

Speech by Mr. Fred Black

Bill Springer

What ~~MM~~ said about me knowing Henry Ford is about the same as most people knowing Abraham Lincoln. I don't think anyone really knew Mr. Henry Ford. A lot of us tried to know him over a great many years, but he had too many sides to him and about the time that some one of us felt that we knew him, why we found we didn't. However, I did have twenty-three years of most unusual experience out here and I have always been very grateful for it.

I think before I start on the subject, you might be interested in a couple of little anecdotes about this room. The Village, of course, was dedicated in 1929, just about a day before or after the stock market broke, so some of you might remember it.

Anyway that day President Hoover was here and Mr. and Mrs. Edison and about three hundred of the most famous people in the United States, some of them known world wide. Part of the ceremony was to light various perpetual fires. Mr. Edison lighted the perpetual fire in this room. I understand this is no longer perpetual, but one very interesting little anecdote; I had Hugh Walpole, the

British novelist in here one time, and there was a caretaker, (I've forgotten who he was then,) but anyway, I told Mr. Walpole that this was a perpetual fire, He said, "You keep it burning all the time?"

I said, "Sure." And I sent for this chap, this caretaker, and I said, "What would you do if you came in here sometime and found this fire out?"

He said, Oh, well that can't happen. It's supposed to burn all the time. We never let it go out."

I said, "Yes, but just assuming that you came in here sometime and found this fire out. What would you do?"

He said, "Yes, but that won't happen. It never can be. We don't let it go out, you know. We have orders not."

I said, "Yes, but just play, just play that you came in this door and you saw this fire was out, what would you do?"

He said, "I'd light it damn quick and say nothing about it!" I figured the fire was all right!

And another very funny thing happened in this room after it was here. Along in the thirties, and I've forgotten just what year, a man who claimed he was a distant cousin of

Abraham Lincoln came up to the main offices, the engineering offices where Mr. Henry Ford's office was, and wanted to see Henry Ford. Well, this man was dressed up in a long frock coat and a high silk hat and he looked just like Abraham Lincoln, except that he wasn't quite as tall. He'd been taking part in a pageant. I've forgotten whether it was some place down east of Chicago or what, but anyway, we told Mr. Ford about this chap and that he looked pretty much like Abraham Lincoln, and I might say here that Abraham Lincoln was one of Henry Ford's three great heroes. The other two were William Holmes McGuffey, who is also honored in the Village and Thomas A. Edison. His three great heroes are all represented here in the Village. So Mr. Ford said that Mr. Mills was a distant cousin of Mr. Lincoln's, and said, "Well, you stay around here for a couple of weeks."

Incidentally, Mr. Mills had arrived in an old Studebaker car and he left in a brand new Ford. He agreed to stay here for a couple of weeks. This was after lunch. Mr. Ford said, "I just want you to hang around the Lincoln Court House down there. I want the school children to see you. The people who come here, etc." Well that was fine. So of course, we had a crew of night watchmen here in the Village as well as people on in the daytime, and Mr. Mills decided he'd just sit here and absorb the atmosphere just about dusk. The night force had come on, but they knew nothing about Mr. Mills. It wasn't this rocking chair, but there used to be a rocking chair

someplace around the room; anyway, Mr. Mills was sitting in front of the fire, no lights on except just the fire casting its shadows, and the night watchman who was going to look after the fire, and what have you. He opened the door and saw this movement of this shadow and he was scared to death. He didn't stop until he hit the office up here. Of course, we all knew, but before most of the people actually found out what had happened, it was out that the court house was haunted. I've forgotten who this chap was. I think maybe Dewey can tell you, or Disten over here -- some of them. But anyway, he created a lot of local color.

I'm going to read this talk tonight and it's the first time I've ever done it and I'll tell you why. I haven't talked on this subject for twenty years. Actually, my hobby, well, I spend all the spare time I can, on pre-Columbian history and archeology. While I'm interested in Lincoln, tremendously interested in this, there are a lot of things I know about Lincoln, but you can easily get a reputation as being an authority.

What I've done is to take the articles that I wrote on the subject and try to reduce a couple of years' work into an hour and really tell you, not so much about the assassination itself, but about chasing John Wilkes Booth around the country fifty-five years after the crime. And it all started with what Henry Ford said on the witness stand in his suit against the Chicago Tribune in 1919.

Well, there were thousands of people all over the United States who wanted to tell him and wanted to prove to him that he was right. So, such as was always when he said something rather startling, we got a terrific amount of mail here at Dearborn. Mail bag after mail bag filled the room and all sorts of pamphlets and clippings and books and what have you. Just thousands of people sent in something, a post card even. Well, many of the letters that we received referred to a book published in 1907 by Phineas L. Bates, and as Bill Springer told you, it was entitled The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth, or The First True Account of Lincoln's Assassination. It said that it contained a complete confession by Booth many years after the crime, written as it said on the flyleaf, "for the correction of history."

Well, Mr. Ford received several copies of the book and he took one home with him. A few days later, he asked me what I knew about Lincoln's assassination and what became of John Wilkes Booth. I said I knew only the bare facts as recorded in most histories. He asked me to read the book and he would talk it over with me the next day. That was about two o'clock in the afternoon and the book was three hundred and forty pages. I read it; I not only read it once, but between two and four o'clock the next morning, I read it twice and the second time over, I made some marginal notes. I was going to have that thing down as best I could by the time I talked to him.

loan on his house for around \$8,000 and \$1,000 of it was due. ^{Speech due.} Would
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Mr. Ford advance him \$1,000 and take Booth's body as security?
Several years later, the body sold for \$1,000.

Well, I ~~told him~~ ~~we~~ couldn't advance the money until we
proof he claimed, there might be something to it. Mr. Ford said,
"Find Bates if he's still alive and let's talk to him."

The book was published in 1907 and this was the winter of
1920. Mr. Bates' address in the book was Memphis, Tennessee.
Well, I called at the Ford offices in Memphis and determined that
Mr. Bates would be willing to come to Dearborn if his expenses were
advanced. This was done and a few days later he arrived.

He claimed to have voluminous files and letters in a safety
deposit vault in Memphis and even better, he had the mummified body
of John Wilkes Booth stored away in his garage. There would not be
any trouble, according to Mr. Bates, in clearing up the weak spots
is his book. He claimed, for instance, that since the book's
publication, he had received much additional proof, but he had a
loan on his house for around \$8,000 and \$1,000 of it was due. Would
Mr. Ford advance him \$1,000 and take Booth's body as security?
Several years later, the body sold for \$1,000.

Well, I explained we couldn't advance the money until we
had examined the proof and after conferences for several days,
during which I discussed the many questionable parts of his book,
I started out on a strange year and one-half of research and
investigation which took me to Washington D.C., Maryland, Virginia,
Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado and Tennessee.

I'm going to treat the assassination very quickly, just
give the background, because I'm not really telling the story of the
assassination, but my chase of John Wilkes Booth.

At this point I'd probably however, better give you a little background of the assassination and what happened in the next twelve days. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln cannot be more clearly and graphically described than from a testimony given under oath at the trial of the conspirators held in Washington May 1st to June 30th, 1865; the trial of John A. Seraph, June 10th to August 10th, 1867, and the impeachment investigation of Andrew Johnson by the House of Representatives in 1867. In addition to that, there were people who were willing to talk as the years went on and tell parts, the parts that they had in the affair, maybe after the assassination in helping Booth get away from Washington. But if you follow those three trials, you get a great amount of background material on them, and if you follow and analyze the material, you get very interesting stories.

Now, the incidents leading up to the assassination began with General Grant's order in April, 1864 prohibiting the exchange of prisoners between North and South; the most serious need of the Confederacy was man power. Consequently, the liberation of Southern captives from Northern prison camps became the goal of expeditions organized by Confederate agents both at Richmond and in Canada and as some of you know, some of those plots hatched right here in Detroit. One of two captured a ferry boat right on the Detroit River; tried to use it to liberate southern prisoners on Johnson's Island.

Well, John Wilkes Booth, an actor, a brother of actors and a son of an actor, noted for his eccentricities, had achieved his stage successes in the South and was in complete sympathy with the southern cause. The Booths were a northern family. With a sense of values, Booth as early as 1864 conceived the idea of kidnapping President Lincoln and carrying him to Richmond as a hostage. To achieve this purpose, he recruited other Southern sympathizers four of whom paid the death penalty for their part in the affair. All plans for the kidnapping proving fruitless and being deserted by some of his confederates in the plot, Booth decided to abandon further attempts. As far as can be ascertained from the testimony, the first definite resolve by Booth to assassinate Lincoln was made on Tuesday night, April 11th. Booth had arrived in Washington from New York, Saturday, April 8th. On this Tuesday evening, accompanied by Payne, one of the conspirators, he listened to President Lincoln's speech given from one of the White House windows to a crowd assembled on the lawn.

According to Payne's statement, the President said that he favored the elective franchise to the more intelligent negroes. Payne said, "Booth tried to persuade me to shoot the President while in the window." Payne claimed he told Booth he would take no such risk.

Booth remarked, "That is the last speech he will ever make."

David Herold, captured with Booth, was seen talking to friends in front of the Metropolitan Hotel on Wednesday, April 12th. That afternoon, Atzedt selected to kill the vice president and ascertained

the location of Mr. Johnson's room at the Kirkwood House. Early in the morning of Friday the 14th, Atzeodt registered and was assigned a room. On Thursday morning, the 13th, Booth, who was staying at the National Hotel, was reported to have asked another guest whether tyrannous was spelled with two n's or two r's. That is purely based on a newspaper story. It may be true or may not, but it was published at that time.

On Thursday afternoon, Booth called on C. B. Hess manager of Grover's Theatre, and asked him if he planned to invite the president for the next night.

Booth's last letter to his mother bore the Washington D. C. post office stamp, April 14th, 2 A.M. About 9 o'clock that morning, Booth had his hair cut at a barber shop near Grover's Theatre. Around 11:30 that morning, he arrived at Ford's Theatre, where he picked up a letter addressed to him. H. Clay Ford, treasurer of the theatre, said Booth was there until about 12:30 and talked to various people on the staff. "I do not know," Ford testified, "that the fact that the President was coming to the theatre was communicated to Booth, but I think it is very likely that he found it out while here. The President's visit to the theatre that evening could not have been known, unless it was made known by someone from the executive mansion. It was published in the Evening Star, but not in the morning papers.

A messenger from the White House had engaged the box about 10:30 that morning from James R. Ford, business manager of the theatre.

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Louis J. Carlin, costumer of the Ford's Theatre, saw Booth three times that day. First, he saw him when he was at the theatre at a little after 12; the second between 5 and 6 P.M.; the third a little later than this. Sometime during the afternoon, Booth bored a hole in the door of the Presidential box and secured a bar for the passageway door, leading from the dress circle to the box. Around the noon hour, he engaged a riding horse from the Humphrey Livery Stable, which he said he wanted about ¼ or half past ¼ that day. Early in the afternoon, he called at the Washington boarding house of Mr. Seraph. Sometime during the afternoon, he went to Grover's Theatre again where he wrote a letter intended for the National Intelligencer, a Washington daily newspaper, which would give his justification for the assassination. He intended to post it, but met John Matthews a fellow actor who was playing that night at Ford's Theatre. Booth gave the letter to Matthews and asked him to deliver it to the Intelligencer, the next day. Now all we know of the contents of the letter, is what Matthews could remember. He became so frightened after the assassination and reading the letter and finding it was a statement of Booth's intentions, he destroyed it, but testified it ended with the statement, "the moment has at length arrived when my plans must be changed. The world may censure me for what I am about to do, but I am sure that posterity ~~waddowick~~ will justify me." Signed: Men Who Love Their Country Better Than Life.--
John Wilkes Booth, Payne, Atzerodt and Herold.

During the afternoon, Booth called at Kirkwood House and left his card for Col. William Browning, Secretary of Vice President Johnson. Browning was out. On another card was a notation, "Don't wish to disturb you at home? John Wilkes Booth."

Booth had known Browning in Nashville, Tennessee. Col. Browning remarked when handed the card by the clerk, "It is from Booth. Is he playing here?" The explanation that has been made for the card was that the vice president being an intended victim, Booth, desired to learn what his plans might be for the evening. That's only a guess, a speculation.

The room clerk at the National Hotel saw Booth leave about 7:00 the evening of the assassination. Atzerodt made the following statement before his execution. "On the evening of the 14th of April,
? I met Booth and Payne at the Herndon House in this city at 8 o'clock. He, Booth, said he himself should murder Mr. Lincoln and General Grant. Payne should take Mr. Seward and I should take Mr. Johnson. I told him I would not do it, that I had gone into the thing to capture, but that I was not going to kill. He told me I was a fool, that I would be hung anyhow and that it was death for every man that backed out, and so we parted. I wandered about the streets until about two o'clock in
? the morning and then went to Kimmill House and from there pawned my pistol at Georgetown and from there went on to my cousin's house in Montgomery County where I was arrested the 19th following."

General and Mrs. Grant were asked Friday morning to attend the theatre with Lincoln that night, but General Grant said if he could finish the work he was doing that afternoon, they wanted to visit their children at Burlington, New Jersey. The Grants left on an afternoon train and Mrs. Lincoln then invited Miss Harris and Major Rathbone, daughter and step-son of Senator Harris. About 9:30 that evening, Booth rode his horse up to the back door of the theatre and called Edward Spangler, a stage hand. Spangler turned the horse over to Joseph Burrows, known as "Peanuts", a boy who carried bills for the theatre. A little after ten, Booth called for whiskey at a restaurant adjoining the theatre, and shortly thereafter entered the vestibule of the theatre and asked the time of the night door keeper. He then went to the stairway to the dress circle, took a leisurely survey of the house and entered the door to the passageway leading to the box, closed and barred it, peered through the gimlet hole, the one he had made in the door to the box that afternoon, opened this box door and fired the fatelshot. Rathbone grappled with him. Booth knifed Rathbone, jerked from his grasp, rushed to the front of the box, and leaped to the stage. His spur, however, caught in the American flag which was draped on the box and Booth landed on his left foot in such a position as to fracture his leg about two inches above the instep. Booth rushed across the stage to the rear entrance, jumped his horse, kicked the Burroughs boy out of his way and was off toward the Navy Yard bridge leading to southern Maryland.

During this time, Payne was making a wild attempt to kill Secretary Seward, and probably would have succeeded but for an iron brace holding in place the Secretary's recently broken collar bone, which deflected the knife. The Secretary had been thrown from his carriage when his team had started to run away about two weeks before that and had thrown him out of the carriage and broken his collar bone rather badly.

Atzerodt, of course, became frightened and did nothing. David Herold apparently was given the job of helping Booth escape. He was a youngster in his late teens who had been working in a drug store and was a hero worshipper of Booth's.

Around one o'clock on that afternoon, Herald had made arrangements for a riding horse for 4 o'clock. Between 10:30 and 11, Booth crossed the Navy Yard Bridge, giving his name and saying he lived close to Bean Town. About five or ten minutes later, Herold passed, giving the name of Smith and saying he lived at White Plains. Passes were no longer necessary to get in and out of Washington. The sentry merely stopped people, asked who they were and where they were going. Herold and Booth arrived together at the Seraph Tavern ten miles from Washington.

They picked up weapons which it was testified Mr. Seraph had left for them that afternoon. Booth's leg was paining him and they headed for the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd, Dr. Mudd's grandfather. They arrived at the doctor's about day break Saturday morning the 15th. The doctor split Booth's boot down to the instep, slipped it off and the sock with it.

He found the front bone was broken nearly at right angles about two inches above the instep. Inside the leg of the riding boot was written J. Wilkes. It was for the left foot and split up the front for about 8 inches. The boot was found under the sofa where Booth's foot was set, later, and was placed in evidence.

Dr. Mudd always maintained and there was never any evidence to refute it, that he did not recognize Booth, whom he had met only casually, the previous fall.

Between three and four o'clock that afternoon, Saturday, Booth, and Herold left Dr. Mudd's, ran into a negro, Oswald Swan, and hired him to lead them to the house of Samuel Cox, a well-known southern sympathizer who still near the Potomac. Booth identified himself by the initials on his wrist, J. W. B. and threw himself on Cox's mercy and asked his aid to get across the Potomac.

One of the things that I don't think was brought out at the trial of Dr. Mudd, which could have I think helped him. But of course a lot of this was not known. The Cox story wasn't known until after, a couple of years, I guess, after the trial was over, before it became general knowledge. Booth identified himself at nearly every step either by the name of Boyd and then told who he was, or identified himself by these initials, "J.W.B." except at Dr. Mudd's and at the Garrett farm, which I think was rather significant.

While guided by Cox's overseer, Franklin Rohde, Booth and Herold were hidden in a thick piece of pine about one mile from the house on the edge of the S Swamp. Cox then sent for his foster brother,

Tom Jones, and asked him to help Herold and Booth across the Potomac.

On the following Friday evening, one week after the assassination, Jones placed them in a rowboat and shoved them off. Instead of crossing as they had planned, the assassinations due to darkness and inexperience, found themselves Saturday morning on the same side of the river, a few miles nearer Washington. They were seen later that morning by a negro, who thinking they answered the description of Booth and Herold, reported it to the authorities. Saturday night the fugitives reached the Virginia side where they thought they would be safe, but found the sympathizers had become very cagey. They spent Sunday night in the hut of William Rufus, a negro, and Monday afternoon he hauled them in a wagon to the Port Conway side of the Rappahanock River ferry fifteen miles further south.. There, they ran into three Confederate officers on their way home; Capt. Jeff, Major Ruggles and Lieut. Bainbridge. Booth, after establishing identification appealed to them for help. They took him to the Garrett farm a few miles farther south. Booth was left there as Mr. Boyd. Herold spent the night with Bainbridge at a Mrs. Parks, while Ruggles and Jeff went to Bowling Green where Jeff had a sweetheart. Herold joined Booth the next afternoon and they slept that night in Garret's tobacco barn, which Federal Calvery had apprehended in Bowling Green, surrounded about 2 o'clock Monday morning the 26th of April. Herold surrendered. Booth wanted to fight it out. The barn was set afire and one of the cavalry men, Boston Corbett, got orders from the Lord, countermanding those of his superior office, not to shoot Booth.

The order had gone out not to shoot Booth and Corbett shot, saying that the Lord had told him to in the beginning, found out that wasn't too good and finally said that he thought Booth was going to shoot one of the officers and he got away with that.

Booth was dragged from the barn and died about five hours later. His body was thrown in a saddle blanket and transported in a ramshackle old wagon back to the Potomac, where accompanied by Herold in irons, it was loaded on a steamer and taken to Washington.

Now, let's leave the matter of identification until I have told you more about my pursuit of John Wilkes Booth, or perhaps I should say, my pursuit of several John Wilkes Booths, in 1920 and 1921. I had obtained of course all the material I could on the assassination from the Detroit Public Library and it convinced me that it would be an easy job to substantiate Bates' thesis that Booth had escaped. Bates was a lawyer yet in his teens in Granbury, Hood County, Texas, according to his own story. He was retained sometime between 1872 and 1878 by a saloon keeper by the name of John St. Helen who was having trouble with his license. At a later date, according to Bates, St. Helen became quite ill and thinking he was going to die, confessed to Bates that he was none other than John Wilkes Booth. He told Bates how he had plotted with Andrew Johnson, Vice President of the United States, to assassinate Lincoln, so that Johnson could become president. He described how he escaped from Washington, finally made his way to Mexico and then up into Texas. Mr. Bates published a tintype which he said St. Helen gave him at the time of his confession. This would establish his identity when compared with pictures of Booth. According to Bates, St. Helen left Granberry

around 1878 and settled in Leadville, Colorado and founded a local order which later became the Leadville Elks Lodge and his picture hung in the lodge. Bates said at the time of this confession he did not believe St. Helen's confession, made no notes of it and didn't attempt to put it on paper until he wrote his book between 1903 and 1907.

Well, I went to Granbury and talked to a lot of people who apparently knew St. Helen much better than Bates. Their description of St. Helen didn't tally with his. For instance, Bates described St. Helen as speaking at a meeting in a full, clear voice and using choice and eloquent language. A history of Hood County Texas published in 1895 describes St. Helen at some length. It says St. Helen had a serious impediment in his speech caused from asthma so that he could barely speak above a whisper. Bates claimed St. Helen had an income greater than that warranted by his business, spent much time in Bates' office reading Shakespeare's plays and reciting from them with great dramatic force. Throughout his book, Bates tried to show that the Booth family continually sent St. Helen remittances. Bates claimed that St. Helen was a man, and I quote from his book several paragraphs here: "Kind in disposition, careless of self, thoughtful of others, leading his own life in soliloquy, with revelry and the thoughts of the master mind in the past, was modest, unobtrusive and congenial, ever pleasant in association with me." Bates says he was was a social failure with all with whom he came in contact and yet he was rather a social autocrat than a social democrat. Except for the select few, he held all men to the strictest social etiquette

repelling all undue familiarity, refusing all overtures of social equality with even those of the better middle classes of men "whatever that means," but it was done in such a gentle and respectful way that no affront was taken, if such it could be called. It was more pleasant than otherwise, leaving the impression that he would be delighted to be on the most intimate terms with the other, but as there is nothing common between us more than a respectful speaking relation, it is an impossibility.

Thus he made friends while he drew the social lines and professed all unconsciousness of his own superiority as an entertainer." Bates continues his description of this man St. Helen. This is a statement from Mr. Bates book. "The hours of our social life were pleasantly spent, not by riotous living, but by amusing games of cards, recitations and readings by St. Helen which were always a great treat and which he himself seemed to enjoy as did his friends."

Continuing Mr. Bates' description. "St. Helen often admitted that in his younger days, he sometimes drank to excess of strong whiskeys, wines, etc., or concoctions of brandy and cordials, but during our associations, I never knew of his taking strong drink of any character, nor did he use tobacco in any form and in the absence of these habits, and tastes, we were entirely congenial, as I myself had never cultivated appetites of this character. We were also lovers of literature of the same class, as well as music and the fine arts and matters pertaining to the stage. We enjoyed the gossip of the stage and the people of the stage came in for a large share of our attention, especially St. Helen's.

He talked much of what he called the old and new school of acting, with which I became conversant, which greatly pleased St. Helen. He frequently made reference to me as his trained associate, while he would explain that we became congenial by constant association linked together by the common mother, kindred thoughts, the off-spring of blended character."

Now let's look at the sworn statements made to me by those who really knew St., as they called him. A. P. Gordon, for whom St. Helen worked for about a year before going into business for himself, said "St. Helen kept away from public meetings and crowds and never to my knowledge, took part in any plays or entertainments. He never got dramatic unless warmed up with whiskey. He was inclined to quote poetry, both when sober and drunk, but I never ~~k~~ saw him read any book, or have any in his possession. He was considered a very wicked man and always went around with a pistol and knife. I do not remember that St. Helen and Phineas Bates were ever very well acquainted, do not think it could have been possible due to their difference in age and character. Bates was just a young, green kid and St. Helen was a hard man of the world of at least 40. St. Helen did not room here at Granbury in his saloon at night unless he was gambling all night which he often did."

Incidentally, this confession was supposed to have taken place in a room back of this saloon.

"Occasionally he slept outside back of his saloon in a wagon and claimed that he could breath better out in the open."

Frank Gaston, editor of the Granbury News said, "I Was at Granbury News said, " I was at Grandbury during the time that St. Helen was here.

I was in his saloon several times, and once or twice I was also in
his place at Glen Rose, where St. Helen first had a saloon for several
months. St. Helen was a typical desperado. He had a quick eye and
sometimes his eyes were rather wild looking. No one around here at
that time thought St. Helen was so strange and different, but of course,
many after they heard that he might be John Wilkes Booth, thought him
quite different."

George W. Wright, another resident said, "I knew St. Helen quite
well while he was here in Granbury. While I remember him quoting
poetry, I do not remember his ever making fine speeches. This would
have been impossible anyway, on account of his throat."

E. L. Nott declared, "He, St. Helen, was particularly a good
friend of John Reed or Green who made most of his living by gambling.
I've heard A. S. McCameron, County Clerk at the time, say many times,
'St. Helen and Reed are rascals. St. Helen drank a lot and was awfully
drunk several times and could hardly get around. He and Bill McDonald
were close friends. In fact, I think it was McDonald who brought
St. Helen to Granbury in the first place. McDonald was a drinking
and fighting man who got drunk frequently and was quite handy with a
knife. He cut John Green up pretty badly. St. Helen once started a
fight in my place of business, with a half-breed indian by the name of
Salvage. St. Helen came in half-drunk and in a violent, vicious mood.
Just how the fight started, I do not know, but the first think I saw
was Salvage on the floor with Saint on top of him. Bill McDonald was in
the saloon and ran up with a knife to aid St. Helen. I grabbed Bill and

pushed him out the front door. When I turned, I saw St. Helen going out the back door and found Salvage back of the counter with a bloody knife. He had cut St. Helen across the back of the neck, opening the muscles, which left a bad scar."

This story also is told in the history published of Hood County, Texas, published in 1895.

There were a number of other people in Granbury, who had known St. Helen and were greatly amused by Bates description of the man. Their stories all followed the tenor of the statements I have just quoted. About the only agreement with St. Helen's alleged confession was that Booth killed Lincoln and got out of Washington with a broken leg accompanied by David Herold. Bates quotes St. Helen's description of how he broke his leg. "As I fired," Quoting St. Helen's confession as reported by Bates, "As I fire, the same instant I leaped from the box to the stage. My right spur entangled in something on the drapery on the box, which caused me to miss my aim of location on the stage and threw my shin bone against the edge of the stage, which fractured my right shin bone about six or eight inches above the ankle."

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Mr. Oldright who used to be in charge of the Ford Museum in the theatre, and used to have his own museum in Washington, and I measured the position of the box and we couldn't imagine how he could hit his leg on the edge of the stage because he jumped towards the stage and was over the stage when he jumped. Remember, of course, that Bates was

quoting St. Helen's statement, "my right shin," and it was the left boot that the doctor cut off.

Mr. Bates says that at this point, exposing his shin, called attention to what seemed to be an inch or two of what of uneven surface on the shin bone. "This I did not notice closely, but actually, it appeared to have been a wound or fracture."

As I just said, remember it was the left boot, and the break was about two inches above the instep according to Dr. Mudd.

Bates quotes St. Helen as saying he and Herold arrived in Washington, according to the St. Helen confession, arrived in Washington, from southern Maryland at 2 in the afternoon on the day of the assassination. Booth as we have seen, had been in Washington for several days, and was accounted for in the city, almost hourly on the 11th. The claim that Andrew Johnson was back of the assassination developed out of retaliatory statements made by southern leaders in the weeks immediately following Lincoln's death. The government claimed that the assassination had been plotted by Jefferson Davis and others. The retort was, who had anything to gain by Lincoln's assassination. Andrew Johnson, of course. Many of Johnson's enemies in the North were glad to further the accusation especially at the time of the impeachment trial, but they never could make it stick. The Saint, in his alleged confession, said he escaped from the Garrett place during the afternoon, before the Federal troops arrived and that someone else was shot in the barn. He thought it was probably a man by the name of Ruddy who worked for Col. Cox, and who, according to St. Helen accompanied Booth and Herold

on their flight across the Potomac and to the Rappahanock River, but was sent back for papers Booth had lost. By the time of the Saint's confession, it was well known in southern Maryland that Cox's overseer, Franklin Robby had looked after Booth and Herold while they were hidden in the S Swamp, but did not accompany them on in their flight. I took statements from various people who knew Franklin Robby up until his death in 1896 and the same people had never heard of anyone in that vicinity by the name of Ruddy.

When Robby died, his obituary published in the Maryland Independent, December 25, 1896, told of his part in taking care of Booth and Herold.

Bates quoted St. Helen as saying he left from the Garrett place on April 23rd. Testimony of Capt. Jeff, the Garretts and others was to the effect that Booth did not arrive at the Garretts until April 24th.

Whoever St. Helen may have been, his statements as quoted by Bates, 30 some years later don't agree with the facts and Mr. Bates' description of the man doesn't agree with others who knew the Saint better.

From Texas I went to Leadville, Colorado, where, if you remember, Bates said the Saint headed when he left Granbury in 1878. Incidentally, the others all claimed that they thought he had left earlier than that, probably around 1875. That makes no difference as far as the story is concerned.

I showed old residents in Leadville copies of pictures of Booth and of St. Helen tin type. No one remembered anyone in particular who looked like either one of them. I was quite startled when I showed these pictures to an undertaker and he had been in the business in Leadville since the middle 70's.

I said, "Do you know anyone who looked like these fellows?"

He said, "Yes," and after a little hesitation continued. "Yes, I buried a hundred of them." These wide flowing mustaches, etc., were quite common at that time.

Well, there's the story and as far as the story of St. Helen or Booth founding the Elks of Leadville, his picture was on the wall and I was surprised when I visited the Elks and saw the painting of the founder of the "Jolly Corps" which later became the lodge. The picture was that of an actor, who somewhat resembled John Wilkes Booth and curiously, he had been an acquaintance of Booth's. His name however, was Charles Vincent, and he was too well known by that name while Booth was still alive to make the resemblance of any consequence.

In 1903, another so-called Booth came into the news. He was a house painter by the name of David E. George. He committed suicide in Enid, Oklahoma. In Bates' book, George made a confession that he was John Wilkes Booth. Bates claimed that he was notified of George's death as a result of a letter addressed to Bates, found in George's effects. This was merely an attempt to support the claim that John St. Helen and Deavid E. George were one and the same person. I went to Enid. This is what I learned.

I learned that George when he committed suicide, made no death bed confession. I took the statement of Lee Boyd, another roomer at the hotel where George, groaning in pain, notified the office to get a doctor, helped break open the door, and with Dr. Field, remained with George until he died. Both of these men said that George was too far gone even to talk. Bates, however, in his book, added to that, an

affidavit given by the manager and the clerk at the hotel by writing over the seal after it was signed, to make it appear that George took poison on the night of January 13th and died early in the morning of the 14th after making a long confession. Unfortunately for Mr. Bates, Erid afternoon newspapers of the 13th had already reported Mr. George's suicide that morning and the transfer of the body of the local undertaking establishment, operated by a former New York Sun reporter by the name of Peniman and his embalmer, W. J. Ryan.

You remember the old story about Mark Twain who said the report of his death was greatly exaggerated? Well, the wife of the local Methodist pastor, Mrs. E. C. Harper, read in the afternoon papers of the 13th about Mr. George's suicide. She decided to visit the undertaking establishment to see if it was the same Mr. George who had lived three years previously in a boarding house in El Reno, Oklahoma, where Mrs. Harper then unmarried also boarded, while teaching school. According to Mrs. Harper she identified the body and told Mr. Feniman that David George had once been quite ill and confessed to her that he was none other than John Wilkes Booth and told her a long story which agreed at least in one particular with St. Helen's. They both had killed Lincoln.

George claimed he had escaped from Washington and hidden in Jerusalem and had been painting there, painting scenery, etc. After spending a number of years there, he had come to the southwest. Now it happens that Peniman and Ryan and had invented a new embalming fluid. They were sure they had discovered the secret of the ancient Egyptians. Peniman, who was a salesman for the National Casket Company at Columbus, Ohio when I located him in 1920 said, "Since George didn't have any money,

only a few pennies in his pocket and apparently no relatives who were interested in paying the undertaker's bill, we decided to try out the fluid on him, since there would be no one to make any objections. When we learned that he had confessed to being John Wilkes Booth, my newspaper sense then told me here was a grand chance to advertise the fluid." He immediately called in the local press to hear the story and laughingly admitted to me that he made it as good as he could.

Bates in his book claims that David George did very little house painting, had a lot more money than he could ever have made and must have received help from the Booth family. During the three years of his traceable life in El Reno, Oklahoma, George had painted a great many houses. I talked to people for whom he painted and one hardware man from whom he bought paint. George was slow paying and those who knew him best said he could never have had more money than he earned. He borrowed small sums from friends and was in debt when he died. He was known as a drunkard and a morphine addict. Incidentally, his handwriting, even with the wildest imagination could not be that of John Wilkes Booth.

I traced Mrs. Harper from Enid, Oklahoma to Amarillo, Texas and called on her there. She was now Mrs. Young. She told me things which she claimed she had also told Mr. Bates which he would not use because they didn't support his thesis. The story of George's suicide and alleged confession was picked up by the Press Association in 1903 and carried all over the country, all over the world, as a matter of fact.

A woman who said her name was Laura Ida Booth showed up in Enid. She identified the body as that of her father, John Wilkes Booth. She faded out of the picture however, when she learned that George had not

left the fortune in oil land that had been reported.

Bates claimed the letter that George had left for him was stolen from George's effects before Mr. Bates arrived in Enid. He said this letter must have been the basis for a telegram received by him on January 17th, asking him to come to Enid and identify the body. When I questioned Mr. Bates about the so-called telegram, he said it also had been lost. According to Bates, he started from Memphis for Enid on January 17th, but did not arrive until six days later due to washouts on the Frisco system. A Check with both railroad systems, the Frisco and Rock Island, covering the period from January 15th to 25th, 1903, failed to disclose washouts on either.

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Peniman, the Enid undertaker said, "Bates read of George's death in the newspapers and wired me to see if he could see the body if he came to Enid. When Bates arrived, he identified the body as his old friend, John St. Helen, John Wilkes Booth."

As a matter of fact, the Memphis Commercial Appeal had published in the Sunday edition on the 18th, the day after Bates said he had left Memphis, had published quite a long story about the story of the confession that George had supposedly given to Mrs. Harper. Peniman wrote me, "I was never able to see any striking resemblance between the body and the tintype. In fact Bates asked me to do all I could to make the body look like the picture and so we combed the hair and mustache accordingly. As to any real substantial evidence offered to prove D. E. George was John Wilkes Booth," and I am quoting Peniman, I guess you have examined all the real positive proof Mr. Bates has in stock at this time and have the ability to weigh its value. Bates is the only man who

ever tried to convince me as to the real identity of this George and he probably used the same selling talk that he used on you. It's good dope, but it doesn't carry.

William J. Ryan embalmed the body of George at the Peniman establish-
ment and did such a good job that the body was still in fair condition in
1920, although looking very much like an egyptian mummy? Peniman kept the
body for eight years and then sold his business and gave Mr. George to
Mr. Bates. Most of the time between 1920 and 1926, it lay in state in
Bates' garage. Part time it was on exhibit in the southwest at street
shows. "Ten Cents a Look, Ladies and Gentlemen! "

Ryan said he never believed it was the body of John Wilkes Booth,
for the eyes were blue or blue-gray and John Wilkes Booth had black eyes.
John St. Helen also had black eyes.

Mrs. Anstein, with whom George roomed for some time in El Reno stated
that his eyes were either dark blue or brown, but not black. Mrs. Harper,
Mrs. Young she was then, said that George had very large deep blue eyes.
Of course, according to Bates, George had broken his right leg. Ryan, who
embalmed the body, could find no trace of a break on either leg.

Well, I tried hard to establish some connection between St. Helen and
George, but there was never able to do so. Had I accomplished this, it
would not have proved they were John Wilkes Booth. There were many other
minor points in Bates' claims that I checked in the southwest, Chicago
and Washington D. C., but we haven't time to cover those tonight. I went
to Washington, Maryland, Virginia, went over the Booth trail starting with
the theatre and ending up at the Garrett place. I did this and then settled
down for a long stay in the Congressional Library. I felt I could under-

stand what happened much better if I became steeped in the everyday history of the period. I read two dailies, the National Intelligencer and the Washington Star from August, 1864 to August, 1865. I scanned them, I probably should say, and then read and made a note of anything that seemed to pertain to life in Washington. I wanted to get the background. As a matter of fact, I used to get out of the Congressional Library at night about nine o'clock, having been there all day and used to go out and get a glass of milk and a sandwich at noon and maybe then again in the evening for a couple of minutes and then back. I'd get out of there at night sometimes and I was surprised to see automobiles. I was living back in 1865. I found the advertising of these publications about as interesting as the news items. But I wanted to find, and believe me, I think you people who have done any research know this; you cannot judge the things that happened back at that time, you can't judge them in the light of what we know today.

Take this matter of military intelligence and it was just child's play. You laugh when you read some of the stories about Confederate intelligence in Washington. They ran free all over Washington any time they wanted to, and for instance, that last year, people could come up from the southern neck, down in Dr. Mudd's territory, come up and drive into Washington. They didn't question them. They didn't need pass words. They had no trouble at all to get out of Washington going south that way. They had a little more trouble getting in sometimes, but in those last weeks at least, Mr. Lincoln himself said; he wrote a note, "No more passes are needed to go to Richmond." You didn't even have to have a pass. That was in his own hand writing.

There was a lot of material on the assassination in the Congressional Library which was not available in Detroit. Well there I ran into several John Wilkes Booths.

The one that best fitted the descriptions and actions of Booth was the Reverend James Blascoe Armstrong, Episcopal clergyman in Atlanta, Georgia, who many in his congregation in the '80's said was John Wilkes Booth. It even came to the point where he was tried by a clerical court on a morals charge. One of the church court asked him, "Are you John Wilkes Booth?"

Dr. Armstrong said, "I'm not being tried on that charge and refuse to answer." I don't know whether he stood on his constitutional rights or not, as they do these days.

Dr. Armstrong knew of the facial resemblance to Booth, was rather vain in his dramatic powers and did nothing to discourage the belief that he was the actor assassin. Dr. Armstrong's taste was for the stage rather than the ministry. He took a deep interest in amateur theatricals and his favorite plays were Shakespearian. Apparently they read a lot more Shakespeare in those days than they do now. It is said that once when Edwin Booth visited Atlanta, Dr. Armstrong occupied a stage box in the Opera House and that Edwin Booth was so startled by Dr. Armstrong's likeness to his brother, that he sought out Armstrong after the performance. Dr. Armstrong died in 1891.

The Armstrong myth spread until it was finally and thoroughly investigated by the New York Herald before the Herald and Tribune joined up. The results published in its issue of April 26, 1903 are rather interesting. The New York Herald traced Armstrong from his birth in Ireland to the time

of his death and found that when he prepared for the ministry at Xenia College in Xenia, Ohio in the late '50's , he was mistaken for the late John Wilkes Booth. His first charge was not very far over the Michigan State line at Sidney, Ohio. The president of the college at Xenia was quoted by the New York Herald as saying, "Armstrong was somewhat lame, walked with a cane, but had a very handsome and attractive face. He closely resembled John Wilkes Booth and he was acutally mistaken for the actor and one or more papers in the country ? ? for Booth. He was gifted as an orator and clear and keen in intellect, but erratic and opinionated, as I knew in 1862."

I also found there were other John Wilkes Booths who had killed Lincoln and then escaped. There was a schoolteacher in northern Kentucky, ? . He lived his life as "Happy Jack", a cobbler in New Orleans.

A sea captain claimed he had escaped from Washington in a large trunk and was hidden away on the island of Ceylon. Another story was to the effect that he lived out a very successful life as Enos, the great South American actor and magician. ?

I suppose there will always be someone who will believe these escapes and maybe succeeding generations will again take the trail, say in 1965, the centennial of the assassination. Bates kept promising to bring to Dearborn, documents, stories and letters which he maintained would sustain his claim. He always had some excuse for not doing so, and finally I went to Memphis. I soon learned why he didn't care to have me study his material. It consisted mostly of letters from people who had read his book or had seen the mummy of David George. These people asked questions or told him he must be right for his cousin had said he was sure John

Wilkes Booth was never captured. Bates' several sworn statements, which he either had altered or misquoted in his book; his files also contained magazine articles about the assassination and a quantity of newspaper clippings dated after George's suicide in 1903. Bates quoted these newspapers by name in his book to support his claims.

His [?]trick file disclosed that the quotations were from interviews he himself had given. That sure proved everything.

Now as to the identification of the man shot in Garrett's tobacco barn April 26, 1865. He was lame and the man who came to their place was a man who was shot the Garrett's testified. In 1921, I interviewed W. H. Garrett, one of the sons who was present at the farm. Yes, he had read Bates' book and thought it was a great hoax. The man had in his pockets, the man who was shot in the barn, a story in which the actor tried to justify his actions, pictures of actress friends, his compass, his knife and a bill of exchange on a Montreal Bank made payable to John Wilkes Booth. On his hand was tattooed his initials, "J.W.B." Taken from his other shirt was a jeweled pin which substituted for a lost button. On this was engraved "D. B. to J. B." "D. B." was Dan Bryant, an actor friend who became known as the father of the minstrel show.

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Col. Condor of the Secret Service who was present at the barn testified he had seen Booth in Washington and recognized the man [?] Baker and Daugherty, the who was killed as the same. Condor,

three officers of the pursuing party were carrying pictures of Booth for identification and while still at the Garrett place, compared them with the man who was shot. The man acted in the approved melodramatic manner and willing to die rather than be captured. When Herold wanted to surrender, the man said to him, "You damn coward, will you leave me now! Go, go, I would not have you stay with me."

Boston Corbett the sergeant who shot the man in the barn said, "When Herold spoke of Booth, he called him Boyd and told us he had first met him three days before. Nevertheless on the way to Washington, he spoke of Booth by his real name."

Beginning at the Seraph Tavern, Booth had used the name of Boyd at a number of places where he and Herold had stopped. But after the man was dragged from the burning barn, he asked if Jeff had betrayed him. Who but Booth could have asked this question.

When the body arrived in Washington, an autopsy was held. Dr. Maywood had removed a tumor sometime previously from Booth's neck and said if it were the actor's body, there would be a scar upon the muscle of the left side of his neck three inches below the ear. The examination of the body disclosed the scar as described. Surgeon-General Barnes found that the small bone on the body's left leg was badly fractured. One of the smaller arteries was ruptured and the leg was badly swollen.

Charles Dawson, chief clerk of the National Hotel where Booth lived when in Washington, identified the body with the tattooed initials

on the left hand. Dawson testified at the conspiracy trial that he had frequently observed the letters on Booth's hand while he was signing the register and on one occasion had said, "Booth what a fool you were to disfigure that pretty hand in such a way."

From 1867 to 1869, Edwin Booth went to a lot of trouble to procure the body of John Wilkes for burial in the Booth family plot in the Green Mountain Cemetary at Baltimore.

I was finally turned over to the family on February 15th, 1869. John Wilkes' dentist was called in and identified the body from fillings he had put in sometime before the death of Booth.

I only hope I'm as well identified for insurance purposes when I quit this mundane sphere.

What became of David George's body? Well, Bates died in 1926 after the publication in 1925 of my series of articles, covering the assassination and the multiplicity of Booths. Mrs. Bates wrote Henry Ford that I had killed her husband. I learned later that she had sold David George to some Chicago woman for \$1,000 and that a group of Chicago doctors had dissected it. A newspaper story said that a signet ring was found in the stomach with an initial that looked like "B". I do not know whether that was for Booth, Bates or Black -- mail.