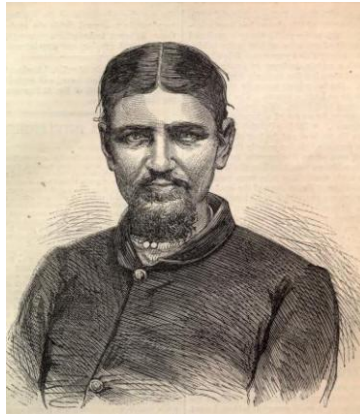




Against Colonel Baker's explicit orders to take Booth alive, Sgt. Boston Corbett shot Booth in the neck. This photo of Corbett, by Mathew Brady, is from the May 13, 1865 issue of Harper's Weekly.

The following passages, also from the Weekly's May 13th issue, describe what happened as Booth resisted arrest at the Garrett barn:

At this instant Sergeant BOSTON CORBETT fired through a crevice and shot BOOTH in the neck. He was carried out of the barn and laid upon the grass. Some water was brought and the dying man revived. BAKER put his ear close down and heard him say, "Tell mother I die for my country." He was then placed upon the porch before the dwelling.

Reviving again he repeated his former words, adding, "I thought I did for the best." Finally the doctor arrived. Just at his coming BOOTH asked to have his hands raised and shown him. When this was done he muttered "Useless, useless." These were his last words. He died about four hours after he was shot.

BOOTH and HAROLD were dressed in rebel gray uniform. HAROLD was otherwise not disguised much. BOOTH'S mustache had been cut off, apparently with scissors, and his beard allowed to grow, changing his appearance considerably. His hair had been cut somewhat shorter than he usually wore it.

His body and HAROLD were taken to Washington. Two sons of GARRETT were also taken, but the rebel captain had escaped.

On the night of the 27th of April a small row-boat received the remains of the murderer, and no one save two men, it is said, know the place or manner of his sepulchre.

Who was Boston Corbett, the man who killed Booth? At page 294, of the May 13th Weekly, we learn more about him:

Sergeant CORBETT, the soldier who shot BOOTH, belongs to Company L, Sixteenth New York Cavalry. He was born in London, England, in 1832, and came to this country when seven years of age. He has lived in Troy, New York, where he learned his trade as hat-finisher, and subsequently worked in Albany, Boston, Richmond, and New York. He enlisted in the latter city in the Twelfth New York State Militia.

While residing in Boston he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Never having been baptized, he was at a loss what name to adopt, but after making it a subject of prayer he believed himself instructed to take the name of Boston, his place of conversion.

Last June a detachment of the Sixteenth was sent to the vicinity of Culpepper, where they were hemmed in by MOSBY, and nearly all compelled to surrender except CORBETT, who stood out manfully, and fired his revolver and twelve shots from his breech-loading rifle at his assailants before surrendering, which he did after firing his last round of ammunition. MOSBY, in admiration of the bravery displayed by CORBETT, ordered his men not to shoot him, and received his surrender with other expressions of admiration.

He was taken to Lynchburg and thence to Andersonville, where he experienced, during five months of imprisonment, the same treatment as others have so numerously testified to. Out of fourteen members of his company, fellow-captives, but one besides himself returned. Upon one occasion he made his escape, but was tracked by blood-hounds and returned to captivity. When exchanged he was but a skeleton, and has not yet fully regained his health.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of CORBETT is his fervent religious enthusiasm. In a letter to his pastor last February he wrote:

"Do try and lead him" [speaking of an acquaintance] "to Jesus. Brother IRVINE is here with me, and we often kneel together and besiege the throne of grace, and bless God He makes us happy in His love. We do not forget our pastors and churches and brethren; and we feel that we are not forgotten by those whom we have left for a while. Last night another brother who belongs to our regiment had a season of prayer with us, after reading the Word; and we three were just as happy as in a Big Meeting. Brother CORBETT shouted, and nobody was hurt by it. Glory to God!"

Further on he says: Give those dear little ones a kiss for me. God bless them! I wish to be remembered with the kindest Christian love," etc.

Sergeant CORBETT is well known in this city. He was a constant attendant of the Fulton Street Meeting, and greatly annoyed it by what was considered his fanaticism. He took part frequently, and in his prayers was in the habit of adding "er" to all his words, as O Lord-er, hear-er our prayerer." When any thing pleased him he would shout, "Amen," "Glory to God," in a sharp, shrill voice, to the great horror of the official who controls the meeting. All remonstrance was in vain, and he shouted to the very last.

He enlisted in the Twelfth Regiment, and made conscience his guide there. He was perpetually in hot water because he would follow the order of his conscience rather than the military order.

He prayed in the corner of his tent regularly night and morning, nor could the taunts or jeers of his associates turn him aside. He was often seen in the guard-house, with his knapsack full of bricks as a punishment, with his Testament in his hand, lifting up his voice against swearing, preaching temperance, and calling upon his wild companions to "seek the Lord."

One day, at a dress parade in Franklin Square, opposite our office, BUTTERFIELD cursed and damned the regiment for something he did not like. CORBETT stepped out of the ranks and reproved the Colonel for breaking God's law. He was, of course, put under arrest. He made up his mind that the time for which he enlisted expired at twelve o'clock at night on a certain day. He gave notice that he should go home when his time was out. He was put on picket duty, and as the hour of midnight was sounded he laid his gun down on the line and marched off. He was tried by a court-martial and sentenced to be shot. The order was not executed, but he was drummed out of the regiment.

Corbett was in serious trouble, for shooting Booth. For quite awhile, he became a suspect himself, although he was later cleared.

Credits:

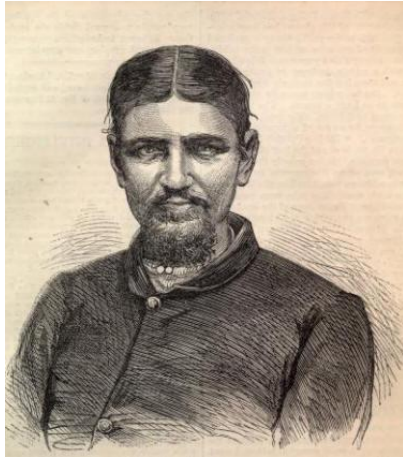
Photo of Corbett, by Matthew Brady, published in the May 13, 1865 issue of Harper's Weekly. Quoted passages also from that issue. Online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Boston-Corbett-Shooter-of-John-Wilkes-Booth1>

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Boston Corbett - Shooter of John Wilkes Booth

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