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F. L. B.

A TRIP OVER THE BOOTH ESCAPE ROUTE IN JULY

The rainiest July for this area did not change the plans of Doctor C. Percy Powell, Frederick Barden, Major Randle Truett, Carlton J. Corliss and Bert Sheldon to make the trip. It is always fair weather when Lincoln fans get together; but it sure did rain like hell before we got safely back home.

We met at the old Fort Theater, now the Lincoln Museum, on Sunday morning July 23rd at 10:00 a.m. Before leaving the old building which has seen so much tragedy we went upstairs to have a look at the (how do you spell diaramma or doorama) diarama which is being constructed by Rudolph Bauss under the direction of the Director of National Capital Parks Division of the United States Department of Interior, Mr. Arthur E. Demaray and his assistants Mr. Edward J. Kelly and Mr. Stanley McClure. Bauss is recreating the inside of the theater as of the night Lincoln was assassinated. His work is of three dimensions and is modeled to scale. The audience, the actors, all of them Booth and Lincoln, are in their places. It will take a long time to finish this work which is being done with so much talent by Mr. Bauss. When it is completed we hope that the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia will be allowed some small part in the unveiling of it.

The escape route can be covered, after a fashion, in a single day. Most of us had never been over "the trail". Bert had been over before on several occasions. What we wanted to do was to visit most of the places where Booth stopped and to have a good time--this we did both in spite of the downpour of rain which confronted us part of the way.

We left the museum by the back door. This departure adds to the atmosphere of realism and helps to stimulate the imagination of those who make the trips. Here it was that the sleek, swaggering villain rushed out to find his horse being held by Peanuts John Burroughs. But, gone are the houses occupied by the colored people, gone are the stables of former years. Instead is a well paved alley in the downtown highway system of a modern city.

We left by the same alley Booth used to escape and through which his remains were brought back after lying buried in the basement of the War College grounds and taken to the Stewart Funeral Home on F Street between 9th and 10th Streets NW. We drove east on 9th to E, to New Jersey Avenue, to Constitution Avenue, to Capital Plaza, thence to B Street Southeast and Pennsylvania Avenue to 11th Street; then across the Navy Yard bridge.

Our first stop was at Clinton, Maryland (onetime Surrattville). Here on the side of the main highway is the following marker:

## JOHN WILKES BOOTH

The assassin of Lincoln stopped here at the house of Mrs. Surratt to secure ammunition on the night of April 14, 1865. He rode on to "T.B" and then to Dr. Mudd's who set his broken leg.

We spent about 20 minutes going through the old tavern of Mrs. Surratt. It is now a modernized residence and the occupants seemed quite willing to receive sightseers.

On our way again somebody in the car raised the question of what became of the knife used by Booth to slash Major Rathbone. Major Truett felt confident that it was on exhibition in the Museum. Then some one wanted to know what became of the table on which General Grant drew up the terms of surrender at Appomattox. Maybe he still wants to know.

"TB" Maryland was not named for that dread tuberculosis disease so troublesome in the past. It got its name from a more pleasant source. The early land owner was Thomas Brooke who marked each one of his fence posts with his initials and thus began the source of the now bona fide name of the community thru which we passed as we took the left fork in the road.

We stopped at Plympton or Grimes Corner for soda pop. Policeman Sheldon gave the store-keeper the 3rd degree treatment and soon discovered that the man was a half-brother of one of Bert's Washington acquaintances. Nevertheless we had to put our nickels on the barrel head. Bert says his stunt doesn't always fail.

We next came to a little settlement known as Horsehead and turned right on to a gravel road. Immediately the question was raised? "Why did Booth come around this way?" Everyone had a possible reason, so we reached the gentleman agreement that your guess is as good as mine.

At the Post Office of Malcom, Md. we made another sharp turn to the right and soon reached an intersection from which we could see the Dr. Mudd house about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the left. By this time we had finished discussing the query, "Why did the soldiers give up the chase at the river and turn the job of catching Booth over to new troops?"

Before visiting the Dr. Mudd house we rode a couple miles farther to the old burial ground of St. Peter's Church. Spangler's grave is here along with some members of the Mudd family. The burial ground is no longer kept up. Many of the old style wooden crosses are standing, but they no longer help for purposes of identification. A short distance beyond is the intersection of the Maryland State highway No. 5. Here is a historical marker which reads:

"Dr. Mudd's House ----- Waldorf, Md.  
Dr. Mudd set the broken leg of Wilkes Booth who escaped from Washington after Lincoln's Assassination on April 14, 1865. Dr. Mudd was tried and imprisoned on Dry Tortugas Island."

Retracing our progress we stopped at the Dr. Mudd House. Jos. Mudd, a grandson of Dr. Mudd, his wife and children now occupy the estate. They permitted us to visit at length about the place without asking any fee. Some slight alterations have been made in the structure, but it is readily recognized from early photographs. Large pictures of members of the family are hanging on the wall exactly as they did at the time of Booth's visit. Here it was that Booth took to the woods; we took to Route 5 and drove to Bryantown. From there we went out to the St. Mary's Church where we saw the grave of Dr. Mudd in the churchyard. The time of day was 1:45 p.m. and no lunch yet. The only man in the crowd to put up a howell (sic) was Powell. Within an hour we were in La Plata eating. "What, no beer?" "No, sir, not in Maryland on Sunday." The sandwiches and icecream in the Bowie Lunch

Room certainly tasted good.

Just out of La Plata we picked up U. S. Route 301 and headed for the Cox place. At Bel Alton, Md. we turned left and 0.3 of a mile from the turn found this marker:

John Wilkes Booth and his  
accomplice Harold hid in a thick woods  
on Samuel Cox's farm 1 mile north for  
several days before escaping to Virginia  
after Lincoln's assassination April 14, 1865.

The Cox house is occupied by a tenant farmer. It is owned by Cox's granddaughter, Lucy Neale, and may be visited if properly approached. Our time was getting short and the rain was too heavy for us to get out of the car; so we turned back into Route 301 and reached the Potomac River at 4:10 p.m. One now crosses the river on a handsome new toll-bridg kept by uniformed attendants, who demand a pretty handsome toll. At this point on the Potomac is the U.S. Navy Reservation known as Dahlgren. The Post office is on the Virginia side.

Next we worked our way over to the town of Owens on State highway No. 206. About four miles from Owens, and some 200 yards off the road to the left is the Stuart place. Mr. G. D. Richardson now owns and lives on the premises. He is always glad to talk to persons interested in the escape route. We went through the house and had pointed out to us the office where Booth is reported to have gone to have his leg dressed. Incidentally Mr. Richardson has a room nearly filled with trophies won by his dogs. Several fine looking ones were standing about the gate as we were saying good-by. Bert Sheldon created a bit of amusement when he singled out one and asked what kind it was. When told that it was an English setter he was dumbfounded. "Oh! it is? he ventured, I took it to be a bird dog."

From the Stuart place we drove over to King George County Court House to see Mr. Gus Rose, a retired lawyer now in his 84th year. He likes to smoke "factory made" cigarettes, and at times to reminisce. He related conversations which he had with a number of Booth's contemporaries; particularly with Jett and Rawlings. He said that possibly he saw Booth's body but he does not remember the incident. The old folks used to tell him that he saw the body of Booth sewed up in a gunny sack in a wagon at Port Royal when the Union soldiers were taking it to Washington. When we drove away Mr. Barden remarked that he was very much impressed by Mr. Rose's lucid and facile manner of talking.

Approximately three miles from King George County Court House is the U.S. Route 301. At the intersection is this marker:

Historic Port Conway. Six miles  
southwest is Port Conway on the Rappahan-  
nock. At the Conway Place there, Presi-  
dent Madison, 4th President of the United  
States was born 1751? There Kilpatrick's  
Union cavalry shelled 2 gun boats captured  
by the Confederates September 1, 1863.  
There John Wilkes Booth, assassin of Lincoln  
crossed the river April 24, 1865.

It was 7 p.m. when we crossed the Rappahannock; but we decided to see the Garrett Place before finding a restaurant.

The following marker stands at the edge of the highway about 3½ miles from the river:

"John Wilkes Booth. This is the Garrett Place where John Wilkes Booth assassin of Lincoln was cornered by Union soldiers and killed April 26, 1865. The House stood a short distance from this spot."

Some materials from the house may still be uncovered from among the vines and weeds which are a bit thick in July. No one in our crowd appeared at all souvenir-minded so we carried away no part of the rafters. FINIS.

EPILOGUE:

Sicatur ad astra. And as Lincoln made his ascent into immortality he took J. Wilkes Booth with him. There was never a thing in Booth himself to warrant the deathlessness of his name. Obviously, Booth has owed everything to his victims deification.

Bowling Green, Va. 10 miles south was our next and final stop. We reached there for an 8 o'clock dinner. After dinner Bert began to talk in rhymes. "If it wasn't so rainy. If it wasn't so late. There's one more call. We ought to make" We made the call and spent one of the most delightful half hours of the entire trip with Mr. Valentine. He is one of the old inhabitants with a wealth of information. His work is in the Court House among the records from which he drew a plat of the Garrett farm and sketched in the house at its exact location. The original drawing is now in the Division of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress.

ITENERARY:

Lincoln Museum.	Speedometer reading	0 miles
	Navy Yard Bridge	3
	Clinton, Md.	14
	Grimes Corner	24
	Horsehead	27
	Malcolm	30
	Intersection near	
	Dr. Mudd's house	33
	St. Peter's Burial G.	34.3
	Marker Dr. Mudd House	36
	Dr. Mudd's House	40
	Bryantown	49
	La Plata	64
	Bel Alton (Cox's)	70
	Potomac River	89
	Stuart Place	100
	King George County CH	109
	Rappahannock River	117
	Garrett Farm, Virginia	121
	Bowling Green	131
	Lincoln Museum, D.C.	208

*James Powell*

*Bert Sheldon*