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THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN

It came to a head on Good Friday, 1865, when John Wilkes Booth, the actor, fired a ball which penetrated the back of Abraham Lincoln's head. This incident took place at Ford's theatre while the President was watching the play from his private box. Booth dropped to the stage after the shooting, made good his escape, and contrary to what is taught in school, lived to a ripe old age.

Does it take an extraordinary man to kill a President? I say no. Booth was a good man for the job and like Lee Harvey Oswald he got the job done. But the thing that set Booth apart from other would be assassins was "determination and desire". He had a compulsion to be remembered by posterity and if his niche in history was covered with shame that niche would be preferable to none at all. This type of thinking would be in compliance with his reputation as the "mad man actor".

Now lets see how the "mad man actor" got away with murder.

The idea to kidnap Lincoln probably entered Booth's head after the Dahlgran caper. This was an unsuccessful Union effort, approved by Pres. Lincoln, to kidnap Confederate President Jeff Davis. So when the Southern Maryland Planters of Bryantown, Md. approached him about kidnapping Lincoln for the benefit of the Confederates, Booth was receptive. To get the ball rolling \$20,000 was delivered to Booth by a messenger from the Judge Advocate Generals office in Washington. Does this mean that the Rebels and the Union government wanted the same thing? Perhaps for this reason Booth went to Richmond where he met Pres. Davis. He was given \$70,000 and a letter of introduction to Mr. Jay Cooke, a northern banker, who introduced Booth to his group of cotton speculators.

this mean that the Rebels and the Union government wanted the same thing? Perhaps for this reason Booth went to Richmond where he met Pres. Davis. He was given \$70,000 and a letter of introduction to Mr. Jay Cooke, a northern banker, who introduced Booth to his group of cotton speculators, who wanted Lincoln out of the way for trade purposes. Included in this group was Thurlow Weed, N.Y. political boss and Radical Republican Zachariah Chandler. Cook then sent Booth to Montreal to meet with Confederate agents Tucker and Thompson. There he was given \$50,000. \$20,000 to be delivered to Radical Republican Benjamin Wade, Chairman of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, and \$15,000 to Radical Republican John Conness. Mr. Conness then informed Booth that Booth would take his orders from Conness in the kidnapping plot.

One wonders who Booth is working for. Originally it was for the Confederate government who wanted Lincoln in Richmond to be ransomed for anything the South could get from the North. Now enters the Yankee bankers and cotton speculators who found Lincoln standing firmly between them and their longing for Southern cotton. Cotton was fetching \$1.00 a pound and that made it more valuable than gold. But not while Old Abe was President. Last but not least were the Radical Republicans in Lincoln's own party. Lincoln wanted to "bind up the nations' wounds" and re-admit the Southern states to the union as full and equal partners, but without slavery. If this took place Southern Democrats would combine in the Congress with Northern Democrats and the Republican party would become a memory. So the Radicals thought. Thus the Radicals would go to any length to prevent this from happening. They planned to kidnap Pres. Lincoln, Vice-Pres. Johnson, and Sec. of State Seward. With these men out of the way plus the Republican control over Congress an interim President could be appointed and re-admission to the Union by the Southern states would be forbidden. Long live the Republican party.

One wonders if the Radicals could get away with their plotting. It was possible considering that the Republican party controlled the War Department ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and allowed Sec. of War Edwin Stanton to become a virtual dictator during the war. Enter Mr. Stanton to the kidnaping plot. He enjoyed the role of dictator.

Now a plot of this magnitude could not be kept secret. The National Detective Police were aware of much of it while the plot unfolded. Col. Lafe Baker, head of the NDP made frequent reports to Sec. of War Stanton. But Mr. Stanton, though it was his responsibility, had no desire to prolong the life of President Lincoln.

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Stanton was involved in the kidnapping plot as will be brought out later. Col. Baker was also involved. He delivered three letters to Booth written by the Confederates Jeff Davis, Judah Benjamin, and Clement Clay. The letters instructed Booth to turn over a sum of money to Baker which he did. It worried Booth that Baker, head of the Federal Secret Service, knew of his illegal plans. He wrote Judiah Benjamin who answered "trust him". He conveyed his fears to John Conness who said "trust him". In truth, Booth did not know whom to trust.

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If Booth had a lick of sense he would have, at this point, headed for the tall timber. But he was very conscious of his niche in history.

Booth recruited his band of kidnapers from the band of smugglers he worked with during the war. He established three escape routes with men and ships standing by and ready to transport Lincoln to Richmond. Booth then set about trying to kidnap Lincoln. John Conness supplied him with information concerning Lincoln's movements but Lincoln would not co-operate. He either would not go where he was supposed to go or he would have a strong escort with him. And to fill Booth's cup of despair Col. E. J. Conger, aide to Col. Baker, told Booth he was bungling the job and to lay off or he would find himself in the Potomac river.

Now who was Booth working for? The speculators had withdrawn from the plot when they worked out a deal with the Radicals. Apparently The Radicals had withdrawn. Gen. Lee had surrendered and the Confederacy was no more. Booth should have thrown in the towel and quit. But he did not. His manifest destiny was greater than life itself.

It must be hard to chronicle a murder 118 years after the event: however David Balsiger and Charles Sellier, authors of the book "The Lincoln Conspiracy", have done a credible job of research on which they spent 10,000 hours. Very little time was wasted researching government documents because they had little faith in those documents and a Gallup pole showed that 58% of the people polled were of the same opinion. Perhaps the Warren commission report and the Watergate cover-up convinced them that our government doesn't always tell the truth. Instead they sought out the second and third generation of heirs of the people involved. and came up with a lot of unpublished information. Among these newly found documents were papers from the estates of Col. Lafe Baker, Detective Andrew Patton, Rep. George Julian, War Sec. Edwin Stanton, Stanton and

sought out the second and third generation of heirs of the people involved. and came up with a lot of unpublished information. Among these newly found documents were papers from the estates of Col. Lafe Baker, Detective Andrew Potter, Rep. George Julian, War Sec. Edwin Stanton. Stanton and others were involved in the kidnapping plot - but not with the assassination. They would not go that far. The murder of Pres. Lincoln was Booth's idea and its successful conclusion would assure him of his niche in history. Even though the kidnapping conspirators did not go as far as murder once the murder was done they would be just as guilty as Booth. This Stanton realized and the knowledge made his blood run cold. So Stanton went to great lengths to cover up his part in the conspiracy ~~an~~ and this explains the bizarre events that took place after the murder.

Now lets go back to Good Friday, April 14, 1865 for Booth had decided to kill Lincoln this day provided, of course, Lincoln would stick to his schedule. That night Booth was to go for Lincoln; Payne was to take on Sec. of State Seward; and Atzerodt for Vice Pres. Andrew Johnson. Atzerodt refused to carry out his assignment on Johnson, Payne made an attempt on Seward's life but was unsuccessful, while Booth of course was successful. Lincoln that night was in his box at Ford's theatre and guarded by one policeman John F. Parker. Mr. Parker decided he wanted a drink of whisky and left his post to go to a saloon. So it was an easy job for Booth to enter the box and shoot the President. Booth jumped from the box to the stage, broke his ankle in the fall, ran to the alley behind the theatre, mounted his horse and made his escape. And of course all hell broke out behind him.

The pursuit of Booth was a tragic comedy of errors.

Booth crossed over the Navy Yard bridge into Maryland and was joined by Ed Henson. Henson was not a part of the plot but was a good friend from Booth's smuggling days. Together they headed for Port Tobacco but Booth's broken ankle forced them to detour to Bryantown to visit Dr. Samuel Mudd. Without this delay Booth perhaps would have embarked upon a ship as a member of the crew and made his escape. Dr. Mudd splinted his ankle and made him a crutch. Booth shaved off his mustach and he and Henson departed through a swamp to Sam Cox and Thomas Jones who befriended them. There they crossed the Potomac and were helped again by a Mr. Harbin. Leaving his diary behind to be discovered Booth and Henson joined with Booth's colored valet and all three made their way to freedom unmolested.

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The escape route was swarming with troopers and dectetives. How did they miss? On the escape route was another couple similiar in appearance to Booth and Henson. One of them even walked with a crutch like Booth. The soldiers would pursue one couple and then the other couple and ended up catching the wrong party.

The other pair was made up of David Herold and Capt. James Boyd. Herald, an original conspirator, was captured by the dectetives and he traded his life to help locate Booth. Capt. Boyd, an ex Rebel prisoner who Stanton released for becoming a double agent was arrested for no reason at all.

Both men escaped from the Detectives and were trying to get out of the country following the same route employed by Booth. These two were caught up with at Mr. Garrett's farm. Herald was captured and Boyd killed. Stanton proclaimed to the country that Booth was dead but Herald told anybody who would listen that the dead man was not Booth. Two detectives told Col. Baker the same and Baker told Stanton. Stanton reasoned that if Booth stayed dead Booth could not testify against Stanton and that would let him off the hook. This satisfied Lafe Baker because now he would share in the \$50,000 reward money posted by Stanton for Booth's capture dead or alive. So Booth stayed dead. Those that identified the body didn't know Booth well or were coerced into identifying Boyd as Booth. A great show was made of burying him in the Potomac river but secretly he was buried in Old Prison. And now the great chase ended with 2000 people arrested.

The trial of the conspirators was conducted by the army under military law. Stanton was Sec. of War and that made him the boss. He wrote his own ticket which was a marvel in brevity-dispose of anyone who possibly knew of his role in the kidnapping plot. This would give rise to the saying that the rights of the prisoners were death by hanging.

High on Stanton's list for survival was silence. If the prisoners could talk he and his co-horts might come under questioning themselves. In their cells the prisoners' hands were shackled, their legs attached to cannon balls, heavy hoods covered their heads. Visitors were not allowed and their guards were changed daily. At the trial they were not permitted to speak. Their lawyers were not given time to prepare arguments nor given the right to challenge the armies witnesses. These witnesses were coached and paid for by the army to tell the lies necessary to assure conviction. After the sentences were approved by the President the condemned were hung with-in 24 hours and the others were sent to

witnesses were coached and paid for by the army to tell the lies necessary to assure conviction. After the sentences were approved by the President the condemned were hung with-in-24 hours and the others were sent to prison with-in 48. The prisoners simply had no chance to tell their side of the story.

Even if a fair trial had been conducted the outcome might not have been very different. Hate and revenge ruled the land. The Yankees wanted the Rebels to pay for the four years of war. ~~Any~~ Any Rebel connected with Lincoln's death deserved to die and the prisoners were known Confederate sympathizers. The public unknowingly was on the side of the

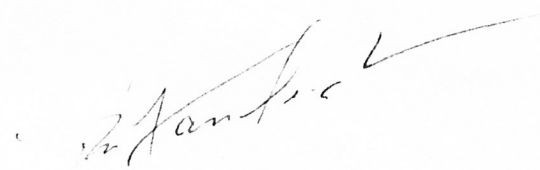
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Radicals and permitted their draconian punishment. Mr. Stanton silenced Mrs. Surratt, Payne, Herold, and Atzerodt through hanging. Dr. Mudd, O'Laughlin, Arnold, and Spangler through imprisonment at Albany penitentiary. The War Sec. slipped there. Albany was a civilian jail and the prisoners would have a chance to sing like canaries. So the ubiquitous Stanton had them committed to an army jail in the Gulf of Mexico. Only then did the curtain fall on the biggest government cover-up this nation has ever known.

Radical Republican George Boutwell in 1867 made the statement that "John Wilkes Booth shot the President and that some dirty Rebs, including Jeff Davis, helped him do it. Nobody else. So far as I am concerned this case is closed.

Boutwell's statement made over 100 years ago was wrong.

The case is still open.


R. M. Fairleigh
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