

Booth's Motives

Drauder 13A

John Wilkes Booth

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The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

John Wilkes Booth's Motives

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

60 YEARS AGO TODAY

MAY 6, 1865.

WASHINGTON.—It is confidently asserted that the government has knowledge of aid and encouragement given by President Jeff Davis of the Confederacy to the plot to assassinate President Lincoln and others. The trial of the assassins will commence next week, possibly on Monday. The court will be composed of men of superior ability and the trial will be pushed rapidly. It is supposed it will take place in the arsenal, where the assassins now in custody are closely guarded by a regiment.

SPRINGFIELD.—Robert Lincoln and Judge Davis have selected a block near the center of Oak Ridge cemetery as the spot in which President Lincoln's remains shall be finally interred. The site is a most beautiful one, and the selection elicits general approbation.

MONTREAL.—George Saunders and Beverly Tucker, accused of complicity in the murder of President Lincoln, are out in a manifesto addressed to President Andrew Johnson, in which they accuse him of a hellish plot to murder their Christian president (meaning Jeff Davis). They agree to go to Rouse's Point or some other place to stand trial on the charges made in President Johnson's recent proclamation.

SAN FRANCISCO.—Gen McDowell is moving several regiments of troops for the protection of land routes to Idaho along which the Indians are troublesome.

ST. PAUL.—Indians murdered a family of four persons in Blue Earth county as they sat at breakfast. As a result a half-breed who was captured was lynched. He was first tried by a "citizens' court," and it recommended that he be allowed a regular trial. This did not suit the crowd and he was placed on a wagon, which was driven under a tree. Then he was strung up and the wagon driven away.

WHY BOOTH KILLED LINCOLN.

Revenge Was the Motive that Impelled the Assassin—A Strange Story.

Special Correspondence of the Globe-Democrat.

1884
RALEIGH, N. C., October 4.—From time to time there have been hints that there was a motive for John Wilkes Booth's assassination of President Lincoln, and that the motive was revenge! A strange story, now told for the first time, shows that these surmises were well founded, and that Booth's horrid crime was not simply the work of a madman, but was committed because of the execution under military law of his friend, Capt. Beall, of the Confederate army.

The story is secured from Dr. George A. Foote, of Warrenton, N. C., a well-known physician who was in the Confederate service as a surgeon, and who was for a long time a prisoner at Fort Columbus, New York Harbor. Here is the narrative just as given by Dr. Foote, who was interviewed here:

Capt. Beall was a noted Confederate officer, and was so quick and so secret in his movements that he was a terror to the Federal commanders in and near New York. He figured in the famous St. Alban's raids in 1863-64, and his exploits at that time gave his name a sort of romantic sound in the South, while he caused consternation among the enemy by his daring. But he was caught at last, after his bold and active work had drawn away from Gen. Grant's Army of the Potomac 20,000 men to quell the border troubles which Beall and his followers had caused.

Beall was tried by court-martial in prison at Fort Columbus, and sentenced to be hanged as a spy, though it was contended in his defense that he was no spy, but a brave and open foe. Efforts to save his life were made by many persons, among them the distinguished Gov. Andrew, of Massachusetts, but all were to no purpose.

John Wilkes Booth had been a college roommate of Beall, and they were in every way the most devoted of friends. Booth tried in every possible manner to secure Beall's escape from prison. He was in New York almost constantly in the winter of 1864, and kept in communication with Beall and his friends in some mysterious way while he tried to secure his pardon or escape. Dr. Foote occupied a cell adjoining Beall's, and with him Booth and his friends were in regular communication. Dr. Foote agreeing to render any assistance in his power. The plan at first agreed on was that Dr. Foote should endeavor to chloroform the guard at night, and, it was alleged, that if this succeeded the way for escape was open, a boat or skiff being in readiness to receive Beall and carry him across the river. Dr. Foote was carelessly bold in approaching Beall's cell too closely, and, this arousing suspicion, the guard was doubled that very night, which caused delay. The next plan was that a crowd of bold men should pass into the barracks, or prison, overpower the guard of five or six and pass Beall through. To this plan some of the outer guard had agreed, having been bribed with gold.

But in some way news of this plan leaked out in New York City the afternoon or evening before the night when the daring attempt was to be made. This prevented any possibility of escape, and President Lincoln or Gen. Dix had Beall executed without delay.

As soon as Booth discovered, through Dr. Foote, who kept constant observation of all that went on, and who was himself informed by one of the guards, who had also been bribed, that there was no chance of escape for Capt. Beall, he went to Washington, and on his knees implored President Lincoln and Secretary Seward to pardon, or at least respite, Beall. Mr. Lincoln agreed to respite, and Booth at once telegraphed the joyful news to Beall's mother, who was in Brooklyn, N. Y. But that very night the prison commandant received a telegraphic order to hang Beall the next morning at 10 o'clock. This order was executed, and Beall was hanged within thirty yards of Surgeon Foote's prison window, and inside Fort Columbus, and not at Johnson's Island, as has frequently been reported.

Booth, for what he termed the perfidy of President Lincoln toward himself and friend Beall, at once swore to avenge his friend's death by killing both Lincoln and Seward. He did not intend to shoot Lincoln in the theater, but the contemplated opportunity did not offer itself elsewhere.

But for the fact that Booth's spur caught in the curtain that fatal night he would have escaped, at least for a time. The war had nothing to do with the assassination of the President. It was due simply and solely to revenge intensified by Booth's love and admiration for his friend.

Booth went to New York the morning of Beall's execution, and being so grievously disappointed at what occurred he became measurably an insane man, to use Dr. Foote's words. Dr. Foote had not the least

idea of Booth's plan to assassinate the President. This plan was known to only one man, and to him Booth revealed it only an hour before the assassination. The man to whom he thus confided his purpose begged him not to carry it out, and finding that Booth was not to be turned from it left the city before the horrid tragedy occurred.

Capt. Beall was a graduate of the University of Virginia, and was a man of most remarkable personal magnetism and high soldierly bearing, and none was more gallant. He had many sympathizers who rendered him great assistance. He was an ardent lover of the Southern cause, and Booth was absolutely devoted to him.

Dr. Foote repeats the statement that neither the war nor its results had anything to do with the assassination of President Lincoln, all reports to the contrary notwithstanding. The war was over before the great tragedy occurred, and Booth knew it could not help matters. Had Beall been pardoned, or simply imprisoned, Mr. Lincoln would not have been killed. That is certain.

Dr. Foote's sole connection with this matter was as Beall's friend, and he was in no wise a party to the assassination. He is a man of high standing, and was a true soldier. Though not in the line of promotion as a field officer, he was yet publicly complimented in a special order by his General for acts of heroism in battle.

WHY BOOTH KILLED LINCOLN.

"Brick" Pomeroy Says It Was Because of the Hanging of a Man Named Beall.

New York Star.—At a private dinner given not long ago at an up-town club, "Brick" Pomeroy, who was one of the guests, startled the little company by observing:

"Gentlemen, I am positively sure that I am one of the three men in the world who know why Wilkes Booth killed President Lincoln."

Amid some expressions of surprise and mild incredulity Mr. Pomeroy told the following story, prefacing it by the statement that it had never been published.

"I don't know but that it is only right that I should correct a popular impression on the subject," he said. "I am in possession of proof that Booth did not kill Lincoln through any hatred of the cause the President represented or through any devotion to the cause of the South. It was a clear case of revenge, and this is how it came about: In 1865, just about the close of the war, a man named Beall, a Confederate, who had been a prisoner on Johnson's Island, made his escape. This man was Wilkes Booth's bosom friend, and they were devoted to each other to a degree seldom found in the friendship of men. Booth was a very impassioned man, as we all know, and he never did anything by half; therefore it is safe to assume that Beall was really as dear to him as he always said the man was. After Beall escaped he seems to have entertained visionary ideas of rescuing his fellow-prisoners at Johnson's Island. At least this was the construction put upon his plot by the authorities when they found that Beall had organized a gang of men to capture the U. S. man-of-war Michigan. The evidence tended to show that Beall and his followers intended to capture the vessel, run her to Johnson's Island, and, after rescuing the prisoners, fly to Canada.

"Beall was tried in New York as the ring-leader, convicted of treason and sentenced to death. When Wilkes Booth heard that his beloved friend, his *Fidus Achates*, was to be hanged, he became wild with excitement. He implored me and Senator Hale, to whose daughter he was engaged, to back him up in a plea to Lincoln for a pardon. Well, both Senator Hale and myself agreed that we would go to Washington with Booth and a friend and see the President. When the four of us arrived at the White House we saw Mr. Lincoln, and Booth made an impassioned appeal for his friend's life. His oratory seemed to be inspired. He spoke with a fluency that was almost startling, and advanced fact after fact until the President seemed impressed with his logic.

"When we had concluded, the President said that he would pardon Beall, and then Booth's somber face lighted up with a gratitude that was eloquent. He shook the President by the hand, told him that Beall and his family would come to thank him for his clemency, and we departed. I believe that this was the last time Booth ever addressed the President until that fateful night in April when he burst into the proscenium box at Ford's Opera-house, in Washington, and shot him.

"The reason I draw a connection between the two incidents is this: After our little delegation withdrew from Mr. Lincoln's office with Beall's safety assured, Booth went at once to the Pennsylvania Depot, and took the first train for New York. He carried the news to Beall, who was confined at Governor's Island, and the two men had a jollification. Beall accepted the President's promise of pardon as final, and watched the approach of the day appointed for his execution with easy indifference. Booth was a frequent visitor to his imprisoned friend, and although they soon commenced to think that there was unnecessary delay in the transmission of the pardon they did not take the alarm until before the appointed day, when the preparations being made for the execution aroused them from their false security.

"Booth was frantic with terror and rage, and Beall's condition was even more pitiable. The respite did not come, and the next day Beall was hanged. Booth never would forgive Lincoln for his failure to keep his promise. He became almost wild for revenge, and, in my opinion, that is why he went to Washington and entered into the historic conspiracy of assassination."

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WHY BOOTH KILLED LINCOLN.

Revenge Said to Have Been the Motive That Impelled the Assassin.

The following strange story is told in the St. Louis "Globe-Democrat," under a Raleigh, N. C., date: From time to time there have been hints that there was a motive for John Wilkes Booth's assassination of President Lincoln, and that the motive was revenge! A strange story, now told for the first time, shows that these surmises were well founded, and that Booth's horrid crime was not simply the work of a madman, but was committed because of the execution under military law of his friend, Captain Beall, of the Confederate army.

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Beall was tried by court-martial in prison at Fort Columbus, and sentenced to be hanged as a spy, though it was contended in his defense that he was no spy, but a brave and open foe. Efforts to save his life were made by many persons, among them the distinguished Governor Andrew, of Massachusetts, but all were to no purpose. John Wilkes Booth had been a college roommate of Beall, and they were in every way the most devoted of friends. Booth tried in every possible manner to secure Beall's escape from prison. He was in New York almost constantly in the winter of 1864, and kept in communication with Beall and his friends in some mysterious way while he tried to secure his pardon or escape.

Dr. Foote occupied a cell adjoining Beall's, and with him Booth and his friends were in regular communication. Dr. Foote agreeing to render any assistance in his power. The plan at first agreed on was that Dr. Foote should endeavor to chloroform the guard at night, and, it was alleged, that if this succeeded the way for escape was open, a boat or skiff being in readiness to receive Beall and carry him across the river. Dr. Foote was carelessly bold in approaching Beall's cell too closely, and, this arousing suspicion, the guard was doubled that very night, which caused delay. The next plan was that a crowd of bold men should pass into the barracks, or prison, overpower the guard of five or six and pass Beall through. To this plan some of the outer guard had agreed, having been bribed with gold.

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OCT 11 1894
COMMERCIAL ADVERT

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THE CASE OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH

2. HENKELS, STAN V. Owner of Oldest Literary Auction House in U. S., Auctioneers of the famous Washington Estate Sales, also cataloguers and dispersers by public auction of practically every genuine American Historical Estate before 1915. Manuscript Signed, 4to. A REMARKABLE CONTRIBUTION TO LINCOLN LITERATURE. 27.50.

I HAVE been asked so often by my friends to give in writing what I know about the case of John Wilkes Booth regarding his assassination of Abraham Lincoln. What I am about to relate is the version of the account which I have so often heard my Father, Stan. V. Henkels, tell to his many friends.

It appears that one John Y. Beall a friend of Booths was captured abroad a Confederate Gunboat, during the Civil War, which was trying to run the blockade. Beall was tried as a Spy and Guerrillero by Military Commission and condemned to die. Booth went to Lincoln, told him that Beall was not a spy and that he was caught in the soldier's regalia of a Confederate Officer and said that spys were not captured in their own uniform. Lincoln saw the equity of this and informed Booth that the man would not be killed but held as a prisoner of war, and to which Booth replied was the proper thing to do. The next day Beall was executed and Stanton the Secretary of War, said in exoneration of himself in the affair that Lincoln's message came too late. (This has not been accepted by knowing ones as a plausible excuse.) Hearing Beall was executed, Booth thought Lincoln had gone back on his word and in an hour of rash judgment and exited anger shot Lincoln in Ford's Theatre. One day in the month of December, 1869, my Grandfather, George J. Henkels, the noted cabinet manufacturer of Philadelphia was standing in the Continental Hotel talking to several of his friends and accompanied by my father, who was then 15 years of age. While they were standing there a colored boy attendant of the hotel came rushing down the stairs and cried "My God Massa Stanton don cut his throat". Immediately everyone questioned him and he informed them that Stanton, who was staying in the hotel had ordered water for his morning shave and the boy said he brought soap and a razor and had gone for the water and on his return to the room found Stanton with his throat cut lying across the bed. The boy was immediately rushed out of sight and his whereabouts never known by the public. This is the story as so often told by my father and which he often related without fear of contradiction.

Regarding the case of Beall I may say that on January 27th, 1922, we sold at auction a pamphlet on this trial and it had inserted a letter of Beall's bearing on his trial. Below I shall give full description of it.

Confederate. Trial of John Y. Beall, as a Spy and Guerrillero, by Military Commission.

8vo, half roan (broken).

Inserted is a full autograph letter of Beall's to Col. R. Ould, Comr. Exchange, Richmond, Va., written from Fort Columbus, 21 Feb., 1865 in which he says:

"Sir,

The published proceedings of a military commission in my case published in the N. Y. papers of the 15th just made you & my government aware of my sentence & doom. A reprieve on account of some informality from the 18th to the 24th was granted. The Authorities are possessed of the facts in my case. They know that I acted under orders. I appeal to my government to use its utmost efforts to protect me, & if unable to prevent my murder to vindicate my reputation. I can only declare that I was no spy or guerrillero, and am a true Confederate.

Respectfully,

JOHN Y. BEALL,
C. S. N."

Research on Lincoln Death Is Launched By Society

Belief Held That Booth Mur-
dered President for Re-
venge; Papers Studied

SAN JOSE, April 14.—Today, April 14, anniversary of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, saw the start of an investigation here by the Lincoln Historical Research Foundation which may throw important new light on the slaying of the martyred president.

Papers and documents of the family of Captain John Beall, noted Confederate intelligence agent during the Civil war, may reveal that the slaying of Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth was a personal revenge plot and not merely the work of a crank shooting down a national figure.

Captain John Baker, 401 South Sixteenth street, San Jose, has papers and documents of the Beall family showing that Beall and Booth were warm personal friends, having been classmates at the University of Virginia.

Beall, from the tone of the documents in Captain Baker's possession, was arrested by Union officers and instead of being treated as a high class intelligence officer of the enemy, was tried as a spy and executed.

It is believed by Captain Baker, who is a descendant of Beall, that Booth seized the opportunity of killing President Lincoln in personal vengeance for the death of his old friend because Lincoln declined to commute Captain Beall's sentence or pardon him. Booth is believed by Captain Baker to have had parts in attempts to bribe officials and attacking the prison where Beall was held prior to his execution. Both plans for freeing Beall failed.

Inside The Mind Of Lincoln's Slayer

By Scott Hart.

IT IS 74 years since John Wilkes Booth killed Lincoln. But here comes Mr. Philip Van Doren Stern to make that fantastic murder seem like something that happened not longer ago than yesterday, or else never happened at all except in the author's imagination.

It is no disparagement of Mr. Stern to say that he seems to write with his mind as much on the customers as on his subject. His book is part thriller, part psychological novel, and if no one else has thought of telling the story in this fashion, that is all to Mr. Stern's credit.

The historian who demands documented exactitudes will find much at which to quibble in "The Man Who Killed Lincoln." But for all that, once he has opened the book he is more than likely to go on to the end. Even the reader who is not an historian may wonder how in the devil Mr. Stern managed to learn so much of what was going on in Booth's mind; but this may come as an afterthought.

It is certainly no quarrel of mine that Mr. Stern has oiled history with juices that make for fast, intense drama. If he wants to give John Wilkes Booth an Oedipus complex, and by a kind of Freudian tour de force to put the blame for everything on poor old Junius Brutus Booth, that's all right with me, too. But a more finicky reader may want to know just where fancy ends and facts begin in this yarn.

I must say, though, that Booth's thoughts and compulsions appear plausible enough as Mr. Stern presents them. Had he attributed them to a fictional character they would be accepted without question. All sorts of motives have been ascribed for Booth's deed. He wanted to avenge the defeated South, some have said. Others hold him as a deranged man entirely, or at least an egotist with such exaggerated appetite for attention that murder was not too large a price to pay for it. Others, having nothing too tangible to proceed on, have wondered and left it at that.

Mr. Stern comes up with the notion that Booth slew Lincoln in the hope of reviving the already beaten Confederacy, of spurring it to further action in the field against a disorganized and leaderless North. It is not clear where he seized

upon this idea, although in the swirl of speculation it certainly had been entertained before. But the crime was committed on the night of April 14, 1865, five days after Appomattox. Only the uncertain Johnston was in the field. It is difficult to reconcile such a motive with the facts. For Booth, even if crazy, was not necessarily a fool.

Anyway, around this motive for action, Mr. Stern makes clear the actor's weakness for dramatics. He has Booth recalling the murder lines from Julius Caesar; and primes him to leap upon the stage, disclosing himself to the audience, and declaiming withal. The broken ankle stopped some of this display.

One finishes the chapter recount-

ing the assassination asking: Was Booth a patriot, a lunatic, or a tragic jackass? Was he, and to what degree, sucked into the conspiracy that to outward appearance he led? Of this latter inquiry, Mr. Stern makes much. One glimpses conspirators, behind every bush—and no doubt there were. But Mr. Stern casts no new light on who they might have been.

Suspicion is made to move about high officials in Washington. And Mr. Stern indicates that Booth's plot was one of at least two that were current when the President was killed. He insists, however, that Booth was ignorant of some of the personages supposed to be aiding him. Later he insinuates that what Booth might have known was plenty.

He takes no stock in the tale that Booth escaped from Garrett's barn the early morning of April 26, 1865, when Federal cavalry surrounded the place and killed the man who was officially buried later as John Wilkes Booth.

He thinks the case is one of America's outstanding murder mysteries. So it is, for the simple reason that no one knows what was in the mind of John Wilkes Booth, what led him to the assassination and whether or not the plan was entirely his own. None of these intense mysteries is illuminated by Mr. Stern. If anything, he intensifies them.

He provides a clear and orderly picture of the whole thing. He develops the characters according to their weight. It begins on Tuesday, April 11, 1865, with Booth brooding over insolence from some drunken Yankee soldiers, and ends in Garrett's barn. He has bent backward to be objective—as objective, that is, as a man can be who is operating within the mind of a character. His facts are accurate enough. If his aim was merely to write something readable, he has been triumphant. He is at his best in the flight of Booth from Washington, and eloquent when he describes Booth's tortures near his journey's end.

He had Booth, in agony with a broken leg and harassed as a fox reflecting that his sufferings were greater than those of Lincoln. Undeniably Booth must have been thinking something of the sort as he lay in the marshes of an inhospitable Virginia.

It seems safe to predict that the book will be pretty widely read. It is swift paced and poignant. This, take it, is enough to satisfy the author. For he saw a ton of dramatic dynamite in the destiny of John Wilkes Booth and the weird characters who surrounded him.

"THE MAN WHO KILLED LINCOLN," by Philip Van Doren Stern. Eight contemporary pictures. (Random House, \$3.)

Early Portent of Lincoln's Death

By L. O. HONIG.

THAT the assassination of Abraham Lincoln had been planned for many months is evidenced by a little known incident which occurred in Meadville, Pa., almost eight months prior to the shooting in Ford's theater, in Washington.

John Wilkes Booth was an overnight guest at the famous McHenry house, adjoining the Erie railroad station in Meadville on August 13, 1864, after a theatrical engagement at the opera house. Whatever possessed him to be so brazen as to divulge the plans he and his friends had made for Lincoln's death probably will never be known. However, on the next morning after Booth had left the city a chambermaid discovered that he had scratched upon the window of his room, evidently with the stone in his diamond ring, the following words:

"Abe Lincoln departed this life August 13, 1864, by the effects of poison."

The chambermaid immediately notified R. M. U. Taylor, the manager of the McHenry house. For some unknown reason, Taylor gave the matter no immediate attention.

The circumstances of Booth's visit to Meadville, and his knowledge of a plot upon the Great Emancipator's life, were immediately recalled as the sad news passed over the telegraph wires the morning of April 16, 1865, that Lincoln had been mortally wounded by Booth in Ford's theater on the evening of the 14th, while the President was attending a performance of "Our American Cousin."

The glass was then removed from the window frame, and afterwards exhibited by Taylor, along with Booth's signature which he cut from the hotel register. He framed the two with a black velour facing to facilitate reading. Later Taylor sent the glass to Miss Mary McHenry of Philadelphia, daughter of the man for whom the hotel was named. It remained in her possession until 1879. That autumn while on a visit to Washington, she saw some other Booth relics in the office of the judge advocate general, and added the pane of glass to the collection. It remained there until December 1, 1939, when it was transferred to the Lincoln museum in Washington, where it is now stored.

Research indicates that John Wilkes Booth's scratching of the prediction quoted above was something more than idle pastime. For several months before, during the summer of 1864, David E. Harold, the vainglorious, shallow-minded drug clerk who rode with Booth that night of April, 1865, was employed in William S. Thompson's drug store at Fifteenth street and Pennsylvania avenue, in Washington. There the President was accustomed to having his prescriptions filled, and it was known that Harold was an easy tool in Booth's hands. It is believed that on one occasion during the summer of 1864, the President actually had unknowingly taken poison in the drugs which had been prescribed by his physician, and prepared by Harold, to no ill effect.

There were numerous other plots to assassinate Lincoln dating back to his first trip to Washington after his election to the presidency. Booth knew of the plan to poison him, and it is even probable he was the instigator.

No evidence has ever been found which would unravel the real story of this plot, other than Booth's prediction scratched upon the window of his room in the McHenry house. Nor is there any evidence to show why the plot failed.

The Politics of John Wilkes Booth

To the Editor:

John Hinckley's attempt to assassinate President Reagan provoked the now customary ritual of national soul-searching and retelling of bad history.

Anthony Lewis told us that America's assassins and would-be assassins have tended to be "lonely, demented men." He cites the attempted assassination of President Truman by Puerto Rican nationalists as the only one with "an identifiable political purpose." Jane Brody likewise distinguished American from foreign assassination attempts by their being "personally, not politically, motivated." Both writers mention John Wilkes Booth.

Abraham Lincoln's assassination was a crime with a clear political motive and not the weirdly inexplicable intrusion of a lunatic into American history. The explanation of Booth's crime lies not in study of his relationship with his father but in reading the testimony, letters and documents which Booth and his co-conspirators left for historians to study.

Co-conspirators? The article failed to mention them, but they are proof of the political motive of Booth's crime. He gathered six men to help him kidnap Lincoln. Two were former Confederate soldiers, one an escaped Confederate prisoner of war, one a Confederate spy, and one a carriage painter who ferried Confederate spies across the river from Maryland to Virginia. Only David Herold was so young and trifling as to appear to have no distinct political views.

Three of these men were still in the plot when it turned to assassination. One tried to kill the Secretary of State; one was supposed to kill the Vice President; Herold was to help in the escape. The political motive is clear: they wanted the Confederacy to win the war.

Booth's longest extant letter is entirely political in content. It echoes the libertarian rhetoric of opposition to the "tyrant" Lincoln, and it expresses racial fears that Lincoln's policies would keep America from being an all-white country. By assassinating the key figures in the Government, he hoped to bring about a revolution that would save the South at last and avert America's biracial future.

The impulse to put such unsettling events in perspective is commendable, but the word "perspective" connotes the long view. Historians have such a point of view by necessity. I long for the day when journalists seek their perspective from historians rather than from psychologists, sociologists, or other journalists.

MARK E. NEELY JR.

Fort Wayne, Ind., April 7, 1981

The writer is director of The Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 1981

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Co-conspirators? The article failed to mention them, but they are proof of the political motive of Booth's crime. He gathered six men to help him kidnap Lincoln. Two were former Confederate soldiers, one an escaped Confederate prisoner of war, one a Confederate spy, and one a carriage painter who ferried Confederate spies across the river from Maryland to Virginia. Only David Herold was so young and trifling as to appear to have no distinct political views.

Three of these men were still in the plot when it turned to assassination. One tried to kill the Secretary of State; one was supposed to kill the Vice President; Herold was to help in the escape. The political motive is clear: they wanted the Confederacy to win the war.

Booth's longest extant letter is entirely political in content. It echoes the libertarian rhetoric of opposition to the "tyrant" Lincoln, and it expresses racial fears that Lincoln's policies would keep America from being an all-white country. By assassinating the key figures in the Government, he hoped to bring about a revolution that would save the South at last and avert America's biracial future.

The impulse to put such unsettling events in perspective is commendable, but the word "perspective" connotes the long view. Historians have such a point of view by necessity. I long for the day when journalists seek their perspective from historians rather than from psychologists, sociologists, or other journalists.

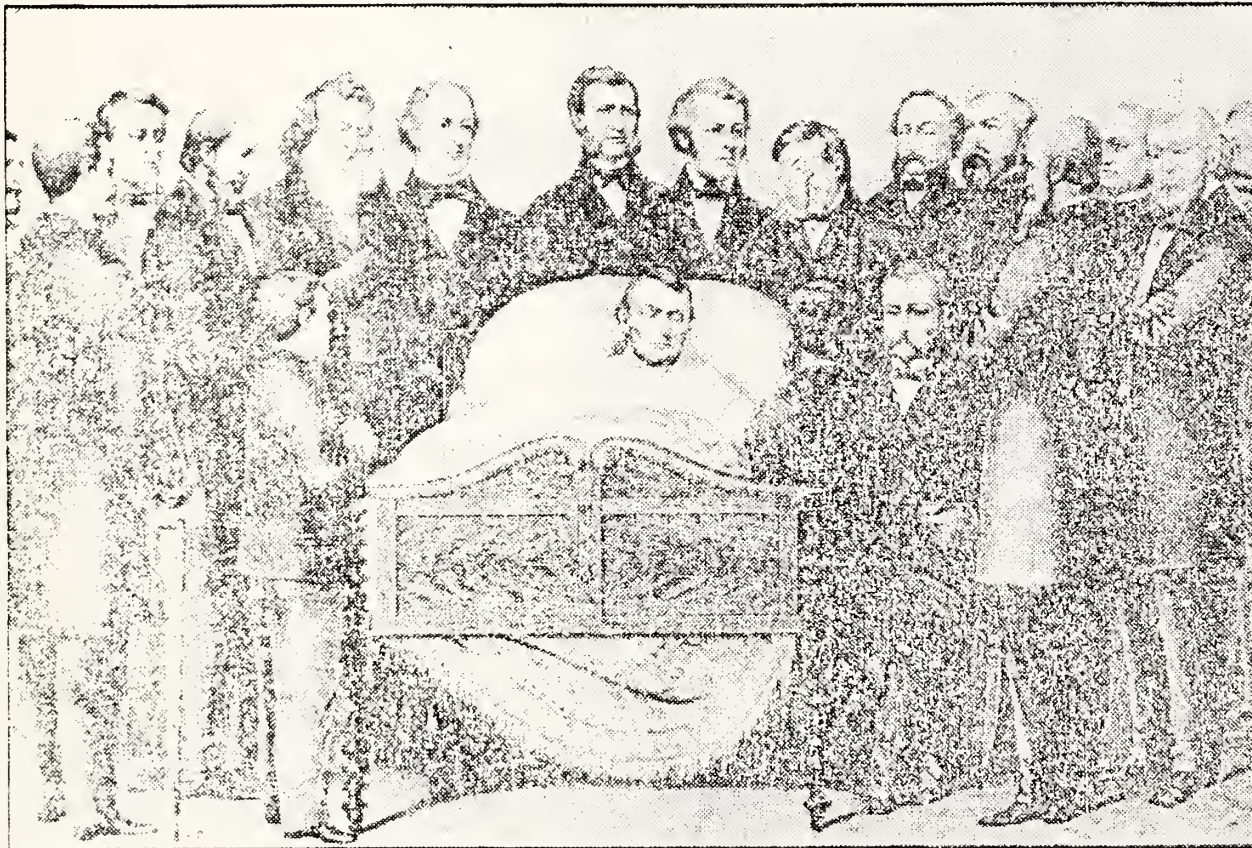
MARK E. NEELY JR.

Fort Wayne, Ind., April 7, 1981

The writer is director of The Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum.

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The death of Abraham Lincoln, April 15, 1865

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LINCOLN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Lincoln killing gets another interpretation

By ZACK NAUTH

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — Abraham Lincoln's assassination 120 years ago was not the action of a crazed Southern sympathizer acting alone, but the result of John Wilkes Booth's sense of duty after elaborate Confederate military plans to kidnap the president or blow up the White House failed, researchers say.

The reinterpretation of events surrounding Lincoln's April 14, 1865, assassination, detailed in a study not yet published, challenges assumptions that Booth was an aberration and theorizes he and other Confederate agents were well-funded and working full time in Washington.

The Civil War researchers contend the Confederate government developed a campaign in the waning weeks of the war they believed would have ensured at least a stalemate.

Later the Confederacy, seeking to avoid any direct links between itself and Booth, encouraged speculation the assassin's actions were an aberration.

"The South won the battle of disinformation," said James O. Hall, a historian believed to have the largest

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Lincoln

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single collection of Lincoln documents.

The study was prepared by Hall, a former Department of Labor official; William A. Tidwell, a retired CIA officer and Army intelligence general; and Department of Defense analyst David W. Gaddy. Their hypothesis was pieced together from evidence gathered from existing and newly discovered documents.

The researchers contend Confederate operations under a clandestine campaign in Washington were to be coordinated with last-ditch military maneuvers by Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

The study notes the assassination was pointless from a military standpoint because Lincoln was shot five days after Lee surrendered. But it said Lee's withdrawal cut off communication to Booth, and the assassin was left hanging, not knowing an attack on Lincoln was no longer needed.

Evidence suggests Booth was originally recruited to help kidnap Lincoln March 17, 1865, on his way to a meeting. However, the study said, an aide went in Lincoln's place, foiling the plan.

Booth was then directed to help blow up the White House, the study added, but an explosives expert sent



J.W. Booth

from Richmond April 1 to help carry out the attack was captured nine days later.

Sometime after April 12, Booth began to plan the attack on Lincoln as the "only method left to him to carry out his mission," the study contended.

It also suggested that:

■ Booth's death may have been arranged by Confederate agents to keep him from disclosing links to their government.

■ The expenses of another agent scouting Lincoln's movements across the street from the White House were approved by Confederate President Jefferson Davis and came from a substantial Confederate fund.

■ Confederate planners wanted to retaliate against Lincoln for what they considered his diabolical and personal "policy of physical attack on key Confederate leaders."

4-16-1985

Los Angeles Times

Booth Shot Lincoln After Rebel Plot Failed, Researchers Say

By ZACK NAUTH, *Times Staff Writer*

WASHINGTON—Abraham Lincoln's assassination 120 years ago was not the action of a crazed Southern sympathizer acting alone, but the result of John Wilkes Booth's "mistaken sense of duty" after elaborate Confederate military plans to kidnap the President or blow up the White House failed, researchers said Monday.

The reinterpretation of events surrounding Lincoln's April 14, 1865, assassination, detailed in a study that has not yet been published, challenges assumptions that Booth was an aberration and theorizes instead that he and other Confederate agents were well-funded and working full time in Washington.

The Civil War researchers contend that the Confederate government developed a campaign in the waning weeks of the war—including a planned attack on Lincoln or the White House—which they believed would have ensured at least a stalemate.

Later, the Confederacy, seeking to avoid any direct links between itself and Booth, encouraged speculation that the assassin's actions

were an aberration.

"The South won the battle of disinformation," said James O. Hall, a historian who is believed to have the largest single collection of Lincoln documents.

The study was prepared by Hall, a former Labor Department official; William A. Tidwell, a retired CIA officer and Army intelligence general, and Defense Department analyst David W. Gaddy. Their hypothesis was pieced together from evidence gathered from existing and newly discovered documents.

The researchers contend that Confederate operations by agents such as Booth under a clandestine campaign in Washington were to be coordinated with last-ditch military maneuvers by Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

The study notes that the assassination was pointless from a military standpoint because Lincoln was shot five days after Lee surrendered. But it said that Lee's withdrawal cut off communication to Booth and that the assassin was "left hanging," not knowing that he no longer needed to attack Lincoln.

THE DRINK THAT KILLED LINCOLN

(From an article by Chas. L. Sheldon in the Christian Herald).

As I passed the corner of Tenth and E Streets (Washington, D. C.) I happened to call up a little bit of history not always told in the school textbooks, and I turned and went into the junk shop where from the Tenth Street door I could see the front of Ford's Theater where President Lincoln was shot. I wanted to see if the thing was still standing in this old saloon that was there on the night of April 14, 1865.

It was still there, and I felt a thrill of memory as I worked my way through piles of old iron to where it was. A gaudily painted post near what was once the bar of the saloon, and the words on it in large and different colored letters: "Where John Wilkes Booth took his last drink."

These are the words inscribed on that old saloon post, and for more than forty years in the capital city of the United States, on the outside of this same saloon were the words painted in bold letters, "John Wilkes Booth took his last drink here fifteen minutes before he shot Abraham Lincoln." And the astounding thing about it all to me, as I recalled it all, was the fact that the words were an advertisement of a saloon, not intended to warn the young men of a danger or even to mark a historical spot.

Within this old saloon for nearly a half century were photographs of Booth and an inscription over one of them read, "The handsomest man in Washington had a drink here fifteen minutes before he killed the ugliest." Can history find anything under the sun to illustrate better the devilish nature of the liquor traffic!

no date

