

ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

The President Shot at Theatre Last Evening.

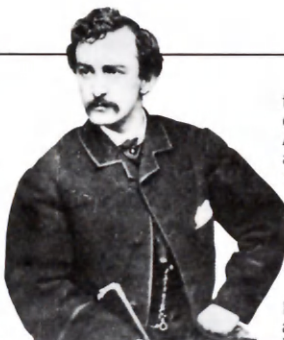
On the night of April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was shot in Ford's Theatre by John Wilkes Booth. He died in the early hours of April 15 in the small back bedroom of a boarding house across the street. Lincoln, who had struggled through the Civil War to preserve the Union, lived long enough to see it maintained but not long enough to help in healing the wounds left by the war. This gentle man, who abhorred violence, had presided over four years

of civil war and now, ironically, became a victim of violence himself. The theatre where Lincoln was shot and the house where he died are preserved today as Ford's Theatre National Historic Site to tell us of these events, to remind us of the troubling times this Nation passed through, and to encourage us to perpetuate the aspirations, the hopes and the ideals that Lincoln held for the United States.

The Conspirators

JOHN WILKES BOOTH, a well-known actor, was a Southern sympathizer who saw Lincoln as the source of the South's problems. In late 1864 he began to lay plans for kidnapping Lincoln. An early recruit was John Surratt. His mother, MARY SURRETT, ran a boardinghouse where most of the conspirators' meetings took place. By 1865 DAVID HEROLD, GEORGE ATZERODT, and LEWIS POWELL (alias Paine, Payne, Rev. Wood) had joined Booth's band. An attempt to seize Lincoln on March 17 failed. John Surratt reconsidered and left the area. After Lee's surrender Booth put together

his final desperate plan: Powell would kill Secretary of State William Henry Seward, Atzerodt would shoot Vice President Andrew Johnson, and Booth would assassinate Lincoln. Only Booth was successful. Amidst the chaos after the shooting at Ford's, Booth rode through the city and fled into Maryland with Herold. The pain from his left leg, broken when he leaped from the box, became intense, and he rode to the home of DR. SAMUEL MUDD to have it set. On April 26 while Booth and Herold hid in a tobacco barn near Port Royal, Va., pursuing Union troops



John Wilkes Booth

surrounded them. After Herold surrendered, Booth was shot and killed while still in the barn, which had been set on fire by the soldiers in an effort to force Booth out. The other conspirators were soon arrested; their

trial began May 10 and ended June 29, 1865. Atzerodt, Herold, Powell, and Mrs. Surratt received death sentences and were hanged July 7, 1865. Arnold and O'Laughlin, who were involved in the initial kidnapping conspiracy, were given life sentences, as was Dr. Mudd. EDMAN SPANGLER, a stage hand at Ford's who held Booth's horse, received six years of hard labor. All four were sent to Fort Jefferson in Florida to serve their sentences. O'Laughlin died of yellow fever in 1867 and President Andrew Johnson pardoned the others in 1869.

Library of Congress photo

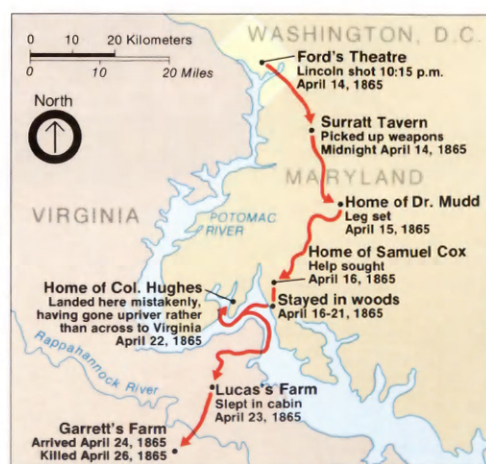


Dr. Samuel Mudd

David Herold

Edman Spangler

Lewis Powell



Booth's Flight
Booth hoped for a quick escape through the Maryland countryside to Virginia and the South where he expected a hero's welcome. His broken leg slowed him down considerably as Booth followed the well-established route of Confederate couriers through southern Maryland, across the Potomac, and into Virginia. While he was provided with food and lodging by some of his contacts along this route, others were reluctant to assist him. At one point Booth and Herold were forced to hide in a thicket for several days. It was not what Booth had envisioned.

The Events of April 14-15, 1865

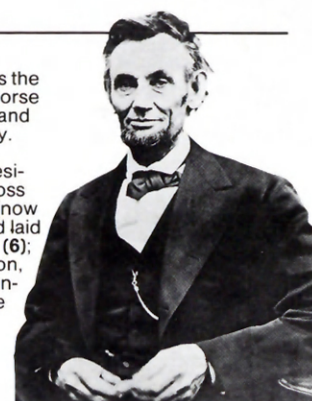
About 8:30 p.m. the Lincolns and guests, Maj. Henry Reed Rathbone and Clara Harris, arrived at Ford's Theatre to see a performance of *Our American Cousin*. Lincoln enjoyed the theatre, for it gave him some relief from the burdens of the Presidency.

At approximately 10:15 p.m. when only one actor, Harry Hawk, was on stage and the audience was laughing, John Wilkes Booth entered the Presidential box (1) and shot Lincoln. After stabbing Major Rathbone in the left arm, Booth made good his escape by jumping (2) to the stage. As he jumped, Booth got entangled in the decorations for the Presidential box and landed off balance on the stage and broke a small bone in his left leg.

He hobbled (3) across the stage, mounted his horse in the back alley (4), and escaped from the city.

The unconscious President was carried across the street (5) to 453 (now 516) Tenth Street and laid in the back bedroom (6); his wife, Mary, and son, Capt. Robert Todd Lincoln, waited (7) in the front room.

Lincoln died at 7:22 a.m., April 15, 1865.



The Occupants of the Presidential Box

In keeping with the joyousness of the celebrations going on in Washington, the Lincolns decided to attend a performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre starring the famous actress Laura Keane. The Lincolns initially invited Lt. Gen. and Mrs. U.S. Grant, but they left Washington in mid-afternoon. At the last minute the Lincolns invited Clara Harris, daughter of New York Sen. Ira Harris, and her fiancé, Maj. Henry Reed Rathbone, who worked for provost marshal Brig. Gen. James B. Fry. Tragedy followed these people: Clara Harris Rathbone was shot by her insane husband in 1883. And Rathbone died in an insane asylum in Hanover, Germany, in 1911.

National Archives photos

The President's Widow

Neither the judgment of history nor the events she lived through were kind to Mary Todd Lincoln. Three of her four sons died during her lifetime. Her husband was shot in her presence. Criticism stalked her public actions and did not abate in the aftermath of Lincoln's assassination. In 1875 she was judged insane and admitted to a sanitarium for several months. She died in her sister's home in Springfield, Illinois, July 16, 1882.



Library of Congress photo

This illustration is akin to a movie, for it shows the activity from the time Lincoln was shot until he was carried across the street and placed in the bed in the back bedroom of the Petersen House. Study it carefully. The illustrator is Al Lorenz.

The Tenth Street Neighborhood

Ford's Theatre lay north of two of the worst neighborhoods in Washington. South of Pennsylvania Avenue, just a block and a half away, was what locals called "Hooker's Division," a center for crime and vice, named after the commander of troops stationed in the area, Gen. Joseph Hooker. Nearby

was Murder Bay, one of the city's worst slums. As the city's population swelled with the influx of soldiers, so did the numbers of gamblers, hustlers, pickpockets, bootleggers, and prostitutes. Unwary soldiers were frequently relieved of what little money they had.

Events of April 9-14, 1865

APRIL 9, 1865 Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Gen. U.S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Va. Lincoln returned from Richmond, Va., to Washington, D.C.; visited Secretary Seward, who had been injured in a fall from his carriage.

APRIL 10, 1865 Crowds serenaded the White House throughout the day. Lincoln promised them he would make a speech the next day and finished by asking the band to play "Dixie," saying that it was "one of the best tunes I ever heard."

APRIL 11, 1865 Lincoln conferred with various officials concerning his Reconstruction plans; told the crowd on the White House lawn of his post-war plans and of his hopes to grant suffrage to black Americans; and explained that for him Reconstruction only meant restoring the rebellious states to the Union.

APRIL 12, 1865 Lincoln worked out the problems of a proposed meeting of the Virginia General Assembly for the express purpose of withdrawing Virginia troops and other support from the resistance to the General Government.

APRIL 13, 1865 The President spent the day in administrative work, and then rode out to the Soldiers' Home.

APRIL 14, 1865 Capt. Robert Todd Lincoln arrived from Appomattox Court House, Va., in time for breakfast with his father, Lincoln and his wife, Mary, went for a drive around the city in the late afternoon; and arrived at Ford's Theatre about 8:30 p.m.

Washington in 1865

From 1861 to 1865, Washington, D.C., underwent great changes as the city became the center of the Federal Government's effort to prosecute the war and maintain the Union. The 1860 population of 75,000 mushroomed as businessmen came looking for government work, clerks arrived to fill the new jobs, and thousands of escaped slaves came to start new lives as freedmen. Work continued on the Capitol dome (right) and was completed in 1863. Volunteers and nurses came to work in the hospitals that sprang

up to care for the wounded who were brought here from the nearby battlefields to be treated. Many of the wounded died and burials took place at the Soldiers' Home and, later, at Arlington House. Undertakers and coffin makers were in great demand.

Opportunists joined the throngs, preying on the weak and the innocent and adding to the crush of people. The city's primitive facilities were soon overtaxed. Few streets were paved, and in rainy weather they became almost impassable. Many wells were contaminated



because of the lack of sewage facilities. The creeks and canals in the city were little more than open sewers. Washington was undergoing growing pains that would only be dealt with in the decade after 1865.

National Archives photo

Ford's: Yesterday and Today

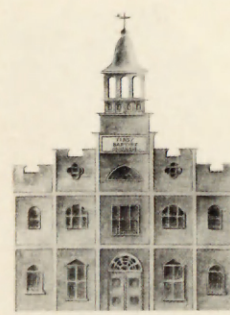
Ford's Theatre National Historic Site is a unit of the National Park System, which consists of more than 340 parks representing important examples of our country's natural and cultural inheritance.

A History of Ford's Theatre and Petersen House

John T. Ford was an extremely successful theatrical entrepreneur from Baltimore, Md., where he managed the Holliday Street Theatre. In the fall of 1861, he decided to expand his operations to Washington, and upon his arrival in the city he leased the First Baptist Church. He immediately set about turning the church into a music hall, and only three days after signing the lease he opened with a 2½-month run of the Christy Minstrels. This and subsequent productions proved financially rewarding, and Ford was poised for what looked like a long run of successes in the capital when fire destroyed the

building on December 30, 1862. Undaunted, he raised money for new construction. The cornerstone was laid February 28, 1863, and the first performance in Ford's "New Theatre" took place August 27, 1863. From then until the theatre closed in the aftermath of Lincoln's assassination, 495 performances were staged. The success was generally attributed to Ford's dedication to quality in the construction of his new building, to the up-to-date equipment that he employed, to the first-rate actors whom he hired, and to the engaging productions that he mounted. The theatre was closed by the Federal Gov-

ernment during the investigation of the shooting and the trial of the conspirators. After their sentencing and hanging, Ford was given permission to reopen. Ford received threats that the building would be burned down, if he reopened it, and so once again the War Department closed it. In August 1865 the department started leasing the building from Ford and began its conversion into a three-story office building. Finally in 1866 the theatre was bought from Ford for \$100,000 by the Federal Government.



First Baptist Church

Ford's Theatre in its Various Stages

The first building on this site was the First Baptist Church, sometimes called the Tenth Street Baptist Church, built in 1833. In 1859 this congregation merged with that of the Fourth Baptist Church. In 1861 the congregation leased it to John T. Ford who later bought it and turned it into a theatre. After the theatre was bought from Ford in 1866, it was used as office space

by the Federal Government. On June 9, 1893, all three floors collapsed killing 22 workers and injuring 68. From then until 1931 the building was used for storage. On February 12, 1932, the Lincoln Museum opened on the first floor of the old Ford's Theatre building. One year later it was transferred to the National Park Service.



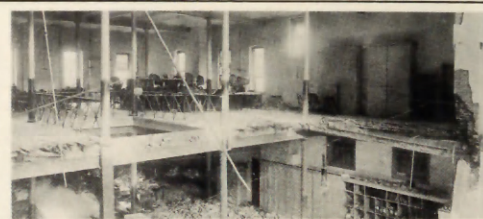
Taken shortly after the assassination, the theatre and nearby buildings are draped in black. Note the unpaved and still muddy street.

Renovation and Restoration

The Ford's Theatre that we know today is the result of two separate strands coming together. The first is the Lincoln Museum. Its initial collection of Lincoln items was assembled by Osborn Oldroyd and brought to Washington in 1893. The col-

lection was purchased by the Federal Government in 1926 and was installed in Ford's Theatre in 1932. The museum focused attention on the structure, and after World War II public interest developed in restoring the theatre to its 1865 appearance. Funds

for research and an architectural study were approved in 1960. Four years later Congress approved the full restoration of the building. Responding to the research unearthed by architectural historians, the work proceeded slowly and care-



After the collapse of June 9, 1893

fully. The furnishings correspond to those that were in Ford's Theatre in 1865. The items in the Presidential box are reproductions of the original pieces except for the red damask sofa where Major Rathbone was sitting, which is original. The

engraving of Washington is the one that hung on the front of the box the night of April 14, 1865. The restored theatre and the newly constructed museum opened to the public February 13, 1968.



A new generation of theatregoers.



The Living Theatre

Besides being a memorial to Abraham Lincoln, Ford's is also an active, legitimate theatre, putting on a full schedule of plays during the year. The Ford's Theatre Society is responsible for the theatrical productions, and over the years it has turned Ford's into a center for contemporary American theatre. Its productions have looked at the wide range of American cultural and ethnic diversity and sought to produce the best examples available from this diverse heritage. The Society has made Ford's Theatre a vibrant cultural force in the Nation's Capital—a worthy heir to John T. Ford's legacy of quality productions. For box office information, call 202-347-4833; for group rates for plays, call 202-638-2368.

"A Christmas Carol" is only one of the many productions mounted by the Ford's Theatre Society.

These photos courtesy Joan Marcus



About Your Visit

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, 511 10th Street, NW, and the House Where Lincoln Died, 516 10th Street, NW, are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The park is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., except December 25. The theatre is closed to tours when rehearsals or matinees are in progress, usually on Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday; the Lincoln Museum in the theatre's basement and the House Where Lincoln Died remain open. Food, drink, and gum are not allowed in the buildings. **For more information** Write: Superintendent, National Capital Parks Central, 900 Ohio Drive, SW, Washington, DC 20242-0004; or call 202-426-6924 or TDD 202-426-1749. You can reach the park at <http://www.nps.gov/foth/> on the Internet.

Events at the Petersen House

The first person to enter the Presidential box, once the audience realized that Lincoln had been shot was Charles Augustus Leale, a 23-year-old doctor who had completed his medical studies only a few weeks earlier. Together with Dr. Charles Sabin Taft, he treated the stricken Lincoln and had him carried out of the theatre and across the street where they found a place in

the back bedroom in the home of William Petersen, a tailor. Throughout the night Leale, Taft, and close to a dozen other doctors tended Lincoln attempting to make him comfortable, for from the first they had known that his wound was mortal. At 7:22 a.m. the next morning Abraham Lincoln died.

1 Hugh McCullough
Secretary of the Treasury

3 Andrew Johnson
Vice President of the
United States

4 Sen. Charles Sumner

6 Henry Halleck
U.S. Army Chief of Staff

2 Gideon Welles
Secretary of the Navy

5 Mary Todd Lincoln

7 Edwin Stanton
Secretary of War



Many pictures were drawn of the scene in the back bedroom at the time of Lincoln's death. Most, like this painting by John Littlefield, paid little attention to the physical limitations of the room and included some people, such as Mary Todd Lincoln, who actually were not in the room at the time of Lincoln's death. Courtesy Smithsonian Institution

FRONT PARLOR This is where Mary Todd Lincoln spent most of the night of April 14-15. Her eldest son, Capt. Robert Todd Lincoln, came from the White House and spent the night trying to comfort her. The room has been furnished in a manner that corresponds to its 1865 appearance, but none of the furniture is

original to the house. At the time of Lincoln's assassination, folding doors opened to the Back Parlor.



BACK PARLOR Here Secretary of War Edwin McMasters Stanton began his investigation into the events surrounding Lincoln's assassination. Stanton, aided by Charles A. Dana, questioned eyewitnesses, sent out orders for the arrest of Booth, passed the news of the events on to the country, and began the preliminar-

ies that would lead to the trial of the conspirators. Cpl. James Tanner sat at a similar center table and took shorthand notes of the interviews.



BACK BEDROOM The original bed in this room, similar to the bed now on display, was not long enough to accommodate Lincoln, and he had to be laid diagonally across it. Throughout the night Dr. Leale held Lincoln's hand, for he knew that if Lincoln did regain consciousness he would be blind; Leale

wanted him to know that a fellow human being was nearby.

