



0. EVENTS at the SURRATT BOARDINGHOUSE - Story Preface

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This image, from the Library of Congress, depicts Mary Surratt's boarding house. It is located about four blocks from Ford's Theatre, where John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln. Click on the image for a better view.

John Wilkes Booth, a famous actor from a famous acting family, was an upset Southerner. He was angry about all the Confederate prisoners the Union had taken (and was refusing to exchange). He did not view the conflict between North and South as a "War of Rebellion" (as Northerners called it at the time). Booth didn't think of Southern soldiers as "Johnny Reb."

Resenting the Union's efforts to quash an independent Confederacy, Booth grew more radical in the waning days of the war. He concocted an audacious plan which, he thought, would help the South's cause.

With a small group of trusted people, Booth would kidnap ... Abraham Lincoln. He would only release the President after the Union released Confederate prisoners of war.

For the plan to work, Booth needed a secure escape route. He needed to find a travel path not well known to Union troops. Who better to consult, about such a venture, than a Confederate courier? Booth asked his new friend, Dr. Samuel Mudd, to introduce him to John Surratt.

Beyond his value as a courier - who knew the best routes between Washington City and Richmond - Johnny still had access to his family's business interests in Surrattsville. And it was there - where the family home also served as a local inn and tavern - that Booth could find help, should he need it. Surrattsville, after all, was located along one of Booth's preferred escape routes.

In late December, 1864, Mudd met Booth at the National Hotel (Booth's favored place to stay in Washington). As they walked to Mary Surratt's boardinghouse, at 541 H Street (known today as 604 H Street, N.W.), Mudd recognized one of two men walking toward them. It was John Surratt.

Ever gregarious, and charming, Booth invited Surratt and his friend - Louis Weichmann, whom Johnny had known from his days as a seminary student at St. Charles College - to his room at the National. Over cigars and drinks, the men got to know each other.

Beginning in January of 1865, Booth began to visit the H-Street boardinghouse. He had convinced John Surratt that kidnaping the President was a good idea.

Sometimes Booth would meet other people there, such as Lewis Powell (also known as Lewis Payne). Sometimes, according to trial testimony, he would talk with Mary Surratt and her daughter, Anna.

Did Mrs. Surratt know about the plot to kidnap Lincoln? In *Encyclopedia of the Reconstruction Era: M-Z and Primary Documents*, by Richard Zuczek, we learn:

*...there is no firm evidence that she was party to the actual plots to kidnap and later assassinate the president, vice president and secretary of state. (Zuczek, page 630.)*

Others disagree, asserting there was enough circumstantial evidence to believe Mrs. Surratt at least knew about the kidnap plan. As Kate Clifford Larson (author of *The Assassin's Accomplice*) wonders: How could she live in a house that size and *not* know?

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/EVENTS-at-the-SURRATT-BOARDINGHOUSE-Conspirat>

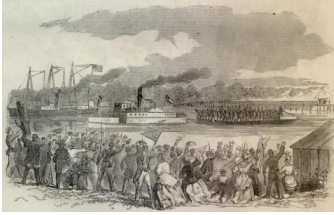
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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/EVENTS-at-the-SURRATT-BOARDINGHOUSE-Conspirator-Mary-Surratt>

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## Media Stream



### Prisoner Exchange - American Civil War

Drawing of Union prisoners, being released to General Burnside, from the June 14, 1862 issue of *Harper's Weekly*. Online, courtesy Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Prisoner-Exchange-American-Civil-War1>



### National Hotel - John Wilkes Booth

Drawing of the National Hotel, where Booth stayed in Washington, online courtesy Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/National-Hotel-John-Wilkes-Booth>



### Louis Weichmann

Image of Louis Weichmann online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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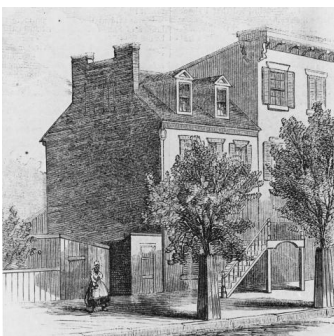


### Surratt and Weichmann - Students at St. Charles College

Photo of St. Charles College, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Surratt Boardinghouse on H Street - Circa, 1865

Drawing of the Surratt Boardinghouse, on H Street, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

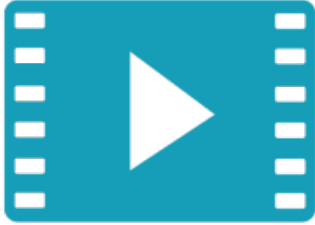
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### EVENTS at the SURRATT BOARDINGHOUSE

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### Assassin's Accomplice - Kate Larson on Mary Surratt

Video of Kate Clifford Larson, author of *The Assassin's Accomplice*, online courtesy the U.S. National Archives' channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Assassin-s-Accomplice-Kate-Larson-on-Mary-Surratt>