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DEATH OF LINCOLN.

The Thirty-Second Anniversary—Recollections of Mr. James R. Ford.

Today is the thirty-second anniversary of the death of President Abraham Lincoln, who was shot the night before by John Wilkes Booth, in Ford's Theatre, in this city. President Lincoln was attending the performance of "Our American Cousin," produced by Laura Keane.

Speaking of the sad event, Mr. James R. Ford, brother of the late John T. Ford, said to a Baltimore American reporter: "I shall never forget the night of the tragedy if I live to be a hundred years old. I was business manager at the Washington theater and happened to be in the box office the afternoon the message came from the White House with a request from Mrs. Lincoln for the use of a box in the evening. Later in the day I came to Baltimore to transact some business with my brother John and started back for Washington on an accommodation train on the Baltimore and Ohio at 8 o'clock, reaching Washington at a few minutes after 10. As soon as I got off the train I noticed a great commotion along Pennsylvania avenue and hurried toward the theater, not being able to get any satisfaction of any one I met more than that something terrible had happened in our theater.

"Just as I reached the theater they were carrying the wounded President out, and he was taken to the home of Mrs. Peterson, who lived on 10th street, opposite the theater. The people were like mad and yelled like demons, demanding the authorities to produce the murderer, who at that time had not been captured. I managed to elbow my way through the crowd to the entrance of the theater, and the sight which met my eyes was, I assure you, unnering. The people, through the excitement, were tearing the seats from their fastenings in their efforts to get out. In the meantime the soldiers encamped in and around Washington in consequence of the surrender of General Lee, on April 9, were dispatched to the scene of the assassination, and within half an hour after the shooting occurred a pandemonium reigned in the vicinity.

"A heavy guard encircled the theater, and troops were placed in charge of the interior. Every citizen was compelled to leave the building, including all attaches and myself. I had some friends on 10th street opposite the theater, near where the wounded President was taken, and I started across the street to spend my time there, when the line of soldiers prevented me from passing. I then walked down on the east side of 10th street, intending to go to the National Hotel, as the night was miserable, made so by a thick, misty rain, that fell, but when near the hotel I was again halted by the troops and was compelled to wander about, having no place to go, until nearly midnight. President Lincoln died early Saturday morning, and his death was mourned by the nation at large. We attempted to open the theater some time afterward, but the government prohibited its further use as a theater, and, upon legal proceedings being threatened, it was purchased by an act of Congress and utilized for government purposes."

SAW LINCOLN MURDERED.

H. W. LEWIS WAS AT FORD'S THEATRE ON THE FATAL NIGHT.

He Was in the Gallery When He Heard the Shot Fired and Saw Lincoln's Head Drop—The Great Commotion That Followed—Size of the Audience—The First Shot in the War.

A few days ago THE SUN printed a letter from a Brooklyn correspondent asking if THE SUN had "ever heard of or from anybody who attended the theatre in Washington on the night that Abraham Lincoln was shot besides those who became more or less well known by their connection with the incidents of that night." The correspondent added:

"There must have been a thousand or more people there, and many have died since then, but I do not recall having seen in the papers in twenty years any reference to any person, living or dead, that he or she was in the audience at Ford's Theatre the night that Lincoln was shot."

THE SUN has received several letters from persons who were in Ford's Theatre on the night of Lincoln's assassination, or know of others who were there. One of these letters said that Henry W. Lewis of 84 Wolcott street, Brooklyn, witnessed the murder of the President. A SUN reporter went to see Mr. Lewis one day last week. Mr. Lewis is now 62 years old and somewhat feeble in health, but has a vigorous memory. He recalls with lively interest the occurrences in Ford's Theatre on the night of April 14, 1865. In his younger days Mr. Lewis used to be a seaman. By the time he was 20 years old he had been around the world. He saw the gold rush to

California and that to Australia, which country he visited in 1850. In the latter part of the civil war Mr. Lewis was employed on the Government transport Constitution, which plied between Washington and the Army of the Potomac in Virginia.

On April 14 the Constitution reached Washington from City Point, where she had delivered a cargo of bread for the army. She brought back part of the Ninth Corps to Washington. When she reached town the members of the crew read that Lincoln and Grant would attend Ford's Theatre that night.

"I had often seen Lincoln," said Mr. Lewis, "but had never seen Grant, and I proposed to several of my mates to go to the theatre to see Grant and the play, 'Our American Cousin.' We arrived at the theatre just before the performance was to begin. There were no seats to be had and we passed in on admission prices and stood up behind the seats in the upper gallery. We watched the incidents of the night eagerly and in the third act of the play heard the pistol shot that Booth fired.

"Instantly there was much confusion. I think the excitement in the gallery was as great as that in the other parts of the theatre, of which so much has been written. There was a great commotion and a great craning of necks. I remember distinctly seeing Lincoln's head drop to his arm. He was unconscious, of course, and no one had yet reached him. I also saw Booth jump to the stage and sink to the floor on one knee. We could tell that he was saying something just before he dragged himself off the stage. The noise in the place was that of a roar by this time. Those in the gallery were on their feet, and we could see no more. A stampede began, such as I suppose occurs at a time of fire in a theatre. To this day I do not know how I reached the street. I have absolutely no recollection about it, and never had. My mates also did not remember how they got out. All we knew was that we were swept out of the place and found the street thronged. It was a sad night, and we were late in reaching our quarters.

"Curiously enough, in all my work and on what few journeys I have made since I have never met a man and never heard of one except the officials who was in Ford's Theatre on that night. Instead of there being 1,000 persons present, as THE SUN's correspondent suggested, there must have been 2,500. There was standing room only, and it is strange that so few of those present have been heard from. For years the incidents of that night came to me with a sense of horror. It was a long time before I could shake it off. I have often talked freely of that night with my acquaintances, and I suppose that the others who saw the assassination did the same, and certainly it is peculiar that so little has been heard of the various individuals who composed the audience on that memorable night."

Mr. Lewis has another reminiscence that his friends have always liked to hear him tell. He saw the first shot fired at the outbreak of the civil war. It was in Charleston harbor on April 12, 1861, but he says it was not at Fort Sumter. It was at the coaster Nashville at 4:30 o'clock in the morning. Mr. Lewis was the lookout on the Nashville. The Union fleet, consisting of the transport Baltic and the warships Pawnee, Pocahontas, and Harriet Lane, had left New York before the Nashville, but the Nashville passed them and arrived off the bar of Charleston harbor first. The Nashville, which belonged to a line running boats between Charleston and New York regularly, and had carried arms and ammunition to the Southerners, resembled the Harriet Lane in her size and rig, and when she approached the bar the Southerners thought she was the Harriet Lane. They had been warned that the Harriet Lane was coming down. The famous battery on Morris Island threw a shot at the Nashville on this supposition, and this opened the hostilities in Charleston harbor. The shot fell half a mile from the Nashville. It was followed by another, which came within a quarter of a mile of the vessel. Capt. Murray, who commanded the Nashville, gave orders at once to retire from the bar. To have gone in would have been certain destruction.

As the Nashville was leaving the bar the Harriet Lane hove in sight. Capt. Murray didn't want the Captain of the Lane to examine his papers, and he shouted to his chief engineer, named Hood, to "shake her up." The Captain of the Lane saw what was going on and fired a blank shot as a warning to stop. The Nashville went on. The Harriet Lane swung around broadside on and fired a solid shot.

"Stop her, Hood!" shouted Capt. Murray to his chief engineer, and forthwith the Nashville came around.

The Captain of the Harriet Lane simply asked some perfunctory questions, and both ships lay off the bar and watched not only the first shot fired on Fort Sumter, but also the entire bombardment of thirty-six hours. On Sunday, April 14, the day of the evacuation of Fort Sumter, the Nashville went into the harbor, and Mr. Lewis, with Capt. Murray and others, rowed over to the fort. The only souvenir of the visit that Mr. Lewis has retained is a grape-shot with a dent in it that was fired against Fort Sumter from one of the rebel batteries in the harbor.

Among the letters which THE SUN has received from those who were present at the assassination of Lincoln is one from William Elmendorf of Hoboken, who says:

"I see by last Sunday's SUN that 'F. H. B.' of Brooklyn and Silas Owen of Cohoes, N. Y., wish to know if there is any one who was present at Ford's Theatre in Washington on the night when Lincoln was shot. I was there, and have the original programme. My present address is 1107 Washington street, Hoboken, N. J. I am a native of Kingston, N. Y., and I believe that some of the letters I wrote immediately after the assassination of Lincoln are now in the old Senate building in Kingston, together with some others placed there by my brother, who now resides at Catskill."