

# The Cover-Up of Booth's Diary Confession

by Don Thomas

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On Wednesday, August 3, 1977, The Washington Post published two opposing articles concerning newly uncovered evidence on the Abraham Lincoln assassination.

The column written by Jack Anderson and Les Whitten was entitled “*FBI Probes Lincoln Assassination.*” It began with the riveting words:

The FBI has quietly entered the investigation of another presidential assassination – this one the 112-year-old shooting of Abraham Lincoln...

Was Lincoln the victim of a secret conspiracy reaching into his own cabinet...Did the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, actually escape and leave another man's body in his place? New light on these questions is contained in some eighteen pages that mysteriously disappeared from Booth's diary but may now have turned up. [1]

The opposing column to the Anderson-Whitten article was posted by Haynes Johnson entitled “*HYPE,*” and it began:

Now, dear reader, here's a proposition: Every day you've got to determine, if you read us at all, what's true, what's false, and, as in most cases, what lies inconclusively in between. [2]

Hello, I am Don Thomas, author and history researcher, committed to exposing this fifteen-decade-old, ever-enduring Lincoln conspiracy cover-up.

In 2009, I found the 1977, Anderson -Whitten Washington Post article, and when I read about the purportedly found eighteen missing pages from Booth's diary, I immediately knew the entire affair was just another phony scheme to disguise the true issue at hand, which is:

Yes, Lincoln was a victim of an assassination plot from within his own cabinet, and no, Booth did not escape capture.

The Lincoln assassination has never been a mystery nor a theory but always a political cover-up, and politics is why the Lincoln conspiracy remains officially unsolved.

Where to begin?

To date, there have been over one hundred-fifty years of phony stories, fraudulent documents, and elaborate charades, all with a political motive to keep the Lincoln conspiracy a never-to-be-solved mystery.

Let us take, for instance, the 1977, Sunn Classic Pictures movie “*The Lincoln Conspiracy,*” which is just one example of a fraudulent production for commercial profit without regard to legitimate facts.

In August 1977, Civil War Times editor William C. Davis published his analogy of “*The Lincoln Conspiracy,*” entitled *Behind the Lines.* Davis explained:

‘Sunn uses computers to help make movies’... -After extensive demographic surveys are made, sample audiences are polled on ‘which scenes offered the greatest enjoyment, which scenes were the most interesting, and which scenes they wanted longest.’ Essentially the audience tells what it likes best, and that is what Sunn gives them. This is fine for a fictional drama, but when applied to the presentation of what purports to be history, the result can be disastrous. No society can afford to have its understanding of its own past determined by market research on what people want to believe. [3]

The Davis analogy is very profound, but the true incentive to make a Lincoln conspiracy movie in 1977 goes much deeper than just commercial profit. I recognized a strong political motive and found the timing of this production hauntingly suspicious.

Consider, for a moment, Ford’s Theater’s motive to endorse a conspiracy theory movie in the wake of an FBI forensic exam of Booth’s diary confession. Would Ford’s Theater be upset to have it definitively proven that their cherished Booth diary is a forgery? And even worse, to admit that the only people who could have forged the diary were the same people who conducted the original investigation and trial yet convicted only Booth’s kidnapping conspirators? [4]

The 1977, Haynes Johnson article explained the Ford’s Theater’s role leading up to the making of “*The Lincoln Conspiracy*”:

Sometime last fall, Michael (Mike) Harmon, curator of the Ford’s Theater Museum, got a call. It might be worth his time to contact a film company, Sunn Classic, in Salt Lake City, he was told. Seems new material on the Lincoln assassination had been turned up. New material is always turning up, but Harmon made the call. [5]

Why would Ford’s Theater contact a Hollywood film company to do an investigation into such a crucially important historical document? Mike Harmon eagerly followed the anonymous tip, contacted Sunn Classic Pictures, and cooperated fully with them during a sensationalized distortion of the Booth diary evidence. This was prior to the diary being examined by a legitimate authority, such as the FBI Forensic Department.

In a letter to FBI Director Clarence Kelly, dated June 23, 1977, Kelly was reminded that the Booth diary will never again be made available for analysis. It took intervention as high as - Vice President Walter Mondale to persuade the National Park Service to make the diary available for an FBI examination, yet Ford’s Theater readily gave Sunn Classic Pictures full access to the diary because of a tip from an anonymous source. [6] Why?

Haynes Johnson stated:

In time, he [Harmon] met Lynch, Balsiger and other people from the movie company. One of them asked for, and got, permission to photograph the original Booth diary on display in the museum. There had been rumors, among the hordes of Lincoln assassination conspiracy buffs, that Booth’s diary contained “invisible” writing. The keys to the case.

In addition, the article detailed: “At this point, no one has seen those [purported 18 missing pages]. No one has met the Stanton heirs. No one, aside from Lynch, knows who they are, or where they live. And they aren’t talking.” [7]



*Booth's Diary showing the 25 visible sheet stubs, and those missing pages have never been recovered. Two additional sheets were also removed, but their stubs were secretly concealed.*

Here we are, four decades later, and there is still no Joseph Lynch, no Stanton heirs, nor have any missing pages of Booth's little red memorandum book ever been recovered. To date, there is no physical evidence, whatsoever, to prove that any diary pages were ever found. The entire story about the Stanton heirs was **nothing more** than an elaborate hoax to divert attention away from the soon-to-be issued FBI Forensic discoveries of Booth's mysteriously missing diary pages.

As for me, I've known since 2009 that there were many more than just eighteen or even fifty pages missing from Booth's diary because the FBI report stated that a total of eighty-six pages were missing from the book. **[8]** None of the missing pages have ever been recovered, but none are needed as evidence to prove that the diary now on display in Ford's Theater has been aggressively altered.

In 1865, Secretary Edwin Stanton's War Department kept Booth's diary hidden for two years before being forced to turn the book over for an 1867, House of Representatives Judiciary review. To this day, many still mistakenly assume the only missing diary pages were the eighteen Lafayette C. Baker testified to Congress as being removed from the diary after Booth was dead, but in 1977, the FBI report revealed a much different truth. **[9]**

When Lafayette Baker and Everton Conger captured Booth and presented Edwin Stanton with the diary (fresh from Booth's body), all three men knew exactly why the little red book must be kept a War Department secret. What Stanton did not know on the day he received Booth's confession is that Conger made a copy of the complete confession Booth wrote, which included the six pages of text that Stanton's War Department had to remove from the book before turning it over for a Congressional review. The story might well have quietly ended after Stanton confiscated Conger's copy, but there is no honor among criminals. **[10]**

Lafayette Baker was Stanton's chief military officer in charge of Washington's security, yet he played a pivotal role during the quest to remove Abraham Lincoln from office and took part in the cover-up that followed. **[11]**



*Secretary  
Edwin Stanton*

After Lincoln had been successfully removed from office by assassination, Andrew Johnson became the next president to feel the long reach of a politically powerful coalition of men, who controlled the destiny of the nation. Their new goal was to have President Johnson impeached. However, things began to quickly unravel for the impeachment advocates when Andrew Johnson caught General Baker spying on him in his own office. Johnson immediately banned Baker from the White House, and Secretary Stanton refused to come to Baker's defense. **[12]**



Lafayette C. Baker



Everton Conger

Lafayette Baker was a man without scruples, a notorious liar, and had no loyalty to anything other than money and himself. Baker's next enterprise, after collecting a large portion of the reward money for Booth's capture, was a book deal, and he promised the New York Publishing House of Derby and Miller that he could deliver a secret diary confession made by John Wilkes Booth. [13] Stanton became enraged with Baker for revealing the secret diary, and after that confrontation, it was "game on" between Baker and Stanton.

Two years after Lafayette Baker and Everton Conger turned Booth's diary confession over to Secretary Stanton, the once-hidden book became publicly known, and it was used as evidence during the John Surratt trial.



John Surratt

Congress subpoenaed the diary from Joseph Holt and did an investigation of the book during Andrew Johnson's impeachment trial. At that point, the criminal coalition turned on each other, and the diary investigation became a death match between Baker and Stanton. [14] By the time the investigation was considered concluded, Baker had lost all.

The Congressional investigation focused heavily on the twenty-five cut out sheets of paper, all of which were in front of Booth's first written page. In 1867, no one realized that Booth had no plot to kill the president until the day of the assassination. No plot until April 14 meant that anything written on those first twenty-five diary sheets would have already been written before Booth decided to murder the president and before Booth made his first diary entry on April 17, 1865. [15]

During the 1867 Congressional investigation into Booth's diary, Baker and Conger were both called as witnesses, but their individual testimonies did not agree on the same story. Meanwhile Stanton's two conspiracy trial judges, Bingham and Holt, testified against every statement given by both Baker and Conger concerning the diary's condition before it was turned over to Stanton. [16]

Lafayette Baker, Everton Conger, Joseph Holt, John Bingham, and Edwin Stanton worked together in 1865 to convict Booth's kidnapping conspirators as assassins, yet two years after the trial ended, Stanton and his judges were testifying against the same two men who captured Booth and recovered his diary. These facts alone are undeniable proof that everyone involved with Booth's diary (before it was turned over to Congress) was giving false testimony about the missing pages. [17]

Keep in mind that before the FBI exam of Booth's diary, no one was aware there were in truth twenty-seven consecutive sheets of paper, or fifty-four pages, cut from the diary section, which had nothing to do with the eighteen pages Lafayette Baker had claimed. Nor did anyone know, before the FBI exam, that Booth's first written diary page was not on the next consecutive sheet page, 26 as it should have been. The FBI exam found that Booth's first written page in the diary began out of chronological order on sheet number 28. The lab technician also found that Booth's first two-original sheets, 26 and 27, had been completely removed from the book but left

no visible sheet stubs. Those two hidden sheets were previously unknown because only 25 cut sheet edges are visible now. [18] That discovery by itself is proof of a major alteration to the diary, but before 1977, no one knew any of these facts. [19]

At this stage of the FBI exam, there can be no doubt or argument that the diary had been altered from its original condition. The lingering question was: were those two sheets-of-paper, 26 and 27, removed from the diary before or after Booth began writing his confession?

Well, the first clue to that question can be found in the first paragraph of the report on page 2: “The diary is glued in place in the middle section.” However, the exam makes no reference as to why the diary pages were glued in place until the last page of the report.

The first paragraph on page 5 identifies which sheets were glued and added that those same sheets were also rebound, which unarguably means the pages had first been unbound. “The four sheets of the diary [Sheets 28, 29, 30 and 31] have at an earlier date been laminated [glued] and rebound into the diary.” [20] But, the FBI could not identify the “earlier date” Booth’s diary was rebound.

The lab technicians did not know when those original sheets had been unbound but did know that the only way the original sheets could have been removed was to first un-glue the outside cover encompassing the individual packets of papers. The next step was to cut the cotton stitches that were used to bind the different packets together. Only then could any sheets be removed from the book.

No one knew until 1977 that the original sheets 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31 had been secretly unbound and removed, nor did anyone know that the rebound replacement sheets 28 and 29 were cut-in-half, glued to the cut-in-half replacement sheets of 30 and 31, and secretly rebound. [21]

The original packet five had eight sheets, or sixteen pages. But the sheets now in packet five have only four glued sheets, one original sheet (number 32), and one cut sheet stub (number 25), or twelve pages. [22] Two sheets, or four pages, are now completely missing and unaccounted-for in packet five, while glued sheet 29 is void of any text. That makes six original pages of text missing from the center of Booth’s confession.

But there was still an even bigger discovery! Page 4 of the report explained the “invisible” writing, which was the main motive to have the FBI examine the book. Page 4 states: “What appears to be text [invisible writing] on the diary pages...- is actually transferred text from the surrounding pages...- This transference is exhibited on all of the laminated pages.” [23]

The report went on to explain that the primary cause for this transference of text from page to page is because the original writing produces indentations on one side of a sheet-of-paper and produces raised characteristics on the reverse side in mirror image. (Keep in mind that each single sheet of paper has two pages, one front page and one back page).

Over the years, dirt and oil deposited on the raised characteristics, which the history buffs assumed was a secret message written with invisible ink. Invisible writing was also noted on the pages with indentions. This was because the paper darkened from dirt and oil, but the indentions remained clear and lighter, therefore also giving the impressions of invisible writing. [24]

At this point, the report clearly explained that there was no invisible writing, no secret message, just natural impressions transferred onto the sheet pages that were underneath the written page.

The lab technicians also realized that the natural impressions on all the laminated pages were not made by just the top pages. It was discovered that when the laminated sheets were written, all four sheets were laying loosely out of sequence, outside of the book and before they were secretly glued and rebound into the diary. [25] That discovery would pretty much rule out Booth as being the person who altered the diary from its original condition, yet how could anyone account for the fact that the pages were in Booth's own handwriting.

The diagnosis of "invisible" writing proved to the FBI that the text on all four rebound, laminated sheets were written twice. This could only have been done after Booth was dead and while the book was in possession of Secretary Stanton's War Department.

On June 23, 1977, the Department of the Interior sent a letter to the FBI Forensic Laboratory to explain why the Booth diary exam was of such great historical importance. The letter stated: "Since this matter has arose, there have been many suggestions that the Booth diary is a forgery designed to assist in a cover-up. This needs to be settled, one way or the other." [26]

Exactly two months before the exam of Booth's diary was made public, Skip Larson and Mike Harmon, both men of the Ford's Theater Museum, along with Kelly Burke, a reporter from WRC-TV, ventured to the FBI laboratory to discuss the results of the forensic diary examination. Lab examiner Barry Mones explained to his visitors that the FBI was not investigating the matter, only providing lab assistance for the Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

All three lab visitors were told that the diary had revealed nothing of significance or value and that it probably had no invisible writing in the book. Reporter Kelly Burke expressed his gratitude for everyone's assistance and excused himself, saying that his column had a five o'clock deadline. [27]

Kelly Burke's investigation ended there, but why does the Lincoln conspiracy live on?

The Lincoln conspiracy still lives because so many have suppressed or refused to acknowledge any evidence that reveals the true government conspiracy against President Lincoln.

On August 8, 1977, the FBI Forensic Department was again reminded that conspiracy theorists may make "a claim that the FBI missed something or deliberately withheld material as part of a conspiracy. This is no idle fear as you can see from the editorial in the Civil War Times for August 1977. A claim has been made that the diary...-was forged by the Government as part of a cover-up. This is the last chance for an answer one way or the other...-so much history rides on the documentation of what you do and how you do it." [28]

Even before Kelly Burke met with Lab examiner Barry Mones, the FBI Forensic Department had already uncovered the government conspirators who destroyed the missing pages of Booth's diary. However, on August 3, 1977, the FBI issued a false memorandum saying that: "As a result of the examination of the diary, no invisible writings, obliterations, alterations or other unusual characteristics were found." [29]



*Judge Joseph Holt*

In truth, the diary was forged by a coalition of men within Lincoln's own party, after Booth was dead and before the book was subpoenaed from Joseph Holt, a Lincoln conspiracy trial Judge Advocate.

The FBI exam found that the Booth diary now on display in Ford's Theater Museum, is a secretly glued-together, rebound forgery with six pages of text missing from the center of Booth's original confession. However, so much history and politics was riding on the FBI documentation that a decision were made to deceitfully conceal the actual results uncovered by the lab technicians.

I am the first and only history author to analyze and publish the FBI's deliberately misleading findings. With the aid of my FBI analysis, The Washington Post can finally bring closure to the conflicting stories it first posted in 1977, while its deserving readers can at long last determine for themselves what is true, what is false, and what now lies conclusively in between.



*The Booth Diary, on display in Ford's Theater.*

FBI sources can be found on Google search:

#### Abbreviations

FBIV FBI Records: The Vault, John Wilkes Booth part 01 of 01. pp. 32-182

FBIE FBI (5 page) October 3, 1977, Exam of John Wilkes Booth's Diary, pp. 178-182

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, 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, and 40<sup>th</sup> Congress: Government Printing Office, 1867.

TRL Thomas, Don. *The Reason Lincoln Had to Die.* Pumphouse Publishers, 2013.

TRB Thomas, Don. *The Reason Booth Had to Die.* Pumphouse Publishers, 2017.

Notes:

1. FBIV, p. 148, - The Washington Post, Wednesday August 3, 1977 Jack Anderson and Les Whitten Article, "*FBI Probes Lincoln Assassination.*"
2. FBIV, pp. 155-157, -The Haynes Johnson August 3, 1977 Washington Post Article, "*HYPE.*"
3. FBIV, pp. 149-153, - Civil War Times, August 1977, *Behind the Lines*, Editor, William C. Davis.
4. Impeach, p. 28 & 285
5. FBIV, p. 157, - HYPE Article.
6. FBIV, pp. 176-177, - Letter, June 23, 1977.
7. FBIV, p. 157, -HYPE Article.
8. FBIE, p. 3, - Exam.
9. Impeach, p. 458
10. Impeach, pp. 324-325
11. TRB, Ch. 3
12. TRL, Ch. 17
13. Impeach, p. 452
14. TRL, Epilogue.
15. TRL, p. 68 - Large Print Edition, p. 69
16. Impeach, pp. 32, 286, 324, 452-458
17. Ibid.
18. FBIE, p. 2, - Exam.
19. Ibid.
20. FBIE, p. 5, - Exam.
21. FBIE, p. 2, - Exam.
22. FBIE, p. 2, 5, - Exam.
23. FBIE, pp. 4, 5, - Exam.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. FBIV, p. 176-177, - Letter, June 23, 1977.
27. FBIV, p. 134-135, - Memorandum, August 4, 1977.
28. FBIV, pp. 146-147, - Letter, August 8, 1977.
29. FBIV, p. 132, - Memorandum, August 3, 1977.

The first paragraph of page five, of the FBI report states:



*“The four sheets of the diary headed Saturday June 11, Friday June 17, Thursday June 23, and Wednesday June 29 have at an earlier date been laminated and rebound into the diary.” What does this FBI statement mean?*

The Analysis of the FBI Exam Report, by Don Thomas.

Bullet point list of the three different types of sheets that make up the Booth diary. Diary sheets can be identified by: **original** sheets, **removed** sheets, and **laminated (glued)** sheets.

- The first sheet of packet five is headed Tuesday, May 24, 1864, and it is an **original** cut out sheet number 25, of the diary section.
- The sheet headed Monday, May 30, is a secretly **removed** sheet, number 26.
- The sheet headed Sunday, June 5, is a secretly **removed** sheet, number 27.
- The sheet headed Saturday, June 11, is a **glued**, rebound sheet, number 28.
- The sheet headed Friday, June 17, is a **glued**, rebound sheet, number 29.
- The sheet headed Thursday, June 23, is a **glued**, rebound sheet, number 30.
- The sheet headed Wednesday, June 29, is a **glued**, rebound sheet, number 31.
- The last sheet of packet five is headed Tuesday, July 5, 1864, and is an **original** sheet, number 32, from the same sheet-of-paper as cut out sheet number 25.



The left sheet headed December 1864, is the last sheet of packet 1. Packets 2, 3, and 4 have been cut from the book, along with the first sheet of packet five, leaving 25 visible sheet stubs.

However, the first uncut sheet is not sheet 26 as it should be, but sheet 28. Sheets 26 and 27 were also removed, but their stubs are not visible.

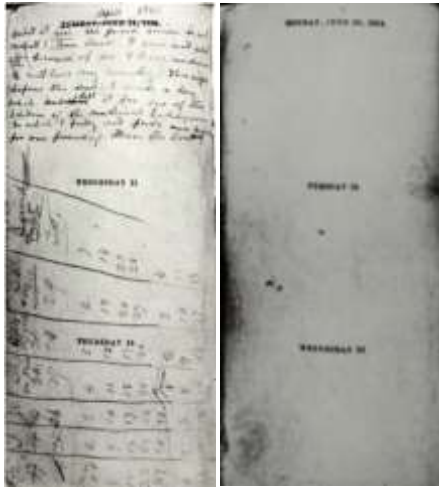
Booth's text from the first page of original sheet 26 was transposed onto the first page of the replacement sheet 28. The first page of sheet 28, left no natural impressions from its writing on any other sheets in the book. That finding proved that sheet 28 was written as a single sheet, outside of the book, before it was glued and rebound.

The Italian phrase, “*Ti Amo*” written at the top of Booth's first confession page left no natural impressions on sheet 29, making the entire text an obvious forgery, copied from an original sheet that is no longer in the book.

Sheet 28 (now in the Booth diary) is a forged copy of the original first page from the secretly removed sheet 26. The forger could use parts of the text from Booth's first original page but needed to take out all the text on Booth's second original page of sheet 26, along with Booth's original text from sheets 27, 28, and 29.

To do this, all six original sheets had to be unbound from the book and rewritten on empty, identically preprinted diary sheets. The Booth diary was rebound with only four transposed copies, traced from Booth's original text, to ensure that the duplicated pages would be in Booth's own handwriting.

Replacement sheets 28, 29, 30, and 31 are all transposed forgeries of Booth's original text, glued and rebound, with sheet 29 left void of any text. The Booth diary is missing two full sheets, while one replacement sheet is completely blank, front and back.



The sheet on the left, with a calendar drawing is the forged, back page of sheet 28 and the copied calendar drawing (taken from a sheet no longer in the book) was traced onto the backside of 28, to fill in for the deleted text from Booth's original second page.

On the calendar page Booth stopped writing his confession in midsentence on April 17, and his next entry was not until April 21.

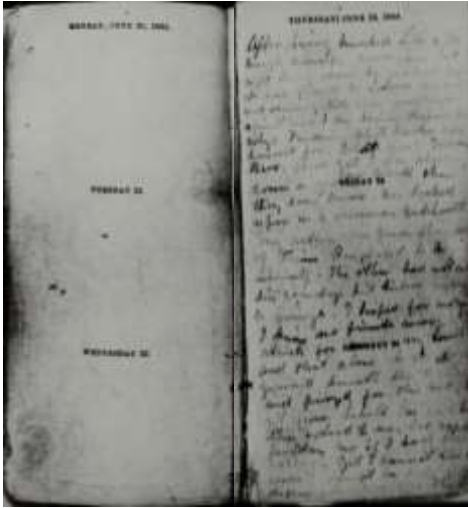
That makes three days (April 18, 19, and 20), and six pages of original text missing from the center of Booth confession.

The natural impressions from the writing on the calendar page (on the left side of the book) can be seen on the blank sheet 29, which is on the right-hand side of the book.

That can only mean that all the glued, rebound sheets were written as single sheets outside of the book, at a date sometime after Booth was shot-to-death, and before the book was turned over to Congress.

The two single sheets, 28 and 29, were originally the same sheet-of-paper, only folded. But sheet 28 was cut from its other half of sheet 29, down the center of the fold, inside the book spine. The forger then glued each half to the single, cut-in-half sheets 30 and 31, which were the folded other halves of sheets 26 and 27.

That was how the forger removed two sheets from the center of Booth's confession without showing any stubs. He cut all the replacement sheets in half and glued sheet half 28 to sheet half 31 and glued sheet half 29 to sheet half sheet 30.



At this location in the book, there are two sheets missing, with a third sheet completely blank front and back.

The glued and rebound sheet 29 could not be left out of the book but was left blank because the text from the original sheet would reveal Booth's true assassination accomplices. Sheet 29 was glued and rebound, but that sheet had to be left void of any writing.



The natural impressions from the writing on the last page of Booth's confession can be seen, not only on the two sheets underneath the last page, but also on the two sheets on top of the last page.

That can only mean that all the pages were written twice. Once by Booth when the original pages were in the book, then again when the original pages were copied onto the glued sheets before the replacement sheets were rebound.

This forgery of the laminated pages could only have been done after Booth's death, and while the book was in possession of Stanton's War Department.

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