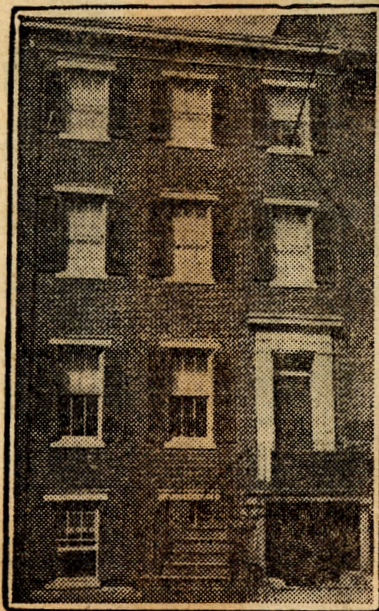
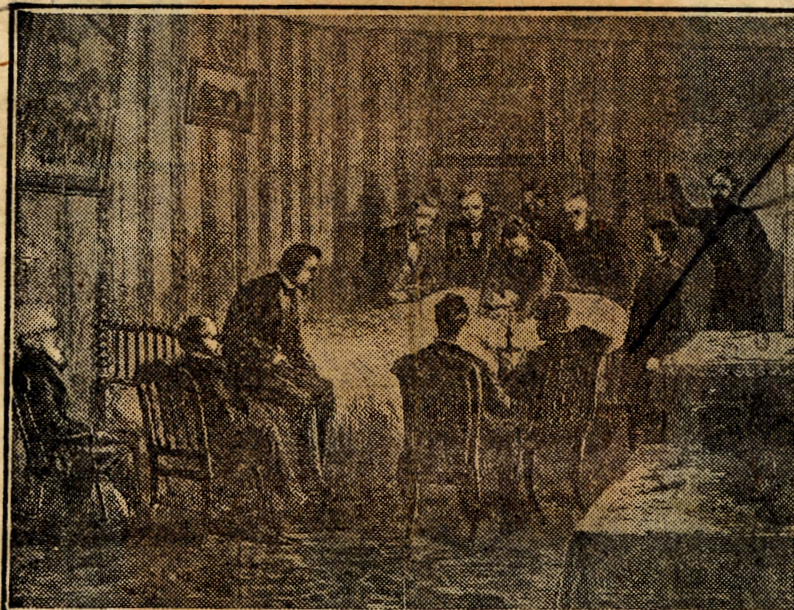


Boston, Mass.

HOW LINCOLN DIED TOLD BY WITNESS OF TRAGIC HOURS



(House photo by Clinedinst Service.)

The Deathbed Scene of Abraham Lincoln, from an Old Leslie's Weekly Cut; and the House Opposite Ford Theatre, Where He Died.

The following letter, now in the possession of Hadley H. Walch of Grand Rapids, Mich., son of the man to whom it was addressed, describes vividly the last hours of President Lincoln as witnessed by its writer, James Tanner, now residing in Washington. It was recently published in the American Historical

Review, and is here offered soon after the 60th anniversary of Lincoln's assassination:

WASHINGTON, April 17, 1865.

Friend Walch:

Of course, you must know as much as I do about the terrible events which have happened in this city during the past few days. I have nothing else to write about, so I will give you a few ideas about that, perhaps which you have not yet got from the papers.

Last Friday night a friend invited me to attend the theatre with him, which I did. I would have preferred the play at Ford's Theatre, where the President was shot, but my friend chose the play at Grover's, which was "Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp." While sitting there witnessing the play, about 10 o'clock or rather a little after, the entrance door was thrown open and a man exclaimed, "President Lincoln is assassinated in his private box at Ford's!"

Instantly all was excitement and a terrible rush commenced, and some one cried out: "Sit down, it is a ruse of the pickpockets!" The audience generally agreed to this, for the most of them sat down, and the play went on; soon, however, a gentleman came out from behind the scenes and informed us that the sad news was too true. We instantly dispersed.

GENERAL EXCITEMENT

On going out in the street we were horrified to learn that Mr. Seward had been attacked and severely injured while in bed at his

house. Myself and friend went up to Willard's, which is a short distance above Grover's, to learn what we could, but could learn nothing there. The people were terribly excited.

We then got on the cars and went down to Tenth street and up Tenth street to Ford's and to my boarding house. My boarding house is right opposite Ford's Theatre.

There was an immense throng there, very quiet yet very much excited; the street was crowded, and I only got across on account of my boarding there.

The President had been carried into the adjoining house (the Peterson house) to where I board; I went up to my room on the second floor and out on the balcony, which nearly overhangs the door of Mr. Peterson's house.

Members of the cabinet, the chief justice, Gens. Halleck, Meiggs, Augur and others were going in and out, all looking anxious and sorrow-stricken. By leaning over the railing I could learn from time to time his excellency's condition, and soon learned that there was no hope of him.

TAKES TESTIMONY

Soon they commenced taking testimony in the room adjoining where he lay, before Chief Justice Carter, and Gen. Halleck called for a reporter; no one was on hand, but one of the head clerks in our office, who boarded there, knew I could write shorthand and he told the general so, and he bade him call me; so he came to the door and

"At 6:45 Saturday morning I finished my notes and passed into the room where the President lay; it was very evident that he could not last long. There was no crowd in the room, which was very small, but I approached quite near the bed on which so much greatness lay, fast losing its hold on this world. The head of the bed was toward the door; at the head stood Capt. Robert Lincoln, weeping on the shoulder of Senator Sumner. Gen. Halleck stood just behind Robert Lincoln, and I stood just to the left of Gen. Halleck and between him and Gen. Meiggs. Secretary Stanton was there trying every way to be calm, and yet he was very much moved."

In these words, written shortly after the assassination of President Lincoln, James Tanner describes the last sorrowful hours of the martyr President. Mr. Tanner was pressed into service as a shorthand writer to take down the testimony concerning the shooting, before Chief Justice Carter,

in the very next room to that where the dying Emancipator lay.

Mr. Tanner's letter, given here in full, is a graphic and reliable narative of those dark hours at the nation's capital.

asked me to come down and report the testimony.

I went down and the general passed me in, as the house was strictly guarded, of course. I went into a room between the rear room and the front room. Mrs. Lincoln was in the front room weeping as though her heart would break. In the back room lay his excellency breathing hard, and with every breath a groan. In the room where I was were Gens. Halleck, Meiggs, Augur and others, all of the cabinet excepting Mr. Seward, Chief Justice Chase and Chief Justice Carter of the District of Columbia, Andrew Johnson, and many other distinguished men. A solemn silence pervaded the whole throng; it was a terrible moment. Never in my life was I surrounded by half so impressive circumstances.

Opposite me at the table where I sat writing sat Secretary Stanton writing dispatches to Gen. Dix and others and giving orders for the guarding of Ford's and the surrounding country. At the left of me was Judge Carter propounding the questions to the witnesses whose answers I was jotting down in Standard phonography. I was so excited when I commenced that I am afraid it did not much resemble Standard phonography or any other kind, but I could read it readily afterward, so what was the difference?

ENOUGH TO HANG BOOTH

In 15 minutes I had testimony enough down to hang Wilkes Booth, the assassin, higher than ever Haman hung.

I was writing shorthand for about an hour and a half, when I commenced transcribing it. I thought I had been writing about two hours, when I looked at the clock and it marked 4:30 A. M. I commenced writing about 12 M. I could not believe that it was so late, but my watch corroborated it. The surrounding circumstances had so engrossed my attention that I had not noticed the flight of time.

In the front room Mrs. Lincoln was uttering the most heartbroken exclamations all the night long. As she passed through the hall back to the parlor after she had taken leave of the President for the last time, as she went by my door I heard her moan, "O my God, and have I given my husband to die?" and I tell you I never heard so much agony in so few words.

The President was still alive, but sinking fast. He had been utterly unconscious from the time the shot struck him and remained so until he breathed his last.

At 6:45 Saturday morning I finished my notes and passed into the back room where the President lay. It was very evident that he could not last long. There was no crowd in the room, which was very small, but I approached quite near the bed on which so much greatness lay, fast losing its hold on this world. The head of the bed was toward the door; at the head stood Capt. Robert Lincoln, weeping on the shoulder of Senator Sumner. Gen. Halleck stood just behind Robert Lincoln, and I stood just to the left of Gen. Halleck and between him and Gen. Meiggs. Secretary Stanton was there trying every way to be calm, and yet he was very much moved. The utmost silence prevailed, broken only by the sound of strong men's sobs. It was a solemn time, I assure you. The President breathed heavily until a few minutes before he breathed his last; then his breath came easily and he passed off very quietly.

Very truly your friend,

JAMES TANNER.