

Ex-IU president's son was famous

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U.S. Postal Department at high levels. The scandal erupted during the administration of President Chester A. Arthur in 1881.

Corruption had been found in the laying out and administering of some mail routes, commonly known as the "Star Routes." The furor eventually involved the second assistant U.S. postmaster, several senators and other officials and contractors.

It was Andrew Wylie's lot to preside over the lengthy and multiple trials that resulted from the scandal. In the end there were no convictions, but the trials stirred up a lot of soul-searching about the integrity of public officials.

Judge Andrew Wylie is better known for his part in the trial of a so-called "infamous conspirator," and the whole proceeding had highly dramatic overtones, since it was related to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

Shortly after the assassination the intense dragnet of federal

authorities yielded all of the "conspirators" except John Surrat, the son of John Wilkes Booth's landlady. She and others were tried and hanged, but John managed to escape to Europe, where he wandered around for many years before he was finally arrested in Egypt.

America may have recovered somewhat from the assassination of a popular wartime leader, but the public had not entirely forgotten. Surrat was put on trial for conspiracy and faced Judge Andrew Wylie on the bench.

John Surrat escaped the fate of his mothers and the others. Perhaps it was because at that distance in time some of the steam had gone out of the public's desire to settle the score. Judge Wylie presided over a hung jury, and the defendant was set free.

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