

SECRET HISTORY OF CIVIL WAR TIMES IS TOLD BY AGED MOOSE



—Photo by Sun Staff Photographer.
Edward A. Stevens, past supreme dictator, of Minneapolis; printer
and ritualist of many orders.

Veteran Delegate Describes Assassination of Lincoln and Secret End of Booth.

How red tape of officialdom was cut during the Civil war and a "secret" Government printing office was established, first with General McClellan's staff in the field, and later in Washington, was told today by Edward A. Stevens, past supreme dictator, of Minneapolis, here for the twenty-ninth annual international convention of the Loyal Order of Moose.

Mt. Stevens, former printer and newspaperman, is now 80 years old. In fraternal circles his connections are numerous and he is considered an authority on ritualistic work. Of particular interest are his reminiscences of Civil war days, the assassination of President Lincoln, which he witnessed, and some unrecorded history of the end of John Wilkes Booth.

At the outbreak of the war, Mr. Stevens enlisted with the First Minnesota Volunteers. He became connected with the detachment under General McClellan and took part in the Battle of Bull Run. His entry into printing came when, on one occasion, some rapid work was demanded by Secretary of War Stanton. At that time, Mr. Stevens says, it required four days to put anything through the Government printing office, no matter how small.

WAR TIME PRINTING.

A staff officer gave him the order to set up an important notice by 3 o'clock one afternoon. Mr. Stevens took the work at 9:30 and by 10:30 had delivered the copies. This attracted the attention of General McClellan and he was assigned to the general's staff. He carried a small hand press with him and handled orders and notations to be sent out to officers and men.

When the staff took possession of Berryville, Md., a state which had not seceded, it was discovered that all the men of the place had fled. A printing office was taken over by the Union troops and it was discovered that a part of the first page of a paper had been started. This contained an installment of General Beauregard's account of the battle of Bull Run and also a reward, signed, which offered \$20,000 for the head of Abraham Lincoln and \$2,000 for the death of Seward, Stanton and others in his cabinet.

Because of the shortage of paper the sheets of the Confederate paper were utilized and on the reverse side a Union edition was prepared, possible the only newspaper that ever, in the same edition, carried redhot Confederate and Northern news in the same issue. It is unnecessary to add that the Confederate columns suffered by contrast in satire.

TRANSFERRED TO ARMY.

In March, 1863, Mr. Stevens was transferred into the regular army service from the volunteers and was established as one of the private printers for work of the war department. He was entrusted with important announcements, all given him in such "takes" that it was impossible to fit one complete message together. This work was confidential and was turned over to him personally.

While in Washington Mr. Stevens says he was led to attend the fatal performance of "Our American Cousin," because it was advertised that the original English version of the play would be presented. He had seen the production before but went, with his wife, out of curiosity to learn wherein the two versions differed.

What was believed to be the difference, according to Mr. Stevens, came when in a scene where an English bar-rister roars out that he will kill the

clerk believed to have stolen valuable papers, at which point a revolver shot rang out through the house. Immediately after, and before the audience could recover, a man in high boots leaped from a box to the stage and strutted to one side and then re-crossed. This was believed to have been a part of the performance. Then it was learned that the President had been shot. The shooting was not seen by the audience because the President sat in a curtained box.

REWARD FOR ASSASSIN.

On the death of the president Mr. Stevens was ordered to turn out the following notice:

President
Lincoln
Assassinated.
\$100,000
Reward
for capture of
John Wilkes Booth
dead or alive.
Edwin M. Stanton,
Secretary of War.

Later Booth's body was brought to Washington and the daily papers carried contradictory stories on its disposal. According to Mr. Stevens, a report believed to have been authentic, was that the body of what appeared to be a man, wrapped in blankets, was taken to the navyyard and placed in quicklime under a stone step in front of what was then the quartermaster's residence. This account of the end of Booth, Mr. Stevens says, is missing from histories of the period.

Mr. Stevens, with his office in the Moose, has been past supreme arch of the Druids, a grand master of Odd Fellows, grand record keeper of the Knights of Pythias, an associate of Justice Rathbone in preparing the first Knights of Pythias ritual, and the organizer and only president of the Independent Order of Quill Drivers, an order in 1862-63 of "War Correspondents," or news service for the information of pictures with the different regiments.