

Potomac Beach P.O. at Wilkinson's Landing
Westmoreland Co, Va
December 20, 1914

Hon Finis L Bates
Memphis
Tenn

Dear Sir:

Pursuant to my promise to you, I left Washington, D. C. on the steamer, Wakefield, yesterday morning, Saturday, December 19, 1914, at 7 o'clock A M. I arrived here at 8 o'clock P M last night and I am writing this in one of the upper rooms of the Post Office Bldg here, kept by Mr F B Blackstone, the Postmaster. I have seen and talked with Mr Emmett J Gouldman, who sits near me as I pen these lines; also with Harold Gouldman and Arthur Gouldman, deceased, who formerly resided at Shell Field farm, nearby, and on parts of which land these three sons of Jesse Gouldman still live. I have not talked with the last two sons of Jesse Gouldman about what their father told me because they were too young at the time, 1896, when I had my talk about the subject matter of this visit with their father and grandmother, Julia Gouldman, to remember anything about it.

I find from talking with Emmett J Gouldman, the oldest son of Jesse Gouldman, here and now, about what his father told me in 1896, about his mother keeping the hotel at Boling Green, Caroline Co, Va. in April 1865, and about his having met Jett and two other men, one of them David E Herold, , on one horse, and Heerold and the other man both on the other , and about Jett accompanying him to his mother's hotel at Boling Green, and about his being captured there that night, and I find that my memory has not played me false, as I felt sure it had not, as to what Jesse Gouldman and his mother, Julia Gouldman, told me and my wife, Stella Bell, at Shell Field farm in the late summer or early fall of 1896, as to the capture of Willie Jett while in bed with him at his mother's hotel, at Boling Green, Va. on the night before the morning of April 26, 1865, before the man thought to have been John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, was killed at Garrett's Coin , Caroline Co, Va , and I propose to give you here and now, though I wrote the Gouldman interview up for the papers sometime afterwards, what Jesse Gouldman and his mother, Julia Gouldman, then told me and my wife, and I will say, too, that Mr Gouldman got me either some fool's cap paper or a leaf from an old ledger, I forget now which it was and that with a lead pencil I wrote down in long hand and at the time what they then and there told me and Mrs Bell.

I am now Chief of the Record Division of the Pension Bureau, Washington, D C and at the time spoken of, I was Deputy Commissioner of Pensions, was also a soldier in the Federal Army from October 4, 1864 to October 19, 1865, as a private in Co K-29th, Indiana Infantry.

Mr Jesse Gouldman, who had been the cavalry on the Confederate side of the struggle, who was after my talk with him a member of the Virginia Legislature, and always a man of highest honor, integrity, and reputation, as well as a man of more than the usual amount of general intelligence, then and there told me, his old mother, Julia Gouldman, sitting by, and confirming every word her son told me as to what occurred that night at her hotel in Boling Green, that he knew Willie Jett intimately, personally and , and that at the time indicated Jett was paying some attention to one of his sisters. He told me that he had been shot through the body by a Yankee cavalryman and was at home at his mother's hotel recovering from his wound at the time. He told me that

on the afternoon before Booth was killed in Garrett's farm, he had ridden out on horseback, three or four miles in the direction of Garrett's barn, when he met Willie Jett, also on horseback, and coming towards Boling Green, and that with him were two other men, both on one horse. That when Jett came up, he stopped his horse in the road, while the two men on the single horse rode on a little way when they also stopped; that Jett then said to him "Jesse, do you know who it is on that horse behind Rudy, or Ruddy, Ruggles(?) (I think he said the former, anyway, as I now remember, it was a name of the sound of Rudy or Ruddy or Ruggles) and that when he told him he did not, Jett said "That is Heerold, one of the men that killed Lincoln". That he then asked Jett where Booth was and that Jett replied "We have left at Garrett's farm or at Garrett's that he then said to Jett "Where are you taking Herold?" and that Jett replied "We are taking him down to your mother's hotel to hide him." That he then said to Jett "My God, Jett, you cant do that, why the whole country is swarming with Yankee cavalry and the hotel is the first place they will search, if they come to Boling Green, and if they find Heerold there, they will burn it down and hang every one of us." Jett then said to him "What, then shall I do with him?" He tole me that he said to Jett "Why, you tell that man on that horse to turn around and take Heerold back to Garrett's where Booth is, and you come along home with me, and get away from them." That Jett at once told the man on the horse with Jett to do this and that he at once turned his horse around in the road and that they at once started in the direction of the Garrett place, and he say them no more. He further told me that Jett did this and that he staid at his mother's hotel in Boling that night, and slept in the same bed with him in a room upstairs that night; that along about twelve o'clock that night, while lying awake, Jett sleeping behind him in the same bed, and thinking of all that had occurred, and apprehensive of coming events, and suffering from his wound, he heard the "click of a saber as though it had struck a spur", that being in the cavalry, he knew only too well, what that sound meant, that he slipped out of bed and going to the window, peeked out, and that the shadowy forms of Yankee soldiers quietly surrounding the house; that going back to the bed, he touched Jett and said to him "Jett, the Yankees are here." "How do you know?", he whaspered back. "Why, I have seen them." he replied. That he and Jett lay still and pretended to be asleep and that for several minutes dead silence prevailed, and then there came a knock on the door of the room below where his mother was sleeping, and his mother asked "Who is there?" That a voice replied "Open the door," "Who is there, and waat do you want?" his mother said. "Open the door, or we will break it down", the voice replied. Mr Gouldman tole me that his mother then got up and lighted a lamp, with it in her hand, and in her night clothing, went to the door and unfastened it, when she was at once covered with a revolver and the soldiers crowded into the room. "Where is your son?" the voice asked. "He is up stairs in bed" his mother replied. "Take us to him" the voice said. Mr Gouldman said that the soldiers then came up the stairs, his mother, lamp in hand, leading the way, and that when they came into the room, he said to them "What is up? What do you want?" and started to get up, when the officer said "Lie down, we don't want you. Jett, we want you, get out of ~~xxxx~~ there." That Jett got up and put on his clothing, after which they took him down stairs, and on threats of immediate compelled him to tell where Booth was, and that the soldiers all left in the direction of Garrett's, taking Jett with them. He said nothing to me about there being any other men in the hotel that night or the day before except ne and Willie Jett and it is the understanding of Emmett J Gouldman, who tells me there were none other, as he got it from his father, Jesse Gouldman, in his lifetime. Jesse Gouldman also tole me that he fully expected for weeks after that night to be arrested and taken to Washington as Jet had been but that Jett never betrayed his presence with him the day before he was taken out of the hotel, or of his meeting him and Herold and the other men on the road, and that he was never disturbed, or his name connected in any way with the matter. He also tole me that he knew (?) it a certainty from four o'clock on the afternoon of April 25, 1865 until the next morning when Booth was killed

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as he thought at Garrett's house, just where Booth was, and that he could easily himself secured the capture of Booth and obtained the hundred thousand dollars reward, but that feeling about the matter as he then said, he would not for one million dollars have betrayed the hiding place of John Wilkes Booth. He also told me that the fact that Jett told where Booth was, and accompanied the soldiers to where he was, ruined Jett, and caused him to be frowned upon and shunned by his people, and that this broke his heart affected his mind, this, as he believed was the cause of his death but he told me he never blamed Jett for he would have been killed then and there if he had not told them where Booth was.

I will say in conclusion that while coming down on the boat yesterday noon, H W Kintz, the steward of the boat, and who resides at 2255- 5th St SE, Washington D C told me that Jesse Gouldman had once told him and one Major Burnside and Athen Ardsat, just what he had told me.

Very truly yours

Henry C Bell

Mr Emmett Gouldman's Statement is as follows:--

I have just heard the above statement read by Mr Henry C Bell and as I remember, that is substantially what I have often heard my father, Jesse Gouldman, and my grandmother, Julia Gouldman, who kept the hotel at Boling Green, Va. say about the arrest of Jett and the meeting of my father with Jett and Herold, and the other man, except that I do not remember that my father ever gave the name of the man on the horse with Herold. The name of my father's sister, and my aunt, whom Jett was then courting, was Izora Gouldman, now Mrs J M Stainback, living and residing at Charleston, W Va. I also have another living aunt, Columbia Gouldman, now Mrs D B Seymour living at 1340 N Fulton Ave, Baltimore, Md.

(Signed) Emmett J Gouldman

Dec 20, 1914

I heard Mr H C Bell read the foregoing statements, Mr Gouldman acquiesced in same, and signed his name to the above.

Titian W J White

Dec 20 , 1914

Patent Lawyer Washington D C