

WHY JOHN WILKES BOOTH SHOT LINCOLN

COMMITTED THE CRIME, NOT TO AID THE SOUTH, BUT TO SEEK REVENGE FOR A  
SUPPOSED PERSONAL WRONG. HE BELIEVED CAPTAIN JOHN Y BEALL HAD  
BEEN UNJUSTLY EXECUTED

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Mrs B G Clifford, of Union, S. C., Corresponding Secretary of  
the South Carolina Division Daughters of the Confederacy, writes as follows in  
the State, in January, 1905, of Columbia, S.C.

Most historians have been content to state the simple fact that  
J. Wilkes Booth shot and killed President Lincoln in Ford's Theatre, at Washington,  
on April 14, 1865.

Barnes' School History adds to this statement that by the shooting  
of Lincoln, Booth "insanely imagined that he was ridding his country of a tyrant,"  
while a recent Southern historian says: "Abraham Lincoln was shot in a theatre  
at Washington on the night of April 14th, by an actor, who, sympathizing with the  
falling Confederacy, thought this deed would avenge the South."

In the editorial column of the Christian Observer, of Louisville,  
Ky., of October 13, 1904, the following statements are made, in which, as a Daughter  
of the Confederacy, deeply interested in all that pertains to the truth of history  
and honor of the South, I desire to call the attention of South Carolinians: \* \* \*  
"No Citizen of the Southern Confederacy had anything to do with the assassination of  
Mr. Lincoln." \* \* \*

"John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Mr Lincoln was a citizen of  
the United States, not of the Confederate States. He was at no time a resident  
of the Confederate States. His Southern sympathies did not lead him to come to  
the South and make common cause with the South. It was not an ardent love of  
the South or of the Southern cause that prompted Mr Booth's crime, but rather a spirit  
of revenge for the personal wrong that Mr Lincoln had done in having Captain John Y  
Beall, one of Booth's friends, unjustly executed.

"The Editor of the Christian Observer was acquainted with Captain  
Beall. He was a native of Virginia, a member of a good family, a college graduate,  
a brave young man of attractive personality. In Richmond, Va., we boarded at the  
same house, ate at the same table and we learned to appreciate his sterling worth.  
He possessed traits similar to those which, during the Spanish-American war, made  
Richard Pearson Hobson the idol of the American people, and when in the fall of  
1864 a man was wanted to lead a hazardous enterprise and make a diversion on Lake  
Erie, he promptly responded to the call of his government. With a handful of brave  
seamen he seized a boat on Lake Erie, made its crew prisoners, converted it into a  
war vessel, captured or sank one or more other boats, terrorized the commerce of  
the Great Lakes, produced a panic in Buffalo and the cities on the lakes, and  
thoroughly alarmed the Northern people. In due time he was captured. He was tried  
by a court-martial and sentenced to death as a pirate.

"John Wilkes Booth interested himself in his behalf; obtained from the Confederate government at Richmond, Va., the evidence that he was a commissioned officer of the Confederate navy; he obtained, also, evidence that his acts were only those of legitimate warfare, and that he was acting under instructions from the Confederate government. Booth went to Washington armed with these documents and secured from President Lincoln the promise that Captain Beall should not be put to death, but should be treated as a prisoner of war. This promise of Mr Lincoln's gave offense to Secretary Seward, who persuaded him, in the face of it to sanction Beall's execution, and Captain Beall was hanged at Governor's Island, N.Y., on Feb. 24, 1865.

"John Wilkes Booth was not a well-balanced man at his best. Doubtless he inherited a streak of the insanity with which his father, though a great actor, was from time to time afflicted. Be that as it may, he was fearfully wrought up by the death of his friend in such circumstances. He denounced the killing in cold blood of a prisoner of war after he had surrendered as 'murder,' and the doing it after the president had given his word that it should not be done as 'falsehood' and 'treachery,' and vowed vengeance against the author of this wrong.

"At once he organized a conspiracy for the assassination of President Lincoln and Secretary Seward, and on the night of April 14, only seven weeks after Captain Beall was hanged, the plot was executed. Booth shot Mr Lincoln at Ford's theatre, Washington, exclaiming: 'Sic semper tyrannis!' and on the same night Paine, one of his co-conspirators, inflicted severe but not mortal wounds on William H Seward, Secretary of State.

"The United States was fearfully aroused by the assassination of the President. At first it was suspected that the crime had been instigated by Confederates. Many prominent citizens of the Confederacy were arrested. The most thorough and searching examination was made, and it was conclusively proved that no representative of the Southern Confederacy had any hand in it. It was as sincerely regretted and as severely condemned through the South as in the North. Mr Lincoln was killed not by a citizen of the Confederate States, but by a citizen of the United States - a partially deranged man, to avenge the wrong he claimed had been suffered by his friend at Mr Lincoln's hands."