

# SCIENTIFIC OIL COMPOUNDING CO.

"Special Oils for Special Purposes"

OTTO EISENSCHIML, MGR.

1645-55 SOUTH KILBOURN AVENUE

CHICAGO.

May 25th, 1932.

Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor,  
"Lincoln Lore",  
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Dear Dr. Warren:

Your issue of May 2nd contains some statements regarding the identification of Lincoln's assassin that many students of history will not be able to agree with. I shall take up the points in the order in which they appear in your "Lincoln Lore" of that date.

## INITIALS ON HAND

Charles Dawson, clerk at the National Hotel in Washington, whom you quote as stating under oath that he knew of the initials "J.W.B." on Booth's right hand, was twice a witness at the Conspiracy Trial in 1865. In neither case was he asked about these initials nor did he swear to them. No other witness has given sworn testimony about this point. Francis Wilson in his book on Booth mentions the story you refer to but gives no references. While our information about the India ink initials on the living Booth are meager, there is no testimony whatsoever available to the fact that the initials found on the corpse alleged to be that of Booth were the same as those on the living man. With Lafayette Baker in charge and a \$100,000 reward at stake, it is well to discount heavily all statements emanating from official sources under his control.

## THE MARK OF THE SCALPEL.

You omit to say that Dr. Frederick May at first positively refused to identify the body as that of Booth. He then described the scar on which his story is based. In Dr. Barnes' sworn testimony at the conspiracy trial this story is not quite so melodramatic, and Dr. May himself did not publish it with all its embellishments until 1908. In the meantime, it is well to remember that when Dr. May was called on the witness stand in the John Surrat trial in 1867, he could not remember whether the scar was on the right side or left side and testified that he had kept no records of the case in his books. Isn't it strange that a doctor should forget within a space of two years the location of a scar on which so much history depended, but should remember so many details forty

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years later?

## TWO GOLD FILLINGS

No sworn testimony from Dr. Merrill is available.

## THE BROKEN LEG

It is not Dr. Barnes but Dr. May who states that the body supposed to be Booth showed a "lower right limb that was greatly contused, and perfectly black from a fracture of one of the long bones of the leg". Incidentally, Booth happened to break his left leg and not his right leg, which shows again either that Dr. May was a very poor observer or else that the body was not that of Booth.

## GENERAL APPEARANCE

The nine people who had known Booth and viewed the body were mostly in the pay of the government. One of them, however, happened to be a well-known photographer, Gardner, who was there with one of his assistants. Photographers are usually invited to take pictures, but this was one of the exceptions. Why?

If we assume that Booth's features had changed so that a photograph would have hurt the government's case more than it would have helped it, wouldn't it have been at least fair to take photographs of the fractured leg, of the initials, of the gold fillings, of the raised eyebrow, of the broken thumb or of some other available material that would have lent itself to subsequent identification? But the only things that were preserved were two valueless and meaningless vertebrae.

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I do not think that the evidence at hand today is sufficient to make it possible to assert positively that the body on the gunboat was or was not that of John Wilkes Booth. I consider your statements a historical brief for the pro side and, therefore, think it is only fair that someone should be allowed