

THE IDENTIFICATION



Chapter 22.

THE IDENTIFICATION

And what would Mr. Bates and Mr. Campbell have said and what can the Reverend Dr. Clarence True Wilson and Bernie Babcock say in answer to the following letter received by me from a Kentuckian who is positive that until 1924 he knew John St. Helen-Booth in the living flesh? Bear in mind that Mrs. Babcock and Dr. Wilson already have accepted the Bates' mummy of David George as St. Helen and John Wilkes Booth.

"March 24, 1926.

"Dear Sir:

"In the early part of last year some articles appeared in your paper (The Dearborn Independent) dealing with the question whether John Wilkes was killed as is the general belief. The articles were able but based on the testimony of the men that brought back the dead body. I commenced to investigate more than twenty-five years ago a man who came into Kentucky tramping more than fifty years ago, whom the people suspected of being J. W. B. from the beginning. I saw Booth's picture in 1901 and was convinced that the suspicion was based on fact. I have investigated the subject at intervals from that day till this, and from my study of the man himself, his character, his form, his feature, his voice, his speech, scars on his face and neck, broken ankle and other things I have learned about him, this is the only conclusion I could form. He escaped, was a sailor for five or six years turned up in Texas as John St. Helen, came tramping and ragged into Kentucky, taught

school for forty-three years, retired at the age of eighty, and died in 1924 at the age of eighty five.

"I looked him over carefully for scars and marks of identification and found sufficient number on him and on Booth's pictures to convince any reasonable person beyond a question of a doubt that the suspect was really Booth. I can see the mark even in the magazine picture of John St. Helen that tells me he was Booth. The mummy was not, it don't look like Booth nor does it have the scar. I have been trying to get the picture or a copy of the picture of John St. Helen that I may look at it with a magnifying glass to see if what I want to see shows plainly.

I was in the Enquirer Office Christmas talking about the subject and Mr. Pence he gave me your name and advised me to write to you, and request a loan of the copy of the picture he thought you might have, and authorized me to mention his name. I tried to borrow the picture from Mr. Bates fifteen years ago and he declined to loan it. I sent Mrs. Bates a check to have me a copy made and she declined and I am the only man in the world that can show by their pictures that Booth and St. Helen were the same.

If you will loan me the copy, if you have it, I will return it in a short time and let you know the result of the investigation.

"I hope that you have the copy. (I see you printed it in the Independent) and that you don't think that I am asking too much when I ask you to loan it."

The picture was forwarded and then in a few days was returned with another letter from this new explorer in the realms of mythical Boothsiana. The place of residence and name of the writer is omitted that we may not unduly execute "Mr. St. Helen's family."

"April 28, 1926."

"Dear Sir:-

"I am returning your print of John St. Helen to you. I found all I expected to find and even more. I have been investigating for twenty-five years at intervals. I studied him carefully for marks of identification in order to be able to prove beyond a question of a doubt that he was Booth. As soon as I saw St. Helen's picture I was sure that it was the picture of Booth. I can prove it now. If the general likeness and two marks, very distinct, will prove it. You make the mistake and Shepherd makes the mistake of believing the lies of those men that brought back the body. Their story if true would naturally cause us to believe that he was captured.

"I have written the story of my investigations, and the only thing that keeps me from publishing it is the family. He had the crippled left foot and seven marks about the face and neck. I have a picture of him but as fate would have it, it only shows two marks and those not very conclusively. But the family has numerous pictures and if I can get hold of them I can show conclusively that he was Booth. I found only one difference. Booth had a disfigured right ear. My man's ear was disfigured but not so much. I discovered the blemish on the man himself first. I tried to get Harper's to get behind me financially so I could do a little more research work. But in view of the findings of Mr. Shepherd they would go no further.

"Booth escaped, was a sailor, turned up in Texas and died in Kentucky. I am the one man in the world that can or at least is interested in establishing the fact. I would like to make some money out of what I know if possible. I would like to do it and not lose the friendship

of the family. I would like to get hold of several of his pictures here in Kentucky, and several of his younger pictures and publish them along with St. Helen's picture calling attention to the same marks I find on all three. These together with the story of my investigations ought to be interesting enough to sell. I have one picture but it is in another part of the state. I can send it to you in a month. I know where I can get another, but the position is not just what I need to show what I want.

"He was a wonderful man. Would have made an ideal college president. He came into Kentucky tramping and was suspected from the first of being Booth, but I happened to be the only one to get interested.

"I want to thank you for letting me have the print. I tried to get it from Bates fifteen years ago. If he had sent it to me I might have let him come up and see his man. I learned from your article that Booth had not recovered from the throat or bronchial affection which Clara E Lachlan mentioned as threatening his future on the stage. I would like to know his birthday, who his sweetheart was, where he went to school, and a few more things to complete my research. Knowing a thing like that and proving it are two different propositions. But I am at the place now where I can prove it, or else establish sufficient facts to justify no other conclusion. I suspect that you will think that I am insane but you should not for you know it is a question."

And we may add that this Kentucky discoverer will tell his children and they will tell theirs until all Kentucky will know in two or three generations that John Wilkes Booth died and was buried in their state in the year 1924. Although I published in a series of magazine articles what I feel the unbiased would consider as ample proof that the man captured by the Government April 26, 1865, was John Wilkes Booth, the Kentuckian whose letters have just been quoted has not accepted them. Neither has an Ardmore, Oklahoma man who wrote as follows May 12, 1925.

" I have read the story of John Wilkes Booth with much interest but I am not convinced that your story is true. In November 1872 at Helena, Arkansas, when I was seventeen years old, I fell in company with a man by the name of James Bentley, and I lived with him just one year, leaving him in November 1873. At that time he was living with his family near Redfork, in Desha County, Arkansas, near the mouth of the Arkansas River.

"James Bentley claimed to have been a quarter master sargent in the U. S. Army stationed at Washington at the time Lincoln was assassinated. That he knew Booth by sight just as well as he knew President Lincoln. That he seen the body of the dead man who was brought to Washington as that of John Wilkes Booth and that it was not Booth, and with the exception of being the same complexion it had no resemblance to Booth. That the body was identified by several persons as being that of a young confederate surgeon. That the body was taken at night and weights attached to it, and sunk near the mouth of the Potomac River. That all Washington Officialdom knew Booth was never captured. James Bentley was a strong partisan republican and bitterly anti-Southern.

"I have heard him tell this story about Booth many times to different parties, and he always told it the same way.

"While I was young at the time becoming 18 years old in July 1873, I was pretty well educated, a good historian, and had read much of the world's best literature at that time. No one could hear Bentley tell his story without being impressed that Bentley felt sure of its truth."

It is not a matter of proof with the writers of letters like this but of feeling. They want to believe the unsupported tales of some acquaintance who cannot show any connection whatever with the affair other than their own rambling statements.

I have a letter dated May 6, 1926, from a woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who says that J. Wilkes Booth was the founder of the original Ku Klux Klan!

In the New Orleans Times Picayune for April 5, 1925, is a story headed "Was this Shoemaker John Wilkes Booth?" Mrs. M. P. Franklin of 428 Calhoun Street New Orleans, is claimed to be "fully convinced that 'Happy Jack' was none other than John Wilkes Booth." According to the story, in 1897, Mrs. Franklin, while attending court session in Newkirk, Oklahoma, in order to obtain a divorce from her husband, also attended a dance where she met an "Itinerant Cobbler" known as "Happy Jack, the Shoemaker of Newkirk" and known also as D. E. George, a violinist. On this occasion, "Happy Jack" played the "Blue Danube" and other Straus Waltzes for the dance. "He was a fine violinist," declares Mrs. Franklin, "Having a large dance repertoire and most conversant with classics." "He was dressed," so her story goes, "in black broadcloth and with white tie, had the stilted diction of the most conventional school, his manners were princely and when I looked at his expensive and scrupulous attire," Mrs. Franklin is reported as saying, "I wondered how it could be that a supposedly poor shoemaker could present so pretentious an appearance." Mrs. Franklin describes this paragon's physical characteristics by declaring that he had "not become a victim of environment or roughened by contact with the crudities of the West," and that, "He was a man of striking personality, high intellectual forehead, flashing black eyes and iron gray hair that he habitually stroked backward." "Mrs. Franklin recalls, "the story states "that time had dealt very kindly with 'Happy Jack' and that "he was a cripple and limped rather painfully."

And then we learn that Mrs. Franklin has read the Bates claims and that "Happy Jack" committed suicide, January 7, 1903, in Enid, but she does not take advantage in any way of the lapse in time between that date and June 13th

when the records show that David George left "this mad, mad world."

John St. Helen lived and so did David George but whether they were each other remains unproved and that either was John Wilkes Booth is impossible.

That there was some man or men in the Southwest who looked like John Wilkes Booth is undoubtedly true. Mustachios and black hair have not become a monopoly at any time. That at least one man was in the habit of promiscuously "confessing" to the Booth identity is also true. Mr. Bates and his disciples have placed emphasis on the seeming secretiveness attendant on the making of these confessions and would lead the public to believe that this secretiveness is in itself confirmation of the tales. Too many, however, have come forward with the assertion that similar confessions were made to them, thus destroying the exclusiveness and value of the Bates' claim that St. Helen (or David George) was attempting to conceal his Booth identity. The very multiplicity of these confessions vitiates their value.

Mr. "X", alias John St. Helen, et cetera, may have murdered someone as he claimed. In his moroseness why should he not vicariously confess to it by saying that the victim was Abraham Lincoln?. That was safe. He bore resemblance to and was at some time "recognized" as John Wilkes Booth. He was cognizant of the escape stories starting soon after Booth's death, for he could not have easily missed those published late in 1866 and early in 1867 in many of the metropolitan newspapers, which declared that Booth was hidden away in the island of Ceylon.

Occasional adoption of the Booth identity by Mr. "X" became a convenient excuse for leaving his wife in Tennessee. It was an excellent confession to tell Bates, the boy, yet in his teens, in order that he might avoid the disclosure of his actual identity. But he did not then fool Bates, who at that time accepted the "confession" at its real worth. Years later, however, Bates, now a Memphis, Tennessee, resident, became familiar with the 1893 stories about

Dr. Armstrong (his scrapbook contained clipping telling that story). He then saw the Dana story in 1897 and was convinced that there might be some basis in fact for St. Helen's "confession" and he began to reconstruct this in detail with the aid of the yarns he had read. But where the "confession" ends and the tales begin is a problem that even he could not solve.

The suicide of David George in 1903 and the disclosure of his 1910 "confession" to Mrs. Harper was final confirmation to Mr. Bates who then began to assist in the correction of history by asking that George's hair and mustache be combed in the approved Booth style. There being no death-bed confession, one was invented and the suicide's life lengthened by a day that he might have the opportunity to make it in all detail. A letter and wire were concocted to prove a connection between St. Helen and George. Unfortunately both were "lost." A newspaper description of David George's handwriting was altered to make it more nearly fit a description of the penmanship of John Wilkes Booth. Confirmation of the identity was sought from Joseph Jefferson and others, and gained by misquotation. Attempts were then made to weave all the Booth escape stories into one connected whole and apply them to the one man.

Who will be accepted as John Wilkes Booth should we find any well founded doubt that he was not killed at the Garrett place? Will it be the "Island of Ceylon man"; Dr. Armstrong; "Mr. Bickford"; "Enos, the Great South American Actor"; John St. Helen - either Mr. Bates' or the Kentuckian's"; Sam Colonna's shipmate; David George; "Happy Jack, the crippled shoemaker of Newkirk" or some of the other claimants, each of whom have a following?

In view of this question let us again examine the proofs of the April 26, 1865, capture and summarize the testimony that proves beyond a reasonable doubt that John Wilkes Booth met his last tragic end at Richard Henry Garrett's farm about three miles from Ports Conway and Royal in Caroline County, Virginia.

Before the capture Secretary Stanton had been advised from Baltimore:

"The following marks are upon the person of Booth by which he may be recognized. On his right arm are the initials of his name." (2)

Booth identified himself to Colonel Cox and Thomas Jones by these initials (3) and also to the Confederate officers, Jet, Bainbridge and Ruggles at Fort Royal. (4) The initials were seen by members of the Garrett family. (5) Robert, one of the younger Garrett sons, who became a preacher, said in a letter dated May 19, 1890, when the Dr. Armstrong claims were brought to his attention:-

"The identification of the dead man's body was complete, standing by I saw it done. First, the picture of the young actor, so well known everywhere, was laid by the dead man's face. God never made two men so exactly alike. Then point by point, the printed description held in the hand of the detective, was verified. The height, color of hair, eyes, all exact, every scar and mark. Then the crowning evidence, on the arm of the dead man was his name in India ink, done long years before." (6)

The pursuing officers had been furnished with descriptions of Booth and Herold by General L. C. Baker and compared those of Booth with the dying man.

Miss Holloway, the thirty-two year old school teacher, living at the Garrett place, was there during the two days Booth remained and was a witness to his death. When interviewed for the Augusta, Georgia, Chronicle in 1897, she said she had never doubted his identity, that he had a striking face, which could hardly be forgotten; that the comparison with his pictures satisfied her at the time and that she had since examined other photographs of Booth and had not changed her mind as to his right identity. (7)

J. M. Peddicord, the sergeant in charge of the body on board the Montauk, noticed the initials (8) and on board this gunboat, the body was identified from

the same initials by Chas. Dawson, the clerk at the National Hotel where Booth lived when in Washington. (9) We also have the following affidavit from O. H. Oldroyd, owner and curator of the Lincoln Collection, housed in the building where the President died.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)
) ss
District of Columbia)

O. H. Oldroyd, being duly sworn, deposes and says that he resides at 516 Tenth Street, N. W., being the house in which Abraham Lincoln died, and that since Lincoln's first campaign for the presidency he has been a collector of Lincolnia, and that about thirty years ago he removed his collection to the District of Columbia and has occupied the house where Lincoln died since that time. That when he moved to Washington thirty years ago, he realized that at some time there might be a controversy as to whether or not John Wilkes Booth, the assassinator of Abraham Lincoln, was actually killed as generally accepted, or if he made his escape. With this in mind, he called on various parties in Washington who had first hand information about this matter. Among these parties interviewed was Harry Ford, the son of John T. Ford, who was the proprietor of Ford's theatre - where Lincoln was shot, and he also called on and interviewed Mr. Buckingham, the doorkeeper of Ford's Theatre when Lincoln was assassinated. Mr Harry Ford and Mr. Buckingham both advised the affiant that at least three members of the company that was playing at Ford's theatre on the night Lincoln was shot and who were personally acquainted with John Wilkes Booth, went down to the Navy Yard and went aboard the Monitor on which Booth's body was being kept for identification and that these three members of the company who went down and viewed the body separately stated that there was tattooed on the left forearm of John Wilkes Booth in indelible ink the initials J. W. B., and that knowing these initials to have been on the left forearm of Booth, they looked for them to make sure of his identification and found them there. Affiant further states that Mr Harry Ford and Mr Buckingham brought these three parties to him, and they told affiant of this fact.

About twenty seven years ago, affiant took a trip on foot over the route which John Wilkes Booth followed down to the Garrett farm after the shooting of Lincoln, and that when affiant reached the Garrett home he spent the night there and met two of the sons of the old Mr. Garrett who resided at this place when John Wilkes Booth was shot there. That affiant talked with these two sons, and they advised him that they had just returned from the war the day before John Wilkes Booth reached their home, and that when Booth died on the front porch of their home, that they noticed the initials J. W. B. in indelible ink on his left forearm.

In testimony whereof affiant has hereunto set his hand and affixed his seal this 12th day of March, A. D. 1925.

(Signed) O H Oldroyd (SEAL)

United States of America,

District of Columbia,

I, Claude L Poindexter, a notary public for the District of Columbia, do hereby certify that O. H. Oldroyd, personally known to me, appeared before me and executed under oath the above statement and declared the same to be true to the best of his knowledge and belief. This the 12th day of March, 1925.

It was easy for those viewing the body of Booth to mistake right for left in the case of arms and legs, but not for St. Helen, who as the alleged "escaped Booth" said his right leg had been broken.

The question of right or left arises also in connection with the tattooed initials. The important point is that Booth and the body had "J. W. B." on one arm, of which there can be no question. The preponderance of testimony is in favor of the right arm or hand as the location of the marks.

In addition to the diary and pictures of actresses taken from John Wilkes Booth's pockets, and no one claims they are false, we have the stick pin taken from his undershirt by Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Baker before the man died. On this was "Dan Bryant to J. W. Booth." (10) The candle covered compass taken from his pocket was the one he used crossing the Potomac. Was the compass put in the pocket and the pin in the undershirt of the mythical substitute and did they tattoo on his arm the tell-tale initials "J. W. B."? There is no question as to the identity of the handwriting in the diary taken from the captured man's pocket. At the Surratt trial and impeachment investigation witnesses testified that it was in the hand of John Wilkes Booth. Of course, the diary could have been in the possession of another party, but taken in connection with the other points of identification, it is conclusive additional evidence.

The man shot in the barn was with Herold - was lame, acted in the most approved melodramatic manner and was willing to die rather than be captured. He knew the penalty of capture was death and a horrible death at that, if the officers should return him alive to Washington.

Would "Fox," "Ruddy," "Roddy," or someone else have preferred to come out and fight, a matter of certain death, rather than surrender and thus save his life by easily proving that he was not John Wilkes Booth? And did this imaginary character conveniently break his leg that he might be identified as the assassin?

Jack Garrett testified (11) that when he entered the barn on command of

Colonel Conger, and demanded Booth's surrender, that he said, "If you don't get out of here I will shoot you; you have betrayed me. Get out of the barn at once!" He raised to get his pistol and I went out at once." Who but Booth would Garrett have betrayed? It could not have been a man whom he did not know and had never seen.

Why should any other than Booth say to the whimpering Herold, who wanted to surrender, "You damned coward, will you leave me now? Go. go, I would not have you stay with me." (12)

The dying man's words acknowledged his identity. "I am a cripple. I got but one leg." and "Tell Mother I die for my country." (13) Had he not known that the Federal officers were cognizent of his identity he would have felt it necessary to explain who he was.

The Garretts say that the man who came to their place on Monday was the man who was shot in their tobacco barn and who died on their front porch and they testified that after the Federal troops passed, on the afternoon before his capture and death, this same man had returned to their house from the woods, had supper and was then sent with Herold to the barn to sleep that night.

Jett and Rollins were at the death scene. Did they protest that the wrong man had been killed? Rollins was a willing guide. (14) The dying man asked if Jett had betrayed him. (15) Who but Booth would have asked this question?

Lieutenant Edward Doherty, at the Conspiracy Trial on May 22, 1865, testified (16) that Herold claimed that he had met "Mr. Boyd" by accident about seven miles from Washington, between 11 and 12 o'clock on the night of the murder." "He said," stated Doherty, "that after they met they went to Mathias Point, and crossed the Potomac there." This was acknowledgment that the "Mr. Boyd" with whom he came to the Garrett farm was the man who was killed there

and whose dead body the officers were carting back to Washington. And Herold had told Lloyd, of the Surratt Tavern, the three Confederate officers and others that "Mr. Boyd" was John Wilkes Booth.

The actor was identified further on the gunboat by the description of a scar on his neck caused from an operation performed by Dr. May of that city. (17) Was this scar magically transferred to another?

The body of the man on the Montauk had a broken leg, a Washington dispatch to the New York Tribune, April 27, 1865, says:

"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."

Colonel H. H. Wells on May 16, 1865, (18) testified that he interviewed Dr. Mudd three times during the week after the assassination and that Dr. Mudd stated that when he had examined Booth's leg he found the front bone was broken nearly at right angles, about two inches above the instep. Mr. Bates claimed (19) that the right leg of his mummy showed signs of fracture about six or eight inches above the ankle.

The claims of the myth makers that the government had given out varying stories about the disposition of Booth's body are untrue. The government represented by the War Department has not to this day released any official statements on the subject. The testimony under oath of General Eckert and Baker and the story of Dr. Porter, three who were in a position to know personally, agree that the body was buried in the old penitentiary building of the Washington Arsenal. (20)

The body taken from this place, after being turned over to Edwin Booth was identified by the dentist who had placed gold fillings in the teeth of John Wilkes Booth. (21)

If the wrong man had been shot why make such an effort to bring Dr. May on board to identify the body? He had been sent for the third time and

on his way to the Montauk met General Baker coming for him. The officials certainly would not have been anxious to call in Booth's surgeon to identify the body of Booth unless they were honest in their intentions. (22)

Why did Edwin Booth go to so much trouble from 1867 to 1869 to procure the body of John Wilkes Booth if the family in the meantime had met him in San Francisco as Finis Bates, W. P. Campbell, Bernie Babcock and Clarence True Wilson maintain? And may we ask, - where is the proof of this alleged meeting?

Why did the government turn over a body to the Booth family in 1869 for burial if it was known by all these "rogues," "embezzlers" and "instigators of murder" who these folks intimate were running affairs in the White House and the War Department that John Wilkes Booth was not the man who had been shot? Why take the chance that some inquisitive person might learn the difference? If the body was that of another man, why was it not destroyed by General Baker to hide that fact. He had the opportunity.

Why should the various stories as to the destination of the body after it was taken from the gunboat worry the myth-makers? They will agree that a man was killed in the Garrett barn and that his body was brought to Washington, placed for about fifteen hours on board the Montauk, subsequently taken from the boat to some place then unknown to the general public. They cannot deny that Edwin Booth over a period of four years attempted at intervals to obtain possession of this body, and that on February 15, 1869, one was dug up in one of the arsenal building rooms, on the rough box of which was the name "John Wilkes Booth." If the body from the Montauk was buried in the sea or eaten up with acid and quicklime to protect the War Department in a nefarious scheme, as some fanatics would maintain, and the box labelled "John Wilkes Booth" did not contain the body of this man, whose cadaver did it hold? Would they answer that the United States Government during the years 1865 to 1869 kept a supply of such bodies on hand? Let us ask again why did the War Department go to so much trouble to carefully preserve the body if they knew they had the wrong man?

The statement has been made repeatedly that the War Department had no evidence in its files that the body was that of Booth. This is not true. It has the boot cut from his left leg. This was authenticated at the Conspiracy Trial. It has the diary in his handwriting taken from his person while he was dying and the bill of exchange made out to his order. It has, or had, the stick pin taken from his undershirt, and on this pin the assassin's name appeared. It has the Conspiracy Trial records with General Barnes' testimony covering Dr. May's identification and the testimony of Conger, Doherty, Lieutenant Baker, Corbett and Jett and the official report of Lieutenant Doherty, all of which is relevant on this point as they had observed the conduct and utterance of the man shot in the Garrett barn which was evidence of his identity. The slain man had been found with Herold with whom the testimony showed he had fled from Washington. He was captured at the Garrett farm where the testimony showed he had been taken by Jett, Bainbridge and Ruggles.

The War Department did not conduct the Surratt Trial and the Impeachment Investigation and in consequence the records in these cases are not in their files. The testimony submitted in both, however, is fully confirmatory of the Booth identity, and is in the files of the United States Government.

Not a single statement has come from those who claimed to be Wilkes Booth or who have had that claim made for them that would indicate more than the most casual knowledge of the Booth family history prior or subsequent to the assassination. The family's affairs were discussed quite generally in the newspapers immediately following the assassination, but these trumped-up claimants are not acquainted even with the common newspaper knowledge of the Booths which was so easily obtainable.

Without exception the statements denying the identity of the man shot in the Garrett barn as John Wilkes Booth have been based on unproven statements, without the submission of any definite physical proof, and as we have seen they have been bolstered up by altered affidavits, misquoted statements and the senile rambling of those who read the first fictitious accounts and in their confusion imagined

that they also knew something about the matter.

But all this must give way even if there were no other proof, to the confirmation of John Wilkes Booth's identity in his theatrical personality which is the thread running through his entire life from the days when as a "wild brained boy" he "would charge on horseback through the woods on the Maryland farm, spouting heroic speeches, with a lance in his hand," through his hairbrained abduction plots, his leap from the presidential box and the melodramatic "Sic Semper Tyrannis" flung at the stunned audience, his whimpering diary, then the dramatic last stand in the Garret barn when he offered to fight the entire cavalry detachment if they would give him a shooting chance - and finally when the paralysis of death was creeping over him, his desire to look at his hands and the moan, "Useless, useless" later followed by the repeated cry, "Kill me, kill me."

Another Booth thread that ran through the tragedy was the assassin's propensity for note writing. First his thousand word Apologia prepared in November 1864 as a prologue to the abduction plots and left with his sister in Philadelphia, his epilogue written on the day of the assassination for the next day's "National Intelligencer," and what a sensation he expected it to be, then the finale, his miserable dictum in the diary pages.

But all this stopped at the Garrett barn! Let the myth makers produce a single piece of writing of a comparable nature from any one of their pretenders and they will have made a beginning. Let them also produce a single signature or any handwriting from their various claimants that at all resembles Booth's and they will have some claim to our attention.

Instead of "Correcting" History, Mr. Bates, Mr. Campbell, Mrs. Babcock and Dr. Wilson obscure the truth of history and tend to the formation of an erroneous public opinion. As has been shown in the analysis of their claims, the accounts which they give consist merely in a confused jumbling of a few comparatively unimportant facts mixed with a lot of myths and fancies and leave

unnoticed and untouched the great mass of relevant and conclusive testimony offered at the Conspiracy and Surratt trials and the Impeachment Investigation.

We have had John Wilkes Booth as "a soldier in Maximillian's army," (23) "an itinerant Catholic Priest in Mexico"; (24) "as a pseudo lawyer and politician in Lexington, Ky."; (25) "As a lumberman in northwestern Canada,"; (26) As "Jesse Smith, a teamster"; " as Laura Ida's father in 1872"; as "an evangelist and Episcopalian Rector in Georgia",; "as a sailor on the seven seas."; "As Professor Ravenwood, a Texas school teacher,"; "St. Helen, a Texas saloon keeper,"; "As Enos, the great South American actor,"; "As 'Happy Jack' the crippled cobbler,"; "As a Kentucky school teacher for forty-three years"; "David George, the house painter of Hennessey, El Reno and Enid, Oklahoma." The only one whose handwriting we have is David George's and an expert is not needed to tell us that not by the wildest stretch of the imagination could it be identified as that of John Wilkes Booth. Some of the claimants were in different parts of the world at the same time and it is certain that they were not all the same man. I pass the problem of their real identities to whomsoever has the inclination, the time and the money to untangle it. I feel that the careful reader is now satisfied that John Wilkes Booth lies buried in the family plot at Baltimore and will join me in the hope that the many contenders for the assassin's infamy, James Glasgow Armstrong, John St. Helen, David George and others of lesser notoriety, may at last rest peacefully undisturbed by myth makers. They were indeed romantic rascals, ego-maniacs, who have enjoyed their precarious places in history, and now in the category of historical fiction let us trust they will remain.

FINIS.

THE IDENTIFICATION

Notes.

- (1) Clara E. Laughlin, in her "Death of Lincoln" page 6, says: "Of the six children who survived their father, three became famous members of his profession, but John Wilkes was universally considered the most gifted of the family, though a severe bronchial affection threatened his voice and, consequently, his future on the stage." I have been unable to learn what authority Miss Laughlin had for this statement. My researches among manuscript, Booth records and letters in the Congressional Library, and the Harvard College Dramatic Library do not mention this.

"St. Helen," states the Hood County Texas History, "had a serious impediment in his speech, caused from asthma, so he could rarely speak above a whisper."

This is a connection that Mr. Bates and the others missed.

- (2) O. R. Series 1, Vol. 46, page 987 - also reported in our Chapter VII.
- (3) See page --
- (4) See page --
- (5) See page --
- (6) Letter dated May 19, 1890, at Austin, Texas, and signed, R. B. Garrett. He was a younger son and from the statements of Miss Holloway and John Garrett (see chapter "At the Garrett Farm") was at home during the time Booth was their unwelcome guest. The letter was published by the Atlanta Constitution July 30, 1893, in connection with that paper's discussion as to whether Dr. James Glasgow Armstrong was Booth or not.

Everton J. Conger, one of the Detective Officers who was present at the death of Booth and who fired the barn on May 17, 1865, (C. T. p. 93) testified:-

"I had seen John Wilkes Booth in Washington, and recognized the man who was killed as the same. I had before remarked his resemblance to his borther, Edwin Booth, whom I had often seen play.

"I recognize among the accused, the man Herold, whom we took prisoner on that occasion, in the barn. We found on Herold a small piece of a school map of Virginia, embracing the region known as the Northern Neck, where they were captured."

(7) Augusta, Georgia Chronicle, April 19, 1897.

(8) See page -- and the Roanoke, Va., Evening News, June 6, 1903.

(9) See page --

(10) See page --

Lieutenant L. B. Baker, at the Surratt Trial, June 25, 1867, page 320, testified: that "There was a pin which Colonel Conger took from his undershirt as we tore open his (Booth's) collar." Baker then identified the pin, compass, diary and pocket knife, which had been taken from Booth's body.

June 25, 1867, S. T. 309, Lieutenant-Colonel Everton J. Conger, testified: that after Booth was shot, and before he died, that he took a pin with a single stone set in jet and gold from Booth's person, on which was "Dan Bryant to J. W. Booth." That he had given the articles taken from the body to Mr. Stanton, Secretary of War. The pin referred to was exhibited and identified by the witness.

Edward D. Townsend, Major-General United States Army, June 24, 1867,

S. T. page 287, testified: "That as assistant Adjutant General of the Army he received the pin and other articles from General Eckert, the assistant Secretary of War, on August 6, 1866, as he was retiring from office, and that the pin had not been out of his possession since that time.

Dan Bryant, known as the father of minstrelsy, was a friend of the Booth's.

(11) S. T. pp. 394-5.

(12) Conger, C. T. --- Also see Chapter ---

(13) See page ---

(14) See page ---

(15) See page ---

(16) C. T. p. 95.

(17) See page ---

(18) C. T. p. 169

(19) Bates p. 262-263

(20) See Chapter 11.

(21) See page ---

(22) See Chapter 11.

(23) Gay-Bates p. 226-8

(24) Gay-Bates

(25) Levan

(26) Levan

*Chs 19-22
Isaac*

(17) George's last letter or statement written on the day of his death and the only letter found among his effects:

"Grand Avenue Hotel,
"S. S. Dumont, Prop.
"Rates \$2 Per Day.
"South Grand Avenue.

"Enid, Oklahoma, January 13, 1902.

"I am informed that I made a will a few days ago and I am indistinct of having done so. I hereby recall every letter, syllable and word of any will that I may have signed at Enid.

"I owe Jack Bernstein about Ten Dollars, but he has my watch in pawn for the amount.

(SIGNED) D. E. George."

(Isaac and Jack Bernstein were Enid saloon keepers.)

(18) The acknowledgment to Mrs Anstine's affidavit is as follows:-

"State of Oklahoma)
) S. S.
"Canadian County)

"I, W. J. Finch, a Notary Public in and for the said County, in the State aforesaid, do hereby certify, that Mary Anstine, personally known to me to be the same person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument, appeared before me this day in person, and acknowledged that she signed, the said instrument.

"Given, under my hand and seal, this 18th day of July, 1921.

" W. J. Finch.

"Notary Public

"My commission expires 11-9-1924."

(19) The will to which George refers bears the indorsement - "Case 229 Filed this 16th Day of January, 1903, in my office No. 1 In Record of Wills, Page 26-45.

"M. C. Garber, Probate Judge."

It is as follows:-

"I, David E George of the County of Garfield and Territory of Oklahoma, being of sound mind and disposing memory, do make, publish and declare this to be my last will and Testament, hereby revoking all former wills by me made.

- (1) I give, devise and bequeath to my nephew, Willy George, if living the Seven Hundred Acre tract of land which I made proof upon before the Dawes Commission about four years ago, which tract of land is located in a body in the Chickaska Nation I. T. about ten miles South East of Marietta I. T. and within two miles of the Delaware Crossing of Red River; The intention of this gift, devise and bequeath is to give my said nephew all of said tract of land but in the event that I am not granted by the Government the whole of said tract, then my said nephew shall have all of said tract so granted by the Government to me. I further provide that in the event that my said nephew is not alive, then I give, devise and bequeath all of said tract of land or so much thereof as may be granted to me by the Government to the Sisters of Charity of Dallss, Texas.
- (2) I give and bequeath to my friend, Isaac Bernstein, all money that may be collected from the life insurance policy I hold of \$3000.00 in the Knights of Phythias Lodge No. 70 of Dallas, Texas or any other Knights of Phythias Organization or Lodge; also my watch, trunk and all my wearing apparel.
- (3) I give and bequeath to my friend George E Smith, late of El Reno, O. T.

all money that may be collected from my Life Insurance Policy of \$2500.00 in the New York Mutual Life Insurance Co., of New York. After he shall pay from the proceeds of said Insurance all of my just debts, expenses of my last illness and all funeral expenses.

"(4) I give and devise and bequeath to my friend A. A. Dumont the sum of One Hundred Dollars.

"(5) I give and bequeath to my friend L. N. Houston the sum of One Hundred Dollars and one Note signed by J. W. Simmons for \$350.00 note dated at El Reno O. T. July 3, 1902 and which matures two years from said date.

"(6) I give, devise and bequeath all my other property not otherwise disposed of, both real personal and mixed whatsoever and wheresoever the same may be to the Roman Catholic Church of El Reno, Oklahoma.

"(7) Imposing special confidence in the integrity and ability of my friend L. N. Houston I request that he be appointed executor of my Estate and that he be not required to give bond. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand this 31st day of December, 1902.

(SIGNED) David E George

"Signed, published and declared by the Said David E George to be his last will and testament in the presence of us who at his request and in his presence and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses thereto, this the day and date above written.

R. B. BrownPost Office, Enid, O. T.

Chas. S. Evans.....Post Office, O. T.

Charles O. Wood.....Post Office, Enid, O. T."

This will was voided by the letter or statement George wrote on the day of his death. Since he did not give the address of his "nephew Willy G. George" and the nephew did not make himself known after David George's death, no trace was ever found of this relative. The bequests

to the Catholic Church may have been the basis for the claims that John Wilkes Booth was a Catholic.

Two years before in El Reno, D. E. George had made a "Last Will and Testament." This also was found with the last day letter. It began:

"In the Name of God, Amen:"

"I, D. E. George, being of sound mind and disposing memory, do make and declare this my last will and testament, as follows, to-wit:

" To my friend Anna K. Smith, of El Reno, Oklahoma, I give devise and bequeath all my property, both real and personal, of whatever kind and description.

Having special faith and confidence in George E. Smith, of El Reno, Oklahoma Territory, I hereby designate him, the said George E. Smith, as executor of this my last will and testament to serve without bond, and carry out the provisions of this instrument.

IN WITNESS of all which I hereunto subscribe my name this 17th day of June, A. D. 1900, in the presence of the witnesses whose names are subscribed hereto.

(SIGNED) D. E. George

Witnesses:

Frank Anstine

W. T. Beeks.

Territory of Oklahoma,)
Canadian County,) SS

We, whose names are subscribed to the foregoing will as witnesses do hereby certify that D. E. George, to us known to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing will this day in our presence and hearing subscribed his name to said instrument, and declared to us in our presence and in our hearing, and in the presence and hearing of each other that the

same is his will; and we do further certify that our names were there and are hereby subscribed in the presence of the said D. E. George and in the presence of each other at his request.

"Witness our hands this 17th day of June A. D. 1902

"Frank Anstine"

"W. F. Beeks."

This had been made for the purpose of borrowing money from George Smith, Mr. Bates' "mysterious financial agent for the Booths."

Mr. W. P. Campbell, whose "Wanderings of J. Wilkes Booth" we will examine in the next chapter, has this to say about the Wills:

In reference to certain lands in the Chickasaw Nation variously bequeathed by Booth in his will, in reply to inquiry Mr. Clark Wasson, superintendent of the Five Civilized Tribes, writes under date of Muskogee, July 27: "You are informed that the names of David E. George and Willy George do not appear upon any of the approved rolls of the Chickasaw Nation. Prior to approval of the Choctaw-Chickasaw agreement of July 1, 1902, ratified by the Choctaws and Chickasaws September 25, 1902, all of the lands in those two nations were held by the members thereof in common, etc. You are further advised that the first allotment of land to enrolled citizens and freedmen of the Chickasaw Nation was not made until April 10, 1903."

Replying to inquiry, F. S. M. Clement, superior of the Sisters of Charity at Dallas, Texas, states that nothing was known there whatever of this man (David E. George), etc. "We do not think we are the Sisters interested." The writer is then referred to the Sisters of Charity of St Paul's Hospital, Dallas.

(20) Bates, pages 292-298.

✓ (21) Bates, Pages 300-303.

(22) Compare the Bates statements with the Joe Jefferson letter,--

The statement that John Wilkes Booth and Joseph Jefferson were in the same company from the time when "Booth went on the stage at the age of seventeen," is untrue. Reference to the theatrical histories in the Howard College Dramatic Library and numerous play bills do not show that they even appeared together and then Jefferson says in his letter that he "had not seen Booth since he was 19 years old." Mr. Bates, though, quotes Jefferson "I have not seen him since a short time before he killed President Lincoln."