

How They Got Away with Murder

by Don Thomas

Most who try to vindicate Secretary of War Edwin Stanton of conspiring to assassinate Lincoln, begin by claiming that the President's protection was casual and spying during the Civil War was minimal. Stanton's defenders are certain that; before Lincoln was shot, Stanton was completely unaware of John Wilkes Booth. Truth is, the President had an around the clock bodyguard staff, and the telegraph was widely used to collect and pass intelligence. Conversely, intercepting the mail or wired communiques was commonly practiced by the military telegraph department, and in collaboration with civilian informers.

Beginning around 1862, the War Department under Secretary Stanton developed an incremental spy division with capabilities far superior to his enemies. Stanton was invaluable in preventing terrorist plots, mainly because of his clandestine information gathering network. The War Department's chief telegraph officer, Thomas Eckert had firsthand knowledge of every ciphered message coming in, and orchestrated every cryptic communiqué going out. His assistant, David Homer Bates was an eyewitness to these events in the telegraph office and wrote a book about his experiences during the war. Bates told of an uncovered plan to burn the New York hotels, and revealed that Stanton had a double agent planted inside the Confederate Secret Service in Canada. This same agent who conducted espionage for Confederate chief Jacob Thompson, also reported to Stanton's War Department, and his information to Thomas Eckert prevented the burning of New York city during the 1864 elections for president.

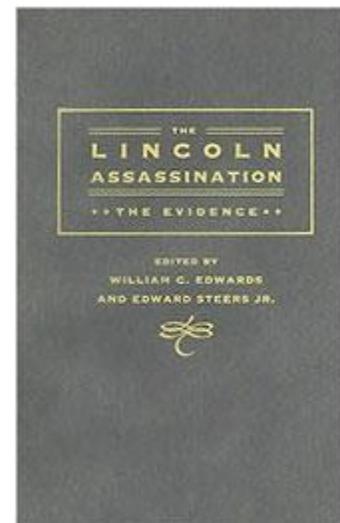
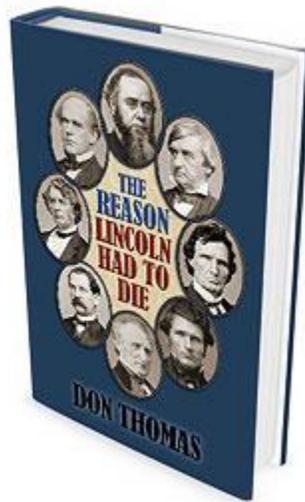
A major Union spy in Richmond, Elizabeth Van Lew had infiltrated the Confederate administration so thoroughly that she reported directly to Washington from the Confederate White House. Van Lew was assisted by a carriage driver, as well as an in house servant, both of whom worked for Jefferson Davis. In Washington, Stanton progressively uncovered Booth's plot to kidnap the President, long before Lincoln was attacked. James Donaldson was just one of several federal employees conspiring with Booth, implicated and identified as a kidnapper in Booth's gang, but Stanton censored all the evidence collected against him so secretly that Donaldson has remained completely edited from history. The military police in Washington, as well as those in Maryland collected surveillance on all of Booth's associates long before Lincoln was shot, but Stanton did nothing to protect The President from harm.

As soon as word about shooting Lincoln reached Baltimore, the Provost Marshal James McPhail knew exactly who he should go after. McPhail headed directly to the Middle Department's 8th Army Corps headquarters to find out from detectives where Booth's associates, Samuel Arnold and Michael O'Laughlin could be found. Weeks before the assassination, McPhail's detectives were already reporting on George Atzerodt, while intercepting Booth's telegraph messages. Two of McPhail's detectives were also George Atzerodt's brother and his brother-in-law.

Less than 5 hours after Lincoln was shot military police were already in pursuit of Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin, John Surratt, George Atzerodt and even Lewis Powell, although they had not yet learned Powell's real name. Stanton's chief spy, Lafayette Baker posted a \$10,000 reward for Powell's arrest a day before anyone other than Baker knew he had attacked Secretary Seward. Baker had just arrived from an assignment in New York and could only have known about Powell from secret informants who had been conducting surveillance on Booth prior to the assassination.

The ridiculous myth that Stanton did not know of Booth and his accomplices before Lincoln was shot has no basis for truth or evidence for fact. This article reveals the censored conspirators who helped Booth assassinate President Lincoln, constructed from published public information anyone can verify by accessing the sources presented.

Conspiracy theories have always irritated me because they only present questions without ever giving answers. For almost 150 years the conspiracy behind Lincoln's assassination has always been nothing more than a theory. The conspiracy trial ended with seven people convicted of being accomplices to the assassins Booth and Powell (alias Paine) then hanged or given life in prison. Their



accusers seemed satisfied with these convictions, and no others were ever charged as accomplices. Forgotten is the fact that two years later, during Andrew Johnson's impeachment investigation, the previously withheld evidence that was never presented in the conspiracy trial revealed that none of Booth's and Powell's convicted accomplices were guilty of aiding in the assassination. From that time until now it has been assumed that Booth and his conspirators were Confederate agents. This assumption ignores the fact that every possible Confederate official who could have employed them was arrested, investigated, and released. Ever since Johnson's investigation by Congress, no one has ever named a single Confederate agent who could have helped the two assassins stage the 1865 terrorist attack on the United States government.

My intention for writing a book about Abraham Lincoln's assassination was not to present another questionable conspiracy theory (for or against the Confederate government), but to present the unbiased, documented evidence that answers who killed Lincoln, and why. Until now, any number of reasons or excuses could be offered for not knowing who plotted Lincoln's death, but the only excuse for not knowing who they are today is ignorance of the facts. These facts are published in [The Lincoln Assassination: The](#)

Evidence, edited by William C. Edwards and Edward Steers, Jr. (hereinafter "E&S").

The History Never Told

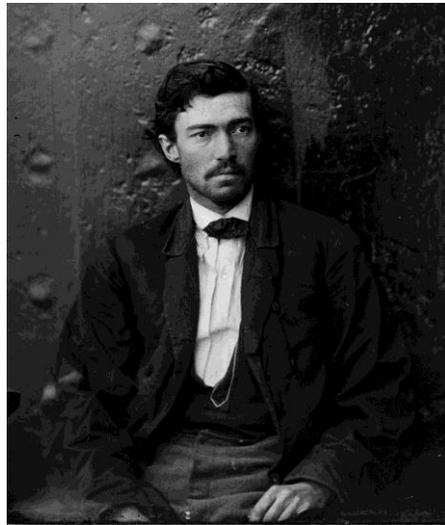
If this attack was not from the Confederacy, but truly an inside job, I had to find out how Lincoln's overthrow was kept hidden. I began by studying the conspiracy trial testimonies [*The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators*, compiled by Benjamin Pitman, 1865] and focused on the suspects and witnesses most involved. I then cross-referenced their testimonies with the immense volume of evidence, and from that the true conspiracy and cover-up emerged. My earliest clue was the original draft of the Executive Order that gave the Secretary of War jurisdiction over the investigation and trial. It was not written by the President on Executive Chamber letterhead, but on War Department stationery in the handwriting of Edwin Stanton, the Secretary of War [E&S, p. 750]. Secretary Stanton could only conceal his own involvement in the crime if he had control of the investigation and trial.

Stanton began the cover-up by appointing three military investigators to collect and evaluate the evidence [E&S, p. 1001], then telegraphed Col. Henry L. Burnett in Cincinnati to join him in Washington to set up a Military Tribunal. [See Bibliography; Chamlee, p. 67] The Executive Order also allowed Stanton to hand-pick all the military Judges. However, after two judges voiced their disapproval of the military commission's restrictions on the defense counsel, Stanton had them both quickly replaced. [E&S, p. 750; Comstock papers, box 8]. Stanton's military accomplices, who supported a reverse of Lincoln's second term policy, banded together to destroy any evidence that would expose this military coup against the administration. This coalition of conspirators realized that using murder for political change would only work if they could convince Congress and the public that Booth's strikes against Lincoln's administration had been a vengeful act of terror devised and aided by the defeated Confederate government.

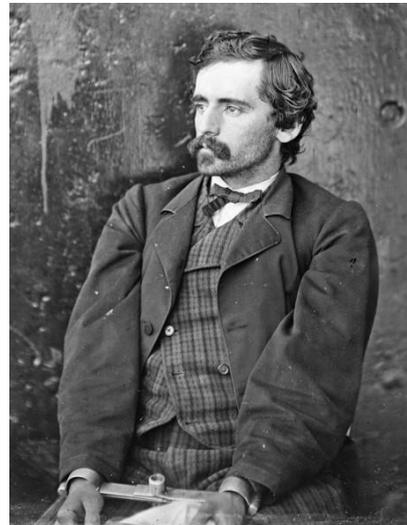
The motive for a terrorist attack against the United States President and his Secretary of State was an in-house conspiracies to destroy Lincoln's reconstruction policy for a post-Civil War America. Much of the evidence used against the accused was fabricated or contrived. Any links that would expose the true collaborators was either destroyed, withheld from the trial, or falsely attributed to others. I found that much of the crucial missing documentation was not randomly lost or accidentally damaged, but deliberately destroyed or covered up. The two assassins, John Wilkes Booth and Lewis Powell (alias Lewis Paine) received help and incentives from a large network of people. To expose the work of those domestic enemies who concealed this treasonous plot, I turned away from the interpretive writings by mainstream historians and relied on the original documents from the National Archives microfilm records [NARA M-599, rolls 1-7], compiled, organized and evaluated by Stanton's Special Judge Advocate, Col. H. L. Burnett.

I began my study with Samuel Arnold, the first conspirator arrested. In Arnold's official statement to the police, he freely admitted that he was just one of several who took part in a plot to *kidnap* Abraham Lincoln, but he fiercely denied having anything to do with the assassination. He cooperated fully with the authorities and named all but one of

Booth's conspirators who gathered at the Washington saloon meeting to plan Lincoln's kidnapping at Ford's Theater. [Samuel Arnold's Confession] Each man identified in Arnold's statement was posted with a large reward for his capture and arrest, except for the man whose name Arnold claimed he could not remember. Arnold did, however, give a detailed physical description of this unnamed conspirator and told investigators that Michael O'Laughlin was well acquainted with this man. The military detectives followed their first lead, knowing that O'Laughlin could provide the name Arnold could not remember. An order had already been given for Baltimore's Police Marshal, Thomas H. Carmichael, to arrest Michael O'Laughlin [E&S, p. 332, E, p. 85].



Samuel Arnold

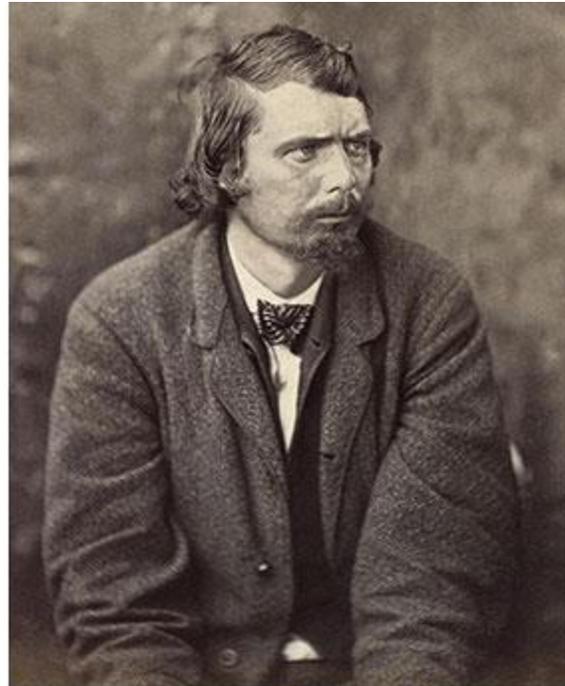


Michael O'Laughlin

The first missing document from the conspiracy investigation was O'Laughlin's statement to Carmichael, which I could not find in Edward's book. The foremost question Carmichael should have asked O'Laughlin would have been, "What is the name of this man Samuel Arnold described in his confession?", but this vital information is conspicuously missing from Col. Burnett's evidence. There was a statement by Carmichael revealing O'Laughlin had a close association with Booth, but the rest of his account is missing. Carmichael's report has only one paragraph devoted to this subject, and it mysteriously ends in the middle of a sentence. [Ibid] To me this was an obvious indication that some watchful authority did not wish for anyone to know the name of this prominent member in Booth's gang. **This unnamed man, who was centrally involved in the plot to kidnap Lincoln, was known to three military judges and a several War Department investigators. He was ignored, never pursued, and no reward was ever offered for information leading to his identity and arrest.** [www.reasonlincoln.com/articles/inside_job.html]

Booth's Protected Accomplice

The only purpose for so much deception would be to keep forever concealed the name Samuel Arnold could not remember. About 18 months into my research I found the man's name in a document the War Department was sure they had completely destroyed. [\[Atzerodt's confession\]](#) It had been recovered 112 years after the trial, but its significance was never realized. The unknown kidnapping conspirator Samuel Arnold could only describe was actually a mole named James Donaldson. His original assignment was likely to infiltrate Booth's kidnapping gang to conduct surveillance on Booth's Confederate agent friend, John Surratt. Washington's chief Detective, Lafayette Baker, had known since 1863 that Surratt was a C.S.A. Signal Corps spy. [\[Larson; Kate C. *The Assassin's Accomplice*. New York: Basic Books, 2008, p. 30\]](#)



[George A. Atzerodt](#), in manacles, photographed for the War Department and newspapers by Matthew Brady.

Donaldson's physical description was again given to the War Department investigators by a third apprehended kidnapping conspirator in Booth's gang, named George Atzerodt. He not only gave an identical description of the man, but also gave them Donaldson's full name. In his last confession, Atzerodt gave the name of James Donaldson to the Baltimore Provost Marshall, James McPhail, but his confession was not only withheld from the conspiracy trial evidence, it was stolen from the War Department files and its duplicate copy was also stolen from the National Archives. [\[See Bibliography; Baker, p. 485; Impeach, p. 673\]](#) Only officials within the United States government would have access to documents securely housed in those Federal facilities. After I published this information in the first edition of my book, my editor, Ian Wesley, found that James Donaldson was also a State Department employee working for Secretary William Seward. [\[Library of Congress photograph reproduction no. PPMSCA-23732; Congressional Serial Set 1097, 1861, p. 2\]](#). Donaldson's position and its concealment were the unarguable, smoking gun evidence that Lincoln's assassination was an inside job. We immediately had to stop print of the first edition and issue a second edition with this undeniable documented evidence. To date, only those who have read [The Reason Lincoln Had to Die](#) [hereinafter "[Thomas](#)"] would understand the significance of James Donaldson or his role in Booth's plots.

If those documents had been honestly presented as evidence, and James Donaldson identified and investigated, the political plot to change Lincoln's second term agenda would have been exposed. The claim that Lincoln was assassinated by a vengeful Confederate government would be realized as nothing more than a fabricated theory, made up to provide a scapegoat for the actual plotters who arranged to have Lincoln shot. This tainted investigation began and continued by selectively destroying whatever evidence the War Department did not want anyone to know. No reason has ever been offered to explain why George Atzerodt's full disclosure about a Federal employee, and a chambermaid working for Secretary Seward, while at the same time plotting with Booth, was never investigated.



The War Department Concealed Many More than Donaldson and Seward's chambermaid

Federal Agent Kate Thompson

Even after Booth was dead, [Atzerodt's confession](#) to Marshal James McPhail created quite another problem for the War Department's case against the Confederate government. On May 1, George Atzerodt gave a confession admitting he overheard that Seward's chambermaid (Margaret Coleman) was Booth's girlfriend. He also identified Kate (Thompson, Brown, Cannon, etc.) at the National Hotel as a conspirator, and he named James Donaldson as the unidentified member in Booth's kidnapping plot who was also described, but not named in Samuel Arnold's confession. He not only named James Donaldson and Kate Thompson, but revealed a list of other previously-unidentified conspirators in Booth's gang such as Charles Yates and James Hall.

Kate Thompson was Kate Warne, a Pinkerton Federal agent [[Thomas, pp. 53-58](#)] and she too (like Donaldson) quickly became a serious dilemma for the War Department investigation. In order to conceal her undercover surveillance on Booth at the National Hotel, while plotting with the other kidnapping conspirators at the Pennsylvania House [[Atzerodt's confession](#)], the War Department claimed that Kate Thompson was actually the same person as Sarah Slater, a known Confederate spy. On the same day George Atzerodt gave Kate Thompson's name to James McPhail, Slater was arrested and delivered to Col. Burnett's office. Sarah Slater was interrogated by James McPhail the next day and he wrote to Col. Burnett that he would try to have her back to him by 12 o'clock [[E&S, p. 871](#)]. That is the last document found in the National Archive's papers concerning Sarah Slater. Slater's last known whereabouts (according to James McPhail) was in the custody of the War Department after being interrogated. After that day Sarah Slater was never seen or heard from again. **Why would the War Department release Slater if they truly believed she was a known Confederate spy involved in the assassination?** And if she escaped the custody of the War Department, why is there no record of how she got away? The War Department could not claim that Sarah Slater and Kate Thompson were the same conspirator in Booth's gang until they intimidated a witness to give a ridiculously phony statement [[E&S, p. 1328](#)]

under the threat of being hanged if he did not [Thomas, pp. 107-109]. Regardless of that fact, the mystery remains: *How or why did she leave the War Department without a trace?*

Sarah Slater's mysterious disappearance from custody has never been explained, nor why several major suspects named in Atzerodt's confession were never investigated. Though George Atzerodt and David Herold implicated six other accomplices, along with Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin, Dr. Mudd, John Surratt and Lewis Powell, those six have remained censored from mainstream history.

The Chambermaid

Before the end of April John Wilkes Booth was dead, David Herold captured, and all but the last two kidnapping conspirators from Booth's mid-March Washington saloon meeting had been rounded up. John Surratt and James Donaldson were two of the seven Samuel Arnold identified plotting Lincoln's abduction, yet the trial began and ended without either man being apprehended.

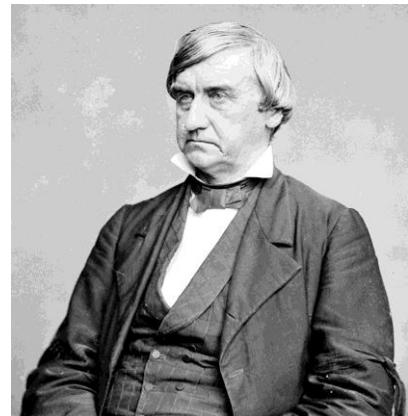
The day after Booth shot Lincoln, John Surratt read about the assassination in a New York newspaper, went into hiding, and would not be captured until two years later. As for James Donaldson, there is no surviving document to prove Michael O'Laughlin had given the military police Donaldson's name during his April 17 statement, but by May 1, there is no question that Secretary Stanton, and his military judges, Joseph Holt and John Bingham knew James Donaldson was the seventh conspirator at Booth's saloon meeting. No attempt was ever made to confront him.



Secretary Edwin Stanton



Judge John Bingham



Judge Joseph Holt

George Atzerodt was one of the seven kidnapers at the March 15, saloon meeting, captured on April 20, and charged as an assassination accomplice. Atzerodt was held prisoner under very heavy guard, chained inside an ironclad ship anchored in the middle of the Potomac River with a canvas bag over his head, unable to see or talk with anyone.

Even though Atzerodt had already given several statements, on May 1, he was brought to the Old Capital Prison for an interrogation to help investigators piece together conflicting evidence about the other accomplices in the conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln and Seward. Obviously the information they uncovered from George (on May 1) was not what they wanted anyone else to know. His last confession was withheld from the conspiracy trial evidence, stolen from the War Department files as well as a duplicate copy stolen from the National Archives. Several of the conspirators George Atzerodt identified were deliberately suppressed from the public and their names did not resurface until 1977.

Eliza Thomas [Mollie Turner]

By May 1 Atzerodt was fully aware of his dire situation and had no motive to falsify information that would proclaim the innocence of anyone other than himself. He admitted all that he knew, but in many cases he just repeated things he had only overheard without completely understanding what was actually being said. Atzerodt's statement about Booth visiting the chambermaid in William Seward's home was an important clue about the conspiracy of assassination, but within the War Department that clue needed to be suppressed. The chambermaid in Seward's home was Margaret Coleman, but not likely the pretty girl Atzerodt overheard Booth talking about during his confidential conversation with Lewis Powell, who used the alias James Wood while in Washington. The reason no one knew Seward's Federal employees were conspiring with Booth, was because those suspects were never investigated or even confronted. The War Department's investigators concealed a long list of *select* suspects.



Dan Bryant, who gave Booth his diamond pin.

There was also a second maid, known only as Eliza working in Mr. Seward's home. She was newly hired shortly before Lewis Powell's attack. If Seward's new maid was the same woman Booth knew as, alias Eliza Thomas, she had a pretty half-sister, Nellie Starr. Booth knew both woman very well, and Nellie Starr was probably the girl Booth was speaking of when Atzerodt overheard Booth say to Powell (alias Wood), "*he had a mind to give her his diamond pin*". Booth was very likely talking about giving his engraved diamond stickpin (a gift from his close friend Dan Bryant) to the pretty girl Nellie Starr, Eliza's younger sister. That major clue was suppressed by the War Department and is still completely over looked by history researchers [E&S p. 683]. Another suppressed clue was that Booth's good friend, Dan Bryant was a New York minstrel entertainer closely associated with two other minstrel suspects, who also knew Booth. William B. Donaldson and Col. Lewis Mosby were both close friends of Dan Bryant, Eliza Thomas, Nellie Starr, Lincoln's bodyguard John Parker and Booth. All were arrested as assassination suspects, but quietly released, except for Dan Bryant, who was never investigated.

Shortly after Mr. Seward's April 5 carriage accident Eliza had been recommended by the chambermaid Margaret Coleman, to be temporarily hired as extra help in the Seward home while the Secretary was recovering from his injuries. The reason so little is known

about these two women is no oversight but a deliberate attempt to suppress information about the attacks on Lincoln and Seward. Margaret Coleman, James Donaldson, Eliza and even Emerick Hansell (Seward's other aid) can all be closely tied to John Wilkes Booth, and keeping that evidence concealed would require a coalition of very influential people with the capability and motive to disguise the true role these people played in the assassination plot. The War Department never investigated James Donaldson, any of Seward's maids, or followed up on evidence against the New York minstrel entertainers who were Booth's true accomplices in the attack against the government. If their role in the assault on the Lincoln administration was ever exposed, it would prove the War Department's involvement. The War Department diverted the investigation away from Mr. Seward's employees, and presented phony evidence that would make the assassination look as though it was a Confederate plot.

It is an undisputed fact, James Donaldson, Margaret Coleman, Eliza and Emerick Hansell were all found together at the house immediately after Lewis Powell's assassination attempt on William Seward. Once it is realized that they all knew Booth, it becomes obvious why the War Department would insist that a Confederate pistol was found at the crime scene. The reason it was found in Mr. Seward's bedroom, and not recovered two rooms away in the bedroom of his daughter Fanny (where Fredrick Seward was attacked) is because Powell only had a knife, and the gun was quickly planted after Powell had fled Mr. Seward's home. The War Department's pre-arranged plot to kill Mr. Seward, included accusing the assassination on an attack conceived and carried out by Confederate agents, while suppressing evidence that would expose Booth's New York minstrel accomplices. The planted gun was a very rare, exclusively made Confederate pistol allowing the War Department to claim the assassin, could have been no other than a Confederate agent.

The History of Eliza Thomas, & Her Richmond Connection

April 1861 to April 1865:

The embargo against the Southern States was a noose progressively strangling the life out of all who lived under its decree. While Virginia was in deprivation it's Border State of Maryland (unaffected by the ever-growing shortages) created a perfect opportunity for black-market smuggling into Richmond and a windfall of illegal profiteering. Within the seedy slums of Richmond's growing gambling and prostitution underworld lay the ideal environment to conduct a secret war of espionage. Union informers in Richmond, later called, "The Union League" operated in Virginia's Confederate capital city on the outskirts of its crumbling social and economic decline. The Richmond and Washington hotels were a perfect location for gathering information, and smuggling between Richmond and Washington was the perfect avenue for Union informers (doubling as blockade runners, gamblers, prostitutes or entertainers) to pass that gathered intelligence north [[National Tribune, August 7, 1899 article: "A Union Man in Richmond"](#)].

At the northeast corner of 14th and Franklin Street sat Richmond's Ballard House Hotel, and directly across the street the Exchange Hotel was connected to it by a footbridge suspended above Franklin Street. In 1862, the back alley behind the Exchange Hotel just off Cary Street, housed the Mulberry Grove House of prostitution. Mulberry Grove was

run by the same Eliza Thomas who would soon move from Richmond to Washington [[Richmond Dispatch, 11/17/1862, p.1 c.4 -7/19/62, p.1 c.5 -7/26/62, p.2 c.5](#)].

Eliza Thomas was born, Mary Jane Starr, the daughter of Ellen Flynn and John Starr. Her father died May 4, 1838 and her half-sister, Nellie Starr was born in the mid-1840s to a father unknown. The widow, Ellen Flynn Starr became a prostitute to support her three children, John Jr., Mary Jane and little Nellie. Mary Jane's mother, Madam Ellen F. Starr was from Baltimore, but moved to Washington sometime during the 1850s, and opened her own house at 15th St. between Pennsylvania and Constitutional Avenue. **[Prostitution, at every social level was an effective means of espionage in both capital cities as evident by more noted Confederate spies, such as Belle Boyd or Rose Greenhow].**

Mary Jane Starr took up her mother's same occupation, and while in Richmond she used the alias Ann E. Thomas, employing at least 10 working girls at her Mulberry Grove back alley residence. Several of those same girls, such as Ella Johnson and Nellie Starr would follow Madam Thomas to Washington, where Ann E. Thomas would become known as Madam Eliza Thomas on 62 Ohio Ave. Some also knew her as Mollie Turner. Nellie Starr was not only Eliza's younger half-sister, but also Booth's mistress. On December 12, 1864, Booth brought Nellie to Eliza's bordello in Washington. Both women knew Booth intimately, and in April 1865, Seward's new maid named Eliza, Margaret Coleman, Emerick Hansell and James Donaldson were each working in the home of Secretary of State William Seward. The night Powell attacked the Seward house, Eliza, Margaret and Hansell were together in the house, while James Donaldson had traded his shift with George Robinson, and for that reason Donaldson was not Mr. Seward's protection during the attack [[See: Fanny's Diary](#)].

John Matthews

Booth's Letter, & the Five Who Signed Their Names

Secretary of War Stanton appointed Special Judge Advocate John Bingham to handle most of the witness examinations before the conspiracy trial and their cross-examinations during the trial [E&S, p. 137]. Bingham had been told there were at least 35 people in Washington to help Booth assassinate Lincoln, but rather than endeavor to find out who they were, he did whatever he could to keep that information concealed.



*Special Judge Advocate
John Bingham*

It is absurd to believe that David Herold, a young man with the mind of a child, and George Atzerodt, a homeless alcoholic immigrant convinced Booth to assassinate Lincoln during the early morning of April 14. Sometime during the day of Lincoln's murder Booth wrote a letter to inform the public the reason he and his accomplices wanted to overthrowing the Lincoln administration. Each accomplice was risking everything to commit their crime, including their lives by signing Booth's political statement. Five of the assassination conspirators signed their names to Booth's letter, and Booth chose John Matthews to issue the credit for their terrorist attack. The next morning Matthews was to deliver the confession to the editor of the *National Intelligencer* stating the reasons for their **proceedings**. However, Matthews destroyed the article Booth wrote to the newspaper, and it was not publicly known until two years later. After Booth's diary was made public in 1867, John T. Ford testified to Congress that he had been told, Booth did in fact leave a confession. Ford stated that on June 1, 1865, he talked with John Matthews who admitted Booth gave the confession letter to him the day he shot Lincoln. Matthews told Ford that Booth instructed him to deliver the letter to the newspaper faithfully the next morning, no matter what occurs [Impeachment p. 533].

While hiding from soldiers in Zekiah Swamp, Booth found out the credit for Lincoln's assassination had not been posted in the newspaper. He repeated the letter's confession in his diary (the only means he had) to tell the world about their political motives for killing Lincoln. Matthews burnt the letter thinking that would be the end of it, confident the letter would never be known. He could not have dreamed that Booth would rewrite the letter confession in his diary, and tell David Herold about it before Booth could be shot to death. Herold told Bingham about the letter during his arrest statement, but that evidence was ignored. The diary would be recovered from Booth's body by Lafayette Baker's specially appointed civilian detective Everton Conger, the same man who shot Booth while he was trapped in the Virginia tobacco barn with no means of escape [Chamlee, p. 289, Thomas, p. 139]. Once again Booth's confession had to be destroyed, and this time the second confession naming his accomplices, and stating their proceedings was in possession of the War Department's senior staff. The diary was subpoenaed and reviewed by Congress, but the sheet naming Booth's accomplices was cut from the diary sometime after Booth was shot to death. The cut out page was replaced with a blank sheet, and single sheets were glued into the book on stubs from missing pages [FBI Forensic Report, Oct. 3, 1977, Thomas chapter 15, Impeachment, pp. 325-32].

Both the letter signed by his five accomplices (but destroyed by Matthews) and his diary confession meant for the world to know (but suppressed by the military prosecution) remained unknown to Congress and the public until President Johnson's impeachment investigation began, long after the conspiracy trial ended [[Thomas p. 153](#)].

On April 18, 1865, John Wilkes Booth recorded in his diary, "*I wrote a long article and left it for one of the editors of the National Intelligencer, in which I fully set forth our reasons for **OUR PROCEEDINGS***". Booth was not speaking about **David Herold & George Atzerodt** when he wrote, "**OUR PROCEEDINGS**". He was talking about the five who signed his letter to the newspaper; **John Matthews, Lewis "Col." Mosby, William Donaldson, Samuel Thomas and James Donaldson** [[Booth's Diary, Thomas p. 214](#)].

On April 21, John Matthews should have become a major assassination suspect, because Stanton was directly notified (from as far away as Boston) that, ***Matthews of Ford's Theater is thought to know about all of Booth's PROCEEDINGS. Proceedings*** is the same word Booth chose to write in his diary (only three days before Stanton's Boston tip) to explain why he and his accomplices wanted Lincoln dead. How did R. W. Walker from Boston, who sent Stanton the tip, know anything about what Booth wrote in a letter (or his diary) which no one other than Booth and John Matthews supposedly knew existed before 1867? [[E&S p. 1308](#)]. **No investigation was made.**

On April 27, 1865, the body of John Wilkes Booth was returned to Washington on the U.S.S. Montauk, and while an autopsy was being performed on Booth's body, Judge Bingham interrogated David E. Herold, the young man captured along with Booth. Much of David Herold's childish testimony mixed fact with fabrication to convince Bingham he just wanted Booth to let him go home to his mother [[E&S, p. 673](#)]. David Herold tried to convince Bingham that Booth was holding him against his will, but he did not falsify any part of his story to defend the dead Booth [[Herold's full statement can be found in E&S, pp. 665-683](#)].

David Herold admitted to Judge John Bingham that Booth told him there were 35 assassination accomplices in Washington, and four or five of them promised Booth they would join him after the murder, but Booth was double-crossed, and the accomplices never showed up. Herold told Bingham, Booth said three accomplices were to assassinate Vice President Johnson [[E&S p. 674](#)]. Herold voluntarily added, Booth wrote a confession letter about the plot to kill Lincoln, and five accomplices signed their names to it. "*He told me this the day before we crossed into Virginia*" [[E&S p. 677](#)]. This was the same letter Herold did not know John Matthews had already destroyed.

Judge Bingham, asks Herold if Booth revealed to him any names of the 35 accomplices, in Washington [[E&S p. 677](#)]? Herold paused to think, but had trouble remembering unfamiliar names and when shown Michael O'Laughlin's photograph, he called him Locklin, Laughlin or McLaughlin [[E&S p. 679](#)]. Herold had said, Booth told him, he wished to God that Seward was killed; and that if a man he called Ed Henson, or Hanson (I believe, belonging to Mosby's command) and a man with him had done their duty, they would have put Johnson through [[E&S p. 674](#)].

Herold was trying to recall, Emerick Hansell the name Booth mentioned (not Ed Henson or Hanson). Emerick Hansell was Mr. Seward's senior State Department messenger assigned to look after the Secretary of State, along with Hansell's assistant, James Donaldson. Herold believed Hansell was in Mosby's command because he heard Booth mention "Colonel Mosby," which was the nickname of Lewis Mosby, a Washington bartender at the Simpson House [E&S, pp. 395-96, 194]. This man was not Lewis Powell nor the Confederate Cavalry Col. John Mosby. The other man Herold could not recall was most likely William B. Donaldson, a circus entertainer from New York, who Booth had known for years.

Herold's confession to Bingham stated, "[Booth] said there were 35 others in Washington, and four [or five men] that ought to have joined me, and you [David Herold] could have gone to the devil" [E&S, p. 674, Impeachment, Conger p. 329]. Bingham knew that Booth was truly part of a large conspiracy because Herold's statement matched perfectly with the first words in Booth's diary:

*Until today nothing was ever thought of sacrificing to our country's wrongs. For six months we had worked to capture, but our cause being almost lost, something decisive and great must be done. **But its failure was owing to others, who did not strike for their country with a heart.***

What others? All three—Herold, Atzerodt and Booth—talked about "the others" [See Thomas, chapter 15, "The Diary"]. Detective Everton Conger had the diary in his hands when he brought Booth's body back to Washington on April 27. He turned it over to Stanton who read the diary, as did Judge Advocates Bingham and Holt. At this point in the investigation all three Judges knew David Herold had told Bingham the truth, because Booth's diary confirmed there were many accomplices *in the* assassination plot. A third validation was Atzerodt's confession, (but known only to the War Department) which was disallowed in the trial. Atzerodt also described a large assassination conspiracy (separate from Booth's kidnapping plot) by a group he called "the New York crowd" [Thomas, p. 164].

Atzerodt's (suppressed and destroyed) confession to McPhail stated that: (paraphrased)

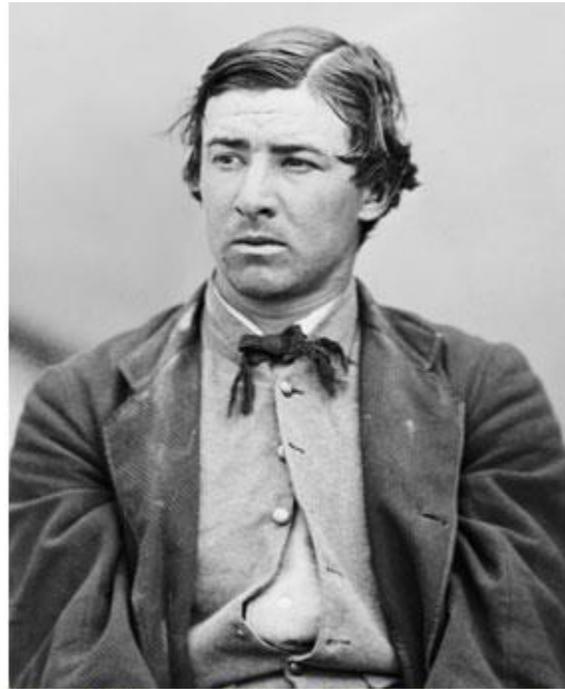
*Booth had met a group in New York that had a plot to get the President certain. They had an entrance to the White House that was near the War Department. Their plan was to plant a bomb and kill Lincoln by blowing up the President's house. Booth said if he didn't get him quick the **New York crowd** would. This access to the White House would be through **friends of the President**. The plan was to get up an entertainment, and they would mix it in, they would have a serenade and thus get at the President and party.*

The "**Friends of the President**" Atzerodt and Herold mentioned were two government insiders, James Donaldson and Emerick Hansell, both State Department messengers for William Seward [Congressional Serial Set 1097 (1861), p. 2]. Both men were ever at Seward's side: in his office, in his travels, and even in his home. Both men were well-known by the whole Lincoln senior staff and party members.

The "**New York crowd**" Atzerodt was speaking of were song and dance entertainers from New York who played in the minstrel shows called "the circus," and the circus was performing at Canterbury Hall in Washington the week Lincoln was shot [E&S, p. 668]. The New York minstrel entertainers planned to give a serenade at the White House, lure Lincoln into a room, then blow up the room. Booth knew these entertainers and about their plot to kill Lincoln, and he told Atzerodt if he did not kidnap Lincoln soon the New York crowd would kill him certain.

On April 31, John Matthews was interrogated four days after Herold's arrest, and the black sword box Booth used to transport the kidnapping weapons from New York to Washington, to Tee Bee Post Office was recovered from Matthews' home, just as Samuel Arnold told police [E&S, p. 847]. Booth's wardrobe box left Washington by Michael O'Laughlin, and last known to be in the position of James Donaldson. Donaldson took the guns out of the box, kept the box at his house, and carried the weapons to Tee Bee Post Office [Samuel Arnold's Confession]. Matthews claimed the box was in his home because Booth gave it to him as a gift, but later stated he did not know Booth very well. **How did the box get from James Donaldson to John Matthews? No investigation was made. What happened to the box?**

Investigators told Matthews that a witness (under oath) told police he heard Booth make a proposition to Matthews, then threaten his life if Matthews talked to anyone about it. John Matthews denied the threat Booth made against him, and downplayed his close relationship with Booth. Matthews lied to investigators about everything, claiming that during the month of April he only saw Booth a few times, casually as they passed each other on the street [E&S, p. 847]. He also did not confess that he saw Booth back stage only minutes before Lincoln was shot, or that Booth had trusted him to post in the *National Intelligencer* the same confession letter Herold told Bingham about four days earlier [Impeachment p. 782]. John Matthews kept the confession a secret until Booth's diary was discovered by Congress, and the conspiracy trial concluded without anyone (other than Matthews and the prosecution) knowing that Booth twice left a confession naming his assassination accomplices. In his diary Booth repeated the *National Intelligencer* letter Matthews destroyed, but his diary only became known to the public long after David Herold and George Atzerodt had been hanged, while the War Department replaced the diary evidence with a blank sheet [Impeachment, p. 782, FBI Forensic Report, Oct. 3, 1977].



David "Davey" Herold, Booth's errand boy who accompanied him on his flight after the assassination.

According to William P. Wood, the superintendent of the Old Capital prison, Matthews was arrested as a suspect aiding Booth, and while held prisoner Wood learned from rumors that Matthews had the letter with him at the prison. William Wood was a close personal friend to Stanton who had commissioned him to work along-side Lafayette Baker and Thomas Eckert in Stanton's spy division. Wood later testified to Congress that the reason he did not search Matthews for the letter was because he learned it had been destroyed. Wood was obviously not telling the truth because he also stated he only learned about the letter being destroyed, after Matthews was released [[Impeachment pp. 490-492](#)]. There is no arrest record for John Matthews or an account of his prison interview among the NARA files. Not a single person testifying before Congress, concerning the letter, the diary or about shooting Booth told the same story.

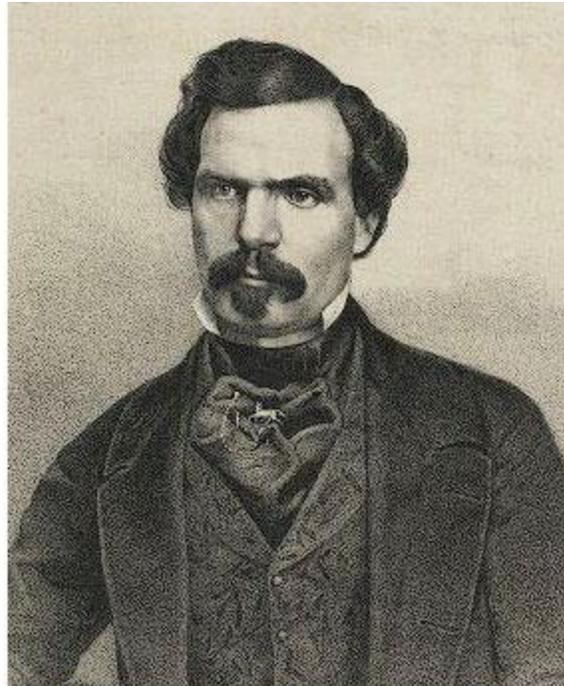
Long after Congress subpoenaed Matthews to explain about the letter, he was persuaded to publish a fabricated story about its contents, with help from a Philadelphia reporter, Frank A. Burr. Matthews and Burr reconstructed the letter copying much of the rage Booth had written in his suppressed 1864 kidnapping manifesto [[Impeachment, p. 782](#)]. The only newspaper to post Booth's manifesto before military police confiscated and censored the letter from the public was the Philadelphia Inquirer [[Thomas, pp. 19-20](#)]. Matthews ended his false account of the letter by naming George Atzerodt and David Herold as the conspirators who signed Booth's confession [[Impeachment, John T. Ford p. 532, & E&S p. 847, Annotation, 1](#)].

Had David Herold actually signed his name to a written confession to Lincoln's murder, he certainly would not have voluntarily revealed the letter to Judge Bingham! On April 27, 1865 Herold was trying to profess his innocence by claiming Booth held him against his will. He revealed the letter to Bingham, as evidence, to prove he was *not* an accomplice to Lincoln's murder. If Herold had actually signed such a confession, not knowing it had been destroyed by Matthews, his only defense would be, *Booth forced him to sign it*, and his only hope would be, *the letter would never be known*. It is a *good* bet that John Matthews (the man who tried to keep the letter unknown) signed that letter along with William Donaldson, James Donaldson, Samuel Thomas and Col. Mosby. And a *sure* bet David Herold & George Atzerodt did not.

Booth's friends and New York accomplices who were never investigated: William B. Donaldson, Col. Lewis Mosby & Booth's New York Accomplices

Many conspirators ran from Ford's Theatre after J. Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln

Moments before Booth shot Lincoln in the back of the head, neighbors living around Ford's Theater heard suspicious whistling signals going back and forth between the streets. After the shot, witnesses reported people running and hearing the trampling of horses leaving the alley in the rear of the theater [E&S p. 539]. William Birch, his brother and sister [E&S p. 138-39] along with a Treasury clerk A. Q. Stebbins, were just a few who gave statements about horses and people running from the theater during Booth's escape, but those reports were never investigated [E&S p. 1195]. Only witnesses who gave testimony about Booth's *kidnapping* accomplices were pursued or made public. Investigators already knew that John Wilkes Booth, David Herold and George Atzerodt each gave written statements confessing that there were many *assassination* conspirators in Washington, some were "**friends of the President**", which also included a separate conspiracy by a large **crowd from New York**, but the War Department easily suppressed that information.



William B. Donaldson, identified by the War Department as someone with knowledge of the assassination, was arrested, but released on Stanton's orders.

Shortly after the assassination, William B. Donaldson fled Washington for Philadelphia, leaving so quickly he did not even bother to pack a bag. His best friend, Daniel J. Cox owner of the Simpson House Saloon was the only who knew where William had gone. The Simpson House was a popular hangout for the New York minstrels while visiting Washington, and the House was frequently entertained by the working girls at Eliza Thomas' bordello [E&S, p. 395]. Lizzie Murtry (who Cox called, "Crazy" Murtry) was not only the prostitute who showed up with Lincoln's bodyguard, John Parker on the morning after Booth shot the President, but she lived at Eliza's house, entertained at the Simpson House, and was also William Donaldson's favorite girl [E&S, p. 396]. **Lizzie and Parker never left a statement, were never called to testify, and John Parker's records are also missing from the National Archives evidence [Thomas pp. 85-86, Reck, p. 162].**



Charles White

At age 18 William Donaldson began traveling with the circus throughout the United States, and toured Europe performing his banjo act [Conlin-L Archives, John Wynd]. In 1853 Donaldson formed his own band which played often at Hope Chapel, Broadway New York. He later joined Charlie White's minstrel company, performing at the Melodeon, 59 Bowery New York, along with Dan Emmett, Lilly Coleman and Dan Bryant. Dan Emmett wrote the famous song "Dixie". Lilly Coleman was a former dancer, and became part owner of the Ballard House Hotel in Richmond, Va. where espionage was conducted [E&S, p. 395]. And Dan Bryant was such a close friend of John Wilkes Booth, that he gave Booth the same diamond stickpin Atzerodt overheard Booth say he would give to

Secretary Seward's chambermaid [E&S, p. 683, note 1]. All these entertainers preformed and traveled the same circuit, and they each had known Booth for a long time. George Atzerodt called them the New York crowd. [Circus Historical Society, Early History of Negro Minstrels, by Col. T. Allison Brown E&S p. 396] www.circushistory.org/Cork/BurntCork3.htm

Charles White, William Donaldson, and J. Wilkes Booth were each close friends with Dan Bryant and each wore a prestigious diamond stickpin.

The assassination investigators collected many hundreds of letters and statements, which include evidence about anyone possibly associated with Booth. The evidence was compiled and evaluated by Stanton's War Department officers, under the overall direction of Judge Advocate Col. Henry L. Burnett. The War Department staff destroyed any evidence which would expose the plot to kill Lincoln was their inside job. Among the National Archives documents, which survived the War Department's edits, is William Donaldson's first letter from Dan Cox delivered to his secluded Philadelphia address, on April 18, 1865:

Friend Bill,

I will send your clothes as soon as possible by Adams Express. Everything is merged into one thing; the assassination. [Ella] Johnson has abused you for everything, and tried her best to get [Col.] Mosby hung for carrying a message ... requesting [her] ...to send the clothes. He [Mosby] was arrested twice but got clear. (The documents of Col. Mosby's two arrests are missing from the collected evidence.)

Cox goes on to tell Donaldson that Mollie Turner's [Eliza Thomas] girls are very angry at him for what he had done. Since Mosby's arrest all the boys stay clear of the Simpson House. "These are trying times." Mollie Turner and all her girls, have been arrested and are being held in the Old Capital prison along with Ned Costello, Harry Krebs and Broom. (Again, there are no documents about their arrest or statements.) Cox ends his message to Donaldson: "No news" [E&S, p. 395].

Over the next couple of weeks Donaldson received more letters from Cox, along with two letters from Mollie Turner's girls, Minnie and Ella Johnson, both of whom (according to Cox) had been arrested and released. Only the very bottom PS portion of Minnie's letter to Donaldson survived the War Department's edits, while her envelope is now recorded without any letter. The War Department edited Minnie's letter leaving only her PS. The PS is complied with the first letter sent to Donaldson from Cox, and is now recorded with the same envelope Cox used. The letter from Ella Johnson, "[*letting*] her guts out", about the assassination, was completely destroyed, and her envelope too is recorded without its letter [E&S, p. 396]. The War Department staff deceitfully attached letters to the wrong envelopes, to cover up the missing evidence they destroyed. Had Ella Johnson's letter survived it would have revealed the New York plot to kill Lincoln [NARA M-599 roll 2:822-831].

Another letter from, Harry Bradford, also a New York entertainer at the Simpson House, identified "Col. Mosby" as being the Simpson House bartender; (Lewis Mosby, "*Veteran of the Rum Corps*") [E&S, p. 193]. On May 4, Cox, (for a second time) identified Col. Mosby to investigators as his bartender, during another letter to W. B. Donaldson [E&S, p. 395]. At this point the War Department knew who Col. Lewis Mosby was from no less than three different sources, but covered up his role in the assassination. To account for the rumors and statements (so many people had reported to investigators) about Col. Mosby's involvement with Booth, [E&S, pp. 394-95] the War Department claimed Mosby was either Confederate commander Col. John Mosby, or accused, "The Mystery Man" Lewis Powell, as being the same alias, "Mosby" who Samuel Arnold told police he met at the March 15, kidnapping meeting in Washington [Thomas, Ch. 14]. According to most accounts, Lewis Powell was in not in Washington on March 15, but in New York [E&S, pp. 196, 197, 198, 200]. The man Samuel Arnold identified at the Washington meeting, known only as Mosby (who was involved in the kidnapping plot) was most likely the bartender Lewis Mosby and not Seward's attacker Lewis Powell.

On May 6, Stanton's Special Commissioner Col. Olcott in New York ordered his top detective in Philadelphia, R.C. Morgan (who also arrested Mary Surratt and Lewis Powell) to investigate numerous reports and rumors about another assassination suspect who also knew Booth, "William" B. Donaldson [E&S, p. 1009]. Military Officers Morgan, Franklin and Roach followed behind William Donaldson as he fled Philadelphia back to Washington, where he was arrested [E&S, p. 917].

A Washington newspaper reported that William Donaldson was arrested with incriminating evidence (a "large number" of Confederate letters and papers, including a [worthless] \$100,000 C.S.A. bond). The article announced, Donaldson was being held at the Old Capital prison to be interrogated by the War Department's chief investigator Col. Burnett [E&S, p. 917]. Two days later, Stanton ordered his release without an investigation, despite all the evidence against him [E&S, p. 261].

Letters and statements revealed that Booth met James Donaldson on the day of the assassination, and that Col. (Lewis) Mosby and William Donaldson would help Emerick Hansell kill Johnson. However, James Donaldson was never investigated, Mosby was twice arrested, but "got clear", [E&S p. 395] and Hansell was never called as a witness.

William Donaldson's charges were dropped, and Stanton ordered him to be discharged from custody on May 9, three days before the trial began [Ibid, p. 261].

The War Department investigators withheld evidence about Booth's New York accomplices, and the military prosecution chose only witnesses who supported their fraudulent case against his kidnapping gang members. During the conspiracy trial it was accused that Lincoln's assassination plot was planned at Mary Surratt's boardinghouse. Mary Surratt was hanged for that crime without evidence, and convicted solely on the testimony of two witnesses (John Lloyd & Louis Weichmann) who were under the threat of being hanged themselves if they did not testify for the prosecution. Along with their perjured testimonies (designed to frame Mary Surratt as a Confederate agent) the prosecution knew it was crucial to suppress any evidence that would prove Booth never had a plot to assassinate before the day he shot Lincoln. Booth's diary and Atzerodt's confession were two vital pieces of evidence that could prove Booth never had an assassination plot until the last day, and both documents needed to be (**and were**) omitted from the trial evidence for that reason [Also see: Thomas, Author's (Notes): Ch. 11-(3), Ch. 19-(19), Ch. 7-(30)].

Lincoln's assassination was not planned at Mary Surratt's boardinghouse, but originated in the Simpson House Saloon at 10th St. & Pennsylvania Avenue - only one block from Ford's Theater. Daniel J. Cox and Joe Hilton managed the saloon, while Lewis Mosby, nicknamed "**Col. Mosby**" worked as their bartender [E&S, p. 396]. These minstrel entertainers (Atzerodt, Herold and Booth talked about) hailed from New York, and gathered at the Simpson House Saloon whenever they were in Washington [E&S p. 668].

The investigators evaluated Atzerodt's suppressed confession, which told of an earlier plan by this same **New York crowd** to kill Lincoln using a bomb. Both, David Herold and George Atzerodt, individually told investigators about two government employees, James Donaldson and Emrick Hansell. These State Department aids were "friends of the President" who would help the New York music entertainers schedule a White House serenade, lure the President into a room, then detonate the bomb planted under the room. It is unknown if this plan was seriously considered, but it was in fact discussed, and George Atzerodt overheard conversations about the plan, and told of it in his last confession. The problem the War Department had with Atzerodt overhearing a plan to blow-up the White House, was because he identified assassins working for Secretary Stanton's military coup to keep Lincoln from serving out his second term [GAC, Thomas Ch. 8].

The actual plan, which was successfully carried out by the New York entertainers, was given to Booth by James Donaldson in the early morning hours on the day of the assassination [Impeachment p. 532, Thomas chapter, 7]. The *complete* plan involved Booth, along with Lewis Powell killing the President and his Secretary of State, while simultaneously William Seward's State Department messenger Emrick Hansell, the Simpson House bartender "Col. Lewis Mosby" and a New York minstrel entertainer William Donaldson would assassinate Vice President Andrew Johnson [E&S p. 674]. Booth was convinced that the new administration would welcome him back to Washington as a hero (*i.e.* "*clear[ing] [his] name*") after deposing the tyrant President.

Booth knew James Donaldson was a Federal employee representing many influential government officials. Booth actually thought of himself as the historical Shakespearian star Brutus and envisioned Lincoln as the tyrant, Julius Caesar. He even alluded to that insane comparison in his suppressed diary confession [[Thomas, p. 124-129, Appendix D](#)].

After Booth was given the plan, all five New York conspirators signed their names to a letter Booth wrote explaining their reasons for killing Lincoln [[E&S p. 677](#)]. Booth then arranged to have the letter posted in the Washington newspaper the morning after the assassination, to ensure the public knew they were all in the plot together [[E&S p. 847, note 1](#)]. None of that ever happened; the letter was destroyed, and the five conspirators from New York had no intention of killing Vice President Johnson. Booth was left alone to take the fall for killing Lincoln, hunted down by 26 soldiers under the command of Washington's corrupt Chief of Detectives Lafayette Baker, then cornered and shot to death at the spot by Baker's civilian detective Everton Conger. Secretary Stanton, Judges Holt and Bingham along with a host of military officers worked to suppress or destroy any evidence that would expose the New York conspirators who were working with this military sponsored strike to overthrow Lincoln's administration. [[See article, Inside Job](#)]

The War Department tried to destroy every trace of evidence which could identify James Donaldson and Emerick Hansell as conspirators in Booth's assassination plot. Investigators (independent from the War Department's staff) learned that William B. Donaldson and "Col. Lewis Mosby" were suspected assassination accomplices. Both suspects were arrested, but quickly and quietly released without an investigation [[E&S p. 261, 395](#)]. George Atzerodt was accused of planning to kill Vice President Johnson, and hanged without evidence or motive.

Investigator-Judge Bingham was one of the commissioners who voted to hang David Herold and George Atzerodt for being Confederate spies attempting to assassinate Vice President Andrew Johnson, while withholding evidence that would prove they had no such plan. Two years later Judge Bingham was part of the coalition who reversed their position and brought charges against Johnson for being a Confederate spy. Congress asked Secretary Stanton, along with Judges Bingham and Holt, to explain why the prosecution suppressed Booth's diary. Basically, their answer to Congress was that the diary would shed light on a truth the conspiracy prosecution commissioners did not want known [[Congressional Globe p. 363-64](#)]. There is little doubt why Stanton and his judges desperately needed to conceal David Herold's statement, Atzerodt's confession, and Booth's diary from the conspiracy trial evidence, then have each man killed before they could talk.

What Investigators Knew & When They Knew It

During the time between 1862 and 1865, Richmond began to succumb to the stifling shortages caused by the blockade. As resources depleted, Ann E. Thomas moved her bordello from Richmond to Washington, became Eliza Thomas, and knew Booth very well. Several hotels in the Confederate capital began to shut down, and the owner of the closed Ballard Hotel, Mr. Talioferro, had been very ill. However, on [September 9, 1864](#), the *Richmond Whig* newspaper announced that the desperately needed Ballard House

Hotel would be reopened by a "gentleman who had much experience in the business and is very popular with the traveling public." This man was Lilly Coleman's Richmond hotel business partner whom she wrote about to Cox and Donaldson shortly after the assassination [E&S p. 370, 396]. The new owner of the Ballard Hotel went by the nickname of "Major" Jack Mokele, a former soldier (although not a real Major) from the 9th New York infantry Hawkins' Zouaves [Carland, E&S, p. 331, & Coleman to Cox letter, p.370].

Long before the November 1864, presidential elections the War Department had completely infiltrated the Democrat "Copperhead" opposition party, the Confederate Secret Service, including its headquarters in Canada as well as the rebel spies in Europe [Thomas, pp.30-32, Bates, pp. 299-300]. Mainstream history often refers to the blockade smugglers on the Maryland-Virginia border as Southern sympathizers or Confederate agents, when actually the line between a "loyalist" (Union man) and a "Secesh" (secessionist) was not so cleanly divided. In truth, most smugglers were not Confederates or Copperheads, but nothing more than common thieves. These smugglers were allowed by Washington's Chief Detective Baker to operate their illegal enterprises by trading secrets in exchange for military protection. Thomas Harbin, Samuel Cox, Thomas Jones and William Bryant were smugglers who were allowed to openly operate in the Washington area in exchange for passing secret information. [E&S, pp. 108, 293, 552]. Among them also existed a hierarchy of Custom House employees (under Salmon Chase) who accepted black-market bribes and kickbacks from port surveyors, while corrupt Treasury agents made windfall profits selling or trading government permits to cotton brokers. [Reck, p. 57; Hay, Oct. 17, 1863, p. 92; Niven, p. 352]

Washington's chief of detectives, Lafayette Baker, not only served as the War Department's henchman, but he was most feared as the kingpin and overseer of the lucrative black market blockade smugglers and spies on the Maryland-Virginia border [Thomas, Author's Notes for chapter. 17, footnote 3]. He also provided Secretary Stanton with a connection to the New York spies and informants. Stanton assigned Baker to New York before Lincoln was shot, and afterward called him back to Washington as a War Department special investigator [Thomas, Author's Notes for chapter. 17, footnote 5].

Another secret operative in Richmond's game of espionage was Charles L. Cowlam, who was born in Wayne County, Michigan. When the Civil War broke out he was already living in Richmond. On September 1, 1863, Cowlam was conscripted into the Confederate Army and detailed as a quartermaster sergeant, but he forged his name T. G. Hunt [E&S, p. 389]. Cowlam actually worked as a black-market smuggler, passing secret information to the Federal Army while presenting himself as a Confederate soldier from Mississippi [E&S, p. 391]. He became acquainted with many members of the Confederate Secret Service and passed information to Stanton's War Department throughout the remainder of the war. Cowlam informed on secret Confederate operatives whom he had met while living among them in the Richmond Hotels [E&S, pp. 388-91].



Stanton's Chief Detective

Lafayette Baker

Two days into the conspiracy investigation Provost Marshal of Detroit, Michigan, Lieut. Col.

B. H. Hill sent a telegram to General James B. Fry in Washington, saying that a native of his state, Charles Cowlam, was coming to the nation's capital city with secret information about the assassination. The telegram stated that Cowlam carried the information in a sealed letter to be opened only by Gen. Fry. While the General waited for Cowlam's arrival, Special Commissioner Col. Foster intercepted Cowlam as he reached DC. Foster broke the seal and read the letter that was addressed to General Fry. The Colonel then employed Cowlam as his detective, assigned him to pose as a Southern sympathizer to gather information from one of Booth's girlfriends at the National Hotel, where Booth had lived while in Washington [E&S, pp. 394-95]. This girlfriend was none other than Kate Thompson, the secret Pinkerton agent named Kate Warne who used many aliases (Cannon, Thompson, Brown, etc.) and was named in [Atzerodt's confession](#) [Thomas, chapter 6]. The War Department covered Kate's identity by calling her Sarah Slater, then disposed of both Slater and George Atzerodt along with his confession evidence which named several more of Booth's unknown accomplices.

Cowlam also interrogated Lizzie Murtry, the same prostitute that John Parker (Lincoln's bodyguard to Ford's Theatre) had arrested on the morning after the assassination to account for his long absence which began just before the shooting. To recap previous evidence, this prostitute, Lizzie, was a companion of the New York minstrels at the Simpson House and the favorite girl of banjo player William Donaldson [E&S, p. 396]. Cowlam also talked with several other prostitutes and hotel employees who resided at the National. After his investigation he issued a report to Col. Foster stating he believed that the men at the Simpson House, plus Kate Cannon and all of the "girls" but two were "genuine Secesh" and that they feared they would soon be arrested [E&S p. 394]. Nothing was ever ascertained from their statements, and they were all released. Among the remaining evidence collected during Charles Cowlam investigation is an edited portion of

his original letter that was turned over to Col. Foster. The only portion of his report, now recorded in the National Archives is his list naming a few suspects. The last name on that list was "Lewis Mosby", the Simpson House bartender [Ibid, NARA 3:856]. Cowlam's edited list is the fourth known document implicating Lewis Mosby and the Simpson House. **No investigation was made.**

On April 27, General Fry learned that Charles Cowlam had been in Washington working for Col. Foster since April 19. Fry sent Col. Foster a letter demanding to know the reason Cowlam had been detained by Foster's Department. New orders were given redirecting Cowlam to deliver the sealed letter to General Fry, but Col. Foster once again intervened, whereupon he destroyed the letter before anyone else could read it. General Fry was incensed at this flagrant disregard for order and rank and wrote a long, furious letter to Colonel Foster demanding an explanation. The matter was not resolved, but soon dropped, and no explanation for such deception and blatant insubordination by a Colonel to a General was ever given [E&S, p. 393-94].

Summary

Booth had no plan of escape, but attempted to protect himself by writing a letter to guarantee his promise of immunity for killing Lincoln. The letter stated their reasons for overthrowing the administration, and it was co-signed by all five New York accomplices. Booth left the letter in care of his actor friend John Matthews to be posted in the *National Intelligencer* the day after the attack [E&S, p. 330, footnote 4; Thomas, chapter 15: "The Diary"]. The letter was not publicly known until two years later after which Matthews told Congress it was burned [E&S, p. 330]. Booth was betrayed by the five men who co-signed the letter, and he was then assassinated by Lafayette Baker's special detective Everton Conger [Thomas, pp. 92-93]. His murder was covered up using the excuse that the crazy Sergeant Boston Corbett made the decision (on his own) to shoot Booth [Thomas, chapter 17: "The Stacked Deck"].

Lewis Powell also had no plan of escape, never bothering to leave the capital city. The War Department knew all about Lewis Powell long before the assassination, except for his real name. For several months prior, Baltimore Marshal James McPhail had known that detectives under Major General Wallace kept surveillance on Booth and all his contacts. Lt. Col. John Wooley knew all about Arnold and O'Laughlin, and had arrested Powell a month before he attacked Secretary Seward, but released him under the name L. Paine. Lafayette Baker proved the War Department had surveillance on Booth and his friends, because he posted a \$10,000 reward for Powell's arrest on April 16, a full day before military police claimed; they did not know until April 17, that it was Powell who attacked Secretary Seward [E, p. 8]. Powell was arrested in Washington DC by order of Special Commissioner H.H. Wells three days after Lincoln was shot, along with Mary Surratt, Samuel Arnold, Michael O' Laughlin, and later in the week George Atzerodt, none of whom had an escape plan. Neither James Donaldson, Emerick Hansell, Samuel Thomas, Margaret Coleman, Eliza Thomas, "Col." Lewis Mosby, William Donaldson, nor John Matthews were ever investigated, nor were they held accountable for the evidence exposing their close association with the assassins Booth and Powell.

Detective R. C. Morgan was the arresting officer who found things in Mary Surratt's house (after everyone was removed) which the prosecution selectively presented to convict her as a Confederate spy. George Atzerodt's May 1 [confession](#) named several unidentified smugglers as Booth's accomplices and also named Dr. Mudd and Thomas Harbin as members of Booth's kidnapping plot. Harbin was not charged with helping Booth escape, even though there was positive physical evidence to prove he did [[E&S, pp. 696 footnote, 216 footnote; Atzerodt's confession](#)]. Meanwhile, during Dr. Mudd's trial, 90 witnesses were called to give testimony that had nothing to do with the assassination plot. Mudd was given life in prison essentially for being disloyal, while smugglers Samuel Cox, Thomas Jones and Thomas Harbin, who traded information and aided Booth during his escape, were never charged with any crime [[Thomas, Author's Note #6 for chapter 1](#)]. Atzerodt's statement (revealing the whole story) was withheld from trial evidence, stolen and meant to be forever destroyed [[Thomas, chapter 12](#)]. Atzerodt was held captive on an ironclad ship in the middle of the Potomac River with a canvas bag pulled over his head and tied around his neck so he could not communicate with anyone, then put to death.

The military commission selectively chose trial evidence. Witnesses were held in custody, then interviewed by the judges before they gave testimony [[E&S, see: H.L. Burnett](#)]. The trial ended with four prisoners hanged for being Confederate spies, and three others were given life in prison. The eighth convict prisoner, Ed Spangler, was given six years for the crime of helping Booth escape the theater, based on hearsay that was contrary to the evidence [[Thomas, chapter 1, convict #8](#)]. Booth's accomplice who helped him escape was actually Samuel Thomas, arrested the next day, but also released without an investigation. Samuel Thomas fit the description of the man seen holding the theater door during Booth's escape, spent the night of the assassination in the same hotel room with George Atzerodt, but was not even called to be a witness [[E&S, p. 614](#)]. Originally, Booth unsuccessfully tried to recruit Samuel Chester to hold the theater's back door [[E&S, p. 1002](#)].

During Andrew Johnson's impeachment investigation (two years after the conspiracy trial ended), Booth's previously hidden diary proved that none of the accomplices convicted in the military trial were guilty of conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln or Seward. Stanton and all of the military judges knew about this evidence, but chose to withhold it from being presented. The coalition who plotted Lincoln's assassination in order to dominate control over Congress needed to impeach Johnson for the same reason they had to kill Lincoln. They accused President Johnson of being a Confederate spy, and they claimed it was Johnson who promised Booth immunity if he would kill Lincoln [[Thomas, chapter 19](#)].

A five-man Congressional committee was formed to investigate the charges against President Johnson, and they found no such evidence existed [[Impeach, p. 111](#)]. Jefferson Davis and the entire Confederate administration were arrested, imprisoned, investigated and released [[Thomas, Epilogue entry for Jefferson Davis](#)]. All surviving convicted conspirators were given a presidential pardon [[Thomas, pp. 160-63](#)].

Joseph Holt was examined by the Congressional Committee Chairman and asked to state when he received the diary, and from whom. Holt answered, that he could not designate

the person or the precise time, but that he first saw the diary very soon after the body of Booth was brought to Washington. Before that officers of the Department, probably Stanton or Eckert had it. Holt continued to say that the diary has been in his possession ever since he got it, and kept locked up in his residence almost invariably. He assured Congress that the diary is in precisely the same condition that it was when it came into his hands. That there was only one loose leaf in the book which seems to have been torn from the diary. Holt also stated he did not know that Stanton had a copy of the diary [[Impeachment pp. 28, 285-287](#)].

Not until the FBI examined Booth's diary, in 1977, was it realized that the War Department defiled the pages Booth wrote. Stanton, Eckert and Holt were the people most responsible for cutting the pages out of Booth's diary, making copies and gluing the copied sheets back into the book. The FBI found that the diary Congress reviewed was a forgery, nowhere near in the same precise condition it was when Everton Conger took it from Booth's body. The diary pages Booth wrote were removed, copied to read differently, then the copied pages were glued and bound back into the book. This was done while the diary was in the possession of none other than Joseph Holt. Booth could not have written the pages that are in the diary now, because the FBI found that when those pages were written, they were loose leaves, unattached from the book and stacked on top of each other.

Who wished a political change to Lincoln's second term agenda? Who had the motive, opportunity and ability to make that change?" Most certainly not the Confederate government, the defeated Confederates were counting on President Lincoln's promise to restore equal rights and privileges to the Southern states with their state representatives readmitted into Congress. Only after Lincoln's death was his policy completely reversed by the same rivals within his own party who competed against him throughout his entire tenure in office. These same rivals also ran the investigation and conspiracy trial.

For further background and references to this article, and so much more, see: [The Reason Lincoln Had to Die](#) by Don Thomas, and visit www.ReasonLincoln.com for further details and more related articles.

Bibliography

E&S - Edwards, William C. and Edward Steers, Jr., editors. [The Lincoln Assassination: The Evidence](#). Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2009. **E-** Edwards, Williams C. editor. [The Lincoln Assassination: The Reward Files](#). ebook, 2012.

Thomas - Thomas, Don. [The Reason Lincoln Had to Die](#). Chesterfield, Virginia, Pumhouse Publishers LLC, 2013.

Impeach - [Impeachment Investigation: Testimony Taken before the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives in the Investigation of the Charges against Andrew Johnson](#). House of Representatives, 2nd session, 39th Congress, First Session, and 40th Congress: Government Printing Office, 1867.

NARA M-599 - National Archives and Records Administration, Department of Microfilm Publications, no. 599: "Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln," rolls 1-7. Available for search and purchase at http://www.fold3.com/title_86/lincoln-assassination-papers/

Chamlee - Chamlee, Roy Z., Jr. *Lincoln's Assassins: A Complete Account of Their Capture, Trial, and Punishment*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company Publishers, 1990.

Globe - *Congressional Globe*, 40th Congress, 1st Session, March 26, 1867.

Fanny - Patricia Carley Johnson, editor. *Sensitivity and Civil War: the Selected Diaries and Papers, 1858-1866, of Frances Adeline (Fanny) Seward*. University of Rochester, 1964.

Baker - Baker, La Fayette C. *History of the United States Secret Service*. Philadelphia: L. C. Baker, 1867.

Larson - Larson, Kate C. *The Assassin's Accomplice*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.

Niven - Niven, John. *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Hay - Burlingame, Michael and John R. T. Ettliger, editors. *Inside Lincoln's White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay*. Southern Illinois University Press, 1999.

Reck - Reck, Waldo E. A. *Lincoln His Last 24 Hours*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.

Burnt Cork - (<http://circushistory.org/cork/burntcork3.htm>) Online performer list from minstrel shows published by the [Circus History Society](#), excerpted from: Slout, William L., editor, *Burnt Cork and Tambourines: A Source Book for Negro Minstrelsy* (Clipper Studies in the Theater Series, vol. 11). Borgo Press, 2007.

Harvard Theatre Collection - Images of William B. Donaldson, Charles White, Dan Bryant and Dan Emmitt were sourced from the American minstrel show collection, 1823-1947 in the Harvard Theatre Collection at Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Bates- Bates, David H. *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office: Recollections of the United States Military Telegraph Corps During the Civil War*. Washington: National Geographic, 2006.