

THE AUTOPSY AND BURIAL.

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Chapter 11.

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What a picture! What a contrast! As the body of the Nation's fallen chief was being borne majestically westward, greeted at each step by dirges and hymns from vast crowds waiting in the "fitful glare of torches", John Wilkes Booth, erstwhile <sup>"</sup>matinee idol, <sup>"</sup>man of fashion, <sup>"</sup>man of romantic beauty, deserted and alone, was playing his last tragic role, not mock but real, in the Garrett barn. Even David Herold, his only remaining disciple, had whimperingly left him to face in solitude the avenging Federal Cavalry.

That midnight, thirty thousand people came out in a storm at Syracuse to greet with "fires and bells and cannons" the passing funeral cortege of Abraham Lincoln, and about the time that the execrated body of Booth was being hauled in a rickety old market wagon back toward Washington, the body of the man who had met death at his hand was lying in state and being visited by multitudes offering from emotional depths "warm devotion" to the memory of a great man gone from amongst them.

One of the strange things of history is that John Wilkes Booth had accomplished just the opposite of what he intended. He had hoped by Lincoln's death to further disrupt the Union, but as George Bancroft, the historian, said in referring to the deed--Abraham Lincoln's death "which was meant to sever the Union beyond repair, binds it more closely and more firmly than ever.---The country may have needed an imperishable grief to touch its inmost feeling.---Peace to the ashes of our departed friend, the friend of his country and his race." (1)

The contrast is made even greater by the paltry bickering of the capturing officers over the body of the slain assassin, valuable because of the offered rewards.

Lieutenant Baker says (2) that Lieutenant Doherty remained behind

at the Garrett place to have the horses fed while he "started away in charge of the body." Doherty, Baker claims, came down to the Rappahannock ferry "with Herold, who did not seem to be hand-cuffed or bound at all"; ~~and that he~~ <sup>Baker</sup> protested to Doherty about this laxness. After crossing

the Rappahannock Baker says that he started out with the body, a corporal and an orderly while the command followed them for a "couple of miles and then took another road." "I sent back the corporal," declared Baker in his testimony, "but I did not see anything more of him, and then I sent back my orderly, but I did not see anything more of him either. I traveled all the day, with the darkey and Booth's body, and struck the river about three miles above where the steamboat was lying at Belle Plain. I left the body concealed in the bushes, with the darkey to watch it, and came up with a small boat in which I took the body to the steamer. On the way up the river General Baker and Major Eckert met us with a gunboat."

According to Doherty's version, the command started back to the ferry from the Garrett place about eight o'clock on the morning of April 26th, with the "body of Booth, and the prisoners Herold, Jett and the Garrett boys."

"The extreme heat" states Lieutenant Doherty, "made it necessary to halt in the shade of the trees, to rest the old negro's horse, carrying the body of Booth, and it was during one of these halts, Herold told me that Booth had taken off his mustache at Dr. Mudd's eleven days previous."

(3) "We arrived at Port Royal at 9 A. M. April 26th, and I found the scow awaiting my command. The horse and wagon conveying Booth's body, the prisoner Jett and two soldiers, all in charge of detective Baker, were sent across first. The scow made several trips, carrying the remainder of the command seven or eight at a time, and taking the two Garretts, Herold and myself on the last trip. Arriving at Port Conway, I found that Mr. Baker without authority, had moved on taking with him the body of the assassin, the guard of two soldiers and the prisoner Jett. I then released Rollins, but retained his horse on which I mounted Herold. Considerable difficulty and delay was incurred, through

having but one horse on which to mount the three prisoners. My progress being slow and the detachment with Booth's body being well mounted, and having the advantage of an hour's start, I feared some accident might happen to the body or prisoner, should the detachment be too widely separated from the main command, while travelling in a hostile country. I therefore despatched an orderly, to command Baker to halt. The orderly rode over four miles before overtaking Baker, and gave him my command to halt until the column came up. This, however, Baker did not do, but continued on, missing me and the road. On reaching Belle Plain at 5 P. M. I found the body had not arrived. I felt a great anxiety, and was about to apply to Major Bosworth of the 16th N. Y. Cavalry, (who as at Belle Plain with his command) for a detachment to go in search of the body, when Baker arrived but without the prisoner Jett, whom he informed me had escaped." (3)

The boat bearing the body of Booth, Herold and the two Garrett boys steamed back up the Potomac Wednesday, April 26th, and soon after midnight reached the Washington Navy Yard where, on orders from Secretary Stanton, Booth's body and Herold were transferred to the iron-clad gunboat "Montauk" and the Garretts placed in the old capitol prison.

Herold was placed in the hold of the iron-clad with a number of other prisoners while the body of Booth was placed on deck, in charge of a marine guard. (4)

The story of Booth's capture had been telegraphed to Washington from Alexandria at five o'clock the evening before. As could be expected, the news, which spread rapidly, created intense excitement in Washington and many were the threats of violence to the body should it be placed within reach of the angry populace.

General Baker and Secretary Stanton had been notified before this by Colonel Conger, who had not waited for the calvacade but left the Garrett place directly for Washington immediately after Booth's death. He went to General Baker's office upon his arrival in Washington about four o'clock that afternoon, showed Baker the diary, bills of exchange, compass and pin taken from the body and also gave a brief account of the capture of Booth and Herold. Baker and

Conger then went to the War Department about five o'clock to report to Secretary Stanton, but were informed that he had gone home for the day. They followed him to his residence and there delivered to him the scarf pin taken from Booth's undershirt on which was "Dan Bryant to J.W. Booth", the diary, bills of exchange and other things taken from his pockets. The other articles, a Spencer carbine, two Wheeler and Wilson pistols and a large bowie or hunting knife and sheath, came up with the soldiers on the boat. (5)

Lieutenant Doherty, upon reaching Washington, returned to the barracks, was relieved of his command and went to his quarters at the National Hotel. There he found friends awaiting to congratulate him and he was also besieged by reporters, photographers and newspaper men. The photograph of him and Sergeant Corbett, which is here reproduced, was taken at this time, and copies of it were sold on the streets of the Capitol, at twenty-five cents each. (6)

That night after reporting to Secretary Stanton, Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Baker went on board the gunboat "Montauk" where their sworn statements covering the death of Booth were taken by Judge Holt in the presence of General L.C. Baker. (7)

The newspapers of Thursday and Friday, the 27th and 28th, were filled with accounts of the capture, descriptions of the state of the body and suggestions for its final disposition.

"The greatest curiosity is manifested here", stated a Thursday's Washington Dispatch, "to view the body of the murderer Booth, which yet remains on the gunboat in the stream, off the Navy-Yard. Thousands of persons visited the yard today in the hopes of getting a glimpse of the murderer's remains but none not connected with the yard were allowed to enter." (8)

And in the same story it was declared of these crowds: "They expected his capture alive. The fate he met was considered too good, too honorable for one who perpetrated so atrocious a crime. Men stopped each other in the street and discussed the event. Around a newspaper office one man remarked, 'he ought to be pulled to pieces.' Another suggested 'the hanging of the dead body,' and still another the fixing of the remains in irons as an eternal warning to the assassin. This is not cruelty, an un-

natural craving for blood and torture, but the common instinct of human nature when a monster appears and defies the laws of God and man. Satisfaction everywhere was manifest."

The New York Tribune editorial comment on Booth's death was: "We do not fully share the feeling of regret, which seemed to be general yesterday, that it should have been necessary to shoot Booth instead of bringing him in alive to be tried and hanged. There was a possible chance of confessions and revelations--but only possible, for Booth was a determined villain, and very unlikely to tell anything that could damage his accomplices or help us. And for other reasons, it was just as well he died as he did. It was a dog's death--dog that he was, and fitted him well. The arrest might have been clumsily managed, or the

Sergeant who shot Booth might have been hasty, and no doubt it was expected of his captors that he should have been taken alive - but no matter. It is enough that justice has thus swiftly overtaken him, after a pursuit probably unparalleled in its intensity and persistence. The murderer can have had no moment of rest, no instant of fancied security from the time he fired his shot down to his actual capture. If anybody wants to indulge his vindictive feeling, let him imagine what agonies of retribution and of apprehension the assassin has had to live through for ten days past." (9.)

On Thursday the press also carried accounts of the Post Mortem examination of Booth's body and of Herold's statements on the assassination. "Surgeon-General Barnes," stated the papers, "held an autopsy upon Booth's body this afternoon. The smaller bones of his left leg was badly fractured, one of the smaller arteries ruptured, and the leg badly swollen. The ball entered the left side of the upper section of the neck, passing out on the opposite side." (10)

The Associated Press, Washington Office, on Friday, April 28th, reported:

" The excitement which prevailed in this city yesterday has considerably subsided. While all regret that the assassin, owing to the rashness among the soldiers engaged in the capture, was not taken alive, they at the same time felt grateful that the murderer had paid the penalty of his crime. Had he been brought to the Washington Navy-Yard alive, nothing could have withstood the fury of the excited congregated thousands.

" What disposition was made of Booth's body after the autopsy upon it, is impossible to ascertain, but that a fitting disposal, in keeping with his ignominious career, was made, is certain.

" The public breathe more freely, as the great burden which has been on their minds for two weeks has been removed.

"Herold", who has been exhibiting great stoicism since his capture, now appears to seem to realize the awful position in which he is placed, and through the day has given way to frequent fits of weeping. He is quite young and his appearance would indicate him to be not over 20. Some time ago he was an applicant for the position of surgeon's steward on the Potomac flotilla, but was unsuccessful.

"Very great curiosity prevails as to the disposition to be made of the remains of Booth; but it seems the authorities are not inclined to give the wretched carcass the honor of meeting the public gaze, and it will probably be deposited in whatever place promises the most utter obscurity for them. Yesterday a photographic view of the body was taken before it was removed from the monitor. It was then placed in an ordinary gray army blanket, in which it was sewed up. A plain casket-shaped box, measuring six feet by two, had been previously made in the joiners shop for the remains, but it was not used." (11)

Letters received by the War Department during the hunt for Booth and immediately after his capture suggested all manner of ways to dispose of him. One said that his body should be "sunk in the ocean in the deepest part thereof, to be food for reptiles." (12)

Another declared his body should be "inclosed in a sack of shoddy, and carried out to sea, beyond soundings, thrown overboard, there to remain until death and hell give up their dead." (13)

A third addressed to "The Hon. the Secretary of War, Washington," suggested that "the skeleton of the assassin Booth be preserved and placed in appropriate receptacle, in order the more fully to perpetuate his infamy and be 'a terror to evil doers,!' " (14)

These suggestions and many others of a similar nature bore fruit later in the wildest sorts of stories as to the actual disposal made of Booth's body.



For the delectation of the curious and the morbid minded, pictures of Booth were being offered for sale by vendors in Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia. Anything connected with him had become of interest to souvenir hunters. The boards of the Garrett front porch where he died have been cut away by these folks. The War Department soon put an end to the distribution of pictures with an order for the confiscation of any when exposed for sale. (15)

On April 27, 1865, the day following Booth's death, an order was issued by the Secretary of the Navy permitting Surgeon-General J. K. Barnes and his assistant, accompanied by Judge Advocate-General Holt, John A. Bingham, Major Eckert, Assistant Secretary of War; William C. Moore, Colonel L. C. Baker, chief of the Secret Service; Lieutenant L. B. Baker, Lieutenant-Colonel Everton J. Conger, Charles Dawson, chief clerk, National Hotel; J. L. Smith, Mr. Gardiner, the photographer, and an assistant, to go on board the *Montauk* to identify the body of John Wilkes Booth. (16)

The inquest was held in the commanding officer's cabin, and while the testimony was being taken which established the identity of the body, Surgeon-General Barnes and his assistant were holding the autopsy on deck.

Seaton Munroe, whose brother, Captain Frank Munroe, was in command of the Marine Guard of the gunboats *Montauk* and *Saugus*, was present at the identification and autopsy on Friday, April 27th. <sup>Seaton</sup> Munroe had been a friend of Booth's during the <sup>previous</sup> past winter in Washington. They had "frequently met and strolled on the avenue" together and wined and dined and discussed matters theatrical.

Munroe in his statement (17) says that he was invited on board the monitor by the officer of the day and there met General Eckert, the assistant Secretary of War, and with him viewed the body of Booth, which was "resting upon a rough carpenter's bench, where it had lain since early morning, and it was now awaiting before a kind of military Coroner's jury, an official identification".

Herold was brought on deck to be photographed and Munroe says, "As I stood near the hatchway, I had my first look at him as he slowly ascended and

moved forward with the sentries. He was not only handcuffed, but to his leg irons were attached, a chain and a 32-pound shot, the latter being carried by the sentry in the rear. As they approached the turret the gangway narrowed and their footsteps along the iron deck were but a few feet from the water. The idea instantly seized me that <sup>at</sup> this moment had come to the unhappy wretch the first, last, and only opportunity to escape from the gallows. A sudden dash to the right and his impetus would have dragged the shot, if not the sentry, after him over the unrailed side of the monitor, and in two minutes thereafter his parting breath would have bubbled to the surface from where he lay anchored, three fathoms below, on the muddy bottom of the river. But, had the thought occurred to him, it was not to be; and he remained among the living a few weeks longer, to complete the doomed quartet upon the scaffold.

*State Moural*

"I then returned to Booth's body," accompanied by Gen. Eckert, when conversation ensued regarding my knowledge of the man and my recognition of the remains. Having been on board for over an hour, I was about to take my leave, when Gen. Eckert informed me that a military commission was about to convene, and the presiding officer desired me to remain as a witness. Shortly afterward I was summoned to the cabin where the Commission was in session, and among the members of it I recall Gen. Holt, the Judge Advocate-General of the army, Judge Bingham of Ohio, and the well-known Col. Lafayette C. Baker. My examination was short, the questions relating to the length of my personal acquaintance with Booth, and to the positiveness of my recognition of the body, and after my dismissal from the stand I was allowed to remain in court.

"The examination of the next witness was more interesting in detail, being that of Dawson, a clerk in the National Hotel, who it appeared had known Booth for some years. When asked whether the man had possessed any physical peculiarity by which he could recognize the remains, he replied in the

affirmative. He had often seen on Booth's right hand, at the junction of the thumb and forefinger, the initials, "J.W.B." in India ink. This mark had sometimes come under his notice when the actor was writing his name on the hotel register, and he had more than once made the remark: "Booth, what a fool you were to disfigure that pretty white hand in such a way." (18)

Another witness presently appeared in the person of Dr. J. Fredrick May. It having been ascertained that Booth had been his patient, the Doctor was sent for, and brought directly from his residence to the cabin of the ship. Mr. Munroe then tells how Dr. John Fredrick May, Washington Surgeon, before he saw it, described a scar that would be found on the neck of the dead man if he were Booth. Mr. Munroe says that when the body was examined in the presence of members of the commission, the disfigurement as described, was found, "thus setting at rest the question of identity."

"Then," Seaton Munroe states in his article, "followed the testimony of the officer who had commanded the pursuing party; and most intensely interesting was this narrative from the lips of one of the chief actors in that tragic retribution." (19)

Surgeon-General J.H. Barnes on May 20th, only about four weeks after he had performed the autopsy on the body of Booth testified: (20)

"I examined the body of J. Wilkes Booth after his death, when he was brought to this city. He had a scar upon the large muscle of the left side of his neck, three inches below the ear, occasioned by an operation performed by Dr. May of this city for the removal of a tumor some months previous to Booth's death. It looked like the scar of a burn instead of an incision, which Dr. May explained by the fact that the wound was torn open on the stage when nearly well."

Dr. May, himself, testified at the Surratt Trial, June 24, 1867, (21) that he identified the body of Booth by a scar on the neck, caused by an operation for a tumor, he had performed a year or a year and a half before the assassination. "Describe the appearance of this scar," ordered Mr. Wilson, the assistant District

attorney. "It was a scar of some width," answered the doctor, "such a scar as would not have been made by a surgical operation if the wound had united by adhesion, but it had been torn open by this blow. After being torn apart it left, when healed, a broad ugly looking scar, produced by the granulating process of which I have spoken, which is usually the case with wounds which unite the second time after being torn open." (22) "In fact," Dr. May declared, "I told the Surgeon General where the scar was, and what its appearance was, before I examined it."

John M. Peddicord, later a doctor of Roanoke, Virginia, was a sergeant of marines on board the Montauk under Captain Munroe, in a letter printed by The Roanoke Evening News, states: (23) that ~~on~~<sup>at</sup> six o'clock on the morning that Booth's body was placed on the Montauk, he received the following order: "Take charge of this body and allow no one to touch it, with orders from Colonel Baker."

"It was the body of the assassin, John Wilkes Booth," says Dr. Peddicord, "which had been brought up the river during the night by the detachment of troops who had captured him. At breakfast, when relieved by Hartley (another sergeant), while I was eating, we unwrapped the face and compared it with a photograph, and I also remember the letters in India ink, on the back of his hand, in pale, straggling characters, 'J.W.B.' as a boy would have done it."

"During the forenoon, Colonel Baker with Surgeon General Barnes and other officers, together with a hospital steward, carrying a case of surgical instruments, came on the ship. Being still in charge of the body, I was quite close during the examination. Surgeon Barnes first removed the bandage from the broken leg, laying the strips and pins carefully on the center of the body, and when an officer took up one of the pins he took it out of his hand, with the remark, "Gentlemen, you will please not take anything from this body." As this did not include myself, who was only a sergeant of marines, I made up my mind then to take something away. From the broken leg they went to the wound which caused his death, and traced the course of the ball. After this the officers all stood apart a bit in conversation. I took up

the scissors, and while the steward wiped the instruments and replaced them in the case, and with the scissors I cut from about the top of Booth's head a lock of hair. General Barnes heard the grit of the scissors through the hair and turned sharply around, but I made a great show of chasing some sailors back from the bench, who had crowded up too close out of curiosity. I was not discovered. The steward, who saw what I was doing, did not give me away, and today I have that lock of fine black hair, cut with my own hands from the head of the assassin of President Lincoln, the only memento of his miserable body that I know of, except that which is in the army Medical Museum at Washington.

The New York Tribune for Friday, April 28th contains the following description of the body:

"He had his mustache shaved off, and had a uniform beard of four or five days. He wore a gray woolen shirt; had on dark cassimere pants; one cavalry, or theater, top boot which drew up above the knees, but was turned down when captured. On the other foot he had an old shoe. His leg was bandaged where it was broken."

We can look back now and say that if the Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton; the Assistant-Secretary of War, Major Eckert; the Surgeon General, J.K. Barnes; the head of the Federal Secret Service, General L.C. Baker; and others had done thus and so, there would be no question of identification. These officials were not thinking of posterity. They were satisfied of the identity and that ended it. They did the thing they considered most sensible under the circumstances. It was necessary to dispose of the body as soon as possible.

From the testimony of Surgeon-General Barnes and Dr. May, the statements of Seaton Monroe, Sergeant Peddicord, and the testimony of Colonel Conger, Lieutenant Baker, and Major Eckert at the Surratt Trial, the identification was sufficiently complete to satisfy the War Department that the right man had been captured. The sworn statements of Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Baker had been taken on the Montauk the previous night. This covered Booth's actions and statements at the Garrett barn. The pin bearing his name, taken from his undershirt, his diary in which he discusses the crime, etc., had been given to Secretary Stanton. On the dead man's arm were the initials of Booth's name; on his neck was the scar resulting from an operation, his

leg was broken and he had been captured with Herold at the place where Booth and Herold were definitely traced. Although the features little resembled the sometime actor, due to the rapid decomposition of the body during the thirty-six hours from the time of death until the autopsy, that was not the case when it was identified from pictures of Booth, which were compared with the dying man at the Garrett place.

In the Baltimore American on Saturday, April 29th, 1865, it was stated that the untidy and disordered appearance of the body had so changed the assassin's looks that his stage and street acquaintances would hardly have recognized the corpse as that of J. Wilkes Booth.

The body must have been in horrible shape. Booth was in a terrible physical condition before his death. The doctor called to attend him at Garrett's said that he could not have lived long had he not been shot. The trip back to Washington in hot weather, with the unembalmed body sewn up in a blanket, was in itself enough to ruin the features. In view of this condition it would not have been of any benefit to have placed his body on public exhibition as was suggested. This was realized at once by Dr. Barnes, who in order to certify to the identity without relying on the dead man's face, insisted on the attendance of Dr. May.

Whether the identification testimony as it was given on the boat on April 27th, was taken in shorthand and then transcribed is not known. At least no transcription has ever been found in the files. This has been used by those who maintain that it was not the body of John Wilkes Booth, to support the assertion that the War Department officials knew they had the wrong man. If the officials knew they did not have Booth, as the myth-makers declare, then the Surgeon-General and General Baker took a tremendous chance when they repeatedly insisted that Dr. May come on board. Dr. Barnes did not share in the awards, neither did Secretary Stanton, Major Eckert, Dr. Porter or Dr. May. What motive could they have had in identifying the body of another man as that of John Wilkes Booth?

It was assumed and published that the Booth family would ask for the body of John Wilkes. The New York Tribune of May 1st, 1865, stated however, that Edwin Booth had not been in Washington for the purpose of procuring the body of his brother for burial as some stories had claimed. "Mr. Booth," the Tribune said, "has not been and had not proposed to go to Washington with such a request, having entire confidence that the Government will make a proper disposition of the remains of his brother, and acquiescing in its decision whatever it may be. Mr. Booth is in this city (New York)

and has rigidly sequestered himself in his own house for the last two weeks, sincerely sympathizing with the public sorrow and overwhelmed with grief that one of his blood should have been guilty of the terrible crime which caused it."

Edwin Booth some months subsequent, however, to please his mother, asked that the body be turned over to the family for burial in Baltimore. † The disposition of the body of John Wilkes Booth has occasioned an outburst of controversy due to the varying stories told by General Lafayette C Baker for the express purpose of misleading people as to the exact location of the first burial place of the assassin.

After President Lincoln's death, assassination was considered such an imminent possibility that military guards were placed around the homes of all cabinet members except that of J P Usher, Secretary of the Interior. As late as April twenty-eighth, the day after Booth's body had been secretly buried these guards were strengthened and Mr Usher's and Judge Advocate General Holt's residences placed on the list. (23 $\frac{1}{2}$ ) The conviction that the assassination and the attempt on Mr Seward's life was a southern plot to kill off all the heads of the Government was reflected in the decision to pursue a policy of secrecy in the disposition of John Wilkes Booth's body.

It was thought that there were many Confederate accomplices within the precincts of Washington and that they might attempt to procure the body, give it triumphal burial in the South and in this manner rekindle the dying flame of rebellion. Newspaper reporters, unable to get but meagre details of the disposal of the body, manufactured those needed to fill out their stories. (24)

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~~John Wilkes Booth's body. It was thought there might be an attempt to procure the body and give it triumphal burial in the South. Newspaper reporters, unable to get but meagre details of the disposal of the body, manufactured those needed to fill out their stories. (24)~~

Even after the truthful story of the disposition of the body was told, considerable confusion resulted because one writer would state that <sup>it</sup> the body was buried in the "old arsenal grounds", while another would say that the burial took place in "the old penitentiary building," and unless the reader happened to know that both names designated the same place, it was naturally assumed that one or the other statement was untrue.

According to the testimony of General Baker given at the Impeachment Investigation of Andrew Johnson, he was ordered by the Secretary of War on April 27, 1865, after the post-mortem was made, to take the body of John Wilkes Booth from the gunboat late in the afternoon and convey it to the arsenal grounds and there turn it over to Colonel Benton, in charge of the arsenal, and General Eckert, the Assistant Secretary of War.

"Midnight", states Dr. George L. Porter, assistant surgeon of the United States Army, (25) "was being called by the sentries from the various posts as the military storekeeper of the arsenal, Mr. Stebbins, four enlisted men, one of them leading a team attached to a cart, another carrying a lantern and myself the only commissioned officer present, met at the little summer house where a sentry was on guard over the thing in the gunny sack. The four enlisted men were members of the Ordnance Corps and picked for their reliability and discretion. They were sworn to secrecy regarding the happenings of the night."

Dr. Porter states that those present when the body was buried were sworn to secrecy regarding the happenings of the night until such time as necessity for secrecy had passed, that the reason for the attempted secrecy "may be found in the turbulent condition of public affairs, the general consternation and almost universal suspicion." "The departments in Washington were demoralized" he declares, and "the clerks were not trusted to copy official orders that were written by the chief personally and transmitted directly by messenger." The Government also feared that the body of Booth, if secured by Southern sympathizers, might be used as a rallying point to revive the war. Fear was the motive behind the false reports.



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"Two of the men picked up the gunny sack and contents, grunting at its unexpected weight, and placed it in the body of the cart. At a word the man leading the horse started it down the avenue. Men marched on each side of the cart, Stebbins brought up the rear, and I walked ahead with the man carrying the lantern, the flickering rays of which cast fantastic shadows on the surface of the broad avenue. Not a word was spoken by a member of our party. The only sounds to disturb the stillness of the night were the crunching of the wheels, the shuffling of our feet and the fall of the horse's hoofs on the gravel road."

continues Dr. Porters story

"Between the administration and jail ends of the penitentiary<sup>1</sup> was a middle section which had been used as a storage place for fixed ammunition at the outbreak of the war and later as a general storage quarter. It was a large room about fifty by forty feet, with supporting columns of stout cedar. There were two enormous doors in it sufficiently large to drive a team and wagon through them, opening on the south and north sides. In this room were a number of cases of goods and fixed ammunition; although the greater portion of the latter had been removed a short time before our adventure owing to the explosion of a shell, and the attendant fear that the entire series of buildings might be blown into the sky by a like accident.

"The cart was led up to one of the doors, which E.M. Stebbins, the military storekeeper, unlocked with a key which he produced. Once inside the apartment the door was carefully locked and the cart was led to the extreme southwest corner of the storeroom. By the flickering light of the lantern we saw a shallow hole lying before us. Whether there was a box in it, I do not know. A pile of dry earth was on one side of the excavation. Grotesque shadows were cast by the light of the lantern falling upon the gun boxes and the packing cases.

"Two of the men picked up the body of Booth, still in its wrapping of gunny sacking and enshrouded in an army blanket, and deposited it in the shallow hole, which could not be dignified by the term "grave"<sup>1</sup>. This was quickly filled with earth, packed down and the surface smoothed off. The surplus dirt was thrown into the cart

and removed. As the floor of the chamber was a dirt one, there was little trouble in concealing the fact that a hole had been dug in it and then filled up.

" It is possible that there were some persons secreted from our view in the chamber, who could watch our every movement and report our doings; but I think this is improbable. It is possible, for the dim light of the lantern did not penetrate the darkness far, neither could we see behind the things which were stored there; it is improbable, for after we had secreted the body Mr. Stebbins, who had the key, locked the doors of the apartment and we left, Stebbins and I going to our quarters, and the soldiers returning to their barracks. The only means of egress from the apartment in which the body of Booth was secreted was through the doors which Stebbins had locked, and the key of which was later delivered to Secretary Stanton, through the proper military channels.

" It has been said that we secreted the body of Booth in the cellar of the penitentiary. There was no cellar in the penitentiary. All of the buildings that were standing forty-five years ago on the night of the so-called burial of Booth have been razed, so far as I know, to give place to the War College and officers' quarters."

At the Impeachment Investigation, <sup>May 20th, 1867,</sup> the following questions were asked General Baker (formerly Colonel Baker) with reference to the place of Booth's burial. (26)

Q. Was it in the arsenal building, or in the penitentiary?

A. I call it the arsenal building, because it was used for arsenal stores. It was properly the old penitentiary, though it had not been used for a penitentiary for some time. It was occupied at that time for arsenal stores for fixed ammunition.

Q. Did you ever represent to anybody that you or some of your assistants took the body of Booth out into the ocean, tied stones to it, and sunk it?

A. I do not know that I ever did directly. I have been questioned a great deal in reference to that matter, and used to reply to the reporters somewhat at random. Very likely I did make such a statement. I do not recollect.

Q. Why do you say very likely you did?

A. I say that because, at the time the body was disposed of, I was beset by correspondents and others who wanted to ascertain where it was buried. The Secretary did not want anybody to know.

Q. Did you ever represent that you alone, with one other man, disposed of the body, and that no other persons on earth knew where it was?

A. My previous answer applies to this question.

Q. You will answer this question if you please.

A. I might have made that representation.

Q. Did you represent to anyone that the head of Booth was taken off and the body buried without the head?

A. Never in my life.

Q. Is it a fact or not?

A. It is not, so far as I know.

Q. Was the head buried with the body?

A. The last I saw of the body it was whole, excepting a section of the spinal bone where the bullet entered, taken by Doctor Barnes, Surgeon-General, and which, I believe, is now in the Medical Museum. (27)

Imaginative writers had described how the heart of Booth had been removed and various things done with it. When asked about this, General Baker replied that he had never made such representations and that the heart was buried with the body. General Baker was asked "Did you ever tell anybody that the body was taken down on the bank of the Potomac, and the ground so covered over that no one could tell where it was.?" He answered that he had never told anyone that in his life.

According to the testimony of Lieutenant L.B. Baker, at the Impeachment Investigation, May 22, 1867, (28) he, General L.C. Baker, and two of the Montauk's sailors took the body from the gunboat, placed it in a row boat, carried it down the eastern branch to a little wharf attached to the arsenal, and then turned it over to Colonel Benton. (29) The body was actually buried under the floor of a large room, the door to the room was locked and the key turned over to the Secretary of War.

General Baker, <sup>discussing</sup> ~~says with reference~~ to the actual burial-place of Booth, in the appendix of his "History of the United States Secret Service," <sup>says,</sup>

"In compliance with a promise made in the Prospectus of this work, ~~as~~ as well as to gratify public curiosity, and, if possible, forever put at rest the many absurd and foolish rumors in circulation concerning the final disposition of the remains of the assassin, J. Wilkes Booth, I submit the following facts:-

"In order to establish the identity of the body of the assassin beyond all question, the Secretary of War directed me to summon a number of witnesses residing in the city of Washington, who had previously known the murderer. Some two years previous to the assassination of the President, Booth had had a tumor or carbuncle cut from his neck by a surgeon. On inquiry, I ascertained that Dr. May, a well-known and very skillful surgeon, of twenty-five years practice in Washington, had performed the operation.

"Accordingly I called on Dr. May, who, before seeing the body, minutely described the exact locality of the tumor, the nature and date of the operation, &c. After being sworn, he pointed to the scar on the neck, which was then plainly visible. Five other witnesses were examined, all of whom had known the assassin intimately for years. The various newspaper accounts, referring to the mutilation of Booth's body, are equally absurd. General Barnes, Surgeon-General U.S.A., was on board the gun-boat, where the post-mortem examination was held, with his assistants. General Barnes cut from Booth's neck about two inches of the spinal column through which the ball had passed; this piece of bone, which is now on exhibition in the Government Medical Museum, in Washington, is the only relic of the assassin's body above ground, and this is the only mutilation of the remains that ever occurred. Immediately after the <sup>conclusion</sup> ~~conclusion~~ of the examination, the Secretary of War gave orders as to the disposition of the body, which had become very offensive, owing to the condition in which it had remained after death; the leg, broken in jumping from the box to the stage, was much discolored and swollen, the blood from the wound having saturated his under-clothing. With the assistance of Lieut. L.B. Baker, I took the body from the gun-boat direct to the old Penitentiary, adjoining the Arsenal grounds. The building had not been used as a prison for some years previously. The Ordnance Department had filled the ground-floor cells with fixed ammunition--one of the largest of these cells was selected as the burial-place of Booth--the ammunition was removed, a large flat stone lifted from its place, and a rude grave dug; the body was dropped in, the grave was filled up, the stone replaced, and there rests to this hour all that remained of John Wilkes Booth."

~~medical museum at Washington.~~

As there were many parties supposed to be either directly or indirectly implicated in aiding the escape of Booth, a second expedition was sent to the Garrett place the week following Booth's death. This expedition was under the command of Lieutenant Baker and returned to Washington May 3rd, on board the propeller John S. Ide, the same boat used for the expedition that captured Booth and Herold. (30)

This second expedition traced the movements of Booth and Herold from the time they crossed the Potomac until they reached the Garrett place. Mrs. Quesenberry, Dr. Richard Stewart, the colored family whose son, Charley Lucas, hauled the assassins from Dr. Stewart's to Port Royal, were interviewed and some of them taken to Washington. At Dr. Stewart's, the note sent him by Booth from the Lucas cabin was ~~found~~ <sup>found</sup> and it

When this second party returned to Washington they had on board eight <sup>persons</sup> people who were charged with aiding Booth in his escape through Maryland and Virginia. Among these was Captain Willie Jett. After his escape from the first expedition, neighbors of the Garrett's, feeling that his testimony would free the family of suspicion of knowingly harboring the assassins, went to his home in Westmoreland County and prevailed upon him to voluntarily go to Washington as a witness, (31) and for this purpose he joined Lieutenant Baker at the Garrett place.

The New York Tribune stated that "The Ide also brought up the boat in which Booth crossed the Potomac into Virginia. "It is a small batteaux," the story read, "with two oars, and is in a very dilapidated condition. The oars look as though they had been made of several distinct pieces of wood and the boat itself does not seem as though it would bear up under even a slight gale. The boat was locked up in one of the sheds on the wharf; but before it could be secured, relic hunters had clipped off pieces from the seats and other parts of the boat." (32)

The pocket compass was exhibited to Colonel Conger at the Conspiracy trial. "That was taken from Booth's pocket, just as it is now, with the candle-grease on it and all" testified Conger. (33)

Lieutenant Baker made a third trip down to the Garrett place. This he describes in his testimony as occurring about a month after the second. (34)

He said that about two weeks after the second trip, "the young Garretts came down with a statement of the articles destroyed in the barn, and an application for damages. They wished me to sign it. I had been trying to find the opera glass which Mrs. Surratt was said to have given to Booth, but I could get no clue whatever to it.

I told Garrett that I could not sign the paper until he had given me all the things belonging to Booth that were in their possession. He said he would do so with pleasure. I then said I would go up in a week or ten days, when I expected to get everything which Booth left. I went to the Garrett place, and young Garrett brought me a piece of Booth's crutch and a haversack, and said that was all. Just before dark I went out to where the barn was burned, thinking I might find some remains of the glass. I poked around in the ashes and found some melted lead, (it seemed he had some cartridges with him,) and pieces of the blanket that Herold had; but I found nothing that looked like the opera glass. There was a little boy about five or six years old, playing around, and on questioning him

I learned that Booth gave the opera glass to his sister, Joanna Garrett, and that she had put it in her father's writing desk. Next morning I told the old gentleman what I knew about the opera glass, and that it must be produced. He was much surprised that I should know what had transpired. I called in the daughter, Joanna, and told her she should do one of two things--either produce the opera glass or come with me to Washington. She began to cry, and was very much affected. The father took her aside, and came back and said the opera glass was about nine miles off, with a sister of hers. We rode over there and found it hid in a clothes chest in the garret. I brought it to Washington and turned it over to General Baker, with a request that I might have it, and telling him how I got it. It was a peculiar glass, having three sets of small lenses, with three screws to turn, marked "opera" "marine" and "field". It was a very valuable glass." (35)

Since there was a serious falling out on the part of the three officers, Conger, Doherty and Baker, as to who was in command of the expedition, it is of interest to note the following letter from the Secretary of War in answer to a resolution of the House of Representatives, April 10, 1866, calling for the findings of the Commission for the capture of J. Wilkes Booth and D.E. Herold. It appears from all the testimony, as follows:

"That the parties who made the arrest of Booth and Herold, were a detachment of the 16th N.Y. Cavalry, consisting of Lieutenant E.P. Doherty, commanding, and two sergeants, seven corporals and seventeen privates, accompanied by E.J. Conger and L.B. Baker, two employees in the detective service of Col. L.C. Baker, provost marshal &c., the officer who originated and directed the expedition, though not personally accompanying it. Upon the principles and legal analogies hereafter referred to, it is concluded that the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars is to be divided between Colonel Baker, detectives Conger and Baker, and Lieutenant Doherty and his command.

"The proper commanding officer of the expedition itself, must, it is conceived, be deemed to have been the commander of the detachment of troops, Lieutenant E.P. Doherty. It is, indeed, represented by Colonel Baker in his official report, and is asserted by Conger and L.B. Baker, that the entire force was placed under the command of E.J. Conger, a detective or special officer in Colonel Baker's employment, who had previously held the position of lieutenant-colonel in the volunteer service, but had been formally mustered out of the service, and had, on this occasion, no military rank. But to place an individual occupying this status, however personally worthy, in authority not only over troops, but over a commissioned officer, thereby investing him with a military command, and subordinating to him, though without rank, an officer with full rank and command as such, would, ordinarily, certainly be an anomalous and unauthorized proceeding." (36)

The official records then would indicate that from a strict military standpoint, Lieutenant Doherty was in command of the expedition. All instructions of any official nature point to him as such. On April 24, 1865, when Colonel Baker requested a detachment the following orders were issued.

"Commanding Officer Detachment Sixteenth New York Cavalry.

"Sir:

" The major-general commanding directs that you detail twenty-five men, well mounted, to be commanded by a reliable and discreet commissioned officer, to report at once to Col. L. C. Baker, Special Agent, War Department, 217 Pennsylvania Avenue, opposite Willard's Hotel, Report your action.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

" A. R. SEWALL,

"Lieutenant and Acting Assistant Adjutant-General

" Headquarters Detachment Sixteenth New York Cavalry,

" Washington, D.C., April 24, 1865.

"Lieut. E. P. Doherty,

"Sixteenth New York Cavalry:

"Sir:

" You are hereby detailed for the duty specified in the preceding order, and will report immediately to Col. L. C. Baker for instructions.

" J. SCHNEIDER,

" Captain, Sixteenth New York Cavalry, Commanding Detachment"

*official report states,*  
Lieutenant Doherty says,

"In pursuance to the foregoing orders, I reported to Colonel Baker, at the time and place specified, and received the following information and instructions. He informed me that he had reliable information that the assassin Booth and his accomplice were somewhere between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers. He gave me several photographs of Booth and introduced me to Mr. Conger and Mr. Baker, and said they would accompany me. He directed me to scour the section of the country indicated thoroughly, to make my own disposition of the men in my command, to forage upon the country, giving receipts for what was taken from loyal parties, and to land at or near Belle Plain at all hazards, to swim my horses ashore if I could not land otherwise, and return when I thought proper. I embarked upon the steamer John S. Ide, at Sixth-Street wharf, this vessel having been placed at my disposal by the following order:



" Assistant Quartermaster's Office, River Transportation  
Sixth-Street Wharf, Washington, D.C., April 24, 1865.

" Captain of Steamer John S. Ide:

" Sir:

Having received on board twenty-five men and horses, proceed down the river, subject to the orders of the officer in charge; having performed the duties required of you, return to this city and report to me.

" E. S. ALLEN,

" Captain and Assistant Quartermaster

" I then proceeded down the river to Belle Plain, and having landed my force I issued the following order to the captain commanding the vessel:

" Headquarters Detachment Sixteenth New York Cavalry  
Off Belle Plain, Va., April 24, 1865.

" Capt. H. Wilson,

" Commanding Steamer John S. Ide.

" Captain:

You will please moor off, after landing my command, to a place of safe anchorage, not to exceed one mile from this place, and there await further orders. Should you not receive a dispatch from me before the 25th instant at 6 p.m., return to Washington. Should you see any of the enemy's force report the fact to the gunboat. Forage will remain on board your boat.

" E. P. DOHERTY,

" First Lieutenant, Sixteenth New York Cavalry, Commanding Detachment

(37)

(From - War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.  
Series I, Vol. XLVI, Part I - Reports.  
Richmond Campaign, Fort Fisher, N.C., Appomattox Campaign, Etc.  
Serial No. 95, pp. 1317-18.)

Lieutenant Baker had been a detective in the Government Service during  
-24- the first two years of the war and then/<sup>became</sup> an officer in the District of Columbia  
Cavalry. He was not called to the stand in the conspiracy trials. Soon after the  
capture of Booth, Baker went to Lansing, Michigan, and/<sup>apparently</sup> made little effort to collect  
any share of the reward. He and Conger made sworn reports to the Secretary of War  
December 24th, 1865, (38) After this Lieutenant Baker was not heard from again  
until he appeared as a witness at the Impeachment Investigation, May 22, 1867. (39)  
At this time Lieutenant Baker stated that General L.C. Baker had come to him first  
when the trace of Booth's whereabouts had been learned and that from what General  
Baker had said he understood that he was to be in supreme command of the expedition.  
Lieutenant Baker claims that he invited Colonel Conger, who was lame, to accompany

the party.

The combined statement of Conger and Lieutenant Baker, December 24th, 1865,  
says: "Colonel Conger was sent with a note from General Baker to General Hancock  
for a commissioned officer and twenty-five cavalry to report immediately to General  
Baker, for duty under his Command." (40)

Conger had been a Lieutenant Colonel in the first District of Columbia  
Cavalry, had been quite severely wounded and was apparently in Washington convalescing  
at the time he was asked to accompany the expedition.

In answer to a question at the Impeachment Investigation as to his status  
at this time Lieutenant Baker answered:- "I was not in the service at the time. I  
had been mustered out two weeks before. I started out in command of the party.  
Colonel Conger is a good officer and a peculiar man. I saw that his pride was hurt,  
and that he did not seem to have any interest in the matter. I knew he was experienced,  
and was familiar with the country about Belle Plain, and as we came up on the bluff,  
it being then very dark, I said, "Colonel Conger, you take charge of the cavalry; you  
have been over the ground. I do not want you to consider me in command; we are  
together." That seemed to relieve him, and everything went on pleasantly. (41)

The distribution of the reward having become a serious question due to the  
conflicting claims of Lieutenants Doherty and Baker, Colonel Conger and General Baker  
as directing head  
who/also felt that he should have a share, the Secretary of War appointed Judge Holt  
and General Townsend as a Commission to effect a settlement.

Although this Commission stated that General Baker had "originated, planned  
and generally directed" the expedition, it awarded him but \$3,000. Conger was to  
receive \$4,000; Lieutenant Baker \$4,000; and Lieutenant Doherty \$7,500. This was not  
satisfactory to the various claimants and the matter came before the committee of claims  
of the House of Representatives in the spring of 1866, and the following recommendations  
made: General Baker and Colonel Conger \$17,500 each; Lieutenant Baker \$5,000 and  
Lieutenant Doherty \$2,500. The recommendation was not followed, however, by the House

H.R. No. 801  
and Senate and the act/approved by Congress July 28th, 1866, gave Conger \$15,000;  
Doherty \$5,250; Lieutenant L.B. Baker \$3,000; General L.C. Baker \$3,750; Sergeant  
Corbett and the other cavalrymen \$1,683.48 each. (42)

The list of those in the expedition which made the capture according to the Committee on Claims of the House of Representatives, is as follows:

Detectives: Lieutenant Colonel E.J. Conger, Lieutenant L.C. Baker; Sixteenth New York Cavalry: First Lieutenant; E.P. Doherty of Company L.; Sergeants: Boston Corbett of Company L, Andrew Wendell of Company E; Corporals: Charles Zimmer of Company C, Michael Uniac of Company C, Oliver Lonpkey of Company E, Herman Newgarten of Company H, John Waltz of Company H, Michael Hornsley of Company H, John Winter of Company I.; Privates: Lewis Savage of Company A, John Myers of Company E, John Ryan of Company E, William Byrne of Company E, Philip Hoyt of Company E, Martin Kelly of Company E, Henry Putnam of Company E, Frank McDaniel of Company E, Fredrick Deitz of Company E, Emery Parady of Company H, David Barker of Company H, William McQuade of Company H, John Millington of Company H, Joseph Zisgen of Company M, Carl Steinbrugge of Company M, John Adolph Singer of Company M, Abraham Genay of Company A.

Although not with the expedition, <sup>the</sup> information obtained in lower Maryland which aided in the capture of Booth and Herold brought rewards to James R. O'Beirne, detective \$2,000; H.H. Wells, George Cottingham, Alexander Lovett, each \$1,000.

The captors of Atzerodt were paid \$25,000 and a \$5,000 reward was paid for the capture of Payne.

The payments were made by separate draft of the Treasury Department of the United States, issued August 9, 1866, on Treasury Warrant No.7724 and each of the paid drafts aggregating the total sum appropriated is now in the archives of the Government at Washington and may be seen by permission of the Secretary of the Treasury.

## THE AUTOPSY AND BURIAL.

Notes.

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- (1) Oration in New York on the occasion of Abraham Lincoln's death by George Bancroft.
- (2) Imp. Inv. p.485
- (3) April 27th after the cavalcade returned with Herold and Booth's body, Edwin M. Stanton, the Secretary of War, telegraphed Major General Halleck at Richmond: "A rebel officer named Willie Jett conveyed Booth from the Potomac across the Rappahannock. He has gone to Richmond. Please have him looked up, arrested, ironed and sent here." O.R. Series 1, Vol.46, Part 3, p.967.

*Major M.B. Ruggles stated in The Century Magazine for January 1890.*

Learning that Jett was a prisoner, and that we were to be arrested, tried, and hanged, as aiders and abettors, Bainbridge and myself stood not on the order of going, but went at once. Making our way into Essex County and crossing to Westmoreland, we went to our home up in King George County. Some ten days after, I was arrested at night by a squad of United States cavalry. Bainbridge was also captured. We were taken to Washington and placed in the Old Capitol Prison. We were not alone in our misery, however, for Dr. Stewart, at whose house Booth had stopped, William Lucas, the negro who had driven him to the ferry, and a number of others, were there, among them being Jett, who had escaped from Captain Doherty, and had been recaptured at his home in Westmoreland County.

After the trial, by a strange mistake I was sent to Johnson's Island, where as a Confederate prisoner I had passed half a year; but after a few days spent there I was returned to Washington, and after taking the oath of allegiance I was released.

- (4) History of the Secret Service, Baker p.541.
- (5) Imp. Inv. p.451, S.T. p.314.
- (6) Doherty's Story
- (7) S.T. p.320, Imp. Inv. p.483, Re Doherty in command.
- (8) April 27th Dispatch, N.Y. Tribune, Friday April 28th.
- (9) N.Y. Tribune, Friday, April 28, 1865.
- (10) N.Y. Tribune, Friday, April 28, 1865.
- (11) N.Y. Tribune, Saturday, April 29, 1865.
- (12) Baker, p.553.
- (13) Baker, p.554.
- (14) Baker, p.553.
- (15) O.R. Series 1, Vol. 46, Part 3, pp. 1072, 1227.
- (16) Dr. Porter, The Columbian, April 1911.
- (17) North American Review, April 1896, and N.Y. Sun, April 5, 1896.
- (18) Corroborated by Dr. Porter, The Columbian, April 1911.
- (19) Next page---

3  
At the time this is being written (April 18, 1926) there is  
in Chicago the only man now living <sup>it is reasonable to assert</sup> who saw the assassination and was present  
at the trial and execution of the conspirators. <sup>both</sup>

Sergeant Boggs is a resident of the James C. King home for old men,  
and the superintendent said when the sergeant was interviewed in 1921 that he  
had a very clear mind and does not romance as so many old men do. Miss Johnson,  
in charge of the office, stated that his mind was very sound and his memory  
good. His ~~affidavit~~ <sup>Statement</sup> which follows is of corroborative interest in connection  
with the identification and disposal of the body of John Wilkes Booth.

During the Civil War; 1861 - 1865, I was a Sargeant, Signal Corps, U.S.A.  
Near the end of the war I was wounded at Raleigh, N. C, by being knocked off my horse.  
I was then sent to a hospital in Washington, D. C. When about well my cousin, General  
Thomas M. Vincent, the then Assistant Adjutant General of the U. S. Army, invited me to  
accompany him to the play, "Our American Cousin", at Ford's Theatre the evening of  
April 14, 1865. My cousin had procured tickets for the main floor, park A, a little lower  
down than the center. In the third act, although not looking at the Presidential box,  
I saw a flash and heard a pistol report which drew my attention to the box. I saw a man  
jump from the box, get his foot tangled in the draped flag and fall to the stage. He  
jumped up and yelled "sic semper tyrannis", crossed the stage to the left and disappeared  
behind the scenery. No one attempted to stop the assassin as he crossed the stage, as the  
crowd did not understand at first what had happened and thought it was possibly part of  
the play. My family was from Ohio and my mother was a very good friend of Judge Bingham,  
the special Judge Advocate at the Conspiracy Trial, who was also a Congressman from Ohio.  
I talked with both Judge Bingham and Surgeon General Barns about Booth, and was told by  
both of them that a committee went on board the boat where the body of Booth was lying  
and identified it. The various stories given out to the public after the disposal of Booth's  
body were to prevent any attempt on the part of the friends of Booth, many of whom were  
supposed to be in Washington at that time, to steal the body for a Southern Triumphant  
march. Judge Bingham gave me a special pass to attend the trial of the conspirators and  
I attended practically every session of the trial; also the execution. Later through the  
aid of Judge Bingham, I became a special post office clerk for the House of Representatives.

Signed Albert W. Boggs

Signal Corps U.S.A. 1861-1865

Residence 360 East Garfield Blvd

Dated Chicago Ill

(20) C.T. p.95.

(21) S.T. p.271

(22) In 1887 Dr John Frederick May, the surgeon who operated on John Wilkes Booth for "quite a large fibroid tumor" sometime prior to the assassination, wrote an account of the operation. He also told how he later identified the body of Booth on the gunboat, Montauk April 27, 1865. Dr May in this story "The Mark of the Scalpel" states that the tumor was "on the back and rather on the left side" of Booth's neck. A short time after the operation, writes Dr May, Booth returned "with the wound torn open and widely gaping and explained to the doctor that in the piece he was playing with Charlotte Cushman, "she had to embrace him, and that she did so with so much force, and so roughly, that the wound opened under her grasp." According to Dr May, the "indirect and tedious course of healing, by granulation, now followed, and left a large and ugly scar.

"I had never seen him before this professional interview," declares Dr May, "and I never saw him again, after he left my care, until I was called on by government detectives to examine his dead body, brought to the Navy Yard at Washington, and there seen on a steamer in the river.

"After the death of Booth strong doubt existed whether the body brought to the Navy Yard at Washington was that of the man who had assassinated the President. In fact, it was openly asserted, it was not his body. Probably in consequence of this, a commission of high functionaries of the government was formed to obtain evidence as to the identification, and I received a summons to appear before it. As I was very busily, and as I thought more usefully engaged in rendering services to the living, than in examining the bodies of the dead, and as no authority for the summons was shown, I did not respond to it. But in a short time, a second and more peremptory message came, directing me to appear before the commission; and as at that time the "Inter arma silent leges" power was in full force, I deemed it most prudent to obey. I therefore started for the Navy Yard with my son, then a mere lad, and now a practicing physician in this city. On my way, a third messenger was met on his way to my house, who was no less than the chief of the detective corps, the noted Colonel Baker. He returned, conducted me on board the steamer, and ushered me into the cabin where the commissioners were in session, and by whom, notwithstanding my contumacy, I was very politely received. I was then told it had been

stated to them I had removed a tumor from the neck of Booth, and they wished to know if I would identify the body; and to go on deck, and examine it thoroughly and make my report. The body was on deck, completely concealed by a tarpaulin cover, and Surgeon General Barnes and his assistants standing near it. By his order the cover was removed, and to my great astonishment revealed a body, in whose lineaments, there was to me no resemblance of the man I had known in life! My surprise was so great, I at once said to General Barnes, "There is no resemblance in that corpse to Booth, nor can I believe it to be that of him." After looking at it for a few moments I asked, "Is there a scar upon the back of its neck?" He replied, "there is." I then said, "if that is the body of Booth let me describe the scar before it is seen by me;" and did so as to its position, its size, and its general appearance so accurately as caused him to say; "You have described the scar as well as if you were looking at it; and it looks as you have described it, more like the cicatrix of a burn, than that made by a surgical operation." The body being then turned, the back of the neck was examined, and my mark was unmistakably found by me, upon it. And it being afterwards, at my request, placed in a sitting position, standing, and looking down upon it I was finally enabled to imperfectly recognize the features of Booth. But never in a human being had a greater change taken place, from the man who I had seen in the vigor of life and health, as in that of the haggard corpse which was before me, in its yellow and discolored skin; its unkempt and matted hair; and its whole facial expression sunken and sharpened by the exposure and starvation it had undergone! The right lower limb was greatly contused, and perfectly black, from a fracture of one of the long bones of the leg." (Taken from the original hand-written document, "The Mark of the Scalpel," by Dr. John Fredrick May, dated Jan. 10, 1887, in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.)

Dr. May in 1887, it will be noted, wrote, "The right lower limb was greatly contused." There has been some question as to whether Booth broke his left or right leg when he leaped from the President's box. "Right" for "left" would be an easy mistake to make with reference to the arms or legs of a body especially in a reclining position. Today in the archives of the War Department the boot cut from Booth's foot by Dr. Mudd can be seen by those interested. It bears the name "J.Wilkes" inside the leg and is for

*Inducted May. Dated Jan 10, 1887.*



the left foot.

"On Friday, the 21st of April," testified Lieutenant Alexander Lovett, at the Conspiracy Trial (C.T. p.87), "I went to Dr. Mudd's again, for the purpose of arresting him. When he found we were going to search the house, he said something to his wife, and she went upstairs and brought down a boot. Mudd said he had cut it off the man's leg, in order to set the leg. I turned down the top of the boot, and saw the name 'J. Wilkes' written in it." Then in the trial records is the statement, "A long riding boot, for the left foot, slit up in front for about eight inches, was exhibited to the witness." "That is the boot", said Lieutenant Lovett.

The New York Tribune, April 27, 1865, contains the statement:- "Surgeon-General Barnes held an autopsy upon Booth's body this afternoon. The smaller bone of his left leg was badly fractured, one of the smaller arteries ruptured, and the leg badly swollen."

*"Left leg" says General T.M. Harris one of the military Commission which tried the conspirators (assassination of Lincoln) by T.M. Harris p 40)*

Unless someone can show that John Wilkes Booth was in the habit of wearing his boots on the wrong feet, it would appear that the physical evidence must stand against all other statements to the contrary. The main point anyway is that the captured man, along with the many other means of identification, had a broken leg.

(23) The Evening News, Roanoke, Virginia, June 6, 1903.

(23<sup>1</sup>) O. R. Series I Vol. 46 Part III p. 1002

(24) Dr. Porter, The Columbian, April 1911.

(25) The Columbian, April 1911.

(26) Imp. Inv. p.453-456

(27) The section of vertebrae from the neck of John Wilkes Booth was still on exhibition when I visited that institution in 1920.

(28) Imp. Inv. p.486-7.

(29) Lieutenant L.B. Baker was asked at the Impeachment Investigation, May 28, 1867, pp.486-487, "Did you have anything to do with burying the body?"

A. "General Baker told me to come with him, that he had orders to dispose of the body. We took the body from the gunboat into a rowboat, and rowed down the Eastern Branch to a little wharf attached to the arsenal. The body was then taken out and put in an arbor.

Q. Who went with you in the rowboat, besides General Baker?

A. Two sailors from the gunboat, who rowed. General Baker left me in charge of the body, went up to the arsenal, and came back with the major who was in command—Major Benton, I believe. They looked at the body and talked the matter over. General Baker had orders, as he told me, to put the body where it would not be disturbed till Gabriel blew his last trump. The body was taken into the arsenal ground, and that is the last I saw of it.

Q. Was it put in a box or coffin before that?

A. No, sir. After the Surgeon General had examined it, it was sewed up again in the blanket.

Q. Where did the Surgeon General examine it?

A. On the gunboat. The officers of the boat were present, and Judge Holt, General Baker and myself.

Q. Do you know Dr. May, of this city?

A. I do not; but I know he was present.

Q. Did you ever hear General Baker say that he had dropped the body in the ocean with weights attached to it?

A. I did not. I heard that he made such a statement.

Q. Did you ever hear him say that he buried the body on the bank of the Potomac, and covered it in such a way that nobody would ever find it till Gabriel blew his last trump?

A. No, sir; nothing of that sort.

Q. Did he ever tell you where he did put the body?

A. No, sir, he never told me. I cannot say how I knew, but I was satisfied as to where it was put. I think that some of his officers told me where he had told them it was put. I never asked him any questions about <sup>it</sup> I guess we never exchanged a word from that time to this about it.

Q. Had you known Booth before he was shot?

A. No, sir. I had his likeness, and identified him by it.

Q. Did you know Booth before?

A. I did not.

Testimony, May 30, 1867, of Thomas T. Eckert, late Assistant Secretary of War.:

Q. Who gave the orders with reference to the burial of Booth's body?

A. The Secretary of War.

Q. Did you?

A. No, sir; or, if I gave any order, it was an order given me by the Secretary of War; and such an order would of necessity be in writing.

Q. Did you give a verbal order to Baker to take the body and dispose of it, and how?

A. I did not.

Q. Do you recollect to whom the charge of that matter was given?

A. It is my impression the order was given to Colonel Benton--whatever order was given. I may, by direction of the Secretary of War, have instructed Baker to take the body to Colonel Benton. I do not recollect that distinctly.

Q. Were you present at the burial of Booth?

A. I was not present when the body was put into the grave.

Q. Did you see the grave?

A. I did.

Q. In what room was the burial to take place?

A. In a large room in the arsenal building.

Q. Please describe that room.

A. The only description I can give of it is, that it is the largest room in the building. It is a room perhaps thirty feet square, and possibly more. I never was in it but twice. It is in the old penitentiary building.

Q. Which side of the building is it on?

A. In going in at the main entrance, it is on the left; what side that is in respect to the points of the compass I cannot give a guess. It was in the night when I went in, and very dark.

Q. Who directed the room in which the body should be buried?

A. It is my impression that Colonel Benton suggested it.

- (30) W.N. Walton's Dispatch, May 3, 1865, N.Y. Herald.
- (31) W.N. Walton's Dispatch, May 3, 1865, N.Y. Herald.
- (32) N.Y. Tribune, Saturday, May 6, 1865.

Thomas A. Jones, in his "J. WILKES BOOTH", p.109-110, says that the boat furnished Booth and Herold was "a flat bottomed boat about twelve feet long, of a dark-lead color" purchased by him the year before for eighteen dollars. He stated "As I was in the act of shoving the boat off Booth exclaimed, 'Wait a minute, old fellow,'" and then offered him some money. "I took eighteen dollars, the price of the boat I knew I would never see again," says Jones. Some of the newspapers stated that Booth had paid \$300.00 for the boat but I can find no authority for such a statement.

- (33) "Conspiracy Trial," by Poore, Vol. 1, p.320.
- (34) See S.T. p.321, which mentions July as the time.
- (35) Testimony of L.B. Baker, May 22, 1867. Imp. Inv. p.489.
- (36) 39th Congress, 1st Session, H.R. Executive Document #9
- (37) From "The War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies", series 1, Vol. XLVI, Part 1.
- (38) Baker, <sup>"</sup>History of the Secret Service,<sup>"</sup> p.532.
- (39) Imp. Inv. p.479
- (40) Baker, p.533.
- (41) Testimony of L.B. Baker, May 22, 1867. Imp. Inv. p.490
- (42) Appendix Congressional Globe, 1st Session, 39th Congress, p.423. For the debate in Congress, see pp 4183-91. Part of this was quoted in the preface of

this book. For a detailed discussion see "The Assassination," by DeWitt,  
p.275-279.