

TRUE
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JOHN WILKES BOOTH AND GARRETT'S FARM
COL. J. E. RAYMOND

After assassinating President Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater in Washington, D. C. on the night of April 14th, 1865, John Wilkes Booth fled on horseback across the Annapostia River bridge at the Navy Yard into lower Maryland. Shortly after crossing the bridge he met up with David Herold, a youth who was a member of the conspiracy band and whose principal service was to act as a guide through southern Maryland. Together the two eluded capture by traveling off the main routes and hiding out in fields until, on the night of April 22, they crossed the Potomac River by rowboat. They landed in Gambo Creek near the present Naval Proving Ground at Dahlgren. After several rebuffs by those whom Booth thought would be sympathizers the pair eventually reached Port Conway on the Rappahannock River on the morning of April 24th. The hand-poled ferry was on the opposite bank and while waiting for the ferry three confederate troopers rode up. They were Ruggles, Bainbridge and Jett, recently paroled after the surrender and now returning to their homes. While Booth rested on the bank of the river David Herold approached the three soldiers and told that his companion had killed Lincoln, and that they wanted to escape the country. Although Booth scolded Herold for his having told their identity, the three soldiers nevertheless agreed to assist them. One yelled across the river to the Negro ferryman, who was idly fishing, to bring the barge over, and the party crossed to Port Royal. There Booth, who was lamed from his leap to the stage after shooting

Lincoln, was mounted on one of the three horses and the party was led by Bainbridge to the home of Randolph Peyton in Port Royal. (This house is still standing and well preserved). There Miss Peyton agreed to take care of the fugitives but upon second thought realized the impropriety of receiving strange men into the home while the men-folk of the house were still away at war. So Bainbridge led the party further along the Port Royal-Bowling Green stage road until they reached the lane that led to the farmhouse of Richard H. Garrett, near Rollin's Fork about three miles from Port Royal. Booth was riding behind Capt. Jett, and Herold behind Lieut. Ruggles. It had been agreed in the meanwhile that booth would be introduced by the name "Boyd".

Herold was left at the gate to the farmhouse lane and the remainder of the party continued to the house. There Jett dismounted and introduced himself and the others, calling Booth his friend "John William Boyd", a confederate soldier who had been wounded in the battles around Richmond. He requested Mr. Garrett to care for Booth until Wednesday morning, the 26th, at which time he would call for him. Mr. Garrett agreed to receive and care for the so called wounded soldier.

On the following afternoon Jett and Bainbridge rode up to Garrett's. Herold dismounted from behind Jett and walked toward the house, while the two soldiers rode off. Booth met Herold midway between the gate and the house. After a conversation lasting about one-half hour he brought Herold to the house and

introduced him to the Garrett family as his brother.

Shortly afterwards Jett and Bainbridge galloped up saying that a Federal troopers were crossing over from Port Conway to Port Royal on the ferry. After giving this startling information the pair hastily rode off. The troopers they saw were in the detachment of twenty six soldiers under Lieut. Diehard and accompanied by two secret service operatives named Col. Conger and Lieut. Luther Baker who had been dispatched by Col. Lafayette Baker, the Chief of the Secret Service and cousin of Luther, to follow up the most recent clue on the flight of Booth.

This alarmed Booth and he and Herold fled to a thicket back of the barn where they remained until supper time. Meanwhile the Federal troops galloped past the lane leading to the Garrett house and continued on to Bowling Green, arriving there after dark. The detachment surrounded the hotel and began to search for Booth. Willie Jett was found asleep, and he was made to dress and accompany the party to the Garrett place where he said Booth was last seen. The weary troopers retraced their steps toward Port Royal, Willie Jett being technically "under arrest" at his own request, and serving as a reluctant guide.

Back at Garrett's farmhouse Booth and his "brother" were really worried over the presence of Federal pursuit forces in the area. After supper Booth requested the boys to drive them to Guinea Station where he hoped to catch a train to the south as he had heard there was a Maryland Artillery Battery (C.S.A.) at Louis

Courthouse that had not surrendered. He felt if he could reach them he would be temporarily safe. The Garrett boys, William and John (Jack), thought it was then too late to start the trip, but agreed to take them the next day. Booth then made a request that instead of sleeping in the house, as he had done the previous night, that he and his brother be permitted to sleep in the barn. The family began to wonder why Booth seemed so fearful of the Federal Troops now that the war was practically over, and soldiers were returning to their homes without fear of molestation. Booth explained that he had gotten in to a "brush with them" over on the Maryland side, and the detachment was probably looking for him.

Mr. Garrett agreed to let the pair spend the night in the tobacco barn. This was not being used for its original purpose but was actually a repository for valuable possession and heirlooms-looms of the families in Port Royal who feared gunboat or raiding damages by the Union Naval and Land Forces. These articles were hidden in Mr. garrett's tobacco barn and concealed by straw.

The Garrett boys were becoming increasingly suspicious of the "Boys" and feared that in their anxiety to get to Guinea Station they might steal the horses during the night. So they locked the barn door after Booth and Herold entered, and William and Jack slept in a nearby corncrib where they could keep an eye on the strange pair.

Shortly after midnight the Federal Cavalry Detachment surrounded the Garrett house. In response to Col. Conger's banging on the door, Mr Garrett appeared. A pistol was thrust at his head and it was demanded he produce Booth. The old man protested he did not know Booth and that there was no one but his family in the house. At this point, apparently out of no-where, the Garrett sons appeared, and seeing their father threatened and frightened they told the officers that the fugitives were not in the house but in the tobacco barn. The troopers were then stationed around the barn, and thirty feet from it, while a parley began between Booth and the Officers. The officers threatened to fire the barn unless Booth and his companion surrendered. It was at this point that the whimpering of Herold were heard. After all, he had not killed anyone, and he did not relish being burned alive. Booth rebuked him for his cowardice but stated to the unseen officers "There is a man in here who wants to surrender. He is innocent of any crime." Herold was directed to come forth with his hands extended. Jack Garrett had already unlocked the barn, and had previously been sent in by the officers, but made a haste retreat when Booth threatened to kill him for having disclosed the hiding place. As Herold came out of the barn he was immediately grabbed and became a prisoner who later was "hanged by the neck till dead" at the "Washington Arsenal on July 7, 1865 after the so-called Conspiracy Trial. As Herold was being grabbed into custody Col. Conger was setting fire to wisps of straw through the cracks of the tobacco barn. A pistol shot rang out in the flickering shadows.

Lieut. Baker flung open the barn door and dragged out the dying body of Booth who clutched a revolver in his hand.

Booth was dragged away from the burning barn and then to the porch of the Garrett House. This was about 2:00 A. M. on the morning of April 26th. A self-inflicted wound in the back of his neck, severing the spinal cord, was evident. The nearest doctor was Dr. Urquhart of Port Royal and he was sent for. However, there was nothing he could do for the dying man. Though the wound was fatal, Booth lingered on until shortly after 5:00 A.M. when he expired with his head resting on the lap of Miss Lucinda K. B. Holloway, the sister of Mrs. Garrett who was living at the farmhouse as a tutor for the Garrett children. (Her grave is in the Greenlawn Cemetery, Next to Camp A. P. Hill)

A religious fanatic named Thomas Corbett, who went by the self-given-name of Boston Corbett, was a member of the Federal Detachment. He claimed that providence had directed him to shoot the assassin of Lincoln. He was armed with a carbine while Booth had two Colt revolvers. None of the detachment saw Corbett shoot Booth. The autopsy proved Booth was killed by a pistol ball. All indications pointed to suicide by Booth rather than be captured alive. Boston Corbett, for reasons of governmental convenience, was made the hero of the day. He was later declared insane, but escaped from the State mental institution in Kansas where he had been committed and was never heard from again.

The Garrett house remained in use until the early 30s when it was finally abandoned. About 1937 the bricks in the chimneys at each end of the house were removed to meet the need for "old bricks" in modern home construction. Without these principal supports to the ridge pole the roof and flooring collapsed, carrying with them the side walls. The heap of rubble was soon overgrown by weeds and brush.

Meanwhile modern highway construction, boring straight ahead, cut out the rambling route between Port Royal and Bowling Green. Today highway US 301 passes beside the site of Garrett's farmhouse, where in yesteryear there was a long lane to the old stage-coach road between the two towns. A State Highway historical marker locates the site where Booth undoubtedly shot himself, although the sign reads "This is the Garrett place where John Wilkes Booth, assassin of Lincoln, was cornered by Union solders and killed, April 26, 1865." Nearby the authorities of Camp A. P. Hill cleared the old site, and put up signs indicating the location of the farmhouse and the tobacco barn.

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