

= John Wilkes Booth =

John Wilkes Booth (May 10 , 1838 ? April 26 , 1865) was an American stage actor who assassinated President Abraham Lincoln at Ford 's Theatre , in Washington , D.C. , on April 14 , 1865 . Booth was a member of the prominent 19th @-@ century Booth theatrical family from Maryland and , by the 1860s , was a well @-@ known actor . He was also a Confederate sympathizer , vehement in his denunciation of Lincoln , and was strongly opposed to the abolition of slavery in the United States .

Booth and a group of co @-@ conspirators originally plotted to kidnap Lincoln but later planned to kill him , Vice President Andrew Johnson , and Secretary of State William H. Seward in a bid to help the Confederacy 's cause . Although Robert E. Lee 's Army of Northern Virginia had surrendered four days earlier , Booth believed the American Civil War was not yet over because Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston 's army was still fighting the Union Army .

Of the conspirators , only Booth was completely successful in carrying out his part of the plot : Booth shot Lincoln once in the back of the head , and the President died the next morning . Seward was severely wounded but recovered . Vice @-@ President Johnson was never attacked at all .

Following the assassination , Booth fled on horseback to southern Maryland , eventually making his way to a farm in rural northern Virginia 12 days later , where he was tracked down . Booth 's companion gave himself up , but Booth refused and was shot by Boston Corbett , a Union soldier , after the barn in which he was hiding was set ablaze . Eight other conspirators or suspects were tried and convicted , and four were hanged shortly thereafter .

= = Background and early life = =

Booth 's parents , the noted British Shakespearean actor Junius Brutus Booth and his mistress Mary Ann Holmes , moved to the United States from England in June 1821 . They purchased a 150 @-@ acre (61 ha) farm near Bel Air in Harford County , Maryland , where John Wilkes Booth was born in a four @-@ room log house on May 10 , 1838 , the ninth of ten children . He was named after the English radical politician John Wilkes , a distant relative . Junius ' wife , Adelaide Delannoy Booth , was granted a divorce in 1851 on grounds of adultery , and Holmes legally wed Julius on May 10 , 1851 , the youth 's 13th birthday .

Nora Titone , in her book *My Thoughts Be Bloody* (2010) , recounts how the shame and ambition of Junius Brutus Booth 's two illegitimate actor sons , Edwin and John Wilkes , would eventually spur them to strive , as rivals , for achievement and acclaim ? Edwin , a Unionist , and John Wilkes , the assassin of Abraham Lincoln .

The same year Booth 's father married Holmes (1851) , he built Tudor Hall on the Harford County property as the family 's summer home , while also maintaining a winter residence on Exeter Street in Baltimore , in the 1840s ? 1850s .

As a boy , Booth was athletic and popular , and he became skilled at horsemanship and fencing . A sometimes indifferent student , he attended the Bel Air Academy (now Bel Air High School) , where the headmaster described him as " [n] ot deficient in intelligence , but disinclined to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered him . Each day he rode back and forth from farm to school , taking more interest in what happened along the way than in reaching his classes on time " . In 1850 ? 1851 , he attended the Quaker @-@ run Milton Boarding School for Boys located in Sparks , Maryland and later St. Timothy 's Hall , an Episcopal military academy in Catonsville , Maryland , beginning when he was 13 years old . At the Milton school , students recited classical works by such authors as Cicero , Herodotus , and Tacitus . Students at St. Timothy 's wore military uniforms , and were subject to a regimen of daily formation drills and strict discipline . Booth left school at 14 , after his father 's death .

While attending the Milton Boarding School , Booth met a Gypsy fortune @-@ teller who read his palm and pronounced a grim destiny , telling Booth he would have a grand but short life , doomed to die young and " meeting a bad end " . His sister recalled that Booth wrote down the palm @-@ reader 's prediction , showed it to his family and others , and often discussed its portents in

moments of melancholy , in later years .

As recounted in the editor 's introduction of the 1874 memoir of Booth 's sister 's , Asia Booth Clarke , no one church was preeminent in the Booth household during her childhood . Booth 's mother was Episcopalian , and his father was described as a free spirit , who was open to the great teachings of all religions . On January 23 , 1853 , the 14 @-@ year @-@ old Booth was baptized at St. Timothy 's Protestant Episcopal Church . The Booth family had traditionally been Episcopalian . Clergyman Charles Chiniquy , however , stated that Booth was really a Roman Catholic convert , later in life . An historian , Constance Head , also declared that Booth was of this religion . Head , who wrote the paper " Insights on John Wilkes Booth from His Sister Asia 's Correspondence " (1982) , published in the Lincoln Herald , quoted from a letter of Booth 's sister , Asia Booth Clarke , in which she wrote that her brother was a Roman Catholic . Booth Clarke 's memoir was published after her death . Terry Alford , a college history professor and a leading authority on Booth 's life , has stated , " Asia Booth Clarke 's memoir of her brother John Wilkes Booth has been recognized as the single most important document available for understanding the personality of the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln " , and " no outsider could give such insights into the turbulent Booth 's childhood or share such unique personal knowledge of the gifted actor " . Testimony given at the trial of John Surratt showed that at his death , Booth had a Catholic medal on his person . Court evidence showed his attending a Roman Catholic church service on at least two occasions . Like his sister Asia , he received education at a school established by an official of the Catholic Church . As to Lincoln 's assassin 's being seen an Episcopalian during his life and in death , while really being a Roman Catholic , Constance Head stated : " In any case , it seems certain that Booth did not publicize his conversion during his lifetime . And while there is no reasonable cause to connect Booth 's religious preference and his ' mad act ' , the few who knew of his conversion must have decided after the assassination that for the good of the church , it was best never to mention it . Thus the secret remained so well guarded that even the most rabidly anti @-@ Catholic writers who tried to depict the assassination of Lincoln as a Jesuit or Papist plot were puzzled by the seemingly accurate information that John Wilkes Booth was an Episcopalian . "

By the age of 16 , Booth was interested in the theatre and in politics , and he became a delegate from Bel Air to a rally by the Know Nothing Party for Henry Winter Davis , the anti @-@ immigrant party 's candidate for Congress in the 1854 elections . Aspiring to follow in the footsteps of his father and his actor brothers , Edwin and Junius Brutus , Jr . , Booth began practicing elocution daily in the woods around Tudor Hall and studying Shakespeare .

= = Theatrical career = =

= = 1850s = =

At age 17 , Booth made his stage debut on August 14 , 1855 , in the supporting role of the Earl of Richmond in Richard III at Baltimore 's Charles Street Theatre . The audience hissed at the inexperienced actor when he missed some of his lines . He also began acting at Baltimore 's Holliday Street Theater , owned by John T. Ford , where the Booths had performed frequently . In 1857 , Booth joined the stock company of the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania , where he played for a full season . At his request he was billed as " J.B. Wilkes " , a pseudonym meant to avoid comparison with other members of his famous thespian family . Author Jim Bishop wrote that Booth " developed into an outrageous scene stealer , but he played his parts with such heightened enthusiasm that the audiences idolized him . " In February 1858 , he played in Lucrezia Borgia at the Arch Street Theatre . On opening night , he experienced stage fright and stumbled over his line . Instead of introducing himself by saying , " Madame , I am Petruchio Pandolfo " , he stammered , " Madame , I am Pondolfo Pet ? Pedolfo Pat ? Pantuchio Ped ? dammit ! Who am I ? " , causing the audience to roar with laughter .

Later that year , Booth played the part of an American Indian , Uncas , in a play staged in Petersburg , Virginia , and then became a stock company actor at the Richmond Theatre in Virginia ,

where he became increasingly popular with audiences for his energetic performances . On October 5 , 1858 , Booth played the part of Horatio in Hamlet , alongside his older brother Edwin in the title role . Afterward , Edwin led the younger Booth to the theatre 's footlights and said to the audience , " I think he 's done well , don 't you ? " In response , the audience applauded loudly and cried , " Yes ! Yes ! " In all , Booth performed in 83 plays in 1858 . Among them were William Wallace and Brutus , having as their theme the killing or overthrow of an unjust ruler . Booth said that of all Shakespearean characters , his favorite role was Brutus ? the slayer of a tyrant .

Some critics called Booth " the handsomest man in America " and a " natural genius " , and noted his having an " astonishing memory " ; others were mixed in their estimation of his acting . He stood 5 feet 8 inches (1 @. @ 73 m) tall , had jet @-@ black hair , and was lean and athletic . Noted Civil War reporter George Alfred Townsend described him as a " muscular , perfect man " , with " curling hair , like a Corinthian capital " .

Booth 's stage performances were often characterized by his contemporaries as acrobatic and intensely physical , with him leaping upon the stage and gesturing with passion . He was an excellent swordsman , although a fellow actor once recalled that Booth occasionally cut himself with his own sword .

Historian Benjamin Platt Thomas wrote that Booth " won celebrity with theater @-@ goes by his romantic personal attraction " , but that he was " too impatient for hard study " , and his " brilliant talents had failed of full development . Author Gene Smith wrote that Booth 's acting may not have been as precise as his brother Edwin 's , but his strikingly handsome appearance enthralled women . As the 1850s drew to a close , Booth was becoming wealthy as an actor , earning \$ 20 @,@ 000 a year (equivalent to about \$ 527 @,@ 000 today) .

= = = 1860s = = =

After finishing the 1859 ? 1860 theatre season in Richmond , Virginia , Booth embarked on his first national tour as a leading actor . He engaged a Philadelphia attorney , Matthew Canning , to serve as his agent . By mid @-@ 1860 , he was playing in such cities as New York ; Boston ; Chicago ; Cleveland ; St. Louis ; Columbus , Georgia ; Montgomery , Alabama ; and New Orleans . Poet and journalist Walt Whitman said of Booth 's acting , " He would have flashes , passages , I thought of real genius . " The Philadelphia Press drama critic said , " Without having [his brother] Edwin 's culture and grace , Mr. Booth has far more action , more life , and , we are inclined to think , more natural genius . "

When the Civil War began on April 12 , 1861 , Booth was starring in Albany , New York . His outspoken admiration for the South 's secession , publicly calling it " heroic " , so enraged local citizens that they demanded his banning from the stage for making " treasonable statements " . Albany 's drama critics were kinder , however , giving him rave reviews . One called him a genius , praising his acting for " never fail [ing] to delight with his masterly impressions . " As the Civil War raged across the divided land in 1862 , Booth appeared mostly in Union and border states . In January , he played the title role in Richard III in St. Louis and then made his Chicago debut . In March , he made his first acting appearance in New York City . In May 1862 , he made his Boston debut , playing nightly at the Boston Museum in Richard III (May 12 , 15 , and 23) , Romeo and Juliet (May 13) , The Robbers (May 14 and 21) , Hamlet (May 16) , The Apostate (May 19) , The Stranger (May 20) , and The Lady of Lyons (May 22) . Following his performance of Richard III on May 12 , the Boston Transcript 's review the next day called Booth " the most promising young actor on the American stage " .

Starting in January 1863 , he returned to the Boston Museum for a series of plays , including the role of the villain Duke Pescara in The Apostate that won acclaim from audiences and critics . Back in Washington in April , he played the title roles in Hamlet and Richard III , one of his favorites . He was billed as " The Pride of the American People , A Star of the First Magnitude , " and the critics were equally enthusiastic . The National Republican drama critic said Booth " took the hearts of the audience by storm " and termed his performance " a complete triumph " . At the beginning of July 1863 , Booth finished the acting season at Cleveland 's Academy of Music , as the Battle of

Gettysburg raged in Pennsylvania . Between September ? November 1863 , Booth played a hectic schedule in the northeast , appearing in Boston , Providence , Rhode Island , and Hartford , Connecticut . Each day he received fan mail from infatuated women .

When family friend John T. Ford opened 1 @, @ 500 @- @ seat Ford 's Theatre on November 9 in Washington , D.C. , Booth was one of the first leading men to appear there , playing in Charles Selby 's The Marble Heart . In this play , Booth portrayed a Greek sculptor in costume , making marble statues come to life . Lincoln watched the play from his box . At one point during the performance , Booth was said to have shaken his finger in Lincoln 's direction as he delivered a line of dialogue . Lincoln 's sister @- @ in @- @ law , sitting with him in the same presidential box where he would later be slain , turned to him and said , " Mr. Lincoln , he looks as if he meant that for you . " The President replied , " He does look pretty sharp at me , doesn 't he ? " On another occasion when Lincoln 's son Tad saw Booth perform , he said the actor thrilled him , prompting Booth to give the President 's youngest son a rose . Booth ignored an invitation to visit Lincoln between acts , however .

On November 25 , 1864 , Booth performed for the only time with his two brothers , Edwin and Junius , in a single engagement production of Julius Caesar at the Winter Garden Theatre in New York . He played Mark Antony and his brother Edwin had the larger role of Brutus in a performance acclaimed as " the greatest theatrical event in New York history . " The proceeds went towards a statue of William Shakespeare for Central Park , which still stands today . In January 1865 , he acted in Shakespeare 's Romeo and Juliet in Washington , again garnering rave reviews . The National Intelligencer enthused of Booth 's Romeo , " the most satisfactory of all renderings of that fine character , " especially praising the death scene . Booth made the final appearance of his acting career at Ford 's on March 18 , 1865 , when he again played Duke Pescara in The Apostate .

= = Business ventures = =

Booth invested some of his growing wealth in various enterprises during the early 1860s , including land speculation in Boston 's Back Bay section . He also started a business partnership with John A. Ellsler , manager of the Cleveland Academy of Music , and another friend , Thomas Mears , to develop oil wells in northwestern Pennsylvania , where an oil boom had started in August 1859 , following Edwin Drake 's discovery of oil there . Initially calling their venture Dramatic Oil (later renaming it Fuller Farm Oil) , the partners invested in a 31 @. @ 5 @- @ acre (12 @. @ 7 ha) site along the Allegheny River at Franklin , Pennsylvania , in late 1863 for drilling . By early 1864 , they had a producing 1 @, @ 900 @- @ foot (579 m) deep oil well , named Wilhelmina for Mears ' wife , yielding 25 barrels (4 kL) of crude oil daily , then considered a good yield . The Fuller Farm Oil company was selling shares with a prospectus featuring the well @- @ known actor 's celebrity status as " Mr. J. Wilkes Booth , a successful and intelligent operator in oil lands " , it said . The partners , impatient to increase the well 's output , attempted the use of explosives , which wrecked the well and ended production . Booth , already growing more obsessed with the South 's worsening situation in the Civil War and angered at Lincoln 's re @- @ election , withdrew from the oil business on November 27 , 1864 , with a substantial loss of his \$ 6 @, @ 000 (\$ 81 @, @ 400 in 2010 dollars) investment .

= = Civil War years = =

Strongly opposed to the abolitionists who sought to end slavery in the U.S. , Booth attended the hanging on December 2 , 1859 , of abolitionist leader John Brown , who was executed for leading a raid on the Federal armory at Harpers Ferry (in present @- @ day West Virginia) . Booth had been rehearsing at the Richmond Theatre when he abruptly decided to join the Richmond Grays , a volunteer militia of 1 @, @ 500 men travelling to Charles Town for Brown 's hanging , to guard against an attempt by abolitionists to rescue Brown from the gallows by force . When Brown was hanged without incident , Booth stood in uniform near the scaffold and afterwards expressed great satisfaction with Brown 's fate , although he admired the condemned man 's bravery in facing death

stoically .

Lincoln was elected president on November 6 , 1860 , and the following month Booth drafted a long speech , apparently undelivered , that decried Northern abolitionism and made clear his strong support of the South and the institution of slavery . On April 12 , 1861 , the Civil War began , and eventually 11 Southern states seceded from the Union . In Booth 's native Maryland , the slaveholding portion of the population favored joining the Confederate States of America . Because the threatened secession of Maryland would leave the Federal capital of Washington , D.C. , an indefensible enclave within the Confederacy , Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus and imposed martial law in Baltimore and portions of the state , ordering the imprisonment of pro @-@ secession Maryland political leaders at Ft . McHenry and the stationing of Federal troops in Baltimore . Although Maryland remained in the Union , newspaper editorials and many Marylanders , including Booth , agreed with Judge Roger B. Taney 's decision in Ex parte Merryman that Lincoln 's actions were unconstitutional .

As a popular actor in the 1860s , he continued to travel extensively to perform in the North and South , and as far west as New Orleans , Louisiana . According to his sister Asia , Booth confided to her that he also used his position to smuggle quinine to the South during his travels there , helping the Confederacy obtain the needed drug despite the Northern blockade .

Although Booth was pro @-@ Confederate , his family , like many Marylanders , was divided . He was outspoken in his love of the South , and equally outspoken in his hatred of Lincoln . As the Civil War went on , Booth increasingly quarreled with his brother Edwin , who declined to make stage appearances in the South and refused to listen to John Wilkes ' fiercely partisan denunciations of the North and Lincoln . In early 1863 , Booth was arrested in St. Louis while on a theatre tour , when he was heard saying he " wished the President and the whole damned government would go to hell . " Charged with making " treasonous " remarks against the government , he was released when he took an oath of allegiance to the Union and paid a substantial fine .

In February 1865 , Booth became infatuated with Lucy Lambert Hale , the daughter of U.S. Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire , and they became secretly engaged when Booth received his mother 's blessing for their marriage plans . " You have so often been dead in love , " his mother counseled Booth in a letter , " be well assured she is really and truly devoted to you . " Booth composed a handwritten Valentine card for his fiancée on February 13 , expressing his " adoration " . She was unaware of Booth 's deep antipathy towards President Lincoln .

= = = Plot to kidnap Lincoln = = =

As the 1864 Presidential election drew near , the Confederacy 's prospects for victory were ebbing , and the tide of war increasingly favored the North . The likelihood of Lincoln 's re @-@ election filled Booth with rage towards the President , whom Booth blamed for the war and all of the South 's troubles . Booth , who had promised his mother at the outbreak of war that he would not enlist as a soldier , increasingly chafed at not fighting for the South , writing in a letter to her , " I have begun to deem myself a coward and to despise my own existence . " He began to formulate plans to kidnap Lincoln from his summer residence at the Old Soldiers Home , three miles (5 km) from the White House , and to smuggle him across the Potomac River into Richmond . Once in Confederate hands , Lincoln would be exchanged for the release of Confederate Army prisoners of war held captive in Northern prisons and , Booth reasoned , bring the war to an end by emboldening opposition to the war in the North or forcing Union recognition of the Confederate government .

Throughout the Civil War , the Confederacy maintained a network of underground operators in southern Maryland , particularly Charles and St. Mary 's counties , smuggling recruits across the Potomac River into Virginia and relaying messages for Confederate agents as far north as Canada . Booth recruited his friends Samuel Arnold and Michael O 'Laughlen as accomplices . They met often at the house of Maggie Branson , a known Confederate sympathizer , at 16 North Eutaw Street in Baltimore . He also met with several well @-@ known Confederate sympathizers at The Parker House in Boston .

In October , Booth made an unexplained trip to Montreal , which was then a well @-@ known

center of clandestine Confederate activity . He spent ten days in the city , staying for a time at St. Lawrence Hall , a rendezvous for the Confederate Secret Service , and meeting several Confederate agents there . No conclusive proof has linked Booth 's kidnapping or assassination plots to a conspiracy involving the leadership of the Confederate government , although historians such as David Herbert Donald have said , " It is clear that , at least at the lower levels of the Southern secret service , the abduction of the Union President was under consideration . " Historian Thomas Goodrich concluded that Booth entered the Confederate Secret Service as a spy and courier . Other writers exploring possible connections between Booth 's planning and Confederate agents include Nathan Miller 's *Spying For America* and William Tidwell 's *Come Retribution : the Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln* .

After Lincoln 's landslide re @-@ election in early November 1864 on a platform advocating passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to abolish slavery altogether , Booth devoted increasing energy and money to his kidnap plot . He assembled a loose @-@ knit band of Southern sympathizers , including David Herold , George Atzerodt , Lewis Powell (also known as Lewis Payne or Paine) , and John Surratt , a rebel agent . They began to meet routinely at the boarding house of Surratt 's mother , Mrs. Mary Surratt .

By this time , Booth was arguing so vehemently with his older , pro @-@ Union brother Edwin about Lincoln and the war that Edwin finally told him he was no longer welcome at his New York home . Booth also railed against Lincoln in conversations with his sister Asia , saying , " That man 's appearance , his pedigree , his coarse low jokes and anecdotes , his vulgar similes , and his policy are a disgrace to the seat he holds . He is made the tool of the North , to crush out slavery . " As the Confederacy 's defeat became more certain in 1865 , Booth decried the end of slavery and Lincoln 's election to a second term , " making himself a king " , the actor fumed , in " wild tirades " , his sister recalled .

Booth attended Lincoln 's second inauguration on March 4 as the invited guest of his secret fiancée , Lucy Hale . In the crowd below were Powell , Atzerodt , and Herold . There was no attempt to assassinate Lincoln during the inauguration . Later , however , Booth remarked about his " excellent chance ... to kill the President , if I had wished . "

On March 17 , Booth learned that Lincoln would be attending a performance of the play *Still Waters Run Deep* at a hospital near the Soldier 's Home . Booth assembled his team on a stretch of road near the Soldier 's Home in the attempt to kidnap Lincoln en route to the hospital , but the president did not appear . Booth later learned that Lincoln had changed his plans at the last moment to attend a reception at the National Hotel in Washington where , coincidentally , Booth was then staying .

= = Assassination of Lincoln = =

On April 12 , 1865 , after hearing the news that Robert E. Lee had surrendered at Appomattox Court House , Booth told Louis J. Weichmann , a friend of John Surratt , and a boarder at Mary Surratt 's house , that he was done with the stage and that the only play he wanted to present henceforth was *Venice Preserv 'd* . Weichmann did not understand the reference : *Venice Preserv 'd* is about an assassination plot . With the Union Army 's capture of Richmond and Lee 's surrender , Booth 's scheme to kidnap Lincoln was no longer feasible , and he changed his goal to assassination .

The previous day , Booth was in the crowd outside the White House when Lincoln gave an impromptu speech from his window . When Lincoln stated that he was in favor of granting suffrage to the former slaves , Booth declared that it would be the last speech Lincoln would ever make .

On the morning of Good Friday , April 14 , 1865 , Booth went to Ford 's Theatre to get his mail ; while there he was told by John Ford 's brother that President and Mrs. Lincoln accompanied by Gen. and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant would be attending the play *Our American Cousin* at Ford 's Theatre that evening . He immediately set about making plans for the assassination , which included making arrangements with livery stable owner James W. Pumphrey for a getaway horse , and an escape route . Booth informed Powell , Herold , and Atzerodt of his intention to kill Lincoln . He assigned Powell to assassinate Secretary of State William H. Seward and Atzerodt to assassinate

Vice President Andrew Johnson . Herold would assist in their escape into Virginia .

By targeting Lincoln and his two immediate successors to the presidency , Booth seems to have intended to decapitate the Union government and throw it into a state of panic and confusion . The possibility of assassinating the Union Army 's commanding general as well was foiled when Grant declined the theatre invitation at his wife 's insistence . Instead , the Grants departed Washington by train that evening for a visit to relatives in New Jersey . Booth had hoped that the assassinations would create sufficient chaos within the Union that the Confederate government could reorganize and continue the war if one Confederate army remained in the field or , that failing , to avenge the South 's defeat . In his 2005 analysis of Lincoln 's assassination , Thomas Goodrich wrote , " All the elements in Booth 's nature came together at once ? his hatred of tyranny , his love of liberty , his passion for the stage , his sense of drama , and his lifelong quest to become immortal . "

As a famous and popular actor who had frequently performed at Ford 's Theatre , and who was well known to its owner , John T. Ford , Booth had free access to all parts of the theater , even having his mail sent there . By boring a spyhole into the door of the presidential box earlier that day , the assassin could check that his intended victim had made it to the play and observe the box 's occupants . That evening , at around 10 p.m. , as the play progressed , John Wilkes Booth slipped into Lincoln 's box and shot him in the back of the head with a .41 caliber Deringer . Booth 's escape was almost thwarted by Major Henry Rathbone , who was present in the Presidential box with Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln . Booth stabbed Rathbone when the startled officer lunged at him . Rathbone 's fiancée , Clara Harris , who was also present in the box , was unhurt .

Booth then jumped from the President 's box to the stage , where he raised his knife and shouted " Sic semper tyrannis " (Latin for " Thus always to tyrants , " attributed to Brutus at Caesar 's assassination and the Virginia state motto) , while others said he added , " I have done it , the South is avenged ! " Various accounts state that Booth injured his leg when his spur snagged a decorative U.S. Treasury Guard flag while leaping to the stage . Historian Michael W. Kauffman questioned this legend in his book , *American Brutus : John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies* , writing in 2004 that eyewitness accounts of Booth 's hurried stage exit made it unlikely that his leg was broken then . Kauffman contends that Booth was injured later that night during his flight to escape when his horse tripped and fell on him , calling Booth 's claim to the contrary an exaggeration to portray his own actions as heroic .

Booth was the only one of the assassins to succeed . Powell was able to stab Seward , who was bedridden as a result of an earlier carriage accident ; although badly wounded , Seward survived . Atzerodt lost his nerve and spent the evening drinking alcohol ; he never made an attempt to kill Johnson .

= = Reaction and pursuit = =

In the ensuing pandemonium inside Ford 's Theatre , Booth fled by a stage door to the alley , where his getaway horse was held for him by Joseph " Peanuts " Burroughs . The owner of the horse had warned Booth that the horse was high spirited and would break halter if left unattended . Booth left the horse with Edmund Spangler and Spangler arranged for Burroughs to hold the horse .

The fleeing assassin galloped into southern Maryland , accompanied by David Herold , having planned his escape route to take advantage of the sparsely settled area 's lack of telegraphs and railroads , along with its predominantly Confederate sympathies . He thought that the area 's dense forests and swampy terrain of Zekiah Swamp made it ideal for an escape route into rural Virginia . At midnight , Booth and Herold arrived at Surratt 's Tavern on the Brandywine Pike , 9 miles (14 km) from Washington , where they had stored guns and equipment earlier in the year as part of the kidnap plot .

The fugitives then continued southward , stopping before dawn on April 15 at the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd , St. Catharine , 25 miles (40 km) from Washington , for treatment of Booth 's injured leg . Mudd later said that Booth told him the injury occurred when his horse fell . The next day , Booth and Herold arrived at the home of Samuel Cox around 4 a.m. As the two fugitives hid in the woods nearby , Cox contacted Thomas A. Jones , his foster brother and a Confederate agent in

charge of spy operations in the southern Maryland area since 1862 . By order of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton , the War Department advertised a \$ 100 @,@ 000 reward (\$ 1 @.@ 55 million in 2016 USD) for information leading to the arrest of Booth and his accomplices , and Federal troops were dispatched to search southern Maryland extensively , following tips reported by Federal intelligence agents to Col. Lafayette Baker .

While Federal troops combed the rural area 's woods and swamps for Booth in the days following the assassination , the nation experienced an outpouring of grief . On April 18 , mourners waited seven abreast in a mile @-@ long line outside the White House for the public viewing of the slain president , reposing in his open walnut casket in the black @-@ draped East Room . A cross of lilies was at the head and roses covered the coffin 's lower half . Thousands of mourners arriving on special trains jammed Washington for the next day 's funeral , sleeping on hotel floors and even resorting to blankets spread outdoors on the Capitol 's lawn . Prominent abolitionist leader and orator Frederick Douglass called the assassination an " unspeakable calamity " for African Americans . Great indignation was directed towards Booth as the assassin 's identity was telegraphed across the nation . Newspapers called him an " accursed devil , " " monster , " " madman , " and a " wretched fiend . " Historian Dorothy Kunhardt wrote : " Almost every family who kept a photograph album on the parlor table owned a likeness of John Wilkes Booth of the famous Booth family of actors . After the assassination Northerners slid the Booth card out of their albums : some threw it away , some burned it , some crumpled it angrily . " Even in the South , sorrow was expressed in some quarters . In Savannah , Georgia , where the mayor and city council addressed a vast throng at an outdoor gathering to express their indignation , many in the crowd wept . Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston called Booth 's act " a disgrace to the age " . Robert E. Lee also expressed regret at Lincoln 's death by Booth 's hand .

Not all were grief @-@ stricken , however . In New York City , a man was attacked by an enraged crowd when he shouted , " It served Old Abe right ! " after hearing the news of Lincoln 's death . Elsewhere in the South , Lincoln was hated in death as in life , and Booth was viewed as a hero as many rejoiced at news of his deed . Other Southerners feared that a vengeful North would exact a terrible retribution upon the defeated former Confederate states . " Instead of being a great Southern hero , his deed was considered the worst possible tragedy that could have befallen the South as well as the North , " wrote Kunhardt .

While hiding in the Maryland woods as he waited for an opportunity to cross the Potomac River into Virginia , Booth read the accounts of national mourning reported in the newspapers brought to him by Jones each day . By April 20 , he was aware that some of his co @-@ conspirators were already arrested : Mary Surratt , Powell (or Paine) , Arnold , and O 'Laughlen . Booth was surprised to find little public sympathy for his action , especially from those anti @-@ Lincoln newspapers that had previously excoriated the President in life . As news of the assassination reached the far corners of the nation , indignation was aroused against Lincoln 's critics , whom many blamed for encouraging Booth to act . The San Francisco Chronicle editorialized : " Booth has simply carried out what ... secession politicians and journalists have been for years expressing in words ... who have denounced the President as a ' tyrant , ' a ' despot , ' a ' usurper , ' hinted at , and virtually recommended . " Booth wrote of his dismay in a journal entry on April 21 , as he awaited nightfall before crossing the Potomac River into Virginia (see map) :

" For six months we had worked to capture . But our cause being almost lost , something decisive and great must be done . I struck boldly , and not as the papers say . I can never repent it , though we hated to kill . "

That same day , the nine @-@ car funeral train bearing Lincoln 's body departed Washington on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad , arriving at Baltimore 's Camden Station at 10 a.m. , the first stop on a 13 @-@ day journey to Springfield , Illinois , its final destination . As the funeral train slowly made its way westward through seven states , stopping en route at Harrisburg ; Philadelphia ; Trenton ; New York ; Albany ; Buffalo ; Cleveland ; Columbus , Ohio ; Cincinnati ; and Indianapolis during the following days , about 7 million people lined the railroad tracks along the 1 @,@ 662 @-@ mile (2 @,@ 675 km) route , holding aloft signs with legends such as " We mourn our loss , " " He lives in the hearts of his people , " and " The darkest hour in history . "

In the cities where the train stopped , 1 @. @ 5 million people viewed Lincoln in his coffin . Aboard the train was Clarence Depew , president of the New York Central Railroad , who said , " As we sped over the rails at night , the scene was the most pathetic ever witnessed . At every crossroads the glare of innumerable torches illuminated the whole population , kneeling on the ground . " Dorothy Kunhardt called the funeral train 's journey " the mightiest outpouring of national grief the world had yet seen . "

Meanwhile , as mourners were viewing Lincoln 's remains when the funeral train steamed into Harrisburg at 8 : 20 p.m. , Booth and Herold were provided with a boat and compass by Jones , to cross the Potomac at night on April 21 . Instead of reaching Virginia , however , they mistakenly navigated upriver to a bend in the broad Potomac River , coming ashore again in Maryland on April 22 . The 23 @- @ year @- @ old Herold knew the area well , having frequently hunted there , and recognized a nearby farm as belonging to a Confederate sympathizer . The farmer led them to his son @- @ in @- @ law , Col. John J. Hughes , who provided the fugitives with food and a hideout until nightfall , for a second attempt to row across the river to Virginia . Booth wrote in his diary , " With every man 's hand against me , I am here in despair . And why ; For doing what Brutus was honored for ... And yet I for striking down a greater tyrant than they ever knew am looked upon as a common cutthroat . " The pair finally reached the Virginia shore near Machodoc Creek before dawn on April 23 . There , they made contact with Thomas Harbin , whom Booth had previously brought into his erstwhile kidnapping plot . Harbin took Booth and Herold to another Confederate agent in the area , William Bryant , who supplied them with horses .

While Lincoln 's funeral train was in New York City on April 24 , Lieutenant Edward P. Doherty was dispatched from Washington at 2 p.m. with a detachment of 26 Union soldiers from the 16th New York Cavalry Regiment to capture Booth in Virginia . Accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Everton Conger , an intelligence officer assigned by Lafayette Baker , the detachment steamed 70 miles (113 km) down the Potomac River on a boat , the John S. Ide , landing at Belle Plain , Virginia , at 10 p.m. The pursuers crossed the Rappahannock River and tracked Booth and Herold to Richard H. Garrett 's farm , just south of Port Royal , Caroline County , Virginia . Booth and Herold had been led to the farm on April 24 by William S. Jett , a former private in the 9th Virginia Cavalry whom they had met before crossing the Rappahannock . The Garretts were unaware of Lincoln 's assassination ; Booth was introduced to them as " James W. Boyd " , a Confederate soldier who , they were told , had been wounded in the battle of Petersburg and was returning home .

Garrett 's 11 @- @ year @- @ old son , Richard , was an eyewitness . In later years , he became a Baptist minister and widely lectured on the events of Booth 's demise at his family 's farm . In 1921 , Garrett 's lecture was published in the Confederate Veteran as the " True Story of the Capture of John Wilkes Booth . " According to his account , Booth and Herold arrived at the Garretts ' farm , located on the road to Bowling Green , around 3 p.m. on Monday afternoon . Because Confederate mail delivery had ceased with the collapse of the Confederate government , he explained , the Garretts were unaware of Lincoln 's assassination . After having dinner with the Garretts that evening , Booth learned of the surrender of Johnston 's army . The last Confederate armed force of any size , its capitulation meant that the Civil War was unquestionably over and Booth 's attempt to save the Confederacy by Lincoln 's assassination had failed . The Garretts also finally learned of Lincoln 's death and the substantial reward for Booth 's capture . Booth , said Garrett , displayed no reaction , other than to ask if the family would turn in the fugitive should they have the opportunity . Still not aware of their guest 's true identity , one of the older Garrett sons averred that they might , if only because they needed the money . The next day , Booth told the Garretts he intended to reach Mexico , drawing a route on a map of theirs . However , biographer Theodore Roscoe said of Garrett 's account , " Almost nothing written or testified in respect to the doings of the fugitives at Garrett 's farm can be taken at face value . Nobody knows exactly what Booth said to the Garretts , or they to him . "

= = Death = =

Conger tracked down Jett and interrogated him , learning of Booth 's location at the Garrett farm .

Before dawn on April 26 , the soldiers caught up with the fugitives , who were hiding in Garrett 's tobacco barn . David Herold surrendered , but Booth refused Conger 's demand to surrender , saying " I prefer to come out and fight " ; the soldiers then set the barn on fire . As Booth moved about inside the blazing barn , Sergeant Boston Corbett shot him . According to Corbett 's later account , he fired at Booth because the fugitive " raised his pistol to shoot " at them . Conger 's report to Stanton , however , stated that Corbett shot Booth " without order , pretext or excuse , " and recommended that Corbett be punished for disobeying orders to take Booth alive . Booth , fatally wounded in the neck , was dragged from the barn to the porch of Garrett 's farmhouse , where he died three hours later , aged 26 . The bullet had pierced three vertebrae and partially severed his spinal cord , paralyzing him . In his dying moments , he reportedly whispered , " Tell my mother I died for my country . " Asking that his hands be raised to his face so he could see them , Booth uttered his last words , " Useless , useless , " and died as dawn was breaking . In Booth 's pockets were found a compass , a candle , pictures of five women (actresses Alice Grey , Helen Western , Effie Germon , Fannie Brown , and Booth 's fiancée Lucy Hale) , and his diary , where he had written of Lincoln 's death , " Our country owed all her troubles to him , and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment . "

Shortly after Booth 's death , his brother Edwin wrote to his sister Asia , " Think no more of him as your brother ; he is dead to us now , as he soon must be to all the world , but imagine the boy you loved to be in that better part of his spirit , in another world . " Asia also had in her possession a sealed letter Booth had given her in January 1865 for safekeeping , only to be opened upon his death . In the letter , Booth had written :

" I know how foolish I shall be deemed for undertaking such a step as this , where , on one side , I have many friends and everything to make me happy ... to give up all ... seems insane ; but God is my judge . I love justice more than I do a country that disowns it , more than fame or wealth . "

Booth 's letter , seized along with other family papers at Asia 's house by Federal troops and published by The New York Times while the manhunt was underway , explained his reasons for plotting against Lincoln . In it he said , " I have ever held the South was right . The very nomination of Abraham Lincoln , four years ago , spoke plainly war upon Southern rights and institutions . " The institution of " African slavery , " he had written , " is one of the greatest blessings that God has ever bestowed upon a favored nation " and Lincoln 's policy was one of " total annihilation . "

= = Aftermath = =

Booth 's body was shrouded in a blanket and tied to the side of an old farm wagon for the trip back to Belle Plain . There , his corpse was taken aboard the ironclad USS Montauk and brought to the Washington Navy Yard for identification and an autopsy . The body was identified there as Booth 's by more than ten people who knew him . Among the identifying features used to make sure that the man that was killed was Booth was a tattoo on his left hand with his initials J.W.B. , and a distinct scar on the back of his neck . The third , fourth , and fifth vertebrae were removed during the autopsy to allow access to the bullet . These bones are still on display at the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington , D.C. The body was then buried in a storage room at the Old Penitentiary , later moved to a warehouse at the Washington Arsenal on October 1 , 1867 . In 1869 , the remains were once again identified before being released to the Booth family , where they were buried in the family plot at Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore , after a burial ceremony conducted by Fleming James , minister of Christ Episcopal Church , in the presence of more than 40 people . By then , wrote scholar Russell Conwell after visiting homes in the vanquished former Confederate states , hatred of Lincoln still smoldered and " Photographs of Wilkes Booth , with the last words of great martyrs printed upon its borders ... adorn their drawing rooms " .

Eight others implicated in Lincoln 's assassination were tried by a military tribunal in Washington , D.C. , and found guilty on June 30 , 1865 . Mary Surratt , Lewis Powell , David Herold , and George Atzerodt were hanged in the Old Arsenal Penitentiary on July 7 , 1865 . Samuel Mudd , Samuel Arnold , and Michael O 'Laughlen were sentenced to life imprisonment at Fort Jefferson in Florida 's Dry Tortugas ; Edmund Spangler was given a six @-@ year term in prison . O ' Laughlen died in a

yellow fever epidemic there in 1867 . The others were eventually pardoned in February 1869 by President Andrew Johnson .

Forty years later , when the centenary of Lincoln 's birth was celebrated in 1909 , a border state official reflected on Booth 's assassination of Lincoln , " Confederate veterans held public services and gave public expression to the sentiment , that ' had Lincoln lived ' the days of reconstruction might have been softened and the era of good feeling ushered in earlier " . The majority of Northerners viewed Booth as a madman or monster who murdered the savior of the Union , while in the South , many cursed Booth for bringing upon them the harsh revenge of an incensed North instead of the reconciliation promised by Lincoln . A century later , Goodrich concluded in 2005 , " For millions of people , particularly in the South , it would be decades before the impact of the Lincoln assassination began to release its terrible hold on their lives " .

= = = Theories of Booth 's motivation = = =

Author Francis Wilson , 11 years old at the time of Lincoln 's assassination , wrote an epitaph of Booth in his 1929 book John Wilkes Booth : " In the terrible deed he committed , he was actuated by no thought of monetary gain , but by a self @-@ sacrificing , albeit wholly fanatical devotion to a cause he thought supreme . " Others have seen less unselfish motives such as shame , ambition , and sibling rivalry for achievement and fame .

= = = Theories of Booth 's escape = = =

In 1907 , Finis L. Bates wrote *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth* , contending that a Booth look @-@ alike was mistakenly killed at the Garrett farm while Booth eluded his pursuers . Booth , said Bates , assumed the pseudonym " John St. Helen " and settled on the Paluxy River near Glen Rose , Texas , and later moved to Granbury , Texas . After falling gravely ill and making a deathbed confession that he was the fugitive assassin , he recovered and fled , eventually committing suicide in 1903 in Enid , Oklahoma , under the alias " David E. George " . By 1913 , more than 70 @,@ 000 copies of the book had been sold , and Bates exhibited St. Helen 's mummified body in carnival sideshows .

In response , the Maryland Historical Society published an account in 1913 by then @-@ Baltimore mayor William M. Pegram , who had viewed Booth 's remains upon the casket 's arrival at the Weaver funeral home in Baltimore on February 18 , 1869 , for burial at Green Mount Cemetery . Pegram , who had known Booth well as a young man , submitted a sworn statement that the body he had seen in 1869 was Booth 's . Others positively identifying this body as Booth at the funeral home included Booth 's mother , brother , and sister , along with his dentist and other Baltimore acquaintances . Earlier , The New York Times had published an account by their reporter in 1911 detailing the burial of Booth 's body at the cemetery and those who were witnesses . The rumor periodically revived , as in the 1920s , when a corpse advertised as the " Man Who Shot Lincoln " was exhibited on a national tour by a carnival promoter . According to a 1938 article in the *Saturday Evening Post* , the exhibitor said he obtained St. Helen 's corpse from Bates ' widow .

The *Lincoln Conspiracy* , a book published in 1977 , contended there was a government plot to conceal Booth 's escape , reviving interest in the story and prompting the display of St. Helen 's mummified body in Chicago that year . The book sold more than one million copies and was made into a feature film called *The Lincoln Conspiracy* , which was theatrically released in 1977 . A 1998 book , *The Curse of Cain : The Untold Story of John Wilkes Booth* , contended that Booth had escaped , sought refuge in Japan and eventually returned to the United States . In 1994 two historians , together with several descendants , sought a court order for the exhumation of Booth 's body at Green Mount Cemetery , which was , according to their lawyer , " intended to prove or disprove longstanding theories on Booth 's escape " by conducting a photo @-@ superimposition analysis . The application was blocked , however , by Baltimore Circuit Court Judge Joseph H. H. Kaplan , who cited , among other things , " the unreliability of petitioners ' less @-@ than @-@ convincing escape / cover @-@ up theory " as a major factor in his decision . The Maryland Court of

Special Appeals upheld the ruling . No gravestone marks the precise location where Booth is buried in the family 's gravesite .

In December 2010 , descendants of Edwin Booth reported that they obtained permission to exhume the Shakespearean actor 's body to obtain DNA samples . However , Bree Harvey , a spokesperson from the Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge , Massachusetts , where Edwin Booth is buried , refuted reports that the family had contacted them and requested to exhume Edwin 's body . The family hopes to obtain DNA samples from artifacts belonging to John Wilkes , or from remains such as vertebrae stored at the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Maryland . On March 30 , 2013 , museum spokesperson Carol Johnson announced the family 's request to extract DNA from the vertebrae had been rejected .

= = In popular culture = =

= = = Film = = =

In the film Prince of Players (1955) , a biography of Edwin Booth (played by Richard Burton) , John Wilkes Booth is played by John Derek .

In the Wagon Train episode " The John Wilbot Story " (1958) , based on the premise Booth survived and moved west , character John Wilbot is played by Dane Clark .

In the The Twilight Zone episode " Back There " (1961) , Booth was portrayed by John Lasell .

Booth is portrayed by Toby Kebbell in the Robert Redford film The Conspirator (2010) .

Jesse Johnson plays Booth in the telefilm Killing Lincoln (2013) , where he is the main character .

James Marsden plays Booth in a flashback cameo in the comedy Zoolander (2001) .

Christian Camargo plays Booth in the opening scenes of the adventure sequel National Treasure : Book of Secrets (2007) .

In the film In The Line Of Fire (1993) , a would @-@ be presidential assassin played by John Malkovich asks to be called " Booth " in his phone calls to a Secret Service agent played by Clint Eastwood .

= = = Literature = = =

In David O. Stewart 's novel , The LINCOLN Deception , two people in 1900 try to discover the true motive behind Booth 's plot .

= = = Stage productions = = =

Booth is featured as a central character of Stephen Sondheim 's musical Assassins , in which his assassination of Lincoln is depicted in a musical number called " The Ballad of Booth " .

= = = Television = = =

In the Wagon Train episode " The John Wilbot Story " (1958) , based on the premise Booth survived and moved west , character John Wilbot is played by Dane Clark .

In the The Twilight Zone episode " Back There " (1961) , Booth was portrayed by John Lasell .

In beginning in episode 9 of season 1 " (A Day to Give Thanks ") , of the BBC America series Copper , all three Booth brothers interact with the Morehouses and with Elizabeth in New York City . John Wilkes is particularly taken with Elizabeth , who is helping them raise funds for the brothers ' 1864 benefit performance of Julius Caesar , at the Winter Garden Theatre .

In Bones , Seeley Booth ? a main protagonist ? is a direct descendant of John Wilkes Booth .

= = = For younger readers = = =

Giblin , James Cross (2005) . Good Brother , Bad Brother . New York : Clarion . ISBN 0 @-@ 618 @-@ 09642 @-@ 6 .