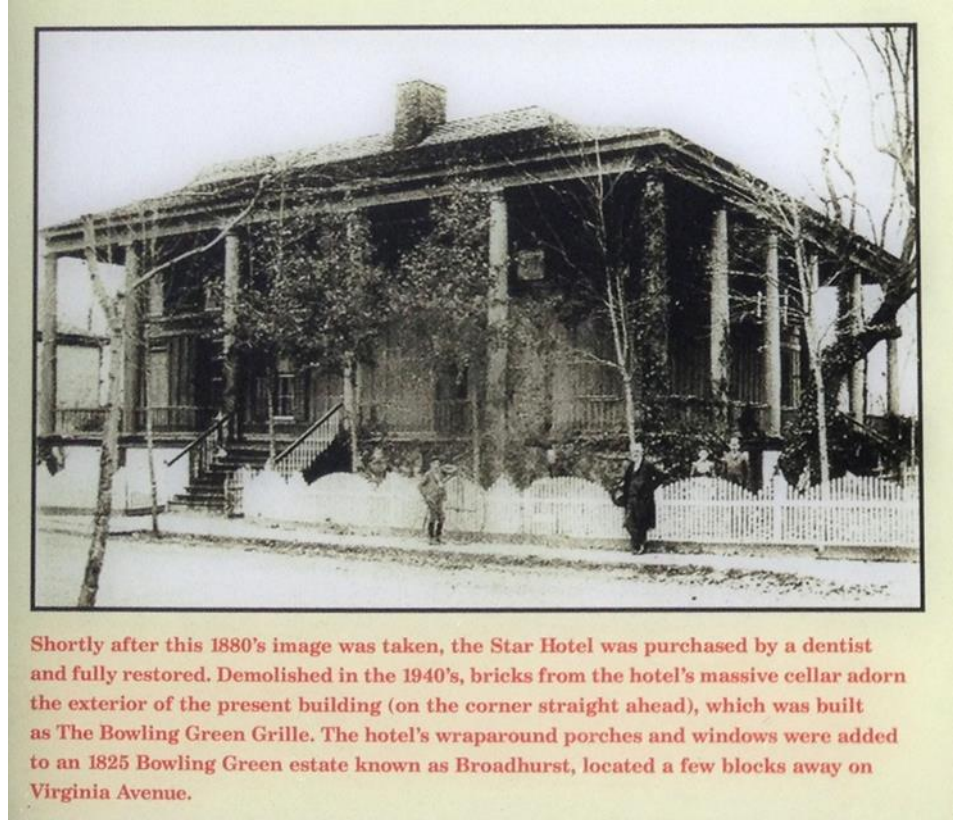


The Manhunt

- Doherty and his men made it to Port Royal, where they interviewed Rollins.
- Rollins told them two men, one with a broken leg, has just passed by
- More importantly, Rollins told Doherty the two men were with a Confederate soldier, Willie Jett

The Manhunt

- It was further reported that Jett was probably at the Star Hotel in Bowling Green
- Jett was wooing Izora Gouldman, the daughter of the hotel owner
- Doherty and his cavalry found Jett there, and under pain of death, Jett revealed that Booth was at the Garrett Farm



Booth – Garrett Farm

- Armed with this knowledge, Doherty and his troopers made haste to the Garrett Farm
- Threatening to string up Papa Garrett, they soon learned the fugitives were in the barn.
- Surrounding the barn, they ordered them to come out.
- Herold decided to surrender, but Booth remained defiant.



Booth – Garrett Farm

- The confrontation moves to a head as Doherty decides to set the barn on fire to force Booth out
- Peering through a slat on the barn, Sgt. Boston Corbett sees Booth raise his rifle
- Corbett then shoots Booth in the neck, and the soldiers drag Booth out of the burning barn



Booth – death

- Booth is brought to the porch of the Garrett farmhouse.
- As a result of the bullet wound to the neck, he is paralyzed from the neck down
- He mutters “tell my mother I died for my country.”



Booth – death

- As dawn broke, Booth prepared to breathe his last.
- He asked the soldiers to hold up his now paralyzed hands
- Looking at them, he made the enigmatic statement “Useless! Useless!” then died.



Booth – death

- But was that Booth that died at the Garrett Farm?
- Stay tuned for Class 3!



Trial and Execution



The Conspirators are arrested

- Dr. Mudd, after his questionable answers, is arrested on April 26
- Ironically, the day that Booth is killed at the Garrett Farm
- Michael O'Laughlen, realizing his danger, surrendered on April 17
- Samuel Arnold was arrested the same day at his job in Hampton Roads

The Conspirators are arrested

- On the night of April 17, police came to Mrs. Surratt's boardinghouse to question and ultimately arrest her
- Unfortunately for him, Lewis Powell chose that exact time to show up at the boardinghouse, and he was also placed under arrest.

The Conspirators are arrested

- George Atzerodt was arrested at the home of his cousin on April 20
- As noted, Herold was captured at the time Booth was killed

The Conspirators are arrested
So by the time Booth died,
all of his conspirators were
already in custody

Trial

- The decision was made to try the conspirators by military commission instead of civil trial.
- The members were all serving officers
- While there was some opposition to such a commission, the AG recommended its use



Trial

- The 1865 commission was cited by the Bush Administration in setting up the Guantanamo tribunals
- Unfortunately (or fortunately) *Ex Parte Milligan* had been decided in the interim, and the Supreme Court said no military tribunals with Congressional approval



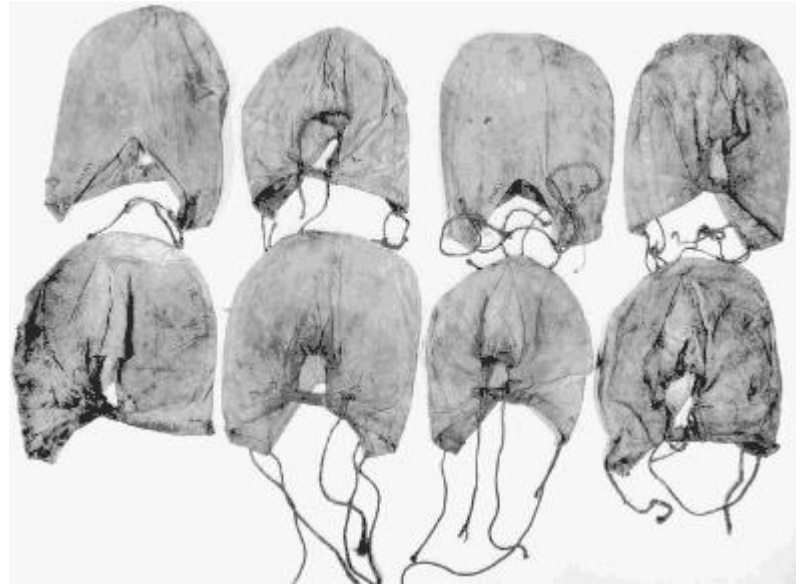
Trial

- Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate General of the Army, served as both
 - Prosecuting Attorney
 - Legal adviser to the Commission
- A conflict if there ever was one!



Trial

- The prisoners were kept under close guard on first the monitor *Montauk* and then at Old Capitol Prison
- Some of the prisoners were shackled to balls and chains, and all the prisoners, with the exception of Mrs. Surratt and Dr. Mudd, were placed in hoods



Trial

- The trial was governed by the “defendant declarations” rule – that the defendants could not testify in federal court
- This was because they had an interest in the case and therefore incompetent to testify
- The rule was not changed until 1934

Trial

- One of the government's goals during the trial was to connect the assassination with the Confederate Government
- They failed in this, but the idea of a Confederate conspiracy survived the trial
- More about that in class 3!

Trial

- Arnold and O'Laughlen conceded that they were involved in the kidnap plot
- However, their defense counsels argued that they dropped out of the plot before it turned from kidnapping to murder

Trial

- Mrs. Surratt was considered to have kept “the nest that hatched the egg.”
- More importantly, John Lloyd, the manager of Surratt’s Tavern, testified that she had prepared items for Booth to pick up after the assassination, particularly “shooting irons.”

Trial

- Dr. Mudd, as his defenders have continued for more than 150 years, argued that he was just doing his duty as a doctor when he treated Booth
- However, the prosecution provided evidence clearly establishing a prior relationship between Booth and Dr. Mudd

The sentences come down

- Execution
 - Lewis Powell
 - George Atzerodt
 - Davey Herold
 - Mary Surratt

The sentences come down

- Life in Prison
 - Sam Arnold
 - Michael O'Laughlen
 - Dr. Samuel Mudd (missed execution by one vote)

The sentences come down

- 6 years
 - Edmund Spangler

Mary Surratt

- While the court voted for execution for Mary Surratt, a majority of the court recommended to the President clemency
- There exists some controversy as to whether President Johnson ever saw the request
- In any event, Johnson did not grant clemency



Executions

- The sentences were handed down on June 30, 1865, and Johnson approved the sentences (including Mrs. Surratt) on July 5
- The execution of the 4 condemned took place on July 7.
- Quick 19th century justice!



Sentences

- The four prisoners sentenced to prison were sent to Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas, off Key West
- A yellow fever epidemic broke out in 1867, and O’Laughlen died as a result



Sentences

- Dr. Mudd provided heroic service during this outbreak
- As a result of this, and the passing of time, Johnson pardoned all of the remaining prisoners shortly before he left office in 1869



One final trial

- John Surratt had been deeply involved in the kidnap plot, but was in Elmira NY at the time of the assassination
- After a literally world wide search, he was returned to the US in 1867 and stood trial



One final trial

- However, by then, he was tried in a civilian court and not by a military tribunal
- As the statute of limitations on other crimes had passed, he was only charged with murder



One final trial

- The trial ended in a hung jury, with 8 voting not guilty and 4 guilty
- He was released and never retried
- He lived until age 72, when he died in 1916



If you want to see the where:

Save the date –

May 10, 2019

Guided tour by moi of

Ford's Theater, Peterson House and
the New Center for Education and
Leadership

Next Week:

An In Depth Look at the Cast of
Characters!