

THE GOVERNMENT ACTS

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Chapter 7

THE GOVERNMENT ACTS.

What was occurring^w back in Washington during the spectacular flight of Booth and Herold? What was the government doing to capture the murderers of Abraham Lincoln?

The first attempt at organization for the pursuit and capture of the assassins was a special commission of three colonels formed in the early morning hours of the fifteenth to start an investigation. Hundreds of soldiers, policemen, and detectives were put on guard by the War Department at all possible avenues of escape. The Navy sent warships to patrol the Potomac and prevent the flight of the assassins by water.

By the time the President breathed his last, the lines about the city were so well established that had Booth and Herold been in Washington they would have found it difficult to escape.

Other than the crossing of the Navy Yard bridge, no trace could be found of the direction which the assassins had taken, although it was surmised they had gone toward lower Maryland and the Potomac.

On Sunday \$30,000 reward was offered for the capture of the fugitives. This was increased to \$100,000 by the War Department and handbill descriptions of Booth, Herold, Payne, and John Surratt were posted.

"Booth," said the handbill, "is 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, slender build, high forehead, black hair, black eyes, and wore a heavy black moustache, which there is some reason to believe has been shaved off."

Since the Booth myth makers of later years have accused the Government of laxity and inactivity in the search for the assassins, it is well that we examine the official records on this point. (1)

"Before the martyr-President had ceased to live, Secretary Stanton "directed a search for the recognized assassin, and an investigation into the circumstances connected with the perpetration of the bloody deed." (2)

At midnight in the rear parlor of the house where the President lay dying,

Mr. Stanton and David K. Carter, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, began the examination of witnesses among whom were numbers of the play cast and theatre attendants, also others who were spectators of the play.

James Tanner, of the Ordnance Bureau of the War Department, who took the shorthand notes for Mr. Stanton, states: "Through all the testimony given by those who had been in Ford's Theatre that night, there was an undertone of horror which held the witnesses back from positively identifying the assassin as Booth. Said Harry Hawk, "To the best of my belief it was Mr. John Wilkes Booth, but I will not be positive," and so it went through the testimony of others, but the sum total left no doubt as to the identity of the assassin." (3)

Tanner states that in the rear parlor where he was, "were Generals Halleck, Meiggs, Augur and others, all of the cabinet except Mr. Seward, Chief Justice Chase, and Chief Justice Carter of the District of Columbia, Andrew Johnson and many other distinguished men."

"Opposite me at the table where I sat writing," states Tanner, "sat Secretary Stanton writing dispatches to General 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."

"Our task," says Tanner, "was interrupted very many times during the night, sometimes by reports or dispatches for Secretary Stanton but more often by him for the purpose of issuing orders calculated to enmesh Booth in his flight. 'Guard the Potomac from the City down,' was his repeated direction. 'He will try to get South.' Many dispatches were sent from that table before morning, some to General Dix at New York, others to Chicago, Philadelphia, etc."

In addition to those who recognized the assassin as he leaped from the President's box, there was his hat and spur. The newspapers of the 15th stated: "The hat was picked up in the President's box, and has been identified by parties to whom it has been shown as the one belonging to the suspected man. The spur was dropped

upon the stage, and that also has been identified as the one procured at a stable where the same man hired a horse in the evening." It was at first thought that Booth had committed both deeds, the assassination of President Lincoln and the attempt on Mr. Seward's life, by disguising himself, but this was soon exploded. (4)

President Lincoln was shot about 10:30 p.m.; before midnight the War Department was actively engaged in instructing its various branches to be on the lookout for the assassins.

Colonel Thompson, Commanding at Darnestown about fifteen miles northwest of Washington and near the Potomac was notified:-

"Colonel: An attempt has been made to assassinate President Lincoln and Secretary Seward. The assassins are supposed to have escaped toward Maryland. Send all your available people at once to scout north of Washington and arrest all suspicious persons." (5)

Colonel Thompson answered: "Sir: I have the honor to report that your dispatch was received last evening at 11.30, directing search to be made for assassins. At 12 o'clock three squadrons were on the different roads. One squadron was directed to search the country between the telegraph road and the river as far down as Tennallytown. Another moved on the telegraph road, with instructions to scour well to the left, and the third took the road to Barnesville and will make a wide circuit toward Fredrick. Extreme vigilance has been enjoined on the whole line of the river." (6)

From Muddy Branch at 1.15 a.m. another message was received from ^{Thompson.} him:

"I have sent three squadrons on as many different roads. The country will be thoroughly scoured before morning. Will report result." (7)

General Augur to General Slough, Commanding, Alexandria: "Attempts have been made upon the lives of Mr. Lincoln and Secretary Seward. It is not known in which direction the assassin has escaped. Have all your police and detectives out, and see that no one leaves the city until further orders." (8)

And to Colonel Sewall, Annapolis: "Permit no boats to leave Annapolis until further orders. Arrest all suspicious persons. No trains will be allowed to pass over the road. Suppress any outbreak. There will undoubtedly be great excitement over the assassination of the President and Secretary of State." (9)

General Meigs to General Augur:- "The Secretary directs that the troops turn out; the guards be doubled; the forts be alert; guns manned; special vigilance and guards about the Capitol Prison. I advise, if your men are not sufficiently numerous, call upon General Rucker for assistance in furnishing guards." (10)

Among the first messages sent by Secretary Stanton was one to Gen. Grant -"on night train to Burlington" telling him of the assassination and requesting his return to Washington. (11) Within a few minutes General Grant again was wired, this time with the suggestion that he keep a close watch on all persons who should come near him and ~~to~~ have an extra engine sent in front of his return train to guard against anything being on the track.

General Hardie, ^{sent this message} to the Agent Military Railroad, Alexandria, 12.20 a.m.: "It is reported that the assassin of the President has gone out hence to Alexandria, thence on train to Fairfax. Stop all trains in that direction. Apply to military commander at Alexandria for guard to arrest all persons on train or on the road not known. By order of the Secretary of War." (12)

Among many ^{dispatches} sent at 1 a.m. are the three following:

"General Hancock,
" Commanding Middle Military Division, Winchester, Virginia: "The

"The President, Mr. Lincoln, was assassinated at Ford's Theatre last evening and is now dying. The Secretary of State, Mr. Seward, was also stabbed in his bed, and is not expected to recover. I shall not be able to send my cavalry as you ordered, as I wish to use them in scouring the country for the assassins." (13)

General Augur to General Gamble, Commanding at Fairfax Court-House, a few miles south west of Washington:- "The President, Mr. Lincoln, was shot at Ford's Theatre last night and is now dying. Mr. Seward was stabbed in bed and is

not expected to recover. The expedition for to-morrow will have to be abandoned, as I wish you at daylight to take your cavalry and scatter it along the river toward Leesburg to arrest and send in all suspicious persons; also along your whole line between it and Washington." (14)

This was followed with another message to Major Waite, at Fairfax Station, near Fairfax Court House, "An attempt has been made to assassinate the President and Secretary of State. Order General Gamble to allow no one to pass his lines. To arrest every one who attempts. To cover the country with patrols between Fairfax and the river. No one arrested to be released until further orders." (15)

The Secretary of War to John H. Kennedy, Chief of Police, New York: "Send here immediately three or four of your best detectives to investigate the facts as to the assassination of the President and Secretary Seward. They are still alive, but the President's case is hopeless, and that of Mr. Seward nearly the same." (16)

Detailed wires were sent to General Dix, New York City at 1:30 a.m. and 3 a.m. (17)

In the 3 a.m. dispatch, Secretary Stanton stated: "Every exertion has been made to prevent the escape of the murderer. His horse has been found on the road near Washington. (18)

At 2 a.m. General Ord at Richmond was advised of the assassination and ordered to arrest all persons who entered his lines by water or land. (19)

The Generals in charge of the Departments at Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York were ordered to arrest all persons who arrived from Washington on trains that night and to hold them for further orders. (20)

General Morris at Baltimore took quick action, for he answered at 2:25 a.m.: "Your dispatch received. Prompt measures will be taken. All the roads are now guarded.

An hour later Secretary Stanton, now sure that Booth was the assassin, gave orders to rush immediately the following message to General Morris: "Make immediate arrangements for guarding thoroughly every avenue leading into Baltimore,

and if possible arrest J. Wilkes Booth, the murderer of President Lincoln. You will acknowledge the receipt of this telegram, giving time, &c." (21)

At 2.15 a.m. General Halleck telegraphed General Barnes at Point Lookout, Maryland, in St. Mary's County, where the Potomac empties into Chesapeake Bay: "Stop all vessels going down the river and hold all persons on them till further orders. An attempt has been made to-night to assassinate the President and Secretary of State. Hold all persons leaving Washington." (22)

General Augur also instructed General Barnes to arrest every person found moving within his district who could not account for himself. (23)

To ^{the first of} these orders General Barnes replied later that morning:- "Your dispatch was received and communicated at once to the gun-boats, and the river and bay are closely watched. The District of Saint Mary's is being thoroughly patrolled by mounted men." (24)

At 4:10 ^{A.m.} ~~that morning~~ a message to General Dix stated, "It is now ascertained with reasonable certainty that two assassins were engaged in the horrible crime, Wilkes Booth being the one that shot the President, and ^{the} other a companion of his whose name is not known, but whose description is so clear that he can hardly escape. It appears from a letter found in Booth's trunk that the murder was planned before the 4th of March, but fell through then because the accomplice backed out until 'Richmond could be heard from.'" (25)

Naturally the Police, as soon as the assassin was identified as John Wilkes Booth, searched his room at the National Hotel. They found it on the fourth floor and it had "a bare and desolate look." On the bureau, in a brown paper, was half a pound of tobacco, a clothes brush, a broken comb, and a pair of embroidered slippers. Scattered among the drawers were a shirt, some underwear, several pairs of stockings, a half bottle of hair oil, and an old concert programme. On the table lay several sheets of note paper, with a number of the Hotel envelopes. There was a pair of black pantaloons, marked "J. Wilkes Booth" on the fob pocket, also his trunk and a large black leather valise which sat on the floor near the trunk. By the valise

was a pair of unpolished boots. (26)

Daylight brought with it a gloomy dismal rain, but the dispatches still kept bearers on horseback and the telegraph wires busy.

General Slough, Military Governor at Alexandria, Virginia, ^{South of Washington,} due to the position of his command, was especially on the alert. At 4 a.m. he received from General Augur: a message which read:

"The murderer of the President is undoubtedly J. Wilkes Booth, the actor. The other party is a smooth-faced man, quite stout. You had better have a squad of cavalry sent down toward the Occoquan to intercept anything crossing the river. The fishermen along the river should be notified and kept on the lookout." (27)

An hour later General Slough answered:

"General: All of the orders received during the night from you have been obeyed, except the sending of cavalry toward the Occoquan, which will be done as soon as a sufficient number can be assembled. The river and shore from Alexandria to Washington are abundantly patrolled, and all are active and vigilant. A tug-boat will start soon to notify the fisheries." (28)

That morning General Slough began to have some trouble with people of consequence over the enforcement of General Augur's midnight message and wired:

"General: Is your order of 12.05 a.m. to me, to see that no one leaves the city until further orders, to be construed strictly? Is it intended to prevent persons from going to Washington by the ferry-boat, or well known persons elsewhere?" (29)

The answer was to permit the ferry-boats to resume their regular trips, "satisfying yourself that no improper persons are allowed to pass." (30)

^{In the early hours of the fifteenth,}
That morning, General Stevenson at Harper's Ferry received the following query: "Have any trains reached Harper's Ferry this morning? The general desires you to arrest all citizens or strangers making their way through your lines at any point. It is possible that the assassins may endeavor to escape south through your lines at some point." (31)

^{this}
That General ~~Stevenson~~ was losing no time is evidenced by his reply:
"I had given the instructions throughout the district before receiving your telegram. No trains have passed either way as yet." (32)

It was decided during the morning of the 15th that a reward might stimulate the search for Booth - and to the Commanders at New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore was telegraphed: "The major-general commanding this department is authorized to offer a reward of \$10,000 for the apprehension of the assassin of the President of the United States and the Secretary of State. Please communicate this to the police and detectives of your department."

By order of the Secretary of War at 9.40 a.m. the 15th, the following circular was issued to the army officers stationed along the Canadian ~~Border~~:-
"It is believed that the assassins of the President and Secretary Seward are attempting to escape to Canada. You will make a careful and thorough examination of all persons attempting to cross from the United States into Canada, and will arrest all suspicious persons. The most vigilant scrutiny on your part, and the force at your disposal, is demanded. A description of the parties supposed to be implicated in the murder will be telegraphed you today. But in the meantime be active in preventing the crossing of any suspicious persons." (33)

Soon after General Grant returned that morning, the following memo from Secretary Stanton was given to him:- "General: I beg to call your attention to the security of this city, and especially to the large number of rebel officers and privates, prisoners of war, and rebel refugees, and deserters that are among us, and ask you to see that adequate force and vigilance are employed. Directions were given Major-General Augur on this subject last night, and also instructions to look to the condition of the forts and defenses. Adequate provisions may have been made, but at the present deplorable juncture I feel it my duty to ask you to consider yourself specially charged with all matters pertaining to the security and defense of this national capital." (34)

General Ord at Richmond faced a rather delicate situation should he

attempt to literally carry out the orders he had received from Washington during the early morning hours. He appealed to General Grant: "Cipher dispatch directing certain parties to be arrested is received. The two citizens I have seen. They are old, nearly helpless, and I think incapable of harm. Lee and staff are in town among the paroled prisoners. Should I arrest them under the circumstances, I think the rebellion here would be reopened. I will risk my life that the present paroles will be kept, and if you will allow me to do so trust the people here who, I believe, are ignorant of the assassination, done, I think, by some insane Brutus with but few accomplices. Mr. Campbell and Hunter pressed me earnestly yesterday to send them to Washington to see the President. Would they have done so if guilty? Please answer." (35) General Grant wired him to use his own judgment. (36)

General Hancock at Winchester was also in a quandary with reference to ~~his~~ ^{the} ~~midnight~~ instructions. ^{sent him at midnight} On Saturday afternoon General Halleck again wired him from Washington: "The object of my telegram last night was to have all persons stopped who might leave Washington by cars or canal boats or otherwise. Of course, women and children and well-known loyal men would be immediately permitted to pursue their journey. Moreover, it was ^{not} intended to include persons coming toward Washington from the West, nor from such a direction as to leave no doubt that they were not in Washington last night. You will do everything in your power to detect the murderers and assassins." (37)

^{later} Years after the name of David D. Dana became mixed up with the Booth myths. For this reason any messages from him are of special interest. On Saturday he reported from Piscataway, Maryland to Capt. R. Chandler, Assistant Adjutant-General: "Sir: I have the honor to report that I arrived in this place at 7 a.m., and at once sent a man to Chapel Hill to notify the cavalry at that point of the murder of the President, with description of the parties who committed the deed. With the arrangements which have been made it is impossible for them to get across the river in this direction.

He added as a postscript: "I have reliable information that the person who murdered Secretary Seward is Boyce or Boyd, the man who killed Captain Watkins in Maryland. I think it without doubt true."

"D. D. DANA"

Captain Chandler forwarded Lieutenant Dana's report to Colonel King with the following indorsement: "Captain McGowan knows all about this Boyce or Boyd, and can tell you more than I can in regard to him. Lieutenant Dana is still on the search with cavalry, and is instructed to keep on until he finds somebody." (39)

It soon became evident that should the assassins be captured a prison both strong and inaccessible would be needed to protect them from being torn limb from limb by the angry populace. General Halleck ordered General Augur on Saturday that, "Should either of the murderers or assassins of last night be caught, put them in double irons and convey them, under a strong escort, to the commander of the navy-yard, who has orders to receive them and to confine them on a monitor to be anchored in the stream." (40)

And also that day
About the ~~same~~ time, Commodore J. B. Montgomery, of the Washington Navy-Yard, received the following from Gideon Wells, Secretary of the Navy, "If the military authorities arrest the murderer of the President and take him to the yard, put him on a monitor and anchor her in the stream, with strong guard on vessel, wharf, and in yard. Call upon commandant of Marine Corps for guard. Have vessel immediately prepared ready to receive him at any hour, day or night, with necessary instructions. He will be heavily ironed and so guarded as to prevent escape or injury to himself." (41) *the Secretary ordered* And Colonel Zeilin, Commandant Marine Corps at Washington ^{to} "Have extra strong and careful guard ready for special service, if called for by Commodore Montgomery." (42)

Rumors of the capture of the murderer were in circulation frequently during the day. Secretary Stanton, according to the Press dispatches, inclined to the belief that Booth still remained concealed in the city. Evidence was being taken all day at the headquarters of Superintendent Richards of the Police. The

dispatches that afternoon stated: "Of the guilt of Booth there has, since daylight, existed not the slightest doubt. He and his accomplices, if they have left the city at all, are supposed to have escaped across the Eastern Branch. Travel has been interrupted during the day, trains have been delayed here, in Baltimore, and at the Relay House. No one is permitted under any pretence to leave the city." (43)

A message from Baltimore on Saturday, claimed that word had just been received that "The assassin J. Wilkes Booth, had been captured near Fort Hastings", and there confined. "This city and the country between here and Washington," continued the dispatch, "is being searched for his immediate accomplice in the dark deed of crime." (44)

"The murderers have probably escaped across the Potomac to Mosby" was the supposition wired to the Press that afternoon. (45)

Saturday evening, Colonel Gamble at Fairfax Court House, South of Alexandria, complained that General Slough was carrying out his orders to the letter. "I have to report that General Slough has stopped all trains to Fairfax Station to-day, consequently no mail matter or dispatches have been received since yesterday. If this is continued it will be necessary for me to communicate with your headquarters daily by a cavalry escort. Please inform me. Eight hundred cavalrymen started early this morning, under Colonel Sweitzer and Clendenin to execute the last order received by telegram at 3.30 a.m., to arrest suspicious persons." (46)

Col. H.H. Wells reported at 8.10 p.m. from Alexandria; "I have cavalry along the river toward Occoquan, and have notified the fishermen and home guards to arrest any one not known to them found in their neighborhood. The pickets report all quiet to-day." (47)

Fear grew that as in the Baltimore assassination plot aimed at Mr. Lincoln in 1861, the murderers had planned on escaping to the sea. Saturday General Halleck had informed Generals Augur and Rucker: "All Government vessels with freight, but no passengers, will be permitted to leave Washington and Alexandria."

On Sunday afternoon, General Halleck further instructed General Barnes, at Point Lookout: "Freight vessels and transports and mail boats without passengers, except troops, officers, and persons well known, will be permitted to pass. They should be thoroughly inspected." (48) And that night General Meigs telegraphed Colonel Newport, Chief Quartermaster, Baltimore: "Send immediately to patrol and watch the west shore of the Chesapeake as far as Point Lookout for all the steamers in employment of this Department in Baltimore. Let a vessel watch particularly the mouth of the Patuxent River. Put three or four armed men on each tug or other steamer. Let them keep out of sight, and admit on board any persons desiring to come off from shore. Detain all such persons; overhaul all small vessels or boats, and detain them until examined. The murderers of the President and Secretary of State have, it is believed, gone southeast, and will perhaps attempt to escape by water to the Eastern Shore, or to board some vessel waiting for them, or some vessel going to sea. The Potomac will be patrolled by steamers from Washington. Report the sailing of each vessel and the orders given her. Let a suitable vessel cruise up and down the bay and keep up communication. The object is to catch the murderers if they attempt this way of escape. Vigilance and speed." (49)

On Sunday, the Secretary of the Navy ordered "Rear Admiral Porter, or the Senior Naval Officer at Hampton Roads: To prevent the escape of the assassins who killed the President and attempted the life of the Secretary of State, search every vessel that arrives down the bay. Permit no vessel to go to sea without such search, and arrest and send to Washington any suspicious persons." (50)

The War and Navy Departments were closely cooperating, for on Monday, in addition to ^{the} many earlier instructions he had given, Gideon Wells, Secretary of the Navy, ordered Commander F.A. Parker, U.S. Navy, Commanding Potomac Flotilla, Saint Inigoes, Md.: "Search all vessels going out of the river for the assassins; detain all suspicious persons; guard against all crossing of the river and touching of vessels or boats on the Virginia shore." (51) And the Commanding Officer of Naval Force, Hampton Roads, Va.: "Send any vessels that may be unemployed to

blockade Eastern shore of Virginia and Maryland coast from Point Lookout to Baltimore, reporting for further orders to senior officer of Potomac Flotilla between these points." (52)

Complying with the secretary's instructions, Commander Parker, ordered the Commanding Officer U.S. Steamship Banshee, Cherrystone, (Va.)^{to} "Blockade the Maryland shore from Patuxent River to Annapolis." (53)

Colonel J.L. Thompson, commanding at Darnestown, was notified, by Command of General Augur: "Have all canal boats searched at Seneca and at the mouth of the Monocacy, and arrest suspicious persons and such as cannot give a good account of themselves." (54)

On the 17th orders were issued to the Washington Post Office to unseal and examine all letters in the mails addressed to citizens of Richmond. (55) It was thought this might produce evidence implicating Confederate leaders.

Some indication of the tremendous efforts being made by the Government to capture Booth and Herold is given in a selection of a few dispatches for April 22nd, 23rd, and 24th. Major J.N. ^{M. Waite} White reported on Saturday the 22nd from Leonardtown, (Md.), "For the last forty-eight hours my cavalry have been scouring this country thoroughly in every direction. Can learn of no rebel bands. Officers report the driest scouting. Have had five parties out today in as many different directions. Have heard from all except the one scouting up and down the Patuxent on this side. Have also sent party of eighty to scout Calvert County. They will cross at Benedict in steamers." (56) And General Augur notified Captain Winship, Provost-Marshal at Alexandria: "When Booth was last heard from he was near Wicomico River, (Md.) It is feared he has crossed into Virginia. He had broken his leg and was on crutches. He had also shaved off his mustache. Let your cavalry know these particulars, and let them go down below Aquia and, if possible, connect with the cavalry I send down by boat tonight into Westmoreland County." (57)

General Augur had guessed correctly when he wrote that he feared Booth had crossed into Virginia. This had happened the night before. The capture of Dr. Mudd

and the story obtained from him with reference to Booth's lameness was indeed a valuable clue as we shall see later.

Gideon Wells, Secretary of the Navy, telegraphed on the 22nd to the Naval Station, Saint Inigoes, (Md.): "Booth was near Bryantown last Saturday, where Doctor Mudd set his ankle, which was broken by a fall from his horse. The utmost vigilance is necessary in the Potomac and Patuxent to prevent his escape. All boats should be searched for and destroyed, and a daily and nightly patrol established on both shores. Inform the people that more than \$100,000 is offered for him. Allow none of your boats to leave, except for search elsewhere." (58)

That same day General Augur sent two dispatches to Commander Parker at Saint Inigoes, the first of which read: "There is reason to believe that Booth and an accomplice are in the swamps about Adlen's Fresh, emptying into Wicomico River. He is evidently trying to cross into Virginia. Have you the Potomac well guarded about there and above? Fearing he may have already crossed, I wish to send a force of cavalry into Nomini Bay. Can I land horses there or in that vicinity, and with how much water? Please inform me at once." The second dispatch said, "There is no longer any doubt that Booth and an accomplice were near Bryantown on Saturday last, inquiring for Piney Church. He is very lame, having broken his leg, and was last seen on crutches. He was undoubtedly endeavoring to cross into Virginia. I am desired to request your most vigilant cooperation, by a rigid and active blockade of all the Potomac, to prevent his escape into Virginia. Will you please communicate this information to the tugs and other quartermasters' boats on duty guarding the river, and enjoin the greatest activity and watchfulness upon them?" (59)

On the next day, the 23rd, Secretary Wells notified Rear-Admiral Porter, commanding the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron: "Continue to exercise the utmost vigilance over all vessels departing from the limits of your command. Booth is endeavoring to escape by water. Send a gun-boat or some tugs to examine the shores and islands of the Eastern Shore of Virginia and all vessels in that direction, and arrest and seize all suspicious parties. If you have any tugs to

*Booth told Dr Mudd
#1, 12*

[This information also was obtained from Dr Mudd's files]

spare send them into the Potomac." (60)

Some of the many false clues received and followed by the War Department are indicated by the following dispatches received from General Barnes at Point Lookout, (Md.), April 23, 1865; "Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War.: I have just received the following dispatch from Captain Willauer, at Leonardtown:

"Sergeant Bagley, of the mounted detachment stationed Millstone Landing, informs me that J. Wilkes Booth was seen passing through Great Mills on foot about 9 o'clock this morning. He is dressed in woman's attire. The sergeant and his men are in pursuit. I will send all the cavalry I have out immediately. Everything shall be done that can be done to secure him. The citizens recognized him as he was passing through.

Signed "S.G. WILLAUER, Captain, Commanding."
General Barnes indorsed on this dispatch

"Great Mills is situated at the head of Saint Mary's River, about ten miles from Saint Inigoes and twenty from here."

~~JAMES BARNES, Brigadier-General~~
~~Commanding.~~"

~~"(Copy to General Augur, by order Secretary of War.)"~~

General Barnes also wired
~~"Point Lookout, April 23, 1865."~~

~~"Captain Nickerson, at~~

~~Saint Inigoes:~~

"I have received a dispatch stating that Booth was seen at Great Mills this morning dressed as a woman. Keep a sharp lookout on Saint Mary's River."

~~J. BARNES, Brigadier-General~~
~~Commanding.~~"

(61)

per above *is they*

~~General Barnes'~~ dispatch, when ~~it~~ reached the newspapers, brought such suggestions to Secretary Stanton as this letter, signed "Justice". "O, please, for the sake of the honor and safety of people in general, do pass a law punishable with death for either sex to wear the other's apparel." (62)

On April 24th, General Tarbert at Winchester, Virginia, telegraphed General Emory at Cumberland, (Md.):

"General: I have just received the following dispatch from General Hancock and send it to you, as I presume it was so intended:

'Notify all the subordinate commanders along the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and in West Virginia to the Kanawha that they must not relax their vigilance in reference to the murderers of President Lincoln. Booth has not been arrested and it is thought that he may attempt to escape in disguise as a woman or otherwise through that portion of the country.'" (63)

And about the time Booth and Herold were being hauled into Port Conway by Charley Lucas, the colored boy, S.H. Beckwith, a War Department telegrapher stationed at Port Tobacco, (Md.), wired Major Eckert:

"Have just met Major O'Beirne, whose force had arrested Doctor Mudd and Thompson. Mudd set Booth's left leg (fractured), furnished crutches, and helped him and Herold off. They have been tracked as far as the swamp near Bryantown, and under one theory it is possible they may still be concealed in swamp which leads from Bryantown to Allen's Fresh, or in neck of land between Wicomico and Potomac Rivers. Other evidence leads to the belief that they crossed from Swan Point to White Point, Va., on Sunday morning, April 16, about 9.30, in a small boat, also captured by Major O'Beirne. John M. Lloyd has been arrested, and virtually acknowledged complicity. I will continue with Major O'Beirne, in whom I have very great confidence. We propose first to thoroughly scour swamp and country today, and if unsuccessful and additional evidence will justify it, we then propose to cross with force into Virginia and follow up that trail as long as there is any hope. At all events we will keep moving, and if there is any chance you may rely upon our making most of it. Country here is being thoroughly scoured by infantry and cavalry." (64)

The net was tightening and had the colored man, ^{filled,} who from the bluffs of the Potomac saw Booth and Herold cross and then notified General L.C. Baker,

failed, these other clues also would have supplied the same information.

On the 26th, the day Booth and Herold were captured, J.L. McPhail, Provost-Marshall-General, State of Maryland, telegraphed Secretary Stanton from Baltimore:

"Sir: The following marks are upon the person of Booth by which he may be recognized. On his right arm are the initials of his name, and on his left hand, between the forefinger and thumb, a small cross, and across the same hand several spots, all in India Ink." (65)

McPhail undoubtedly had obtained this description from Belair neighbors of the Booths or from some of their acquaintances in Baltimore. The information later aided in the identification of John Wilkes Booth.

Early in the morning of April 27th, Secretary Stanton wrote "finis" on this chapter of dispatches with the following to various Generals:

"Booth and Herold were traced by Baker to Garrett's barn, three miles from Port Royal, yesterday morning. They were secreted in a barn. The barn was fired. Booth, in making his escape, was killed and Herold captured. Booth's body and Herold are here now. They crossed the Potomac Saturday night or Sunday night. Their horses were left in the swamp and should be secured; also all persons who aided their concealment." (66)

There have been few great crimes in history where as many people were involved even in a time of peace, that were as quickly unraveled as the plots back of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Within a week after the murder, all the implicated conspirators, except Booth and Herold were in the toils and but eleven days had elapsed when Booth and Herold were trapped and the former killed.

Naturally many, in their great anxiety to see the assassins apprehended, felt that this brief period was an eternity--and that only the grossest blundering on the part of the authorities accounted for the ability of Booth and Herold to elude their pursuers.

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Ch 7

NOTES

(O.R.)

- (1) O.R. The Official Records of the Rebellion, Series I, Vol. 46, Part III contains the hundreds of dispatches and orders issued by the War Department with reference to the assassination and search for the assassins. These were in addition to those issued by various Police Departments.
- (2) Introduction to "The Conspiracy Trial," by ³Ben. Perley Poore, 1865.
- (3) James Tanner's story of his experiences that night was written first to a friend, H.F. Walch, Grand Rapids, Mich., on April 17, 1865. This was printed in the American Historical Review for April, 1924, p.514-17. I am quoting from "The Life of Abraham Lincoln" by Wm. Barton, Vol. 11, P.469-480. *Harry Hawk, calls the leading man in "Our American Cousin"*
- (4) Detroit Free Press, April 19, 1865.
- (5) O.R. P.752. *Series I Vol 46 Part III*
- (6) *ibid* O.R. P.768
- (7) O.R. P.768
- (8) O.R. P.752
- (9) O.R. P.756
- (10) O.R. P.756
- (11) O.R. P.744
- (12) O.R. P.773
- (13) O.R. P.767
- (14) O.R. P.772
- (15) O.R. P.773
- (16) O.R. P.783
- (17) O.R. P.780
- (18) This was the horse Payne had used. C.T. P.159-160.
- (19) O.R. P.762 *Series I Vol 46 Part III*
- (20) *ibid* O.R. P.779
- (21) O.R. P.775

- (22) O.R. P.769
- (23) O.R. P.769
- (24) O.R. P.769
- (25) Washington April 15, N.Y. Tribune, April 17, 1865. The letter referred to is that written to Booth by Arnold. See note 68, Chap. "Plots". O.R. Series 1, Vol. 46, ^{Part 3} P.781
- (26) Wash. April 15, N.Y. Tribune April 17, 1865.
- (27) O.R. P.770 *Series I Vol 46 Part III*
- (28) ^{Med} O.R. P.770
- (29) O.R. P.770
- (30) O.R. P.801
- (31) O.R. P.775
- (32) O.R. P.775
- (33) N.L. Jeffers, Brevet Brig.-Gen. Acting Provost Marshall General, in the N.Y. Tribune. ^{April 17 1865} ~~Also O.R.~~ ?
- (34) O.R. P.757 *Series I Vol 46 Part III*
- (35) O.R. P.762
- (36) O.R. P.763
- (37) O.R. P.765
- (38) O.R. P.767
- (39) O.R. P.767
- (40) O.R. P.766
- (41) O.R. P.768
- (42) O.R. P.768
- (43) Wash. April 15, N.Y. Tribune, April 17, 1865.
- (44) N.Y. Tribune
- (45) Detroit Free Press, April 18, 1865.
- (46) O.R. P.772 *Series I Vol 46 Part 3*

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- (47) O.R. P.771
- (48) O.R. P.803
- (49) O.R. P.806
- (50) O.R. P.799
- (51) O.R. P.816
- (52) O.R. P.816
- (53) O.R. P.817
- (54) O.R. P.829
- (55) O.R. ~~Series 1, Vol. 46, P.810~~
- (56) O.R. P.899
- (57) O.R. P.901
- (58) O.R. P.902
- (59) O.R. P.903
- (60) O.R. P.910
- (61) O.R. P.913
- (62) "History of the Secret Service" by Baker, P.553.
- (63) O.R. ~~P.935~~ ⁹³⁴ *Series 1 Vol 46 Part III*
- (64) O.R. P.937
- (65) O.R. ~~Series 1, Vol. 46, Part III, P.963~~
- (66) O.R. P.987