

Beloit, Wisconsin, March 31st. 1922.

W.D. Kenzie

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I, Wilson D. Kenzie, seventy-seven years of age, make the following statement of how I became acquainted with John Wilkes Booth, the actor and assassin of President Lincoln and how I know he was not killed.

I enlisted the 5th. day of August 1861 in the Federal Army at Niles, Michigan in Company "F", Sixth Michigan Volunteers and was ordered to New Orleans and in 1862 in May and re-enlisted in Co. "F" First United States Artillery, in November 1862 and was quartered in New Orleans. Our quarters in New Orleans was a very attractive place and visited by a great many people, among them being John Wilkes Booth, who was a frequent caller.

The first time he came there he had a pass and all were required to have passes who came there to enter our quarters. He attracted my attention and the second time he called I introduced myself to him and at that introduction he told me he was John Wilkes Booth.

Booth was very fond of good horses and we had a great many in the service and during these meetings and interviews we became very good friends and associates, covering a period of about four months so that my knowledge and acquaintance with him was impressed upon my mind. Afterwards the whole Company knew him. Joe Zisgen of our Company knew Booth as well as I did. In May 1863 we were ordered out on the Red river expedition and took part in the battle of Marchville Plains on Banks' retreat, when we went into the battle we had 140 men in our Company and when we came out, we had only 23 men left and from there we marched to Plackumen on the banks of the Mississippi river, there we got transportation by steamer back to New Orleans.

I was First Sargent of Company "F" and had charge of these men our our return to New Orleans and quartered in a cotton press for a while and Lieut, Haskin (W.L.Haskin) was the commanding officer of the Company and he went to Washington

about June 1863 and made application to have the Company sent north which had never been in the north since the Mexican war and was the oldest company in the service of the U.S. Army .

Then after he went to Washington I had orders to bring the Company consisting of twenty-three men, including myself to Washington .

I left New Orleans and landed at New York with my twenty-three men , where they all deserted me , so I went on to Washington alone from New York and at Washington I reported to General Auger's headquarters , who was in command of the defences at Washington, where I also met General D.D. Dana Provost Marshall . General Augers refused to have anything to do with me as he had no jurisdiction over the regular army ; but he instructed me to report to the War Department for instruction , which I did and after several hours I was admitted to the presence of E.M. Stanton, Sec'y. of War .

I identified myself with Company "F", by showing my credentials to the satisfaction of Sec'y. Stanton , then he turned around and introduced me to his assistant as Company "F" of the First United States Artillery which Company had not been north since the Mexican War . I was sent by Sec'y. Stanton to a hotel on "F" street in Washington City with instructions to report every morning to Sec'y. Stanton , until further orders .

I remained at the hotel for two weeks until every man came back , then we were ordered to Camp Barry in Washington City After we went to Camp Barry Haskin returned and took charge of the Company and began to recruit the Company up to the standard of 124 men , Lieut. Haskin being the only commissioned officer, Sec'y. Stanton appointed Hardmen P. Norris as 2nd. Lieut. in Co., "F", First United States Artillery, who married Sec'y. Stanton's niece at Norristown, Pa.

Haskin was transferred to another command after Norris was appointed 2nd. Lieut. who took charge of the Company . Soon afterwards we were transferred to Fort Morton on Arlington Heights where we remained at the time of the assassination of President Lincoln.

Norris left the Company while we were at Arlington Heights about the time of the assassination of President Lincoln, which left the Company in my charge as First Sargent ^{acting as} ~~and~~ Quarter-Master Sargent which entitled me to a monthly pass which gave me the privilege of going anywhere in Washington, night or day and I frequently went to the theaters.

On the night of the assassination of President Lincoln, I went to Ford's theater and was present at the time that Booth killed President Lincoln. I was looking at my program and did not see Booth when he jumped. I heard the shot and saw Booth standing on the platform and recognized him instantly. I then looked on my program to see if Booth was in the play but did not find him. Then I discovered the commotion on the stage and in Lincoln's box, then I stood up and saw Booth with his hand raised ~~raised~~ shouting "Sic semper tyrannus". As Booth turned to move off, I noticed ~~him~~ that he was dressed with high riding boots and limping in his right leg. I was badly scared and jumped up and beat it and got my horse and went over to Georgetown as fast as the horse would carry me and reported it over there.

Joe Zisgen had been discharged from my company who also knew Booth in New Orleans. When Lincoln's last call came for troops Zisgen re-enlisted in Sargent Corbett's Co. of the 5th. Mass. Cavalry. Everybody was looking for Booth in a kind of free for all game as there had been a big reward offered. Corbett's Company or the Company with which he was connected, as they came out I enquired where they were going and they told me they were going out looking for Booth and I said wait till I get my saddle on my horse and I will go with you. I went in pursuit with them and we all brought up at the Garrett barn where Booth was supposed to be and Corbett's company surrounded the barn. Boston Corbett ^{shot} ~~fixed~~ the man, through a crack in the barn, and killed him instantly. ~~and shot the man on the inside~~ They brought the man out and put him on the porch and covered him with a blanket except his feet.

Joe Zisgen had discovered that it wasn't J. Wilkes Booth and then they covered him up so no one could see his face, as I rode up Joe Zisgen called here, come here Sargent, this ain't J. Wilkes Beoth at all. As he attempted to uncover the corpse, he was stopped by some of the officers, his face was exposed enough so I could see the color of his hair and side of his face and from the fact that this man had sandy hair and Booth had very dark hair, I knew at once it wasn't he. His body was exposed, the lower part of it and he had no injured leg that I could see and he did not have on riding boots, but I think ordinary shoes and I sized him up as being an ordinary Virginia farmer, what I do know and positively state that it was not the body of John Wilkes Booth.

By that time the officers came up and ordered me to keep still and not say that it wasn't Booth saying the least you say about it, you are better off.

I have examined the pictures of Booth illustrating a book written and published by Finis L. Bates, called the escape and suicide ~~murder~~ of John Wilkes Booth and also of the ~~mumified~~ body, now being exhibited by Finis L. Bates and his lessees and pronounced those pictures as the pictures of John Wilkes Booth and as the body of John Wilkes Booth.

I was discharged from the service at Fort Trumbull, Conn. on the 13th. of Nov. 1865 and as I was taking my leave from the Officers Quarters, I was handed this recommendation to Lieut Haskin.

To all whom it may concern:-

"Fort Trumbull, New London, Conn.

November 14th. 1865.

I take great pleasure in recommending to your favorable notice, the Bearer Wilson Kenzie, late 1st. Sargent of Company "F", 1st. U.S. Artillery. We have been attached to the same Company for three years and I have never found him wanting either in knowledge of his duties or in willingness to perform them. He has been an honest, faithful, sober and intelligent soldier and an ornament to his station.

(Signed)

W.L.Haskin,
1st. Lt. Bvt. Major, 1st. U.S.
Arty."

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