

THE MURDER OF LINCOLN-THE LAST DAYS OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH

3-1

To The Editor of the New York Herald:

I saw it stated in a Washington paper, upon the presentation of my petition by Hon. John T. Lewis, to Congress for payment for my losses sustained in the burning of my tobacco house and contents by the orders of Col. Conger, who commanded the forces that were endeavoring to capture J. Wilkes Booth and D. C. Harold, in April 1865, "that it would be recollected that Booth, and Harold were concealed in this house, and it had to be burned to capture them," leaving the inference, it appears to me that Booth and Harold were concealed in this house by me or some of my family. If this inference is intended to be made by the editor of said paper there is nothing more erroneous, and to set the matter right and to show that neither I nor any of my family intended in any way to conceal them, or was at all apprised or had any suspicion of who these men were, I will make a true statement of the whole transaction from the time that Booth was brought to my house to the time of his being shot by one of the soldiers when the house was on fire. On Monday, the 24th of April 1865, about 4 o'clock P. M. three men rode up to my yard, and when I went out to them I found they were all strangers to me. The one in front introduced himself as Captain Scott, he then introduced the others to me - one as Lieut. Ruggles and the other as his friend Mr. Boyd. He stated that Mr. Boyd was a wounded Confederate soldier; that he belonged to the former command of Gen. A. P. Hill, and that he was wounded before Petersburg just before the close of the war, that he and Lieut. Ruggles were going (as he expressed it) on a little scout towards Richmond, and asked me to keep and take care of his friend Boyd until the next Wednesday morning, as he was suffering too much to travel with them, and that they would call for him at that time.

As it had always been one principle of my religion "to entertain strangers, especially any that seemed to be suffering," I consented that he should remain, and that I would take as good care of him as I could. I did not promise this because he was a confederate soldier, but because he seemed to be suffering. I had before this administered to the wants of about twelve wounded federal soldiers, who had been captured and brought to my neighborhood in a suffering state, and it was comforting to my feelings to see the

THE MURDER OF LINCOLN - THE LAST DAYS OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH

gratitude expressed by them to me and to feel that I had helped to relieve the wants of some of my fellow-creatures. Never shall I forget this circumstance; it is graven deep upon my heart. This man, whom I and all my family looked upon as Mr Boyd, a wounded Confederate soldier, was taken at once into my house. He supped with my family, and slept that night in one of my upper rooms, in which my sons, John M and William H and two smaller children slept. He breakfasted with my family the next morning and remained in the house and yard, most of the time reclining upon the grass in the yard, my little children often being with him. He had very little to say and seemed to be suffering, we thought, from his wound. After breakfast that morning my eldest son, John M rode to a shoemaker's, about one mile from my house, to have his boots repaired, and while there he met with a gentleman of the neighborhood who had gotten by private means a newspaper from Richmond (there being no mails to our section), and this paper had in it an advertisement offering a large reward (\$150,000, I think) for the capture of Booth, the murderer of President Lincoln. After my son's return, and while at the dinner table, he spoke of having seen this paper containing the advertisement. This man, who was at the table, remarked that he would not have been surprised if half a million dollars had been offered, but that he had heard that the man that committed the act had been arrested between Baltimore and Philadelphia, and was now in Washington. He having before this told me that he was a native of Maryland, I then asked him if he had ever seen the man Booth who was charged with the offense. He said he had seen him once. He saw him in Richmond about the time of the John Brown raid. I asked him if he was an old or young man; he said he was rather a young man.

I had never heard of but one Booth as an actor, and thought it was Mr. Edwin Booth. My younger son, who was a mere youth, remarked, "I wish he could come this way, so that I might catch him and get this reward." He turned to him and said, "If he were to come out, would you inform against him?" My son, laughing, said he would like to have the money. The man talked all this coolly, and showed nothing like excitement upon the occasion, and caused no grounds of suspicion in any of our minds that

he was the man who had done the act. Some two or three hours after dinner, two men on horseback, with a third man riding behind one of them, rode up to my gate on the main road. The man who was riding behind one of them, rode up to my gate on the main road.