

THE CHARGER

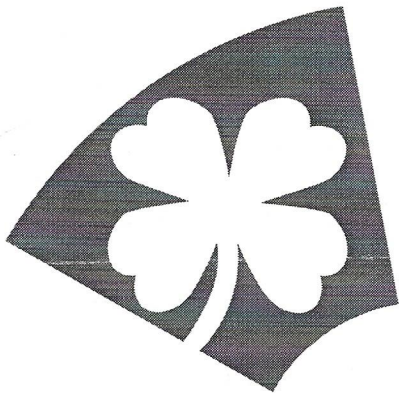
March, 2004

413 Meeting

Vol. 25 #7

Tonight's Program:

Irish in the Civil War



There were roughly 185,000 Irish-American immigrants who fought on both sides of the American Civil War. Of that number all but about 40,000 were in the Union forces.

The bulk of the immigrants served in largely Irish units, though the organizational placement of those Irish units in the Union and Confederate armies was considerably different.

Why separate Irish units? It helps to understand how the armies were formed but it is also impossible to ignore that there was a certain amount of distrust and discrimination against the Irish in the United States at the time the war broke out.

On both sides, states raised forces by recruiting for specific units. Each unit raised carried its state's name and was raised in the neighborhoods of large northern cities, or in the towns and rural communities across all of the States. Brothers, cousins, fathers, and uncles signed on together and went to battle side-by-side. Since the largely Catholic Irish were not completely trusted by their Protestant neighbors, particularly in the North, they generally joined separate units.

Tonight's Speaker:

Kelly O'Grady

Kelly O'Grady, a nine year National Park Service veteran, is currently Historian at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Park.

He has published several articles on the Civil War including *From Tom Davis to Jefferson Davis: Irish Nationalism's Link to America's Confederacy*.

Kelly is here to discuss his book, "**Irish in the Army of Northern Virginia**"

**Date: Wednesday,
March 10, 2004**

**Place: The Cleveland
Playhouse Club
8501 Carnegie Ave.**

**Time: Drinks 6 PM
Dinner 7 PM**

**Reservations: Please Call
JAC Communications
(216) 861-5588**

**Meal choice: Brocollini or
Chicken Champignon**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Warren McClelland** (216) 751-4477

Vice President: **Mel Maurer** (440) 808-1249

Secretary: **Evelyn Hayes** (216) 381-3878

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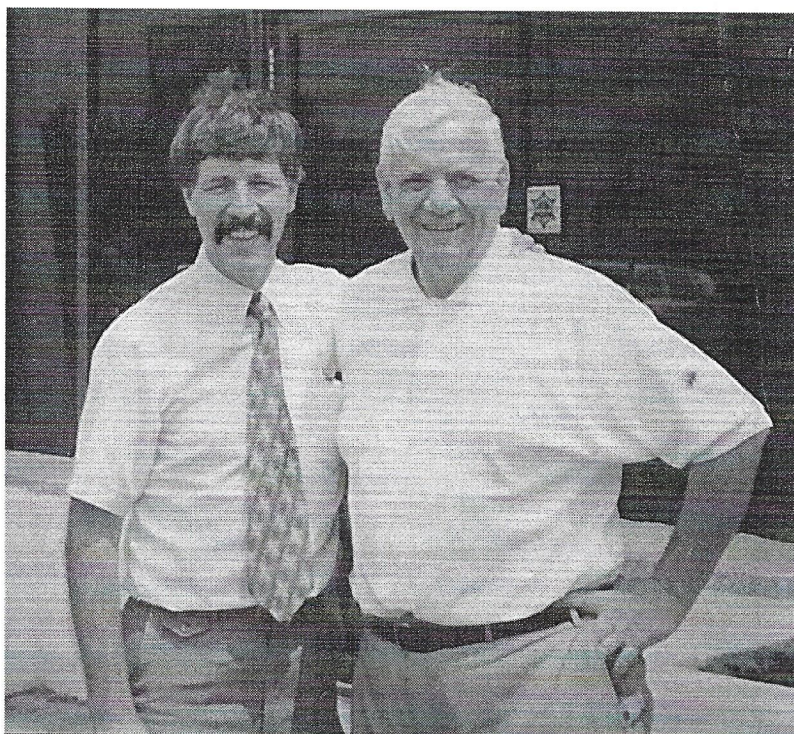
Editor_ THE CHARGER- Dick Crews

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—MARCH 2004

Attendee's at last month's meeting were provided a nice look at a local civil war site, the prison camp on Johnson's Island. Dr. David Bush of Heidelberg College gave us the history of the prison camp, as well as the current archaeological work going on there. As Dr. Bush pointed out this important site is in great danger of being lost, however. I would like to see this organization become more intensely involved in the effort to preserve and protect this site from the developers. If you have ideas or suggestions of how to do this please see me at the next meeting. Congratulations to past-president Maynard Bauer who held the winning ticket for the Johnson's Island print.

This month's speaker is Kelly O'Grady, a historian at the Fredericksburg - Spotsylvania Battlefield Park. I have heard Mr. O'Grady speak in the past and I am sure you will enjoy his presentation.

Warren McClelland



Bob Battisti (left) with Cleveland CWRT lifetime member Guy DiCarlo (right).

THE ROUNDTABLE LOSES A FRIEND

Bob Battisti, 1994 Roundtable President, and one of our most popular members, passed away in mid February. Bob has been suffering with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) for the last few years.

My favorite story about Bob was the 1995 field trip to Vicksburg. Out on the battlefield, we were having a talk from the Park Ranger. Bob, spotted a nice tree stump in the shade. He sat there for a while then leaped to his feet and started running around like a crazy man.

-He had sat on a fire ant nest.

We will greatly miss Bob and his infectious smile.

Dick Crews

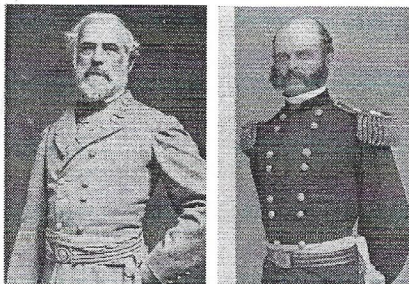
Cleveland CWRT field trip
September 30—October 3, 2004

Franklin, Tennessee

We need volunteers to work the
Civil War Encampment at Lee Burneson
Middle School in Westlake, Ohio
Friday, May 14, 2004
Call Mel Maurer (440) 808-1249

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2003/2004 SCHEDULE**

September 10, 2003

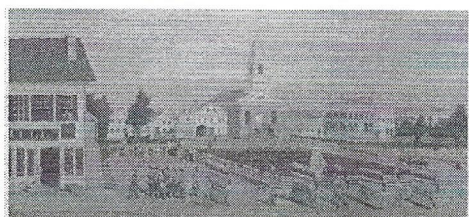


Lee vs. Burnside

**Fredericks
-burg**

**Frank
O'Reilly**

October 8, 2003



Grays
on
Public Square
1839

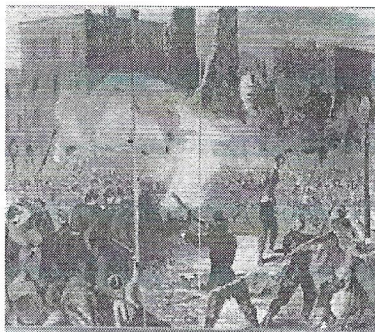
Painting by Joseph Parker
Courtesy of the Western Reserve
Historical Society

**The Cleveland Grays
George Vourlojianis**

November 12, 2003

**New York
Draft Riots**

**William
Vodrey**



December 10, 2003



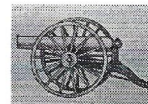
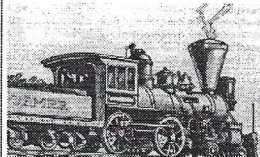
Clara Barton

**Carol
Starre-Kmiecik**

January 14, 2004

The Great Debate: *What equipment or innovation had the most effect on the Civil War?*

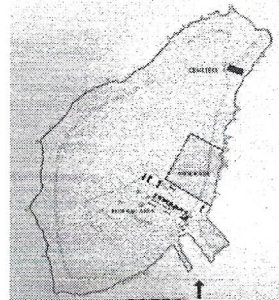
Moderator: Dick Crews



February 11, 2004

Johnson's Island

David Bush



March 10, 2004

**Irish
in the
Army of Northern Virginia**

Kelly O'Grady



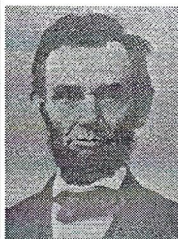
April 14, 2004

**George B.
McClellan**

Thomas Rowland



May 12, 2004



**Lincoln
and His Generals**

Norty London

For membership in the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable: Call (800) 800-8310 or visit our web site.
<http://clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com>

Abraham Lincoln and the Case of the Altered Almanac

By Mel Maurer

Abraham Lincoln an unscrupulous lawyer? That was one of the charges made against him in his senatorial race against Steven Douglas and later again in his run for the presidency. Lincoln, so it was claimed, had altered the almanac used so successfully in his most famous trial – a murder trial in 1858. It was a serious charge against anyone but especially against a man well known for his integrity.

The initial source for this scurrilous claim was apparently someone – a Douglas democrat – who was on the jury for the murder trial. A man who voted to acquit Lincoln's client - Duff Armstrong - and who then felt deceived by Duff's attorney. Lincoln had taken this case at the request of Duff's mother, Hannah, the newly widowed wife of his old friend Jack. It was Jack he had bested in a wrestling match in his early days in New Salem. Lincoln called the match a "turning point in his life." Jack's friendship with Lincoln after his win led to Lincoln's acceptance into the community.

Duff and another man named Norris were accused of killing a man in a drunken brawl in August of 1857. In a separate trial, Norris was convicted of manslaughter for hitting the man in the back of the head with a weapon. Now Duff would be tried for hitting the man in the front of the head with a weapon. Although already preparing for his run for the Senate against Steven Douglas, Lincoln could not say no to his friend Hannah and took the case - pro bono.

Lincoln, at that time was known as one of the best lawyers in Illinois but his reputation



This ambrotype of Abraham Lincoln was taken an hour after conclusion of the Armstrong trial. Of the hundred or so Lincoln photographs it is the only one showing him in a white suit. (Courtesy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

was made in civil cases. He had, in his over 20 years in practice, handled over 4000 civil cases and just a few hundred criminal cases. Roughly a dozen of these involved murders and he lost half of them.

Obviously Abe Lincoln was not Perry Mason but it was a "Perry Mason" moment - crushing an opposing witness - that created the impression in the minds of some that false evidence had been introduced in what became known as "The Almanac Trial." The trial's defining moment – its turning point – came when Lincoln, after a series of questions setting up the prosecution's eye witness, Charles Allen, with his testimony on how much moonlight there was that fateful August night and how far he could see because of it, introduced an almanac for 1857 showing the time the moon had set that night. It is popularly believed – probably because that's the way it's been dramatized over the years - that the almanac showed there was no moon that night. It merely showed that the "moonset" that night was three minutes after midnight.

The time of the assault was about 11:00 PM so the moon could not have been overhead, as the witness had testified. When Lincoln read the facts from the almanac, a “roar of laughter” rose from the spectators and some of the jurors – the witness had been discredited.

Despite the fact that a moon an hour before setting would have been high enough to provide all the illumination needed, the impression Lincoln had created in the minds of the jury and those in attendance was that there was not enough light to see what the witness said he saw especially in the detail that Lincoln had him testify to in setting him up. Lincoln had not altered the almanac, he had skillfully altered the perception of the witness’ testimony in the minds of the jurors and no words by the prosecutor were able to change that perception. It was only later, when people began to look at the almanac for themselves, and saw that there was almost a full moon that night, that they thought that Lincoln had used an altered almanac.

It was a ridiculous claim. Even if Lincoln were unethical and stupid enough to try such a trick it would not have worked. Lincoln had three copies of the almanac with him that day. He gave one to the judge, one to the prosecutor and one to the jury after he read from it. The prosecutor immediately sent his assistant out to buy more almanacs. He did and returned with several copies of two published by other companies – they agreed with Lincoln’s almanac to the time of moonset within a minute or two – as if further proving Lincoln was right and the witness was wrong. (Over time various enterprising people clumsily changed 1857 almanacs to show there was no moon that night and then claimed their almanac was the one Lincoln used in the trial.)

A good lawyer, Lincoln did not rely on just his almanac to defend his client. Before recalling the state’s star witness to discredit him with the almanac, he called a witness who testified the weapon that Duff allegedly used belonged to him and not Duff. (A potentially dangerous witness since he told Lincoln he, Lincoln, did not wish to hear all he saw that night). Lincoln also found a doctor to testify as an expert witness that the blow to the back of his head could have caused the wound at the front of the victim’s head. (And they had already convicted the man who delivered that blow, hadn’t they). Finally and maybe most importantly Lincoln in his closing argument in his shirt sleeves, pulling on his knitted braces told a somewhat exaggerated story of his relationship with the Armstrong family and how much they meant to him – it was as if Lincoln were personally vouching for the boy on trial. How could anyone from a family so loved by Abe ever do anything so wrong? No wonder Duff was acquitted.

While Lincoln was innocent of the campaign charge that he had fixed the almanac, a charge that he had violated his principles in taking and trying this case would have been true. Lincoln was known for only accepting cases he believed in and he could not have believed in this one. There was sufficient evidence to prove that Duff was as guilty as his convicted partner that night – even Lincoln’s own witness if asked could have testified to that – but, in a test of friendship vs. principle, Lincoln chose friendship. Maybe what he was really doing in his closing remarks was making his friendship argument to himself in front of the jury trying to convince himself that he had made the right choice. (Although he never talked about the trial, at least publicly, as president he had friends in Illinois start the wheels rolling to have Norris released early on parole.)

Mel Maurer

Note: For more on this subject, read Moonlight. Abraham Lincoln and the Almanac Trial by John Evangelist Walsh published by St. Martin’s Press

THUS ALWAYS WITH MISCREANTS

By John Fazio



John Wilkes Booth

Booth gave out this autographed card to his admirers

“Miscreant,” applied to John Wilkes Booth, is not my word; it is Churchill’s. But it might just as well be mine, because I cannot think of a better one-word description of the man, or rather the boy.

What images typically come to mind when we hear the name John John Wilkes Booth? We think of a young man, an actor by profession, good looking, trim, well dressed, wealthy, a ladies’ man, vain, racist, verbal, gutsy, impulsive and stupid. Interestingly, they all fit. The popular images of Booth are quite accurate.

He was born, a bastard, on May 10, 1838. His father, pre-eminent tragic actor, Junius Brutus Booth, and his mother, Mary Ann Holmes, would not marry until his 13th birthday. He was named for an eighteenth century Englishman--John Wilkes--an enemy of the crown, an agitator for popular liberties and, said Junius Booth, Sr., a distant relative. Junius’s full name--Junius Brutus Booth, Sr.--also bore an anti-authoritarian mark, for “Junius Brutus” referred to one of Caesar’s assassins, thus suggesting legitimacy and honor for assassins, a sentiment that was surely not lost on John.

As a boy, and doubtless influenced by his father (he died when John was fourteen), and his older brothers, he was given to flowery speech and vainglorious expressions, signing his letters, for example, “Thine till death” and “Yours forever.” “I must have

fame! fame!” he cried, according to his sister, Asia. He dreamed of earning immortality by performing some incredible deed or by some extraordinary accomplishment. Asia wrote that he said he wanted to “do something . . . so he would never be forgotten, even after he had been dead a thousand years.”

He grew in years, but not in stature, not in wisdom. As for the great issue of the day, he was at odds with the rest of his family, all of who were Unionists. His acquired skills were window-dressing; there is no substance behind them. Mentally and emotionally, he remained a child, given to outbursts of temper, like almost all children. Asia’s husband, John Sleeper Clarke, told of an incident in a railroad car when he, Clarke, made a disparaging remark about Jefferson Davis in Booth’s presence, “As the words were uttered, Booth sprang up and hurled himself at Clarke in a wild tempest of fury, catching him by the throat. Other passengers tried to interfere, but Booth held his hold, to all appearances bent on strangling his brother-in-law. He swung Clarke from side to side with maniac strength while his grip tightened. His face was drawn and twisted with rage. Slowly his anger left him, none too soon for Clarke . . . Booth stood over him with a dramatic gesture. ‘Never, if you value your life,’ he said, tensely, ‘never speak in that way to me again of a man and a cause I hold sacred.’” (George S. Bryan, The Great American Myth, pp. 141-142.)

He became a fine horseman, an acrobat, and a crack shot. He took up fencing, probably because of the roles he played. In any case, he became quite good at it and it gave him a grace of movement that set him apart from his peers. He became a very handsome and talented man, with a strong voice, but because he had no maturity or wisdom to go with those attributes, he was a vain peacock.

"To perfect his image, Booth wore a wide black silk cravat that was ornamented with a diamond stickpin. His shirt was white. His braided- bound black jacket had a velvet collar. His black twill breeches were perfectly tailored. His ensemble finished with highly polished black boots adorned with shiny silver spurs. His black and white apparel conformed perfectly with the striking contrast of his moods." (Quoted in Mary Spratt-An American Tragedy, by Elizabeth Steger Trindel.)

"Being a proficient fencer, he was quick and graceful in his movements, yet he bore the physique of an athlete. His perfectly waved hair was jet black. Luminous, melting brown eyes shown from beneath black eyebrows and heavily lashed eyelids. A black inverted scimitar mustache reclined beneath a well-formed nose. His skin and teeth were white and flawless as newly formed snow." (Ibid)

Many called him "the handsomest man in America." It was said, "women spoiled him." One observer said that "John Wilkes Booth cast a spell over most men . . . and I believe over all women without exception." An actress friend waxed poetic when she said that "At the theater. .as the sunflowers turn upon their stalks to follow the beloved sun, so old and young, our faces smiling, turn to him." Another said: "Seldom has the stage seen a more impressive, or a more handsome, or a more impassioned, actor . . .Picture to yourself Adonis, with high forehead, ascetic face corrected by rather full lips, sweeping black hair, a figure of perfect proportions and the most wonderful black eyes in the world . . .At all times his eyes were his striking features, but when his emotions were aroused they were like living jewels. Flames shot from them. His one physical defect was his height. . But he made up for the lack by his extraordinary presence and magnetism." (Quoted in Right or Wrong. God Judge Me--The Writings of John Wilkes Booth, edited by John Rhodehamel and Louise Taper.)

In 1858, he joined the company of the Richmond Theater (Richmond, Virginia) and fell in love with the antebellum South, which reciprocated the sentiment. His belief in the natural superiority of the white race found its fullest expression here. He described American slavery as "one of the greatest blessings . . .that God ever bestowed on a favored nation."

At the height of his career--at age 26, when his trigger finger sent a half inch of lead into Lincoln's brain--he had earned as much as \$30,000 a year (in 1860)--a prodigious sum in those days, more than most doctors and lawyers earned. He referred to his wealth as "sweet money" and "my beloved precious money," forgetting, if he ever knew, that the love of it is the root of all evil (St. Paul). Such success, of course, only continued his views of white supremacy and of his own superiority. His view of blacks was not only that they were inferior, but that they were despicable, an object not so much of scorn as of hatred. Is that not what one would expect of a spoiled brat, for he was exactly that—a "man" who had everything but the things that matter—intelligence, wisdom, maturity, character. And would we not also expect such a "man" to be contemptuous of working class whites ("trash") and immigrants? And we would be right.

Though strongly pro-Confederate, of course, Booth did not join the Confederate Army, believing—or so he said—that he could do more for the cause of Southern independence outside of the Army than in it. So he smuggled medicine to the South, sometimes did a little spying and became an agent of the Confederate Secret Service. "My brains are worth twenty men," he told his sister, "my money worth a hundred. I have free pass everywhere; my profession, my name, is my passport."

Booth originally planned not to murder Lincoln, but to capture him and take him to Richmond to be held as ransom for the release of Southern prisoners of war, or perhaps to wring other concessions from the Federal government. It is known, in fact, that the capture of Lincoln

was an idea that found much favor with the Confederate government and that Booth's scheme to accomplish it was probably not the only one afoot. It is equally well known that Booth had many meetings with Confederate Secret Service operatives, in Northern cities and in Montreal, in the months preceding April 14, 1865. His original plan was to kidnap the President when the latter was on one of his well-known and not very secure carriage rides, like the one he often took to the Soldiers Home a few miles from the White House. Lincoln went there often to escape the summer heat. Frustrated by delay, Booth considered capturing the President while he was attending a performance at Ford's Theater. His fellow conspirators, who thought it was suicide, flatly rejected the idea. Reluctantly, Booth returned to his original plan of abduction. He thought he would get his man when Lincoln planned to attend a play at a soldiers' hospital near Washington on March 16, 1865, but Lincoln changed his plans, leaving Booth empty handed and his fellow plotters discouraged. Matters came to a head in April, with Grant's capture of Richmond on April 3rd, Lincoln's tour of the conquered city on April 4th and Lee's surrender on April 9th. Lincoln's reception in Richmond by newly freed blacks was particularly galling to Booth. "You are free—free as air," Lincoln told them, "you can cast off the name of slave and trample upon it. Liberty is your birthright. it is a sin you have been deprived of it for so many years." To a "man" to whom free blacks meant insurrection, rape, plunder and the destruction of white (i.e. genteel) society, these words cut like a knife. But there was more to come. On April 11, Lincoln spoke to a crowd from a balcony of the White House. Booth, David Herold and Lewis Powell (aka Lewis Paine or Lewis Payne), two other conspirators, were in the audience. "It is also unsatisfactory to some," Lincoln said, "that the elective franchise (in the new government of reconstructed Louisiana) is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers." Upon hearing these words, Booth resolved to murder the President, rather than capture

him, according to Herold. He was heard to say, "Now, by God, I'll put him through! That is the last speech he will ever make." Booth wrote in his diary: "Something decisive must be done."

On the 14th, Booth learned that General Grant and his wife would be accompanying the Lincolns at Ford's Theater that night. Booth saw this as a golden opportunity to decapitate the government of the United States and thus approximate the results of an aborted Confederate plot to blow up the White House, with Lincoln and other high officials in it, a plot that was almost certainly approved by Jefferson Davis himself perhaps as a retaliation for the Dahlgren Raid on Richmond (Dahlgren was allegedly authorized to kill Davis), but also a last ditch effort to salvage Confederate fortunes by creating chaos in a leaderless North. Booth gathered his motley minions and laid plans to murder not only Lincoln and Grant, but also Vice-President Johnson and Secretary of State Seward, perhaps believing that the Secretary was next in line, after Johnson, to succeed to the Presidency. This is not what the Constitution provides, of course, but Booth probably didn't



David Herold's mother & sisters bid him good-by.



George Atzerodt is advised to repent his sins



No relative ever visited Paine (Powell) in his cell.

Sketched by a Leslie's Illustrated Weekly artist

know that, which should not surprise anyone, because the 26-year old was an ignorant "man." Actually, the law at the time provided that if the President and Vice-President were both incapacitated, the Secretary of State was required to call for a meeting of electors the following December for the purpose of electing a new President. Whether Booth knew this, and for this reason targeted the Secretary of State, or proceeded because of the mistaken belief that the Secretary was in line to succeed to the Presidency if Lincoln and Johnson were gone, is not known. Stanton, too, may have been targeted. He later said that he was convinced that a broken doorbell had saved his life. This, however, has been disputed on the grounds that Booth did not have enough conspirators to kill Stanton too. Well, as everyone knows, the Grants decided not to accompany the

Lincolns after all, and, about mid-day, left the City for New Jersey. Major Henry R. Rathbone and his fiancée, Clara Harris, took their place.

Atzerodt lost his nerve and did not even attempt to kill Johnson, preferring to get drunk and pawn his revolver instead. Powell (a very big and brutish man), though he managed to injure four other persons at Seward's home, and to slash Seward's face horribly, nevertheless failed to kill Seward, whose neck was protected by a metal collar that he was wearing because of a recent injury received in a carriage accident. Seward would carry the scars of the attack for the rest of his life. Only Booth was successful, due in part to his familiarity with Ford's Theater and in part to some shoddy security for Lincoln. "When I leave the stage, I will be the most talked about man in America," Booth had said to William Withers, Director of the Orchestra at Ford's Theater, at about 6:30 p.m. on the fateful night. He would finally have the fame, for which the gigantic ego in his puppy's brain thirsted, by God, regardless of the price.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, Booth probably didn't drill a hole in the door earlier in the day (for viewing his target), nor arrange for a wooden wedge to hold another door shut behind him. The evidence supports the conclusion that the hole had been drilled long before April 14th so that a guard could keep his eye on the President, and that the wedge board was there because a lock was broken.

As for Lincoln's security, several eyewitnesses later said there was a man posted outside the Presidential box who allowed Booth to enter. One Samuel Koontz, in a letter written ten days after the assassination, stated, "Booth went through the door of the box, told the man who was Lincoln's servant at the door, that Lincoln had sent for him." Another eyewitness testified at the conspiracy trial that "He (Booth) took a small pack of visiting cards from his pocket, selecting one and replacing the others, stood a second, perhaps, with it in his hand, and then showed it to the President's messenger, who was sitting just below him. Whether the messenger took the card into the box, or, after looking at it, allowed him to go in, I do not know; but in a moment or two more I saw him go through the door of the lobby leading to the box and close the door."



**Lincoln's Box
at Ford Theater**

Still another eyewitness wrote, two years after the event, "I saw a man speaking with another near the door (to the Presidential box) and endeavoring to enter, which he at last succeeded in doing, after which the door was closed." John Parker, one of six District of Columbia police officers detailed to guard the President (in addition to military units from Pennsylvania and Ohio), and Charles Forbes, the Presidential messenger, are the best candidates for the man outside the Presidential box, but there is no clear proof of the identity of the man.

Parker is an interesting case. He was three hours late reporting to the White House on the fateful night. He was instructed to go to Ford's Theater and wait for the arrival of the President's party. He did so, and then took a seat just outside the Presidential box. He soon left his post for a seat where he could both hear and see the play, perhaps at Lincoln's request. At the intermission of the play, he repaired to a saloon adjacent to the theater with Lincoln's footman (Forbes) and coachman (Frances P. Burke). Whether he returned to the theater that night is not known. In any case, Parker was charged with neglect of duty, but the Complaint was dismissed on June 2nd. No one knows why. Washington newspapers did not cover the case and transcripts of the proceedings have never been found or do not exist. One of Lincoln's other bodyguards, William H. Crook, blamed Parker for the tragedy and said that "He (Parker) looked like a convicted criminal the next day. He was never the same man afterward." Parker himself admitted, some time later, in response to a Mary Todd Lincoln tongue-lashing (for which she was famous), that "I did wrong, I admit, and have bitterly repented...I did not believe anyone would try to kill so good a man in such a public place, and the belief made me careless. I was attracted by the play and did not see the assassin enter the box." If this is true, it means that Parker did return from the saloon, but that he took a seat where he could both see and hear the play and was therefore not the man seen outside the Presidential box who allowed Booth to enter.

At least one assassination researcher has challenged the accepted view that Booth broke his leg after he caught his spur in the bunting that draped from the Presidential box, causing him to land awkwardly on the stage after the twelve-foot leap. Michael W. Kauffman argues that Booth's leg was probably broken when his horse fell on him during his escape.

The conventional wisdom as to what Booth said when he landed on the stage, i.e. "sic semper tyrannis" (thus always with tyrants)—the Virginia State Motto, has also been challenged. Though most eyewitnesses claimed that "sic semper tyrannis" were indeed Booth's on-stage words, some said that he shouted "The South is avenged," either by itself or as a follow-up to "sic semper tyrannis," some said that his words were "Revenge for the South," and at least one member of the audience was certain that Booth exclaimed "I have done it." Strangest of all, others in the audience swore that he didn't say anything at all. Can anything be more human than the attempt of eyewitnesses to accurately describe an event, even one that took place in front of hundreds, perhaps thousands, and in a few seconds? Witness the volumes that have been written about a few seconds in Dealey Plaza in November, 1963, and the impossibility of agreement as to something as basic as how many shots were fired! If we ever needed proof of the historicity of the Gospels, it is surely this, namely that they all tell essentially the same story differently. If they all told it the same way, we should be justified in our suspicions. But precisely because there are a hundred differences of minutia, we can be sure that it happened.

After shooting the President, laying Major Rathbone's arm open with a dagger, leaping to the stage and saying whatever he said, assuming he said something, Booth ran backstage, passed between Harry Hawk and William Ferguson, two actors in the play, struck at William Withers, the orchestra leader, with his dagger, and then made his way out through the stage door and into the alley. Ferguson later said that Booth passed so closely to him that "I felt his

breath upon my face.” Well, he got away, for a while; incredibly it seems, with so many in pursuit, but then again perhaps not so incredibly. After all, his horse was ready and waiting, kept by Johnny Peanut, or Peanut Johnny, a boy who sold peanuts in the gallery and did odd jobs around the theater. It was all arranged by Edward Spangler, Booth’s stagehand friend, who got six years for his effort, though he was pardoned before serving his full term. And after all, Booth got a good start, with no one in the City, except those in and around the theater, aware of what had happened, and a mile or a few miles ahead is a mile or a few miles ahead, whether over the course of an hour or a week or a month. But, of course, after twelve days and ninety-five miles of tortuous flight, fear, agonizing pain and misery, he and David Herold were finally brought to bay in a tobacco barn on the farm of one Richard H. Garrett near Port Royal, Virginia. One of the cavalrymen who had surrounded the barn (Lt. Luther Byron Baker) set fire to it, when Booth refused to surrender. The man-boy was silhouetted against the flames. “It was a fearful picture,” recalled young Richard Garrett, “Framed in great waves of fire stood the crippled man leaning upon his crutches and holding his carbine in his hand. His hat had fallen off and his hair brushed back from his white forehead. He was as beautiful as a statue of a Greek god and as calm in that awful hour.” When it appeared that Booth was going to make use of his weapon, Sergeant Boston Corbett, in disobedience of orders to bring the assassin in alive, shot him through the neck, severing his spinal cord. Some contend, however, that Booth’s wound was self-inflicted. In any case, he was dragged from the flames onto Garrett’s front porch, where he died several hours later, but not before asking the soldiers to tell his mother that he died for his country (“the old lie”— *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*) and not before asking the soldier to raise his hands (Booth’s) so that he could see them (his wound had paralyzed him). When he looked at his raised hands, he muttered “useless, useless” and then died. Fate had decreed that the last words to pass from his lips, before oblivion, would be his epitaph.

John Faxio



The Identification of Booth’s body and the autopsy is held on the deck of the Ironclad warship, the Montauk



**IRISH
IN THE
ARMY
OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA**

**WEDNESDAY
MARCH 10, 2004**

