

## SAID HE KILLED LINCOLN

### Oklahoma Man Claimed to Be John Wilkes Booth

#### Story of the Mysterious Suicide at Enid Excites Interest

#### Many Believe That He Was Really the Assassin

#### Bore a Remarkable Resemblance to President's Murderer

(Special Correspondence)

GUTHRIE, Ok., Feb. 5, 1905.—Was Daniel E. George, who committed suicide in Enid a few days ago, really John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, as he declared on his deathbed confession? Some scoff at the idea, saying Booth was shot by Boston Corbett and that the facts surrounding his death are a part of history.

Others, more conservative, have been piecing together the many mysterious circumstances connected with this strange suicide, and the more they have investigated the extraordinary story the more inclined they are to believe it, in spite of an apparent effort to hush the matter up or to make it appear that George could by no possibility have been Booth.

George had been a resident of the territory for several years and he had always been well supplied with money, the origin of which no one knew. From some mysterious source he received regular remittances. He was a familiar figure in Guthrie, El Reno and Enid, and his confession on his deathbed that he was John Wilkes Booth, to whom it is now discovered he bore a remarkable resemblance, created a profound sensation in these localities.

He announced that he had eluded the officers after the assassination of Lincoln and had since remained incognito, traveling much, but always under an assumed name.

"George's" first confession that he was Booth was made to Mrs. Harper, wife of the minister of the First Methodist Church of Enid. He told her: "I killed the best man that ever lived—Abraham Lincoln."

Mrs. Harper states that she met George in El Reno, where he was boarding with a family named Simmons, with some members of which she was intimate. She says her acquaintance with him would lead her to believe him a different person from what he represented himself to be. He was eccentric. Although he claimed to be only a painter of houses, yet he was of far more than the ordinary intelligence, and in conversation would discuss subjects of moment with the greatest ability and skill.

He told frequently of his visits to Jerusalem, of his travels through Europe, Asia and Africa.

There were few people with whom he cared to have anything to do. Generally he was gloomy, though at times he would brighten up, sing snatches of stage songs and repeat scenes from Shakespeare in an admirable manner. He was well versed in Shakespeare, so much so that often he would answer questions with quotations.

#### Had Been an Actor

At one time the young people of El Reno had a play of some kind, and, one of the actors becoming ill, George filled the place. He said he had acted in plays when he was a young man, and in that way he was induced to take the part. "He told me," says Mrs. Harper, "he had played in Dallas, Tex."

"Regarding his people," says Mrs. Harper, "he told different stories. One time he said his father was a doctor and that he and a brother were the only children; that his mother married again and two half-brothers were living in Indian territory, their name being Smith, and that he had property in that territory. He was subject to fits of melancholy. He was extremely sensitive, quick-tempered, rather excitable.

"He seemed very lonely and said at another time he had not a relative in the world. He said he had never married. There seemed to be something continually on his mind, about which he studied, and it made him miserable. He longed to have one understand he was in trouble and appreciated sympathy. He remained with the Simmons family three years, saying he had never been before

where people treated him so kindly.

"Never do I remember of him speaking of his past life and insinuating that he was other than D. E. George until the time he thought he was going to die. That was about the middle of last April.

"George had gone uptown and returned shortly, entering a room where Mrs. Simmons, Mrs. Beers and myself were seated. He made a remark regarding the weather, then went upstairs; in about fifteen minutes he called for us and said: 'I feel as if I am going to be very sick.' He was lying on his bed. Finally he asked me to get him a mirror. For some time he gazed at himself in the mirror. His hair seemed to be of a reddish tint; he said it was curly when he was young; he had a way of raising one of his eyebrows higher than the other. I noticed him limp frequently, but he always laid it to rheumatism."

That George had a past was known by all acquainted with him, but the secret of that past was not known. After his dying statement became known an investigation was commenced, but without much success in unraveling the mystery. The friends who knew him best state that so far as they know he might have been Booth—that he talked little of the past.

When the surgeons examined him they found his leg broken in the same manner and in the same place as was Booth's after the actor jumped from the president's box in Ford's theater, having murdered the nation's head. They also found that George was practically the same age Booth would be at this time were the latter living. The entire surgical investigation backed up the story told by the man.

The authorities then began to look around for someone who could identify the remains, to ascertain if possible if the man was Booth. The first man to attempt to get hold of in that case was, of course, Boston Corbett, who always has had the credit of killing Booth in the burning barn near Port Royal, Va., soon after the assassination.

#### Determined to Die.

George had evidently determined to die, for he made more than one attempt before succeeding. In El Reno, several days prior to killing himself in Enid, he took poison, but physicians were called in time to save him. The story of his suicide in Enid at the Grand Avenue Hotel is told by a citizen of the place as follows:

"George had been in Enid, off and on, for about six weeks. He arose as usual on the morning of his suicide and came down to breakfast, going out immediately afterward, presumably for a stroll. He returned shortly, wrote a letter at the desk and started upstairs to his room. Turning, he informed the clerk that he would go to his room for a nap and to call him if he did not awaken in time for dinner. About half an hour afterward a wild cry startled the entire hotel and the people ran to George's room, locating the scene of trouble. He expired soon afterward and it is supposed that he took poison."

In the will left by George he named George Smith of Colfax, Iowa, as one of the legatees and executor. Mr. Smith was summoned, but upon his arrival seemed to be as much at a loss as to the identity of the dead man as everyone else.

Regarding George being Booth Smith said he was in possession of no secret and could only draw an inference from the statements he had heard.

"He may be Booth," answered Smith. "I don't know. A man of his experience could have been. I have known him only about a year and a half and can say that he was an extensively traveled man, unusually well read. To me he confided but little of his past."

Smith held conferences with the county authorities and left for home without making disposition of the body. Friends of the dead man state that he had received money regularly from unknown sources.

A search for a facsimile of Booth's handwriting was rewarded by finding it in a copy of Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War. The resemblance between that and the handwriting of the Enid suicide is startling.

A picture of the dead man, supposedly the last taken, is said by his friends to be an excellent likeness of Booth several years ago.

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