

Lincoln Assassination Incident Recalled

Dr. A. H. Ritter, of 262 Hewes street, a retired Eastern District physician, is one of the old-time Brooklynites whose admiration for Abraham Lincoln has kept him in close touch with everything pertaining to the martyred President. A musician named Withers, who died recently in New York and who was a friend of Dr. Ritter, was at one time a tutor of "Tod" Lincoln at the White House, and was a drummer in the orchestra at Ford's Theatre in Washington at the time of Lincoln's assassination.

"On the night of April 14, 1865, Withers took his accustomed place in the orchestra," says Dr. Ritter. "There was a capacity house. Every one waited eagerly the arrival of the President and his party. When the President arrived Withers was favored with a cordial nod from Lincoln.

"The performance started without any occurrences out of the ordinary. Withers had occasion to go back on the stage and there found a singer who pleaded to be excused from performing. She declared that she was too frightened and nervous and feared something dreadful was about to happen. She was reassured and told to go to her dressing room. A

few minutes later she was found to be hysterical.

"During the intermission Withers, according to his story, was strolling through a dark passage way when he observed one of the stage hands lurking near the gas box. Questioned by Withers as to what he was doing there he slunk away. The supposition later was that he was there as part of the plot and was going to shut off the gas when Booth committed his dastardly act.

"A few minutes later as Withers was approaching the exit he saw a figure dashing directly at him. Something was flashing in his hand. Without warning the man flung himself at the musician and stabbed him. Withers dropped to the floor with a moan. The assailant leaned over him and, recognizing the drummer, exclaimed: 'My God, Withers, is that you?' Withers recognized the voice as that of John Wilkes Booth.

"But that was not the worse of the musician's ordeal. Some of the audience in pursuit of the assassin reached the stage and finding Withers lying in a pool of blood thought he was the President's assailant. They roughly handled the drummer before a friend recognized and cued Withers.