

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.

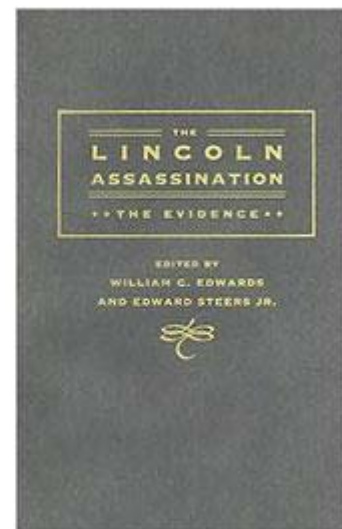
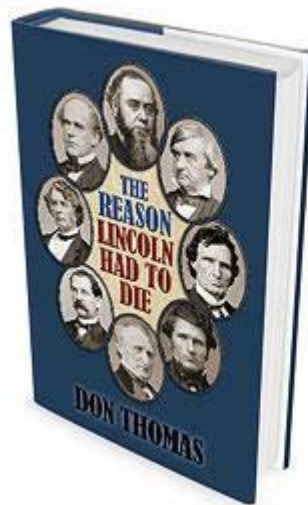
A major Union spy in Richmond, Elizabeth Van Lew had infiltrated the Confederate administration so thoroughly that she reported directly to Washington from the Confederate White House. Van Lew was assisted by a carriage driver, as well as an in house servant, both of whom worked for Jefferson Davis. 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.

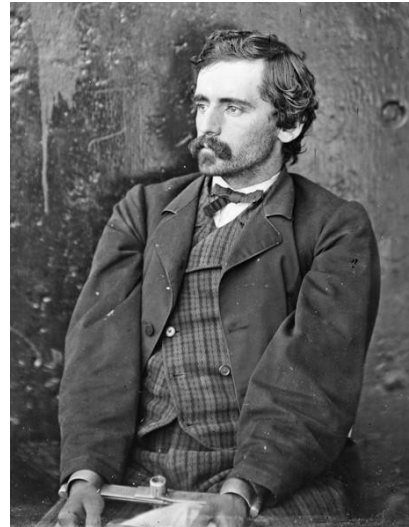
The motive for a terrorist attack against the United States President and his Secretary of State was an in-house conspiracies to destroy Lincoln's reconstruction policy for a post-Civil War America. Much of the evidence used against the accused was fabricated or contrived. Any links that would expose 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

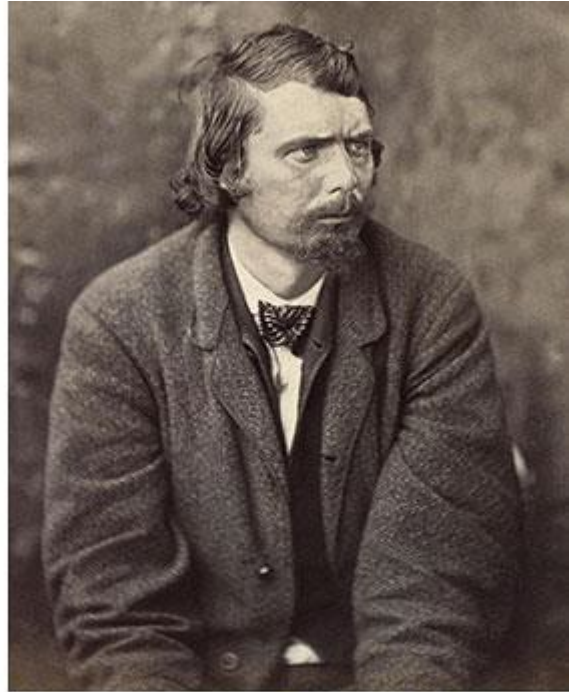


Michael O'Laughlin

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.**

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 and Brown) 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, 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 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 its 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 [\[Richmond Dispatch, 11/17/1862, p.1 c.4 -7/19/62, p.1 c.5 -7/26/62, p.2 c.5\]](#).

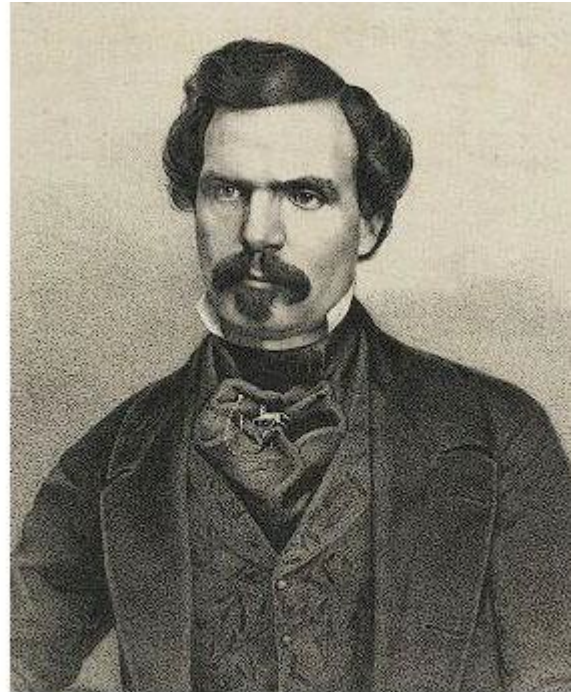
Eliza Thomas was born, Mary Jane Starr, the daughter of Ellen Flynn and John Starr. Her father died May 4, 1838 and her half-sister, Nellie Starr was born in the mid-1840s to a father unknown. The widow, Ellen Flynn Starr became a prostitute to support her three children, John Jr., Mary Jane and little 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 Constitution 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](#)].

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 person 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 16, kidnapping meeting in Washington [Thomas, Ch. 14]. 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

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

Lafayette Baker

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.

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