

THE GANG THAT KILLED ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A Kidnap Conspiracy That Turned Into Murder

By Hoag Levins

CAMDEN, N.J. -- In the century and a half since it happened, populist history has largely boiled down the assassination of Abraham Lincoln to the story of a single perpetrator: John Wilkes Booth.



Photo: National Archives

Four of the eight convicted for participating in the conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln in April of 1865 died on the gallows three months later.

But in his appearance at the Camden County Historical Society, Lincoln scholar Hugh Boyle made clear that the *real* story is a sprawling epic.

It involves a gang of Confederate operatives and sympathizers that first plotted to kidnap the President and, when that failed, decided to murder not only him, but the Vice President and Secretary of State as well. Their goal was to decapitate and destabilize the federal government in hopes of forcing a settlement to the war that would avoid the South's total defeat. In the end, they managed to kill Lincoln and seriously injure Secretary of State William Seward.

Four executed

The gang leader -- 27-year-old John Wilkes Booth -- was tracked down and shot to death by Union soldiers in Virginia. Eight others were convicted of being conspirators with Booth. Four were sentenced to death and hung, including the first woman ever executed by the U.S. government. The other four were sent to a remote prison island off the coast of Florida.

"School children today learn maybe one-tenth of the actual story of the Lincoln assassination," said Mr. Boyle, speaking in the Historical Society's Boyer Auditorium.

"For instance, author Vincent Bugliosi recently put out a book that documents the Kennedy assassination and it runs to more than 1,500 pages. But if you tried to put together a similar book on the Lincoln assassination, it would be twice that size. That's how many people were involved in the investigation."

1865, the last year of the Civil War, was a time of extreme desperation for the slave-state Confederacy and its supporters. Vast stretches of the South's plantations, ports, railroads, and industrial facilities lay in total ruin. The probability of total defeat was now obvious.

'A time of terrorism'

"It was also a time of terrorism that we've largely forgotten," said Boyle. "We saw the beginnings of chemical and biological warfare in this period. For instance, Dr. Luke Blackburn of Kentucky collected large quantities of clothes and blankets from a Yellow Fever outbreak and shipped them to Washington in hopes of triggering an epidemic there."



Photo: National Archives

By 1865, the South was a vast swath of utter destruction. Shown here are the remains of what was the State Arsenal in Richmond.

surrender.

Lincoln's last speech

But among those listening in that crowd were John Wilkes Booth and 21-year-old Lewis Thornton Powell.



Photos: National Archives

John Wilkes Booth (left) and Lewis Thornton Powell were enraged by the President's White House speech on April 11. Three days later, Booth killed Lincoln in Ford's Theater while Powell tried to kill Secretary of State William Seward in his home.

Richmond and use him as a bargaining chip to win the release of all the Confederate prisoners being held in Union prison camps."

Other people were trying to poison the water supplies of northern cities. Still others were setting fire to hotels in New York. It was a time of massive upheaval, great danger and high emotion for the South, so the idea that someone might be thinking about attacking the President or other high government officials was not a crazy one in the atmosphere of the times."

The frustrations and angst of the Southern cause came to a boil in April of 1865. Its capital, Richmond, Va. -- now a burned out hulk of a city -- was captured and occupied by Ulysses S. Grant's forces on April 3. The first Union Army units that marched into the city were U.S. Colored Troops.

Six days later, Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia surrendered and was disarmed at Appomattox. Three days after that -- April 11 -- President Lincoln, standing in a second-story window of the White House, spoke to a huge crowd in a city gone wild in celebration of the Appomattox

Booth was one of the country's most famous actors and an ardent supporter of the Confederacy. His young companion, Powell, was a Confederate army veteran and a second cousin of Confederate general John B. Gordon, head of Georgia's Ku Klux Klan.

Powell, who enlisted at age 17, fought at Antietam, Chancellorsville, Murfreesboro and Gettysburg, where he was wounded and taken prisoner of war. He escaped his captors and, using the alias Lewis Payne, joined a Confederate guerilla-warfare unit conducting raids behind Union lines.

Under circumstances that have never been fully documented, Powell/Payne suddenly left that unit to work with John Wilkes Booth in a plan to kidnap Abraham Lincoln. It was strongly believed -- but never conclusively proven by Union military investigators -- that a Canadian-based arm of the Confederate Secret Service was behind that kidnap plot.

Lincoln kidnap plot

"The plan," said Boyle, "was to kidnap Lincoln, take him to



Photo: National Archives

Mary Surratt's boarding house in Washington was a meeting place for Confederate spies and operatives, including those planning to kidnap Lincoln.

In March of 1865, Booth, Powell and a number of other conspirators prepared to seize Lincoln as he traveled to attend a play at a hospital near the Washington cottage that served as his Presidential summer home. The gang took up position on the road to the hospital but their venture failed when Lincoln changed plans and attended another capital function instead.

A month later, as he and Powell stood in front of the White House on April 11, Booth decided to escalate the plot from kidnapping to murder.

"Booth was enraged as he listened to Lincoln talk about how Black men should have the right to vote in that speech," said Boyle. "We believe that Booth made up his mind about the assassination on that day. We know he turned to Powell and said, 'That's the last speech Lincoln will ever give.'"

The war wasn't over

"It's important to understand that neither the fall of Richmond nor the surrender of Lee at Appomattox ended the war," said Boyle. "A lot of people today aren't clear on this and it's an important fact because it played a big role in the ultimate fate of the conspirators. Confederate general Joe Johnston was still fighting Sherman down in the Carolinas. The war wasn't over."

At the time he began planning the earlier failed kidnap attempt, John Wilkes Booth recruited a number of people to help. Powell, the battle-hardened Confederate veteran, was crucial to the plan because of his strength and size.

"Booth knew he needed a big, strong guy, about six-foot-five or so," said Boyle. "Why? Well, if you're going to kidnap a President who was six-foot-four, you better have a guy *his* size."

Powell was enormously strong and he also developed the strangest and most dedicated allegiance to Booth of all the conspiracy group members."

That group also included:

- **John Surratt**, 21, a Confederate spy and courier and the son of Mary Surratt.
- **Mary Surratt**, 42, proprietor of a Maryland tavern and a Washington boarding house that served as meeting places and safe houses for Confederate spies and couriers.
- **David Herold**, 23, a Washington pharmacist and former schoolmate of John Surratt.
- **George Atzerodt**, 30, owner of a down-and-out carriage painting business in Port Tobacco, Va. He knew the southern Maryland waterways, back roads and woods and shuttled Confederate couriers and spies back and forth across the Potomac. A heavy drinker, he was introduced to Booth by John Surratt.
- **Dr. Samuel Mudd**, 32, a Maryland physician, tobacco farmer, slave owner and member of the underground anti-Union partisans in Maryland. In 1864 Mudd joined Booth in the kidnap plan and introduced the actor to John Surratt.
- **Samuel Arnold**, 31, a Confederate Army veteran and former schoolmate of Booth's.
- **Michael O'Laughlen**, 25, another former schoolmate of Booth's who was a member of a secret Confederate organization involved in sabotage.
- **Edmund Spangler**, 40, a Ford's Theatre employee who was unwittingly entangled in the assassination by Booth.



Photo: National Archives

Dead on the gallows is Mary Surratt, the first women ever put to death by the Federal Government.

Three assassinations planned

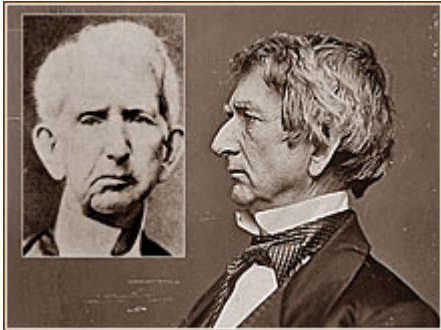
During the 72 hours after he made his assassination decision on April 11, Booth hurriedly organized Powell, Atzerodt and Herold for action on April 14. Booth was to kill Lincoln at Ford's Theater. Powell was to kill Secretary of State William Seward at home and Herold was to assist him. Atzerodt was to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson. All were to strike at 10:15 p.m.

"Before he went into Ford's theatre," said Boyle, "Booth stopped in a saloon along the side of the theater. As he was having a drink, someone in there recognized him and said, 'You're not



Photos: National Archives

The Derringer Booth used to murder the President and the Bowie knife Powell used in his attempt to kill Secretary of State Seward.



Photos: National Archives

Powell slashed Seward around the face and neck multiple times and believed him dead. But, although heavily disfigured, the Secretary of State survived.

Herold hid out in various locations in southern Maryland before they crossed the Potomac and took refuge in the barn of a farm owned by Richard Garrett in Virginia.

the actor your father was,' Booth's answer was 'When I leave the stage, I'll be the most famous man in America.'" A short time later, sneaking into the President's theater box, he shot Lincoln in the head at point-blank range.

Simultaneously, Lewis Thornton Powell and David Herold arrived at the home of Secretary Seward, who had helped write and had signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Herold remained outside with the horses as Powell went to the front door. Carrying a Whitney Navy revolver and a 12-inch Bowie knife, he pushed past a servant and was confronted on the stairs by Seward's son, Frederick. Powell tried to shoot him in the head at close range but the revolver would not fire, so he beat him across the head with it. As he entered the elder Seward's room, Powell fought with both a male nurse and Seward's daughter before leaping on the bed and slashing the Secretary of State multiple times with the Bowie knife. On his way out of the building, he fought with both Seward's second son and a State Department courier, whose throat he slashed.

But once out on the street, he found himself alone. Herold, who was supposed to guide Powell out of the city, had heard all the noise and run away. Powell wandered around Washington for days, hiding in the Congressional cemetery at night, where he slept in a tree.

Meanwhile, George Atzerodt, armed with a gun, had checked into Washington's Kirkwood House where the Vice President was also staying. Before the appointed attack time, Atzerodt began drinking in the hotel bar. Drunk and unable to bring himself to actually carry out the murder, he wandered the streets of the capital for the rest of the night.

Booth's escape

Fleeing Ford's Theatre on his horse, Booth met up with David Herold and rode to Mary Surratt's tavern in Maryland, where guns had been stored. Now armed with a carbine rifle, the two rode to the farm house of Dr. Samuel Mudd for treatment of Booth's leg, which had been injured during his escape. For the next twelve days, Booth and



Photos: National Archives

Initially recruited for the Lincoln kidnap plot, Dr. Samuel Mudd aided Booth during his escape immediately after the assassination of Lincoln.

At the same time, they became the subjects of the largest manhunt in North American History.

A Union Army cavalry unit finally tracked them to Garrett's, surrounded the barn and set it afire to force the fugitives out. Herold came out peacefully and surrendered. Booth refused to come out and brandished the carbine inside. Aiming through a crack in the barn boards, Union sergeant Boston Corbett shot him through the neck. Booth died hours later on the front porch of Garrett's house.

The massive military and law enforcement investigation that took Herold into custody had also arrested Lewis Thornton Powell, George Atzerodt, Mary Surratt, Dr. Samuel Mudd, Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlen and Edmund Spangler.

'Ninth conspirator'

Curiously missing among the arrested was the man many called the "ninth conspirator," Confederate agent John Surratt. Evading the dragnet, he fled to Canada, took a ship to England and made his way to Rome. There, he disappeared from view by changing his name and joining the military unit that protected the Pope. This unlikely tactic was made possible by the fact that the Surratt family were devout Catholics and had had friendly contacts in church circles.



Photos: National Archives

Confederate spy John Surratt fled the country and hid out in Rome where he joined the military unit that protected the Pope.

All eight went on trial before a military tribunal whose nine judges included some of Lincoln's top generals.

"The issue of using a military tribunal rather than a civil court was as controversial back then as it continues to be today," said Boyle. "But that's what Secretary of War Edwin Stanton was determined to do. U.S. Attorney General James Speed wrote the decision that basically concluded that the war was not over when Lincoln was killed. So, the conspirators did not just kill a private citizen serving in the Presidency. They killed the Commander in Chief of the armed services during time of War."

Death by hanging

The two-month trial heard testimony from more than 300 witnesses and generated a transcript of nearly 5,000 pages. In the end, four of the eight -- Lewis Thornton Powell, Mary Surratt, David Herold and George Atzerodt -- were sentenced to death by hanging. The other four -- Samuel

Mudd, Michael O'Laughlen, Samuel Arnold and Edmund Spangler -- were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Forty eight hours after President Andrew Johnson approved the sentences, four of the conspirators were hung.

"Why did they split up the eight into four who went to jail and four sentenced to death?,"



Photos: National Archives

Along with Dr. Mudd, three other conspirators were sentenced to life imprisonment: (left to right) Confederate Army veteran Samuel Arnold, Confederate operative Michael O'Laughlen and hapless stagehand Edmund Spangler.

said Boyle. "My belief is that each one of the four who went to the gallows was directly involved in something on the day of the President's assassination."

"The other four were shipped off to Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas off Florida," said Boyle. "This was a military fort that had been turned into a prison. Inmates who broke the rules often had to carry around 30-to-50 pound iron balls all day. Really troublesome prisoners were hung up by their thumbs for periods of time."

In 1867 an epidemic of Yellow Fever swept through the tightly-packed prison population killing Michael O'Laughlen and many other inmates, guards and the prison's only physician. Dr. Samuel Mudd, the inmate, was pressed into service to administer to the sick during the emergency and did an outstanding job. As a result, the surviving warden and military guards later wrote letters to President Johnson asking for mercy for Mudd. Just before he left office in 1869, Johnson issued a Presidential pardon for Mudd, Arnold and Spangler.

The one that got away

"The one that got away -- John Surratt -- did avoid capture for a while in Rome, but eventually someone recognized him," said Boyle. "He was arrested, but escaped and took a ship to Alexandria, Egypt, where authorities were waiting for him. He was sent back to the U.S. and tried for the same crimes as his mother. But this time it was a civil trial that resulted in a hung jury. John Surratt got off and lived until 1916."

A bizarre modern-day footnote to this assassination story surfaced in 1991 when the skull of Lewis Thornton Powell was discovered in an attic storage bin



Photos: National Archives

The skull of Lewis Thornton Powell was found in the Smithsonian Institution in 1991.

at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. In 1865, Powell had been buried in a grave next to the gallows where he was executed. But later, his body was moved to other storage or grave sites at least four times. It's believed that the skull became separated from the body during one of those moves and ended up in the Army's medical museum. In 1898, that military facility passed it on to Smithsonian, where it was inadvertently mixed in with a collection of Native American bones -- and forgotten for nearly a hundred years.

In 1994, Powell's skull was claimed by an elderly family member who had it buried in Geneva, Fla., near his mother's grave.



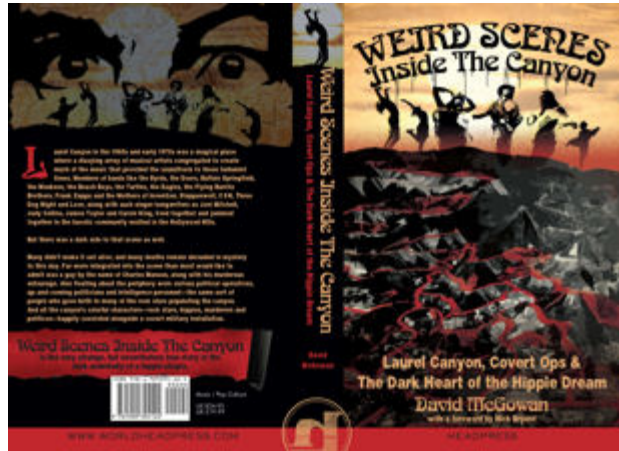
FANNY BROWN
(‘Pretty Fay Brown’)

Fanny Brown, one of Booth's many paramours

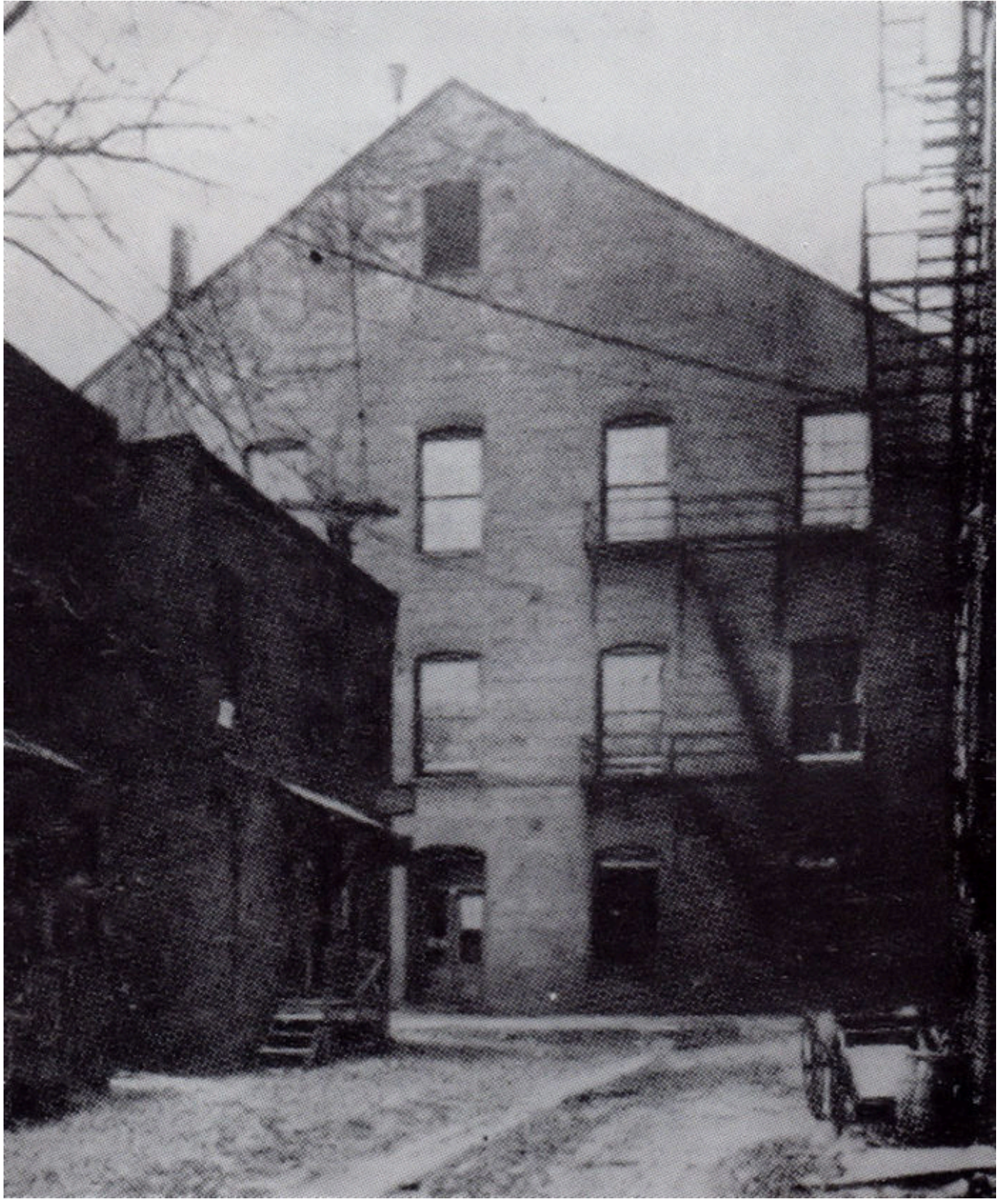
In summary then, your best bet is probably to make the attempt on Lincoln's life when he is alone and unprotected. And you should probably bring along some more impressive firepower, just in case. If you

are determined to do it in the theater, you should don a disguise and bring along a couple other gunmen in case one or more of you are killed or physically prevented from reaching the president. The dumbest thing you could probably do would be to go it alone, as John Wilkes Booth, and arm yourself only with a derringer. But I guess you can't argue with success ... right?

Meanwhile, one of your comrades-in-arms, Lewis Paine/Payne/Powell, has a difficult task ahead of him as well. His goal is to kill Lincoln's Secretary of State, William Seward, who is recuperating at his stately manor in the heart of DC after being severely injured in a fall from a horse-drawn carriage just nine days earlier. Seward had suffered a broken lower jaw, a fractured right arm, torn ligaments in his foot, and heavy bruising over much of his body.



The 63-year-old secretary is therefore physically vulnerable, but assassinating him is still not going to be easy. For starters, Paine is going to have to gain access to the estate. Then he's going to have to find Seward without knowing the layout of the home or which floor or which of the many rooms the secretary is in. And he's going to have to get past a lot of people, because there are no less than eight other able-bodied adults in the home, five of them men, two of whom are military personnel. And there are readily accessible weapons in the home. And, as I may have mentioned, there are armed patrols all over the city, and they are quite capable of quickly responding to any signs of a disturbance at the Secretary of State's residence.



The rear view of Ford's Theater and 'Baptist Alley'

The attack on Seward has been all but written out of our history books, but in 1865 it was portrayed as an integral component of the plot against Lincoln, particularly during the show trial of the alleged conspirators. It is now mentioned only in passing, if at all. Which is probably because the story doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

In the home are: William Seward, the injured Secretary of State; William Bell, Seward's black servant; Frederick Seward, William's son as well as his Assistant Secretary of State; Major Augustus Seward, another son and a career Army officer (who will be promoted in a few weeks to lieutenant colonel); Private George Robinson, Seward's personal attendant (who will be promoted to sergeant in a few weeks); Emerick Hansell, a US State Department courier; Frances Seward, the secretary's wife (who will be dead very soon); Fanny Seward, his daughter (who will be dead fairly soon); and, finally, the wife of one of the Seward sons.

Payne of course is going it alone, just like Booth, for reasons that have apparently never required an explanation. The five able-bodied men in the house, at least a couple of whom are likely armed, will pose a physical challenge. The three women will pose less of a physical threat, but one or more of them are very likely to run out into the street to summon any nearby patrols. And just the fact that there are so many people in the way will make it extremely difficult for Powell to control the situation.



Another of Booth's paramours, this one unidentified

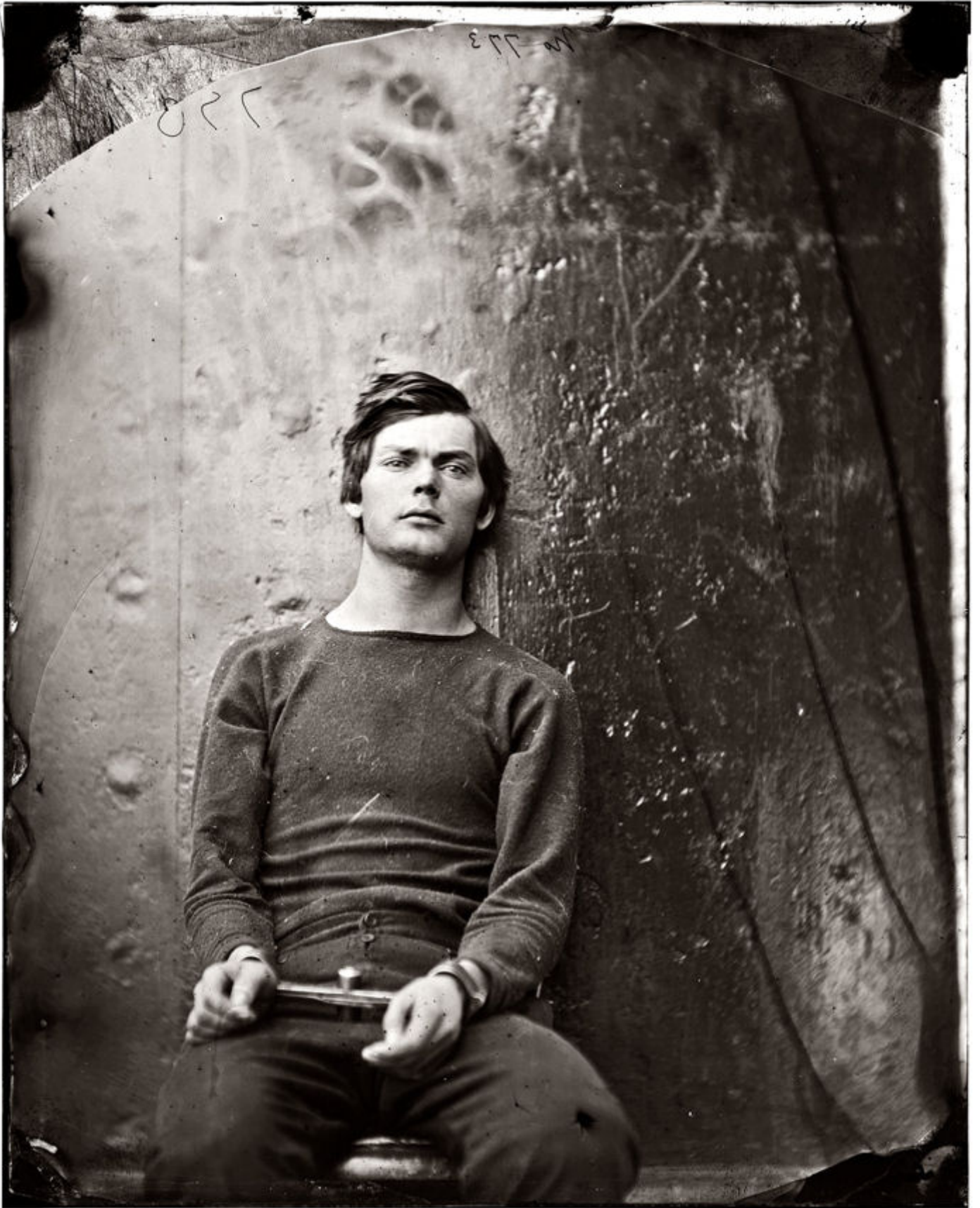
Paine's mission is not unlike Booth's; he must enter the building, work his way past any resistance to get to his target, take out his target, work his way back out of the building past any resistance, and then somehow find his way out of Washington. But unlike Booth, Payne won't have even a single bullet to

work with. Instead, he is going in armed only with a bludgeon and a knife. And he'll be coming out with nothing but the clothes on his back.

Technically speaking, he will be carrying a gun, but it doesn't work and so is only useful as a bludgeon. In a city overflowing with guns, Paine has chosen to bring one that doesn't work. Which means that, luckily for the Swards, no one is going to die.

Paine though is going to leave quite a trail of destruction once he enters the estate, which sits just a half-dozen blocks from Ford's Theater. Frederick Seward will be left gravely injured, with his head reportedly split open and his skull fractured in two places. Major Augustus Seward will also receive severe head injuries, with one report claiming that he was half scalped. Private Robinson will also be seriously wounded, with deep stab wounds to his chest. Emerick Hansell will receive at least one deep, very serious chest wound as well. Fanny Seward will be wounded as well, in some unspecified manner. And William Seward – who is lying in bed on his back, unable to defend himself – will be brutally stabbed about the head and neck, but will, despite his already weakened condition, miraculously survive.

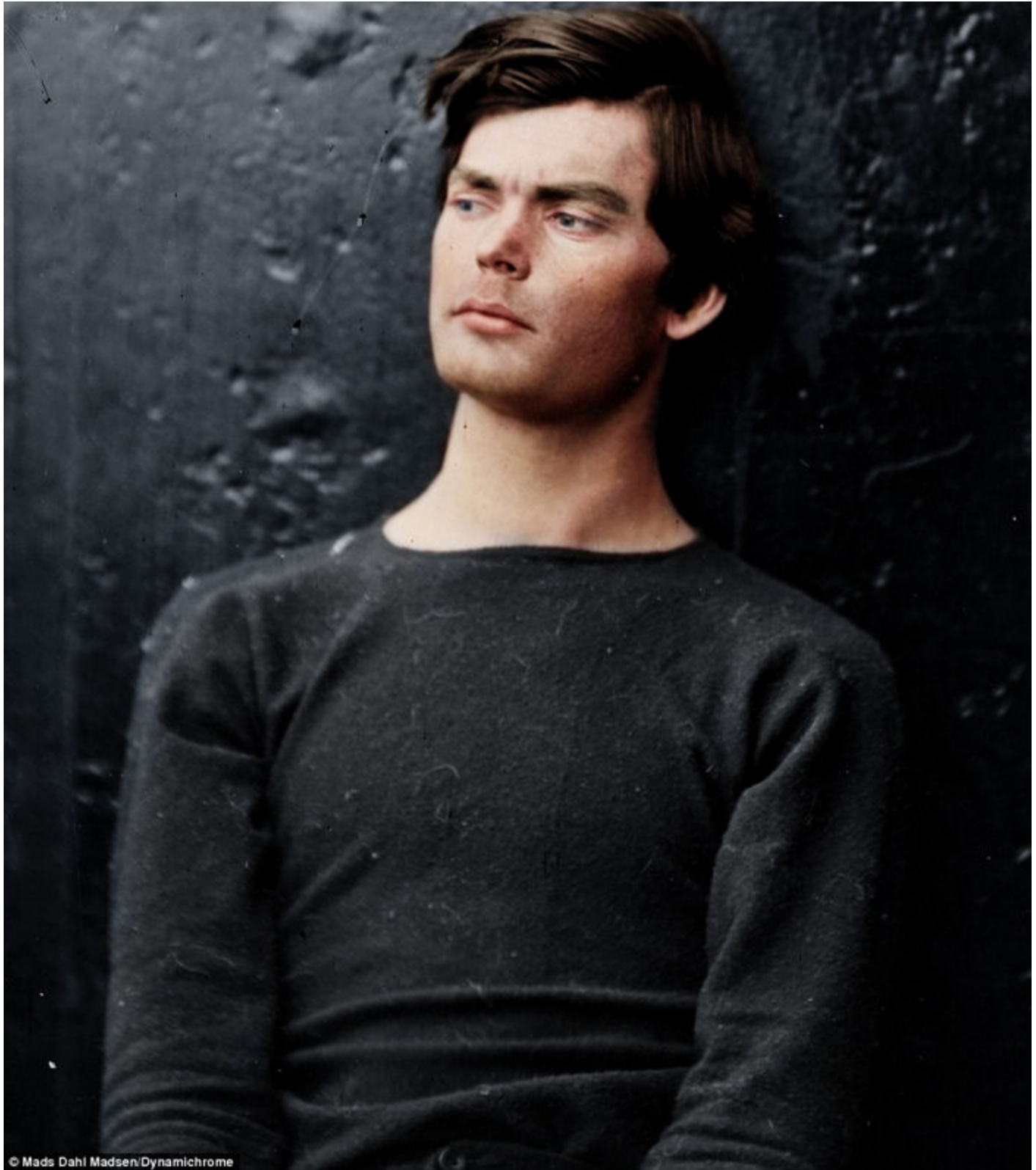
It is difficult to believe that the attack on Secretary of State Seward ever took place at all. Lewis Paine supposedly gravely wounded six people in hand-to-hand combat, four of them able-bodied men, and yet, as photos taken soon after his arrest just days later reveal, he didn't have so much as a scratch on him. He supposedly left his hat, gun and knife behind, creating a handy evidence trail, but why would he leave his only weapons behind? He also allegedly left a bloodstained coat with gloves and a fake moustache in the pocket in the woods just outside of DC. Lewis Paine was apparently a very considerate attempted assassin.



Lewis Paine, April 1865

The descriptions of the conditions of the victims came from the first three people to conveniently arrive at the crime scene: Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, and Surgeon General Joseph Barnes. You know, just your typical first responders. None of them reported seeing Augustus there. Stanton initially claimed that only William Seward, Fred Seward and George Robinson were injured; Augustus Seward, Emerick Hansell and Fanny Seward were later added to the victim list, apparently so that the prosecution would have suitable witnesses. It was an entire month before Fanny Seward came forward with her account of the attack.

Augustus was later presented at trial as both a victim of and an eyewitness to the attack – the attack that very likely didn't take place, in the home he wasn't actually in at the time. His testimony was wildly at odds with that of Robinson, with both men claiming that they had been in the room and personally witnessed the attack on William Seward. Not only did their accounts significantly differ, but neither really explained why it was that with the two of them in the room, and with Frederick and Hansell in the home as well, they were unable to defend the secretary.



This remarkable image of Paine, captured in April 1865, has been lovingly colorized

It is impossible to determine whether the alleged attack ever took place, but it appears extremely unlikely. It does not seem logistically possible for one barely armed man to have done what Paine is supposed to have done. And it doesn't seem physically possible for him to have done so without sustaining a single visible injury. There is no tangible evidence that Paine ever entered the home. The only 'evidence' that has ever existed is the dubious (and conflicting) accounts told by the alleged victims and by the high-ranking cabinet officials who just happened to be first on the scene.

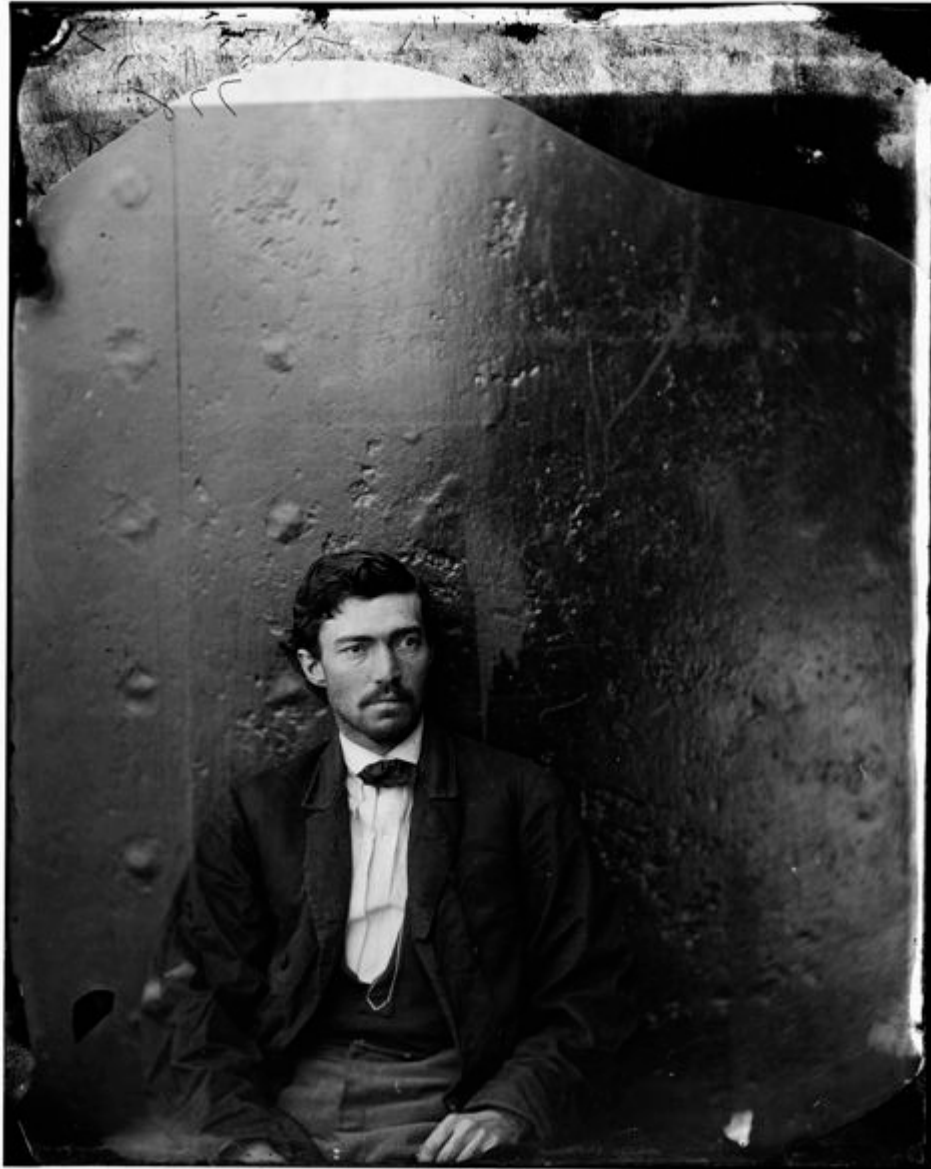
Let's now briefly review the key elements of this story: two assassins; three targets; numerous people to get through to get to those targets; numerous other people to get by to flee the scene; a city essentially under martial law; and one – exactly one – bullet. Anyone see anything wrong with that scenario?

the Center for an Informed A

Anatomy of a Presidential Assassination, Part III
March 16, 2014

Anyone notice anything peculiar about the two images of Lewis Powell in my last post? Anything at all? Other than, of course, the fact that one of them had been colorized, making it appear unsettlingly contemporary? Because they are, to be sure, very unusual images.

There's really nothing else like them in all of recorded history – except for, that is, the remarkable images that also exist of most of his alleged co-conspirators. And perhaps it is time for us to now meet those alleged conspirators, beginning with the rather dashing gentleman pictured below, Mr. Samuel Bland Arnold, who looks almost like he could be a 21st century actor posing for a publicity photo for his latest blockbuster film.



Arnold was thirty at the time of the assassination and was working as a commissary clerk at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. He was said to be a former Confederate soldier, though it seems very likely that he was actually a Union operative (as appears to be the case with almost all of Booth's alleged accomplices). The files of the Bureau of Military Justice (a misnomer if ever there was one) contain the following tidbits of information on Arnold:

“Samuel B. Arnold was born at Georgetown, D.C., of highly respectable parents ... He was first sent to be educated at Georgetown College, from there he was sent to the Reverend J.H. Dashills, [in] Baltimore County, his parents having removed from Georgetown to Baltimore. He was one year in Rockingham County, Virginia, under the charge of the Reverend Mr. Gibbins, and afterward sent to Saint Timothy Hall, Catonsville, Maryland, and place[d] under the Rev. L. Vanbakelin.”

The picture painted here is of a well educated young man who had a rather privileged upbringing in and around the nation's capital. Not at all the kind of guy you would expect to have donned a Confederate uniform, unless he did so as a covert Union operative. Arnold was convicted of complicity in the plot to kill Lincoln and was handed a life sentence by the military tribunal. He served only four years though before being pardoned by President Johnson and released in 1869. Arnold lived to the ripe old age of seventy-two, passing away on the autumnal equinox of 1906.

Next up is Michael O'Laughlin (or O'Laughlen – the two are used interchangeably throughout the literature on the assassination), who, like Arnold, was a ruggedly handsome, well dressed young man from a well-to-do family. Just twenty-four when Lincoln was shot, O'Laughlin had known Booth since childhood, when they had lived across the street from each other in Baltimore (Arnold had also been a childhood friend of Mr. Booth). The Bureau of Military Justice files reveal the following about O'Laughlin:

“Michael O'Laughlin was born in the City of Baltimore ... He was educated at a School conducted by a highly respectable Teacher at the corner of Front and LaFayette Sts., and after leaving School learned the trade of ornamental Plaster work, and also acquired the art of Engraving. The company he was in the habit of associating with was not of a character that a person indisposed to evil would have made choice of. His appearance was generally of a genteel character.”

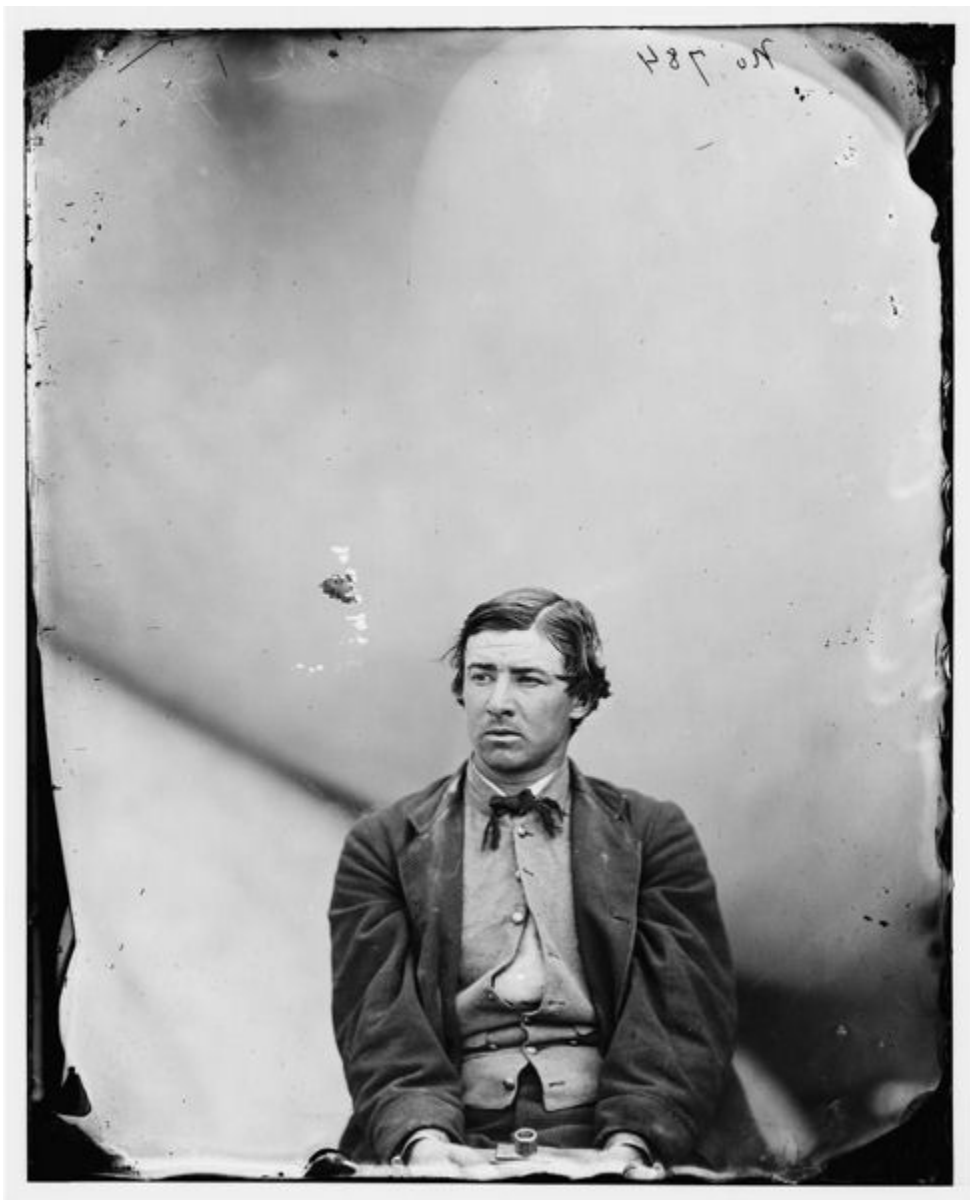


In 1865, O'Laughlin was working for his older brother as a clerk in a Baltimore feed store. That brother, according to government files, was a member of the Knights of the Golden Circle. Testimony before the military tribunal indicated that Michael likely was as well. Convicted by that tribunal, O'Laughlin was given a life sentence, which proved to be a death sentence when he contracted yellow fever in prison and died, strangely enough, on or about the autumnal equinox of 1867. His remains are interred in the same Baltimore cemetery where Arnold and Booth can be found.

Like Arnold and O'Laughlin (and Booth), David Edgar Herold (frequently identified in print as David Herald) was a well educated young man from an upscale family. Herold was born in Maryland and raised in – where else? – Washington, DC. His father was the chief clerk at the Washington Navy Yard store – the same Washington Navy Yard whose guarded bridge Booth and Herold were inexplicably allowed to cross on the night of April 14, 1865.

Herold attended Georgetown College, followed by the Rittenhouse Academy and then the prestigious Charlotte Hall Military Academy. He later went to work for various pharmacists and doctors, including our old friend "Dr." Francis Tumblety. On one occasion in 1863, when he was dispatched to the White House to deliver a bottle of castor oil, Herold had the honor of personally meeting President Lincoln.



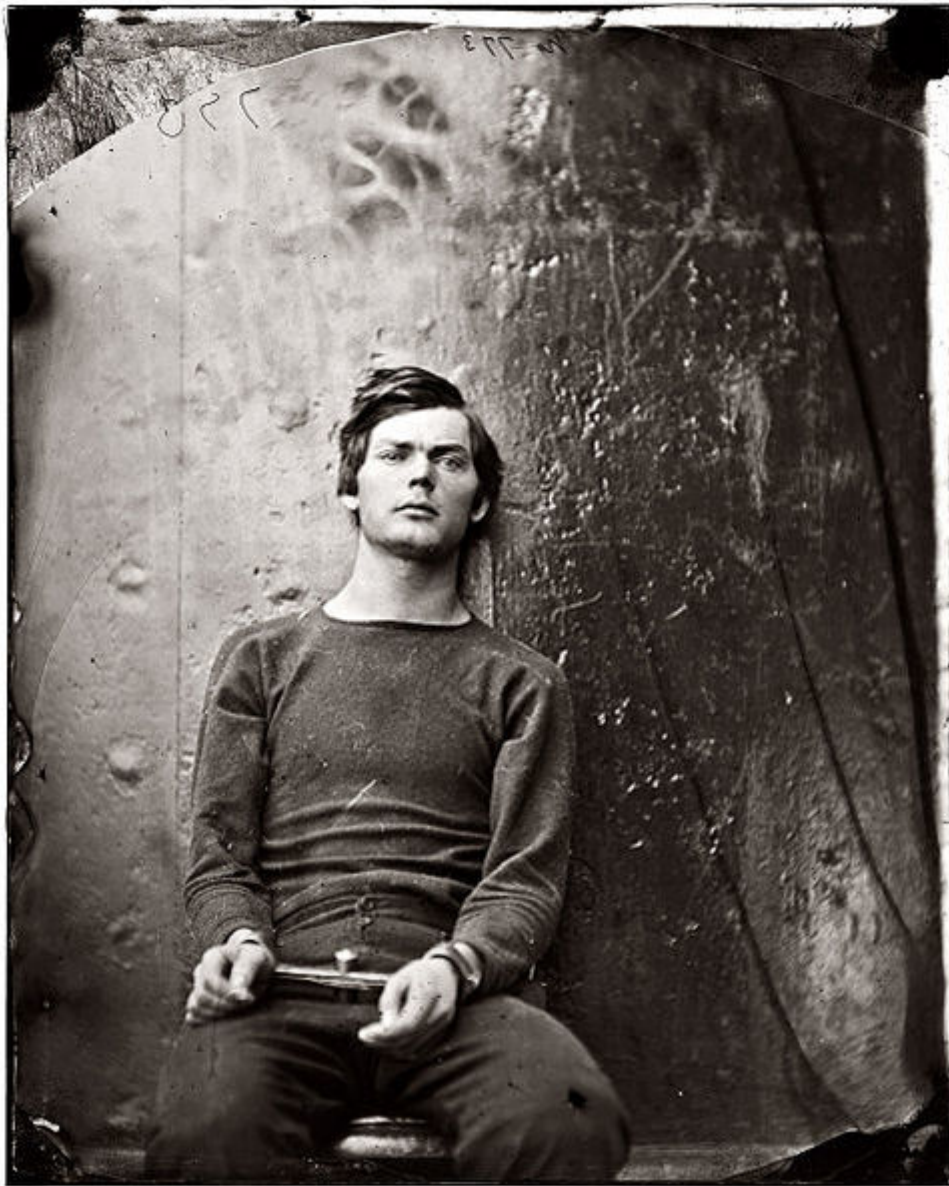


Tried along with seven of his alleged co-conspirators, Herold was found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. That sentence was carried out on July 7, 1865, just after Herold's twenty-third birthday. He is, as would be expected, buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, DC.

Thus far we have met four lads (Booth, Herold, McLaughlin, and Arnold) who all were raised in and lived and worked in the Baltimore/Washington DC area. Considering that the conspiracy to kill Lincoln, to the extent that it is acknowledged at all, is invariably cast as a Confederate conspiracy, there don't appear to have been too many southerners in the crowd. There was at least one though – our old friend Lewis Thornton Powell.

The youngest of the alleged conspirators – just twenty at the time of the assassination – Powell was also known as Lewis Paine, Lewis Payne, Reverend Wood, The Reverend, James Wood, Mosby, and Kincheloe, among other aliases. As his shadowy identities would seem to imply, he

was by many accounts an intelligence operative. Raised in Alabama, Georgia and Florida, Powell was educated by his father, the Reverend George C. Powell.



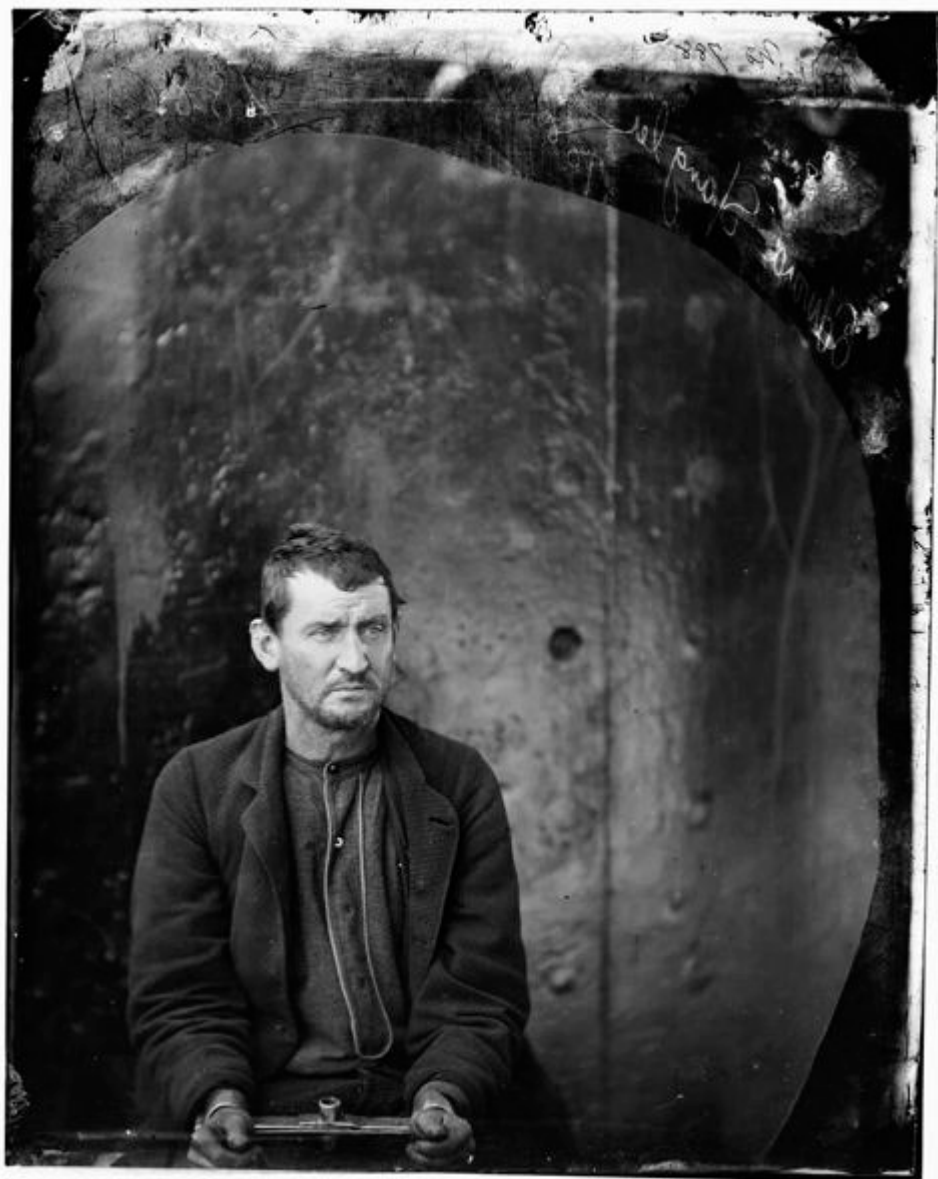
Lewis entered the service at a young age – either sixteen or seventeen, depending upon the source. Powell’s two older brothers enlisted as well, with all three serving with the 2nd Florida Infantry. Lewis was the only one of the three to survive the Civil War. Wounded at Gettysburg in early July 1863, he was taken prisoner and sent to a POW hospital. Following his recovery, he was put to work as a male nurse in a hospital in Baltimore, from where he reportedly escaped, apparently by basically walking out the door.

After that, according to historian Theodore Roscoe (*The Web of Conspiracy*), his “movements are hard to follow.” Author Jim Bishop added, in *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*, that “There is an unexplained hitch in his [military] records.” According to various accounts, he went to work with

the paramilitary forces serving under John Singleton Mosby. In January 1865, he turned up in a boardinghouse in Baltimore, Maryland and allegedly became a Lincoln assassination conspirator. On July 7, 1865, he was hanged.

There is scant evidence that Powell knew Booth at all, though an apocryphal tale is often told of a very young Lewis meeting Booth in a theater following a performance by the acclaimed actor. There doesn't appear to be any evidence at all linking him to the other alleged conspirators. He photographed really well though.

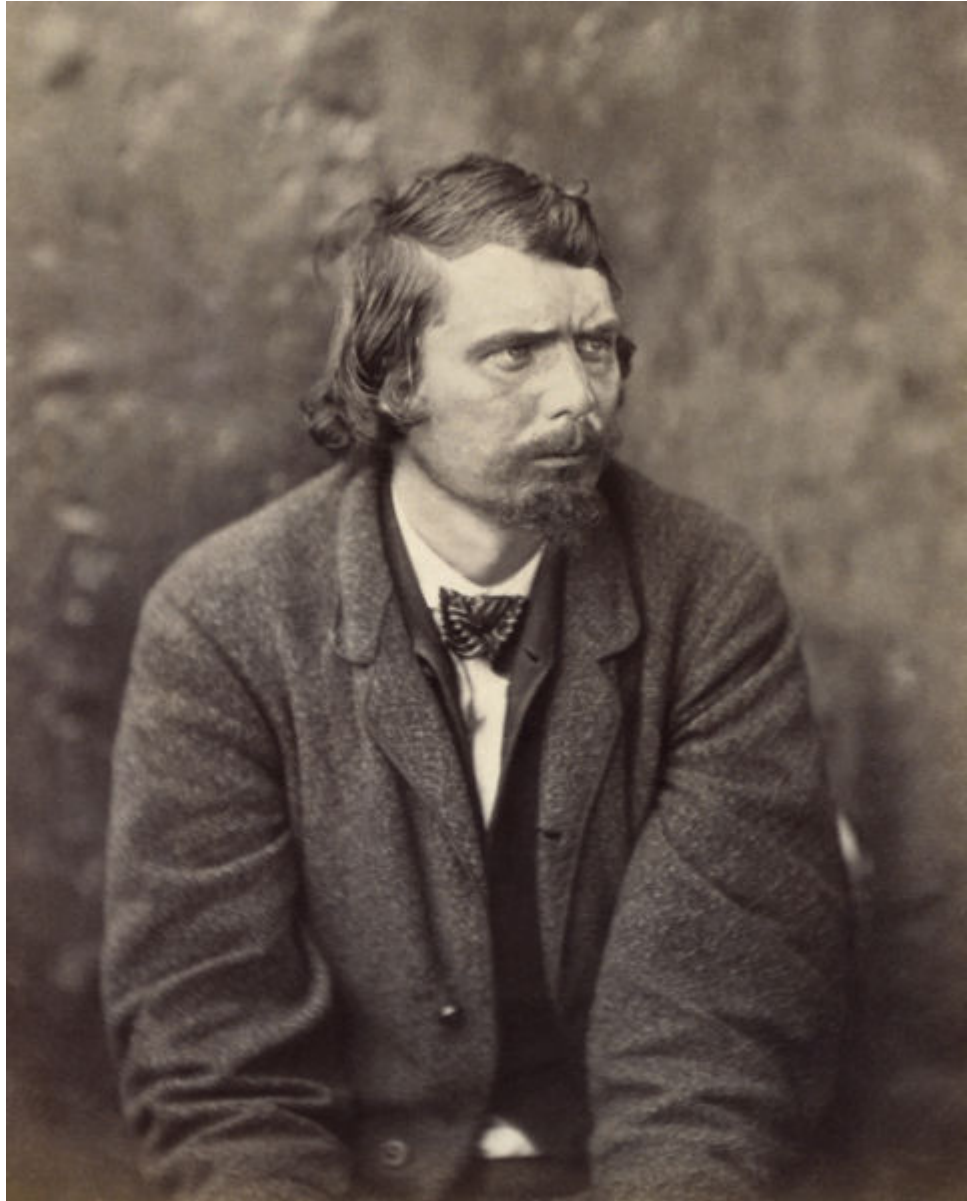
Moving back up north, we next meet the hapless Ned Spangler, also known as Ed Spangler, Edward Spangler, Edman Spangler, and Edmund Spangler. The oldest of the alleged male conspirators at thirty-nine, Spangler was a journeyman carpenter originally from Pennsylvania, though he had spent the majority of his life in the Baltimore area. During the Civil War, he was living in Washington, DC, where he was employed at Ford's Theater as a carpenter and stagehand.





Spangler had met Booth many years earlier when he worked on the Booth family's Tudor mansion. In the aftermath of the Lincoln assassination, he was accused of holding Booth's horse and aiding and abetting the actor's escape from the theater. The charges though were dubious at best. Sentenced to a six-year prison term, the most lenient sentence handed down by the military tribunal, he was pardoned four years later by President Andrew Johnson. Spangler died on February 7, 1875, reportedly of tuberculosis.

Next up is the only foreign national in the group, George Andrew Atzerodt, who was brought over to America from Germany when he was eight. Raised in, of course, Maryland, Atzerodt and his brother owned a carriage repair shop where George worked as a painter. At the time of the assassination, he was twenty-nine.





The military tribunal maintained that Atzerodt had been assigned the task of assassinating newly-installed Vice President Andrew Johnson, but he had allegedly lost his nerve and failed to carry out the assignment. In truth, there is no real evidence that Johnson, who was likely involved or at least had knowledge of the plot, was ever targeted. As with Stanton, this was a case of the conspirators themselves claiming to be intended victims. Atzerodt was found guilty of his alleged crimes and was hanged on July 7, 1865.

The seventh of the alleged conspirators was Dr. Samuel Mudd, yet another Marylander. Like many of the others, Mudd was born into a large, well-to-do family and he was well educated, having graduated from both Georgetown College in DC and the medical school at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. Mudd worked as both a country doctor and a tobacco farmer, and was reportedly a slave owner who harbored southern sympathies.

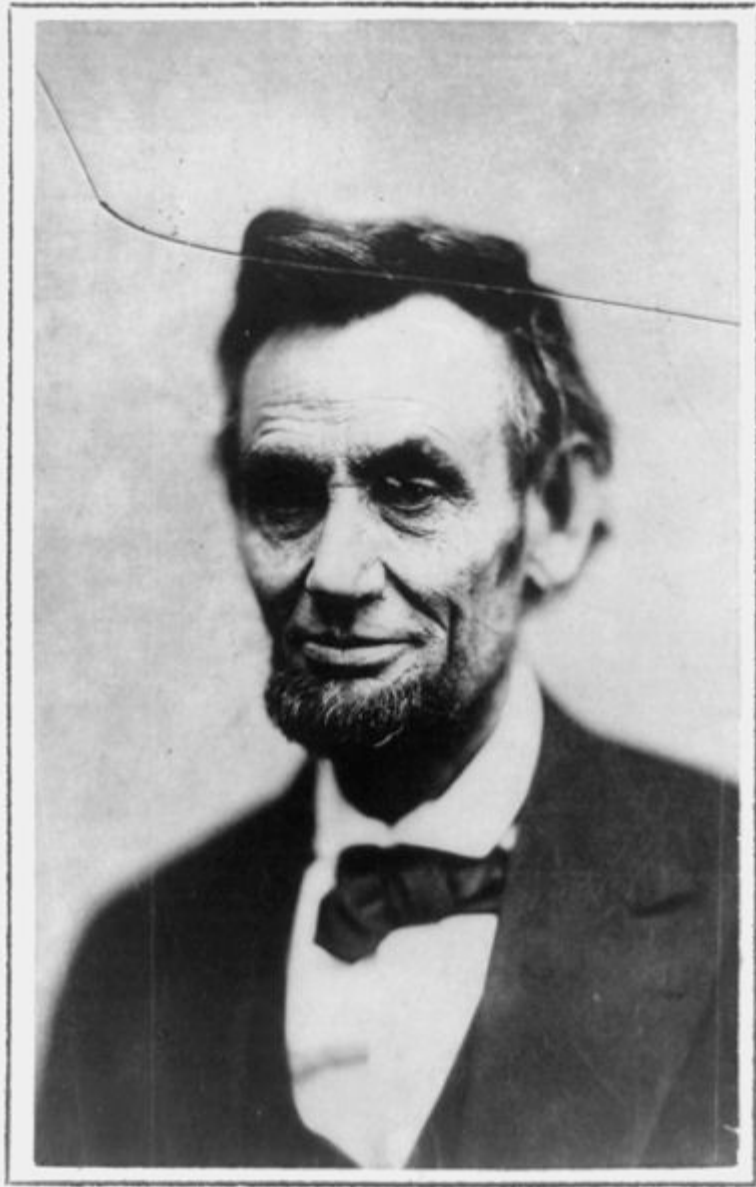


Mudd, thirty-two at the time, stood trial along with the others on charges of having aided and abetted Booth's plot and having offered medical aid to the injured actor. His actual role has been fiercely debated by mainstream historians, all of whom have grossly misrepresented the Lincoln assassination. Convicted by the tribunal, Mudd was sentenced to life in prison but was pardoned just four years later by Johnson.

Having now met seven of the nine people who stood trial as Booth's alleged co-conspirators, is there anything that stands out as unusual about the images adorning this post? Anything at all? And keep in mind that these are official booking photos, otherwise known as mugshots. But they certainly don't look like any other mugshots ever taken. We certainly have no such images of Lee Harvey Oswald. Or Sirhan Sirhan. Or Charles Guiteau. Or Leon Czolgosz. Or James Earl Ray. Or John Hinckley. Or Mark David Chapman. Or any other alleged assassin or attempted assassin. Or anyone ever arrested on suspicion of having committed any crime.

No one else, you see, had one of the top professional photographers of the era come by to take their mugshots. No one else had the benefit of dramatic backdrops, professional lighting, and flattering poses and camera angles. And no one else was photographed by the very same guy, Alexander Gardner, who was long credited as being the guy who took the last known images of President Abraham Lincoln.

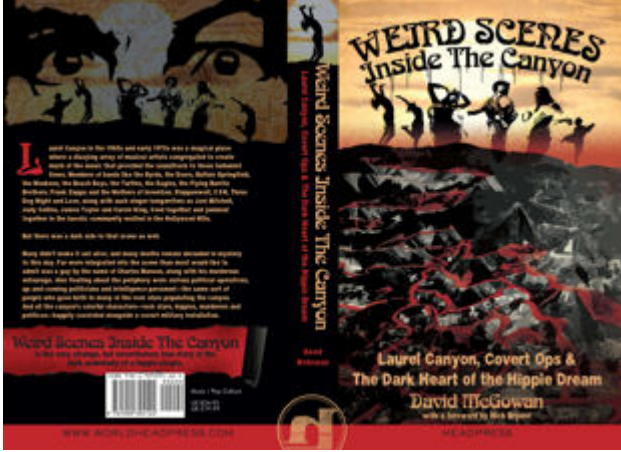
When called upon to photograph the people accused of plotting against that president, Gardner certainly rose to the occasion. The images of the alleged Lincoln conspirators are arguably the finest work that the Civil War photographer ever did. The portraits of the conspirators' victim, taken not long before Lincoln's death, are rather lackluster in comparison.





The very same Alexander Gardner was also the guy who, just weeks after lovingly photographing the alleged conspirators, photographed several of those same conspirators being led to the gallows and hanged. And the guy who officially photographed Lincoln's funeral. And the guy who took the only image of what was claimed to be the body of John Wilkes Booth, after the actor had allegedly been gunned down and transported back to Washington.





Laurel Canyon in the 1960s and early 1970s was a magical place where a flowering array of musical artists congregated to create music that captured the zeitgeist of the times. Laurel Canyon was the home of some of the most iconic bands of the era: The Byrds, The Doors, Buffalo Springfield, The Mamas & the Papas, The Beatles, The Beach Boys, The Flying Burrito Brothers, Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, Ringo Starr & Paul McCartney, The Band, and more. Laurel Canyon was the home of some of the most iconic bands of the era. Laurel Canyon was the home of some of the most iconic bands of the era.

Weird Scenes Inside The Canyon
Laurel Canyon, Covert Ops & The Dark Heart of the Hippie Dream
David McGowan



ISBN 9781455500000



WEIRD SCENES Inside The Canyon



Laurel Canyon, Covert Ops & The Dark Heart of the Hippie Dream
David McGowan
with a foreword by Bob Dylan



Left to right: Mary Surratt, Lewis Powell, David Herold, and George Atzerodt

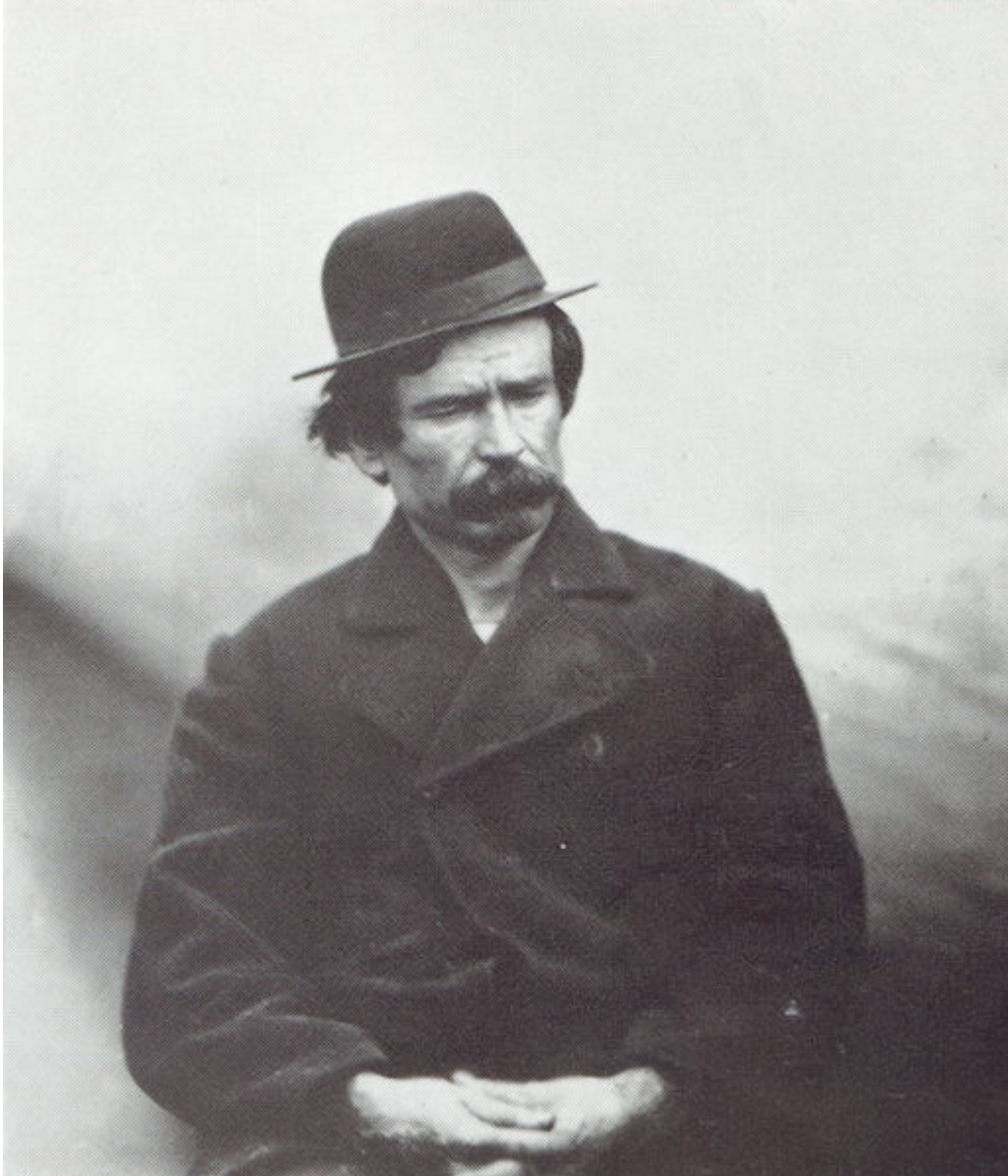
That image though won't be displayed here, for reasons explained by author W.C. Jameson (*Return of Assassin*): "Following the work of the identification committee, the body was photographed by Alexander Gardner, one of the members. Gardner conducted his work in the presence of War Department detective James A. Wardell. Gardner was allowed to take only one photograph and was quickly hastened to a darkroom to develop it. Wardell stood by his side the entire time, and when the picture was finished, Wardell took possession of it, along with the plate ... Moments later, Lafayette Baker took the photographic plate from Wardell. In response to subsequent inquiries, the government denied that any photographs were ever taken of the body ... To this day, no one knows what became of either the picture or the plate."

Theodore Roscoe adds that, "Undoubtedly Gardner gave the glass plate to Lafayette Baker or to Stanton. But the Secret Service Chief made no mention of it in his history. Stanton never mentioned it. War Department records are absolutely silent on the subject. The photograph never reached public domain."

Nothing unusual about any of that. Returning now to the collection of the world's most glamorous mugshots, it should be noted that there are, beyond their mere existence, other curiosities concerning these photos. Like the fact that the photo of Dr. Mudd that was officially released, and presented above, isn't actually Dr. Mudd at all. It appears to be Hartmann Richter, a cousin of George Atzerodt who was never charged with any complicity in the assassination plot. The real Dr. Mudd is pictured below.



And then there is the guy in the next image, officially photographed as a conspirator yet never charged, tried or even identified. The government just pretended as though he never existed.



The appearance of the alleged conspirators in these striking images stands in stark contrast to their treatment throughout their confinement, which can only be described as barbaric. The suspects' ankles and wrists were kept shackled at all times. They were forced to wear specially-designed heavy leather hoods at all times other than when they were in court. The hoods were very tightly fit and featured pads that put tremendous pressure on the prisoners' eyes, causing intense pain in addition to subjecting the wearers to extreme and prolonged sensory deprivation. Some of the prisoners were also fitted with iron collars attached to a heavy ball and chain. These also had to be worn at all times.

All suspects were confined to tiny solitary cells outfitted with just a thin straw mattress, a worn army blanket, and an open bucket to use as a toilet. They were allowed no visitors and their guards were even forbidden from speaking to them. Armed sentries kept watch at all times to ensure that the prisoners had no human interaction whatsoever. Each suspect was assigned to a

cluster of three cells, insuring that they had no neighbors to interact with. It was widely rumored that they were being tortured in more overt ways as well, which was undoubtedly the case.

No attorneys were provided for the defendants; they had to retain their own counsel, despite being completely cut off from the outside world. Consequently, some of them began the proceedings with no representation. Even after obtaining counsel, they were not allowed to have any private consultations with their attorneys. And they were not allowed to testify or speak in court at all, nor could any statements made by them be introduced.

But other than all that – and numerous other factors, which will be discussed later – the conspirators were given a fair trial. Let's now close out this edition by meeting the last of the alleged conspirators who were tried by military tribunal – the one who, without explanation, was not photographed by Mr. Gardner. That would be, of course, Mary Surratt, the first woman to be executed in these United States.



Surratt was, shockingly, a native Marylander from a rather wealthy family. Born sometime in the early 1820s (no one seems to know exactly when), she was educated at a private Catholic boarding school in Alexandria, Virginia, at a time when, as Theodore Roscoe noted, “higher learning for females was frowned upon as radical.” At fifteen (or sixteen, or nineteen), she married John Surratt, with whom she had three offspring, Isaac, Anna, and John, Jr.

The Surratts did well for themselves for a number of years. At one time, John owned as many as 1,200 acres of land and a number of businesses, including a hotel, a tavern and a boardinghouse. Much of that land straddled the border between DC and Maryland, just thirteen miles from downtown Washington, DC. The settlement there soon came to be known as Surrattsville, which is frequently claimed to have been heavily involved in Confederate espionage activities.

Spymaster Lafayette Baker, accompanied by some 300 Union soldiers, converged on Surrattsville in late 1861 to launch a full investigation of the Surratt family and various others suspected of involvement in the Confederate underground. According to pseudo-historian Roy Chamlee, Jr. (*Lincoln's Assassins*), Baker's team unearthed compelling evidence of a vast network of covert Confederate operations. They made though only a few token arrests, which, given that thousands elsewhere were rounded up by Baker's thugs in mass arrests based on far less evidence than what was found in Surrattsville, strongly suggests that the operations in Surrattsville weren't actually aimed at aiding the south,

In any event, John Surratt died in 1862 and his widow fell upon hard times. She was nevertheless able to finance a costly move to the heart of DC in late 1864, taking possession of a boardinghouse just four blocks from Ford's Theater. It was in that boardinghouse that Booth and the others allegedly plotted first the kidnapping of, and then the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Found guilty by the military tribunal, Mary Surratt was hanged on July 7, 1865.

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Anatomy of a Presidential Assassination, Part IV *April 7, 2014*

In the last installment, we met the seven men and one woman who faced trial by military tribunal for their alleged roles in the plot to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln. But there were two others involved in the supposed conspiracy: the mastermind and assassin, John Wilkes Booth, and his alleged right-hand man, John Harrison Surratt, Jr., son of the executed Mary Surratt.

Like most of his alleged co-conspirators, Surratt was a well educated, good looking young man from a well-to-do Northern family. He was born in April 1844 to John and Mary Surratt, and was baptized at St. Peter's Church in – where else? – Washington, DC. He was educated at St. Charles College in, naturally enough, Maryland. At the tender age of eighteen, following the death of his father, Surratt became the Postmaster of Surrattsville. Beyond that, little is known about the early life of the man cast by the government as Booth's primary accomplice. As Theodore Roscoe wrote in *The Web of Conspiracy*:

“Official records on John Harrison Surratt, Jr., are similarly devoid of depth ... He passes through Washington like a shadow. His appearances in the house on H Street are shadowy. Now he is glimpsed in Richmond. Next he is glimpsed in Canada. The authorities can never quite lay their hands on him, and neither can the historians. Of the immediate members of Booth's coterie, least is known about John Harrison Surratt, Jr.”

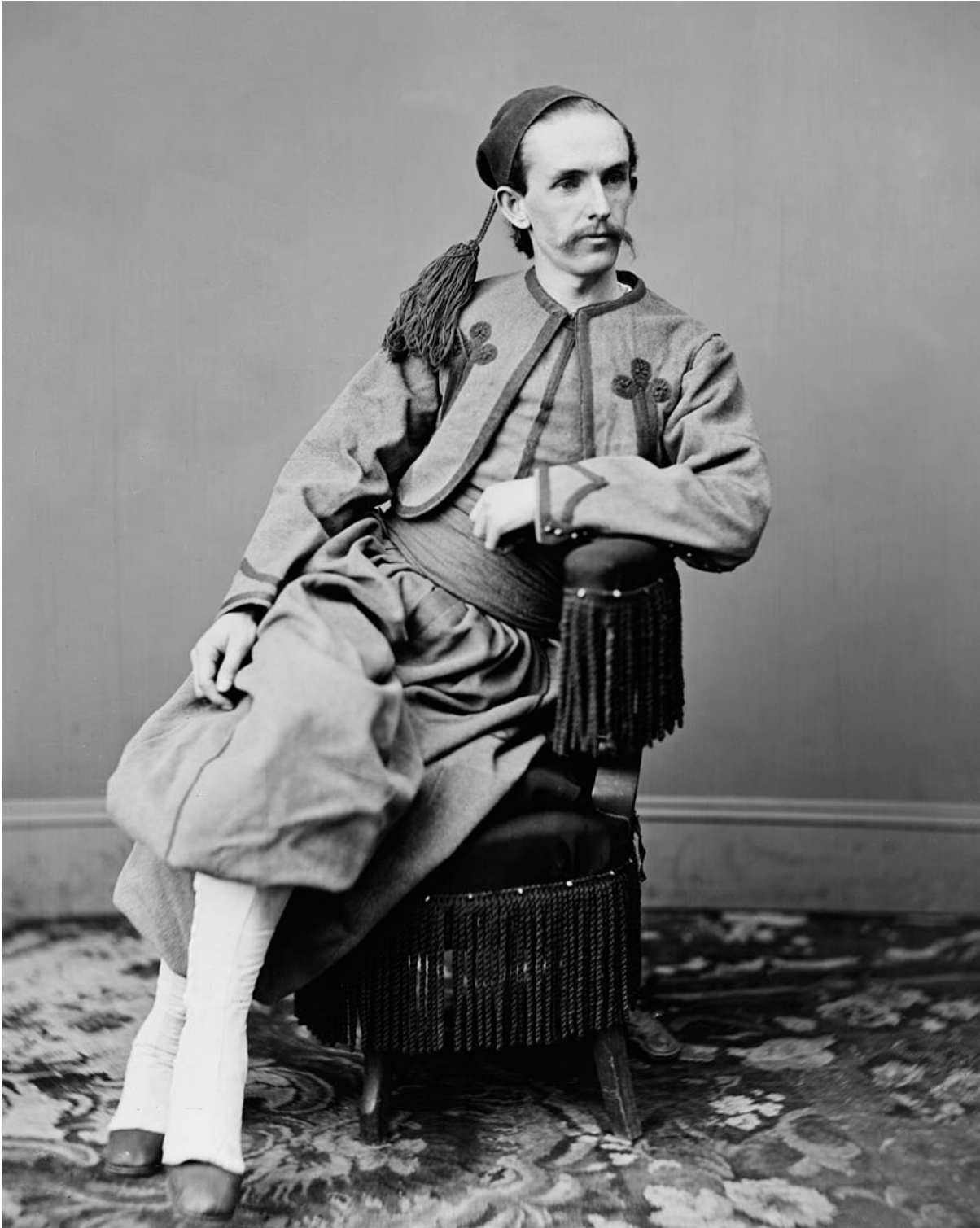


John Harrison Surratt, Jr., as sketched by an artist for *Harper's Weekly*

Roscoe claims, as have many other historians, that Surratt “operated as spy and as message-bearer, conveying Confederate dispatches between Richmond, Washington, and Montreal, Canada. By the time Mrs. Surratt’s boardinghouse was well established in Washington, John H. Surratt had become a well paid and highly adept operator in the Secret Service of the C.S.A. [Confederate States of America]” Maybe so. It seems far more likely though, given various facts of the case, that he was actually a Union operative posing as a Confederate operative. Or that the two ‘sides’ were actually one and the same, as seems likely.

Of the ten alleged conspirators, Surratt, who celebrated his 21st birthday just one day before Lincoln was gunned down, was the only one not to be captured or killed in the massive manhunt that followed the assassination. He quickly made his way to Canada, where he found sanctuary with a Catholic priest during the time that his mother was being tried, sentenced and hanged. He left Canada in early September, some two months after the executions had been carried out.

From that point on, the US government appears to have been well aware of his movements and whereabouts.



John Surratt in his Papal Zouave uniform

On March 4, 1867, the *Washington Daily Morning Chronicle* summarized the findings of an investigation by the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives as follows: “It appears that Surratt sailed from Canada in September 1865, and landed in Liverpool on the 27th of the same month; that the fact of his landing was communicated to Secretary Seward by the American vice consul, Mr. Wilding. No steps were taken by the President or Secretary of State to secure his arrest. No demand was made upon England for his return to this country, nor is there any evidence of the procurement or attempted procurement of an indictment against him.”

Surratt himself would later say that, “While I was in London, Liverpool and Birmingham, our consuls at those ports knew who I was and advised our State Department of my whereabouts, but nothing was done.” Curious behavior indeed for a government that had, just months earlier, aggressively prosecuted and executed lesser conspirators.

On November 24, 1865, two months into Surratt’s leisurely stay in England, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton abruptly withdrew the standing reward on Surratt’s head, clearly signaling to Europe and elsewhere that the US wasn’t all that interested in pursuing the capture and prosecution of the alleged conspirator. Stanton, needless to say, offered no explanation for his unusual actions.

In April 1866, Surratt sailed from England to Italy, arriving in Rome, where he was almost immediately assigned a position with the Pope’s elite Papal Zouave military guard. On April 21, a fellow Zouave, Henri de Sainte-Marie, who happened to be an old friend from Maryland, informed America’s minister to Rome, General Rufus King, of Surratt’s whereabouts and true identity. A Cardinal Antonelli explained to King that “if the American government desired the surrender of the criminal there would be no difficulty in the way.” The US government, nevertheless, chose to look the other way.

Returning once again to the summary of the findings of the House Committee, we find that “news of [Surratt’s] presence in Rome did reach the ears of minister King. He was informed by another than the Secretary of State that Surratt was in the military service of the Pope, and communicated the fact by letter, dated August 8, 1866, to his department. Notwithstanding this, no steps were taken to identify or secure the arrest of the *supposed* conspirator and assassin ...” [emphasis added]

No explanation was given, of course, for the nearly four-month delay in drafting and sending the letter. On November 11, 1866, after Surratt had been going about his business in Rome for some seven months, making no effort to disguise himself, Papal authorities ordered his arrest. He allegedly then leapt from a cliff and made his escape, somehow supposedly surviving a 100-foot drop and evading at least 50 soldiers who were in hot pursuit within minutes. He then casually made his way across Italy, keeping a low profile by continuing to wear the garishly colored uniform of the Papal Zouave.



Barracks at Veroli, Italy, from where John Surrat purportedly escaped

After making his way to Naples, where he was sheltered by the local police and allowed to sleep at the station as a non-paying guest for three nights, he booked passage first to Malta and then to Alexandria, Egypt. On November 27, 1866, he was finally arrested by US authorities. It was almost another full month though before he was dispatched back to the US aboard the *Swatara*, a US Navy vessel, which set sail on the winter solstice, December 21, 1866.

That return voyage took unusually long to reach the states, nearly a month and a half. Had a paddleboat been available, Washington likely would have opted to use that. Upon reaching US shores, the vessel was delayed for another few weeks while the crew waited for ice to melt on the Potomac. There were, of course, other ports available from which Surratt could have been quickly transported by train to Washington, but authorities chose to delay his arrival for as long as possible.

As researcher Vaughan Shelton (*Mask for Treason*) wrote, “When the papal government in Rome finally forced the issue by arresting Surratt, every possible tactic was used to delay his return.” Otto Eisenschiml (*In the Shadow of Lincoln’s Death*) concurred, noting that “Stanton had tried his utmost to keep Surratt from being brought back at all ...”

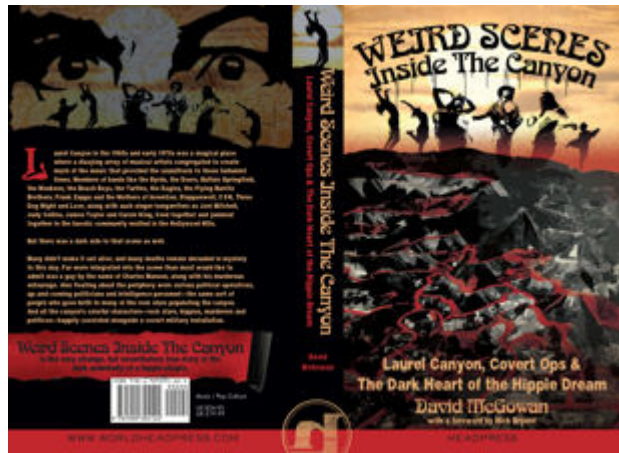
On February 4, 1867, the Grand Jury of the District of Columbia indicted John Surratt, who was still being held aboard the *Swatara* at the mouth of the Potomac. On February 19, the *Swatara* finally anchored at the Washington Navy Yard and Surratt set foot on US soil for the first time in nearly two years. A bench warrant for his arrest was issued that same day. Four days later, on February 23, Surratt was brought to court to enter a plea.





Lead defense attorney Joseph H. Bradley (left) and co-counsel Richard T. Merrick (right)

On April 18, 1867, Surratt's defense attorneys filed a motion to set a date for the start of the trial, saying they were fully prepared to proceed. On that very same day, the district attorney's office filed a motion for a continuance. It was just the first of many attempts by the state to delay the onset of the trial. The *New York Herald* reported, on May 19, 1867, that the "prisoner's legal representatives have over and over again reported themselves ready, but, contrary to the general ruling, the prosecution, after six months of preparation, has never yet been able to say, 'We are prepared to proceed with the trial.'" Ten days later, the *Baltimore Sun* added that it "is hinted that, for reasons not made public, the trial of Surratt is not at all desirable."



The question that most obviously comes to mind throughout this sordid chapter of US history is why the government suddenly lost the desire to aggressively pursue and prosecute the last alleged Lincoln conspirator? The primary reason is that, with the war over, Washington no longer had any justification for seeking ‘justice’ through a military tribunal and would have to rely instead on civilian courts. And that meant that the proceedings couldn’t be controlled and corrupted to nearly the extent that they had been throughout the first mock trial.

That presented Washington with a huge problem. Without the muzzling of the defendant, and without the wholesale introduction of perjured testimony and manufactured evidence, and with the requirement that actual rules of law be followed, the state had little chance for a conviction. And given that eight others had already been either executed or exiled to America’s version of Siberia, despite the fact that they had played lesser roles in the alleged conspiracy, it wasn’t going to look very good to have John Surratt walk out of the courtroom a free man.

In addition, the government had pulled out all the stops to lay the assassination to rest as quickly as possible. The other alleged conspirators had been rounded up, indicted, tried, convicted, sentenced, and executed/imprisoned in less than three months, primarily because Washington had a vested interest in wrapping things up as quickly as possible, before too many troubling questions could be raised. The last thing they now wanted to do was reopen the case to public scrutiny.

Given little choice though in the matter, the case proceeded to trial in June 1867. And true to form, the state did its very best to rig the proceedings. As America’s first Secret Service chief, William P. Wood, later wrote, Surratt was “confronted with an abundance of perjured testimony.” He was also confronted with an abundance of bogus evidence, including a document that had supposedly been in the water for six weeks before being recovered, but which showed no signs of exposure whatsoever.

And then there were the laughably biased jury instructions delivered by presiding Judge George Fisher, which kicked off with the immortal words: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood by man shall his blood be shed. So spake the Almighty.” One would have to search far and wide through the annals of American jurisprudence to find a more wildly inappropriate set of jury instructions.



Presiding Judge George P. Fisher

To insure that the trial was properly rigged, Secretary of State William Seward hired Edwards Pierrepont, an old friend of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, to assist the prosecution, although neither the State Department nor the War Department should have had anything to do with what was ostensibly a civil trial. Pierrepont was a descendant of James Pierrepont, a cofounder of Yale University. Also hired by Seward, to assist Pierrepont, was Albert G. Riddle. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles' diary would later reveal that Riddle "had been employed by Seward to hunt up, or manufacture, testimony against Surratt."

One of the most bizarre aspects of the Surratt trial was the testimony delivered by our old friend Henry Rathbone, who was called to the stand, as he had been at the military trial, to provide eyewitness testimony as to the shooting of Lincoln. Although it was not commented upon at the

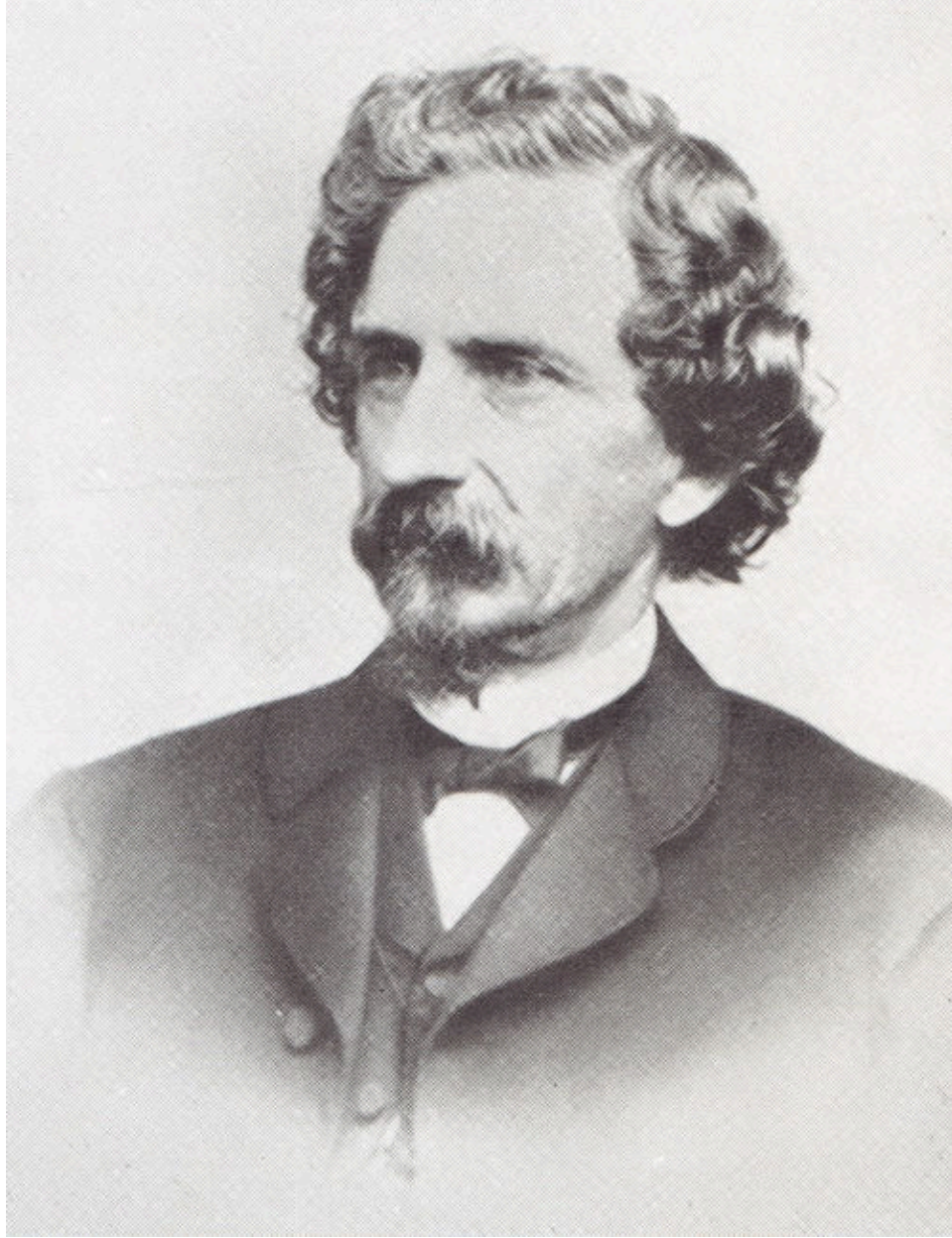
time, or for decades after, Rathbone was clearly not spontaneously recalling events as they had happened, but rather was reciting his testimony from a memorized script.

That script appears to have been created on April 17, 1865, two days after Lincoln died, when Rathbone was purportedly deposed. A portion of that alleged deposition reads as follows: “That on April 14th, 1865, at about 20 minutes past 8 o’clock in the evening, he, with Miss Clara H. Harris, left his residence, at the corner of Fifteenth and H Streets, and joined the President and Mrs. Lincoln, and went with them in their carriage to Ford’s Theater, in Tenth Street ... When the party entered the box, a cushioned armchair was standing at the end of the box farthest from the stage and nearest the audience ... When the second scene of the third act was being performed, and while this deponent was intently observing the proceedings upon the stage, with his back toward the door, he heard the discharge of a pistol behind him, and looking around, saw, through the smoke, a man between the door and the President ... This deponent instantly sprang toward him and seized him; he wrested himself from the grasp, and made a violent thrust at the breast of deponent with a large knife. Deponent parried the blow by striking it up, and received a wound several inches deep in his left arm, between the elbow and the shoulder ...”

One month later, on May 15, 1865, Rathbone testified before the military tribunal. With the exception of delivering his testimony in the first person, it was a nearly verbatim recital of the script prepared the month before, and went a little something like this: “On the evening of the 14th of April last, at about 20 minutes past 8 o’clock, I, in company with Miss Harris, left my residence at the corner of Fifteenth and H Streets, and joined the President and Mrs. Lincoln, and went with them, in their carriage, to Ford’s Theater in Tenth Street ... On entering the box there was a large armchair that was placed nearest the audience, farthest from the stage ... When the second scene of the third act was being performed, and while I was intently observing the proceedings upon the stage, with my back towards the door, I heard the discharge of a pistol behind me, and, looking round, saw, through the smoke, a man between the door and the President ... I instantly sprang towards him, and seized him. He wrested himself from my grasp, and made a violent thrust at my breast with a large knife. I parried the blow by striking it up, and received a wound several inches deep in my left arm, between the elbow and the shoulder ...”

A little over two years later, on June 17, 1867, Rathbone dusted off his script and delivered the following testimony at the trial of John Surratt: “On the evening of the 14th of April, at about 20 minutes past 8, I, in company with Miss Harris, left my residence at the corner of Fifteenth and H streets, and joined the President and Mrs. Lincoln, and went with them in their carriage to Ford’s Theater, on Tenth street ... On entering the box there was a large armchair placed nearest the audience, and furthest from the stage ... When the second scene of the third act was being performed, and while I was intently observing the performance on the stage, I heard the report of a pistol from behind me, and on looking round saw dimly through the smoke the form of a man between the President and the door ... I immediately sprung towards him and seized him. He wrested himself from my grasp, and at the same time made a violent thrust at me with a large knife. I parried the blow by striking it up, and received it on my left arm, between the elbow and the shoulder, and received a deep wound ...”





State Department/War Department representatives Edwards Pierrepont (left) and Albert G. Riddle

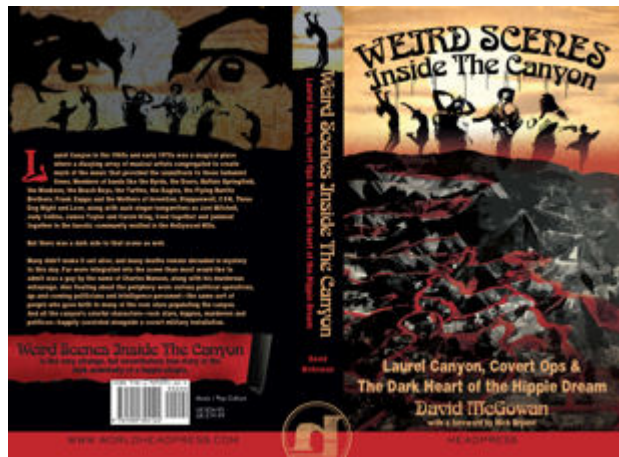
In the end though, the government's brazen attempts to corrupt the proceedings failed to pay dividends and the jury was left hung 8-4 in favor of acquittal. Even with the obviously perjured testimony, the manufactured evidence, and the wildly inappropriate jury instructions, the state was only able to secure four votes for conviction. And Surratt had found himself a number of new fans. As Eisenschiml noted, "The ladies of Washington considered him quite attractive and thronged the courtroom."

John Harrison Surratt walked out of court a free man, and the state quietly opted not to further pursue the charges. Five years later, he married Mary Victorine Hunter, a second cousin of none other than Francis Scott Key, whose son's murderer, it will be recalled, was defended by Edwin

Stanton. Key's great-great-granddaughter Pauline Potter, by the way, later married Baron Philippe de Rothschild, of the infamous Rothschild banking family.

Surratt lived to the ripe old age of 72, passing away, curiously enough, on April 21, 1916, precisely 50 years to the day from when he had been identified in Rome as a member of the Papal Zouave. It is said that he had penned a biography, but he supposedly opted to burn it a few days before his death. In a similar vein, Robert Todd Lincoln is said to have burned all his father's private papers shortly before his own death – because, I suppose, one wouldn't want the truth about the assassination of one's father to reach the public domain.

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Anatomy of a Presidential Assassination, Part V *April 19, 2014*

Defense attorney Joseph H. Bradley, whom we met in the last installment, had this to say to the jury and spectators at John Surratt's trial: "Who was John Wilkes Booth? ... He was a man of polished exterior, pleasing address, highly respectable in every regard, received into the best circles of society; his company sought after; exceedingly bold, courteous, and considered generous to a fault; a warm and liberal-hearted friend, a man who had obtained a reputation upon the stage."

The woman who once reported him for rape in Philadelphia, and the irate, jealous husband who once severely throttled him in Syracuse, New York, might disagree.

Francis Wilson, one of Booth's biographers (*John Wilkes Booth: Fact and Fiction of Lincoln's Assassination*), posed the following question: "How was it possible for Booth to obtain such power over a fellow human being as to command him to perform an act of murder and to know that that command would be enthusiastically obeyed?" A little over a century after the

assassination of Lincoln, prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi would ponder the very same question about a guy by the name of Charlie Manson: “I tend to think that there is something more, some missing link that enabled him to so rape and bastardize the minds of his followers that they would go against the most ingrained of all commandments, Thou shalt not kill, and willingly, even eagerly, murder at his command.”

A friend of Booth’s from childhood, John Deery, said that the John Wilkes Booth that he knew “cast a spell over most men with whom he came in contact, and I believe all women without exception.”



Junius Brutus Booth, father of John Wilkes Booth

So who was this charismatic enigma known as John Wilkes Booth – the man known to history as possibly the most famous assassin who ever lived? Just about everyone knows that he was an actor, one of the finest and arguably the most popular of his generation. But he was much more than just that, a fact obscured by the century-and-a-half focus on John Wilkes Booth the actor. In

reality, John Wilkes Booth, and the Booth family in general, were very deeply tied to the power structures in Washington and London, and had been for a very, very long time. And they still are today.

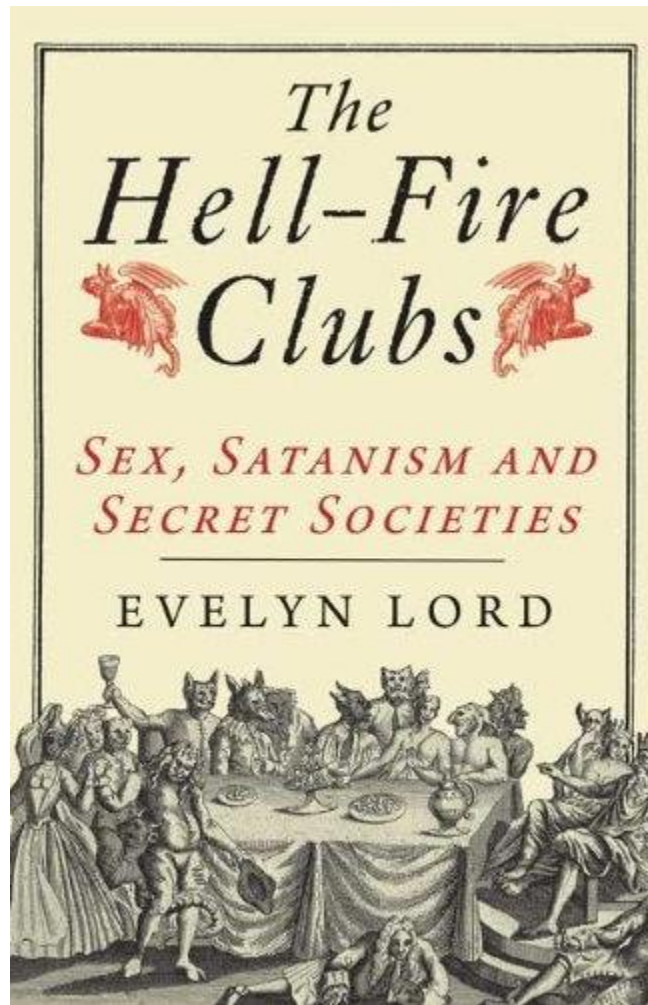
Booth's most famous ancestor was undoubtedly his namesake, John Wilkes, who lived from October 17, 1725 until December 26, 1797. Throughout his life, Wilkes served as a Member of Parliament, a judge, a journalist and essayist, and the Lord Mayor of London. A revered statesman, Wilkes was also a member of the Hellfire Club and a noted libertine (other notable libertines throughout history include the Marquis de Sade, Aleister Crowley, and Anton LaVey). That would be the same Hellfire Club that included as a member a 'Founding Father' by the name of Benjamin Franklin. And that would be the same Benjamin Franklin whose London home from that era yielded the remains of at least ten bodies, six of them children.



Lord Mayor of London John Wilkes

It was the Hellfire Club, by the way, that first coined the phrase “Do what thou wilt,” which was later appropriated by Aleister Crowley. And it was the Hellfire Club that was widely rumored during its heyday to be conducting black masses and other occult/Satanic rituals, along with drunken orgies and various other acts of debauchery.

John Wilkes was also notable for being considered during his lifetime the ugliest man in all of England. He never though suffered from a shortage of beautiful female companions. Aside from a nine-year marriage, Wilkes remained single for his 72 years on this planet and was considered quite the ladies man, fathering an unknown number of children. Like his descendent and namesake, Wilkes apparently had a knack for “cast[ing] a spell” over women.



Two other of John Wilkes Booth's famous ancestors were Henry Booth, the 1st Earl of Warrington, who lived from 1652 to 1694, and his son George Booth, who lived from 1675 to 1758 and succeeded his father as the 2nd (and last) Earl of Warrington. At various times during his life, Henry Booth served as a Member of Parliament, a member of the Privy Council of England, a noted writer, and a mayor.

John Wilkes Booth was also descended from Barton Booth, who lived from 1681 to 1733 and who was described by one biographer as the “most popular actor with the English royalty known to history.” Many generations later, namesake Sydney Barton Booth, a son of Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., would become an actor and writer of some renown before passing away in 1937.





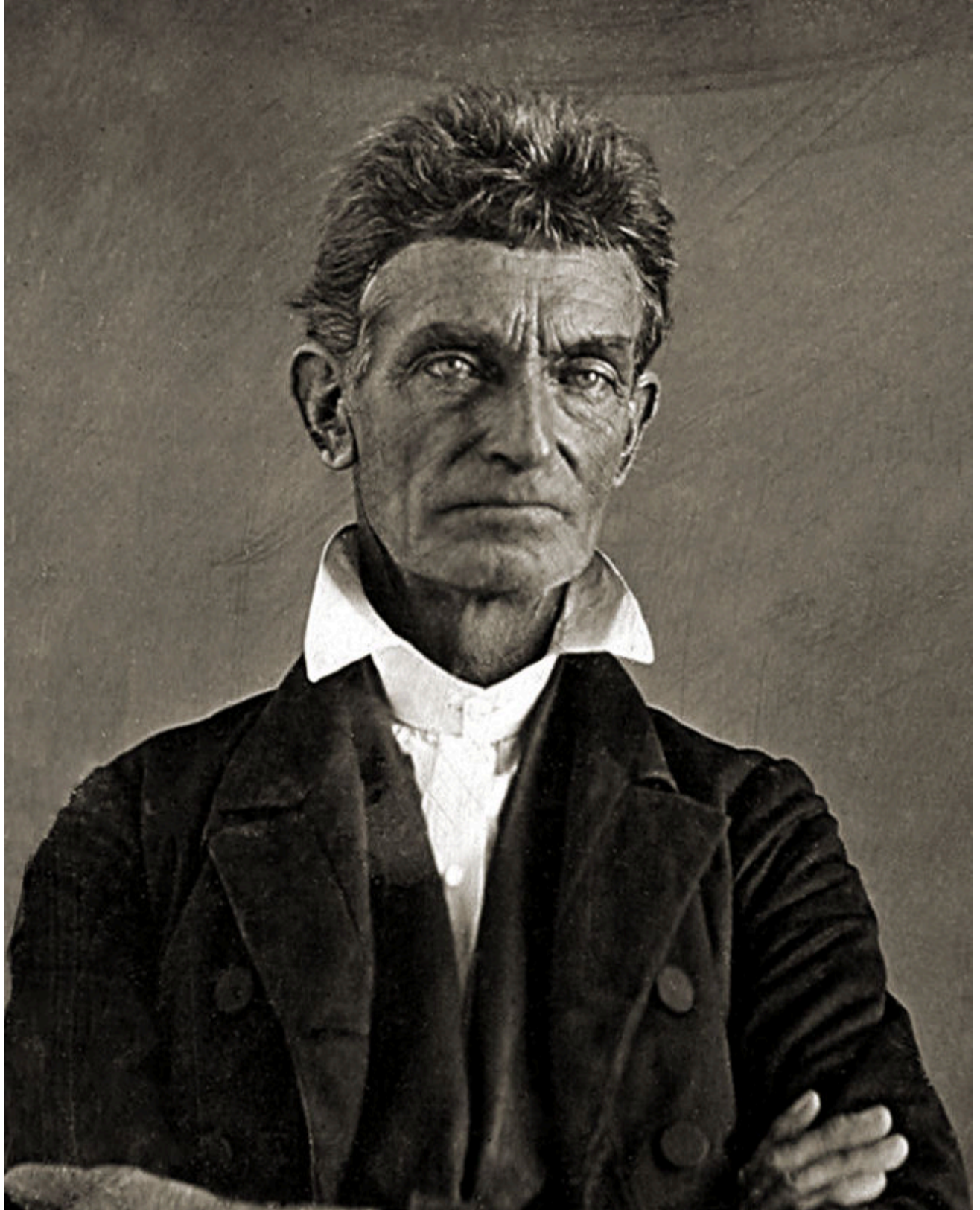
Henry and George Booth, the 1st and 2nd Earls of Warrington

The alleged assassin's grandfather was Richard Booth, an eccentric English barrister with a fondness for alcohol – a fondness that would be shared by his son, Junius Brutus Booth, and his grandson, John Wilkes Booth. Junius was born in London in 1796 and was performing on stage by the age of seventeen. At nineteen, he married Marie Christine Adelaide Delannoy. Less than five months later, she bore him his first child, who died in infancy, as would a number of Junius Brutus Booth's offspring.

In June 1821, at the age of twenty-five, Junius set sail for America with his mistress, Mary Ann Holmes, leaving behind his wife and only surviving child, Richard Junius Booth. Junius and Mary Ann would pose as man and wife for the next thirty years, producing no fewer than ten illegitimate offspring, four of whom didn't make it through childhood. The pair weren't actually

married until 1851, the year Junius finally divorced his actual wife, and were married just one year before Junius passed away in November 1852.

During his lifetime, Junius was considered to be one of the finest actors of his generation. He was also regarded as a playwright, scholar, philosopher and linguist. Named for one of the most notorious assassins of all time, Junius once set a fine example for son John by sending a letter to then-President Andrew Jackson threatening to slit his throat and/or have him burned at the stake. And he thoughtfully signed that letter and included a return address. It was, nevertheless, dismissed as either a hoax or a joke.



John Brown

Junius and Mary Ann purchased a 150-acre estate in Maryland that would ultimately feature a large pool, stables, and a Gothic home known as Tudor Hall, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Junius began construction on the home shortly before his death and so never lived there, though his offspring, including John Wilkes Booth, did. Ned Spangler, it will be recalled, was involved in the construction of the home.

John Wilkes Booth, the ninth of Junius and Mary Ann's ten offspring, was born on May 10, 1838. A well educated young man, he was regarded as an excellent horseman and marksman as well as a talented athlete. Like his father, he made his acting debut at seventeen, in an 1855 production of Richard III. By 1861, he was one of the most popular actors in America and there was considerable demand for his services.



Abraham Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth at Lincoln's second inaugural address

On December 2, 1859, John Wilkes Booth was among the soldiers standing guard on the scaffold when probable agent provocateur John Brown was hanged. Booth was not a soldier though – he purportedly either borrowed or stole a militia uniform and posed as a soldier to secure the position. On March 4, 1865, Booth found himself prominently placed among the onlookers at Lincoln’s second inaugural address. He was there as a guest of US Senator John P. Hale.

Unknown at the time was that Booth was secretly engaged to Hale’s daughter, Lucy Hale. Senator Hale had worked closely with fellow Senator William Seward before Seward’s appointment as Secretary of State. Notably, Hale was a northern senator, representing New Hampshire, and he was known for his staunchly abolitionist views. It makes perfect sense then that his daughter would be engaged to an alleged Confederate operative.



Senator John P. Hale

During John Wilkes Booth's lifetime, there was another member of the Booth/Wilkes clan who achieved a considerable amount of public notoriety. Charles Wilkes was a US naval officer who ultimately attained the rank of rear admiral, as well as a celebrated explorer who led the United States Exploring Expedition from 1838 to 1842. He was also a great-nephew of John Wilkes, making him a blood relative of John Wilkes Booth and his numerous siblings.

Charles Wilkes was raised by his aunt, Elizabeth Ann Seton, who was a woman of considerable social prominence who later became the first American-born woman to be canonized by the Catholic Church. In the 1820s, Wilkes counted among his associates a genocidal Grand Master Mason by the name of Andrew Jackson – the same Andrew Jackson who was also, by some reports, a friend of Junius Brutus Booth, the guy who 'jokingly' threatened to assassinate him.



Charles Wilkes

Many years later, another member of the Booth clan, Theresa Cara Booth, was born on September 23, 1954. Theresa is a direct descendent of Algernon Booth, Junius Brutus Booth's brother and John Wilkes Booth's uncle. She became an attorney in 1976 and a member of the

Queen's Counsel in 1995. Two years later, Theresa Booth – better known as Cherie Blair, wife of Tony Blair – became the First Lady of Downing Street. Nothing unusual about that, I suppose.

In the aftermath of the Lincoln assassination, actors were viewed with considerable suspicion across the country. The entire cast of *Our American Cousin* was arrested and numerous other productions closed for a time due to the lynch-mob mentality that was sweeping the nation. No one was above suspicion and, as previously noted, more than 2,000 people were arrested as possible co-conspirators. Those with only the loosest connections to the accused coup plotters were scooped up and held for varying lengths of time.

Two of John Wilkes Booth's brothers, Edwin and Junius Brutus, Jr., were fellow actors. Clearly then they had two big strikes against them, which should have put them at the very top of the government's round-up list. And yet not a single member of the Booth clan was arrested in the frenzy of arrests and accusations. Not one. It always helps to have friends in high places.

Brower's Hotel, Philadelphia.

July 4th 1835.



You damn'd old Scoundrel if you
don't sign the pardon of your
fellow men now under sentence
of Death De Ruiz & De Soto. I
will cut your throat whilst
you are sleeping. I wrote to
you repeated Cautions - so look
out or damn you I'll have
you burnt ^{at the Stake} in the
City of Washington.

Your Master

Junius Brutus Booth

You know me! Look out! -

The Op-Ed page of the *Los Angeles Times* apparently now operates in part as a forum for unpaid advertisements for intelligence agency-approved works of fiction. I say that because just a few days ago that page featured what was essentially a half-page ad for Jeff Bauman’s hopelessly fraudulent account of the Boston Marathon bombings. And yesterday that same page featured a barely disguised advertisement for a book written by a professional liar by the name of Mel Ayton.

Ayton has apparently penned a whole series of disinformational books on various presidential assassinations and attempted assassinations. His latest, *Hunting the President: Threats, Plots and Assassination Attempts – From FDR to Obama*, carries on in that fine tradition. The following paragraph is from his wildly inaccurate Op-Ed piece:

“Lincoln was the first American president to be assassinated. But the motivations that drove his assassin were unfortunately not unique. Understanding the nature of those who want to kill a president goes considerably further toward explaining assassinations than looking to fanciful conspiracy theories.”



Cherie Blair, aka Theresa Cara Booth

Let’s now take a peek at what “fanciful” theory it is that Ayton is pitching: “Booth’s desire for fame and recognition is a common theme among assassins. In researching a book on presidential

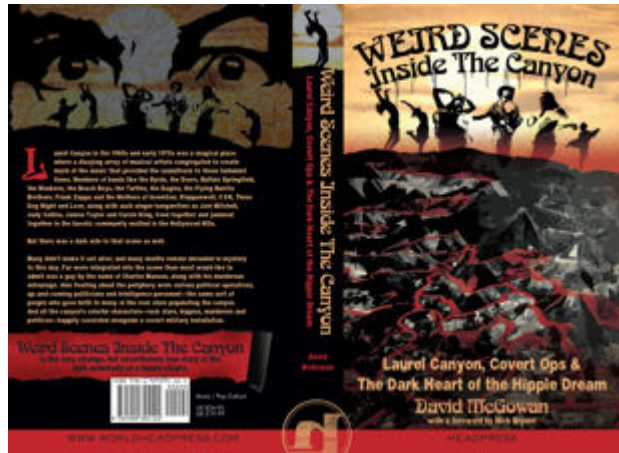
killers and would-be killers, I found that they tended to share certain personality traits. While some had been treated for mental illness, an even more predominant characteristic is that many of them were disillusioned with and resentful of American society after a lifetime of failure. And most of them also had a burning desire for notoriety. Killing an American president, most would-be assassins believed, would win them a place in history, making a ‘somebody’ out of a ‘nobody.’”

Every single word of the preceding paragraph can only be described as complete and utter bullshit. Booth already had fame and recognition beyond his wildest dreams. He was far from being a “nobody.” To the contrary, he was making upwards of \$20,000 a year, a staggering amount in those days, and had the love, respect and admiration of men and women all across the country. He was wealthy, good looking, supremely talented, and had lived a very charmed life. And given that he was only twenty-six at the time of the assassination, it is hardly accurate to say that he had faced a “lifetime” of failure. In truth, he had never known failure at all in his short life.

Compulsive liar Ayton’s body of work is, unfortunately, typical of what has been written about Lincoln and his alleged assassin over the last 149 years. Listed below, in order of the date of release, are some of the more honest books that have been published (some decidedly better than others).

Bates, Finis L. *The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, J.L Nichols & Company, 1907
Wilson, Francis *John Wilkes Booth: Fact and Fiction of Lincoln’s Assassination*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929
Eisenschiml, Otto *Why Was Lincoln Murdered?*, Little, Brown and Company, 1937
Eisenschiml, Otto *In the Shadow of Lincoln’s Death*, Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1940
Roscoe, Theodore *The Web of Conspiracy*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959
Shelton, Vaughan *Mask for Treason: The Lincoln Murder Trial*, Stackpole Books, 1965
Balsiger, David and Charles Sellier, Jr. *The Lincoln Conspiracy*, Schick Sunn Classic Books, 1977
Jameson, W.C. *Return of Assassin: John Wilkes Booth*, Republic of Texas Press, 1999

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Anatomy of a Presidential Assassination, Part VI ***May 7, 2014***

“The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, only days after the end of the war, was a terrible tragedy. Much has been speculated about the events leading up to the murder and immediately afterward, but few people know what *really* happened.” So says Bill O’Reilly on page 1 of his tome on the Lincoln assassination. What he doesn’t tell readers is that after reading his novelized account, they will still have no clue what *really* happened.

One thing that O’Reilly opts to leave out of his book entirely is the mockery of a trial held for the alleged conspirators. After spending the first 276 pages of his book covering the period from April 1, 1865 to April 26, 1865 (the day Booth was allegedly gunned down at Garrett’s barn), O’Reilly then abruptly jumps ahead to July 7, 1865, the day four of the alleged conspirators were hanged. Apparently nothing of significance happened in May or June of 1865. Or maybe it is best not to shine too bright a light on one of the most sordid chapters of US history.

US Navy Secretary Gideon Welles is on record as stating that Secretary of War Edwin Stanton wanted the alleged conspirators to be “tried and executed before President Lincoln was buried.” Convictions were obviously a given. Lincoln was laid to rest on May 4, 1865, nineteen days after he died and just before the trial of the conspirators began, thwarting Stanton’s wishes, but ‘justice’ was dispensed very quickly nonetheless.

Stanton favored a military trial, a course of action opposed by various other members of the Lincoln cabinet, including both Welles and former Attorney General Edward Bates, who noted that “if the

offenders are done to death by that tribunal, however truly guilty, they will pass for martyrs with half the world." Many believed that a military trial would be unconstitutional given that all of the defendants were civilians. Stanton nevertheless prevailed.

It would in fact be later determined that the proceedings had been unconstitutional, both because the suspects were subjected to military 'justice,' and because they were denied their right to individual trials. That ruling would not, however, resurrect the five alleged conspirators who paid with their lives.

While awaiting what passed for a trial, the prisoners were held in appalling conditions aboard two ironclad vessels, the *Montauk* and the *Saugus* (except for Mudd and Surratt, who were reportedly held elsewhere and spared the tortuous hoods). Very special attention appears to have been paid to Lewis Powell. Throughout his confinement, Powell was personally guarded by Thomas T. Eckert, which is undoubtedly the only time in the nation's history that a sitting Assistant Secretary of War served as a lowly prison guard. Even more curiously, despite the fact that Powell was kept shackled, hooded, isolated, and otherwise deprived, he was nevertheless allowed to keep a knife while imprisoned. And false reports were circulated indicating that he was suicidal.



Thomas T. Eckert

It is perfectly clear, in retrospect, that the government had contingency plans to have Powell 'suicided' if necessary.

On May 1, 1865, newly-installed President Andrew Johnson ordered that the eight alleged conspirators face a nine-man military tribunal. The members of that tribunal – seven generals and two colonels – were all handpicked by Stanton. All but a couple were unknown to the public and none of them knew anything about the so-called 'rule of law' or about evidentiary or procedural rules. That didn't prove to be a problem though – they just made up the tribunal rules as they went along.

As Vaughan Shelton wrote back in 1965, "All but one or two were nearly as unknown then as they are now. There was not a noteworthy war record in the whole group. In fact the two whose names might be

recognized by the average reader – Major General David Hunter, presiding officer, and Major General Lew Wallace (later author of *Ben Hur*) – had attained rank by political connections, and their names had been associated with military defeats throughout the four-year contest. All appeared to be qualified largely by their prejudices, total ignorance of the law, and subservience to the will of the prosecutors. It was common talk in Washington that the military commission was assembled for the purpose of convicting the accused persons – not to weigh the merits of their cases.”

Besides being completely unqualified to sit in judgment of the accused, the panel had something else in common, as various photographs reveal: many of them, maybe all of them, were Freemasons. As were the prosecutors. And at least some of the defense attorneys. And Edwin Stanton. And Lafayette Baker. And John Wilkes Booth. And seemingly just about everyone else who played a prominent role in the assassination conspiracy and cover-up. And many of the generals who directed the action on the battlefields of the Civil War. On both sides.



Confederate General Albert Pike

Seated on the panel were Major General David “Black Dave” Hunter, Brigadier General Albion Parris Howe, Lieutenant Colonel David Ramsey Clendenin, Brigadier General Thomas Maley Harris, Brevet Brigadier General James Adams Ekin, Major General Lew Wallace, Brevet Colonel Charles Henry Tompkins, Brigadier General Robert Sanford Foster, and Brevet Major General August Valentine Kautz. The lead prosecutor was Brigadier General Joseph Holt, then the Judge Advocate General of the United States Army and a former Secretary of War. Joining him as Special Judge Advocates were John Armor Bingham, a US Representative from Ohio and a future US Ambassador to Japan, and Brevet Brigadier General Henry Lawrence Burnett. Both Bingham and Burnett were appointed, of course, by Edwin Stanton.

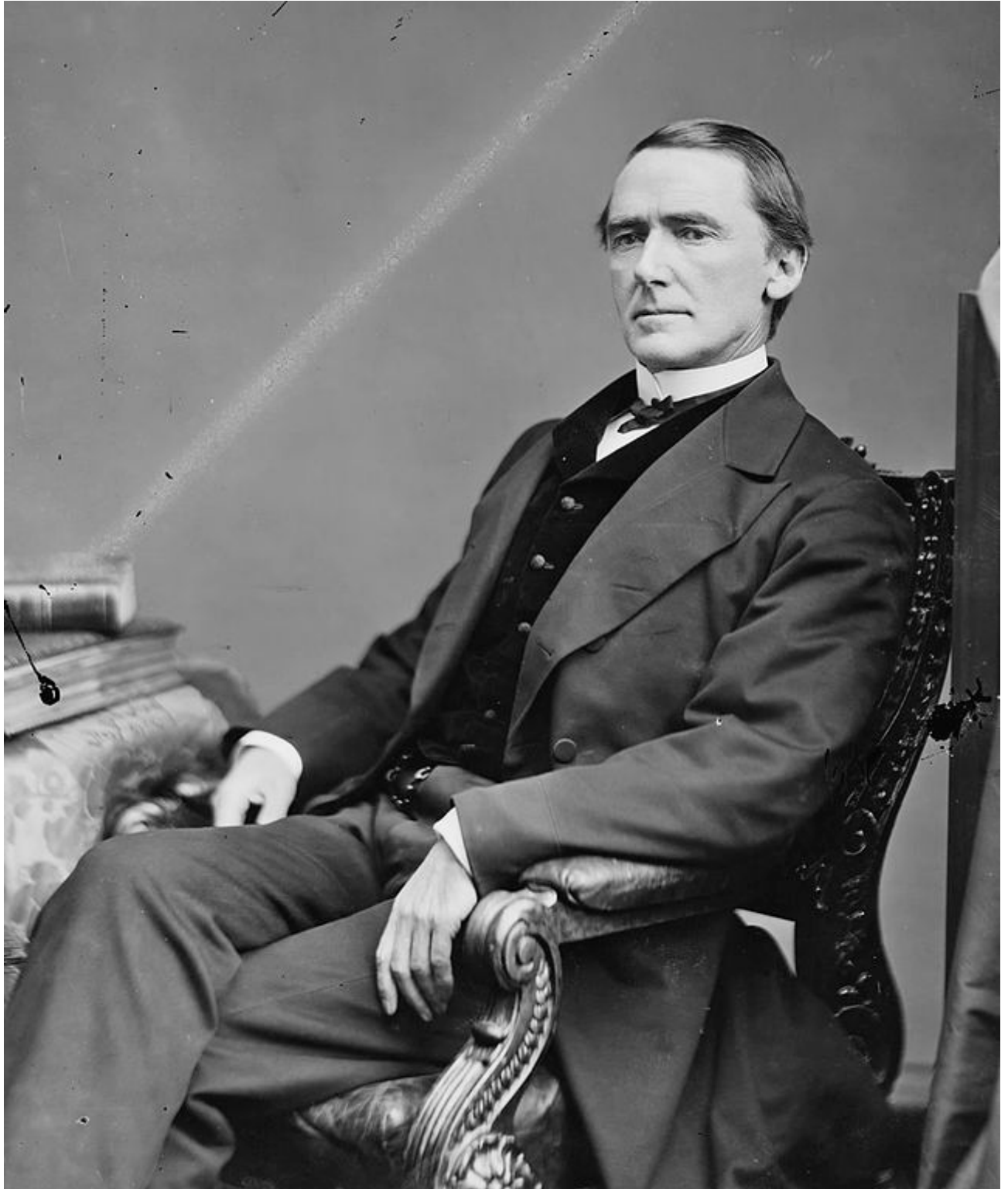


Pretty Masons all in a row: the nine tribunal members and three prosecutors

Shockingly enough, the assembled panel of ‘judges’ showed extreme bias throughout the seven-week proceedings. That bias was revealed, for example, by the jurists’ handling of objections. The defense attorneys, most of whom appear to have actually been working for the state, lodged only twelve objections, all of which were overruled. Prosecutors, on the other hand, voiced fifty-four objections, fifty-one of which were sustained.

The prisoners were arraigned on May 10, 1865, just one day after the charges against them had been read (Holt wanted those charges withheld from the press and public). Two days later, on May 12, testimony began. The defendants had been given just three days to obtain legal counsel, which they had to do while being quite literally muzzled. Ultimately assembled for the defense were Captain William Doster, Frederick Stone, Thomas Ewing, Jr., Walter Smith Cox, and Colonel Frederick Aiken.

Three members of that group appear to have been richly rewarded for their 'service' to country. Just two years after the 'trial,' Stone became a US Representative from Maryland. Ewing also joined the US Congress, representing a district in Ohio. Cox became a federal judge and, perhaps quite tellingly, presided at the trial of alleged presidential assassin Charles Guiteau just a couple years after being seated.



Defense attorney Frederick Stone

Aiken, who represented Mary Surratt after the curious withdrawal of her first attorney, Reverdy Johnson – who was a sitting US Senator, a former US Attorney General, and a future Minister to the UK – may have actually been legitimately working on behalf of his client. Notably, he faced a much different fate after the trial concluded than did Stone, Ewing and Cox. Within a year, Aiken's law practice had imploded and he had been arrested for bouncing a check. He died in 1878 at the relatively young age of forty-six and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Very little else is known about the young defense attorney. As his *Wikipedia* page notes, "Information on Aiken's early life is largely unknown; his date of birth, city of birth, and even his full name varies depending on source." And "like his birth records, his war service also remains largely unknown." Even less appears to be known about the ethereal William Doster, who was tasked with defending both Atzerodt and Powell, and who also may not have been thoroughly co-opted.

The reality though is that no defense attorney, no matter how devoted or how skilled, could have saved any of the defendants from their fates. All that was required for conviction was a simple majority of five votes – five votes from a nine-man panel predisposed to convict before the trial even began. Only one additional vote was required to impose the death penalty. And the tribunal's pronouncements would be final; there would be no appeals allowed. All of that, of course, was brazenly unconstitutional.



Union General George McClellan

Stanton's War Department did not just put the eight defendants on trial; the entire Confederacy was put on trial in a shameless attempt to inflame public opinion and inspire bloodlust. As Shelton noted, witnesses told tales of "Plots to burn northern cities, start epidemics, instigate riots" and other nefarious deeds, including poisoning public water supplies, destroying historical buildings, and starving Union POWs. Most of these alleged plots were never actually carried out. And even if they had been, none of that had any relevance at all as to the guilt or innocence of the defendants and would not have been allowed into evidence in any legitimate court proceedings.

Another problem with the introduction of such testimony is that most of the 'witnesses' who delivered it didn't actually exist. One such witness who testified as "Sanford Conover," for example, was actually Charles Dunham, who also used the alias "James Watson Wallace." It was later revealed that Dunham had run what was dubbed a "school for perjured witnesses" at the National Hotel, where he had

coached others on how to properly deliver their perjured testimony. Dunham soon found himself in prison after being convicted for both perjury and suborning perjury.

One of those receiving schooling was "Richard Montgomery," who was actually James Thompson, a burglar from New York with a long criminal record. Appearing as "Henry Van Steinacker" was Hans Von Winklestein, a prison inmate who gained his release shortly after testifying. A Canadian presented to the court as "Dr." James Merritt was denounced by his own government as a fraud and a quack. And so on.



Left to right: Thomas Harris, David Hunter, August Kautz, Albion Howe, Lew Wallace, and John Bingham

Defense attorney Doster, whose vehement objection to the introduction of the irrelevant, inflammatory testimony was overruled, would later claim that some of the other prosecution witnesses were actually NDP detectives paid by the government for their testimony. And it would later be revealed that NDP chief Lafayette Baker's order to his underlings instructed them to "extort confessions and procure testimony to establish the conspiracy ... by promises, rewards, threats, deceit, force, or any other effectual means."

Many of the state's witnesses were in fact paid handsomely for their testimony. Merritt, for example, collected a \$6,000 paycheck, the equivalent of more than \$150,000 today. Not bad for a day's work.

There were numerous other irregularities in 1865's version of The Trial of the Century. Major Henry Rathbone, as we have already seen, delivered a bizarrely verbatim recital of his deposition testimony. For those who have forgotten, here's another little taste of Rathbone's version of events, first from his deposition on April 17, 1865, and then from his testimony before the tribunal one month later, on May 15, 1865.

"Deponent then turned to the President; his position was not changed; his head was slightly bent forward, and his eyes were closed. Deponent saw that he was unconscious, and supposing him mortally wounded, rushed to the door for the purpose of calling medical aid. On reaching the outer door of the passageway, as above described, deponent found it barred by a heavy piece of plank, one end of which was secured in the wall ... This wedge, or bar, was about four feet from the floor. Persons upon the outside were beating against the door for the purpose of entering. Deponent removed the bar, and the door was opened ..."

"I then turned to the President. His position was not changed: his head was slightly bent forward, and his eyes were closed. I saw that he was unconscious, and, supposing him mortally wounded, rushed to the door for the purpose of calling medical aid. On reaching the outer door of the passageway, I found it barred by a heavy piece of plank, one end of which was secured in the wall ... This wedge or bar, was about four feet from the floor. Persons upon the outside were beating against the door for the purpose of entering. I removed the bar, and the door was opened ..."



Union General William Tecumseh Sherman

Rathbone was clearly 'reading' his testimony from a memorized script, which raises the obvious question of: why? Why was Rathbone so thoroughly rehearsed that he was able to recite his deposition testimony virtually verbatim, without even minor variations in the wording?

Historians, needless to say, have never addressed that question. Another question that has never been addressed is why the photo of John Wilkes Booth that was used throughout the trial wasn't actually of John Wilkes Booth; it was instead an image of his brother, Edwin Booth. What that means, of course, is that every witness who identified Booth as the man they had seen or heard discussing, carrying out, or fleeing from the assassination, was actually identifying Edwin Booth as the culprit. And again, the obvious question that is raised, but that has never been asked or answered, is: why?

In a bold move, defense counsel Doster subpoenaed sitting President Andrew Johnson to appear as a witness, but Johnson cavalierly ignored the summons, with no legal repercussions. Numerous other witnesses who should have been called were strangely absent from the proceedings, like Mary Todd Lincoln and Clara Harris, both of whom were eyewitnesses to the assassination of Lincoln. And William Seward, Frederick Seward, Fanny Seward, Frances Seward, and Emerick Hansell, all of whom were allegedly eyewitnesses to the supposed bloodbath at the Seward home.

The three witnesses who did testify about the alleged attack at the Seward residence – William Bell, George Robinson and Augustus Seward – presented wildly contradictory and problematic accounts, made all the more problematic by the fact that, according to all the early reports, Augustus Seward wasn't actually at the home at the time of the alleged attack.



Confederate General Robert E. Lee with various other Confederate generals in 1869

It will probably come as a shock to no one that in 1865 America, the testimony of a black man carried considerably less weight than the testimony of a white man, especially when the white men in question were the Secretary of State, an Assistant Secretary of State, and a US State Department courier. Why then did the state leave William Seward, Frederick Seward and Emerick Hansell (along with three of the Seward women) on the sidelines while calling to the stand two black servants – two men who were, if we're being honest here, just a step above slaves in the social hierarchy of the time?

According to reports, there were as many as eight eyewitnesses to the carnage at the Seward mansion – six of them white and five of them members of the Seward family. But the only two of the eight called were a black 'houseboy' who was unable to give his age when asked in court, and a black nurse. The only member of the Seward family who was called was the one who wasn't actually home and therefore didn't witness anything.

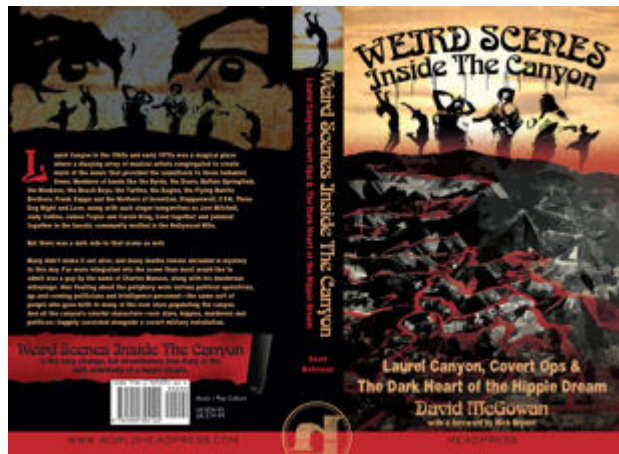


Defense attorney Thomas Ewing, Jr.

As previously stated, the first arrivals to the house after the alleged attack were Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, and Surgeon General Joseph Barnes. Arriving shortly after them was Assistant Secretary of War Thomas Eckert, who would soon be serving as Lewis Powell's prison guard. Unanswered, of course, is the question of why these four prominent individuals converged on the Seward house before anyone else arrived. And why they didn't instead head immediately to Ford's Theater, where the president lay near death.

No mention was made by any of them of encountering Major Augustus Seward that evening. And testimony at the tribunal also indicated that Augustus was not at home the evening of April 14. And yet, nevertheless, he was presented to the courtroom and to the public as the principal eyewitness to the alleged carnage.

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Anatomy of a Presidential Assassination, Part VII *May 7, 2014*

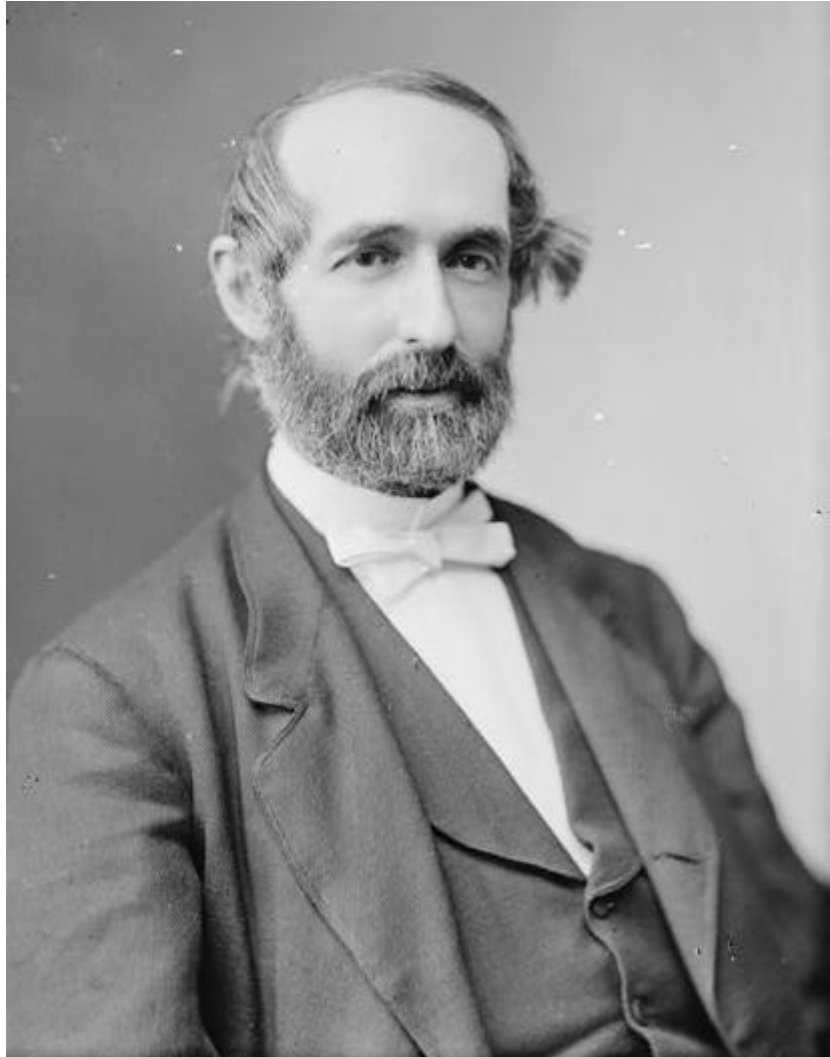
According to the official story, Powell came calling at the Seward home the night of April 14 under the guise of delivering medicine for the ailing William Seward. He was greeted by houseboy Bell, whom he allegedly brushed past while insisting that he was to hand-deliver the medications. Powell was then confronted at the top of the stairs by Frederick Seward, who

insisted that Powell leave the package with him and not bother the sleeping Secretary of State. Powell then turned to leave, took a few steps down the stairs, and then pulled a gun and attempted to shoot Frederick. When the gun failed to fire, he supposedly bum-rushed Frederick and brutally beat him nearly to death.

According to Bill O'Reilly's overwrought version of events, "The two men grapple as Powell leaps up onto the landing and then uses the butt of his gun to pistol-whip Frederick. Finally, Frederick Seward is knocked unconscious. His body makes a horrible thud as he collapses to the floor, his skull shattered in two places, gray matter trickling out through the gashes, blood streaming down his face."

During that encounter, Fanny Seward supposedly looked out from her father's room and in doing so conveniently gave away William Seward's location. So after incapacitating Frederick, Powell next burst into William Seward's room and encountered George Robinson, whom he grappled with before beginning to brutally slash away at Seward. At that time, Augustus Seward, who had been awakened by all the commotion, allegedly entered the room and began grappling with Powell. Powell though got the best of him as well and then bolted out of the room and down the stairs. In most versions of the story, there is no further mention of Fanny Seward, who was supposedly in her father's room throughout the ordeal.

On his way out of the house, Powell allegedly encountered Hansell, who had just arrived at the home. Hansell was supposedly brutally attacked and left for dead just inside the entrance to the home. Powell then exited the residence and rode off into the night. And that, in a nutshell, is the official story of how one man was allegedly able to leave at least five people mortally wounded while walking away without a scratch.



Frederick Seward, showing the severe scarring from his alleged beating

The witnesses who appeared before the military tribunal, however, had a very hard time keeping the details of that story straight. Here is a portion of Robinson's testimony, delivered on May 19, 1865: "The first I saw of [Powell] I heard a scuffling in the hall; I opened the door to see what the trouble was; as I opened the door he stood close up to it; as soon as it was opened wide enough he struck me and knocked me partially down and then rushed up to the bed of Mr. Seward, struck him and maimed him; as soon as I could get on my feet I endeavored to haul him off the bed and he turned on me; in the scuffle there was a man come into the room who clutched him; between the two of us we got him to the door, or by the door, when he clinched his hand around my neck, knocked me down, broke away from the other man and rushed down stairs."

Amazingly enough, neither the prosecutors nor the defense attorneys bothered to ask him who this other mystery man was. Clearly though it wasn't Augustus Seward, who Robinson, a household servant, would certainly have recognized. When asked specifically whether he saw Powell's alleged "encounter with Major Seward," Robinson replied that he "did not see that." When asked about Frederick Seward, he responded as follows: "I did not see Mr. Frederick Seward around at all." So George Robinson did not see the guy who was supposedly lying in a

bloody heap just outside the door to William Seward's room. He also didn't see the guy who supposedly assisted him with trying to subdue Powell. And he didn't see, or at least didn't mention, Fanny Seward. But he did see some mysterious, unidentified stranger.

When later asked, "Where was [Frederick] when [Powell] came out [of Seward's room]?", his unexpected response was: "The first I saw of Mr. Frederick was in the room standing up; he had come inside the door." So it appears that the guy who was lying near death somehow magically got up and strolled into the room, hopefully after pushing the gray matter back into his shattered skull.



JOSEPH HOLT



COLONEL HENRY L. BURNETT



JOHN A. BINGHAM

The prosecution team: one of Burnett's duties was to oversee the rewriting of the trial transcript to remove various contradictions and inconsistencies

Robinson also told the court that he never heard Powell utter a sound throughout the ordeal. Judge Advocate Holt, sounding a bit incredulous and clearly not getting the answers he wanted, asked the witness this question: "You say that this man, during the whole of this bloody work, made no remark at all; that he said nothing?" Robinson responded with: "I did not hear him make any remark."

Let's now listen in to some of Augustus Seward's testimony, because this is where it really gets interesting: "I retired to bed about 7 o'clock on the night of the 14th, with the understanding that I would be called at 11 o'clock, to sit up with my father; I very shortly fell asleep, and so remained until wakened by the screams of my sister; I jumped out of bed and ran into my father's room in my shirt and drawers; the gas in the room had been shut down rather low, and I saw what appeared to be two men, one trying to hold the other; my first impression was that my father had become delirious, and that the nurse was trying to hold him. I went up and took hold of him, but saw at once from his size and the struggle that it was not my father; it then struck me that the nurse had become delirious and was striking about the room at random; knowing the delicate state of my father's health, I endeavored to shove the person I had hold of to the door, with the intention of putting him out of his room; while I was pushing him he struck me five or six times over the head with whatever he had in his left hand; I supposed it at the time to be a bottle or decanter he had seized from the table; during this time he repeated with an intensely strong voice-'I am mad, I am mad;,' on reaching the hall he gave a sudden turn and breaking away from me, disappeared down stairs."

You got all that straight? Augustus first mistook Powell – a strapping, physically fit, 20-year-old man – for his frail, 63-year-old, bedridden father. Following that, he next mistook Powell, a decidedly fair-skinned Caucasian lad, for his father's black nurse. He also completely failed to notice that Robinson was right alongside him grappling with Powell. And he failed to notice that his sister was in the room. And he distinctly heard Powell loudly proclaiming himself to be mad, even though Robinson, also in the room, didn't hear Powell utter a word.

Augustus was also asked about his brother Frederick, to which he responded: "I never saw anything of my brother the whole time." In other words, he didn't notice that he had to practically step over his brother's prone, bloody body to get to his father's room. And he apparently wasn't paying attention when Frederick stood up and walked into that room.



It's Booth's photograph - just not the right Booth

Coupled with the conflicting testimony of Seward and Robinson, there is the enduring mystery surrounding Emerick Hansell. According to the official version of events, Hansell was left lying nearly lifeless just inside the front door of the home. But Dr. T.S. Verdi, the Seward family physician, testified that he “found Mr. Hansell, a messenger of the State Department, lying on a bed, wounded by a cut in the side some two and a half inches deep.” He went on to say that that bed was in a third-floor bedroom! Needless to say, no explanation was offered as to how and why Hansell could have ended up there. On that particular night, apparently, it was not uncommon for mortally wounded guys to get up all by themselves and wander around the Seward manor.

It seems pretty obvious that of all the witnesses to testify before the tribunal, none were more important to securing convictions than those who claimed to have witnessed the crimes actually being committed. It seems more than a bit odd then that the state bypassed both the First Lady and a senator's daughter in favor of an otherwise obscure future murderer named Henry Rathbone, who was clearly reading from a script written by unseen others. And it also seems more than a little odd that the state also left no fewer than five members of the Seward household *and* a State Department courier sitting on the sidelines in favor of two lowly household servants and a member of the Seward family who, by all accounts other than his own, wasn't even in the home that night.

It is on the shoulders of those four men – Augustus Seward, William Bell, George Robinson, and Henry Rathbone, all of whom are all but forgotten and all of whom presented obviously perjured testimony – that the official story of what happened on the evening of April 14, 1865 in the presidential box at Ford's Theater and at the Seward home has now rested for 149 years.



Defense attorney William Doster

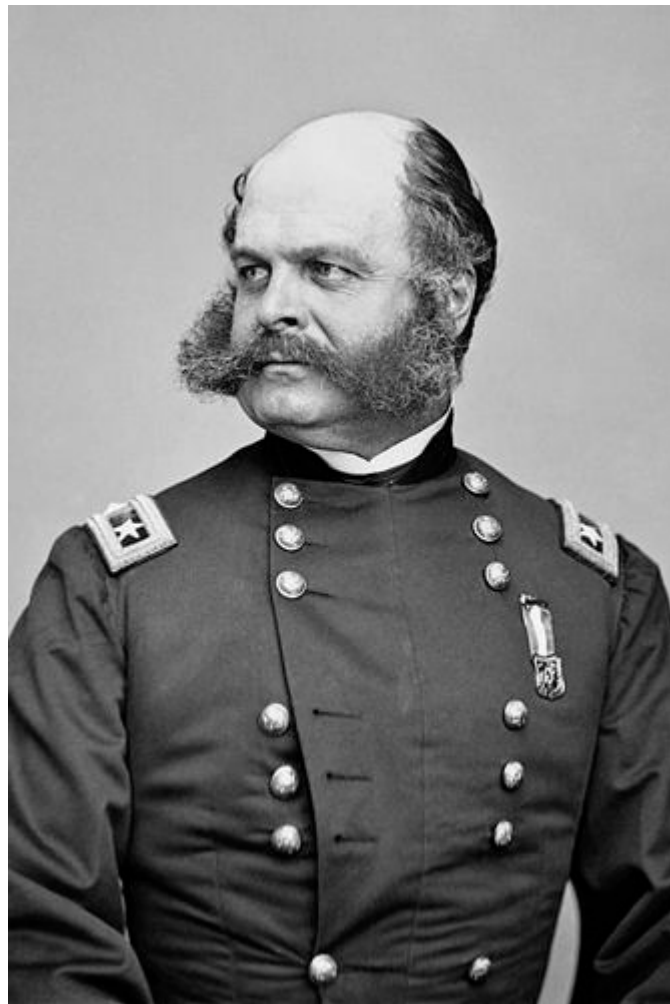
As for Bell, his testimony was problematic as well: “When [Powell] came he rang the bell and I went to the door, and this man came in; he had a little package in his hand, and said it was medicine from Dr. Verdi; he said he was sent by Dr. Verdi with particular directions how he was to take the medicine, and he said he must go up; I told him he could not go up ... he said that would not do, and I started to go up, and finding he would go up I started past him and went up the stairs before him ... I noticed that his step was very heavy, and I asked him not to walk so heavy, he would disturb Mr. Seward; he met Mr. Frederick Seward on the steps outside the door, and had some conversation with him in the hall.”

After describing a lengthy argument between Powell and Frederick Seward, Bell testified that Powell “started toward the steps as if to go down, and I started to go down before him; I had gone about three steps, and turned around, saying ‘don’t walk so heavy;’ by the time I had turned round he jumped back and struck Mr. Frederick Seward, and by the time I had turned clear around, Mr. Frederick Seward had fallen, and thrown up his hands, then I ran downstairs and called ‘murder;’ I went to the front door and cried murder; then I ran down to General Auger’s headquarters at the corner.”

Finding no one there, Bell ran back to the house in time to see Powell run out and get on his horse. Asked if he saw “with what [Powell] struck Mr. Fred. Seward,” Bell responded that “it appeared to be round and wound with velvet; I took it to be a knife afterwards.” For the record, it was actually supposed to be a gun.

Probably seeking to avoid perjuring himself too brazenly, Bell adopted the “I didn’t see nothing” approach. Powell, acting with superhuman strength and speed, managed to get to and subdue Frederick Seward before Bell could even turn around – after which Bell left the house, missing the rest of the carnage and returning just in time to witness Powell’s escape.

One wonders though how Emerick Hansell, the Steven Parent of this story (look it up), somehow managed to not see or hear Bell’s frantic flight and shouts of “murder” as he approached the Seward house that night. And why no patrols were near enough to respond to his cries. And exactly how long it took William Bell to turn “clear around.” In any event, we know that we can rule Bell out as being the mystery man who assisted George Robinson.



Union General Ambrose Burnside

Amazingly enough, after nearly a century-and-a-half, no one has ever seriously questioned the official narrative of what exactly happened that night. There have been just a relative handful of books written that question various aspects of the assassination, such as whether there were other, unseen conspirators, and whether John Wilkes Booth really was gunned down at Garrett’s barn, but even the authors of those books have unquestioningly accepted that what the state says went down in that presidential box and in the Seward home really did happen.

But why? On what basis should we blindly accept those aspects of the official story? Why should we believe a guy who when called upon three times to tell his story under oath, told that story in the exact same words all three times? And why should we believe two guys who supposedly stood side-by-side to fight off an intruder without either noticing the other's presence? And who both somehow failed to notice the allegedly mortally wounded Frederick Seward lying right outside the door? And why should we believe a guy who absurdly claimed that he confused a young, physically fit Lewis Powell for his own invalid, aging father, and then claimed to have confused the very same Lewis Powell with the shorter, older, and much darker George Robinson?

How is it possible that no one has questioned any of that? Do I have to fucking do everything around here?

There were, needless to say, other irregularities in what passed for a trial, including the wholesale suppression of exculpatory evidence. And the introduction of brazenly manufactured evidence, like a supposed cipher letter, also introduced into evidence at John Surratt's trial, that had allegedly been retrieved from a river but that clearly had never been in the water.



Confederate General Robert E. Lee, with son

To briefly recap then, all of the following were distinguishing characteristics of the ‘trial’ of the conspirators:

1. The defendants were informed of the charges against them just 72 hours before the trial began, depriving them of the ability to put together an effective defense.
2. The defendants, all civilians, were subjected to military justice.
3. The defendants were denied their right to individual trials.
4. The defendants were not allowed to speak in their own defense.
5. The state willfully withheld the list of prosecution witnesses, denying the defendants their right to know the nature of the testimony they would be defending themselves against.
6. The state freely introduced inflammatory, prejudicial testimony.
7. The state made extensive use of witnesses testifying under assumed identities.
8. The state made extensive use of paid witnesses.
9. The defendants were prohibited from privately consulting with their attorneys.
10. The state was not shy about suppressing exculpatory evidence.
11. The state was also not shy about introducing manufactured evidence.
12. The state allowed subpoenaed defense witnesses to ignore those subpoenas.

13. Only a simple majority was required to convict, and only a 2/3 majority was required to impose the death penalty.

And yet, through seven weeks of the most extreme prosecutorial misconduct imaginable, the entire defense team raised only twelve objections. They should have raised that many just during the first hour of the first day of the proceedings. If not sooner.



Union General John Pope

On June 29, 1965, the tribunal members met in a secret session to begin reviewing the evidence. It didn't take them long to find all the defendants guilty. On July 5, President Johnson approved all the sentences handed down by the commissioners, including the death sentence for Mary Surratt. The very next day, four of the prisoners were informed that they would hang in less than 24 hours.

Mary Surratt's spiritual advisers were denied access to her until they gave their assurances that they would not proclaim their belief in her innocence. Even then, they were allowed access only for a few hours. All of the prisoners were guarded very closely during their final hours by Thomas Eckert, Lafayette Baker, and a number of his thuggish detectives. Some of the gathered

witnesses described the condemned prisoners as looking drugged as they were led to the gallows by Baker's men.

More than a thousand soldiers ringed the prison walls to keep protestors at bay. Just after 1:30 PM on the afternoon of July 7, 1865, four soldiers kicked away the posts that were temporarily supporting the floor of the gallows and Mary Surratt, Lewis Thornton Powell, David Herold, and George Adzerodt fell to their deaths.

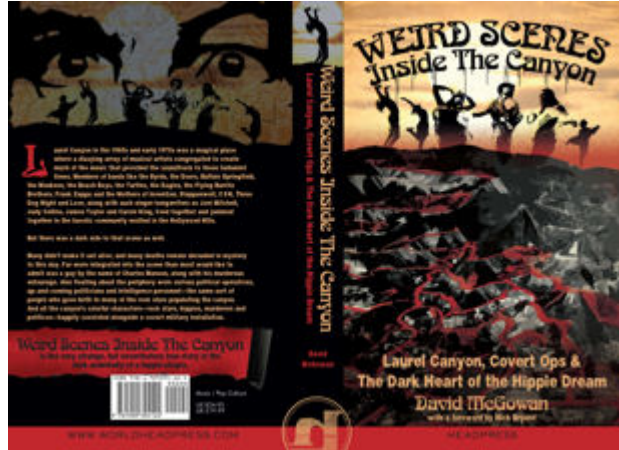
Meanwhile, military personnel escorted Dr. Samuel Mudd, Michael O'Laughlin, Ed Spangler, and Samuel Arnold to a remote, isolated, desolate facility known as Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas off the coast of Florida. Photos reveal that what was once undoubtedly a gorgeous tropical atoll had been converted by the US military into a veritable hell on Earth. The facility reportedly featured underground torture cells and dungeons. All four prisoners were held in solitary confinement in conditions so appalling that one of them, Michael O'Laughlin, was dead within two years.



Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas

And that, dear readers, is how ‘justice’ was meted out to the eight alleged accomplices of John Wilkes Booth.

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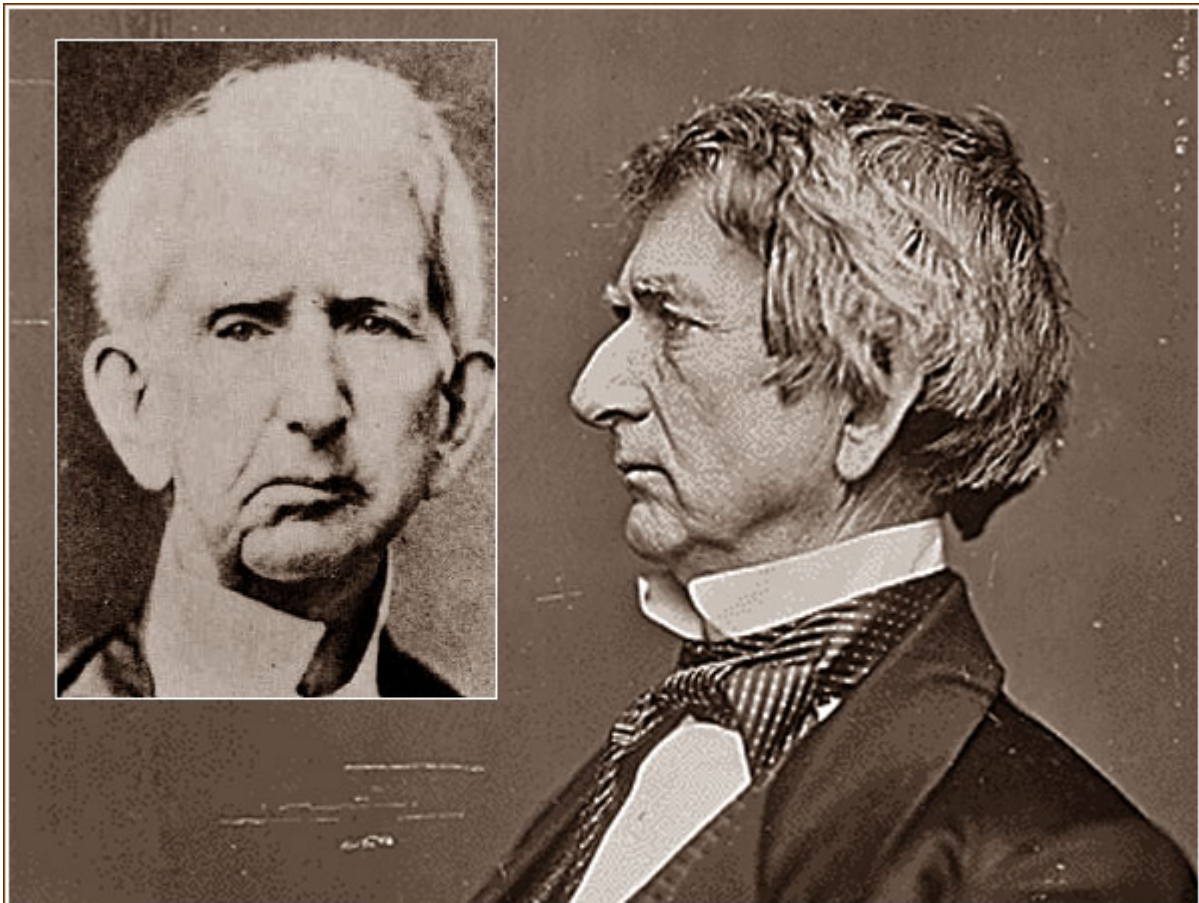


Why Everything You Think You Know About the Lincoln Assassination is Wrong, Part VIII August 25, 2014

In my continuing quest to gain some kind of understanding of exactly what happened on the night of April 14, 1865, I have worked my way through several more rather tedious treatments of the Lincoln assassination, including a relatively new tome by Leonard Guttridge and Ray Neff (*Dark Union*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003) that adds several new layers of complexity to the fabled attack on Secretary of State William Seward. And by “new layers of complexity,” I really mean new layers of absurdity.

One thing we learn from the authors is that the “house where the Seward’s lived was a thirty-room mansion overlooking Lafayette Square.” A three-story, thirty-room mansion. But like virtually everyone else who has written about the alleged attack at the Seward home, the authors offer little commentary on how Lewis Powell, who by all accounts had never been in the home, could have so easily navigated his way through it.

The authors also inform us that, “This was no assassin’s work. Seward’s body was otherwise unscathed. The knife struck nowhere near the heart or any other vital organ. It was not aimed at the windpipe. It targeted Seward’s face – in particular, his ligatured jaw.” In other words, none of the wounds that Seward allegedly sustained that night were inconsistent with the injuries he was known to have suffered as a result of the carriage accident. It is, I have to say, a rather remarkable ‘coincidence’ that Powell’s knife struck only where Seward was previously injured.



Photos: National Archives | HistoricCamdenCounty.com

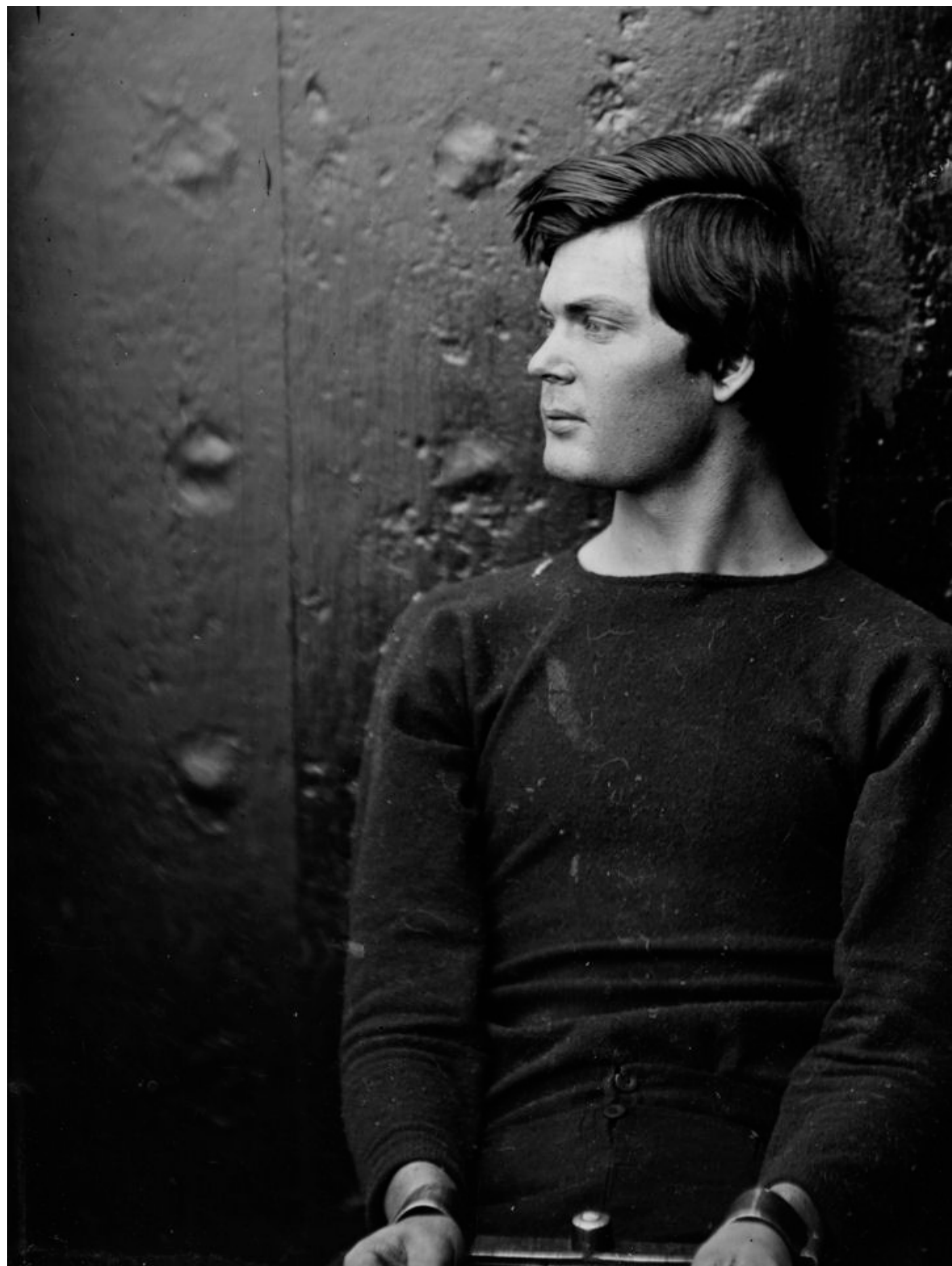
WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 14, 1865) – Secretary of State William Seward as he looked before he was attacked (right) by Lewis Thornton Powell. Seward survived but was disfigured by the knife attack (left).

Contradicting virtually everything else that has been written about the alleged attempted assassination of Seward, Guttridge and Neff also claim that “Two male nurses had been assigned to the secretary, and two State Department messengers, each armed with a Colt revolver, were working shifts as Seward’s bodyguard. That Good Friday evening one of the messengers, Emerick Hansell, reached Seward’s home shortly after nine in the evening ... After a meal in the kitchen, he settled himself in an alcove on the third floor, where most of the family bedrooms were located.”

So now we find that, in addition to two active-duty military personnel (George Robinson and Augustus Seward) and two other able-bodied men (William Bell and Frederick Seward) being present in the home, William Seward actually had an armed guard stationed right down the hall

from his room – and yet Powell was still able to locate, get to, and brutally attack his target. Well done, Mr. Powell!

According to Guttridge and Neff, Hansell didn't enter into the melee until after William Seward had been attacked and Powell was grappling with Robinson: "Then another figure plunged into the room. It wasn't Fred. He had already staggered to his bedroom, beaten nearly senseless. The new arrival was Emerick Hansell ... He heard Robinson cry, 'Hansey, help me.'"



The always photogenic Lewis Powell

In case anyone missed any of that, let's run through the scenario presented by Neff and Guttridge: William Seward had an armed guard stationed just down the hall from his room. We have no idea why he had an armed guard since the President didn't even have one, but we'll just play along and say that he had one. That guard though didn't respond when Powell came calling at the door, forcing his way in. He didn't respond when Powell argued with Bell and pushed past him. He didn't respond when Powell "walked heavy" up two flights of stairs. He didn't respond when Frederick Powell stood on the landing loudly arguing with Powell. He didn't respond when Powell then physically attacked Frederick, leaving him for dead (or to wander off to his bedroom, or to get up and wander into his father's room). He didn't respond when William Bell ran from the house screaming "murder!" He didn't respond when Powell forced his way into William Seward's room. He didn't respond when Powell attacked first Robinson and then Seward. No, it wasn't until Powell was fighting his way out of the bedroom that Hansell decided to respond. And even then, despite the fact that Powell had nearly killed three people, including the guy that Hansell was assigned to protect, he opted not to use his weapon, choosing instead to become another casualty.

Does all of that make perfect sense to everyone?

If so, then this infinitely fascinating bit of assassination trivia should make perfect sense as well: "The Seward episode was further complicated by a coincidence. Within twenty-four hours of the Good Friday attack, newspapers reported that Emerick Hansell, the State Department messenger on protective duty and knifed on the third floor, had died of his wounds. The obituaries were all but correct. There were two men named Emerick Hansell. One had indeed succumbed in Washington, but he was a farrier at the Union cavalry depot at Giesboro at the edge of the city. His widow was informed that he was kicked in the head while shoeing a horse. He lingered a week, to die just eight hours after the stabbing of his namesake."

Call me a skeptic if you will, but I am finding it very difficult to believe that that was a 'coincidence.' Truth be told, I'm finding it almost impossible to believe that there were two guys named Emerick Hansell living in Washington, DC in 1865, let alone that one of them died within hours of the other being brutally attacked. If such reports did indeed circulate, then they had to be deliberately false reports. And those false reports led to a very predictable outcome:

"The farrier's death had the effect of stilling questions that only the other Hansell might have answered. Many years would pass before the State Department's messenger, then in pensioned retirement following a resumed career on the federal payroll, would give his story under strict guarantees of confidentiality. His recollection then was that he had been the third man on the landing, rushing to Private Robinson's aid, convinced that the man he and the soldier grappled with was Major Augustus Seward, the secretary's troubled son."

It is obvious from this passage that Guttridge and Neff based their account of the alleged attack at the Seward residence on Hansell's belated, off-the-record recollections. The authors appear to be unaware that Hansell's story is wildly at odds with the accounts of other supposed witnesses, or perhaps they just don't care.



The Seward family home in Washington, DC

We now have testimony from three guys claiming to have been in William Seward's bedroom and to have acted in his defense. One of them, Augustus Seward, had no one assisting him and he thought he was fighting against either his father or his father's nurse. Another of them, Emerick Hansell, was assisted only by Robinson and thought he was grappling with Augustus Seward. The third, George Robinson, thought that he was fighting with a guy he described to a newspaper reporter as having "light sandy hair, whiskers and moustache." And he, of course, thought that he was assisted by someone who was never identified.

None of the three saw Frederick Seward lying unconscious outside William Seward's room, but Robinson did see him enter the room. None of them made any mention of the presence of Fanny Seward, though her belatedly released statement would hold that she was in the room as well. None of them saw Frances or Anna Seward either, though you would think they would have come to see what all the commotion was about at some point. Though Powell and Hansell were both supposedly packing heat, and Augustus Seward's testimony at trial indicated that he retrieved a gun as well, not a single shot was fired that night at the Seward mansion. After being awakened by the commotion, which necessarily would have included Bell's shouts of murder, Major Seward nevertheless opted to initially respond without a weapon. Hansell apparently responded without his weapon as well. And Bell, ignoring the fact that Seward already had an armed guard and a militarily trained and armed son, felt the need to run down the street seeking outside help.

It's hard to imagine a more ridiculously contradictory set of stories. Two of the 'witnesses' essentially identified each other as the assailant, and the third offered up a description that did not in any way fit the always clean-shaven Lewis Powell. To say that there was reasonable doubt

in this case would be a serious understatement, but the tribunal had no problem convicting Powell and sentencing him to death (there were even, as previously stated, contingency plans to have him executed before the trial even concluded).

But then again, Doster did wrap up his ‘defense’ of Powell by delivering a closing argument that began as follows: “May it please the court: There are three things in the case of the prisoner, Powell, which are admitted beyond civil or dispute: (1) That he is the person who attempted to take the life of the Secretary of State. (2) That he is not within the medical definition of insanity. (3) That he believed what he did was right and justifiable. The question of his identity and the question of his sanity are, therefore, settled, and among the things of the past.” With a defense like that, how could he lose?



Lewis Powell's empty gravesite

Perhaps James Swanson, who appears to fancy himself to be the reigning expert on the Lincoln assassination, can clear up the confusion surrounding what exactly happened at the Seward manor. In his bestselling *Manhunt: The Twelve-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer* (William Morrow, 2006) Swanson spins a uniquely preposterous account of the alleged attack. Like other self-styled historians, he handpicks facts from the accounts of various alleged participants while conveniently leaving out all the contradictory elements of those accounts.

One thing that Swanson does get right in his overly wordy account is an acknowledgement that Powell's alleged assignment would have been a very difficult one: “This was a difficult mission even for a man like Powell, a battle-hardened and extremely strong ex-Confederate soldier. Powell had three problems. First, how could he get inside Seward's house? ... Once inside, it was Powell's job to track down Secretary Seward in the sprawling, three-story mansion ... Powell faced a third challenge: he did not know how many occupants ... were on the premises.”

In Swanson's telling of the tale, on the night of April 14, 1865, “Fanny [Seward] watched over her father and listened to the sights and sounds of the never-ending celebrations in the streets.” Of primary interest here is the mention of the “never-ending celebrations.” General Lee had just surrendered to General Grant, the Civil War was all but over, and the nation's capitol was in a celebratory mood. Just the night before, public buildings and private homes across the city were lit up with candles and gaslights while fireworks exploded overhead, providing, by all accounts, a uniquely awe-inspiring view of the city.

The next day, April 14, was a Friday and those celebrations continued well into the night, with tens of thousands of people taking to the streets to join in the revelry. The Seward mansion sat, as previously noted, right across the street from Lafayette Square, which surely would have been

filled that night with a sizable portion of that mass of humanity. Keep that in mind as we work our way through Swanson's highly dubious account.

"Around 10:00 P.M.," according to Swanson, Fanny Seward "put down her book, *Legends of Charlemagne*, turned down the gaslights, and, along with Sergeant George Robinson, a wounded veteran now serving as an army nurse, kept watch over her recovering father." For the record, Robinson was not yet a sergeant, which is one of many factual inaccuracies that can be found throughout Swanson's supposedly authoritative books.

Shortly after Fanny had lowered the lights, Lewis Powell approached the front door of the home and "rang the bell ... [and] William Bell, a nineteen-year-old black servant, hurried to answer the door." Amazingly, Swanson knows what William's age was at the time even though Bell himself was unable to provide that information when asked at trial! In any event, an argument ensued between Powell and Bell and, "For five minutes, the assassin and the servant bickered about whether Powell would leave the medicine with Bell."

Powell next pushed past Bell and proceeded up the stairs, where, as we know, he encountered Fred Seward and argued with him as well. After appearing to lose the argument, Powell began to retreat down the stairs but then quickly pivoted and attempted to shoot Fred Seward. When the gun failed to fire, "Powell raised the pistol high in the air and brought down a crushing blow to Seward's head. He hit him so hard that he broke the pistol's steel ramrod, jamming the cylinder and making it impossible to fire again."

Broke the steel ramrod?! No shit? I could see possibly bending it, but how do you "break" a steel ramrod? Had Powell or anyone else hit Seward with that kind of force, and then delivered a few more equally devastating blows, he would certainly have killed him. But according to Swanson, Powell didn't even knock him down (directly contradicting, of course, Bell's sworn testimony at trial): "Powell moved lightning fast. He shoved Fred aside and struck Robinson in the forehead hard with the knife." Swanson later informs us that Fred remained conscious and on his feet throughout the ordeal, though he mostly just "wandered around the house like a zombie, babbling the same phrase, 'It is ... it is,' over and over unable to complete the thought."

Meanwhile, "The assassin pushed past the reeling sergeant and the waiflike girl blocking his path and sprinted to the bed" where the ailing William Seward lay helpless. According to Swanson, the only thing that saved Seward's life was Powell's poor aim, which resulted in him completely missing the motionless secretary of state with his first two knife thrusts. By the time he connected, Robinson had rejoined the fight and was attempting to pull Powell away from Seward. At about that time, "Fanny ... screamed, not once, but in a ceaseless, howling, and terrifying wail that woke her brother Augustus, or 'Gus,' who was asleep in a room nearby. Fanny then opened a window and screamed to the street below."

So now, in addition to Bell running down the street screaming "murder," we have Fanny Seward screaming out an open window. And yet still, with celebrants swarming around the capitol, no one was able to respond in time to even see Powell, let alone try to stop him! Sounds perfectly reasonable to me. As does the fact that "Gus" was able to sleep through the knock on the door, the argument between Bell and Powell, Powell's noisy ascent of the stairs, Powell's argument

with Frederick, Powell's attack on Frederick, Powell forcing his way into William Seward's room, Powell's attack on Robinson, Powell's attack on William Seward, and all the screaming that all the victims would undoubtedly have been doing as they were being viciously attacked. Old Gus was a pretty sound sleeper, I guess.

According to Swanson, Augustus Seward and George Robinson then jointly battled Powell, which we already know directly contradicts the sworn testimony of both of them. That fight supposedly spilled over into the hallway outside Seward's room. At that time, "Secretary Seward's wife, alarmed by Fanny's screams, emerged from her third-floor, back bedroom in time to witness the climax of the hallway struggle between Powell and her son Gus. Uncomprehending, she assumed that her husband had become delirious and was running amok. Fred's wife, Anna, rushed to the scene ..."

Apparently Frances and Anna Seward slept even more soundly than Augustus. With their arrival though, Powell was outnumbered six to one, and that didn't even include Hansell, who, according to Swanson, decided that his best bet was to get the hell out of Dodge: "On [Powell's] way out, he caught up with Emerick Hansell, who was running down the staircase, trying to stay ahead of the assassin. The State Department messenger, on duty at Seward's home, was fleeing rather than joining the battle."

Of course he was. That's probably why we all remember him being lynched, which is undoubtedly what would have happened if Swanson's tall tale was true. I guess Hansell slept through most of the ordeal as well, foolishly choosing to flee at the same time as Powell. You'd think he would have just stayed wherever it was that he was hiding. Or run sooner. Those would have been safer options. But then again, since he had a gun and was backed up by at least six people, and the assailant was unarmed, maybe he should have just done his job. That way, he wouldn't have had to haul his gravely wounded body up two flights of stairs to get into bed before the doctor got there.

It is more than a little odd, I must say, that both Augustus Seward and Frances Seward claimed to initially believe that the 'intruder' was actually William Seward "running amok." Was that a common thing for the secretary of state to do? Even when everyone knew that he was confined to bed and completely immobile?

Mr. Robinson, by the way, had a change of heart after telling a reporter about the intruder with "light sandy hair, whiskers and moustache." By the time the trial rolled around just a few weeks later, Robinson was sure that Powell was the assailant. That may have been due to the fact that he had received a gold medal, \$5,000 in cash, and a promotion. And he later was awarded the knife allegedly used by Powell in the attack.



This is said to be the only known remains of Lewis Powell

It is impossible for me to believe that the alleged events at the Seward home ever took place. All the available evidence overwhelmingly suggests that it was an entirely manufactured affair. Fanny and Frances Seward, as previously discussed, did not live long after the alleged attack. Neither, of course, did Lewis Powell. William and Frederick Seward chose to never speak publicly about the alleged incident. Augustus Seward, George Robinson, William Bell, and (belatedly) Emerick Hansell gave wildly conflicting accounts. And as mainstream historians continue to work diligently to bend the conflicting accounts into some kind of believable storyline, the story just gets more and more ridiculous.

The more deeply immersed in this I become, the more I am convinced that the key to understanding the Lincoln assassination may be in understanding what *didn't* happen at the Seward residence. For if the alleged parallel attack on the Swards never took place, then clearly

there was much more to the events of April 14, 1865 than the activities of John Wilkes Booth and a ragtag band of conspirators.

Before wrapping up, let's take a look at one final curiosity surrounding the alleged attack on the Seward family: in all the accounts that I have read – and I have now worked my way through fourteen books chronicling the Lincoln assassination – it is either stated or implied that Powell (and Bell) ascended just one flight of stairs to get to William Seward's bedroom, and descended just one flight to exit the house. But Seward's bedroom was on the third floor of the home, which meant that reaching him (and Frederick and the rest of the cast) would have required first ascending one flight of stairs, then crossing a second-floor landing, and then ascending a second flight of stairs.

That curious fact seems to have remained deliberately obscured for many, many years now. And it's not hard to figure out why, for if that fact is pointed out, it raises the very obvious question of exactly how Powell would have known to bypass the home's second floor and proceed directly to the third.