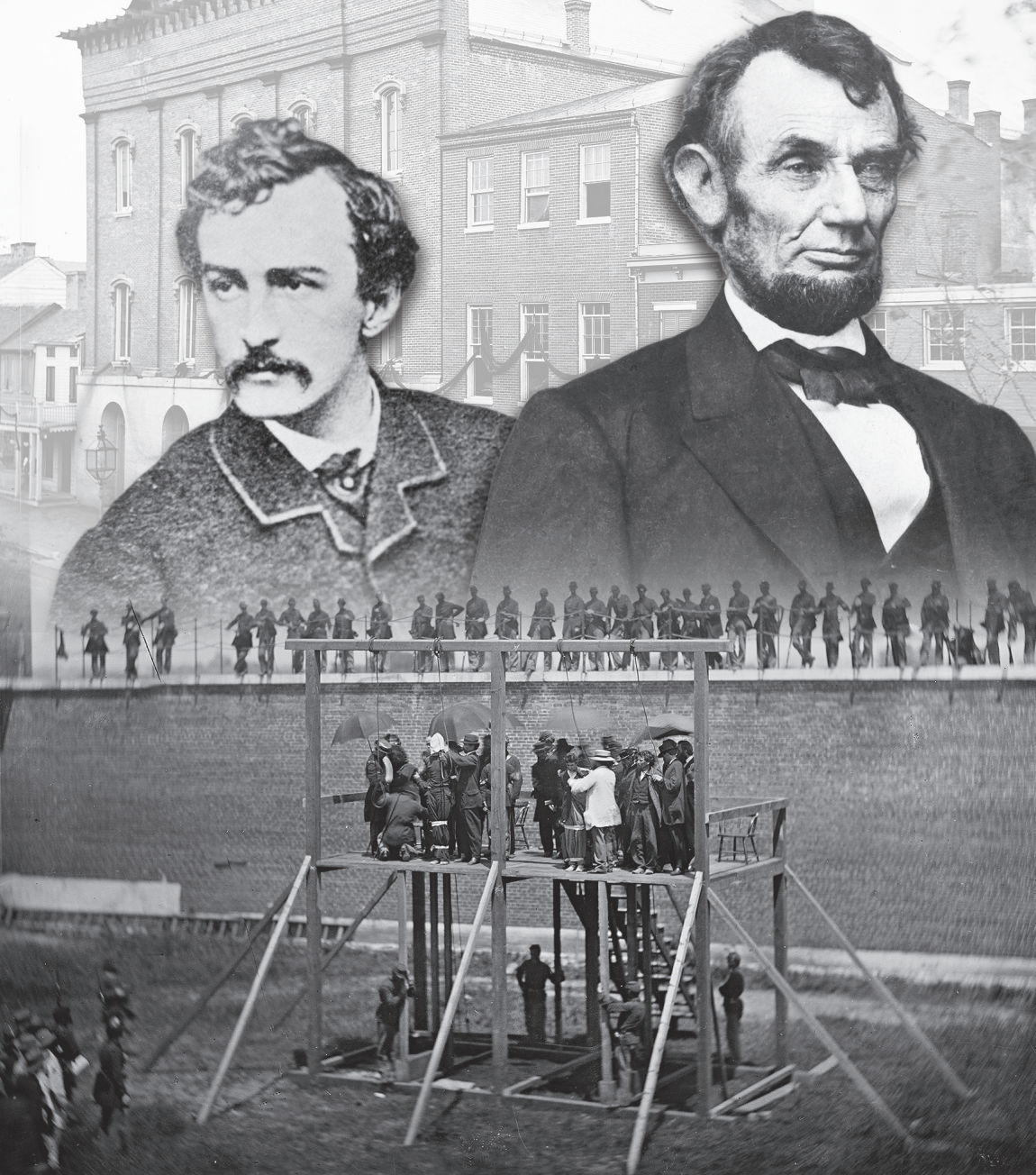


— STAFF RIDE GUIDE —

# THE LINCOLN ASSASSINATION



United States Army Center of Military History



— STAFF RIDE GUIDE —

# THE LINCOLN ASSASSINATION

*by Joseph A. Beard and Shane D. Makowicki*

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## FOREWORD

Since 1906, when Maj. Eben Swift took a dozen officer-students from Fort Leavenworth's General Service and Staff School to the Chickamauga battlefield, the U.S. Army has used the staff ride as a tool for professional development, honing the critical thinking and decision-making skills of contemporary soldiers, and enabling them to learn and gain insights from the past. Since that time, Army educators have employed staff rides to provide both soldiers and civilians a better understanding of past military operations, the complexities and vagaries of warfare, and military planning.

In the twenty-first century, our Army has learned to adapt and apply the staff ride methodology beyond the boundaries of the terrestrial battlefield. While traditional staff rides covering battles or campaigns at the tactical and operational levels of war continue to be very useful, staff ride methodology also can be adapted to enable deeper and broader exploration of other events connecting and influencing matters of strategy and policy.

To support both traditional and nontraditional staff ride initiatives, the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) publishes staff ride guides, such as this one on the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and the trial of his conspirators. This account is drawn principally from primary and secondary sources and from the sworn testimony of the conspirators and other participants.

The Lincoln Assassination Staff Ride offers significant political, strategic, legal, and military lessons. Revisiting the historic sites associated with the assassination's planning, execution, and aftermath—including the site of the conspirators' trial by military commission, viewed through the eyes of the actual participants—affords students insights into decision making under immense pressure and the human condition during times of crisis.

The Lincoln assassination was, in a manner of speaking, a first engagement—the first time an American president was murdered as part of a deliberate plan to decapitate the U.S. government. It was a climatic test of our war-torn nation's resiliency and legal ethics under the Constitution. We hope this volume will prove a useful reference for those conducting staff rides to the pertinent scenes of this infamous plot and calamitous crime that made an indelible impact on American history.

Washington, D.C.  
8 January 2020

PETER G. KNIGHT, Ph.D.  
Chief, Field and International  
History Programs Division



## THE AUTHORS

Joseph A. Beard is a Ph.D. candidate at Texas Tech University, where he studies world history with a focus on Chinese, British, and American relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His dissertation examines the economic, social, military, political, and diplomatic relations between China, Britain, and the United States from 1784 to 1860, concentrating on the growth of imperialism and studying the experiences of these political states through the lens of trade in Canton, China. He received his B.A. from Abilene Christian University in 2000 and his M.A. from the University of North Texas in 2005. He is currently a graduate research assistant in CMH's Field Programs and Historical Services Directorate, where he helped lead more than a dozen staff rides in the Washington, D.C., area. He completed the writing of this project using research begun by Shane Makowicki, a previous graduate research assistant.

Shane D. Makowicki is a Ph.D. candidate at Texas A&M University, where he studies American and European military history with a focus on occupation, military government, and civil-military relations. His dissertation analyzes the interplay of conventional operations, guerrilla warfare, and occupation in eastern North Carolina during the American Civil War. He received his B.A. from the University of Connecticut in 2013 and his M.A. from Texas A&M University in 2016. He spent 2018–2019 as a graduate research assistant in CMH's Field Programs and Historical Services Directorate, where he helped lead dozens of staff rides to sites in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. He holds a dissertation fellowship with CMH for 2019–2020. He initiated this project and conducted much of the research that led to its completion.



## PREFACE

The death of President Abraham Lincoln at the hands of the well-known actor John Wilkes Booth on 14 April 1865 was a devastating event for the Union and an overwhelming shock to the nation as a whole. The timing of the event was itself unsettling, given that the Confederacy was losing the American Civil War, and the brutal, four-year conflict was coming to a close. Lincoln's assassination followed General Robert E. Lee's surrender at the Appomattox Court House on 9 April, yet it occurred before the official surrender of the Confederate government or the capture of its president, Jefferson F. Davis. Many feared that Lincoln's assassination would cause a resurgence in the conflict, and there was a widespread belief that Confederate agents had committed the attack as a desperate attempt to do just that. The immediate reaction of many in the North was to blame the Confederacy either for tacitly supporting the plot or for carrying it out directly. Although the ties between the Confederacy and the assassination continue to be debated to this day, the manhunt for and killing of Booth, the ultimate capture of Booth's co-conspirators, and their eventual trial by a military commission brought some measure of clarity to the situation.

As with all Army staff rides, this one seeks to enlighten participants through their prior study of specific topics and their subsequent visits to relevant physical locations. The goal is for staff ride participants to exercise critical thinking skills and gain valuable insights from the past, all of which could prove useful in addressing future challenges. Elements of this staff ride experience are unique compared to our traditional battlefield staff rides. Its complexity allows for myriad lessons concerning the military, civilian government, legal jurisprudence, and the practice of historical study itself. The Lincoln Assassination Staff Ride sites are conveniently located for audiences whose daily operations take place in the National Capital Region.

Aspects of the Lincoln assassination and the ensuing trial of the conspirators continue to be debated today. This staff ride experience gives participants a chance to explore these historical debates as they learn about an important event in U.S. history. Participation—through attentive reading of source material before the staff ride and active contributions to discussions during the staff ride itself—is essential to historical education and will facilitate successful active learning during this event. The information acquired from both individual study and thoughtful discussions with other staff ride participants and facilitators undoubtedly will lead to increased insight

for military and government personnel and any other individuals involved. Through this experience, participants will learn about specific historical events and their resulting outcomes, and they will relate and apply the insights they gain to contemporary issues.

This guide is meant to help prepare anyone planning to carry out the Lincoln Assassination Staff Ride, and it will give the reader additional sources of information on the subject. Thorough preparation is essential. In the preliminary study phase of the staff ride, participants will read pertinent material before the event. It is highly recommended that students read as much material as possible before the staff ride itself in order to participate fully and derive maximum benefit from the experience. During the field study phase of the staff ride, participants and facilitators will stop at relevant historic sites and take part in discussions of important events and topics related to the site. At the end of the staff ride, participants will go through an integration phase in which information discussed in the earlier phases is analyzed and evaluated for its significance, ensuring the students begin to apply what they have learned. The U.S. Army Center of Military History is excited to present this nontraditional staff ride and is confident that participants will find the experience to be both intellectually enhancing and personally rewarding.

Washington, D.C.  
8 January 2020

JOSEPH A. BEARD  
SHANE D. MAKOWICKI

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*Front cover:* President Abraham Lincoln (*right*), John Wilkes Booth (*left*), Ford’s Theatre in 1865 (*top*), and the execution of the conspirators (*bottom*)

*Back cover:* Poster issued by Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton advertising reward money for the capture of Booth and his accomplices, 20 April 1865

Unless otherwise noted, all images are from the Library of Congress.



Lincoln delivers his second inaugural address on the east portico of the U.S. Capitol. Alexander Gardner, detail, 4 March 1865

# THE LINCOLN ASSASSINATION AND THE WIDER CONSPIRACY: AN OVERVIEW

## *Prelude to the Lincoln Assassination*

The murder of President Abraham Lincoln on 14 April 1865—the first assassination of a U.S. president—was the culmination of a conspiracy that had been brewing for months in the minds of at least six individuals. The assassin, John Wilkes Booth, and his fellow conspirators hoped that the deaths of Lincoln and other U.S. government leaders would aid the Confederacy in the war or, at the very least, avenge the Confederacy's losses. Booth also appears to have desired fame, believing that by killing the president he would become “immortal in history.”<sup>1</sup>

Those who the U.S. government ultimately considered to be responsible for the assassination included John Wilkes Booth, Mary E. J. Surratt, George A. Atzerodt, David E. Herold, Lewis T. Powell, John H. Surratt Jr., Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, Samuel B. Arnold, Michael O’Laughlen Jr., and Edman “Ned” Spangler. When Booth brought the conspirators together in late 1864, they sought at first not to kill Lincoln but only to kidnap him. They planned to hold the president for ransom in order to demand the release of Confederate prisoners of war (POWs). They also hoped the kidnapping might buy the Confederacy valuable time to sue for peace in a conflict they were otherwise destined to lose.

In August 1864, John Wilkes Booth, a successful actor from Bel Air, Maryland, began recruiting other people to join him in a plot to capture the president. That month, Booth met with his boyhood friends Samuel Arnold and Michael O’Laughlen in Baltimore. He convinced them to support his plot to “save the slipping fortunes of the Confederacy” by kidnapping the president and taking him to Richmond with the ultimate goal to “bring about an exchange of prisoners.”<sup>2</sup> Earlier that year, the Union had ended POW exchanges, which led to worsening personnel shortages for the Confederate military. Booth believed that after capturing Lincoln, Lincoln could be traded for many if not all of the Confederate POWs.

Booth’s original plan in August 1864 was to kidnap Lincoln as he traveled from the White House to his part-time weekend residence

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy S. Good, *We Saw Lincoln Shot: One Hundred Eyewitness Accounts* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel B. Arnold, *Memoirs of a Lincoln Conspirator*, ed. Michael W. Kauffman (Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1995), p. 22.

at the Soldiers' Home. This proposal mirrored earlier Confederate schemes to capture the president, all of which had fallen through by that time, and it is likely that Booth got the idea from his previous contact with Confederate agents. He suggested the plan to Arnold and O'Laughlen during a meeting at Barnum's Hotel in Baltimore in August, and both readily agreed to take part.<sup>3</sup> Booth believed that Lincoln's trip to the Soldiers' Home would leave the president vulnerable because his route was well known and he often rode alone. However, Booth had not been in the District since November 1863 and was apparently unaware that, in the summer of 1864, Lincoln had finally acquiesced to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who insisted that Lincoln travel with a full-time security detail. By the fall of 1864, Lincoln routinely traveled with the cavalry escort pushed upon him by Stanton, which would have foiled a kidnapping plot.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Booth's first plan to kidnap Lincoln never materialized. However, by that time, Booth—quite comfortable in theater settings—seemed more interested in using a familiar theater for capturing the president, who enjoyed attending plays.

As Booth continued planning the kidnapping, he sought a way to transport Lincoln through southern Maryland to Richmond, Virginia, but he did not know anyone in southern Maryland who might assist with the plot. In October 1864, to gain introductions to people further south, Booth traveled north to Montreal, Canada—then a hotbed of Confederate activity, nicknamed “Little Richmond.” He visited with two Confederate agents and discussed his plans to free Confederate POWs in order to help with the Confederate war effort. Through these Canada-based agents, Booth secured \$1,500 in financial backing as well as introductions to Confederate sympathizers living in southern Maryland, including Dr. Samuel A. Mudd.<sup>5</sup> With a letter of introduction from a Confederate agent in hand, Booth met with Mudd in Charles County, Maryland, in November 1864. Mudd then introduced Booth to Confederate agent John H. Surratt Jr. in a meeting in Booth's hotel room in

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<sup>3</sup> William A. Tidwell, James O. Hall, and David Winfred Gaddy, *Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), p. 264; Edward Steers Jr., *Blood on the Moon: The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Roy Z. Chamlee Jr., *Lincoln's Assassins: A Complete Account of Their Capture, Trial, and Punishment* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 1990), p. 69; Tidwell, *Come Retribution*, p. 237.

<sup>5</sup> Steers, *Blood on the Moon*, p. 73.

Washington, D.C., in December 1864. Surratt willingly joined in on Booth's presidential kidnapping plot.

John Surratt was instrumental in recruiting George Atzerodt and David Herold into the group of conspirators. Atzerodt, who ferried Confederates and supplies back and forth across the Potomac River, would be helpful due to his knowledge of the river. Herold, a pharmacy worker, had access to chloroform that might be useful in subduing the president. He was also an avid hunter who knew southern Maryland very well. The final recruit was Lewis Powell (also known as Payne or Paine), a former Confederate soldier who recently had deserted and was apparently recruited as "muscle." By January 1865, Booth had gathered a formidable group of Confederate agents and sympathizers with the goal of kidnapping President Lincoln. The group met regularly at a boarding house in the District run by Mary Surratt, John Surratt's mother, where several of them began to stay.

Booth began advocating for staging their operation in a theater, believing it would be an ideal location. He knew the layout well and thought he could make a quick getaway.<sup>6</sup> Booth next sought to kidnap the president during a play at Ford's Theatre on 18 January 1865. The plan, which included tying Lincoln up and lowering him down from the theater's balcony, was infeasible, and the other conspirators had reservations with it. Arnold and O'Laughlen were particularly taken aback, and they worried that Booth was throwing out months of careful planning in favor of this improvised plot. Regardless, this proposed kidnapping likely would have failed anyway; Lincoln was a no-show at the 18 January performance. Eventually, however, the opportunity to attack the president in Ford's Theatre would present itself again.

By March, the plan began to change, at least in Booth's mind, from kidnapping the president to killing him. This especially appears to have been the case following Lincoln's second inauguration, which Booth attended, on 4 March. Afterward, Booth complained, "What an excellent chance I had to kill the president, if I had wished, on inauguration day."<sup>7</sup> Still, other members of the group insisted on sticking with the kidnapping plan, and the conspirators developed a new scheme to abduct Lincoln on 17 March. Hearing that the president would be attending a play for Union troops called *Still*

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<sup>6</sup> Michael W. Kauffman, *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies* (New York: Random House, 2004), pp. 162–63.

<sup>7</sup> Benn Pitman, ed., *The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators* (New York: Moore, Wiltach & Baldwin, 1865), p. 45.

*Waters Run Deep* at the Campbell General Hospital in Washington, D.C., the conspirators planned an ambush nearby.

Booth reconnoitered the hospital, ascertaining Lincoln's arrival schedule and level of security, while part of the gang waited at a nearby restaurant. Meanwhile, Herold was prepositioned near the Surratt Tavern in Maryland with a trunk of weapons and gear from Booth. Though Herold would later claim he was only there to go duck hunting, Booth's trunk was heavy with two carbines, a couple of double-barrel shotguns, a pistol, a knife, a sword, a wrench (to remove the wheels from Lincoln's carriage, so that it could be ferried across the Potomac), and a rope (to be stretched across the road to break the pursuit of any cavalry that might follow).

When Lincoln failed to show at Campbell General Hospital, the conspirators were once more left with empty hands and frustrated plans. Booth joined his fellow conspirators at the restaurant to commiserate. After learning that the plan had been aborted, Herold, who had been joined by Surratt and Atzerodt, eventually made his way back to the District.

On 11 April, President Lincoln made his last public address to a crowd at the White House, two days after General Lee's surrender of the Confederate *Army of Northern Virginia*. In his speech, Lincoln discussed the plans for Reconstruction, the Emancipation Proclamation (which had been announced the previous year), and the enfranchisement of black people. Booth, who was in attendance along with several other conspirators, was particularly angered by the president's words about giving black people the right to vote. In response, Booth claimed, "Now, by God, I will put him through. That will be the last speech he will ever make!"<sup>8</sup>

By April 1865, the conspirators had widened their target list beyond Lincoln to include Vice President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of State William H. Seward, and General Ulysses S. Grant. The goal was to create havoc in the Union by attacking its most important leaders. The conspirators believed that without a vice president to assume control after the death of the president or a secretary of state to call together electors to determine a new president (as called for by the Presidential Succession Act of 1792), and with the commanding general of the U.S. Army dead, the Union would descend into chaos.

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<sup>8</sup> Testimony of Thomas T. Eckert, 30 May 1867, before the U.S. Cong., House of Representatives, Judiciary Committee, *Impeachment Investigation*, 39th Cong., 2d sess., and 40th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867), p. 674.

## *The Lincoln Assassination*

Four years before President Lincoln was shot, the Civil War began when Fort Sumter, near Charleston, South Carolina, fell to the forces of the South Carolina militia on 13 April 1861, following the state's secession from the Union in December 1860. On 15 April 1861, in response to the fall of the fort, Lincoln issued a proclamation declaring that the seceding states had launched an insurrection against the laws of the United States. Four years later, on the day that he would be assassinated, President Lincoln had chosen to commemorate the Union's retaking of Fort Sumter by reraising the battle-torn U.S. flag that the victorious Southerners had lowered when they captured the fort.<sup>9</sup>

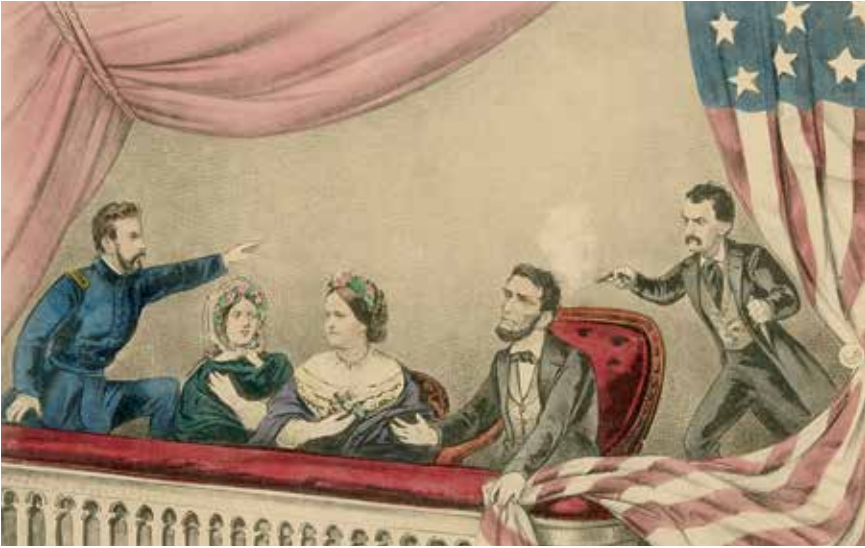
Meanwhile, around 1100 on 14 April, John Wilkes Booth arrived at Ford's Theatre to pick up his mail. (*See Map 1.*) While he was there, the ticket agent, Harry Clay Ford, informed him that President Lincoln and his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, along with General Grant and his wife, Julia B. Grant, would be attending the play *Our American Cousin* that night at the theater. After hearing this, Booth began preparations to assassinate the president that night. He rented a horse from James W. Pumphrey's stable on C Street, visited the Kirkwood House where Vice President Johnson was staying, and left a note—for either Johnson or his assistant—to ascertain his whereabouts. He then met with fellow conspirators to continue planning. That afternoon, he met with Mary Surratt at her boarding house at least three times and gave her a package containing a pair of binoculars. She took them to her tavern in Maryland to leave with her tenant, John M. Lloyd, instructing him to be ready for someone to pick up the package later, along with two carbine rifles and some whiskey. At 1900, Booth met with Atzerodt, Powell, and Herold at a boarding house called the Herndon House to coordinate their attacks. Booth would assassinate President Lincoln and, if possible, General Grant. He then chose Atzerodt to kill Vice President Johnson; Powell, aided by Herold, was to kill Secretary of State Seward.<sup>10</sup>

It is probable that by the time Booth arrived at Ford's Theatre he suspected that General Grant and his wife would not be in attendance.

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<sup>9</sup> The flag was reraised by Maj. Gen. Robert Anderson, the same Union officer who, as a major, had surrendered the fort in 1861.

<sup>10</sup> Statement of George Atzerodt, 25 Apr 1865, while on board the USS *Montauk*, in Laurie Verge, ed., *From War Department Files: Statements made by the alleged Lincoln Conspirators under examination 1865* (Clinton, Md.: Surratt Society, 1980), p. 68.



*The Assassination of President Lincoln*, hand-colored lithograph, detail,  
Currier & Ives, 1865

According to actor John Matthews, who was with Booth at the theater around 1600, Booth had seen the Grants' carriage going to the train station that afternoon and had followed it. Additionally, Julia Grant reported that a suspicious person meeting Booth's description had been riding by and looking into the carriage. Although the newspapers had announced that the Grants would be in attendance at Ford's Theatre, the couple canceled at the last minute and instead visited their children in New Jersey.

President and Mrs. Lincoln's carriage arrived at Ford's Theatre at approximately 2300, though the play had begun around 2000. The Lincolns' late arrival caused a brief cessation in the first act, during which the audience responded with a standing ovation, the band played "Hail to the Chief," and actor W. Henry "Harry" Hawk, who was on stage at the time, acknowledged President Lincoln's presence by saying, "This reminds me of a story, as Mr. Lincoln says."<sup>11</sup> The president was seated in a red padded rocking chair, next to his wife, on the left side of the presidential box. Maj. Henry R. Rathbone and

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<sup>11</sup> George A. Townsend, *The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth, With a Full Sketch of the Conspiracy of which he was the Leader, and the Pursuit, Trial, and Execution of his Accomplices* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1865), p. 7.

his fiancée, Clara H. Harris, who had been invited to join the Lincolns after the Grants had canceled, sat on the right side of the box.

Booth arrived in Baptist Alley behind the theater around 2130 and asked Ned Spangler to hold his horse. Spangler, who had duties backstage, handed the horse off to Joseph Burroughs, who was nicknamed “Johnny Peanut” because he sold peanuts at the theater. After ascertaining that Lincoln had arrived at the theater, Booth decided to get a drink at Peter Taltavull’s Star Saloon next door, where he ordered a whiskey and a glass of water.<sup>12</sup> Between 2215 and 2230, Booth returned to Ford’s Theatre and made his way up the stairs to the presidential box. He was armed with a single-shot .44 caliber Derringer pistol and a 7-inch hunting knife.

During the play’s intermission, Lincoln’s assigned bodyguard for the evening, a policeman named John Frederick Parker, had left the theater to get a drink at a nearby tavern with Lincoln’s valet, Charles Forbes, and coachman Francis P. Burke. It is uncertain whether Parker returned to the theater, but Forbes certainly must have, because he met Booth at the door to Lincoln’s box. Booth presented his calling card, and, after a short conversation, Forbes allowed Booth to enter the presidential box at approximately 2030, during Act III, Scene 2 of the play. Booth then quietly used a wooden brace, which he had placed in the box earlier in the day, to barricade the outer door of the box.

Knowing the play well, Booth sought to time his shot with the laughter that would erupt after a specific line. Asa Trenchard, played by Harry Hawk, would turn to Mrs. Mountchessington and say: “Don’t know the manners of good society, eh? Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal—you sockdologizing old man-trap!”<sup>13</sup> Harry Hawk delivered the line, and, as the theater crowd reacted with the predicted laughter to the character’s jest, John Wilkes Booth shot President Lincoln in the back of the head with his Derringer pistol. The bullet entered the president’s head just behind the left ear and came to rest behind his right eye.

Immediately after Lincoln was shot, Major Rathbone tried to subdue the assassin. Booth dropped the one-shot Derringer pistol and used his hunting knife to slash Rathbone on his left arm. Booth, an

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<sup>12</sup> Testimony of Peter Taltavull, in Benjamin Perley Poore, ed., *The Conspiracy Trial for the Murder of the President and the Attempt to Overthrow the Government by the Assassination of its Principal Officers, Volume 1* (Boston: J. E. Tilton and Company, 1865), pp. 179–80.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Taylor, *Our American Cousin* (Reprint, Middletown, Del.: Astounding Stories, 2018), p. 80.



The .44 Derringer single-shot pistol used by Booth to shoot President Lincoln



The 7-inch hunting knife used by Booth to slash Maj. Henry R. Rathbone's arm

accomplished theater stuntman, tried to escape by jumping from the box to the stage, but one of the spurs on his boots became tangled in the Treasury Guard flag hanging on a staff in front of the box.<sup>14</sup> After an approximately twelve-foot drop, Booth landed awkwardly. (It is commonly believed that this fall broke Booth's left leg, although some argue that he did not break his leg until later, when his horse fell on the way to Surratt's tavern.) On the stage, Booth held his bloody knife above his head and reportedly said, "*Sic Semper Tyrannis!*" (Latin for "Thus always to tyrants!"), the motto of the Commonwealth of Virginia. He also may have followed this with "the South is avenged!" or a similar statement.<sup>15</sup> As Booth left the stage and fled out the back of the theater, Rathbone shouted, "Stop that man!" Army Maj. Joseph B. Stewart responded by leaping from the audience to the stage and chasing after Booth, almost catching him before Booth rode away on the horse he had left in Baptist Alley.

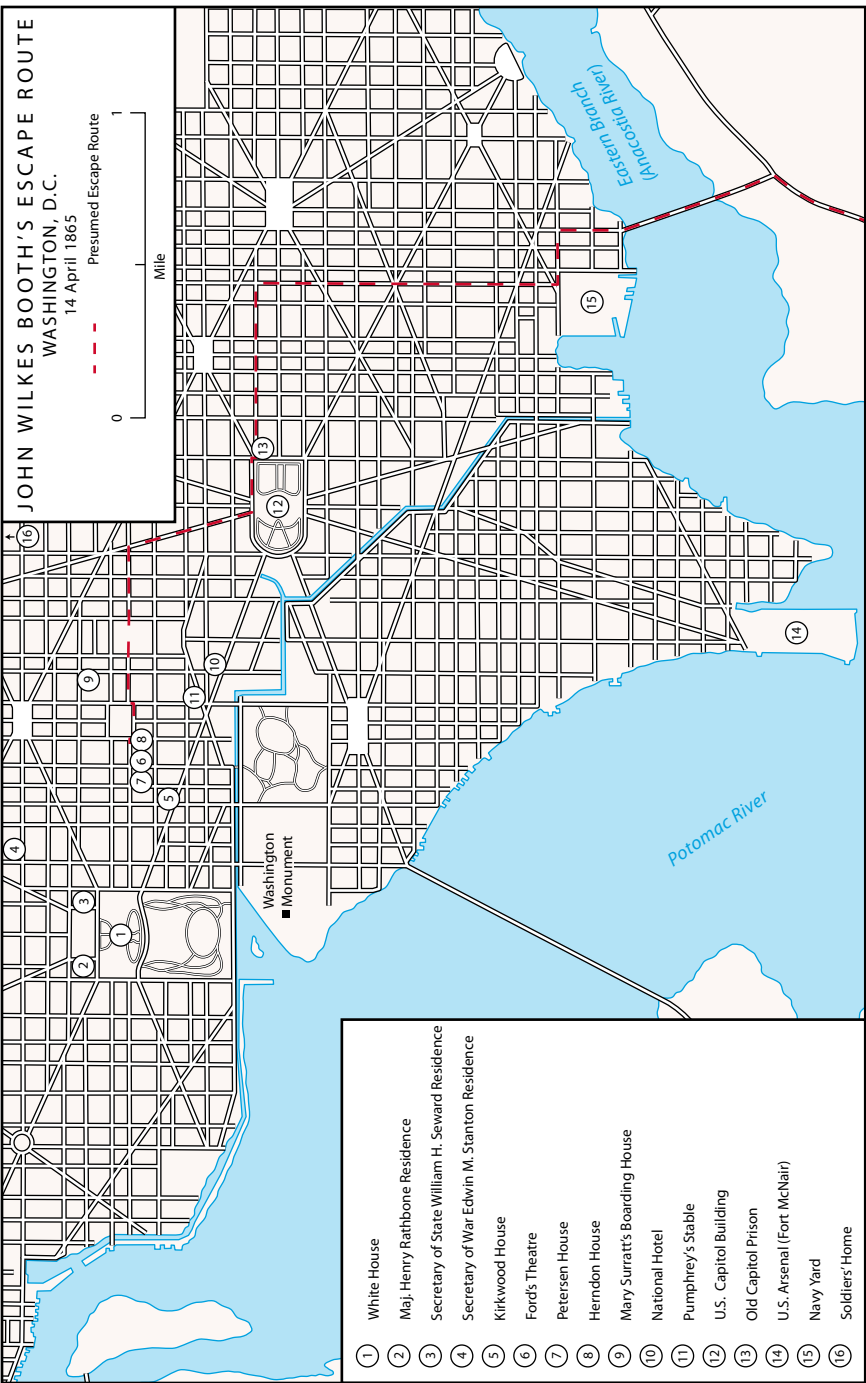
Meanwhile, someone in the presidential box called out for a surgeon. Army doctor Charles A. Leale, who was seated in the dress circle nearby, rushed to the door of the president's box. The president was taken from his chair and laid upon the floor so Dr. Leale could examine him. Initially, Leale assumed Lincoln had been stabbed because Booth had held a bloody knife above his head, but the doctor quickly realized that Lincoln was suffering instead from a bullet wound to the head. Almost instantly, Dr. Leale recognized that the wound was mortal. Army doctor Charles S. Taft, who had been lifted up into the presidential box by audience members, concurred, as did another physician, Dr. Albert F. A. King. Together, those attending the president decided that it would be unseemly for the president to die in a theater, especially on that day, which was Good Friday.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Leale did not believe Lincoln would survive a carriage trip to the White House, so the doctors decided that he should be moved to the nearest house available. A group of men carried the president out the front of the theater on an improvised stretcher, aided by U.S. Army soldiers who cleared a path. Upon seeing a man across the street beckoning to them, they took Lincoln into the Petersen House, where the man, Harry Safford, was boarding. They laid the president on a

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<sup>14</sup> Hours before the play, theater staff borrowed flags from the U.S. Treasury Department to decorate the presidential box. The Treasury Guards were a militia unit formed by Department of Treasury employees with the intent of defending Washington, D.C., during the Civil War.

<sup>15</sup> David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 597.

<sup>16</sup> Good Friday is an annual Christian holy day commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.



Map I

bed in a room at the end of the hall; its regular occupant, William T. “Willie” Clark, a former Army private of the 13th Regiment Infantry, Massachusetts Volunteers, was not there at the time.<sup>17</sup>

Several more doctors arrived at the Petersen House to attend the president, including Lincoln’s personal physician, Dr. Robert K. Stone. Throughout the night, the doctors continued to tend to Lincoln. At the same time, U.S. government officials came and went from the house, visiting the dying president, comforting his grieving wife and his son, Robert Todd Lincoln, and beginning to coordinate and carry out the manhunt that would capture Booth and his co-conspirators. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Senator Charles Sumner, and General Henry W. Halleck were among those who spent hours either in the room with Lincoln or in the front room of the Petersen House. After almost nine hours of unconsciousness, President Lincoln succumbed to his injury and died at 0722 on 15 April. Upon his death, Stanton famously said, “There lies the most perfect ruler of men the world has ever seen. Now he belongs to the ages.”<sup>18</sup>

### *Additional Assassination Attempts*

In preparation for his attack on Vice President Johnson, George Atzerodt booked Room 126 at the Kirkwood House in Washington, D.C., just above the two-room suite in which Johnson was staying. He then ensured that the vice president was present in the hotel. However, even though Atzerodt had been a willing participant in the plot to kidnap Lincoln, he was reluctant to commit murder. Atzerodt spent the night drinking at the Kirkwood House hotel bar and wandering the streets of the District instead. In the end, he was unable to bring himself to kill the vice president.

Lewis Powell, on the other hand, did make an assassination attempt—one which almost succeeded in killing Secretary of State William H. Seward. Because Powell was from the South and did not know his way around the District, he was guided by David Herold, who was from the area. The pair arrived at Seward’s house sometime after 2200. While Herold watched the horses, Powell went inside

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<sup>17</sup> The unit designations used in this staff ride guide reflect the official naming conventions, as found in general orders and Adjutants General reports issued at the time each unit was created.

<sup>18</sup> W. Emerson Reck, *A. Lincoln: His Last 24 Hours* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1987), p. 159. At least one witness claimed that Stanton did not use the word *ages*, saying instead: “Now he belongs to the angels.”



*Attempted Assassination of Wm. H. Seward, Secretary of State, print, 1865  
(National Police Gazette)*

Seward's house, carrying out the attack at approximately the same time as Booth's murder of the president. Powell got past Seward's butler, William H. Bell, by pretending that he was there to deliver medicine to Seward, who was in bed recovering from a carriage accident. On the stairs, Powell met Seward's son, Frederick W. Seward, who asked him to hand over the medicine. Powell tried to fight past Frederick, and when his pistol failed to fire, he used the butt of his gun to hit Frederick in the head several times, fracturing his skull and knocking him down.<sup>19</sup> Powell made his way up the rest of the stairs and into Seward's bedroom. There he found Sgt. George F. Robinson, the Army medic assigned to guard and nurse the secretary of state, and Seward's daughter, Fanny A. Seward. Powell quickly hit Robinson in the forehead with his knife handle and knocked Fanny out of the way. He then tried to stab Seward four or five times, missing several times before finally lacerating him in the neck and face area. Seward's life was saved, most likely, by the metallic brace he was wearing on his neck to help heal his broken jaw. Hearing the commotion, another of Seward's sons, Augustus H. Seward, ran into

<sup>19</sup> James L. Swanson, *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer* (New York: William Morrow, 2006), p. 57.



The .38 Whitney revolver which misfired and was used by Lewis T. Powell to hit Frederick W. Seward over the head



The Rio Grande camp knife used by Powell to stab Secretary of State Willian H. Seward, Sgt. George F. Robinson, and Augustus H. Seward  
(Courtesy of George Foster Robinson papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California)

the room and, seeing what was happening, tried to fight Powell off his father. Meanwhile, outside, hearing the screams coming from the window, Herold fled the scene, deciding not to wait for Powell. As Powell fought to leave, he stabbed Robinson twice in the shoulder and Augustus seven times. After some struggle, Powell broke free of the two men, running back down the stairs shouting, "I'm mad! I'm mad!" As he left the house, Powell ran into a State Department messenger named Emerick Hansell, whom he stabbed in the back. Once outside, Powell found his abandoned horse, mounted it, and rode off calmly.<sup>20</sup> Despite Powell's lengthy list of victims, all those who were injured at the Seward home recovered from their wounds, including Secretary of State Seward.

As for General Grant, it seems that any plan that may have been in place to assassinate him that night was abandoned. During the trial of the conspirators, the prosecution sought unsuccessfully to prove that Michael O'Laughlen had stalked General Grant with the intent to kill him. The only evidence of any malicious intent against Grant was circumstantial and pointed to Booth, not O'Laughlen. Although Julia Grant had seen a man peering into her carriage, and although John Matthews recalled that Booth had followed the Grants' carriage, it seems Booth made no plans to kill Grant or have him killed on 14 April 1865.

### *Immediate Consequences: The Manhunt*

Lincoln's shooting instigated a massive Union search for his assassin and any possible collaborators. The city of Washington was rife with fear of a wider conspiracy, especially after the attack on Seward, and the ensuing manhunt soon became the largest the nation had ever seen. Thousands of people, both military personnel and civilians, searched the vicinity of the District and all of southern Maryland, under the direction of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. Many believed from the beginning that it would be easy to catch the conspirators, but some thought it would be more difficult. For instance, after Lincoln's funeral procession, Helen A. B. DuBarry, an eyewitness to the assassination in Ford's Theatre, wrote in a letter to her mother

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<sup>20</sup> *The Trial of the Assassins and Conspirators at Washington City D.C., May and June, 1865* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson & Brothers, 1865), p. 72; *Trial of the Assassins and Conspirators for the Murder of Abraham Lincoln* (Philadelphia: Barclay & Co., 1865), p. 33; Chamlee, *Lincoln's Assassins*, p. 2.

that “the Authorities think that there is no chance for the assassins to escape but I think it is like hunting for a needle in a haystack.”<sup>21</sup>

The manhunt for Booth and the other conspirators eventually did lead to the capture or death of those involved, but it took longer than many had hoped, especially because of the high level of confusion at the outset. According to *New York World* reporter George A. Townsend, the high-ranking Union intelligence officer, Col. Lafayette C. Baker, was instrumental in restoring order during the manhunt. Immediately, guards were stationed around all forts, and most people were not allowed in or out of the District. The day following the assassination, Army units were tasked with apprehending “all rebel deserters or any suspicious persons.”<sup>22</sup> Army units cast a wide net, tracking every possible lead they unearthed from witness testimony, vetting information from anyone who knew the suspects, and working with police to ensure security. They left no stone unturned. On 20 April, the federal government offered a reward totaling \$100,000 for the capture of John Wilkes Booth (\$50,000), David Herold (\$25,000), and John Surratt (\$25,000).<sup>23</sup> (Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Joseph Holt ultimately would determine how the reward money would be awarded. Most recipients were Army personnel who had been involved in the manhunt, with amounts apportioned based on rank.)

The authorities arrested all but one of the conspirators within two weeks of the attacks. On 15 April, the Ford’s Theatre stagehand Edman Spangler was arrested due to his connections to Booth: Spangler formerly worked on the Booth family’s farm and he also routinely cared for Booth’s horse at Ford’s Theatre. On 17 April, Mary Surratt and Lewis Powell were arrested at Surratt’s boarding house when their stories suspiciously did not line up. Powell had arrived at the boarding house at 2300 while Mary Surratt was being questioned by police. He pretended to be a laborer working for her, yet she claimed to have never seen him before. That same day, Samuel Arnold was arrested at his new workplace at Fort Monroe, Virginia. The police had connected him to Booth through a letter Arnold had written to Booth, which was found in Booth’s room at the National Hotel. Michael O’Laughlen gave himself up to authorities that same day. On 20 April,

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<sup>21</sup> Good, *We Saw Lincoln Shot*, p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievens, *Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters between New England Soldiers and the Home Front* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), p. 52.

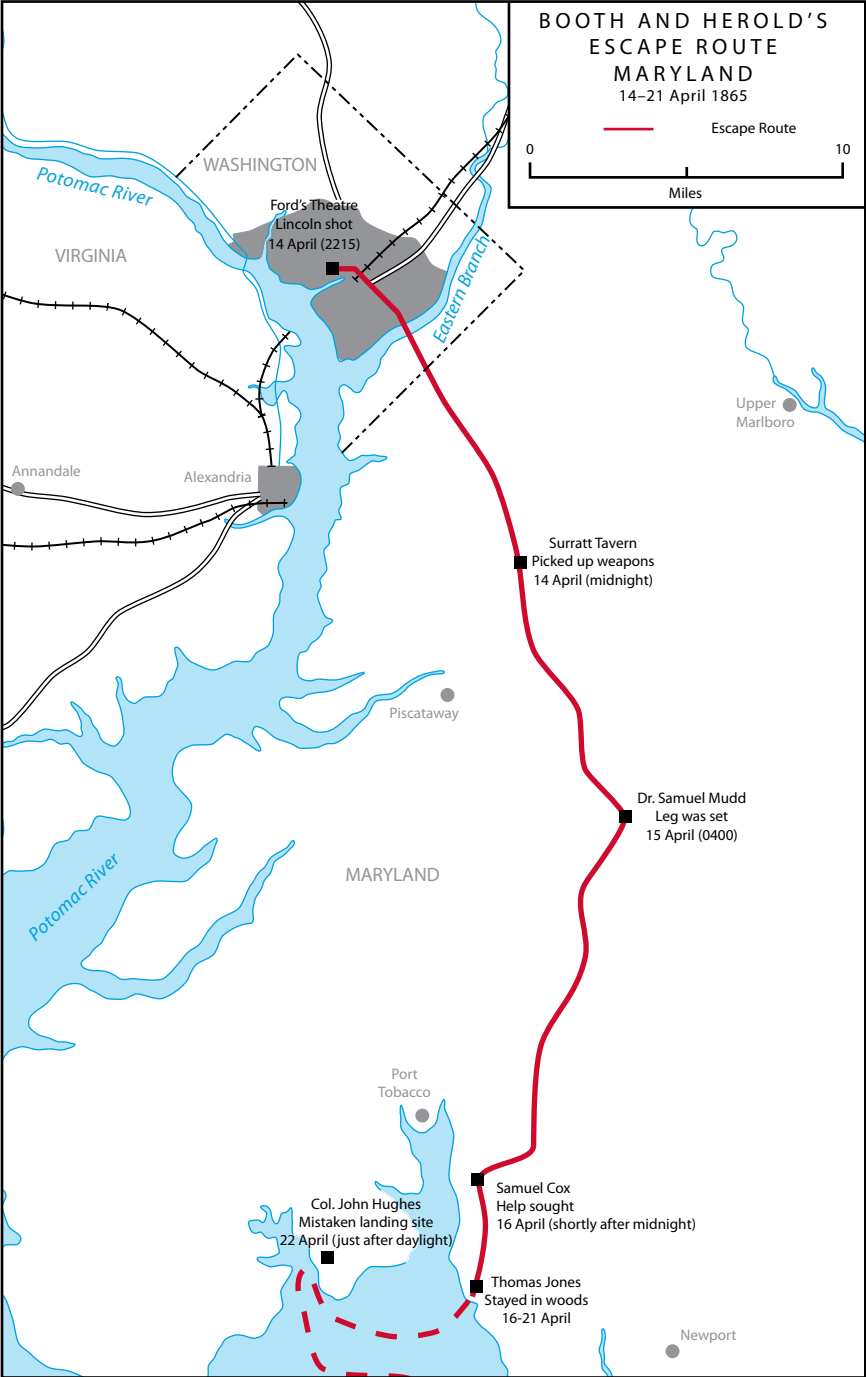
<sup>23</sup> James L. Swanson and Daniel R. Weinberg, *Lincoln’s Assassins: Their Trial and Execution* (New York: William Morrow, 2006), p. 53.

George Atzerodt was arrested at his cousin Ernest Hartman Richter's house in Germantown, Maryland, after police received a tip from the Kirkwood House bartender. On the day of Lincoln's assassination, Atzerodt had talked with the bartender concerning the whereabouts of Vice President Johnson. The day after the assassination, that enquiry seemed suspicious to the bartender, and he contacted the police about a "suspicious-looking man" in a gray coat.<sup>24</sup> With that tip, military police searched Atzerodt's room, where they found a loaded revolver under his pillow, a Bowie knife, and a bank book belonging to Booth. On 24 April, Dr. Samuel Mudd was arrested when police suspected him of lying about his role in aiding Booth and Herold. Meanwhile, John Surratt, working directly for Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin, was reconnoitering the feasibility of breaking Confederate prisoners out of the Union-controlled Elmira prison camp in upstate New York. Upon realizing he was wanted by the police, he fled back to his Confederate sponsors in Canada.

Over the course of these ten days, as their co-conspirators were being captured, Booth and Herold met up in Maryland and escaped into Virginia. Approximately half an hour after he had assassinated Lincoln, Booth reached a checkpoint at the Navy Yard Bridge where he was able to talk his way past the guards, who did not yet know of the assassination. Herold crossed the bridge soon afterward, linking up with Booth near Soper's Hill. The two went on to Mary Surratt's tavern in Surrattsville, Maryland, where they met her tenant John Lloyd and picked up the carbine rifles, binoculars, and whiskey, before continuing south (*Map 2*). In the early morning of 15 April, the two conspirators reached the home of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd near Bryantown, Maryland. Mudd treated Booth's broken leg, and, after spending a day recuperating at Dr. Mudd's house, Booth and Herold traveled further south toward Zekiah Swamp. Unsure of their surroundings, they came across a freed black tobacco farmer named Oswell Swann, whom they paid to guide them to the home of former Confederate Col. Samuel Cox. Cox, in turn, introduced them to Confederate sympathizer Col. Thomas A. Jones, who helped the pair hide in the pine thicket near the village of Bel Alton on the Virginia border, not far from the Potomac. Jones guided them through the thicket and provided them with supplies. Booth and Herold stayed hidden in the swamp during the period of 16–21 April, before crossing the Potomac River in a boat procured by Jones. During their crossing, Booth and Herold

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<sup>24</sup> Pitman, *Assassination of President Lincoln*, p. 144.

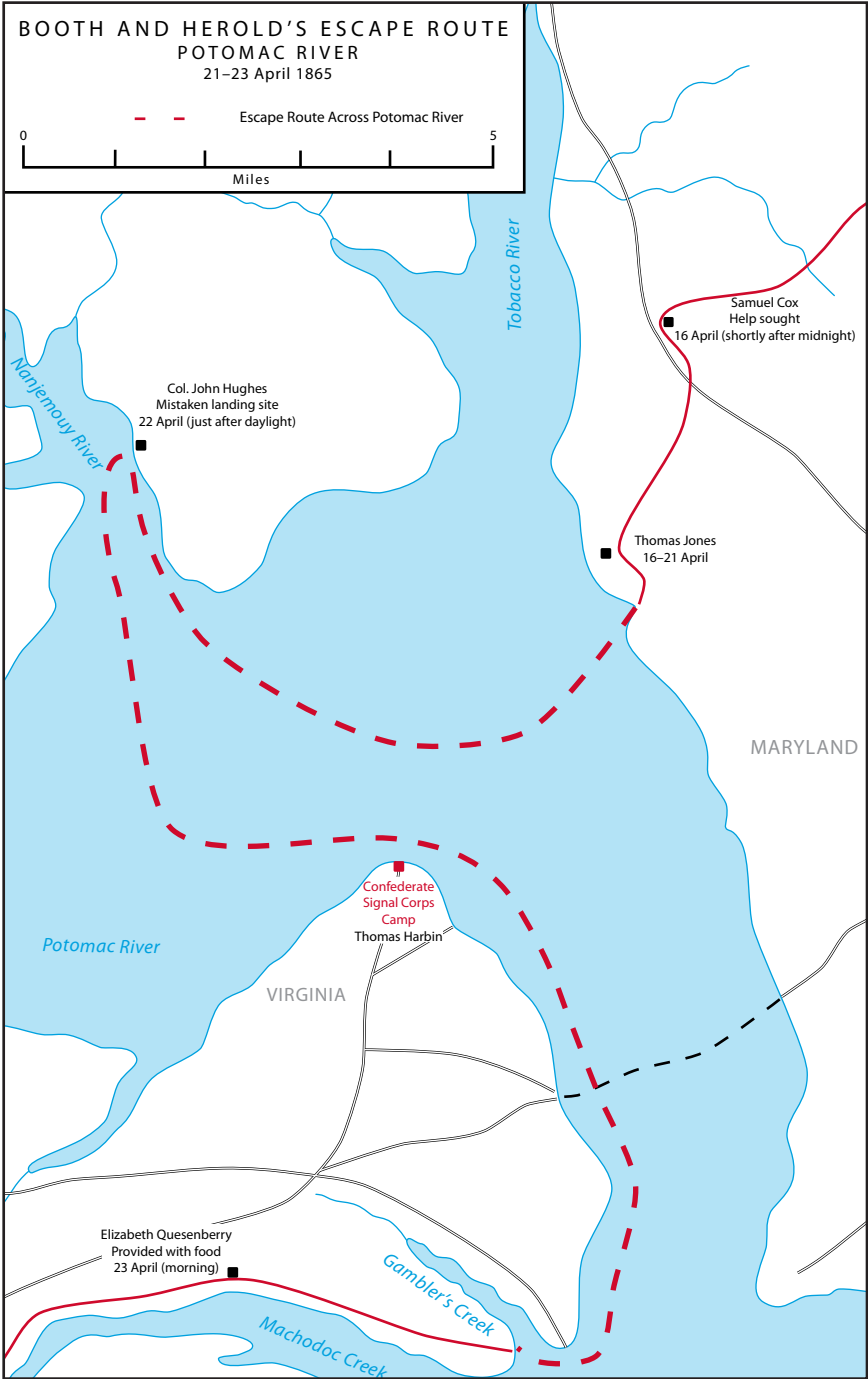


Map 2

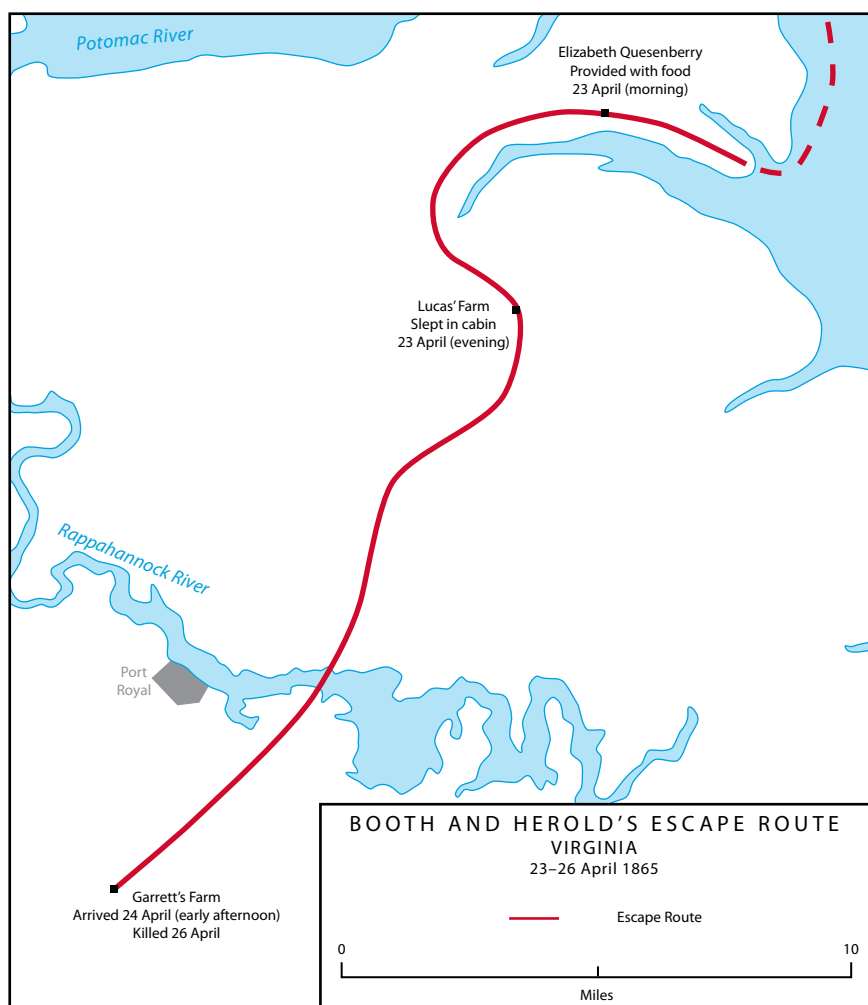


Booth's compass, in a red leather and brown velvet case, was among the items found on Booth's body after he was shot. Carol M. Highsmith, 2017

accidentally traveled too far north—probably in an attempt to avoid Union patrol boats—and landed again in Maryland near the home of former Confederate Col. John J. Hughes (*Map 3*). Hughes fed the criminals and allowed them to stay in his former slave quarters for approximately thirty-six hours. Booth and Herold then made their way back across the Potomac River to Virginia on 23 April. They sought out Confederate sympathizer Elizabeth R. Quesenberry, who put them in touch with Thomas H. Harbin, a Confederate agent with whom they were already acquainted. (*See Map 4.*) Harbin took the conspirators to the home of Dr. Richard Stuart, who refused to receive them in his house. As a result, the two fugitives forced a freed black farmer named William Lucas and his family out of their cabin so they could stay there. The next day, Lucas's son, Charlie, transported Booth and Herold by wagon to Port Conway on the Rappahannock River. By happenstance, they met three Confederate soldiers returning home from the war and traveled with them across the river. One of the soldiers,



Map 3



Map 4

William S. “Willie” Jett, escorted Herold and Booth first to the home of Randolph Peyton, who was not home, and then to the Garrett Farm, owned by Richard Garrett.<sup>25</sup> Introduced to Garrett as Confederate soldiers, the conspirators at first were allowed to

<sup>25</sup> Statement of Willie Jett, 6 May 1865, microfilm M-599, reel 4, frames 86-99, Record Group (RG) 153, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (NADC), in Steers, *Blood on the Moon*, p. 189.

stay in the home, but as the Garrett family's suspicions grew, they were hidden in a tobacco shed instead.

On 24 April, Colonel Baker placed 1st Lt. Edward P. Doherty and his detachment of twenty-five soldiers of the 16th Regiment Cavalry, New York State Volunteers, under the control of detective Everton J. Conger, a former lieutenant colonel in the 1st Cavalry, District of Columbia Volunteers. The latest intelligence information indicated that Booth and Herold were "somewhere between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers."<sup>26</sup> By 25 April, Doherty's unit reached the ferry that crossed the Rappahannock River between Port Conway and Port Royal. In Port Conway, they spoke with ferryman William Rollins and his wife Bettie. After showing the Rollinses photographs of the fugitives, Doherty's soldiers confirmed that Booth and Herold had traveled through there. They also learned that Willie Jett, one of the Confederate soldiers who had aided the fleeing pair, might be staying at a hotel in Bowling Green, Virginia. Later that day, the detachment reached Bowling Green and, after interrogating Jett, found out that Booth and Herold were staying at the Garrett Farm.

At approximately 0200 on 26 April, Jett guided Doherty and his men to the farm, and the troops surrounded the tobacco barn where Booth and Herold were hiding. Herold immediately surrendered, but Booth did not. According to one Army officer, Booth said he preferred that they "have a fair fight."<sup>27</sup> Because Booth refused to surrender peacefully, the soldiers set fire to the barn, hoping this would persuade Booth to come out. Booth stood his ground. As the building burned, Sgt. Thomas "Boston" Corbett, who was standing near the barn, fired his Army-issue Colt revolver into the barn, shooting Booth in the back of the neck and severing his spinal cord. Corbett claimed that he saw through an open slat in the barn that Booth was armed and that he "thought he would do harm to our men in trying to fight his way through."<sup>28</sup> Booth was dragged from the burning barn and died about two hours later on the front porch of the Garrett house at approximately 0700.

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<sup>26</sup> Rpt. Lt. Edward P. Doherty, 26 Apr 1865, in U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880–1901) (hereinafter cited as *OR*), ser. 1, vol. 46, pt. 1, p. 1318.

<sup>27</sup> Statement of Luther B. Baker, 27 Apr 1865, microfilm M-619, reel 455, frames 665–86, RG 94, NADC, in Steers, *Blood on the Moon*, p. 203.

<sup>28</sup> Poore, *Conspiracy Trial*, p. 326.

## *Trial and Sentencing of the Conspirators*

In less than two weeks, the authorities had apprehended all the conspirators thought to have been directly involved with the assassination plot, with the exception of John Surratt, who had fled to Canada. Other suspects were arrested for aiding Booth and Herold in their escape, but the military commission did not seek convictions against them. These individuals included Samuel Cox, Thomas Jones, John Hughes, Elizabeth Quesenberry, Thomas Harbin, and Willie Jett. Many of these individuals were taken into custody by the authorities and held for a period of time, but ultimately they were released due to cooperation or lack of evidence. In the end, only eight individuals would stand trial as apprehended conspirators, accused of conspiracy to murder Lincoln, Johnson, Seward, and Grant.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt made key decisions about how to handle the trial, including whether to try the conspirators in a civilian or military court. Because Stanton and Holt considered the assassination of the president to be a war crime and the conspiracy to do so to be a Confederate plot meant “to destabilize the federal government and the Union war effort,” they opted for a military tribunal.<sup>29</sup> Stanton and Holt came to this conclusion for a couple of practical reasons. First, although General Lee had already surrendered, there were still Confederate armies in the field, and the rebel government had not yet ceased to exist. Second, because the goal of the conspiracy was to decapitate the Union leadership in order to aid the Confederate side in the war, the assassination was, according to Stanton and Holt’s perspective, a culmination of Confederate war crimes. U.S. Attorney General James Speed concurred with the decision to hold the trial by a specific type of military tribunal known as a military commission. In Speed’s legal opinion, because Lincoln was the commander in chief of the United States Army at the time of his death, his assassination was, by definition, a war crime. Speed concluded that the conspirators either were Confederates themselves or were working on behalf of the Confederate cause. He also noted that, though civilian courts were operating at the time, martial law was in effect when the assassination was committed, which gave the military direct control over ordinary government functions including the justice system. Finally, and most importantly, Stanton and Holt desired a military trial because they

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<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Lincoln’s Avengers: Justice, Revenge, and Reunion after the Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), p. 82.

feared that a civilian jury might be unable to come to a unanimous verdict and would therefore be obligated to find the defendants innocent. A military trial would not require a unanimous verdict to find the defendants guilty.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, in an environment in which citizens were being attacked for anti-Union and anti-Lincoln speech acts, some saw a military tribunal as the only way to ensure a fair trial for the defendants.

Military commissions differ from courts-martial in that they provide jurisdiction not only over enemies (military or civilian) who commit war crimes against the United States, but also over civilians who commit crimes in an area under martial law. Specific authorization for military commissions stemmed from the 1863 Lieber Code and legislation passed by Congress the same year.<sup>31</sup> Although commissions typically operated in a similar fashion to courts-martial, they were not governed by a fixed set of rules. Like a court-martial of that time period, a military commission generally consisted of a panel of officers who fulfilled the roles of both judge and jury.

Assistant Judge Advocate General John A. Bingham, in consultation with Stanton and Holt, chose a group of nine Union officers—all combat veterans—to be the members of the military commission for the trial. Led by the commission’s president, Maj. Gen. David A. Hunter, this group was made up of Maj. Gen. August V. Kautz, Maj. Gen. Lewis “Lew” Wallace, Brig. Gen. James A. Ekin, Brig. Gen. Robert S. Foster, Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Harris, Brig. Gen. Albion P. Howe, Col. Charles H. Tompkins, and Lt. Col. David R. Clendenin. The prosecutors of the trial were Judge Advocate General Holt, Assistant Judge Advocate General Bingham, and Assistant Judge Advocate General Col. Henry L. Burnett. Holt, from Kentucky, had been secretary of war under President James Buchanan Jr. and had been appointed by Lincoln to be the judge advocate general of the U.S. Army in charge of enforcing military law. Bingham was a Republican congressman from Ohio who would go on to be the principal author of the Fourteenth Amendment to the

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<sup>30</sup> Fred L. Borch, “‘Let the stain of innocent blood be removed from the land.’ The Trial of the Lincoln Assassination Conspirators by Military Commission,” *Army History* 86 (Winter 2013): 12–13.

<sup>31</sup> The Lieber Code, also known as General Order No. 100, instructed soldiers on proper wartime conduct. Named after German-American legal scholar Francis Lieber, and signed into law by President Lincoln on 24 April 1863, the code sought to aid soldiers in dealing with ethical dilemmas and set standards concerning martial law, military jurisdiction, and the treatment of spies, deserters, and POWs.

U.S. Constitution. Burnett was a lawyer from Ohio who had recently been brevetted to colonel.

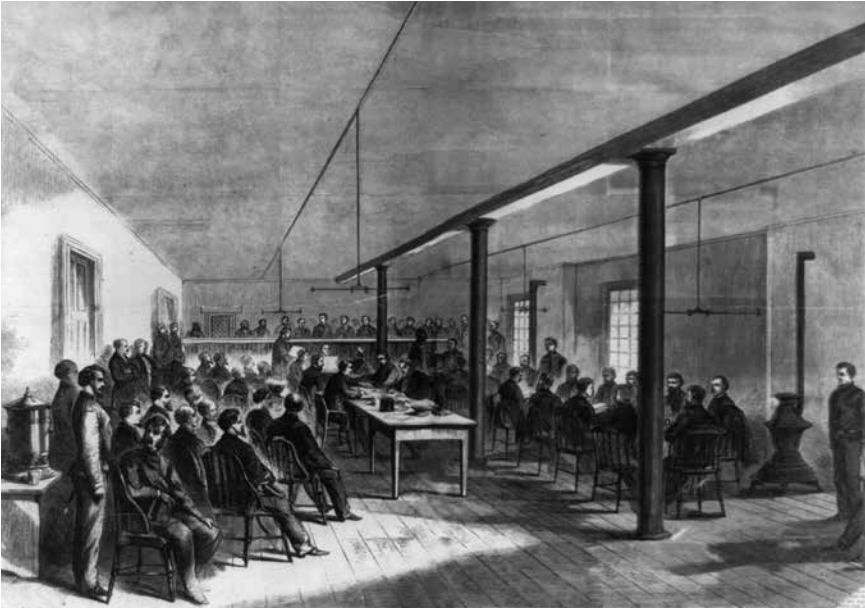
The trial procedures were as follows. There was no presumption of innocence; all relevant evidence could be presented and considered; only a majority vote was needed to gain a conviction, although a two-thirds vote was necessary to give the death penalty; Holt and Bingham could participate in the deliberations, but they could not vote; and, although the defendants could not appeal the verdict of the trial to any higher court, President Johnson could provide clemency for some aspects of the findings after the sentencing.

The trial began 10 May 1865, three weeks after Lincoln's assassination, and ended on 30 June. It was held at the Old Arsenal Penitentiary on what is now Fort Lesley J. McNair in southwest Washington, D.C. The main charge against the defendants was conspiracy to murder Lincoln, Johnson, Seward, and Grant. As in other kinds of trials, the government prosecutors first presented their case and provided witnesses, followed by the defense attorneys doing the same. Seven individuals served as defense counsel.

Maryland Senator Reverdy Johnson and his junior partners, Frederick A. Aiken and John W. Clappitt, provided the defense for Mary Surratt. This team of attorneys attempted to represent her as an unfortunate widow who just happened to run the boarding house where the conspirators had met, but this defense proved difficult. First, Surratt's character was tarnished by the reputation of her deceased husband, John Surratt, who was remembered as a man of questionable morals, alcohol and debt problems, and violent tendencies. Second, evidence showed that Surratt had maintained a relationship with Booth for months, meeting with him three times on the day of the assassination alone. Third, the prosecution effectively used Surratt's statement about not recognizing Powell on the night of their arrest, along with testimony from John M. Lloyd and Louis J. Weichmann, against her. Lloyd, Surratt's tenant at the tavern, claimed that she told him to have the "shooting irons" ready on the night of 14 April, while Weichmann, a boarder at Surratt's boarding house, attested that she had relationships with Confederates and Confederate sympathizers, particularly Booth. Weichmann described the trips he took to the tavern with Surratt on 11 and 14 April, which corroborated Lloyd's testimony.<sup>32</sup> It is possible that one or both men knew of the conspiracy themselves. Indeed, John Surratt Jr. would

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<sup>32</sup> Edward Steers Jr., ed., *The Trial: The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), pp. 54–55.



Scene in the court-room in the old Penitentiary building, wood engraving,  
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 3 June 1865

claim later that Weichmann had sought to aid in the plot but was rejected because he “could neither ride a horse nor shoot a pistol.”<sup>33</sup> In the end, as the owner of the boarding house where the conspirators had stayed and met, and as an apparent participant in the conspiracy herself, Mary Surratt was seen by the members of the commission as having “kept the nest that hatched the egg,” as President Johnson reportedly said.<sup>34</sup>

David Herold’s attorney, Frederick Stone, portrayed him as a dimwitted coward who merely accompanied Powell and Booth as a guide. Brig. Gen. William E. Doster, defense counsel for George Atzerodt, claimed that his client, too, was a coward who never intended any harm to anyone, which is why he got drunk instead of trying to kill Vice President Johnson. General Doster also served as

<sup>33</sup> John H. Surratt, “A Remarkable Lecture: John H. Surratt Tells His Story,” *Washington Evening Star*, 7 Dec 1870.

<sup>34</sup> Louis J. Weichmann, *A True History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and of the Conspiracy of 1865*, ed. Floyd E. Risvold (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1975), in Steers, *Blood on the Moon*, p. 226.

Lewis Powell's attorney, whom he portrayed as a soldier just following orders in his attack on Secretary of State Seward.

Maj. Gen. Thomas Ewing Jr. defended Samuel Arnold, Dr. Samuel Mudd, and Edman Spangler. In Dr. Mudd's case, General Ewing depicted him as a simple country doctor who merely had treated a patient in need and was never involved in the conspiracy, but two points hurt his case. Mudd had waited more than twenty-four hours to report Booth and Herold's visit to authorities, and he changed his story several times while under interrogation, revealing that he knew Booth previously and might have had some involvement in the kidnapping plot. Mudd made two statements to authorities: one was an undated, voluntary, written statement for Union Col. H. H. Wells; the other was his sworn statement dated 21 April. In his first statement, Mudd lied, stating, "I never saw either of the parties [Booth and Herold] before, nor can I conceive who sent them to my house."<sup>35</sup> In the second statement, Mudd admitted, "I have seen J. Wilkes Booth. I was introduced to him by J. C. Thompson, a son-in-law of Dr. William Queen, in November or December last."<sup>36</sup> Mudd's contradictory statements were proof that he and Booth knew each other before the assassination. More supporting evidence of this fact would come to light after the trial.

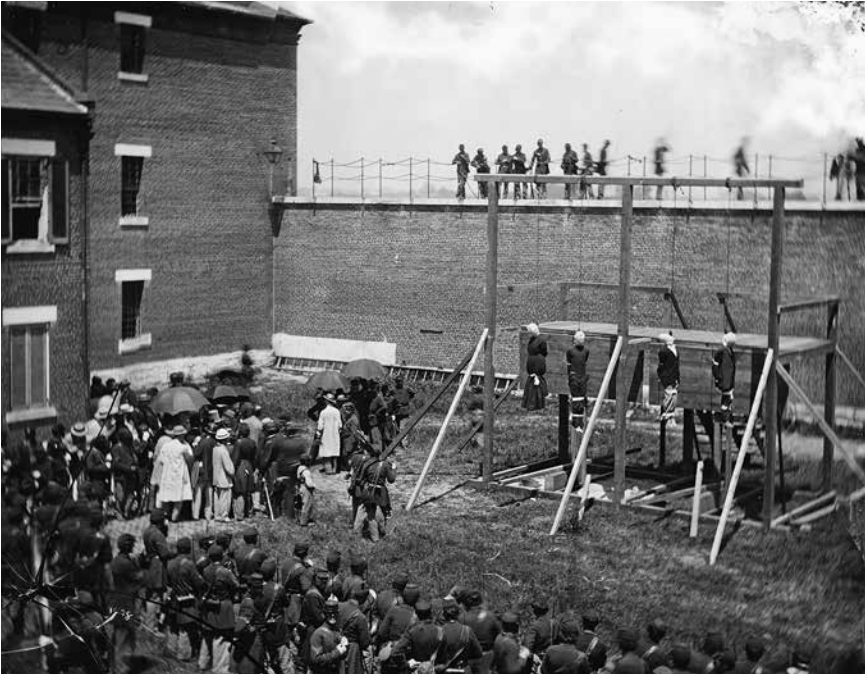
Both Walter S. Cox, the attorney who defended Michael O'Laughlen, and General Ewing, who defended Samuel Arnold, insisted that their clients' involvement was limited only to the earlier kidnapping plot and that neither man was a part of the assassination plot. In O'Laughlen's case, government prosecutors sought to prove that he had stalked General Grant on the nights of 13 and 14 April with the intent to kill him, but they were unsuccessful in this endeavor. In Arnold's case, the defense showed that after failed attempts to kidnap Lincoln, Arnold left the District and returned to Baltimore. Arnold then got a job as a clerk in Old Point Comfort, Virginia. On 27 March, Arnold wrote a letter (now known as the "Sam Letter") to Booth, asking him to stop his plans and declaring that he was no longer part of Booth's gang. On the night of the assassination, Booth left Arnold's letter in his National Hotel room, and police subsequently used it to connect Arnold to the conspiracy. Nevertheless, Samuel Arnold maintained that he was in Virginia at the time of the assassination, a fact to which his coworkers attested.

In defense of his client Edman Spangler, General Ewing argued that Spangler only happened to know Booth because he worked at

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<sup>35</sup> Verge, *From War Department Files*, p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Verge, *From War Department Files*, p. 26.



Execution of the condemned conspirators (*from left to right*): Mary E. J. Surratt, Lewis T. Powell, David E. Herold, and George A. Atzerodt, 7 July 1865

the theater, and that although he had held Booth's horse at times, he knew nothing of the conspiracy. However, another Ford's Theatre worker, Jake Rittersback (also known as Jacob Ritterspaugh), told authorities that when he tried to chase Booth out the back of the theater, Spangler had hit him in the face and told him not to say which way Booth had gone. It is uncertain how accurate this statement was. Major Stewart, the Union officer who ran after Booth, did not directly corroborate Rittersback's testimony, but he seemed to implicate Spangler in aiding Booth nonetheless. At the trial, Stewart stated that there was a person near the door who could have stopped Booth, yet did not, and that Spangler looked "more like the person [he] saw near the door than anybody else."<sup>37</sup> Stewart

<sup>37</sup> Poore, *Conspiracy Trial*, p. 73.

added that this person closed the door behind Booth, further aiding his escape.

As it seemed clear that Surratt would be found guilty and sentenced to hang, five of the nine members of the military commission signed a letter asking the president to commute Surratt's death sentence to life in prison, due to her age and gender. President Johnson declined the request to grant clemency. At 1000 on 7 July, Surratt's attorneys gained a writ of habeas corpus from Justice Andrew Wylie to ensure her a civilian trial, but Johnson suspended the writ.

The final verdict of the military commission was that all of the defendants were guilty in some way. The commission found Atzerodt, Herold, Powell, and Surratt guilty of conspiracy to commit murder and sentenced them to hang until dead. For the same crime, the commission sentenced Arnold, Mudd, and O'Laughlen to life imprisonment. Unlike the others, Spangler was not found guilty of the conspiracy charge, but he was sentenced to six years in prison for aiding Booth in his escape.

At 1330 on 7 July 1865, under the observation of Provost Marshal Maj. Gen. John F. Hartranft and Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, the four conspirators—Atzerodt, Herold, Powell, and Surratt—were hanged at the Old Arsenal Penitentiary. Their accomplices—Arnold, Mudd, O'Laughlen, and Spangler—were sent to prison at Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas near Key West, Florida. O'Laughlen died of yellow fever at the prison two years later, while Arnold, Mudd, and Spangler received presidential pardons from President Johnson and were released in 1869.

### *Aftermath and Analysis*

When he found out that he was wanted in connection with President Lincoln's assassination, John Surratt Jr. fled to Canada. From there, he traveled to Great Britain and then to the newly created Kingdom of Italy. He eventually was captured in Alexandria, Egypt, on 23 November 1866 and returned to the United States for a civilian trial in a district court in Maryland. Unlike the other conspirators, Surratt was not tried by military commission because a Supreme Court ruling earlier that year, known as *Ex parte Milligan*, stated that it was unconstitutional to try civilians in a military court if a civilian court was available. The statute of limitations had run out on all of the charges against Surratt except the one for murder. Surratt confessed to being part of the earlier conspiracy to kidnap Lincoln, but he did not confess to being part of the assassination conspiracy.



President Lincoln's funeral procession on Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C., wet collodion negative, detail, 19 April 1865

Surratt's hearing ended in a mistrial because the jury could not reach a unanimous verdict. He was released in 1867.

Interestingly, Confederate President Jefferson Davis became linked to the Lincoln assassination conspiracy during John Surratt's trial. Although Davis was not charged in the trial of the conspirators, many believed he had ordered the assassination. The court claimed that Davis "incited and encouraged" the conspirators to kill the president, strongly intimating that the murder was a natural product of the Confederacy, which was "engaged in armed rebellion against the United States of America." The assassination would aid the insurgents through "subversion and overthrow the Constitution and laws of the said United States" by killing the president, vice president, and secretary of state. The goal was to create so much chaos that an

election would be impossible and the Union would be weakened.<sup>38</sup> Davis was implicated as inciting the conspirators to act, and in this way he was considered an unindicted co-conspirator who was guilty of treason and conspiracy to murder Lincoln.

The level of connection between Booth and official Confederate channels is still a matter of debate. Although Booth met with Confederate agents in Montreal, Canada, months before the Lincoln assassination, little evidence has been found to prove that the Confederacy was fully aware of Booth's plans to kidnap or kill Lincoln. According to many Confederates, as well as John Surratt and Samuel Arnold, the Confederate government knew little to nothing of the conspiracy. Yet many Unionists believed that the assassination was part of a widespread Confederate-supported plot to destroy Union leadership. President Johnson proclaimed that the "atrocious murder of the late President Abraham Lincoln, and the attempted assassination of the Honorable William H. Seward, Secretary of State, were incited, concerted, and procured by and between Jefferson Davis . . . and other rebels and traitors against the Government of the United States."<sup>39</sup> As Union efforts to capture Davis intensified, the War Department, under Secretary of War Stanton, certainly saw the assassination as a Confederate plot, claiming that links existed between the conspirators and well-known Confederate agents as well as Davis himself.

After meeting with the Confederate cabinet on 5 May 1865 to dissolve the Confederate government officially, Davis was captured by Union forces in Irwinville, Georgia, on 10 May. On 19 May, he was imprisoned at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Overall, the federal government was reluctant to try Confederates for treason for fear that such cases would be unsuccessful, that the trials would hinder North-South reconciliation, and that they would somehow validate the constitutionality of secession. Nevertheless, while he was in prison, Davis was indicted for treason, and, on 11 June, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to bring him to trial for this charge. Jefferson Davis and other high-ranking Confederate officers had not received the general amnesty offered by President Johnson in 1865 for "every person who directly or indirectly participated in the late insurrection or rebellion."<sup>40</sup> Though the U.S. Circuit Court recruited

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<sup>38</sup> Poore, *Conspiracy Trial*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>39</sup> *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 2, p. 566.

<sup>40</sup> President Andrew Johnson, "Pres. Johnson's amnesty proclamation . . . Done at the city of Washington, the twenty-ninth of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-five . . . Andrew Johnson" (Washington, D.C., 29 May

a jury to try Davis for treason, he was released on bail after two years of imprisonment. In 1868, Davis moved to Montreal, Canada, to be with his family, also travelling to Cuba and Europe. On 25 December of that same year, he received a presidential pardon. Though the case against Davis was dismissed on 15 February 1869, theories concerning Davis's role in Lincoln's assassination continue to this day.

Historians disagree over the effect of President Lincoln's assassination on the efforts of the federal government to bring the nation back together during post-Civil War Reconstruction. Some historians claim that Lincoln's death had little effect on Reconstruction, arguing that President Johnson continued Lincoln's tolerant 1863 plan, allowing former Confederate states to rejoin the Union after only 10 percent of their population had taken an oath of allegiance to the United States. Other historians contend that the assassination had a huge impact, burdening an already stressed government and creating an even more negative attitude in the North against the former Confederate states, resulting in what they call "Radical Reconstruction." These historians add that Lincoln's Reconstruction plan was a wartime measure, and that at the time of his death he was leaning toward supporting suffrage for freed black men. Further, President Johnson was much less adept at working with Congress than Lincoln had been, which made a significant difference in how Reconstruction was handled.

Historians can only speculate whether a moderate Republican Reconstruction effort would have been more successful in ensuring the rights of freed black people and reconciling the differences between North and South. It is possible that a more moderate approach would have allowed an even stronger opposition anyway, resulting in the same kind of Radical Reconstruction that transpired under Johnson. However, it seems apparent that differences between Lincoln and Johnson, namely Johnson's inability to maintain cordial relations with Congress and mediate between disparate parties, coupled with Northern anger over the assassination of Lincoln, resulted in a move away from moderation to a more severe Radical Republican Reconstruction.

Just as the assassination shaped many of the events that followed it, the trial of the conspirators had a lasting impact on U.S. legal jurisprudence. Historians continue to study and deliberate the details of the assassination, and the proceedings of the military commission—one of the most significant commissions in the history of the U.S.

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1865), microfilm, portfolio 235, folder 25, Library of Congress.

military—continue to arouse questions. Uncertainties remain over the veracity of the evidence, the witness statements, and the degree of guilt of those who were tried by the commission. Additionally, historians continue to ponder whether the conspirators received a fair trial and just sentences. Despite these and other ongoing debates surrounding the Lincoln assassination, the entire ordeal punctuated the end of the U.S. Civil War and inexorably shifted the course of the nation's history.

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## CHRONOLOGY

*August–December 1864*

John Wilkes Booth recruits people to aid him in his plot to capture President Abraham Lincoln, with the goal of taking him to the Confederate government in Richmond and trading him for Confederate POWs.

*18 January 1865*

Booth's first planned attempt to kidnap President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre is foiled. The other conspirators see the plan as impracticable, and Lincoln is a no-show.

*4 March 1865*

Booth attends Lincoln's second inaugural address at the U.S. Capitol Building.

*17 March 1865*

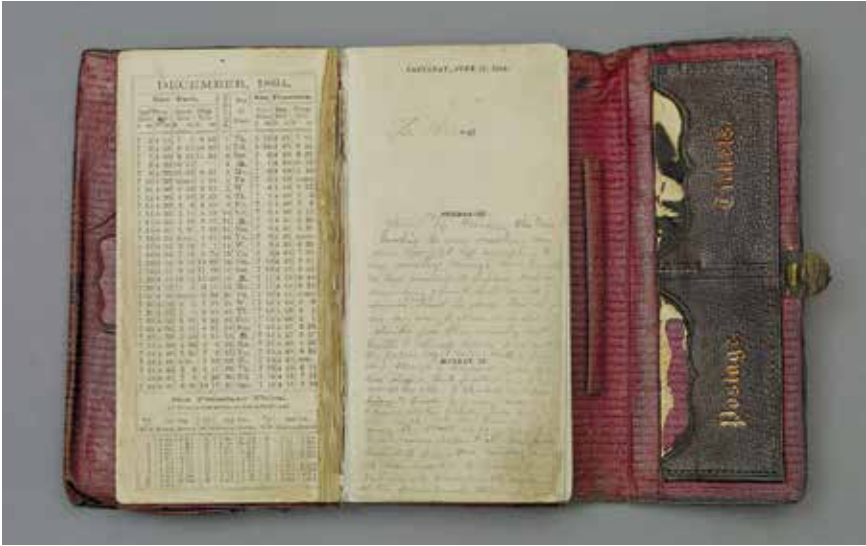
Booth and his accomplices try to kidnap Lincoln on the road near Campbell General Hospital, where the president is supposed to attend a play, but again Lincoln is a no-show.

*9 April 1865*

General Robert E. Lee surrenders the *Army of Northern Virginia* to Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Court House in Appomattox, Virginia.

*11 April 1865*

President Lincoln gives a speech at the White House concerning Reconstruction, the abolition of slavery, and the enfranchisement of black people. Booth, who is in attendance, is particularly angered by the mention of giving black people the vote. This event seems to have solidified his desire to kill the president.



Booth's red leather diary, open to an entry from 14 April 1865 in which he defends his actions. Carol M. Highsmith, 2017

#### *14 April 1865*

At approximately 2230, Booth shoots President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre.

At approximately 2230, Lewis Powell attacks Secretary of State Seward at his home.

#### *15 April 1865*

At 0722, President Lincoln dies in the Petersen House across the street from Ford's Theatre.

At approximately 1000, Vice President Andrew Johnson takes the oath of office and becomes the seventeenth president of the United States.

After questioning, Edman Spangler is arrested on suspicion of being an accomplice to Booth.

*17 April 1865*

Mary Surratt and Lewis Powell are arrested at Surratt's boarding house in Washington, D.C.

Samuel Arnold is arrested at his clerk's job in Old Point Comfort, Virginia, on suspicion of being an accomplice to Booth.

Michael O'Laughlen surrenders to authorities.

*19 April 1865*

Lincoln's funeral service is held in the East Room of the White House.

*20 April 1865*

The federal government offers a reward of \$100,000 for the capture of President Lincoln's assassin and others involved.

George Atzerodt is arrested in Germantown, Maryland.

*24 April 1865*

Dr. Samuel Mudd is arrested because of suspected connections to Booth.

*26 April 1865*

Union forces catch up with Booth and David Herold at the Garrett Farm near Port Royal, Virginia.

Herold surrenders, but Booth refuses. Sgt. Thomas "Boston" Corbett kills Booth.

Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston surrenders the largest remaining Confederate army—nearly 90,000 troops—to Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman at Bennett Place near Durham, North Carolina.

*1 May 1865*

President Johnson orders the trial of the conspirators by military commission.

*2 May 1865*

President Johnson offers a reward of \$100,000 for the capture of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, whom Johnson accuses of helping to plan Lincoln's assassination.

*4 May 1865*

Abraham Lincoln is buried in Springfield, Illinois.

*9 May 1865*

The military commission convenes to try the conspirators.

*10 May 1865*

Jefferson Davis is captured near Irwinville, Georgia.

*12 May 1865*

The first testimony of the trial is heard.

*29 June 1865*

The commission goes into secret deliberations.

*30 June 1865*

The commission finds all conspirators guilty and sentences Herold, Powell, Surratt, and Atzerodt to hang until dead; Mudd, O'Laughlen, and Arnold to serve life in prison; and Spangler to serve six years in prison.

*5 July 1865*

President Johnson approves the commission's findings and sentences.

*6 July 1865*

The defendants are made aware of their sentences.

Mary Surratt's attorneys attempt to evoke a writ of habeas corpus, but it is suspended by President Johnson. Mary Surratt becomes the first woman executed by the U.S. federal government.

*7 July 1865*

Four of the conspirators—Herold, Powell, Surratt, and Atzerodt—are hanged at the Old Arsenal Penitentiary on what is now Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, D.C.

*23 November 1866*

John Surratt is arrested by U.S. officials in Alexandria, Egypt, and is brought to the United States for trial.

*10 August 1867*

John Surratt is released after a mistrial is declared in a civilian court.

*23 September 1867*

Michael O'Laughlen dies of yellow fever while in prison.

*25 December 1868*

President Johnson pardons Jefferson Davis.

*1 March 1869*

President Johnson pardons Samuel Arnold, Samuel Mudd, and Edman Spangler.

*6 December 1889*

Jefferson Davis dies of acute bronchitis.

## ARMY REACTION TO THE ASSASSINATION

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln was particularly devastating for soldiers in the U.S. Army. After fighting a civil war for four years, they suddenly lost not only their president but also their commander-in-chief. Numerous Army soldiers and officers were in attendance at Ford's Theatre on the night of the assassination, and many of them were instrumental in tending to the wounded president, moving him to the Petersen House, attempting to stop Booth's escape, and participating in the manhunt to catch him and the other conspirators.

The following excerpts from primary source documents, written by Army soldiers in the wake of the assassination, reveal the sense of mourning and desire for justice that prevailed among many in the U.S. Army.

Pvt. John B. Foote Jr. of the 117th Regiment, New York State Volunteers, wrote in a letter to his sister that Lincoln's assassination "fell like a wet blanket on every soldier's heart."<sup>41</sup>

Pvt. Edmund J. Cleveland of the 9th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteers, wrote in his journal, "I do hope that both assassins are caught and meet their due reward. A general feeling of sorrow pervades the army."<sup>42</sup>

In a letter to a cousin, Cpl. Jonathan P. Hutchinson of the 1st Regiment, New Jersey Volunteers described the assassination of the president as one of the "most boldest and cowardly acts that any man could perpetrate...I hope they catch every one that was concerned in it and hang them."<sup>43</sup>

1st Lt. James F. Merrill of the 7th Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, wrote in his journal on 15 April that he recalled Lincoln's "kindly face" on 3 April 1865 as he rode along their lines during the Petersburg Campaign, adding that upon hearing of his death the men of his unit "wept and cursed treason. What less could they do?"<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ltr, John B. Foote to his sister, 23 Apr 1865, John B. Foote Papers, Rubenstein Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

<sup>42</sup> Diary entry, Edmund J. Cleveland, 22 Apr 1865, Edmund J. Cleveland Diary, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

<sup>43</sup> Ltr, Jonathan P. Hutchinson to his cousin, 20 Apr 1865, Jonathan P. Hutchinson Letters, Norwich Civil War Round Table Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA (hereinafter USAHEC).

<sup>44</sup> Diary entry, James F. Merrill, 15 Apr 1865, James Flint Merrill Diary, Civil War Document Collection, USAHEC.

Maj. Frank W. Dickerson of the 5th U.S. Cavalry wrote to his father that “the country was not prepared for the suddenness of this shock, to lose our President, at a time when rays of peace were commencing to dawn upon us and the prospects of happily settling our national difficulties was so apparent.”<sup>45</sup>

Pvt. James W. Turner of the 26th Regiment, Illinois Volunteers, exclaimed in a letter to another soldier that “we bid him adieu—the one blow has struck us all.”<sup>46</sup>

Capt. Jacob Heffelfinger of the 36th Pennsylvania Infantry wrote in his journal, “God help us, in the midst of rejoicing, we are made to mourn.”<sup>47</sup>

Col. Ladislav L. Zulavsky, commander of the 82d Infantry, United States Colored Troops, an African American unit, wrote that Lincoln’s death had been “deeply felt and mourned over by every officer and soldier” under his command.<sup>48</sup>

Sgt. Nathan L. Parmater of the 29th Ohio Volunteer Infantry summed up the feeling of Union soldiers in general, writing in his personal journal on 17 April, “The soldier feels as though he had lost his best friend and the country her best Statesman.”<sup>49</sup>

On 29 April 1865, after almost all of the conspirators had been captured and Booth had been killed, Sgt. Joseph Barlow of the 23d Regiment Infantry, Massachusetts Volunteers, wrote to his wife that “we will not get over the death of the President very soon, it makes us feel all the harder against the Rebels.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ltr, Frank W. Dickerson to his father, 16 Apr 1865, Frank W. Dickerson Letters, Civil War Document Collection, USAHEC.

<sup>46</sup> Ltr, James W. Turner to Joseph Shreve, 13 Jul 1865, Joseph Shreve Papers, Civil War Times Illustrated Collection, USAHEC.

<sup>47</sup> Diary entry, Jacob Heffelfinger, 22 Apr 1865, Jacob Heffelfinger Diary, Civil War Times Illustrated Collection, USAHEC.

<sup>48</sup> 18 May 1865, in *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 2, pp. 833–34.

<sup>49</sup> Diary entry, Nathan Parmater, 17 Apr 1865, Nathan Parmater Diary, Nathan Parmater Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio; in Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> Ltr, Joseph Barlow to his wife, 29 Apr 1865, Joseph Barlow Papers, USAHEC.

## ORDER OF PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION IN 1865

According to the Presidential Succession Act of 1792, the order of presidential succession, in the event that the president died or became incapacitated, was as follows in 1865: vice president, president pro tempore of the Senate, and speaker of the House of Representatives. Interestingly, this law did not provide for the situation that would have arisen had Booth's conspirators successfully killed both the vice president and the secretary of state.

If the president pro tempore of the Senate or the speaker of the House of Representatives succeeded to the presidency, the secretary of state was to call together electors to determine the next president. It was probably Booth's hope that killing the president, vice president, and secretary of state would create a circumstance in which no successor to the presidency could be determined legally. Whether Booth truly believed this chaotic situation would allow the Confederacy to survive (and continue to fight the war) or simply wished to avenge the South (for having lost the war), is a matter that is still debated. If the plan had been fully successful—especially if the opportunity to kill General Grant had presented itself—it certainly would have been more devastating for the Union. As it happened, only the president was killed. Seward recovered. Grant was not in attendance at Ford's Theatre, and Johnson became the new president.

Following the assassination of President James A. Garfield in 1881, Congress passed the Presidential Succession Act of 1886, adding more successors to the line of presidential succession. The goal was to avoid the type of constitutional crisis that could have occurred after both Lincoln's and Garfield's assassinations. The Presidential Succession Act of 1947 further changed the line of succession, restoring the speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the Senate to prominent positions on the list. Currently, the order of presidential succession is the vice president, speaker of the House of Representatives, president pro tempore of the Senate, and the fifteen members of the president's cabinet beginning with the secretary of state and going in order of their departments' creation dates.

*Order of Presidential Succession Throughout History*

1792

Vice President  
President of the Senate pro tempore  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

1886

Vice President  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of the Treasury  
Secretary of War  
Attorney General  
Postmaster General  
Secretary of the Navy  
Secretary of the Interior

1947

Vice President  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
President pro tempore of the Senate  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of the Treasury  
Secretary of War  
Attorney General  
Postmaster General  
Secretary of the Navy  
Secretary of the Interior  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Secretary of Commerce  
Secretary of Labor

*Current*

Vice President  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
President pro tempore of the Senate  
Secretary of State  
Secretary of the Treasury  
Secretary of Defense  
Attorney General  
Secretary of the Interior  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Secretary of Commerce  
Secretary of Labor  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development  
Secretary of Transportation  
Secretary of Energy  
Secretary of Education  
Secretary of Veteran Affairs  
Secretary of Homeland Security

## MILITARY COMMISSION FOR THE TRIAL



Members of the military commission for the trial of the conspirators,  
Alexander Gardner, gelatin silver print, 1865

The military commission for the trial of the conspirators was composed of the following people, as shown in the photograph above (*from left to right*):

Lt. Col. David R. Clendenin  
Col. Charles H. Tompkins  
Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Harris (*standing*)  
Brig. Gen. Albion P. Howe  
Brig. Gen. James A. Ekin  
Maj. Gen. Lewis “Lew” Wallace (*standing*)  
Maj. Gen. David A. Hunter, president of the commission  
Maj. Gen. August V. Kautz (*standing*)  
Brig. Gen. Robert S. Foster

Also pictured in the photograph above are those who served as prosecutors of the trial (*continuing from left to right*):

Assistant Judge Advocate General John A. Bingham  
Assistant Judge Advocate General Col. Henry L. Burnett (*standing*)  
Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Joseph Holt

## LEGACY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY: THE CHANGING HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Like all major historical occurrences, the assassination of President Lincoln and the trial of the conspirators have been interpreted in different ways throughout the years. These two historical subjects, inexorably intertwined, have continued to be popular among historians and U.S. history enthusiasts alike. Numerous books have been (and continue to be) written, based on primary sources and other documents available in repositories such as the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Many of these works have shaped the ever-changing collective memory and understanding of both the Lincoln assassination and the trial of the conspirators.

Museums have also been instrumental in the preservation of these events and in shaping the historical narrative around the assassination and the trial. By preserving and exhibiting relevant historical artifacts, museums shape Lincoln's legacy for visitors who might not otherwise be engaged in scholarly debate. Today, the remodeled Ford's Theatre, run by the U.S. National Park Service, and several other preserved sites such as the Petersen House, Grant Hall, the Surratt House Museum, and the Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House Museum are central to these historical endeavors. About a million people visit Ford's Theatre (and the Petersen House) each year to see where President Lincoln was shot and where he died. The Ford's Theatre Museum collection contains key artifacts from the assassination such as the black wool coat Lincoln wore to the theater that night, the Derringer pistol that Booth used to kill Lincoln, and the pillow stained with Lincoln's blood, among thousands of other items. Similarly, many people gain further insight concerning specific aspects of Booth and Herold's escape by touring the Surratt House Museum and the Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House Museum each year. These experiences have an important effect on those visiting, whether they do so physically or online.

Of course, historical texts have also played an instrumental role in shaping the narrative of Lincoln's assassination and the prosecution of those responsible for it. The Army's *Official Records* series on the Civil War, Benjamin Perley Poore's *The Conspiracy Trial for the Murder of the President*, other early compilations of trial records, and works like George Alfred Townsend's *The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth* have aided historians for more than 150 years.

Differing theories about the conspirators have grown and changed throughout the years, but two of the most enduring and popular

debates concern the culpability of Dr. Mudd and Mary Surratt. To this day, Mudd's family continues to claim his innocence, and other private interests like the Surratt Society believe that Mary Surratt was innocent, even though substantial evidence indicates otherwise in both cases. Historians continue to investigate both the assassination and the conspirators' trial, reexamining known information and at times coming across new information, constantly reshaping how people in the present view past events. For instance, in the years immediately after the assassination, most Americans believed Mudd was a mere bystander who had no previous knowledge of Booth and was simply treating an injured man. That popular assessment overlooked indicators to the contrary such as an affidavit recorded in 1865 from Capt. George C. Dutton, a member of Mudd's military escort to the Dry Tortugas prison, in which Dutton claims that Mudd confessed to having met Booth prior to the assassination.<sup>51</sup> In 1893, Thomas A. Jones claimed that Booth met with Mudd at his home prior to the assassination, but this information did not greatly sway popular opinion on the matter either.<sup>52</sup> It was not until the late twentieth century that works like Edward Steers' *His Name is Still Mudd* sought to reexamine Mudd's supposed complete innocence. Steers presents clear evidence that Mudd knew Booth before the assassination, including an 1893 statement by Samuel Cox that, following his release from prison, Mudd had told him that "Booth had at one time sought an introduction . . . through John Surratt."<sup>53</sup> Steers presents a solid case against Mudd, tracing how Mudd and Booth came to meet through introductions from Confederate agents Thomas Harbin and John Surratt. More recently, in his 2008 book *The Fall and Redemption of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd*, Robert K. Summers (Mudd's great grandson) proved that Mudd had a total of three encounters with Booth before the assassination.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps the greatest example of new evidence coming to light in a way that reshaped the historical narrative is George Atzerodt's "Lost Confession," which was discovered in 1977 among the papers of Atzerodt's attorney. In his statement, made while he was imprisoned with the other conspirators aboard the USS

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<sup>51</sup> Pitman, *Assassination of President Lincoln*, p. 421.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas A. Jones, *John Wilkes Booth: By the Man Who Helped Him Escape* (Chicago: Laird & Lee Publishers, 1893), p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> Edward Steers Jr., *His Name is Still Mudd: The Case Against Dr. Samuel Alexander Mudd* (Gettysburg, Pa.: Thomas Publications, 1997), pp. 54–55.

<sup>54</sup> Robert K. Summers, *The Fall and Redemption of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd: The True Story of the Doctor Who Went to Prison for Helping Abraham Lincoln's Assassin, John Wilkes Booth* (Robert K. Summers, 2008).

*Montauk*, Atzerodt claimed that Booth had sent provisions to Mudd's house about two weeks before the assassination to be used during the escape to Virginia, a strong indication that Mudd, at the very least, knew of Booth's plot to kidnap Lincoln and take him to Richmond.<sup>55</sup>

As with many major happenings in our nation's history, the events surrounding Lincoln's death quickly entered the realm of American folklore, and popular American views and perceptions about them—just like those of historians—have been changing ever since. These views have been shaped by the many books written about Lincoln and his assassination. Within months of the assassination, memoirs, descriptions, and analyses of the event were published, with especial focus on Lincoln as a national hero. Interest in Lincoln and his assassination has been consistently popular ever since. Over time, the historical narrative has reshaped and reframed Lincoln from a mere man humbly serving his nation to a larger-than-life character of deific proportion. As a historical subject, he is enduringly popular. Indeed, more books have been written about Lincoln than about any other U.S. president. Meanwhile, other aspects of the assassination event, especially the trial and punishment of the conspirators, have often been neglected.

Although many people in the country mourned Lincoln's demise, some may have been glad. Reactions in the South certainly were mixed. Some believed the story to be a rumor; some rejoiced at the news; others feared it would lead to fiercer reprisal from the North once the war was over. This division in the popular response to Lincoln's death has shaped the collective memory of the event for Americans to the present day. Anti-Lincoln historical traditions have continued alongside larger pro-South historical traditions from the end of the Civil War up to today. These differences in historical presentation have had tangible effects on Americans' understanding of Lincoln, his assassination, and the Civil War in general, and have been played out in the pages of both textbooks and popular histories.

Furthermore, views of the conspirators and the trial itself have been disparate. Many have believed some or all of the accused were innocent. Others, especially those studying the legal aspects of the case, have disagreed completely with the use of military commissions for trying civilians and have been critical of the trial's outcome, sentences, and procedures. Though the Supreme Court's *Ex parte Milligan* decision in 1866 showed an almost immediate legal response—ruling that civilians could not be tried in military courts—

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<sup>55</sup> Steers, *The Trial*, p. 104.

the nation has revisited the idea several times since, especially during times of war. During World War II, in a 1942 case known as *Ex parte Quirin*, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of allowing military tribunals for unlawful combatants who were not citizens of the United States. In 2001, this case was used as the legal precedent for trying suspected terrorists who were detained at Guantanamo Bay. In the present day, the U.S. government continues to wrestle with the issue of how to detain and prosecute enemy combatants captured during the Global War on Terrorism.

Although most Americans today are not overly familiar with the details of the Lincoln assassination or the trial of the conspirators, they are more likely to have some personal image of the two primary individuals involved: Abraham Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth. Generally, Lincoln has come to be seen by most as a martyr for the nation, an almost mythic success story of a rugged working man who rose to the most powerful position in the country and died fighting to reunite the Union. However, scholarly writings and sermons of the late nineteenth century indicate that many Americans of that era had come to see the assassination as predestined. Lincoln often was compared to Moses, who successfully led his people to the Promised Land but was unable to enter it himself.<sup>56</sup>

By contrast, in many modern narratives, Booth often has been depicted as mentally unstable and so infatuated with the South that he assassinated the president in a theatrical act of revenge for the Confederacy's loss of the Civil War. Yet in the late nineteenth century, some writers sought to cast Booth as someone who was moved by the divine to bring about Lincoln's predetermined death—even going so far as to compare Booth's actions with Judas Iscariot's pivotal role in the betrayal and execution of Jesus Christ. Charles Warwick, an actor and friend of Booth's, wrote: "Let them remember that without a Judas there would have been no atonement and we poor sinners might still be floundering on in the dark and dusty way leading to

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas R. Turner, *Beware the People Weeping: Public Opinion and the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp. 83–84; in Harold Holzer, Craig L. Symonds, and Frank J. Williams, eds., *The Lincoln Assassination: Crime and Punishment, Myth and Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 164.

eternal life.”<sup>57</sup> In this theological perspective, the actions of both traitors were seen as necessary for the salvation of mankind.<sup>58</sup>

Almost a hundred years before President John F. Kennedy’s assassination would inspire scores of conspiracy theories, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln inspired its own frenzy of conspiracy theories. For years, false information spread concerning who was *actually* responsible for Lincoln’s death and about what *really* happened to Booth. In addition to the widespread belief that Jefferson Davis was involved in the assassination, in the immediate aftermath of the assassination claims were made in the North by newspapers, politicians, and some citizens that prominent figures such as Vice President Johnson or Secretary Stanton had something to do with Lincoln’s death, although these rumors failed to gain much traction. Some Radical Republicans in Congress like Ohio Congressman James M. Ashley, distrustful of Johnson, asserted that Johnson had a hand in the murder of Lincoln to ensure a more lenient Reconstruction for the South. This led to a congressional special committee investigation of President Johnson in 1867, which ultimately cleared him of these accusations. Even into the twentieth century, some writers asserted that Secretary Stanton was involved in the assassination. For example, in his 1937 book *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?*, Otto Eisenschiml argued that Stanton was behind the Lincoln assassination, a theory which has come to be known as the Eisenschiml Thesis.<sup>59</sup>

Somewhat more widespread were the theories about Booth’s demise. There were several instances of men claiming to be Booth (usually in the West), to have met him still alive, or to have talked with someone with knowledge of his whereabouts. Books such as

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<sup>57</sup> Charles Warwick, “The Assassination of Lincoln,” in *The Unlocked Book: A Memoir of John Wilkes Booth By His Sister*, ed. Asia Booth Clarke (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1938. Reprint, Middletown, Del.: Big Byte Books, 2019), pp. 95–96. Judas Iscariot was a disciple of Jesus Christ, who betrayed Jesus by revealing his identity to his persecutors.

<sup>58</sup> Turner, *Beware the People Weeping*, pp. 83–84; Holzer, Symonds, and Williams, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 164.

<sup>59</sup> See Otto Eisenschiml, *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1937). For more information on Lincoln assassination conspiracy theories please refer to William Hanchett, *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies: being an account of the hatred felt by many Americans for President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and the first complete examination and refutation of the many theories, hypotheses, and speculations put forward since 1865 concerning those presumed to have aided, abetted, controlled, or directed the murderous act of John Wilkes Booth in Ford’s Theater the night of April 14* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

Finis Bates' *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth* (1907) claimed that Booth had not been killed and was still alive after 1865.<sup>60</sup> Bates argued that the U.S. government had passed off another body as Booth's, and that Booth had assumed a new identity as John St. Helen and had lived until 1903, when he took his own life. Bates traveled the country with a mummified cadaver, which he claimed was Booth's dead body. These conspiracy and cover-up theories were refuted time and again, yet they persisted, even though the results from Booth's official autopsy and the subsequent exhumations and reinternments of his remains should have removed all doubt. Booth's own family members verified that the remains remanded to their possession in 1869 and buried in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore were those of John Wilkes Booth.

Some of the discrepancies in current beliefs about the events surrounding the assassination can be explained by looking at publications from that time, which spread both accurate and inaccurate information—much like the media of today. Some newspaper reports directly linked the attacks on Lincoln and Seward to the Confederacy. For instance, the front page of the *Nashville Daily Union's* 15 April edition, entitled "The Rebel Fiends At Work," presented Stanton's report claiming that Booth was taking orders from Richmond.<sup>61</sup> As more information became known and the conspirators were being tried and sentenced, people who were directly involved in the events—including the conspirators themselves and reporters at the trial—began to publish accounts.<sup>62</sup> They were motivated by several factors: to inform the public, to clear their names, or merely to make money. The factual discrepancies in the many published first-hand accounts of the assassination and trial presented varying versions of the truth. For example, reporters and stenographers like Benjamin Perley Poore and Benn Pitman, both of whom were present at the trial, used their notes to write slightly differing reports of the trial proceedings.<sup>63</sup> Personal accounts of various aspects of the assassination were published in

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<sup>60</sup> See Finis L. Bates, *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth* (Memphis: The Historical Publishing Company, 1907).

<sup>61</sup> E. M. Stanton, "The Rebel Fiends At Work," *Nashville Daily Union*, 15 Apr 1865.

<sup>62</sup> Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Harris, who served on the military commission, waited until 1897 to publish his treatise, *Rome's Responsibility for the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, in which he tried to link responsibility for the assassination to the Roman Catholic Church. Anti-Catholic views were prominent at that time, and it should be noted that Mary Surratt, John Surratt Jr., and Samuel Mudd were all Catholic.

<sup>63</sup> See Poore, *Conspiracy Trial*; and Pitman, *Assassination of President Lincoln*.

the decades following, providing more perspectives but introducing more inaccurate information.<sup>64</sup> In a personal account published by Thomas Jones in 1893, Jones insists he had no knowledge of the assassination when he aided Booth and Herold in their escape. He even claims to believe that Lincoln was a “great and good man.”<sup>65</sup> Neither of these assertions agrees with Jones’ earlier accounts. To meet public demand for information on the assassination and its aftermath, some, like reporter George Alfred Townsend, hastily published financially lucrative but not necessarily accurate works.<sup>66</sup>

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the field of Lincoln assassination studies, much like academic studies in general in the United States, has become more focused on objective research and factual presentation. This trend is also evident in museums’ exhibitions and presentations. As research continues to grow in clarity and nuance, and as former inaccuracies are set to right, the nation’s collective memory should also evolve and reflect a version of history that is closer to the one found in the primary source records. Hopefully, Americans will engage more deeply with the ever-changing historical narrative of the Lincoln assassination and the trial of the conspirators.

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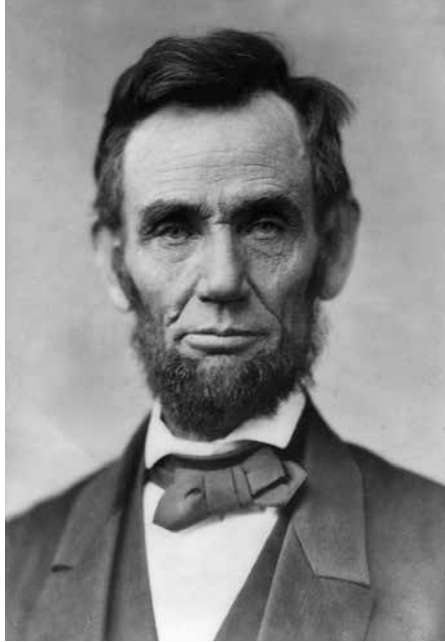
<sup>64</sup> See Arnold, *Memoirs of a Lincoln Conspirator*; Jones, *John Wilkes Booth*; and Weichmann, *A True History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*.

<sup>65</sup> Jones, *John Wilkes Booth*, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> See Townsend, *The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth*.

## SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

### *Abraham Lincoln*



Portrait of Abraham Lincoln  
by Alexander Gardner, matte  
collodion print, 8 November 1863

Abraham Lincoln was born on 12 February 1809, in a log cabin on a farm near Hodgenville, Hardin County, Kentucky. He attended school at Zachariah Riney. In 1816, Lincoln's family moved to a town near Gentryville, Indiana, where Lincoln worked on a farm. In 1827, he began running a ferry across the Ohio River. In 1828 and 1831, while transporting boatloads of produce to New Orleans, Lincoln witnessed the ill treatment of enslaved black people, which shaped his views on abolition. In 1830, Lincoln's family moved to a farm in Decatur, Illinois. It was at this farm that Lincoln famously split rails to build fences, an act that earned him the nickname "Abe Lincoln the Rail Splitter" and, subsequently, the Republican presidential nomination for the 1860 election. After helping to build a new cabin for his family, Lincoln moved to New Salem, Illinois, where he worked as a store clerk, served in the local militia, and fought in the Black

Hawk War during the Indian Wars as a company commander, rising to the rank of captain. Afterward, Lincoln became a partner in the Lincoln-Berry Store, an endeavor which did not succeed and left him in debt. In 1833, Lincoln was elected postmaster and served as deputy surveyor. The following year, he was elected as a Whig to the Illinois House of Representatives. Lincoln was reelected three times, serving from 1834 to 1842. He also began to study law, was granted his legal license in 1836, and moved to Springfield, Illinois, in 1837 to practice law. Lincoln married Mary Ann Todd of Lexington, Kentucky, in 1842. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1846, as a Whig candidate, and he served one term.

In 1858, Lincoln campaigned for a seat in the U.S. Senate. He ran as a candidate of the new Republican Party against Democrat Stephen A. Douglas, but he lost. Even so, Lincoln gained nationwide notoriety for his series of debates with Douglas over the 1854 passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the extension of slavery. It was during the debate in Springfield, Illinois, that Lincoln gave his famous “House Divided” speech, in which he invoked the words of Jesus Christ to describe the fragility of the U.S. government with half the nation for slavery and half the nation against it: “a house divided against itself cannot stand.”

In May 1860, Lincoln won the Republican presidential nomination. In the general election, he ran once more against northern Democrat Stephen Douglas, as well as southern Democrat Vice President John C. Breckinridge and moderate Senator John Bell from Tennessee of the Constitutional Union Party. Because the Democratic Party was split, Lincoln won the election with 39.8 percent of the popular vote and 180 electoral votes, exceeding the 152 (of 303) electoral votes required for the win.

Soon after Lincoln was elected president, Southern states began seceding from the United States. When the new Confederate States of America fired upon Fort Sumter in South Carolina, Lincoln called up volunteers and militia to suppress the rebellion and ensure the continuation of the Union. As a moderate Republican, he spoke out against Radical Republicans’ demands for harsher treatment of the South, sought to work with War Democrats who remained in the Union, and looked for ways to end the growing conflict and reunite the seceding states with the Union.

On 1 January 1863, marking a major shift in his wartime policy, Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation. This executive order changed the federal legal status of more than 3.5 million black people in the Confederate states from enslaved to free. Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not free enslaved people in states

that had remained part of the Union, it served as a wartime measure to put further pressure on the Confederacy.

In November 1863, Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address during the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery after the Gettysburg Campaign. In this speech, Lincoln appealed to the nation, calling for American citizens not to allow such sacrifice to be made in vain, and urging them to come together in the struggle to maintain the Union's existence as a bastion of democracy, republicanism, liberty, and equality.

Lincoln won reelection in 1864, beating Democratic candidate George B. McClellan who had been in command of the Union forces from 1861 to 1862. After his reelection, Lincoln oversaw the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, which abolished slavery throughout the entire nation.

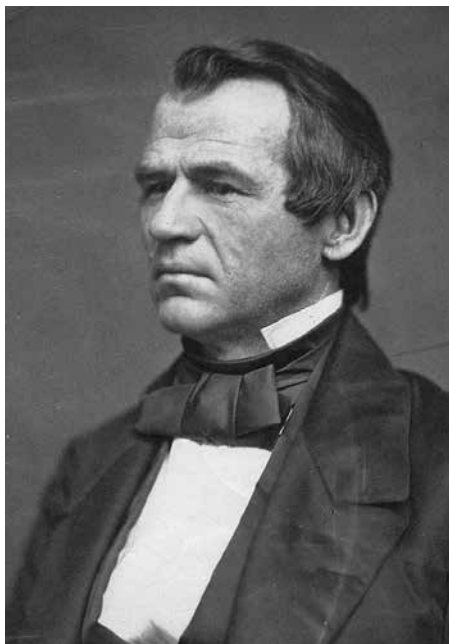
After Lincoln's assassination, his body lay in state in the East Room of the White House and then in the Capitol Rotunda from 19 to 21 April. His body, along with the body of his son William who had died of typhoid fever three years earlier, was carried by funeral train for three weeks to Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln, his wife Mary, and three of their four sons—Edward, William, and Thomas—all rest in the same burial plot.

Lincoln was the first American president to be assassinated, and the event had a strong and long-lasting emotional impact on the country. In his elegy to Lincoln called "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," American poet Walt Whitman described the president as a "fallen star," depicting that "tearful night" when a "great star disappear'd!" In his poem "O Captain, My Captain," also written in response to President Lincoln's death, Whitman describes his "Captain" as "fallen cold and dead."

The great legacy of Abraham Lincoln has persisted through time. Often depicted as a martyr for his nation, Lincoln is routinely ranked at the top of historians' lists of U.S. presidents for his abilities as a national leader, his handling of the Civil War, and his success in preserving the Union.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Abraham Lincoln's background, his movements on the day of 14 April 1865, why the Grants did not attend the play, the events following Lincoln's assassination and preceding his death, and his legacy in U.S. history.

## *Andrew Johnson*



Portrait of Andrew Johnson  
attributed to Jesse Harrison  
Whitehurst, photographic print on  
salt paper, 1860

Andrew Johnson was born on 29 December 1808, in Raleigh, North Carolina. Coming from humble beginnings, Johnson received no formal schooling as a child, instead working as a tailor's apprentice. As a young adult he settled in Greeneville, Tennessee, where he served as mayor of the city before being elected to the state House of Representatives in 1835. Johnson then served in the state Senate before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1843. He became governor of Tennessee in 1853 and was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1857. While in the Senate, Johnson fought for the Homestead Act, an instrumental piece of legislation, which passed in 1862 and led to a significant increase in westward expansion of American citizens.

As Southern states began seceding in 1861, including his home state of Tennessee, Johnson was the only senator from a Confederate state who did not resign his seat but remained firmly supportive of the Union. In 1862, Lincoln appointed Johnson military governor

of Tennessee. To shore up Southern Unionist support for Lincoln's reelection in 1864, Johnson was added to the ticket as the Republican vice presidential candidate, replacing Hannibal Hamlin of Maine. Upon Lincoln's reelection in 1865, Johnson became vice president of the United States.

Johnson was one of the four U.S. government leaders targeted by John Wilkes Booth and his accomplices in their assassination plot. Johnson met with Lincoln on the afternoon of 14 April 1865, which marked the first time they had seen each other since the inauguration the previous month. As Lincoln lay dying in the Petersen House that evening, Johnson was at his bedside. He is reported to have said, "They shall suffer for this."

Johnson was sworn in as Lincoln's successor at approximately 1000 on 15 April. As the seventeenth president of the United States, he was instrumental in the proceedings that followed Lincoln's assassination, working to hunt down and either kill or capture the accused conspirators. Johnson was also influential in the trial of those who were caught, insisting on a trial by military commission rather than a civilian court. This military commission led to the hanging of four conspirators and the imprisonment of four others.

President Johnson oversaw the early stages of Reconstruction in the South during his one term in office, including the period often called "Presidential Reconstruction" (1865–1867) and the beginning of the "Radical Reconstruction" period (1867–1877).

President Johnson has the dubious honor of two firsts: he was the first American president to assume office after the assassination of a sitting president, and he was the first American president to be impeached. In 1868, the U.S. House of Representatives began impeachment proceedings against Johnson "for high crimes and misdemeanors," putting forward eleven articles of impeachment. The most grievous of these was Johnson's violation of the Tenure of Office Act, which had been passed in 1867 over his veto. He had attempted to remove Edwin Stanton from his position as secretary of war without permission from the Senate, a deed which violated the Act. Johnson stayed in office despite the impeachment, because the Senate failed—by a single vote—to reach the two-thirds majority required to remove him from office.

During the presidential election of 1868, Johnson ran for the Democratic presidential candidacy. He lost to Governor Horatio Seymour of New York who in turn went on to lose to General Ulysses S. Grant in the general election.

Many commentators widely criticized Johnson's handling of the trial of the conspirators after Lincoln's assassination. They disliked

that he failed to show leniency to Mary Surratt when he did not sign the commission's plea to commute her sentence from execution to life in prison. Although Johnson claimed he had never been presented with that option, documentary evidence and eyewitness accounts of others indicated that claim to be false.

Partly to shore up support for the upcoming election, Johnson worked to pardon and give amnesty to former Confederates. On 25 December 1868, Johnson went so far as to pardon former Confederate President Jefferson Davis. He also pardoned the imprisoned conspirators—Dr. Samuel Mudd, Samuel Arnold, and Edman Spangler—in 1869, because they were widely believed to be innocent and their sentences were deemed excessive. (Michael O'Laughlen had died of yellow fever in 1867 and was not pardoned.)

In 1875, Johnson returned to the U.S. Senate as a representative from Tennessee, but he died shortly afterward from a stroke. Johnson was buried in Greeneville in what is now called Andrew Johnson National Cemetery.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Andrew Johnson's background, his political views and sympathies, his refusal to commute Mary Surratt's death sentence, his pardoning of the conspirators and other Confederates, and his impeachment.

*William H. Seward*



Portrait of William H. Seward,  
photographic print

William Henry Seward was born on 16 May 1801 in the village of Florida in Orange County, New York. His parents ran a large farm and owned slaves. (New York state did not abolish slavery until 1827.) At fifteen, Seward attended Union College in Schenectady, New York. However, after arguing with his father over money, the seventeen-year-old Seward ran away from school. With a fellow student, Seward took a ship to Georgia, where he got a job working at a school in Eatonton in Putnam County. While in the South, Seward witnessed the terrible treatment of enslaved black people, which would inform his views on abolition later in life. In 1819, Seward's family persuaded him to return to New York. He then studied law at an attorney's office in Goshen, New York, and graduated from Union College in 1820. Seward passed the bar exam in 1822 and started working as a lawyer. In 1824, he married Frances Adeline Miller and joined her father's law practice in Auburn, New York. Seward also became involved in politics, becoming close friends with the publisher, Edward T.

“Thurlow” Weed, a Whig and Republican political boss who later would become Seward’s political adviser.

After several failed attempts in the 1820s to gain elected positions in the government, Seward became a state senator in 1830, having run as his district’s Anti-Masonic Party nominee. After Andrew Jackson’s reelection in 1832, Seward joined the growing Whig Party, which opposed Jackson and the Democrats. In 1834, Seward became the Whig candidate for New York governor, but he lost to incumbent Democrat William L. Marcy. Because his state senate term had expired, Seward returned to Auburn and again worked as a lawyer. During a trip to Virginia in 1835, he and his wife again witnessed the awful treatment of enslaved black people, which further solidified their abolitionist views. In 1836, Seward began working as an agent for the Holland Land Company in western New York. He fought to aid the company in weathering the Panic of 1837. In 1838, Seward again ran against Marcy for the New York gubernatorial office. Seward won, mainly because of the country’s economic recession, which was blamed on the Democrats.

Seward was reelected governor in 1840, the same year that Democratic President Martin Van Buren lost to Whig candidate William Henry Harrison. While serving as the governor of New York, Seward incurred massive debt to maintain the lifestyle expected of the office and to cover his losses from his investment in the Holland Land Company. In 1843, he left the governor’s office and returned to practicing law in Auburn. Seward grew popular in his work, defending a variety of controversial clients, such as murderers who were considered insane, abolitionists, black people, and individuals who were accused of helping black people escape slavery via the Underground Railroad. As Whig candidate Zachary Taylor won the presidency in 1848, Seward was elected to the U.S. Senate. As the lead antislavery advocate in the Senate, Seward opposed the proslavery elements of the Compromise of 1850. The bills passed anyway, mainly owing to President Taylor’s death and Seward’s declining influence under Taylor’s successor President Millard Fillmore. As the divide between North and South grew over the issue of slavery in the 1850s, Seward and his wife Frances opened their home to enslaved fugitives as part of the Underground Railroad.

The Republican Party was created in 1854 in reaction to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and its antislavery stance was attractive to Seward and many other Whigs. When the two parties merged in 1855, Seward was the most prominent member of the new party, but he decided not to run for office on the advice of Weed, who felt the new party was not strong enough to win. Instead, California

senator John C. Fremont became the first Republican candidate for president, losing to Democratic senator James Buchanan Jr. in 1856. Then, in 1860, when Seward was favored to win the Republican presidential candidacy, it was Abraham Lincoln who was victorious. Lincoln's campaign was helped by Seward's former ally, the publisher Horace Greeley, who attacked Seward in his newspaper, the *New-York Tribune*. Greeley and others feared that Seward could not win in battleground states like Illinois and Indiana, whereas Lincoln could. Although Seward believed that Lincoln had won the nomination through the underhanded means of his followers, Seward still campaigned for him, helping Lincoln carry most of the Northern states. Seward eventually accepted the position of secretary of state, which was offered to him by Vice President Hannibal Hamlin on Lincoln's behalf. As Southern states began secession conventions in 1860 in response to Lincoln's probable election, Seward sought to bring both sides together through compromise legislation. In January 1861, he gave a popular speech in which he argued for the preservation of the Union.

In February 1861, as Lincoln was on his way to Washington, D.C., Seward was informed by Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott that there was a plot to assassinate the president-elect as he passed through Baltimore. Seward sent his son Frederick to warn Lincoln in Philadelphia. Lincoln decided to travel the rest of the way without his family but with well-armed guards, and he made it to the capital without incident.

As the secretary of state during the Civil War, Seward worked to ensure that foreign powers did not interfere in the conflict. This meant using diplomacy to counter the efforts of Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin in order to prevent other nations from officially recognizing the Confederate States of America. It also meant disrupting trade between Southern states and other countries. Seward was effective in this campaign; in May 1861, both Britain and France declared the Southern states to be belligerents by international law. In fact, over the next four years, the Confederacy would remain unrecognized by European nations, largely because of the efforts of Seward's State Department.

Seward continued as secretary of state after Lincoln's reelection in 1864. He survived Lewis Powell's assassination attempt on 14 April 1865, and remained secretary of state under Andrew Johnson. During Johnson's presidency, Seward's reputation was damaged by fights in Congress over the Freedman's Bureau, the Civil Rights Bill, and Reconstruction efforts.

Throughout his term as secretary of state, Seward sought to expand U.S. territorial holdings in places like the Caribbean, the North

American continent, and the Pacific Ocean in order to aid the U.S. Navy in its protection of U.S. international trade. As an expansionist, Seward often sought to annex new territory by purchase. Although he sought several territories, the only territory that was annexed while Seward was in office was Alaska, which the United States bought through a treaty with Russia (which had claimed ownership of Alaska in 1867).

Although Seward backed General Grant when he won the Republican nomination for president over Johnson, Grant did not choose to keep Seward on as secretary of state. Seward retired from politics in 1869 and, over the next few years, traveled across North America on the newly built Transcontinental Railroad, as well as to Mexico, Cuba, Japan, China, India, the Middle East, and Europe, before returning home to Auburn in 1871. Seward died in 1872 while working on his memoirs and was buried with his wife in Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn, New York.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Seward's background; Powell's attack on Seward; the ultimate outcome of the attack; and the reasoning behind Booth's plan to attack Lincoln, Johnson, and Seward.

## *Ulysses S. Grant*



Portrait of Lt. Gen. Ulysses S.  
Grant by Samuel Sartain, 1865

Hiram Ulysses Grant was born on 27 April 1822 in Point Pleasant, Ohio. His father worked as a tanner and merchant. Although named for his grandfather on his mother's side, Grant went by his middle name throughout his life. In 1839, at the age of sixteen, Grant was nominated by his congressman Thomas L. Hamer to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Hamer, perhaps assuming that Grant's middle name was his mother's maiden name, Simpson, enlisted Grant under the name "Ulysses S. Grant." The name stuck, and when fellow cadets at West Point noticed that Grant's initials were now "U. S.," they nicknamed him "Sam" as in "Uncle Sam." When Grant graduated in 1843, he became a second lieutenant and was assigned to the 4th Infantry Regiment at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis, Missouri, which, at the time, was the largest military base in the western United States.

Grant participated in the Mexican-American War from 1846 to 1848, distinguishing himself as a competent officer in several campaigns, including Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterrey,

Veracruz (the first large-scale amphibious assault conducted by the U.S. military), Molino del Rey, and Chapultepec. In 1847, as reward for his actions, Grant was brevetted to first lieutenant.

Grant married Julia Dent in St. Louis in 1848 and decided to stay in the Army. He was stationed in Detroit and New York for a short time, then ordered to California with the 4th Infantry after gold was discovered there. Grant's unit sailed from New York to Panama, made the harrowing overland crossing of the peninsula, and then sailed on to California to reinforce a small garrison. Once in California, Grant was sent north to Vancouver Barracks in Oregon territory. In 1853, he was promoted to captain and assigned to Company F, 4th Infantry at Fort Humboldt, California. In 1854, after reportedly having issues with drinking caused by his long separation from his family, he resigned his commission and returned home to St. Louis. He farmed and looked for work for the rest of the decade. In 1860, Grant and his family moved to Galena, Illinois, so he could work in his father's tannery. This allowed him to pay off debts he had accrued in Missouri.

When the Civil War began, Grant sought to return to the military and fight for the Union. He became a military aide to Governor Richard Yates and was promoted to colonel in June 1861. Grant was the commander of the 21st Regiment, Illinois Volunteers, and sent to Missouri in order to dislodge Confederate forces. In August, Grant was promoted again, this time to brigadier general, and put in charge of volunteer forces. He was then appointed commander of the District of Southeastern Missouri. In this role, Grant fought the Confederates along the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers, in the battle of Belmont (Missouri 1861) and in the Henry and Donelson Campaign. The taking of Fort Donelson in 1862 by Grant's forces was the first major Union victory in the war. In April 1862, Grant led Union forces in the Shiloh Campaign in Tennessee. Although this was a Union victory, the sheer number of deaths shocked many citizens; Shiloh was, at the time, the costliest campaign in U.S. history. In January 1863, Grant assumed command of Union forces in western Tennessee and began the Vicksburg Campaign. The Union took Vicksburg in July, gaining control of the Mississippi River and splitting the Confederacy into two parts.

Lincoln promoted Grant to major general after the taking of Vicksburg, and assigned him command of the new Military Division of the Mississippi in October 1863. By November, Union forces had taken Chattanooga, defeating the remaining Confederate forces in Tennessee and allowing the Union to invade further south (setting up Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's march to the sea). In March 1864,

Grant was promoted to lieutenant general and given command of all United States armies. In that role he oversaw the Union victory in the Civil War. On 9 April 1865, Grant was present at the Appomattox Court House to accept General Lee's surrender of the *Army of Northern Virginia*.

On 14 April, Grant and his wife Julia were invited by the Lincolns to attend a play at Ford's Theatre, but they declined, choosing instead to visit their children in New Jersey. It is believed that Booth at least considered assassinating Grant, although there was no evidence that either Booth or the conspirators took any action to do so. During the trial of the conspirators, prosecutors were unsuccessful in their attempts to show that O'Laughlen had shadowed the general with the intent of killing him.

After the war, Congress created a new four-star rank for general officers known as "General of the Army of the United States," and they conferred this new rank upon Grant in 1866. In that same year, Grant, now a war hero, became the Republican candidate for president, going on to defeat Democrat Horatio Seymour. Grant oversaw the rest of Reconstruction, serving two terms in a presidency that was marred by scandals, which were largely blamed on his corrupt advisers. In 1877, the Grants traveled around the world, which led to financial difficulty. Grant then made an unsuccessful bid for the 1880 Republican presidential nomination. Facing financial ruin in 1884, he made a publishing deal with Mark Twain to write his two-volume autobiography, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, which was published shortly after Grant's death. Grant died from throat cancer in 1885, and he was buried in Riverside Park in Manhattan, New York, then moved to the nearby General Grant National Memorial (the largest mausoleum in North America) in 1897.

## *John Wilkes Booth*



Portrait of John Wilkes Booth, detail

John Wilkes Booth was born on 10 May 1838, in Bel Air, Maryland. He was raised in a prominent theatrical family and became a well-known actor himself. He attended Bel Air Academy and then Milton Boarding School for Boys from 1850 to 1851. Later, Wilkes was sent to St. Timothy's Hall, a military academy in Catonsville, Maryland, but he left school at the age of fourteen when his father died. At sixteen, Booth showed interest in politics and attended a rally of the Know Nothing Party as a delegate for anti-immigrant congressional candidate Henry Winter Davis during the 1854 election. Booth was also interested in the theater, seeking to follow in the footsteps of his father and older brothers.

Booth made his onstage debut in 1855 at the age of seventeen in a supporting role in *Richard III* at Baltimore's Charles Street Theatre. Through the 1850s, he continued to act, eventually becoming well-known for his energetic performances and staged sword fights. In September 1858, Booth moved to Richmond, Virginia, to perform at

the Marshall Theatre. His popularity grew due to his work as a stock company actor at the Richmond Theatre.

It was during this time that Booth, a bitter opponent of abolition himself, became sympathetic to the South's political concerns. When the Civil War began, he immediately became a Confederate sympathizer. During the war, Booth continued to appear in shows throughout the country, both in the North and South. When John T. Ford opened Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., in August 1863, Booth was one of the first actors to appear on its stage. In November 1863, he performed in *The Marble Heart* with Lincoln in attendance.

In February 1865, Booth secretly became engaged to Lucy Lambert Hale, daughter of U.S. Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire. Unbeknownst to his fiancée, Booth was already actively conspiring to kidnap the president. To that end, he assembled a group of fellow Confederate sympathizers and agents who began to meet routinely at Mary Surratt's boarding house in the District. As it increasingly looked as if the Confederacy would lose the war, and with the abolition of slavery commencing, an angry Booth ramped up his conspiratorial activities, with assassination superseding kidnapping as the more viable option in his mind.

Twelve days after assassinating Lincoln, Union forces tracked Booth down and mortally wounded him at the Garrett Farm on 26 April. Booth's body was positively identified by an array of individuals including family members, friends, and a doctor who had previously operated on him and recognized the scar from the surgery. Family members recognized recent dental work while others took note of a tattoo of the letters "J.W.B." on one hand, a marking which Booth had gotten as a young man. Booth's body was buried at the Old Arsenal Penitentiary, where it was soon joined by the bodies of his fellow conspirators, Mary Surratt, David Herold, Lewis Powell, and George Atzerodt after their execution on 7 July 1865. In 1869, Booth's body was exhumed, returned to his family, and reburied in an unmarked grave at Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore, Maryland.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Booth's background, his motivation for wanting to kidnap or kill Lincoln, his activities leading up to the assassination, the assassination, and his escape and demise.

*Mary E. J. Surratt*



Portrait of Mary E. J. Surratt at age 28, Mathew Brady, daguerreotype, detail, 1852 (*Courtesy of the Surratt House Museum/M-NCPPC*)

Mary Elizabeth Jenkins was born circa 1820 on a tobacco plantation near Surrattsville (now Clinton), Maryland. She attended a private Roman Catholic girls' boarding school called the Academy for Young Ladies in Alexandria, Virginia, for four years until the academy closed. Jenkins married John Harrison Surratt in 1839, and they had three children: Isaac, Anna, and John Jr. John Sr. was an alcoholic who accumulated massive debts, straining the family financially. The Surratts ran a tavern near Surrattsville, built by John in 1853. They also bought a townhouse at 541 H Street (now 604 H Street) in Washington, D.C. When John died suddenly of a stroke in 1862, Mary rented out the tavern in Maryland and moved into the D.C. townhouse, which she ran as a boarding house. Booth, Atzerodt, Powell, and other conspirators stayed at the boarding house and often used the site as a meeting place. Found guilty of conspiring to murder President Lincoln, Surratt was hanged on 7 July 1865, becoming the

first woman to be executed by the U.S. federal government. Her body eventually was buried in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Mary Surratt's background; her relationship with Booth and the other conspirators; possible involvement in the kidnapping plot and assassination scheme; her arrest, trial, and execution.

*Lewis T. Powell*



Lewis T. Powell imprisoned aboard  
the USS *Montauk*, Alexander  
Gardner, wet collodion negative,  
detail, April 1865

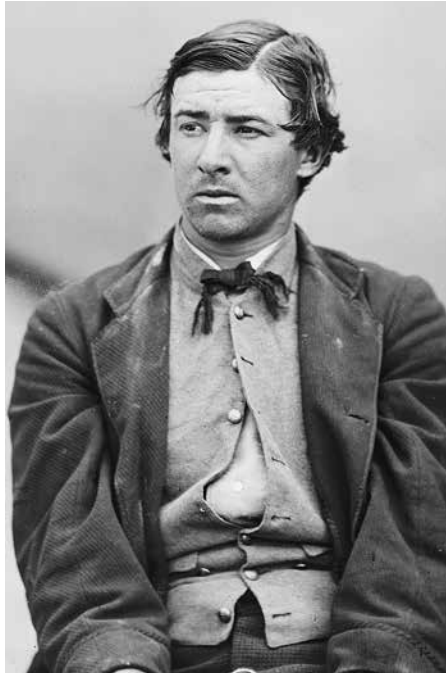
Lewis Thornton Powell (also known as Lewis Paine or Payne) was born on 22 April 1844 in Randolph County, Alabama, the youngest son of eight. His father was a Baptist minister. Although born in Alabama, Powell grew up in Georgia and Florida. In May 1861, Powell enlisted in the *2d Florida Infantry* of the Confederate army. He was wounded and captured during the Gettysburg Campaign, but escaped and continued to serve in the Confederate military with Col. John S. Mosby's *43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry* (known as *Mosby's Rangers*), from October 1863 to January 1865, when he deserted. Under the alias Lewis Payne, Powell signed the Oath of Allegiance to the Union in Alexandria, Virginia.

Like the bodies of the other executed conspirators, Powell's body initially was buried at the Old Arsenal Penitentiary. Later, most of the bodies of the conspirators were reburied elsewhere according to their families' wishes, but it is believed that Powell's

remains were removed with others in the area in 1884 and reburied in Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Interestingly, in 1991, a researcher identified Powell's skull in the Smithsonian Institute's Native American collection. The skull had been donated by the Army Medical Museum in 1898 and accidentally became mixed in with the Native American collection. Powell's skull was released to his nearest living relative, his great-niece Helen Alderman, and was buried next to his mother's grave in Geneva, Florida.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Powell's background and military experience; his role in the group of conspirators; the attack on Seward; Powell's arrest, trial, and execution.

*David E. Herold*



David E. Herold imprisoned  
aboard the USS *Montauk*,  
Alexander Gardner, wet collodion  
negative, detail, April 1865

David Edgar Herold was born on 16 June 1842 in Maryland. His father worked as the chief clerk of the Naval Storehouse at the Washington Navy Yard. Herold grew up in a large brick house at 636 Eighth Street SE in Washington, D.C. In his youth, he attended a Jesuit high school, Charlotte Hall Military Academy in St. Mary's County, Maryland (where he met John Surratt Jr. in the 1850s), and the Rittenhouse Academy in the District. He then attended Georgetown College (now University) where he received a certificate of pharmacy in 1860 and began working as a pharmacist's assistant and clerk for a doctor. In December 1864, Surratt introduced Herold to John Wilkes Booth, and Herold became a conspirator in the plot to kidnap President Lincoln. After his execution, Herold's body eventually was buried

with his family in an unmarked grave in Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Herold's background; his role in the group of conspirators; his role in the attack on Seward; his escape with Booth to Virginia; his capture, trial, and execution.

*George A. Atzerodt*



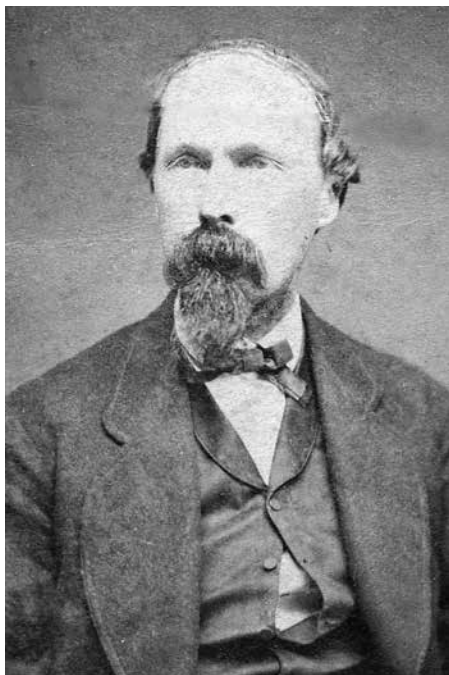
George A. Atzerodt imprisoned  
aboard the USS *Montauk*, Alexander  
Gardner, photographic print on card  
mount, detail, April 1865

George Andrew Atzerodt was born on 12 June 1835 in Dören in the Prussian province of Saxony (now Anrode, Thuringia, Germany). He immigrated to the United States with his family in 1843 at the age of eight. The Atzerodts settled in Germantown, Montgomery County, Maryland. Although he lived in the United States for the rest of his life, Atzerodt never became a naturalized U.S. citizen. As an adult, Atzerodt opened a carriage repair business with his older brother John in Port Tobacco, Charles County, Maryland, but by 1865, their business had failed. To make money, Atzerodt began working for the Confederates, rowing them back and forth across the Potomac River. Through this activity, he became acquainted with Confederate agent Thomas H. Harbin. In January 1865, Harbin introduced Atzerodt to John Surratt, who was working as a Confederate messenger. Atzerodt's knowledge of the back roads and escape routes of the area

made him an attractive recruit for Booth's plans. After his execution, Atzerodt's body eventually was buried in an unmarked grave in either section Q or P at Glenwood Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Atzerodt's background; his role in the group of conspirators; his motivation for taking part in the kidnapping plot; his motivation for deciding not to assassinate Johnson; his arrest, trial, and execution.

*Dr. Samuel A. Mudd*



Portrait of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd,  
detail, 1860 (Courtesy of the Surratt  
House Museum/M-NCPPC)

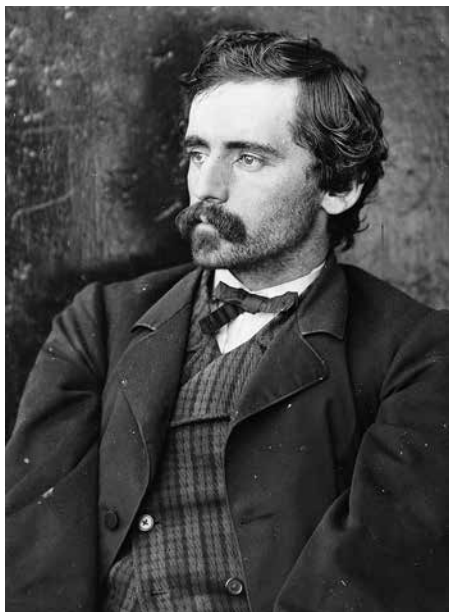
Samuel Alexander Mudd was born on 20 December 1833, in Charles County, Maryland. At the age of fifteen, Mudd was sent to a boarding school called St. John's Literary Institute (now St. John's Catholic Prep School) in Frederick, Maryland. Two years later, he enrolled in Georgetown College (now University) in Washington, D.C. Mudd went on to study medicine at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. After graduating in 1856, he returned to Charles County to practice medicine. Mudd married his childhood sweetheart, Sarah Frances Dyer, and together they had nine children.

Working as a doctor as well as a tobacco farmer in southern Maryland, Mudd owned slaves, was pro-Confederate, and was anti-Lincoln. His farm fared poorly during the Civil War, especially after Maryland abolished slavery in 1864. Mudd met Booth in 1864 and probably was involved in the kidnapping plot. Upon being found guilty, Mudd was imprisoned at Fort Jefferson near

Key West, Florida. During a yellow fever epidemic in the Dry Tortugas, he treated many prisoners and guards at the prison. For this humanitarian work, Mudd received a pardon from President Johnson and was released from prison in 1869. After his release, Mudd returned to Maryland, where he resumed his medical practice and continued to farm tobacco. He died in 1883 and was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in Bryantown, Maryland.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Mudd's background; his relationship to Booth, his possible role in the kidnapping plot; his role in Booth and Herold's escape; his arrest, trial, imprisonment, and pardon; and the debate over his innocence.

*Michael O'Laughlen Jr.*



Michael O'Laughlen Jr. imprisoned  
aboard the USS *Montauk*,  
Alexander Gardner, wet collodion  
negative, detail, April 1865

Michael O'Laughlen Jr. was born on 3 June 1840, in Baltimore, Maryland. Because the O'Laughlen family lived across the street from the Booth family, O'Laughlen became one of John Wilkes Booth's earliest friends. At the beginning of the Civil War, O'Laughlen joined the Confederate army, but he was discharged because of poor health. He then returned to Baltimore and worked as a clerk in his brother's feed store. Along with Mudd, Arnold, and Spangler, O'Laughlen was sent to Fort Jefferson near Key West, Florida, for his part in the conspiracy plot. He died in prison of yellow fever in September 1867 and was buried in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore, Maryland.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* O'Laughlen's background; his relationship to Booth; his role in the group of conspirators; his decision to no longer participate in the kidnapping plot; his arrest, trial, imprisonment, and death.

*Samuel B. Arnold*



Samuel B. Arnold imprisoned  
aboard the USS *Montauk*,  
Alexander Gardner, wet collodion  
negative, detail, April 1865

Samuel Bland Arnold was born on 6 September 1834, in Georgetown, D.C. His family later moved to Baltimore, Maryland. Arnold attended St. Timothy's Hall military academy, where he was schoolmates with John Wilkes Booth. At the beginning of the Civil War, Arnold joined the Confederate army, entering Capt. Edward Dorsey's *Company C of the 1st Maryland Infantry Regiment*. After four months of service, Arnold was discharged for health reasons in the fall of 1861. He then worked for the Nitre and Mining Bureau in Augusta, Georgia; as a clerk for the paymaster, Capt. James Maurice in Tullahoma, Tennessee; and as an assistant to a quartermaster in Augusta, Georgia. In 1864, while visiting his sick mother in Maryland, Arnold was recruited by Booth to be part of the plot to kidnap Lincoln. Along with Mudd, Spangler, and O'Laughlen, Arnold was sent to Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas near Key West, Florida. On 1 March 1869, three days before Johnson left office, Arnold received a presidential pardon.

The petition for his release was signed by Maryland Governor Oden Bowie, Baltimore's mayor, its police commissioner, and many others. After his release, Arnold freely admitted that he took part in the kidnapping plot, but he consistently denied any role in the assassination plot. He died in 1906 of pulmonary tuberculosis and was buried in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Arnold's background and military experience; his relationship to Booth; his role in the group of conspirators; his decision to no longer participate in the kidnapping plot; his arrest, trial, imprisonment, and pardon.

*Edman “Ned” Spangler*



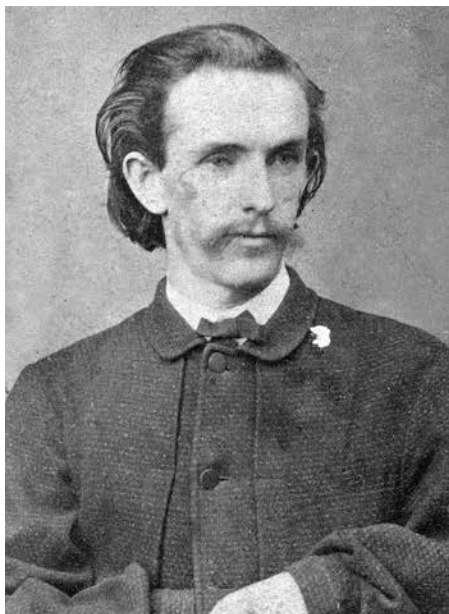
Edman “Ned” Spangler imprisoned  
aboard the USS *Montauk*,  
Alexander Gardner, wet collodion  
negative, detail, April 1865

Edman Spangler was born on 10 August 1825 in York, Pennsylvania. He moved to Baltimore, Maryland, as a young man and spent most of his life there. In the 1850s, Spangler worked as a carpenter on the Booth family estate in Bel Air, Maryland, where he met John Wilkes Booth. During the Civil War, Spangler moved to Washington, D.C., to work at Ford’s Theatre. He frequently spent the night in the theater or in the stable behind it and often took care of Booth’s horse while there. After his conviction, Spangler was sent to Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas near Key West, Florida, along with Mudd, Arnold, and O’Laughlen. In 1869, Spangler and the others were pardoned by President Johnson. After his release, Spangler visited Dr. Mudd on his farm in Maryland. Having become friends with Spangler while in prison, Dr. Mudd gave him five acres of land to farm. Spangler also worked as a carpenter in the neighborhood. Spangler died in 1875,

probably of tuberculosis. He was buried in a graveyard connected to St. Peter's Church near Dr. Mudd's farm in Maryland.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Spangler's background; his relationship to Booth; his possible role in aiding Booth's escape from Ford's Theatre; his arrest, trial, imprisonment, and pardon.

*John H. Surratt Jr.*



Portrait of John H. Surratt Jr. in  
his Canada jacket, Mathew Brady,  
albumen print, detail, ca. 1866

John Harrison Surratt Jr. was born on 13 April 1844 in Washington, D.C. In 1859, he enrolled in St. Charles College, where he studied for the priesthood. While at St. Charles, he met Louis Wiechmann, who would later be a witness against the conspirators during their trial. John Surratt Sr. died suddenly in 1862, by which time the younger Surratt was helping his mother run the family tavern in Maryland. In September 1862, Surratt was appointed postmaster in Surrattsville, Maryland—a duty he performed until November 1863. As postmaster, Surratt also served as a courier and spy for the Confederate Secret Service Bureau. After carrying dispatches about Union troop movements across the Potomac River, he was introduced to John Wilkes Booth through Dr. Samuel Mudd in December 1864. Surratt agreed to take part in the plan to kidnap Lincoln. According to a lecture given by Surratt in 1870, after the failed attempt to capture Lincoln on 17 March 1865, he carried foreign dispatches to Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin in Richmond, Virginia. Benjamin paid Surratt \$200 and requested that he take the

dispatches to Canada. Surratt returned to the District on 3 April, but left soon afterward to travel to Montreal, Canada. According to Surratt, he found out about the assassination of Lincoln while he was in Elmira, New York. He did not return home, but instead fled to Canada after seeing his name in the newspaper in connection with the attempt on Seward's life. Surratt stayed in Canada as his mother and co-conspirators were tried, sentenced, hanged, and imprisoned.

With aid from ex-Confederates, Surratt booked passage to Europe under an alias and disguised as an Irishman. He went first to England, and then Italy. In Rome, under the alias John Watson, he served in the Ninth Company of the Pontifical Zouaves, which was charged with protecting the Papal States. He was recognized by Canadian Confederate sympathizer Henri Beaumont de Sainte-Marie, whom he had met in Maryland during the war. De Sainte-Marie notified papal officials and the U.S. minister in Rome. Surratt was arrested and imprisoned in November 1866, yet he escaped and lived with supporters of Italian nationalist General Giuseppe Garibaldi. With their help, Surratt gained safe passage through the Kingdom of Italy. Posing as a Canadian named Walters, he booked passage to Alexandria, Egypt, where he was arrested by U.S. officials in November 1866, while still wearing his Pontifical Zouaves uniform. Surratt was returned to the United States in early 1867 and held at the Washington Navy Yard.

Unlike his mother and fellow conspirators, Surratt was tried in a civilian court. The Supreme Court had recently ruled that it was unconstitutional to try civilians in a military court if a civilian court was available. During the trial, Surratt admitted to taking part in the initial kidnapping conspiracy, but he claimed to have no involvement in the assassination plot. The trial lasted for two months, but the jury could not come to a unanimous decision. Eight jurors found him guilty, and four found him not guilty. A mistrial was declared, and Surratt was released. After his release, Surratt taught at a school and farmed tobacco. He also went on a lecturing tour in 1870, speaking about the kidnapping conspiracy. Surratt died of pneumonia in 1916 and was buried in New Cathedral Cemetery in Baltimore, Maryland.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Surratt's background; his work as a Confederate agent; his relationship to Booth; his role in the group of conspirators; his escape from the United States after the assassination; his arrest, trial, and acquittal.

*Edwin M. Stanton*



Portrait of the Hon. Edwin M.  
Stanton, wet collodion negative,  
ca. 1855–1865

Edwin McMasters Stanton was born on 18 December 1814 in Steubenville, Ohio. He attended a private school and seminary called the Old Academy. His father, a doctor, died suddenly in 1827, leaving his family in financial trouble. To survive, Stanton's mother opened a store selling medical supplies, books, stationery, and groceries. In 1831, Stanton went to Kenyon College, paying for it by selling books. In 1835, he began studying law at the firm of the well-known attorney Chauncey Dewey in Cadiz, Ohio. Stanton married Mary Ann Lamson in 1836. He continued to work for a law firm, and, in 1837, he was elected to be the prosecutor of Harrison County, Ohio. Mary died in 1844, and when Stanton was admitted to the bar in 1847, he moved to Pittsburgh and began to practice law. In 1856, he married Ellen Hutchinson, and they moved to Washington, D.C., where Stanton built a successful practice in the federal courts.

Stanton gained notoriety in 1859 for his successful defense of Congressman Daniel E. Sickles, who had murdered his wife's lover,

Phillip Barton Key II, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia and the son of Francis Scott Key. Stanton defended Sickles using a plea of temporary insanity, the first time such a defense was used in a U.S. court. (Later, Sickles received the Medal of Honor for his questionably heroic actions as a major general during the Gettysburg Campaign.)

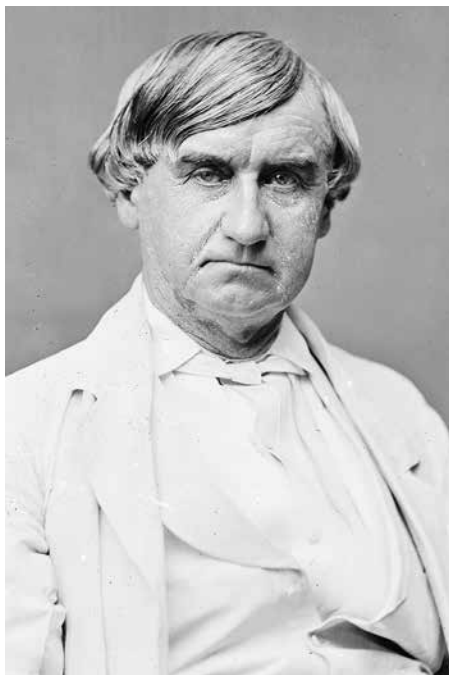
Beginning with his 1860 appointment as the nation's attorney general under President Buchanan, Stanton became more involved in politics. At that time, Buchanan's cabinet was in disarray following the Southern states' secession, but when Lincoln became president, Stanton did not continue as attorney general. Instead, in 1862, Lincoln made Stanton his secretary of war, replacing Simon Cameron, who was deemed incompetent. Although Lincoln originally wanted Joseph Holt for the job, Secretary of State William Seward persuaded him that Stanton was the better choice. Stanton did an admirable job as secretary of war, maintaining the position throughout most of the Civil War and through Lincoln's reelection, afterward becoming an instrumental member of Lincoln's cabinet.

Stanton, who was present at Lincoln's deathbed, then coordinated both the investigation and trial of the conspirators. After the trial, Stanton continued as secretary of war under President Andrew Johnson for several years, managing the demobilization of Union forces and working tirelessly to rebuild the South during the early phase of Reconstruction. However, Stanton and Johnson soon disagreed over the course of Reconstruction. In 1868, the president tried to force Stanton to resign, an act which led to the first impeachment of a president in U.S. history. However, when the Senate did not vote to convict Johnson, Stanton resigned from his office.

After his term as secretary of war, Stanton returned to private practice. He was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Ulysses S. Grant in 1869, but Stanton, who had a lifelong problem with asthma, died from respiratory insufficiency only four days later. Stanton was buried next to his son James in Oak Hill Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Stanton's background, his role in the manhunt for Booth and his accomplices, his role in the trial, and his legacy in U.S. history.

*Joseph Holt*



Portrait of Judge Joseph Holt,  
wet collodion negative, detail, ca.  
1860–1875

Joseph Holt was born on 6 January 1807 in Breckinridge County, Kentucky. He was educated at St. Joseph's College in Bardstown, Kentucky, and Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. As an adult, Holt settled in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and began practicing law. In 1832, he married Mary Harrison and moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where he became assistant editor of a newspaper and was elected as Commonwealth's Attorney, the prosecutor of felony crimes for all of Kentucky, from 1833 to 1835. The Holts then moved to Mississippi, where Joseph practiced law. Mary died when both she and Holt contracted tuberculosis. After Joseph recovered, he returned to Louisville. Holt eventually married Margaret Wickliffe, and when he was appointed commissioner of patents by President Buchanan in 1857, the couple moved to Washington, D.C.

The president appointed Holt postmaster general in 1859. Then, after John B. Floyd resigned from Buchanan's cabinet to join the

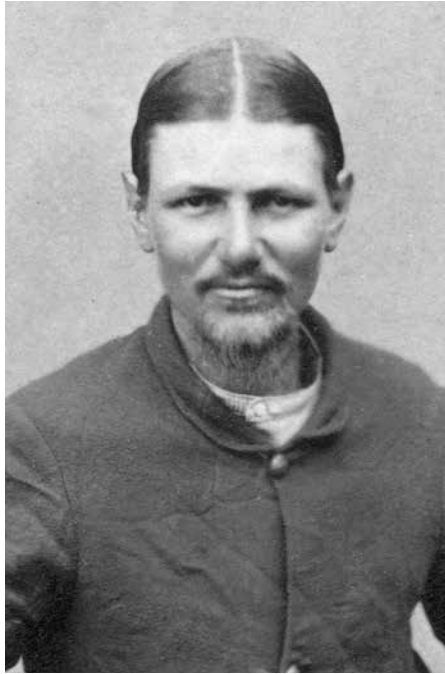
Confederacy, Buchanan selected Holt, who was antislavery, to replace Floyd as secretary of war in late 1860. When Lincoln took office in 1861, Holt returned to Kentucky, where he worked hard to ensure that his home state did not secede from the Union. Kentucky stayed neutral or was under Union control throughout the Civil War.

In 1862, Holt joined the Union army as a colonel and was appointed Judge Advocate General of the Union army by President Lincoln. In 1864, he was promoted to brigadier general and turned down two positions offered to him by President Lincoln: secretary of the interior and attorney general.

After the Lincoln assassination, Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army Holt and Secretary of War Stanton were instrumental in forming the military commission for the trial of the conspirators. Holt served as the chief prosecutor in the military trial, but his career was hurt by the popular perception that he handled the trial poorly. Holt continued to serve as the judge advocate general until he retired from public life 1875. He died in 1894 in Washington, D.C., and was buried in the Holt family cemetery in Addison, Kentucky.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Holt's background and military experience, his role in the trial proceedings, and his legacy in U.S. history.

*Thomas “Boston” Corbett*



Portrait of Sgt. Boston Corbett,  
U.S.A., wet collodion negative,  
detail, ca. 1860–1865

Thomas “Boston” Corbett was born in London on an unknown date in 1840. His family immigrated to the United States through New York City that same year, eventually settling in Troy, New York. As a young man, Corbett apprenticed to a milliner and worked in that profession intermittently throughout his life. Corbett suffered from mental issues—which he exhibited before, during, and after the Civil War—that may have derived from exposure to mercury, which was commonly used in the hatmaking industry. Corbett eventually moved back to New York City, where he married, but both his wife and their baby died in childbirth.

Following that tragedy, Corbett moved to Boston, Massachusetts. Unable to procure a job, he drank heavily and eventually became homeless. After a particularly hard night, a street preacher from the Methodist Episcopal Church convinced Corbett to quit drinking and join the church. Corbett became quite devout, was baptized,

and changed his name to Boston to honor the city in which he had been converted. Corbett's zeal at church meetings earned him the nickname "The Glory to God Man." He began to wear his hair long in imitation of Jesus Christ, though he was forced to cut it when he joined the Army.

Corbett began working at a hat manufacturer's shop in downtown Boston in 1857. He also became a street preacher and religious fanatic. In 1858, on his way home from church, Corbett was propositioned by two prostitutes. Deeply upset, Corbett returned home to his Bible, reading in the Gospel of Matthew about those who, to avoid sin, had "made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Inspired by these words, Corbett castrated himself with a pair of scissors.

In 1861, Corbett enlisted as a private in Company I of the 12th Regiment, New York State Militia, but his eccentric behavior and religious fanaticism were not tolerated in the unit. Corbett regularly held unauthorized prayer meetings, argued with his senior officers, and publicly condemned his superiors for their profanity and other misdeeds. After refusing to apologize, Corbett was court-martialed for insubordination and sentenced to be shot. Eventually, his sentence was reduced, and he was discharged in 1863.

Almost immediately, Corbett reenlisted with Company L of the 16th Regiment Cavalry, New York State Volunteers. In 1864, he was captured in Virginia by Confederate Col. John S. Mosby's men and held at the Andersonville prison for five months. After being released in an exchange, Corbett was treated for scurvy, malnutrition, and exposure. He was promoted to sergeant upon returning to his company.

On 24 April 1865, Corbett was among the detachment of soldiers from the 16th Regiment Cavalry, New York State Volunteers, who were sent out to apprehend Booth at Garrett Farm. Corbett mortally wounded Booth on 26 April.

After being discharged from the Army in 1865, Corbett went back to work as a milliner in Boston. His fanatical behavior made it difficult for him to keep a steady job, as he often was fired for stopping and praying instead of working. When business slowed, he worked as a preacher, first in Connecticut and then in New Jersey. As another means to make money, Corbett gave lectures about shooting Booth as "Lincoln's Avenger," which he offered at Sunday schools, women's groups, and tent meetings, until his erratic behavior deterred people from booking him.

Corbett became increasingly paranoid that the U.S. government was out to get him for robbing them of the opportunity to arrest, try,

and execute Booth. He blamed the government for his inability to keep a job, and he believed that secret pro-Confederate organizations sought to avenge Booth by killing him. He began to carry a pistol with him at all times. On one occasion in 1875, during a soldiers' reunion in Ohio, Corbett drew his weapon on some men who questioned whether Booth had really been killed.

In 1878, Corbett bought land in Concordia, Kansas, through the Homestead Act. He built himself a dugout and continued to preach. Owing to his fame as Lincoln's Avenger, he was appointed assistant doorkeeper of the Kansas House of Representatives in Topeka in 1887. However, after only a month at his new job, believing that members of the House were discriminating against him, Corbett pulled out his revolver and chased them out of the building. After his arrest, a judge declared him insane and sent him to the Topeka Asylum for the Insane. In 1888, Corbett escaped from the asylum and reportedly fled to Mexico. Some evidence indicates that he instead fled to Minnesota, where he lived under the name of Thomas Corbett until dying in the Great Hinckley Fire of 1894.

*Some relevant issues for role-players to focus on:* Corbett's background and military experience, his role in the killing of Booth, his life afterward, and conspiracy theories concerning Booth's demise.

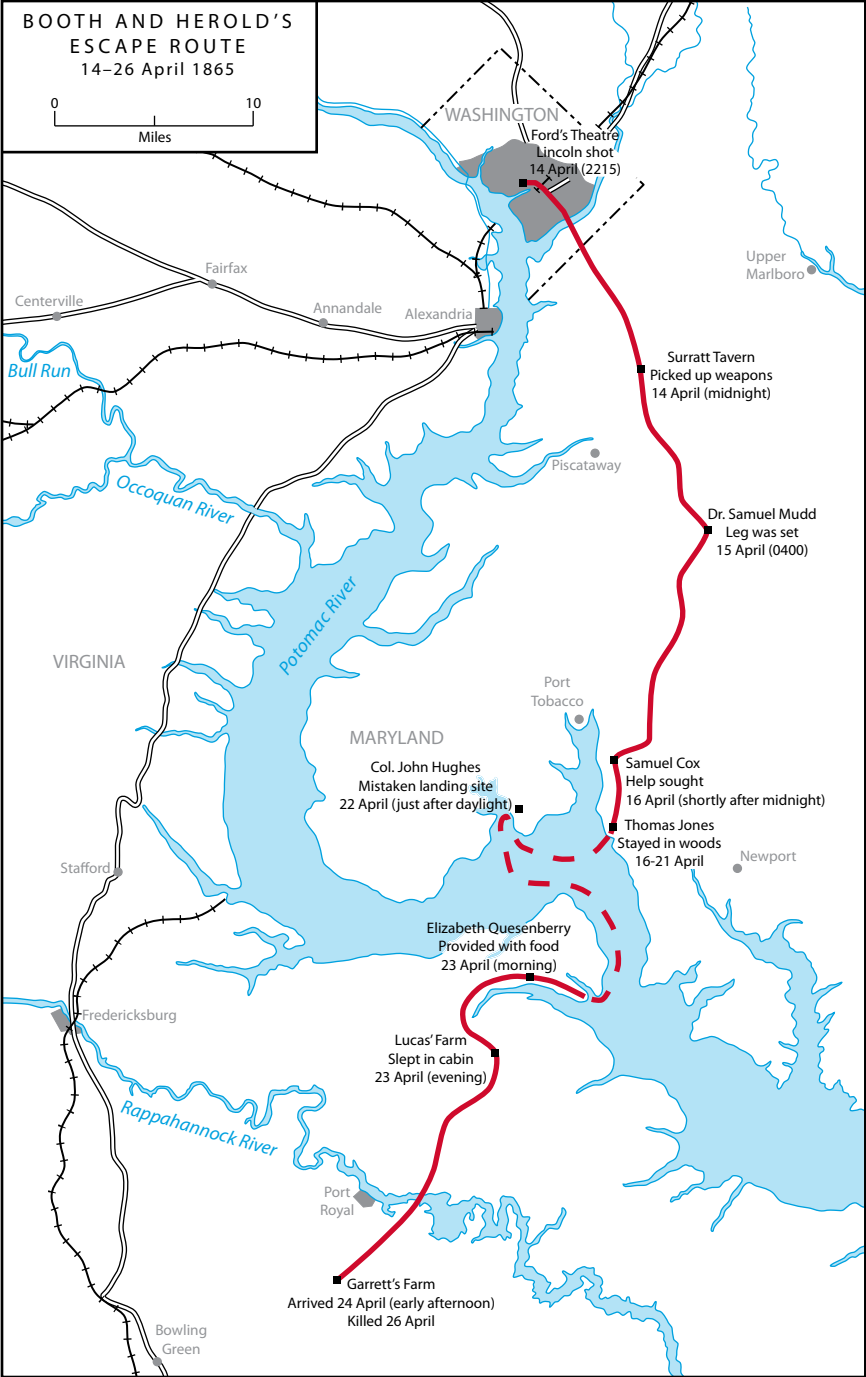
## SUGGESTED STOPS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

This section, in addition to providing practical information about the suggested stops, provides useful discussion prompts and techniques to augment the Lincoln Assassination Staff Ride. This information is for both leaders and participants. Each stop is designed to engender discussion and learning within the group. The suggested discussion questions are broken into three main sections to facilitate the application of historical learning and lead to the successful execution of this staff ride. These techniques include the Socratic dialogue method, role-playing, and decision gaming.

The Socratic method is meant to spark discussion and create a productive dialogue. It uses *how* and *why* questions to encourage the participants to talk and to deepen the dialogue within the group. Such questions have been suggested here. Some, specifically identified as “devil’s advocate” questions, are designed to provoke more lively debate.

Role-playing allows participants to explore the role of each individual involved in the event. If role-playing, units should assign specific historical figures (from the lists provided) to designated personnel before the staff ride is carried out. The process of preparing for staff ride role-playing allows participants to become limited subject matter experts. This creates a depth of knowledge across the group, which can be presented and shared with the rest of the group during the staff ride, thereby furthering everyone’s education.

Finally, decision gaming is a group activity that enables staff ride participants to work as a team while applying critical thinking skills to decipher the problem at hand. The ensuing discussion should focus on the importance of contingency planning in the understanding of history, allowing for different possible outcomes. Decision gaming has the added benefit of keeping the group active during the staff ride.



Map 5

*Stop 1. Ford's Theatre: Location of President  
Lincoln's assassination*



Ford's Theatre, albumen print, ca. 1865

*Logistics*

Ford's Theatre is located at 511 Tenth Street NW in Washington, D.C. Parking is available in an underground paid parking lot on the north side of the theater. This site is currently run by the National Park Service. It is open 900–1630 daily, except Thanksgiving Day and 25 December. A limited number of free same-day tickets are available at the box office beginning at 830 daily. Advance tickets are available for a fee. Groups of ten or more should contact the group sales office to reserve a tour time. Tours are half an hour to an hour in length.

*Summary*

Ford's Theatre originally was built in 1833 as a house of worship by the First Baptist Church of Washington. In 1861, when the church moved to another location, the building was bought by John T. Ford

and renovated to be a theater. Initially called Ford's Athenaeum, it burned down in 1862, and was rebuilt in 1863. After Lincoln was killed by John Wilkes Booth in the presidential box of the theater in 1865, it was appropriated by the U.S. government, which ordered that it never be used as a place of public amusement again. From 1866 to 1887, the building was used by the U.S. War Department. At various times, it held Record and Pension Bureau records, housed the Army Medical Museum, and was used as a clerk's office. In 1893, the front of the building collapsed, killing twenty-two people and injuring sixty-eight, leading many to believe the building was cursed. In 1911, it was repaired and used as a government warehouse. In 1928, the building was handed over to the Office of Public Buildings and Parks of the National Capital, and, in 1932, Ford's Theatre was made a National Historic Site. That same year, a Lincoln museum was opened on the first floor. In 1933, the building came under the control of the National Park Service, and, in the mid-1960s, the building was restored through funding from Congress. When its doors were reopened in 1968, Ford's Theatre once again became the site of theatrical plays.

The facility went through another renovation in the late 2000s to make the theater more audience-friendly and to accommodate the increasing number of tourists visiting the site each year. The building currently can hold 665 people. The Ford's Theatre Museum houses many artifacts related to the Lincoln assassination, including the Derringer pistol used to kill Lincoln, Booth's diary, the original door of the presidential theater box, Lincoln's coat, and the blood-stained pillow from the president's deathbed.

Roughly one million people visit the site annually.

### *Discussion Suggestions*

1. Socratic dialogue questions
  - a. Why did Booth initially want to capture the president?
  - b. Why, and when, did Booth change his plan from capturing the president to killing him?
  - c. Why did Booth prefer to use a theater, specifically Ford's Theatre?
  - d. How could Lincoln's security have been improved?
  - e. *Devil's advocate question:* Would it have made a difference if Grant had been present?
  - f. What lessons can we learn from this event? For instance, what similarities can be seen between the conspirators' activities and those of terrorist or insurgent cells today?

2. Role-playing
  - a. Abraham Lincoln
  - b. John Wilkes Booth

3. Decision gaming

*Booth Gang Decision Game*

It is 14 April 1865. You are a co-conspirator of John Wilkes Booth and presently in Washington, D.C. Booth has just found out that Lincoln and Grant will be attending a play at Ford's Theatre this evening. He has gathered you together as a group to discuss the plan to assassinate several major Union leaders and sow chaos to aid the Confederacy. Which leaders should you target, and why? Which conspirators should do what? How might earlier plans for the kidnapping plot aid you in this new endeavor? How have previous kidnapping attempts against President Lincoln influenced your assessment of the current plot and its chances for success?

Talk among yourselves and develop an overall, detailed plan of action for the evening of 14 April 1865.

*Goal: To gain insight that will help with the understanding of how terrorist and insurgent group members think in order to better combat them and counter future attempted attacks.*

*Stop 2. Petersen House: The site where President Lincoln died*



The Petersen House, stereograph print, ca. 1909

*Logistics*

The Petersen House is located at 526 (formerly 453) Tenth Street NW, across the street from Ford's Theatre, in Washington, D.C. Parking is available across the street in the underground paid parking lot on the north side of Ford's Theatre. This site is currently run by the National Park Service. The house is typically open 930–1730 daily, except Thanksgiving Day and 25 December. Admission is free; the ticket used for Ford's Theatre can be used for entry. Groups should

contact Ford's Theatre ahead of time to ensure availability. The tour is self-guided and takes about twenty minutes.

### *Summary*

The Petersen House was built in 1849 by German tailor William Petersen. At the time of Lincoln's assassination in 1865, it was being used as a boarding house. Soon after Lincoln was moved to the house, and as doctors attended him, an understandably shaken Mrs. Lincoln spent the night in the front parlor accompanied by Elizabeth L. C. Dixon, wife of Senator James Dixon, until the president expired at 0722 the next morning. Meanwhile, Secretary of War Stanton used the rear parlor as a headquarters from which to run important government operations including the manhunt for those responsible for the attacks. In 1876, the Petersen family sold the property to Louis Schade, who live there and ran a newspaper called the *Washington Sentinel* out of the basement. During the 1880s, the Schade family rented the house out. In 1893, Osborn H. Oldroyd rented the building to open a museum in which he displayed his large collection of "Lincoln articles," artifacts linked to President Lincoln or his assassination. In 1896, Congress approved funding to buy the house, and, in 1926, the U.S. government officially took possession of Oldroyd's collection of more than 3,000 objects and moved them to Ford's Theatre, where they now make up the bulk of its museum's exhibits. In 1932, the Petersen House was made a National Historic Site, and in 1933 it became a museum administered by the National Park Service. Today, visitors can tour three rooms, which are presented as they were in 1865, including the back room where Lincoln died and the front parlor room where cabinet members waited and grieved. Many of the items in the house are now replicas, as the originals were purchased by a collector and are now on display at the Chicago History Museum. Next door, in Ford's Theatre's Center for Education and Leadership, is a museum pertaining to the assassination and a gift shop, which holds the famous "Lincoln Book Tower," an impressive cylindrical tower made out of every known published work about the president.

### *Discussion Suggestions*

1. Socratic dialogue questions
  - a. Why was President Lincoln brought to the Petersen House?
  - b. Why did Booth and his fellow conspirators want to target Seward, Johnson, and possibly Grant, in addition to

Lincoln? What did they hope to accomplish by these multiple attacks?

- c. *Devil's advocate question*: How did most people in the North view the attacks on President Lincoln and Secretary Seward? Whom did they blame?
- d. How did Stanton organize the manhunt for Booth and his co-conspirators?

## 2. Role-playing

- a. Lewis Powell
- b. David Herold
- c. George Atzerodt
- d. Mary Surratt
- e. Dr. Samuel Mudd
- f. Samuel Arnold
- g. Michael O'Laughlen
- h. John Surratt
- i. Ned Spangler
- j. William H. Seward

## 3. Decision gaming

### *MDW Commander Decision Game*

It is the evening of 14 April 1865. You are the commander of the Military District of Washington (MDW). President Lincoln has been shot in the head and is not expected to recover. Secretary of State William H. Seward has been attacked as well, although he is expected to recover from his knife wounds. Across the street from Ford's Theatre, doctors are attending the president at the Petersen House. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton is using that location as a headquarters from which to depose witnesses and orchestrate the manhunt to capture the persons responsible for the two known attacks on Union leaders. Stanton has tasked you with creating a plan of execution for this manhunt. Subordinate cavalry units are standing by. General, what are your orders?

Think about the following: What actions should be carried out immediately in the aftermath of Lincoln's shooting? What resources will be necessary (e.g. military, police) to ensure this manhunt is successful? How will different entities work in concert? How will you

ascertain whether the Confederacy had a direct hand in these attacks? What other things are important to be aware of in this situation?

Discuss among yourselves and come up with a plan to successfully capture those responsible for Seward's injuries and Lincoln's death.

*Goal: To gain insight concerning ways in which government, police, and military can respond to terrorist or insurgent attacks in an effective manner, working together to carry out the most efficient response and possibly deterring future such attacks.*

*Stop 3. Surratt Boarding House: The site of meetings  
among the conspirators*



Mary Surratt's boarding house, wet collodion negative, ca. 1890

*Logistics*

Located at 604 H Street NW (previously 541 H Street), the former Surratt Boarding House is now the site of a restaurant in the Chinatown neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Limited parking is available along the street and in a paid parking garage on Sixth

Street NW, to the east of the restaurant. This site is a privately owned business. Individuals and groups should call ahead or visit the restaurant's website to confirm business hours and ensure availability. Because this site is a restaurant, it could be a convenient spot for lunch during the staff ride.

### *Summary*

The Mary E. Surratt Boarding House in Washington, D.C., was the site of meetings among the conspirators who working with John Wilkes Booth in late 1864 and early 1865. The ground floor of the building, which is used as a kitchen and dining area by the present-day restaurant, served those same functions for Mary Surratt when she ran the building as a boarding house. On the first floor (currently occupied by the karaoke bar and lounge), Surratt, her daughter Anna, and a twenty-year-old boarder named Nora Fitzpatrick shared the back room. The front room served as a parlor. The second floor was occupied by the Holoman family, Louis Weichmann, and John Surratt Jr. when he was home. The conspirators, usually meeting in a room in the attic, initially planned to kidnap President Abraham Lincoln, but their plans evolved into a plot to kill Lincoln and other important Union leaders instead.

The building, built in 1843 by Jonathan Walker, was purchased by John Surratt Sr. in 1853 to be used as a boarding house. After John's death in 1862, his wife Mary continued to run the boarding house while also renting out her home in Surrattsville, Maryland, which she operated as a tavern. According to testimony during the trial of the conspirators, the D.C. boarding house was a meeting place for Confederates and Confederate sympathizers and was the main meeting site for those involved in the conspiracy to kill Lincoln.

For her role in the plot, Mary Surratt was hanged, becoming the first woman to be executed by the U.S. federal government. In 1866, the house was auctioned off to pay the Surratt family's debts. It continued mainly as a boarding house until 1922, by which time it had come into disrepair. In 1925, the house was renovated so the ground floor could be used as a commercial space. While occupied by the Piccadilly Bottle Supply Company, the building was raided by the D.C. police in 1928 for violation of the Prohibition Law. Since the 1930s, the space has mainly been used by individuals and businesses of the District's growing Chinese immigrant community. The building was added to the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites in 1968, and to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 2009. Today, the site is occupied by a popular restaurant.

### *Discussion Suggestions*

1. Socratic dialogue questions
  - a. How is this site linked to the attacks on President Lincoln and Secretary Seward?
  - b. *Devil's advocate question:* How involved was Mary Surratt? Was she sentenced too harshly? Based on the evidence, does it appear that she was involved in the conspiracy to murder President Lincoln?
2. Role-playing (if not done at previous stop)
  - a. John Wilkes Booth
  - b. Lewis Powell
  - c. David Herold
  - d. George Atzerodt
  - e. Mary Surratt
  - f. Samuel Arnold
  - g. Michael O'Laughlen
  - h. John Surratt

*Stop 4. Old Arsenal Penitentiary: The site of the trial  
of the conspirators by military commission*



Grant Hall, which was once the Old Arsenal Penitentiary, on present-day Fort  
Lesley J. McNair, 2014 (U.S. Army)

*Logistics*

Grant Hall is located in Building 20 on Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, D.C. Parking is available in a lot to the south of the building. Because this stop is located on an active military base, visitors should be prepared to stop at the gate. Anyone without access to a military base will be required to sign in and must be escorted by an ID-card holder while on base. This site is currently used by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, an academic institution within the U.S. Department of Defense. Joint Base Myer–Henderson Hall hosts a quarterly public open house in the third-floor courtroom. Check website for date and times. At all other times, this building remains locked. To request access to Grant Hall outside of scheduled open house times, contact the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Groups

of twenty or more should contact the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Public Affairs office in advance to schedule a tour.

### *Summary*

The trial of the conspirators involved in Lincoln's assassination was held at the Old Arsenal Penitentiary in Washington, D.C., in a makeshift court room on the third floor of what is now Grant Hall on Fort Lesley J. McNair. The arsenal was built in 1803 and became an ordnance distribution center for the U.S. Army. The British captured it in 1814, during the War of 1812. In 1831, a penitentiary was built at the arsenal to house prisoners. In 1862, due to overcrowding, all prisoners at this penitentiary were transferred to the federal penitentiary in Albany, New York.

During the Civil War, the arsenal was used as a place to produce, test, and store weaponry for the Union military. President Lincoln once visited the site to fire a newly designed repeating machine gun. The arsenal was chosen as the location for the trial of the conspirators because, at that time, it was mostly empty, yet still tightly guarded. The four conspirators who were sentenced to death were hanged in the courtyard of the prison on a temporary gallows that had been erected for the execution. In the years following the trial of the conspirators, Grant Hall was used as bachelor officers' quarters as well as quarters for other Army personnel and their families.

Though the arsenal and the penitentiary no longer exist, Grant Hall (the building in which the trial occurred) was restored by American Film Company Wildwood Enterprises, Inc. for use in the 2010 movie *The Conspirator*, directed by Robert Redford. Although Grant Hall remains, the other buildings that were in its vicinity at the time of trial have since been removed. Standing largely alone, Grant Hall currently serves as the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

### *Discussion Suggestions*

1. Socratic dialogue questions
  - a. How well was the manhunt for the conspirators handled?
  - b. *Devil's advocate question:* Why were the conspirators tried by a military commission rather than a civilian court? Was Lincoln's assassination a war crime?
  - c. How did Booth and Herold make it to Virginia? Who aided them? See Map 5 for an overview of Booth and Herold's escape route.

- d. Why are there so many conspiracy theories about the Lincoln assassination and Booth's death?
- e. How did John Surratt Jr. end up going free?
- f. Why didn't the U.S. government put Jefferson Davis on trial?
- g. What precedents did this trial set? How is knowledge of the trial useful for making legal decisions today?

## 2. Role-playing

- a. Edwin Stanton
- b. Joseph Holt
- c. Boston Corbett
- d. Andrew Johnson

## 3. Decision gaming

### *Military Commission Decision Game*

It is 9 May 1865. President Johnson has ordered a trial by military commission of the eight alleged conspirators linked to John Wilkes Booth. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army Joseph Holt have chosen you as the senior military officer to lead that commission. John Wilkes Booth has been captured and killed. David Herold, George Atzerodt, Lewis Powell, Dr. Samuel Mudd, Michael O'Laughlen, Samuel Arnold, Edman Spangler, and Mary Surratt are all in custody. John Surratt Jr. remains at large. You receive guidance that your commission must try the alleged conspirators as war criminals, ensuring that they receive due process of law. They must face the nation's justice for the heinous murder of President Lincoln and the attempted murders of Secretary of State Seward and Vice President Johnson. You knew President Lincoln well, and you were appointed to your rank by the slain president. The other handpicked members of the commission are standing by for your guidance before the trial commences. General, what are your orders?

Think about the following: Why is it important that the conspirators be tried by military commission? Should the number of those on trial be increased to include those who aided Booth and Herold in their escape? Should John Surratt be tried in absentia? As the leader of the military commission, how should you proceed with the trial? Which witnesses will be key, and what evidence is most significant? How should the prosecution approach each individual conspirator's case? If the conspirators are found guilty,

what specific punishments should be meted out to each convicted conspirator? Finally, what are the most important elements of legal jurisprudence involved in this particular trial? Discuss among yourselves and come up with an overall plan for the military trial of the conspirators.

*Goal: To gain a better understanding of how the trial of the conspirators took place, the argument for its legality, and the legal precedents that it set.*

*Stop 5. Surratt House: A critical stop on Booth and Herold's  
run from the law*



The Surratt House in present-day Clinton, Maryland, Carol M. Highsmith, 2017

*Logistics*

The Surratt House is located at 9118 Brandywine Road in Clinton (formerly Surrattsville), Maryland. Free parking is available nearby. This site is a privately owned house museum run by the Surratt Society. It is open on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 1100 to 1500, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 1200 to 1600. General adult admission is \$5, although group rates are available. The Surratt House is a Blue Star museum providing discounts for veterans and active duty military from Armed Forces Day in mid-May through Labor Day in early September. Groups should contact the Surratt House Museum ahead of time to schedule tours. Tours are half an hour in length.

*Summary*

Mary Surratt's house in Maryland became historically important the moment that Booth and Herold stopped there during their flight from the law.

Mary Surratt and her husband John built the two-story house in 1852 on their 300-acre plantation. In 1853, John began using the building as an inn and tavern. A post office was installed inside the tavern, and John Surratt became the city's first postmaster. Shortly after, the area became known as Surrattsville. In 1854, John added on to the building and named it Surratt's Hotel. John died in 1862, and when Mary moved to their D.C. townhouse in 1864, she rented the Maryland property to John Lloyd to be used as a tavern. It was here that Booth and Herold picked up supplies such as rifles, binoculars, and whiskey from John Lloyd on the night of Lincoln's assassination.

After Mary Surratt's conviction and execution in 1865, and with the Surratt family in a great deal of debt, the house was sold in 1868. It was privately owned by five different families until 1965, when the property was donated by B. K. Miller and his son Thomas Miller to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC). The original plan had been to move the building to Clinton Regional Park, but this plan fell through. In 1968, the MNCPPC used money provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to buy the land on which the house stood. The Surratt House was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The MNCPPC restored the house in 1975. That same year, the Surratt Society was formed. The Surratt House opened as a historic house museum in 1976. Additional restoration to ensure the authentic appearance of the home was completed in the 1980s.

### *Discussion Suggestions*

1. Socratic dialogue questions
  - a. Why did the guard at the Navy Yard Bridge checkpoint let Booth and Herold out of the city?
  - b. Why were Booth and Herold able to execute such a well-planned escape? How did they know to meet up in Maryland? How were they able to escape the capital, make it across Maryland and well into Virginia, and avoid capture for almost two weeks?
  - c. Why did Booth and Herold stop at the Surratt tavern? What was John Lloyd's role in their escape, and how did his testimony influence the trial of the conspirators?
  - d. How was evidence from the Surratt tavern used by the prosecution during the military trial, and how did it affect their verdict concerning Mary Surratt?

- e. *Devil's advocate question, if not done at previous stop:*  
How involved was Mary Surratt in Booth's plans?  
Was she sentenced too harshly?

2. Role-playing

- a. John Lloyd
- b. Louis Weichmann

*Stop 6. Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House: Home of the doctor  
who gave medical attention to Booth*



The Dr. Mudd House Museum in present-day Waldorf, Maryland,  
David E. Hilkert, 2018 (*private collection*)

*Logistics*

The Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House is located at 3725 Dr Samuel Mudd Road in Waldorf, Maryland. Free parking is available nearby. This site is a privately owned house museum. From mid-March to late November, it is usually open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1100 to 1600 and on Sundays from 1200 to 1600. Admission for adults is \$7. Groups should schedule ahead of time by contacting the Mudd House. The tour takes half an hour.

*Summary*

The Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House is a two-story farmhouse located near Waldorf, Charles County, Maryland. The house is part of St. Catharine plantation, which has been in the Mudd family since the 1690s. After Dr. Mudd's conviction and imprisonment in 1865, St. Catharine plantation stayed in the Mudd family's possession, and indeed the property is still owned by the Mudd family. It is one of

only a few properties in Maryland that has been owned by the same family for over 300 years.

When Mudd married in 1857, his father gave the approximately 218-acre plantation to him and his wife, Sarah Frances Dyer Mudd. That same year, Mudd worked to repair and enlarge the plantation house. In 1864, he updated the kitchen with a cookstove and added two more rooms to the house.

After stopping at Mary Surratt's tavern in Maryland, Booth and Herold next went to Mudd's plantation, seeking medical attention for Booth's broken leg in the wee hours of 15 April 1865. The doctor treated Booth's leg and allowed the pair to rest in an upstairs bedroom.

Following Mudd's pardon and release from prison in 1869, he lived the rest of his life at the plantation, continuing to farm tobacco and work as a medical doctor.

In 1974, the house was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Still privately owned, the Mudd House has been used as a historic house museum since that time.

### *Discussion Suggestions*

1. Socratic dialogue questions
  - a. How did Mudd aid Booth and Herold in their escape?
  - b. Why did Mudd wait over twenty-four hours to inform authorities of Booth's and Herold's visit?
  - c. *Devil's advocate question:* How involved was Mudd in Booth's plans? How likely is it that he was aware of Booth's plan to assassinate the president? Was he too harshly sentenced?
2. Role-playing (if not done at previous stop)
  - a. Dr. Samuel Mudd
  - b. John Wilkes Booth
  - c. David Herold

## NOTES

## NOTES

## NOTES



SURRAT.



BOOTH.



HAROLD.

War Department, Washington, April 20, 1865,



**\$100,000 REWARD!**

# THE MURDERER

Of our late beloved President, Abraham Lincoln,

**IS STILL AT LARGE.**

**\$50,000 REWARD**

Will be paid by this Department for his apprehension, in addition to any reward offered by Municipal Authorities or State Executives.

**\$25,000 REWARD**

Will be paid for the apprehension of JOHN H. SURRATT, one of Booth's Accomplices.

**\$25,000 REWARD**

Will be paid for the apprehension of David C. Harold, another of Booth's accomplices.

**LIBERAL REWARDS** will be paid for any information that shall conduce to the arrest of either of the above-named criminals, or their accomplices.

All persons harboring or secreting the said persons, or either of them, or aiding or assisting their concealment or escape, will be treated as accomplices in the murder of the President and the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State, and shall be subject to trial before a Military Commission and the punishment of DEATH.

Let the stain of innocent blood be removed from the land by the arrest and punishment of the murderers.

All good citizens are exhorted to aid public justice on this occasion. Every man should consider his own conscience charged with this solemn duty, and rest neither night nor day until it be accomplished.

**EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.**

**DESCRIPTIONS.**—BOOTH is Five Feet 7 or 8 inches high, slender build, high forehead, black hair, black eyes, and wears a heavy black moustache.

JOHN H. SURRAT is about 5 feet, 9 inches. Hair rather thin and dark; eyes rather light; no beard. Would weigh 145 or 150 pounds. Complexion rather pale and clear, with color in his cheeks. Wore light clothes of fine quality. Shoulders square; chest bones rather prominent; chin narrow; ears projecting at the top; forehead rather low and square, but broad. Parts his hair on the right side; neck rather long. His lips are firmly set. A slim man.

DAVID C. HAROLD is five feet six inches high, hair dark, eyes dark, eyebrows rather heavy, full face, nose short, hand short and fleshy, feet small, instep high, round bodied, naturally quick and active, slightly closes his eyes when looking at a person.

**NOTICE.**—In addition to the above, State and other authorities have offered rewards amounting to almost one hundred thousand dollars, making an aggregate of about TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS.



PIN : 206933-000