

ACTUAL BURIAL PLACE OF BOOTH

History U.S. Secret Service

By  
Gen'l. L. C. Baker -1867

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In compliance with a promise made in the Prospectus of this work, 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, etc. 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 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,

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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 Ordinance 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 filled up, the stone replaced, and there rests to this hour all that remained of John Wilkes Booth.