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**Ford's Theatre and
the House Where
Lincoln Died**

Washington DC

Ford's Theatre

On the evening of April 14, 1865, Tom Taylor's celebrated comedy "Our American Cousin" was playing to a full house at Ford's Theatre. In the audience, a young woman named Julia Shephard penned a hasty note to her father back home: "The President is in yonder upper right hand private box so handsomely decked with silken flags festooned over a picture of George Washington. The young and lovely daughter of Senator Harris is the only one of the party we can see, as the flags hide the rest. But we know 'Father Abraham' is there, like a father watching what interests his children . . . How sociable it seems, like one family sitting around their parlor fire. . . . The American Cousin has just been making love to a young lady who says she will never marry but for love, yet when her mother and herself find he has lost his property they retreat in disgust at the left of the stage, while the American cousin goes out at the right. We are waiting for the next scene."

The next scene was one of shock, confusion, and terror: the sharp crack of a pistol, a woman's piercing screams, the dark figure of a man leaping onto the stage, and someone shouting "Stop that man! He has shot the President!" Within moments, pandemonium broke out, the audience stumbling around in bewilderment, no one wanting to believe what had just occurred. Doctors scrambled quickly into the President's box, examined his wound, pronounced it mortal, and helped to carry the unconscious leader across the street to the home of William Petersen. There, at 7:22 the following morning, Abraham Lincoln died.

Ford's Theatre, one of Washington's most popular playhouses, was closed after the assassination. Its owner, John T. Ford, planned to open it again 2 months later, but an indignant public forced him to abandon the idea. The Federal Government soon purchased the theatre and remodeled it for use as an office building. For years it was used as a center for processing the records of Union soldiers and to house the Army Medical Museum.

A second tragedy occurred here on June 9, 1893, when the third floor collapsed, killing or injuring many Government workers. From that time the structure was used for the storage of Government publications. In 1932, the famous Oldroyd Collection of Lincolniana, containing more than 3,000 items, was moved into the building and Ford's Theatre became the Lincoln Museum. On August 10, 1933, it was transferred to the National Park Service.

The Restoration of Ford's Theatre

Beginning in 1946, a number of bills were introduced in Congress to restore Ford's Theatre to its original appearance as of the night of April 14, 1865. No action was taken until 1960, however, when funds were appropriated for research and architectural study of the building. Final approval for full restoration did not come until July 7, 1964, when the 88th Congress voted \$2,073,600 for that purpose.

On February 13, 1968, after 3 years during which the interior of the building was painstakingly rebuilt section by section, Ford's Theatre was reopened to the public. Although some concessions were made to satisfy modern building and fire codes, the theatre is as accurate historically as it was possible to make it. The furnishings throughout are either original items or true reproductions based on contemporary photographs, sketches, or drawings, newspaper articles, official reports, and samples of wallpaper and curtain material from various museum collections.

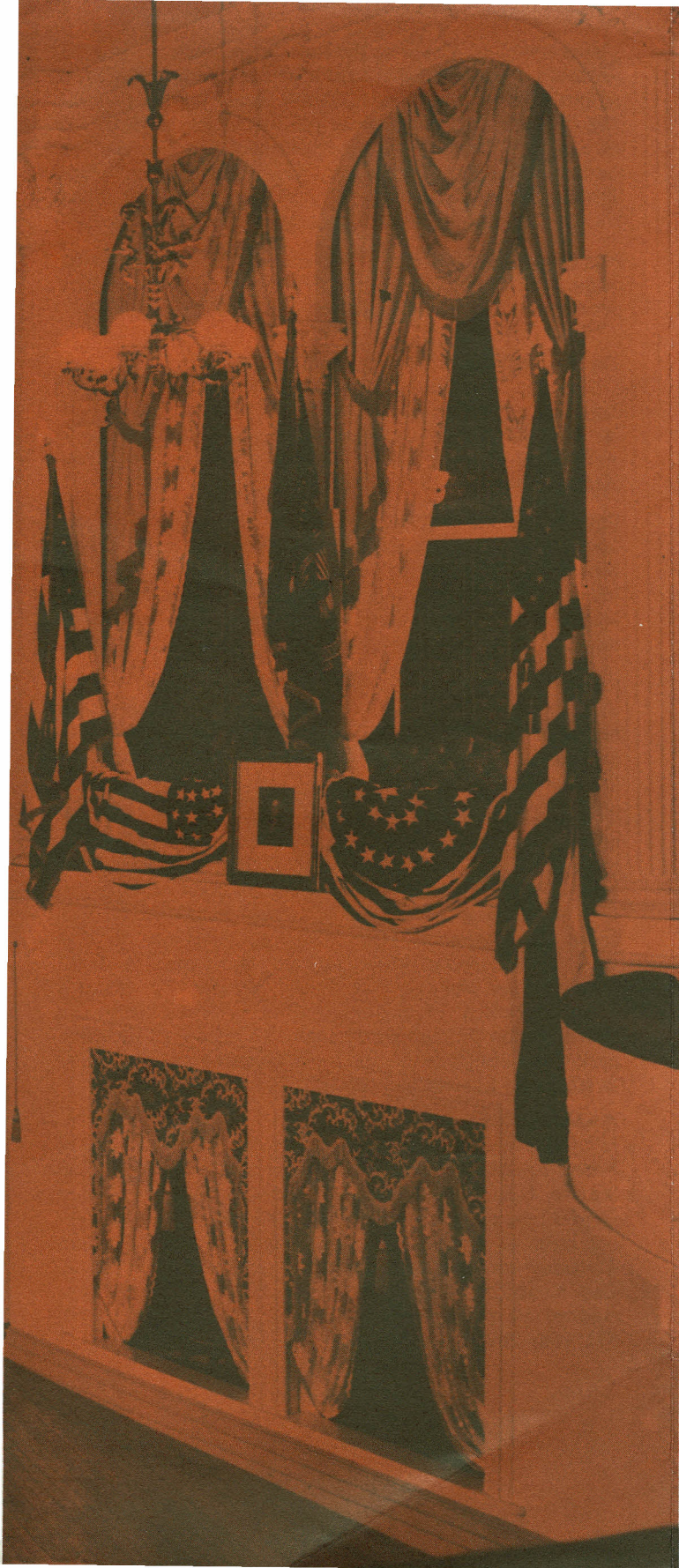
The Presidential box is decorated and furnished as it was the night of April 14, 1865. President Lincoln occupied a rocker; Mrs. Lincoln sat in a straight rush-bottom chair at the President's right; Maj. Henry Rathbone was on the sofa; and Clara Harris, Rathbone's fiancée, was seated in an upholstered chair slightly in front of him. Except for the original crimson damask sofa, the furniture in the box was duplicated especially for the restoration. The flags displayed across the front of the box are also reproductions, but the framed engraving of George Washington is the original used on the night of the assassination.

"Our American Cousin" was playing at the theatre on that evening. John Wilkes Booth, the assassin and a noted actor, who knew practically every line in the play, planned his move for a time when only one actor was onstage and the audience was laughing. In the second scene of the third act Harry Hawk, in the role of Asa Trenchard, uttered the words "sockdologizing old mantrap;" the laughter came, the bullet was fired, and Lincoln lapsed into unconsciousness.

Booth reached the Presidential box from the Dress Circle, or first balcony, which is connected with the theatre lobby by a winding staircase. Entering the narrow passageway behind the box, he barred the door so that no one else could enter, and waited for the moment to strike. When that time came, he entered the box, shot the President, grappled with Major Rathbone, leaped to the stage, and escaped out the back of the theatre. You can retrace Booth's movements through the Dress Circle and view the Presidential box.

The second balcony, or Family Circle, is closed to visitors. In 1865, this area consisted of unreserved bench seats costing 25 cents. When more tickets were sold than there were seats available, latecomers stood behind the "standing bars" to watch the performance.

As a part of the interpretive program of the National Park Service, live theatre was reintroduced in Ford's Theatre when it was reopened. In cooperation with the Ford's Theatre Society, performances are scheduled throughout the year. For box office information, call 347-4833; for group rates call 638-2368. Also scheduled in the theatre are free 15-minute programs which reflect the atmosphere of Civil War-time Washington and recount the tragic story



of the assassination. These programs are offered during the summer.

The Museum

As part of the restoration, the National Park Service has prepared a modern exhibit of contemporary design in the theatre basement. The Oldroyd Collection forms the nucleus of the museum's holdings.

In the center, three crescent-shaped areas deal with Lincoln as lawyer and politician, as President, and as family man, philosopher, and humanitarian.

The first contains objects associated with Lincoln's early years and his family life—a plow and an ox yoke similar to those he would have used in his youth; some of the books he owned; his surveyor's equipment; a model for a new wagon-making principle Lincoln worked out to make the steering easier; a cradle and a chair from his Springfield, Ill., home; the long wooden bench on which he often fell asleep; and candlesticks used by Mrs. Lincoln for both light and decoration are some of the items shown.

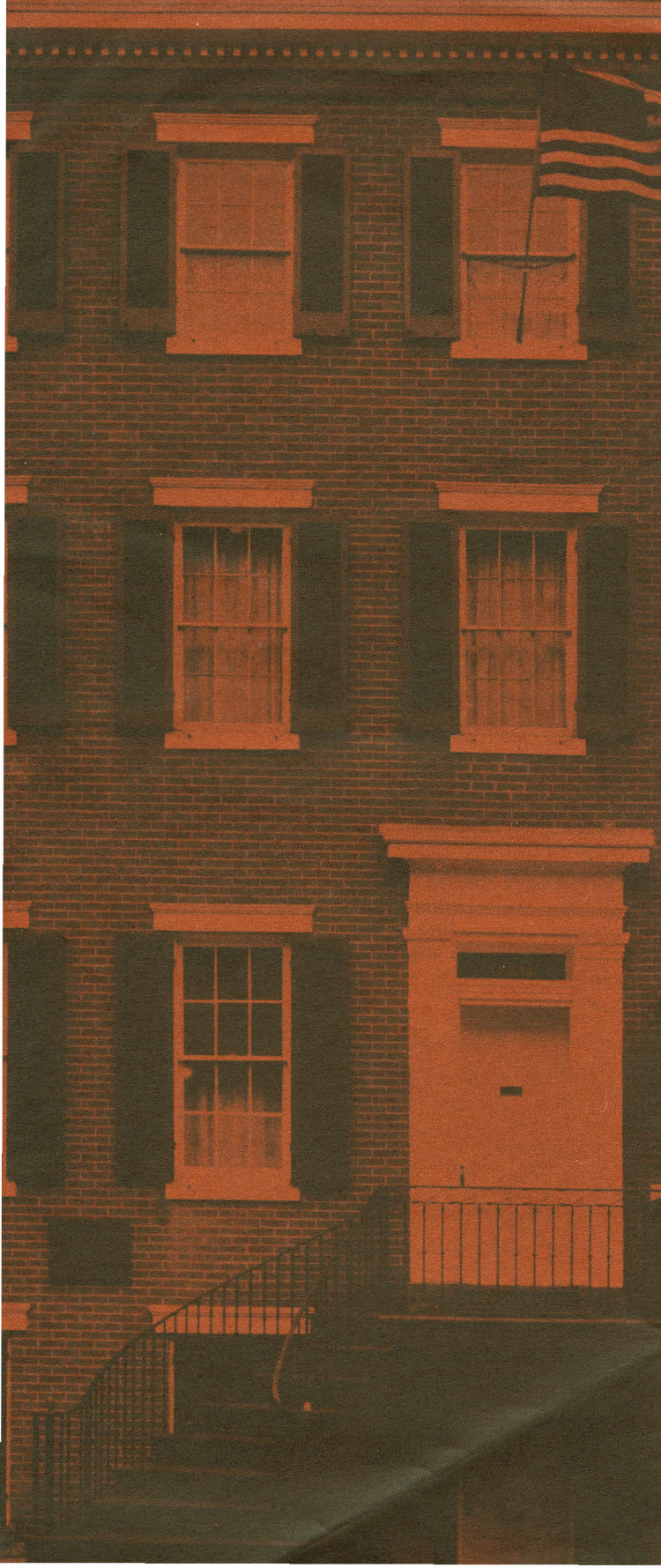
The second area depicts the beginnings of Lincoln's public career. Among the objects displayed here are the desk and chair from his Springfield home, a few of his lawbooks, a listing of the public offices he held, and samples of his campaign materials.

The third area deals with the Presidential years. Lincoln's shaving mug helps to tell the story of his growing a beard. Pieces of the Lincoln's White House china service are on display, reproductions of letters President Lincoln wrote, and the shawl he often wore on walks between the Executive Mansion and the War Department. Lincoln might have worked at the table here, sat in the chair, and used the ink and sand pots—all of which were White House furnishings.

Taped messages at each of the crescent-shaped areas explain the exhibits in greater detail.

Specially designed glass cases contain still other items of interest. One case contains a continuously changing display of Lincoln memorabilia. In another are the clothes the President was wearing the night of the assassination: overcoat, frock coat, vest, trousers, black silk stock or cravat, and boots. Yet another case holds the 36-star U.S. flag that draped Lincoln's coffin, a drum that beat out the sad tattoo of the funeral march, tassels from the catafalque, and several photographs taken along the funeral route from Washington to Springfield.

Items relating directly to the assassination are displayed in a special alcove and include the long black boot worn by Booth showing the slit made by Dr. Samuel Mudd to treat the assassin's leg, broken in the leap from the President's box. Other objects are the two Colt revolvers and two



knives found on Booth at the time of his capture, and the assassin's confidential diary from which several pages mysteriously disappeared after his death. The Treasury Guards' flag ripped by Booth when he jumped to the stage is also here, as are the door to the Presidential box and the bar used to block entry to the passageway from the Dress Circle. The single-shot Deringer pistol, from which the fatal bullet was fired, is spotlighted inside a special security case.

Plaster casts of the hands and life mask of Lincoln, the originals of which were made in 1860 by Leonard Volk, are prominently displayed in the center of the museum.

The House Where Lincoln Died

The house at 516 Tenth Street, to which the dying President was carried from Ford's Theatre, is a sturdy 3-story red-brick dwelling constructed by William Petersen in 1849 and typical of many houses built by families of moderate income in the mid-19th century.

Entrance to the first floor, which is the only part of the house open to visitors, is gained by a semicircular stairway with decorative wrought-iron railing. The first room to the left of the entrance hallway is the front parlor, where an anguished Mary Todd Lincoln spent most of the long night of April 14-15 with her son, Robert.

From the front parlor you pass through the double doorway into the back parlor. Here, at the center table Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton took notes and questioned witnesses as he launched the investigation into the shooting of the President.

The room where Lincoln died is at the rear of the house at the end of the hallway. It is furnished much as it was on the night of the assassination. A lithograph of Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair" hangs above the bed and an engraved copy of Herring's "Village Blacksmith" hangs on the wall above the commode. Both are replicas of pictures that were in the room while Lincoln lay dying. A high-back rocking chair is placed near the foot of the bed where Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles sat in a similar rocker throughout the night. The bed is of the same period and design as the one in the room when death came to Abraham Lincoln at 7:22 a.m., April 15, 1865.

Administration

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, including the House Where Lincoln Died, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The site is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except December 25. Throughout most of the year the theatre closes for Sunday and Thursday afternoon matinees and rehearsals as needed. Call 426-6924 for information and group reservations. Address all inquiries to the site manager, Ford's Theatre, 511 10th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

national park service
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