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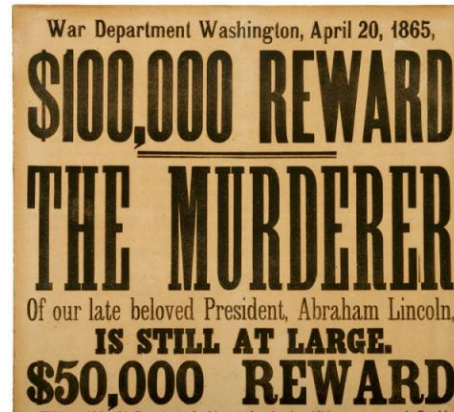
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This image depicts one of the broadsides, issued by the Union War Department, which circulated immediately after the death of President Lincoln. It places a bounty on the capture of "The Murderer of our late beloved President, Abraham Lincoln."

With a price on his head, John Wilkes Booth (hiding in a barn at [Garret's farm](#) near Port Royal, Virginia) was captured by 1st Lieutenant Edward P. Doherty of the Sixteenth New York Cavalry.

Doherty's official [report](#) highlights what occurred:

We took Jett [a Confederate officer] down stairs and informed him our business, telling him that if he did not forthwith inform us where the men were he should suffer; that no parley would be taken, &c...Mr. Baker and myself had scarcely left the room when he told Mr. Conger that he would show us the place.

"The place" was [Garrett's farm](#). The official report continues:

On learning this I took him [Jett] in my own charge. His horse was got out, he was mounted, and we went back to [the house](#) of Mr. Garrett, about twelve miles from Bowling Green. I ordered my command to surround the house, and, as a precautionary measure, sent six men in rear of the barn and outbuildings. While I was placing my men around the buildings the detectives knocked at the door, which was opened by the elder Mr. Garrett, who was much excited; he said the men who had been there went to the woods the previous evening.

That was a lie. Booth, in fact, was in the Garrett barn with David Herold.

While engaged in conversation the son of Mr. Garrett came in, advising the father to tell where they were. I seized this man by the collar, and pulled him out of the door and down the steps, put my revolver to his head and told him to tell me at once where the two assassins were; he replied, "in the barn." I said "show me the barn."

Booth was in the barn. Detectives assisting Doherty wanted to burn the barn, but the officer-in-charge disagreed.

...Sergt. Boston Corbett, Company L, Sixteenth New York Cavalry asked permission to enter the barn alone, which I refused. Booth all this time was very defiant and refused to surrender. At one time he said if we would draw up in line fifty paces off he would come out, adding that he was lame and had only one leg.

At this point, Doherty believed Booth was in the barn alone. David Herold, however, was still with Booth. And Herold was scared.

We threatened to burn the barn if he did not surrender; at one time gave him ten minutes to make up his mind. Finally, Booth said, "Oh; Captain, there is a man here who wants to surrender awful bad." I answered, and I think Mr. Baker did at the same time, "Hand out your arms." Herold replied, "I have none." Baker said, "We know exactly what you have got." Booth replied, "I own all the arms, and intend to use them on you gentlemen." After some little parley I said, "Let him out."

With Herold in custody, the pressure was on to get Booth.

Almost simultaneous with my taking Herold out of the barn the hay in the rear of the barn was ignited by Mr. Conger, and the barn fired. Sergt. Boston Corbett, Company L, Sixteenth New York Cavalry, shot the assassin Booth, wounding him in the neck. I entered the barn as soon as the shot was fired, dragging Herold with me, and found that Booth had fallen on his back. Messrs. Conger and Baker, with some of my men, entered the barn and took hold of Booth. I proceeded with Herold to find a rope to secure him, there being no irons for that purpose. The assassin Booth lived about two hours. In the meantime, a doctor was procured, who remained with Booth till he died.

It is said Booth told his captors: "Tell my mother I did it for my country." Later, while looking at his hands (which he held before his face), Booth apparently said his last words:

Useless! Useless!

Booth left behind other, written words (in his letters). But it is his diary that is most interesting. In it he states his motive (and reflects his determination) for killing the President.

From his words, it is clear he developed his assassination plan on the day he carried it out - April 14, 1865. Because of numerous missing pages, however, the diary itself has been a source of controversy since it was "rediscovered" two years after Booth was killed. (Too bad it wasn't "available" as evidence for the conspiracy trial.)

Corbett, because he shot Booth, was initially thought by some to be part of the conspiracy. (He later testified for the prosecution at the conspiracy trial.) The charges against him, however, were quickly dropped by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.

Some people wondered if Stanton's actions reflected his own part in a conspiracy. Debate on that point continues.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BOOTH-S-CAPTURE-AND-DEATH-Assassination-of-Abraham-Lincoln>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BOOTH-S-CAPTURE-AND-DEATH-Assassination-of-Abraham-Lincoln>

Questions 2 Ponder

What Were the Last Words John Wilkes Booth Had for His Mother?

When John Wilkes Booth said to tell his mother, "I did it for my country," what "country" did he mean?

If America's civil war was already over, when Booth killed President Lincoln, how could Booth mean the Confederate States of America (as his country)?

Was Booth trying to destabilize the United States, so the Confederacy could rise from the chaos he'd created?

Why do you think Booth kept a diary about the events of Lincoln's assassination?

Who Fatally Shot John Wilkes Booth?

Sgt. Boston Corbett was initially suspected as a conspirator. Was that justified?

If it was justified, why were the charges against him so quickly dropped?

Should they have been dropped? Why, or why not?

Media Stream



Garret Farm House

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

PD

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Garret's Farm - Map Locator

Map image, online courtesy U.S. National Park Service (NPS).

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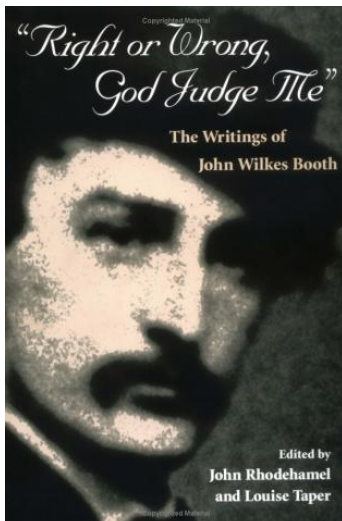
Garret's House - Last Stop of John Wilkes Booth

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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Right or Wrong, God Judge Me - by John Wilkes Booth

Book-cover image online, courtesy University of Illinois Press and Google Books.

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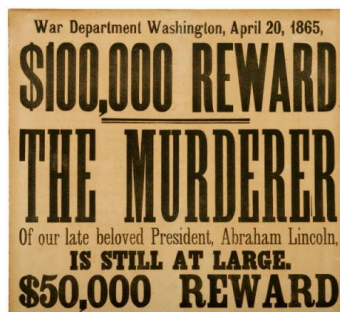
Capture of John Wilkes Booth - Setting the Barn on Fire

Illustration online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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