GEORGE ALFRED TOWNSEND

AND

THE LINCOLN ASSASSINS

By

Derek Anthony Aldridge

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

School of Journalism

1978

ABSTRACT

GEORGE ALFRED TOWNSEND
AND
THE LINCOLN ASSASSINS

By

Derek Anthony Aldridge

No event shook the foundation of the nation during the Civil War more than the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. George Alfred Townsend, New York World reporter, was the only journalist to cover Lincoln's assassination, the death of John Wilkes Booth and the trial and execution of Booth's conspirators.

This thesis examines Townsend's daily reports to the World from shortly after the assassination through the execution of the conspirators. The thesis serves as a good example of how a reporter can enhance his reputation through a single story or series of stories. As is shown, even before the Booth accounts, Townsend already had a highly professional reputation.

Chapter II examines Townsend's life and numerous achievements. Chapter III reveals Townsend's coverage of the assassination and the death of Booth. Chapter IV focuses on Townsend's reports on the trial of the conspirators and their execution.

To the constant prodding of my wife Denise,

and the inspirational gurgles of my daughter Carrie,

this thesis is thoughtfully dedicated.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the assistance given him by the staff of the Houston Post library, the inspiration of Edward and Dr. Dona Rae Reeves and the forever, loving support of his parents, J. D. and Clephane Aldridge. And George Alfred Townsend would remain a relatively unknown journalist were it not for the enthusiastic support of Dr. Maurice R. Cullen, Jr., whose careful editing hand guided the project until the final product. To all of the above the author is tremendously indebted.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

April 1865 was perhaps the most pivotal month of the entire Civil War because it transported a war-weary American populace into peacetime. The war was over; the North cautiously but jubilantly celebrated its victory; the South retreated to lick its wounds and reminisce over the victories it claimed.

But the American people had no sooner settled back into a lulling routine when news of a staggering nature swept the land: President Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated. This was the first political assassination in the United States.

A brief period of good feeling following the conclusion of the war ended with this one act of violence. The North was sorrowful; the South, struggling in a postwar limbo, rose quickly to deny any participation. A shattered North found it easy to point an accusing finger at the South.

Angry and eager for revenge, the North began to regain the emotions that had recently run so strong during the war.

A journalist who was especially adept at capturing on paper these feelings and desires of the American people during the war was George Alfred Townsend, war correspondent for the New York World. Youngest reporter of both Union and Confederate press,

Townsend was especially adept at writing the humanistic or human interest story, yet he was an ardent fact seeker and accurate reporter of the hard news story. With this and an uncanny ability to gather information with lightning speed, Townsend was able to sharpen his professional stature early in the war.

Because of his speed and news gathering talent, Townsend was assigned to report on the Lincoln assassination almost immediately after it happened. Following Lincoln's death, rumors as well as facts merged to form a cloudy picture of the identity and whereabouts of the assassin. An able reporter was needed to sift through the rumor--to the fact. Perhaps that is why Townsend was the only news reporter with the battery of Union officers that subsequently found and killed John Wilkes Booth.

Yet, the unfinished story of the Lincoln assassination followed Townsend even after the death of Booth. Alleged accomplices had been arrested and were awaiting trial. It was only fitting that Townsend would report on the trial. However sensational it became, the trial had lulls during the proceedings and during these moments Townsend took other assignments. But these were infrequent and the cumbersome task of covering the conspirators' trial rested on his shoulders.

With a trial of such historical significance, it is no wonder such a gifted reporter as Townsend, a reporter who had already earned enormous praise for his belated coverage of the Battle of Five Forks, the final days of Richmond and the death of Booth, was assigned to examine the testimony of each participant.

It is the aim of this paper to present the events shortly after the assassination to the execution of the conspirators through the eyes of one of the exceptional reporters of the times--George Alfred Townsend. There have been studies on the operation of the press during this three-month period but none focused on the work of a single reporter, perhaps because no other reporter was involved in the assassination story from just after it occurred through the death of Booth and the execution of the conspirators.

Townsend's reporting will only serve to present an accurate presentation of the daily events that transpired during that difficult period in 1865. However, there is a dual purpose here. While Townsend's daily dispatches were highly informative for World readers, they also increased the reporter's experience and reputation, upon which Townsend was to rely in later life.

It would be unfair to compare Townsend's reporting to that of another journalist, since Townsend was the only member of the press to see Booth die. Townsend's stories on the actor's death have been called by Louis Snyder and Richard Morris in their book, A Treasury of Great Reporting, the World reporter's greatest contribution to the history of journalism. Besides, other reporters used Townsend's stories about Booth's death to provide their readers with the news of the actor's death.

A brief biography provides further insight into Townsend's training, motivation and dedication to his profession, his early years, and work in newspapers, his coverage of the Civil War

and the later years when he built an elaborate mansion and war correspondent's memorial in Maryland.

Townsend's stories as they appeared in the New York World from April to July 1865 were examined. The reporter also wrote several magazine articles, and a number of his newspaper stories about his participation in the capture and death of John Wilkes Booth were collected and published.

Only through close examination of Townsend's work during this three-month period can one understand and appreciate the role he played in reporting the Lincoln assassins.

CHAPTER II

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CIVIL WAR CORRESPONDENT GEORGE ALFRED TOWNSEND

All news reporters long for a big story--one which will increase their stature, if not among readers, certainly among colleagues. Most reporters never have their moment of glory. Some, either by luck or resourcefulness, manage to be at the right place at the right time and are blessed with the reporter's dream--an exciting, historically unforgettable story.

Most recently, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward's Watergate reporting for the Washington Post comes under this trite heading of "the big story."

In 1865, George Alfred Townsend witnessed the death of John Wilkes Booth. While this may have been Townsend's most unforgettable story, he had other events in his life that made a general overview of his accomplishments of principal interest with respect to his entire career. It would be unfair to concentrate on one single event, as there were numerous that contributed to Townsend's later success. Nevertheless, singular events can propel a man's career and increase his reputation. Thus was the case with Townsend's stories on Booth. However famous the writer became during his career, he was just another Delaware baby in 1841.

Chilling Atlantic gales numbed the bones of the hardiest of humans during bitterly cold winter nights in Delaware. On such a winter night, January 20, 1841, George Alfred Townsend was born on Market Street, between Front and the Courthouse Square in Georgetown, Delaware.[1] Between that day and 73 years later when he died in New York City, he gained wide recognition as a poet, author, architect and philanthropist. His initial acclaim came at 20 when he was the youngest Civil War correspondent among both Union and Confederate press.

His reputation grew as his daily dispatches dealing with Abraham Lincoln's assassination, death of John Wilkes Booth and the conspirators' trial appeared on the front pages of the New York World from April to July 1865.

Before that, his assignments carried him to the battlefields of Cedar Mountain, Five Forks and the final days at Richmond.[2]

His career reached a climax on October 16, 1896, when a huge, Moorish arch monument to the memory of his fellow Civil War correspondents which he had helped finance was dedicated at his Askelon retreat in South Mountain, Maryland.[3]

Townsend's father was as remarkable as his son. The elder Townsend worked as a carpenter and later became a Methodist

---

[1]J. T. Scharf, The History of Delaware 1609-1888 (Philadelphia: Publisher Unknown, 1888), p. 467.

[2]Lida Mayo, ed., Rustics in Rebellion (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. vi.

[3]Ibid., p. xix.

minister, serving the theological needs of Delaware Peninsula residents. He also earned a degree in medicine at age 43 and the doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Pennsylvania at age 70. He died in Philadelphia in August 1881.[4]

Three months after George Alfred Townsend was born, the family moved to Salisbury, Maryland, one hundred miles from Philadelphia; and by the time Townsend was 16, the family had moved eleven times.[5] Young Townsend studied at Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland, and Delaware College in Newark, Delaware. In 1885, the family settled in Philadelphia where Townsend attended Philadelphia High School from which he was graduated in February 1860.[6]

At the school he published and wrote for school newspapers and he composed in prose and verse beginning at age 14. The Townsend Papers indicate that he first became interested in writing for an audience at an earlier age: "I commenced at eleven years of age, unconsciously to be a seer and writer for the public."[7]

Outstanding papers and journals served as additional lures for the budding writer. Approximately seven years before the Civil War a multitude of weekly papers was being published throughout the country. These periodicals influenced young men in a way that

---

[4]Scharf, p. 467.

[5]Mayo, p. xiii.

[6]Scharf, p. 467.

[7]"An Interviewer Interviewed--A Talk with Gath," Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, November 1891, p. 631.

aroused their desire for travel and adventure.[8] Townsend reflected on how the papers influenced him:

> It was from some of these papers that I derived a disposition to see something of mankind, especially in conflict, in Congress, and in pageants and movements. I began to write a tale at the age of thirteen, and from that time onward never for a whole day have been out of sight of the writing purpose and occupation.[9]

This new-found interest in writing for the public caused Townsend to spend holidays visiting historical places. Traveling, even as a high school student, gave Townsend an even more intense desire to continue his writing. Seeing new things inspired the young writer to capture his feelings and sights on paper.

At 15, he could write compelling and articulate verses at will whenever a subject was given the class by the teacher. He soon learned the rewards that writing could bring:

> While at the High School, at the age of sixteen, I published a little magazine for an advertising personage; and a brother of Stephen Foster, the song writer, who was a vice-president of a railroad, gave me on that behalf tickets to Pittsburgh and return--a longer journey that I had made in all my preceding days.[10]

But with his natural flair for writing, Townsend felt ill-at-ease about working in a newspaper office. "I made appearances in inferior literary journals or sometimes a miscellaneous Sunday paper; but a want of confidence to press in among crowds and through

---

[8]George Alfred Townsend, "Recollections and Reflections," Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, November 1886, p. 516.

[9]Ibid., p. 517.

[10]Ibid.

policemen and worldly folks made me feel indescribably fresh and bashful in a newspaper office."[11]

At this point, Townsend was still very immature and this immaturity sometimes lead to frustration. "I saw no way at last of getting into the newspapers at all and about the time I graduated I had not the least idea of what profession I should adopt or how I should get along in the world."[12]

As luck, or skill, would have it, Townsend would not be frustrated for long. The day he was graduated, he read one of his poems to the senior class at commencement. After the exercises, a man approached him and asked if he had a job now that he had been graduated. The man had read Townsend's college material in the school papers and offered him a position on a newspaper--the Philadelphia Inquirer.[13]

With a salary of six dollars a week, Townsend began work on the Inquirer as a news editor, writing editorials. While in this position, Townsend set out to upgrade the local reporting and editing in the Quaker City:[14]

> I had a dread of the daily papers, for the men about them seemed to be off-hand, practical and I have never in my life been a worldly person. As soon as I got there, the other

---

[11]Townsend, "Recollections," p. 517.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Scharf, p. 467.

[14]Ibid.

> reporters thought I must be plagiarizing; and I heard the editorial factotum cry out one night, 'Who is this boy who is publishing editorials in the reporters' column?'[15]

Because of Townsend's youth, he became a target for the older editorial writers. Perhaps that is why he was accused of plagiarism. Nevertheless, he was not one to sit by and be criticized. He often denigrated his fellow editorial writers because they thought more of building up their own stature. Townsend was also critical of the type of writing that today is commonly associated with an editorial. He assailed it often, saying the writing was not a very good way to keep a journalist's reporting fresh: "The reason is, I think, that the editorial room gives the mind more dogmatism than air, more confidence that experience; and without perpetually freshening up the nature, all writing sinks to be perfunctory, and the oxygen's out of it."[16]

After working on editorials for the Inquirer in 1860, Townsend was promoted to reporter and later city editor. As a reporter, Townsend hoped that one day he could elevate himself to the position of "special correspondent." This post would resemble a newspaper columnist today. The special correspondent had the freedom to wander about the city or countryside reporting on items of interest to the paper's readers. In addition, whenever there was a story of major interest, he was usually the one assigned to cover it. At the time, however, there were very few of these

---

[15]Townsend, "Interviewer Interviewed," p. 631.

[16]Townsend, "Recollections," p. 518.

correspondents because only the larger papers could afford to have one reporter whose duties were so broadly defined.

Nevertheless, just below the special correspondent on the journalistic ladder stood the reporter. Within the city, he was considered a dignitary.

After serving as a reporter, Townsend still maintained a desire for the special correspondent position and became closer by taking the city editor position at the Inquirer.

For Townsend, this position combined his talents of reporting and editing. He was responsible for editing both the stories he wrote as well as those of other reporters. He also assigned himself stories to cover and was frequently out of the newsroom. As he said, "So, I became a reporter about the city, never having the chance to get far beyond its environs; but in this small occupation I had enterprise according to my opportunity and in a little while I was what is now called the city editor."[17]

But even the city editor position did not fulfill Townsend's ambitions to become a special correspondent. As he said of it, "It became apparent to me that I must find in some other city a career which, after two years of experiment in Philadelphia, had come far short of my expectations."[18]

While Townsend worked as the city editor for the Inquirer he lived at home, and on the side, picked up additional money by

---

[17]Townsend, "Recollections," p. 518.

[18]Ibid.

sending stories, generally news and features about Philadelphia, to several New York City periodicals. Chief among the periodicals which published Townsend's writing was the New York Herald. Nevertheless, by working for the Inquirer full-time and doing the feature work for the New York periodicals, Townsend remained tied to Philadelphia and missed the first year of the Civil War.

He soon shifted away from the city editor's post because it increasingly kept him in the office and away from his prime interest of reporting. He suddenly found himself becoming more of an editor than a writer. Out of his editing dissatisfaction, he became the drama critic and traveling correspondent.

Reflecting on his two years on the Inquirer, Townsend said:

> I never gave any time to getting the intimate confidence of any of my employers beyond doing my work in my own way, and thus, individuals watchful of the small proprieties of life seemed to be passing ahead of me; though I found, in the long run, that leaning upon personal friendship in any career is a staff of straw. It took me a good many years in the press to earn the privilege of saying what I thought and believed.[19]

With this discouraging outlook, it is little wonder Townsend felt the influence of newspapers was retarded by the jealousy and smallness in the conduct of the columns of the journal. Once again, Townsend lashed out at the people who worked on the editorial staffs of the papers. "A man who is on the outside looking at things should have a clearer idea of what is taking place than he who is cooped up

---

[19]Townsend, "Recollections," p. 519.

in such editorial rooms as we formerly had, which were hardly fit for a dog to occupy."[20]

Out of his growing dislike for the Inquirer, Townsend began to look elsewhere for work. Apparently he did not have to look far. The New York Herald had been impressed with the features he had been sending them from Philadelphia and in March 1862, Townsend realized his dream when he signed with the Herald as a special correspondent.[21] He was immediately sent to the combat areas for a first-hand look at the Civil War.

Townsend loved the life of the correspondent, "this roving commission, these vagabond habits, this life in the open air among the armies, the white tents, the cannon and the drums."[22]

He first faced conflict when he followed General John Pope into the Piedmont region of Virginia.[23] Townsend, although unfamiliar with the fast-paced style of Civil War reporting, was not afraid to speak harshly of the Union officers and soldiers he was to cover for the Herald.

> Vain, imprudent, and not proverbially truthful; but shrewd, active, and skilled in the rules of warfare. Pope could be great and little too. He spoke much and rapidly, chiefly of himself; swore soundly at intervals, was petulent at trifles, and sanguine of impending success.[24]

---

[20]Townsend, "Recollections," p. 519.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Mayo, p. xiii.

[23]George Alfred Townsend, "Campaigning with General Pope," Cornhill Magazine, December 1862, p. 758.

[24]Ibid.

After riding a troop train one long day in an effort to reach Pope's camp, Townsend stopped at Warren, Virginia. The inhabitants of the town appeared to be leading peaceful, serene lives even with the front lines of the war just a few miles away. Although the Warren people seemed to be complacent with the surrounding conflict, Townsend noted some different emotions:

> There was something mournfully embarrassed in the faces of the residents. Their sons were in the Southern army, their daughters at home, and they, a few old men, among thousands of armed and hostile strangers.[25]

Townsend's eyes must have been filled with bewilderment when he finally got caught up in the fierce, intense action of the war. Still immature and unaccustomed to writing the tragic scenes that were unfolding before him, Townsend nevertheless improved as the action and fighting became more concentrated. Later, writing of the battle of Cedar Mountain, Townsend said:

> When about five miles out of Culpepper, we came to the base of Cedar, or Slaughter's Mountain. Ambulances were here wheeled into a field, batteries unlimbered and advanced, and infantry formed in double lines across the country, and skirmishers thrown out in front. Disorder ceased; discipline prevailed. The sun set upon four thousand men, lying vigilantly upon their arms, and all looking through the twilight at a point on the mountain, where, from the roof of a white house, floated a speak of canvas--the Southern flag.[26]

Late in the afternoon, the first guns started exchanging fire. The time had come and Townsend was intent on being right there on the battle line.

---

[25]Townsend, "Campaigning with Pope," p. 758.

[26]Ibid., p. 766.

Many times he would incorporate his knowledge of classical literature into his reporting. The battle of Cedar Mountain was no exception. His mind must have conjured up mental images of past great battles as the Herald reporter quickly moved increasingly closer to the scene of action on Cedar Mountain:

> At three o'clock, we heard the first gun. Every head leaped up. I realized at that time the wonderful fidelity of Byron's battle picture, at Waterloo, in my own impressions, as well as in the scenes enacted before me.[27]

At one time of the battle, Townsend got so close to the action, he was seemingly the only man surrounded by a battery of artillery fire:

> My horse, trembling and terrified, leaped and struggled at the scream of every missile. I tried to untie his halter, but he threatened to trample me. I resolved to cut it, but my knife was missing. I soothed and stroked him in vain. Before, behind, above, the iron shrieked and howled. A deathly fear came over me. My heart seemed to have leaped to my throat and stuck there, choking me. A shell at that instant passing so close that I could have touched it, struck the ground just ahead and exploded, fire, iron and earth. I seized my bed, took to my heels, and left steed and saddle to their fate.[28]

After the battle ended, Townsend walked about the field trying to identify soldiers who had fallen. As the troops were burying bodies, Townsend reflected on one of the uglier aspects of war:

> The dead became more numerous as I approached Cedar Creek, and in one place, where two fences met at an oblique angle, I counted eighteen bodies in the space of ten yards square. Their blue uniforms had faded to a dusky purple; the gold ornaments of officers were tarnished; the boots in almost every case removed from the feet. Behind a stone-heap I found one kneeling, his dull eyes fixed at the breech of

---

[27]Townsend, "Campaigning with Pope," p. 767.

[28]Ibid., p. 770.

> his musket: a ball through his forehead transfixed him in the deed. Another lay with a bayonet driven through the brow and eye. Those slain by shell or cannon ball were frightfully mangled; and some few that had died by bayonet thrusts preserved even in disfigurement the agony of the pain. Fatigue-parties were burying the bodies. Only a few favourite officers were allowed separate graves, the mass being thrown into trenches by dozens and scores, and covered by a single foot of clay.[29]

Terribly shaken by the battle at Cedar Mountain, Townsend withdrew to New York with information on the battle and the names of those killed in action. After a few days of recuperation, he was ordered to return to the front lines and cover the Second Battle of Bull Run near Manassas, Virginia. During this campaign, however, Townsend contracted typhoid fever. So ill he could not continue, he left the Second Battle of Bull Run while it was at its height. This disease, coupled with an intense desire to see Europe, sent Townsend to England for rest. He took sick leave from the Herald, but he was never to return to his particular New York newspaper.

The British were eager for first-hand information about the war and Townsend, while on the slow cruise to England, considered launching himself on a lecture circuit to help pay his expenses in the British Isles. "The possibility thrilled me, like a novel discovery, that the Old World might be willing to hear of the New as I could depict it, fresh from the theater of action."[30]

While aboard ship, Townsend met a man named Hipp who seemed to encourage in Townsend the desire to lecture in England. Townsend

---

[29]Townsend, "Campaigning with Pope," p. 770.

[30]George Alfred Townsend, "An American War Correspondent in England," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, January 1865, p. 229.

named Hipp as his agent and when the two landed in Liverpool on October 1, 1862, they made preparations for his first lecture in Lancashire.[31] However, Townsend appeared embarrassed at the zealous approach Hipp made to the townspeople of Lancashire.[32] As Townsend said:

> But when I saw that child of the Mayflower stolidly, shrewdly going about his business, working the wires like an old operator, making the largest amount of thunder from so small a cloud, I was rebuked of my faintheartedness. He gave the townspeople to understand that I was a prodigy of oratory, whose battle-sketches would harrow up their souls and thrill them like a martial summons.[33]

Townsend still had a rush of stage fright immediately before he appeared on stage:

> My throat was parched as fever, my hands were hot and tremulous; I felt my heart sag. Another burst of impatient expectation made me start. I opened the door, and stood before my destiny.[34]

Townsend had every reason to be fearful of his first night on the lecture tour, for the audience he addressed held strong Confederate sympathies. But Townsend clearly showed his Northern loyalties, castigating the Secessionists and calling for a quick victory by the Union armies.[35]

Soon thereafter, he gave up the lecture circuit and left for London where he felt sure he could get a job on one of the local

---

[31] Townsend, "War Correspondent," p. 230.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., p. 231.

newspapers. He was sadly mistaken. None of the dailies had openings on their editorial staffs and Townsend had only passing familiarity with London and English customs. After several attempts, he finally realized he was not experienced enough for the London metropolitan dailies.

An acquaintance suggested that Townsend approach London magazine publishers. Since coming to England, Townsend had been rebuffed in every attempt to share his Civil War exploits and he was also wary about approaching the publishers. The journals' editors, however, were eager to publish his stories. To be certain he would not offend any readers, Townsend informed magazine officials that he would not slant his writing to favor either Union or Confederate armies, but would concentrate on his battlefield experiences in America.[36]

Townsend wrote his first story for Cornhill Magazine about his travels with General Pope, for which he received 15 guineas.

> That was the end of my necessities; money came from home, from this and that serial; my published articles were favorably noticed, and opened the market to me. Whatever I penned found sale; and some correspondence that I had leisure to fulfill for America brought me steady receipts.[37]

Though Townsend was finding steady work in England he soon found he was surrounded by other informed Americans transplanted from the Civil War battlefields who were equally as eager to cash in on news from the war. "After a few months the passage of the war with which I was cognizant lost their interest by reason of later

---

[36]Townsend, "War Correspondent," p. 223.

[37]Ibid., p. 234.

occurrences and I found myself, so to speak, wedged out of the market by new literary importations."[38]

Because magazines were being inundated with articles from the influx of Americans, Townsend found time to write his first book, Campaigns of a Non-Combatant and His Romaunt Abroad During the War, which he failed to get published while in London. His arbor undampened, he began to string together particular segments from the book and publish them in serial form. Townsend eventually became tired of the London scene and moved on:

> After nine months of experiment I bade the insular metropolis adieu, and returned no more. The Continent was close and beckoning; I heard the confusion of their tongues, and saw the shafts of her Gothic Babels probing the clouds, and for another year, I roamed among her cities, as ardent and errant as when I went afield on my pony to win the spurs of a War Correspondent.[39]

Townsend sailed to France after having made enough money in English journals to finance his forthcoming stay on the Continent. There he lived what he considered a Bohemian life with other writers and artists.[40] On April 7, 1864, he and some fellow American colonists set out from Paris to find some rest and relaxation.[41] "It was our wish to push our enterprise into all the neighboring villages, that we might know how far the truckmen, the grape-growers, and the

---

[38]Townsend, "War Correspondent," p. 234.

[39]Ibid., p. 235.

[40]Mayo, p. xiii.

[41]George Alfred Townsend, "An American Colony in France," Galaxy Magazine, July 1866, p. 387.

rustics of the great metropolis differed from those who dwelt in the environs of New York, or carried butter to Boston market."[42]

Townsend and his friends found their retreats to be a peaceful respite from the hustle and bustle of Paris. It was their intention to see the countryside and explore some of the lesser known landmarks usually overlooked by most visitors to Paris, who judged the Arc de Triomphe and Notre Dame as representative of French history and culture.

After two years he tired of Europe and returned to the United States in late 1864, when he joined the staff of the New York World. One of Townsend's first duties for the World was to write an account of an execution of a New York criminal. Using his flair for descriptive prose, the reporter painted a grim picture of the dying convict. His story was so detailed that it was discussed in the newspaper office for weeks.

It is no wonder then that World editor Manton Marble wanted the man who wrote the execution piece "to go to the seat of war."[43] Perhaps Townsend's most vivid reportorial work was done while he worked for the World.

Townsend didn't really think he would be able to go to the scenes because he didn't have a pass to go with the army, and

---

[42]Townsend, "American Colony," p. 387.

[43]J. Cutler Andrews, The North Reports the Civil War (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955), p. 629.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, whose office issued the passes, had a deep-seated hatred of the World.[44]

One day in early 1865, Townsend received the pass and headed for Five Forks, near Richmond, Virginia. Once at the site, his post on the left of the Union infantry's position did not afford him a very good view of the battle. He left and proceeded toward the front lines. He became lost and missed the Battle of Five Forks. What Townsend missed turned out to be a decisive Union victory; troops captured a division of Confederate soldiers and a strategic position. General Phillip Sheridan, commanding officer at Five Forks, possessed a legendary hatred for newspapermen yet Townsend succeeded in getting valuable information from him.[45] He asked Sheridan, "General, you have done a great day's work here, and if you would help me for a minute or two to form some idea of what it is, I would start tonight from this field and go to New York with it to put it in the papers."[46]

Townsend was fortunate indeed for Sheridan then produced a map and for the next twenty minutes explained to the reporter the significance of the troop movement and the reasons for the success at Five Forks. Shortly after midnight, Townsend arrived at the World offices in New York and when the battle account finally appeared in the next edition of the World, Sheridan's stature was greatly increased. In addition, Townsend's story of Five Forks was widely

---

[44]Andrews, p. 630.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

read and in his own opinion was instrumental in establishing his reputation as a first class reporter.[47]

Soon after the Battle of Five Forks, Richmond stood under siege and not long after Townsend reached New York with his story of Sheridan's success at Five Forks, Petersburg and Richmond fell. The reporter was immediately dispatched to the Confederate capital to write about the closing scenes of the Civil War.

For two weeks, Townsend was in Richmond with General Edward Ord sending New York daily dispatches of the destruction of the city. On April 14, 1865, he was still in Richmond continuing his assignments for the World.

He was awakened in the night to the news that President Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated at Ford's Theater earlier that evening.[48] Townsend felt he was needed in Washington but before he could leave Richmond he had to clear up some stories about the Confederate capital. Thus, Townsend did not reach Washington until April 19.[49] After having rushed to Washington, Townsend dispatched as much information on the assassination as he could gather. In the days that followed, Townsend continued to sift through the available information made public by Stanton to find clues to the identity of the person, or persons, who had killed the President.

---

[47]Andrews, p. 631.

[48]Otto Eisenschiml, Why Was Lincoln Murdered? (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), p. 5.

[49]New York World, 15 April 1865.

Townsend continued to provide information of President Lincoln's assassination to New York readers, and when United States Secret Service Chief La Fayette C. Baker assigned a platoon of troops to search for two of the known suspects, John Wilkes Booth and David Herold, Townsend rode with the soldiers. He followed the troops throughout the search until Wednesday, April 26, when one of the soldiers shot and killed Booth in a barn near Port Royal, Virginia.[50]

The World carried two full pages of Townsend's dispatches, which detailed the surrounding of the barn and the shooting. Sgt. Boston Corbett, a religious fanatic, reportedly shot the actor.[51]

Townsend's account of the dogged pursuit of Booth and Herold by Baker's troops gained nationwide recognition. His established reputation was greatly nourished by his scoop and he accumulated additional fame by reporting the trial of the remaining alleged conspirators from May to June 1865.

His trial reporting dealt not only with the daily transcripts of court proceedings but included his own interpretations of testimony and behavior of the defendants.

Following the execution of the conspirators, Townsend became a World city reporter.

On December 21, 1865, Townsend married a Philadelphia girl, Bessie Evans Rhodes, and took her abroad for a year.[52]

---

[50]Philip Van Doren Stern, The Man Who Killed Lincoln (New York: Literary Guild of America, Inc., 1939), pp. 362-363.

[51]New York World, 27 April 1865.

[52]Mayo, p. xiii.

While on this second trip to Europe, he made a study of the European governments. Townsend also covered the Austria-Prussian conflict for the World. The Townsends returned with their baby girl, Genevieve Madeleine, born in Paris.[53] No longer with the World, Townsend settled in Washington, D.C. to study and observe politics and government in America.

He published results of his research on Washington in a book titled, The New World Compared with the Old.[54] The book sold well and it helped citizens acquire a growing interest in their government and spurred a surge in readership of the events surrounding official Washington. All these developments proved fortunate for Townsend, a man who took advantage of favorable situations, since he used his talent and availability to sources of government functions to supply outlying readers with information from Washington.

In 1868, primarily because of the popularity of his book, Townsend syndicated his reports from Washington. Interest in his stories from the nation's capital had swelled to such an extent that newspapers across the nation sought him out as their Washington correspondent. Rather than write for a single publication, Townsend used his enterprise to write daily columns for many papers. The Cleveland Leader was the first paper to receive Townsend's stories, followed by the Chicago Tribune, the Cincinnati Commercial, and the

---

[53]Mayo, p. xiv.

[54]Ibid.

Missouri Democrat. Before long, he was appearing in almost every newspaper of importance in the country.[55]

Townsend introduced his famous pseudonym, "Gath," in his first letter to the Chicago Tribune. He had said that he was tired of signing his columns with G. A. T. and added the only reasonably sounding letter, "h," which became "Gath," a term selected from the Bible: "Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon."[56]

Townsend's articles were informative, independent, personal and often witty. In 1873, he published his account of political and social life in Washington, Washington Outside and Inside.[57]

Two years later, after having basked in the success of this book, Townsend decided to study the financial structure of America and moved his family to New York, though still maintaining ties with Washington. At this point, he was financially independent--wealthy enough to provide a comfortable living for his family.

New York was not only the financial capital, it was the literary capital of the nation as well. It is probable that the

---

[55]Mayo, p. xiv.

[56]Ibid. Original quote can be seen in Bible verse II Samuel 1:20. At this point David is grieving the deaths of King Saul and Jonathan during a battle with the Philistines. The Philistines did not know that Israel's king had perished in battle. Fearful that the Philistines might attack anew if they knew that Saul was dead, David tried to keep news of Saul's death secret, especially in the Philistine cities by saying, "Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon." Gath and Askelon were two of the Philistine cities.

[57]Ibid.

friends Gath made during this period encouraged in him a concealed ambition to write fiction. He had not heretofore been able to write the historical novel he had always wanted to write and now was approaching 40.

On an impulse one day, he took a steamboat trip down the Chesapeake Bay to Pocomoke, the region where his mother and father had been born. The result of this pilgrimage to the peninsula was a small volume called Tales of the Chesapeake, published in 1880.[58] Its reception was enthusiastic. Leading literary men of the day, Mark Twain, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes, were generous in their praise.[59]

During one of his peninsula visits, Townsend acquired some background knowledge of his ancestors. This became the background for Townsend's most famous fictional work. The Entailed Hat.[60] The novel added enormously to Gath's reputation as a literary artist and before it went into print, he began another book on the John Wilkes Booth conspiracy. The book, Katy of Catoctin or the Chain Breakers, was published by Appleton in 1886.[61]

In researching Katy of Catoctin, Townsend found a 100-acre wooded tract of land that commanded a view of Middleton, Maryland, not far from Harper's Ferry and the Antietam battlefield.

---

[58]Mayo, p. xiv.

[59]Ibid., p. xvi.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid., p. xvii.

With characteristic impulsiveness, he bought the land at once and began to build a country house that he designed himself and called Askelon, a name coupled with Gath in the Bible.[62]

Townsend, now in his late 40s, was beginning to find that the material he was submitting to magazines was not being as well-received as his earlier writing had been. Townsend blamed his slowly ebbing readership on the fact that he had estranged himself from the fast-paced, action-filled life of a journalist for the more scholarly life of an author. Ever since Townsend turned his pen toward novels, the nonfiction world of newspaper reporting no longer intrigued him.

Realizing that he was losing his readers, he began to spend more time building additions to his mansion, Askelon. In 1890, he built the "Hall," which had 11 rooms; five years later there was the den and library, which made 15 rooms. Three guest rooms were soon added. Later Mount Gath, which had five rooms, and the lodge, which had four rooms, were constructed. With stables and barns and summer houses, there were nine buildings in all.[63] Townsend had built a tomb for his family on the land but it was never used. The death of his wife in 1903 shattered Townsend.[64] He seemed to age rapidly and spent most of his time at his house in Washington, withdrawing from public life and absorbing himself in his grief. He soon became an invalid. On a visit to his daughter in New York in the spring of 1914, he

---

[62]Mayo, p. xviii.

[63]Ibid., p. xix.

[64]Ibid.

became ill and died there on April 15, at age 73--49 years to the day after President Lincoln had died.

But there is a memorial at Gapland--not to Gath, but to the George Alfred Townsend who reported the Civil War. On the summit of the mountain there rises 50 feet in the air a stone monument commemorating all the Union correspondents of the war.[65]

In shape, it is like the gateway to a castle: On a Moorish arch are superimposed three Roman arches and a turret. Flanking the main arch are marble tablets containing the names of 157 Civil War correspondents and artists; around the smaller arches are terra cotta horses' heads, niches containing statues representing Mercury, Electricity and Poetry, and tablets inscribed with the words "Speed" and "Heed" and with quotations on war reporting taken from many sources, including the New Testament.[66] Names inscribed on the monument are Whitlaw Reid, George W. Smalley and Matthew Brady.

There is not much doubt that Townsend, architect of Askelon, had a hand in the design. He had conceived the idea of a memorial and raised the money, $5,000, from such men as J. Pierpoint Morgan, Levi P. Morton, George M. Pullman, Joseph Pulitzer, Chauncey M. Depew, John Wanamaker and Thomas A. Edison.[67] The memorial was dedicated on October 16, 1896.

Today, Gathland, the land on which Townsend's Askelon was built, is the property of the Maryland Parks and Wildlife Department.

---

[65]Mayo, p. xix.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

The War Correspondents Monument has been declared a National Historical Monument, the structure and the surrounding park area maintained by the federal government.

In 1962, a movement was made to transfer Townsend's body from Washington back to Askelon to be interred in a special mausoleum that would be provided with the building of the National Journalism Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame was proposed in 1962, to be built approximately ten yards from the War Correspondents Monument and only a few extra yards from the site of Askelon. The hall is scheduled to be built by the state of Maryland but has yet to be completed.[68]

From just the few instances presented here, it has been shown that Townsend was a highly ambitious reporter who started in journalism while still a student in Philadelphia. The reporter excelled in his first newspaper job for the Philadelphia Inquirer, so much so that he rose to several key positions during his tenure there. Later, dissatisfaction with the paper, and an ambition to rise to the lofty position of special correspondent led Townsend to the New York Herald.

After becoming a special correspondent for the paper, he was assigned to the front lines of the Civil War--the youngest war correspondent to serve in the field. Unfortunately, his reporting was cut short by typhoid fever. He soon left for England to recuperate for two years. After tiring of Europe, he returned to the United States to work for the New York World.

---

[68]"Delaware Civil War Writer May Lie in News Fame Hall," Newspaper unknown, 14 September 1962, section and page number unknown. This article was sent, minus the author's name, the newspaper that carried it, from the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, Dover, Delaware.

During his years on the World, Townsend did some of his best writing. Once again, he found himself assigned to the front lines and soon after Lincoln's assassination, followed the trail of Booth and witnessed his death. This was Townsend's most monumental contribution to the history of journalism.

Many of the events filling his later life were close to rivaling his reporting during the period following Lincoln's death. To show firsthand Townsend's reporting during this tumultous 3½-month period, the next chapter focuses on Townsend and his role in the search for Booth.

CHAPTER III

TOWNSEND AND BOOTH

As has been stated, April 1865 was the most pivotal month of the Civil War. George Alfred Townsend began the month covering Union troop movements and ended it reporting on the death of Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth--thirty days of tumultous reporting.

As early as April 3, Townsend's reports from the Grand Campaign appeared in the New York World. His reflective reports on the day's events revealed his weariness with the war. On one such troop movement, Townsend said:

> They (soldiers) all crossed Hatcher's run, the enemy falling back and skirmishing dispiritedly, and so passed on to the right of the battlefield, relics of which, in the shapes of castaway blankets and boots, dead horses, and scattered graves, yet sprinkle the waste of shrub and stump. . . . War here, as everywhere, has left its blighting testimonies, there are neither fences nor fields, nor household goods, nor anything which makes a land worth living for.[69]

One day after writing about the above troop movements, he was assigned to cover the Battle of Five Forks, His prolific report filled the entire front page of the World on Tuesday, April 4.[70]

His speed at reporting was later noted by World compositor George Bartholomew:

---

[69] New York World, 3 April 1865.

[70] New York World, 4 April 1865.

> Townsend in those days was the most rapid writer I ever knew, and I doubt very much if the record he made on one occasion has ever been broken. He came into the office one afternoon with a most sensational piece of news, the story of the Newell forgery. . . .
> . . . He sat down at the desk and wrote an entire page of leaded nonpareil, less the space occupied by a reproduction of one of the forged checks, in three hours.[71]

Townsend claimed that his reporting of the Battle of Five Forks was the most thrilling experience of his life.

During the final stage of the war Townsend was joined by fellow World correspondent Jerome B. Stillson. It was under their dual bylines that World readers first learned of the end of the Civil War, the surrender of Robert E. Lee to Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomatox Courthouse. After all the final ceremonies were over, Townsend wrote of a Richmond in ruin:

> This town is the rebellion, it is all that we have directly striven for; quitting it, the Confederate leaders have quit their shut-anchor, their roof-tree, their abiding hope. Its history is the epitome of the whole conquest, and to us, shivering our thunderbolts against it for more than four years, Richmond is still a mystery more the less dimmer because army reporters here superficially limned it in this hour of victory.[72]

On Friday, April 14, 1865, while Townsend was still in Richmond, President Abraham Lincoln, while attending a play, "Our American Cousin," at Ford's Theater in Washington, was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. Simultaneously, fellow conspirator Lewis Payne was attempting to kill Secretary of State William Seward as the latter

---

[71] New York World, 6 November 1899.

[72] New York World, 10 April 1865.

lay in his bed at home.[73] Payne inflicted severe wounds but was unsuccessful. First news of the assassination appeared in the early Saturday editions. Only a single reporter, Lawrence Gobright of the Associated Press, saw Lincoln's assassination but news spread fast and did not elude Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Stanton took all information of the killing, relaying to the newspapers only details he felt not in conflict with national security. Hence, Stanton became the source of information during the first few hours of the assassination, relaying news reports via special dispatches.

Under the title "Latest Dispatch," Stanton supplied the most current details of Lincoln's condition:

> The President is still alive, but is sinking rapidly. Medical investigation shows that the wound is in the head. The ball entered the back of the neck and 'is still in the head.' No arrests have been made except of witnesses. Miss Laura Keene, who was coming on the stage at the time of the shooting, testifies that Wilkes Booth is the assassin.[74]

Confusion surrounded the city as military patrols immediately began searching for Booth and Payne. Panic spread among the citizenry. Men sobbed uncontrollably, striking out against any who spoke even slightly disfavorably of the fallen chief of state. City police were unable to control many of the mobs that formed and widespread attempted lynchings of Southern sympathizers were reported--since it was widely assumed the killing to be the action of Confederate soldiers. As Stanton said:

---

[73]Jim Bishop, The Day Lincoln Was Shot (New York: Harper and Brothres, 1955), p. 33.

[74]New York World, 15 April 1865.

> The republic received a stab aimed at the person of its annointed chief, and the national character a horrible stain. All the emblems and insignia of jubilant victory which had yesterday tossed to the breeze, were today shorn of their attitude and from their drooping folds sadly waved for the lighting of a nation's woe. The hand of a single man has wrought a sin which neither famine, war nor pestilence could have invoked.[75]

As a feeling of uneasiness continued to sweep the capital, newspapers increased their around-the-clock coverage of the events that had transpired at Ford's Theater.

Stillson, in Washington at the time of the assassination, provided initial coverage for World readers and was assigned to follow up on the tragedy. Townsend continued to report about the aftermath of the war in Richmond. He explored the mood of the Confederate capital after news of Lincoln's death had reached the city. Townsend expressed sadness for the country; however, he felt sadder at the loss suffered by the Confederate states:

> Mr. Lincoln is dead. Sad be that sentence in the stirred North, but ten times sadder for the crushed South, whose best friend in the administration lies in his coffin with the kindly measures he proposed.[76]

The reporter told of a paroled Confederate officer at the Ballard House in Richmond who exclaimed that he was "damned glad Lincoln was dead," whereupon he was attacked by Negro waiters and thrown into the street. A young Confederate lieutenant on a City Point boat said he thought that "Mr. Lincoln ought to have been

---

[75] New York World, 17 April 1865.

[76] New York World, 18 April 1865.

killed four years ago." He was subsequently released from a crowd of passengers who tried to hang him.[77]

After this report, Townsend moved on to Washington and immediately began working on the Lincoln story. During these eventful days it was not unusual to see the entire front page of the New York World dedicated to one story about Lincoln's assassination and its aftermath.[78]

The correspondent's first report about Lincoln's death centered on two sources in the city, a city wrapped in a flurry of sorrowful activity:

> Affairs in this city are as intricate and uncertain as you can imagine them to be. Two rival energies are at work--that which wishes to pay honor to Mr. Lincoln commensurate with his greatness, and that which wishes to render more practical justice to his memory by trailing out his assassins.[79]

Townsend gave status reports of the various search parties hunting the assassins and even noted the power of public opinion:

> Public opinion has compelled the closing of the bars, billiard saloons, and other places of recreation, and this city is enveloped in mourning from center to suburb. All is silence, tremorous, regretful, and indignant. . . .
> . . . There is so much pressure, mystery and confusion existing that even indefatigable news-gatherers stand back appalled; a thousand rumors to which I cannot give credence are afloat.[80]

His reports were hastily pieced together from scraps of information he had gathered about diverse aspects of the assassination.

---

[77] New York World, 18 April 1865.

[78] Ibid.

[79] New York World, 19 April 1865.

[80] Ibid.

On the one hand, he studied the reactions of people upon their first hearing of the death of Lincoln. He also sketched possible escape routes for Booth and Payne, and even visited the White House where Lincoln was by now lying in state.

At the White House, Townsend detailed the mourning scene as those who wished to pay their last respects passed by the bier of the late President:

> How since daylight the orderly and unlimitable populace has waited for the term of each individual to pass beneath the barring muskets, and look upon the face of the dead. Fifteen thousand persons have passed through the east room to-night, and as many more, waiting beyond the portal since dawn, have failed to gain admission. He lay in simple, artistic state, not gaudily, but tastefully enshrined, and wearing his inaugural suit--that which ushered him into prolonged honor, but which proved his self-prepared shrowd. His face wore that benignant, half-thoughtful, half-tender expression which distinguished it through life.[81]

Under "The Funeral" in the April 20 edition of the World, Townsend gave further evidence of his ability to fully describe an event in a relatively short period of time. His eyewitness dispatch on Lincoln's funeral in Washington covered the entire front page, with the conclusion jumping to page 8.[82]

> As many as six thousand persons spent Thursday night in the streets, in depots and in out buildings. The population of the city this morning was not far short of a hundred thousand, and of them as many as thirty thousand walked in procession with Mr. Lincoln's ashes.[83]

---

[81] New York World, 19 April 1865.

[82] New York World, 20 April 1865.

[83] Ibid.

Townsend served as the narrator for the thousands of World readers who weren't able to personally pay their respects to Lincoln. Consequently, he reported on even the smallest of details surrounding the Washington funeral. Evidence of this is his attention to the White House's free stone columns draped in black, and the half-closed reception room, all of which he abundantly described.

Before Lincoln was moved from the East Room to the Capitol, Townsend gazed at the catafalque:

> Their imperfect surfaces reflect the lofty catafalque, an open canopy of solemn alpaca, lined with tasteful satin of creamish lead, looped at the curving roof and dropping to the four corners in half transparent tapestry. . . . The lid is drawn back to show the face and bosom, and on the coffin top are heather, precious flowers, and sprigs of green.[84]

The World reporter's rambling account continued but served only to deify the assassinated chief of state. Nevertheless, for the reporter, nothing was to be ignored. Somewhat morbidly, Townsend described the draining of the blood from Lincoln's body and how the embalmers scooped Lincoln's brain from his head. He also detailed the dead President's facial features:

> Death has fastened into his frozen face all the character and idiosyncracy of life. The hue is rather bloodless and leaden; but he was always sallow. The dark eyebrows seem abruptly arched; the beard which will grow no more, is shaved close; save the tuft at the short, small chin. All that made the flesh vital, sentiment, and affectionate is gone forever.[85]

---

[84] New York World, 20 April 1865.

[85] Ibid.

Townsend watched as Lincoln's cabinet formed before the catafalque for the President's last trip from the White House. Even the newly inaugurated President, Andrew Johnson, attended.

There was little doubt Townsend recognized the events he was reporting on for the World were of great significance. He remembered earlier scenes at the Lincoln White House when there were numerous galas and "the most beautiful women of their day mingled here with men of brilliant favor. Dancing music had made those mirrors thrill which now reflect a pall."[86] But the activity at the White House now was much different. No longer happy and gay, the walls were wrapped with death.

After lying in state, Lincoln's body was placed on a funeral train and transported through several selected cities before being buried in Springfield, Illinois.

Concluding about the funeral, Townsend assailed Lincoln's killer, emphasizing the loss to the country of the dead President and drawing upon the emotion-charged events that had occurred previously in the day:

> And so through the starry night, in the fane of the great Union he had strengthened and recovered, the ashes of Abraham Lincoln, zealously guarded, are now reposing. The sage, the citizen, the patriot, the man has reached all the eminence that life can give the worthy of ambition. The hunted fugitive who struck through our hearts to slay him, should stand to-night beside that funeral bier to feel how powerless, are bullets and blades to take the real life of any noble man.[87]

---

[86] New York World, 20 April 1865.

[87] Ibid.

On Friday, April 21, evidence of a nation in hot pursuit of an assassin was recorded. On the last page under "The Assassins" a report showed that Booth's co-conspirator George Atzerodt, a surly-appearing Prussian coachmaker whose intended mission was to kill Andrew Johnson, had been arrested at his cousin's farmhouse in Rockville, Maryland.

But Atzerodt was just one of a long line of suspects that the government sought for Lincoln's death. Within a week of the assassination most of Booth's accomplices had been arrested. Lewis Payne, Baptist minister's son and former Confederate soldier who was a trained killer, was arrested at Mrs. Mary Surratt's inn near Surrattsville, Maryland. Payne, incapable of living in a non-violent world, was the near-successful assassin of Secretary of State Seward.[88]

Sam Arnold, a conspirator in earlier Booth plots but extricated from the Ford's Theater killing, was captured in Maryland. Michael O'Laughlin, a feed store laborer and conspirator in earlier plots, like Arnold, was arrested near Washington. The scene shifter, Edward Spangler, originally intended to hold Booth's horse behind Ford's, was so wrapped up in the play the night of April 14, he never held Booth's mount. Nevertheless, he also was arrested within the week.

Mrs. Surratt, owner of the tavern/inn at Surrattsville and who would later come under scurrilous attack during the trial, was arrested when Payne appeared at her door. It was bad timing for

---

[88]James McKinley, Assassination in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 21.

Payne since police were at the inn to question Mrs. Surratt about the whereabouts of her son John. Police originally believed John Surratt was the attacker of Seward. John Surratt, however, had left Booth's insane plots behind and fled to the company of rebel agents in Canada only a week before Lincoln's death.

The only remaining members of the conspiracy, Booth and David Herold, were on a road south of Washington. Herold, a partridge hunter and drugstore clerk, accompanied Payne to Seward's house the night of the assassination and was supposed to lead Payne to the Navy Yard Bridge where they would join Booth and flee south. However, Herold heard several of the screams coming from Seward's house as Payne inflicted wounds on Seward, became scared and left Payne to his own fate. He soon met up with Booth near the bridge and the two fled. By this time there were rewards offered of $100,000 for Booth and his accomplices, $50,000 for Booth and $25,000 each for Herold and John Surratt.[89]

Since Booth had not been apprehended, the World yearned for stories relating to his whereabouts. The World could not rely on its special correspondent, for by this time Townsend was with a search party that was closing in on Booth. Nevertheless, the World published even the remotest news of the actor's location. One such inaccurate account appeared in the April 24 edition of the World

> About 9 o'clock, a soldier, in breathless haste and nervous anxiety, rushed into the Central police station (New York) and told Secretary Scott that he had just seen the

---

[89] New York World, 21 April 1865.

> infamous murderer, J. Wilkes Booth, on Clark Street in company with Mr. Pratt of McVicker's Theater. Mr. Scott at once asked the soldier why he had not killed him on the spot, when the soldier answered that he would have done so but he was unarmed. (Reached by police) the stranger was informed that he was under arrest as the assassin of Mr. Lincoln. Had a thunderbolt from heaven struck him, the accused could not have been more surprised. He had no difficulty, however, in convincing the officials that they were mistaken and that he, the supposed Booth, was none other than Mr. J. F. Nagle, the accomplished leading actor at McVicker's Theater.[90]

While Townsend was searching for Booth, the World followed up on new information concerning the arrests of Booth's conspirators. On April 25, the World published an account from the Philadelphia Inquirer on Atzerodt's arrest.

According to the Inquirer, Atzerodt told military authorities that he had been in Washington the week of the assassination trying to sell the government a horse. He admitted that he knew Booth very well, but had not seen him for some time. Investigators said Atzerodt's account of his activities was extremely contradictory; one investigator even saying that his "mixing account is in such a manner that it was almost impossible to make head or tail of it."[91] Under further pressure, Atzerodt admitted to his part in the plot but appealed for leniency since he had been drunk and never intended to harm Johnson. The Inquirer story ended saying that Atzerodt's statement was forwarded to Secretary Stanton.[92]

Little happened with regards to the Lincoln processional train, by now in New York City. However, the whereabouts of Booth

---

[90] New York World, 24 April 1865.

[91] New York World, 25 April 1865.

[92] Ibid.

were still in question until April 28. At that time, Townsend witnessed, as the only member of the press, events leading to the death of Booth on a farmhouse porch south of Washington and the capture of Herold.

Without a doubt, Townsend entered the search for Lincoln's assassin as eager to find the actor as his readers were to hear of the assassin's fate. The reporter sent his first dispatch to the World on April 27, for the April 28 edition. He examined the final moments for Booth who was pulled from a fire-gutted barn near Port Royal, Virginia. Townsend's initial account filled the front page and one column on another.[93] However, Townsend's first story on Booth's death provided a general overview, for in the April 29 edition Townsend wrote a first person account of the pursuit, capture, and death of Booth that was lengthier and intensely detailed.

Since much of the material is duplicated, Townsend's April 29 report will be studied, examining the reporter's first person account. Nevertheless, the April 28 story was not without its own merits, for it carried Townsend's biographical sketch of Booth.

In the sketch on Booth, Townsend provided several detailed insights into Booth's character. The World reporter delved into his subject with such ferocity as to examine the actor's youth, tempestuous love life and radical political leanings.

A bonus for the World and Townsend, the reporter's biographical sketch generated widespread interest and extra copies were

---

[93]New York World, 28 April 1865.

printed. However, since Townsend was the only reporter to see Booth during his final hours, his reports to the World were in great demand.[94]

Following his biographical sketch of the actor, Townsend filled the entire front page of the World's April 29 edition with the story of the chase for Booth and his subsequent death. And it was not just a single issue. For every edition between April 28 and May 4, Townsend's stories about Booth's death and moving of the body filled the entire front pages. It was this series of reports that gave Townsend's name a meteoric rise to notoriety.

Townsend began his account with a description of La Fayette C. Baker, head of the U. S. Secret Service:

> A hard and grizzly face overlooks me as I write. It's inconsiderable forehead is crowned with gleaming sandy hair, and the deep concave of its long insatiate jaws is almost hidden by a dense red beard, which cannot still abate the terrible decision of the large mouth, so well sustained by searching eyes of spotted gray, which roll and rivet one. This is the face of La Fayette Baker, colonel and chief of the Secret Service. He has played the most perilous part of the war and is capturer of the late President's murderer.[95]

The World reporter explained that when Lincoln died, Baker was out of town and not readily available to begin an immediate search for Booth. Baker went to Washington three days after the assassination and was immediately brought before Stanton who ordered him to begin the search. "The sagacious detective found that nearly ten thousand cavalry, and one-fourth as many policemen, had been meantime

---

[94]Louis L. Snyder and Richard B. Morris, A Treasury of Great Reporting (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), p. 154.

[95]New York World, 29 April 1865.

scouring, without plan or compass, the whole territory of Southern Maryland."[96]

Townsend said Baker took all current information on Booth and started immediately to control a unified search party. Baker sent a few chosen detectives to various towns near Washington and awaited results.[97]

Townsend wrote that Baker, relying on information obtained from a Negro boatman who had positively identified Booth and Herold, sent for twenty-five men, and while these troops were mustering, studied his coast survey maps for the probable route of the assassin and his conspirator.

Townsend watched as Baker sketched a route that would take his troops through Port Royal, on the Rappahannock River. The reporter said Baker gathered Lt. Edward P. Doherty's men and placed the entire band under two other officers' command--Col. E. J. Conger and Lt. Luther B. Baker, the secret service chief's cousin. La Fayette Baker, who remained in Washington, sent the troops with Conger and his cousin to Belle Plain on the Lower Potomac to examine the country around Port Royal and "not to return unless they captured their men."[98]

Townsend accompanied the troops as they left Washington, detectives and cavalrymen leaving the train at Belle Plain, Maryland.

---

[96] New York World, 29 April 1865.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

Townsend reported that on the previous day Booth and Herold had met some Confederate cavalrymen who ferried them across the Rappahannock. These cavalrymen were members of the disbanded John S. Mosby command, heading south to their homes.

The detectives caught up with these rebel troops and interrogated the captain. He told the detectives Booth "was then lying at the house of one Garrett, which they (the detectives) had already passed."[99] Townsend reported the troops quickly returned to Garrett's farm. His descriptions of the house, barn and surrounding scenery were grossly overwritten. But his zeal for accurately setting the stage was not to top his reporting of what next was to happen.

On the porch of the farmhouse Luther Baker found and seized Garrett by the throat and held a pistol to his ear. He lambasted the elderly farm owner: "Where are the men who stay with you? If you prevaricate, you are a dead man," Townsend heard Baker bellow. Garrett, quite frightened, stammered, shook, and said not a word. Finally as his "knees smote each other," Garrett said, "They are gone. We haven't got them in the house. I assure you that they are gone."[100]

As Baker and Conger, who by this time had entered the doorway, were examining the house, a young man appeared as if from nowhere. He appealed to his father: "We had better tell the truth about the matter. Those men whom you seek, gentlemen, are in the

---

[99]New York World, 29 April 1865.

[100]Ibid.

barn, I know. They went there to sleep."[101] Baker and Conger left one soldier to guard the elder Garrett and ordered the remaining mounted soldiers to ride down to the barn; their pistols cocked and pointing at the youth's head. Carefully watching the scene, Townsend saw Baker order the barn surrounded, cautioning the troops to have their pistols ready. As he approached the barn, Baker could hear the rustling of straw as if someone were awakening. Hearing this, Baker hailed:

> To the persons in the barn. I have a proposal to make; we are about to send into you the son of the man in whose custody you are found. Either surrender to him your arms and then give yourselves up, or we'll set fire to the place. We mean to take you both, or to have a bonfire and a shooting match.[102]

At this time there was no answer from the barn so the youth was pushed through an opening of the door. When the youth made his appeal, Townsend heard Booth say "Damn you. Get out of here. You have betrayed me."[103] Townsend could hear the dialogue and haggling between Baker and Booth. The reporter also saw the young Garrett being tossed from the barn, only to report that he was unable to persuade Booth and Herold to surrender. Townsend watched as Baker once again demanded that Booth and Herold surrender immediately.

Booth responded, according to Townsend, by saying, "Captain, this is a hard case, I swear. Perhaps I am being taken by my own friends. Well, give us a little time to consider." A pause ensued.

---

[101] New York World, 29 April 1865.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

Baker demanded for the final time that Booth and Herold surrender. Townsend recorded Booth's answer, "I am but a cripple, a one-legged man. Withdraw your forces one hundred yards from the door and I will come. Give me a chance for my life, captain. I will never be taken alive."[104]

By this time Townsend noticed a disturbance within the barn. Booth and Herold were arguing. Herold realized Baker and Conger would soon burn the barn and wanted to get away from Booth, who by then was determined to die in the barn rather than surrender. Townsend heard Booth scream at Herold: "Get away from me. You are a damned coward, and mean to leave me in my distress; but go, go. I don't want you to stay. I won't have you stay."[105]

After Herold convinced Baker and Conger that he had no weapons, that Booth had kept them, he surrendered and left the barn. The reporter watched:

> At this time Herold was quite up to the door, within whispering distance of Baker. The latter told him to put out his hands to be handcuffed, at the same time drawing open the door a little distance. Herold thrust forth his hands when Baker, seizing him, jerked him into the night, and straightaway delivered him over to a disputation of cavalrymen. The fellow began to talk of his innocence and plead so noisely that Conger threatened to gag him unless he ceased.[106]

At this time Booth moved to the center of the barn, ranting that he would never be taken alive. Conger slipped around to the

---

[104] New York World, 29 April 1865.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

rear of the barn, drew some loose straw through a crack in the wood, and lit it. Townsend said the fire quickly blazed.

As the barn burned, Townsend shuffled around quickly to get a better look at the assassin.

> At the gleam of the fire Wilkes dropped his crutch and carbine, and on both hands crept up to the spot to espy the incendiary and shoot him dead. His eyes were lustrous like fever, and swelled and rolled in terrible beauty, while his teeth were fixed and he wore the expression of one in the calmness before frenzy.[107]

At this time Booth prepared to charge out of his fiery inferno but just as he was about to charge the barn door, Sgt. Boston Corbett, at the rear of the barn peering through a gaping hole, shot Booth. Baker at first thought Booth had shot himself. After a pause, the two detectives could no longer hear any movement inside the barn; Conger and two soldiers entered, dodging flames, and brought Booth's body out to the grass.[108]

Overlooking Conger, Townsend could see the actor was slowly reviving. Baker, keeping an intent watch on the slowly ebbing Booth, noticed the actor was attempting to speak. Baker put his ear close to Booth's face and heard him say, "Tell mother--and die--for my country."[109] The fire consuming the barn became so hot the troops had to lift Booth again and move him to the porch of Garrett's farm house.

---

[107] New York World, 29 April 1865.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

Townsend noted that on the porch Booth was now slipping in and out of consciousness, mumbling sporadically. When he was able to speak again, after drinking some brandy, Booth once again muttered to Baker, "Tell mother, I died for my country. I thought I did for the best."[110]

A doctor had been summoned but had not arrived. Townsend noticed the look of concern on Conger and Baker's faces as they realized the actor was soon to die. Townsend, as well, continued his watch over the actor noting:

> Now and then his heart would cease to throb, and his pulses would be as cold as a dead man's. Directly, life would begin anew, the face would flush up effulgently, the eyes open and brighten, and soon relapsing, stillness reasserted, would again be dispossessed by the same magnificant triumph of a man over mortality.[111]

Booth's life ended in a peculiar way. Townsend noted his last words:

> Just as his coming Booth had asked to have his hands raised and shown him. They were so paralyzed that he did not know their location. When they were displayed he muttered, with a sad lethargy, "Useless, useless." These were the last words he ever uttered.[112]

Booth's story, as Townsend reported it, did not end on the porch at Garrett's farm; there was the trip back to Washington. The World reporter continued his ride with the detectives.

After Booth had died, he was sewn in a saddle blanket. Soldiers searching the area found Booth's carbine, knife, two

---

[110] New York World, 29 April 1865.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

revolvers, U. S. money, Canadian money and a diary. This diary, as well as the Canadian money, have been controversial topics among historians. Some references in the diary point to a conspiracy of which Booth was only a small part, leading many to believe that Booth was not the chief conspiratory, but rather, the second or third person in charge, answering to a higher authority--many say Secretary of War Stanton.

On the road back Townsend said the detectives approached a black man who gave them his wagon for the purpose of transporting Booth's body back to Washington. Once across the Rappahannock and back in Washington they released the black man and his wagon. The detectives then slung the dead actor over a horse and rode on to report to La Fayette Baker. During all this riding back to the capital, Herold cried out his innocence, maintaining that he had met Booth on the road and had only helped him since he was wounded. But nobody listened to him, Townsend reported.[113]

Townsend ended his dispatch by reporting that one day after the troops returned, he had asked La Fayette Baker where Booth had been buried. Baker replied that only he and one other person (his cousin) sworn to secrecy knew the final resting place of the dead assassin.[114] But his report was not complete by any means. The very end contains some of Townsend's best writing:

> Last night, the 27th of April, a small row boat received the carcass of the murdered, two men were in it; they carried the body off into the darkness, and out of that darkness it will

---

[113] New York World, 29 April 1865.

[114] Ibid.

> never return. In the darkness, like his great crime, may it remain forever, inpalpable, invisible, nondescript, condemned to that worse than damnation, annihilation. The river-bottom may ooze about it laden with great shot and drowning manacles. The earth may have opened to give it that silence and forgiveness which man will never give its memory. The fishes may swim around it, or the daisies grow white above it, but we shall never know. Mysterious, incomprehensible, unattainable, like the dim times through which we live and think upon us if we only dreamed them is perturbid fever, the assassin of a nations' head rests somewhere in the elements, and that is all; but if the indigent seas or the profaned turn shall ever vomit this corpse from their recesses, and it receives humane or Christian burial from some who do not recognize it, let the last word those decaying lips ever uttered be carried above them with a dagger, to tell the history of a young and once promising life--useless! useless![115]

On May 3, Townsend followed his report of the capture and death of Booth with an account of the planning and execution of Lincoln's assassination.

His account of the conspiracy lists no attribution, thus lending itself to speculation by Townsend. The story reveals the emergence of Booth as the chief conspirator and the involvement of yet other conspirators. Since Townsend's story lacked attribution, the article becomes a signed statement of little merit other than opinion. However, history has proven that many of Townsend's speculations were fact.

Townsend linked Booth's Southern sympathies to the stage. Despite the fact that his brother, Edwin Booth, was a renowned actor in the North, John Wilkes Booth had most of his successes in the South and was more sympathetic to the Confererate cause.[116] This

---

[115] New York World, 29 April 1865.

[116] New York World, 3 May 1865.

fact plus a false sense of gratitude and a general sense of waywardness set Booth against the North and for the South.

Booth, as Townsend believed, was against the murder of Lincoln at first until many less dangerous resolutions failed. One plot was the much-publicized plan in which Lincoln was to have been kidnaped on the way to his second inauguration.[117] Booth, failing to gather as many men as he desired to help him, abandoned the project of kidnapping.

Townsend tied Booth to certain exiled rebel Confederates in Canada, specifically Montreal. The reporter did not name the Confederates because he did not know the extent of their involvement with Booth and the assassination. But the reporter did say that Booth had been in Montreal on at least three occasions, one time depositing $455 into an account at the Ontario Bank. Townsend said he had seen the passbook that revealed the deposit in Atzerodt's room in Washington shortly after the Prussian's arrest.

The reporter believed the Canadian rebels provided Booth with a skilled assassin--Lewis Payne. The reporter said Payne was merely a dispatched murderer, and immediately after the assassination travelled north for Canada, instead of south as Booth had done.

But Booth, tired of sluggish planning by the rebels in Canada, increasingly believed the success of the venture rested entirely in his hands. As Townsend reported, the killing of Lincoln became "his business, his recreation and his study." Booth had not worked half

---

[117] New York World, 3 May 1865.

as hard for histrionic successes as for his graduation into an assassin.[118]

The reporter maintained that the acquaintance of Mrs. Mary Surratt steered Booth's flight south rather than north like Payne. He also said Mrs. Surratt helped Booth gather all the other accomplices he needed to carry out the killing.

The last few stories about Booth ended May 4 with his last dispatches printed and after having just returned from a harried, back-breaking search. The World reporter was indeed due for a rest.

By this time, Townsend had become deeply involved in all matters of the assassination. He had already reported on the confusion surrounding Washington after Lincoln's death, covered the President's funeral in Washington, sought Booth's co-conspirators and witnessed the actor's death.

Yet Townsend's reporting achievements during this period of upheaval did not go unnoticed by his peers. David Goodman Croly, World managing editor in 1865, said that Townsend's stories on Booth's death "was the most extraordinary instance of pure literary triumph that he had ever known."[119] Compositor Bartholomew had already spoken of Townsend's quickness at writing. Another admirer, reporter Henry M. Stanley, later to find missionary David Livingstone, envied the "verve and uplifting power" of Townsend's prose "when its

---

[118]New York World, 3 May 1865.

[119]Ruthanna Hindes, George Alfred Townsend (Wilmington, Del.: Hambleton Printing and Publishing Company, 1946), p. 23.

grand rolling lines described in unequaled style the shock of battle and the thunder of war."[120]

In assessing Townsend's achievements, author Ruthanna Hindes said,

> Townsend's contributions to the columns of the New York World on the Battle of Five Forks, the closing scenes about Richmond, Virginia, and his letters on the Lincoln murder created such a furor that he was called to lecture all over the country; if it had not been for these events, Townsend might very well have remained an obscure correspondent along with many others of the same period.[121]

Because of Townsend's deep involvement in the ongoing Lincoln story, he was assigned to cover the conspirators' trial. This left little time for Townsend to rest from his search for Booth, as the trial was scheduled to start May 10. Even as Baker and Conger were closing in on Booth, Stanton was busy orchestrating the beginning of the trial. After a brief rest, Townsend was ready to go to Washington.

---

[120]Hindes, p. 25.

[121]Ibid., p. 24.

CHAPTER IV

TRIAL OF THE CONSPIRATORS

George Alfred Townsend rested until May 10 when the military commission began the trial of the accused conspirators. Even before the reporters descended on the courtoom at the Old Arsenal Building in Washington, Secretary Stanton had decreed that the trial was to be held in secrecy. Needless to say, there was a universal cry of 'foul!' among reporters at the scene. Despite their pleas for an open courtroom, journalists were barred from the first week of the trial. Only after a barrage of papers, including many of the Eastern metropolitan dailies, raised such a vehement outcry were the proceedings finally opened to reporters. When the trial was opened, the government continued to maintain control of what reporters printed by supplying them only transcripts of the day's testimony. Many papers printed the transcripts verbatim.

The World initially ran the transcripts but as the trial bogged down, it printed fewer and fewer. In addition to the transcripts, its readers could scan the summaries provided by World reporters assigned to the trial. These summaries were written generally by Townsend and occasionally by his colleague Jerome Stillson. Since the World ran the transcripts verbatim, material on the trial often covered an entire full page of the paper. Frequently verbose,

the transcripts were slow reading. The World preceded the start of the transcripts with Townsend's summaries of the daily proceedings. In this case main focus will be not so much on the government transcripts as on the summaries provided predominantly by Townsend.

At the beginning of the trial, the World printed the complete list of the members comprising the military commission. Those on the panel were Major-General David Hunter, Major-General Lewis Wallace, Brevet Major-General August V. Kantz, Brigidier-General Albion P. Howe, Brigadier-General Robert S. Foster, Brevet Brigadier-General James A. Ekin, Brigadier-General T. M. Harris, Brevet Colonel C. H. Thompkins, Lieutenant-Colonel David R. Clendinen and Brigadier-General Joseph Holt, judge advocate and recorder of the trial.[122] Holt, as chief recorder, was responsible for the transcripts and other material released to reporters. As stated in Townsend's first summary, "Such portions of the evidence as Judge Holt deems proper for publication will be officially furnished to the Associated Press, to be transmitted to the journals here and in all of its principal cities."[123]

Shortly after Booth's death the prisoners, David Herold, George Atzerodt, Lewis Payne, Michael O'Laughlin, Edward Spangler, Samuel Arnold, Mary Surratt and Samuel A. Mudd, who had been arrested south of Washington for treating Booth's leg, were arraigned--each pleading not guilty.

---

[122] New York World, 11 May 1865.

[123] Ibid.

On May 15, as a result of newspaper pressure, the trial was opened to reporters; however, the World continued to print the government's transcripts as released by Judge Advocate Holt, Townsend noted the opening in a brief statement preceding the World's May 15 official report. In his announcement Townsend said:

> Although outside reporters are admitted to the military trial of the alleged conspirators, they are only permitted to publish such evidence as in the judgement of the court may not be deemed prejudicial to the public interest. Very important evidence, it is understood, was taken yesterday, which will not be allowed publicity at present. Owing to the fact that good progress has been made already, and that all of the principals have been placed on trial at once; it is believed that the trial will not last more than two weeks.[124]

The press, breathing a general sign of relief, was now able to sit in on the trial. However, that was about the extent of its participation. At the end of each day, reporters had to have their stories cleared with Judge Advocate Holt. Those not clearing their reports with Holt were kept from attending the trial at any future session.

As it turned out, perhaps the most damaging testimony to defendants Surratt, Payne, Herold, Atzerodt, Mudd and Arnold was given during the first week of the two-month trial. The government called as one of its first witnesses Lewis Weichmann, a boarder in Mrs. Surratt's inn at the time of the assassination. In his testimony Weichmann linked the conspirators to the plot against Lincoln, saying he first heard of the plot to kill Lincoln through conversations at Surratt's inn. Townsend listened as Weichmann said Booth had been to

---

[124]New York World, 15 May 1865.

the inn on several occasions and had discussed the topic with John Surratt and his mother. Not long after the discussions and just before the assassination Surratt fled to Canada and on to England, where he remained during the duration of the trial. Weichmann testified that Payne, using the name Wood, stopped frequently at the inn for John Surratt. He also said that John Surratt made frequent trips to Richmond and speculated that the Confederacy was behind the conspiracy. Townsend recorded the most devastating blow to the innocence claim of Mrs. Surratt. Weichmann said Booth had visited her immediately after Lincoln had been shot.[125] James McKinley maintains that Stanton knew of the assassination plans as much as two months before April 14 through the revelations of Weichmann. McKinley claims that because of Weichmann's talks with Stanton, many of the conspirators were arrested so soon after April 14.[126]

Also testifying was John Lloyd. Townsend heard Lloyd reveal that just before the assassination, John Surratt had asked him to hold some guns for him. He said on the day of the assassination, Mrs. Surratt approached him and told him to have the guns ready. Later that night after the shooting, he said Booth and Herold came to his house in Surrattsville and demanded "those things," meaning the guns.[127]

---

[125] New York World, 15 May 1865.

[126] McKinley, p. 21.

[127] New York World, 15 May 1865.

Little of the trial was reported in the May 16 edition of the World. As Townsend reports, "The second day of the open trial of the conspirators is over, without any very startling developments."[128]

As he said, the testimony had mainly been directed at Booth, Michael O'Laughlin, originally assigned to kill Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, and Edward Spangler, the stage carpenter at Ford's Theater. The reporter says testimony showed O'Laughlin suspiciously in Secretary Stanton's house on the night preceding the assassination when General Grant was there but was promptly told to leave.[129]

While listening to the testimony, the reporter would gaze at the prisoners. Throughout the trial, Townsend would write descriptive passages about the defendants. During his first such report he said Payne sat erect, with his head against the wall, maintaining a defiant, indifferent, stoical air. He said Mrs. Surratt sat veiled, and close to the other prisoners. Previously she had remained separated. Of Spangler, Townsend was far less than objective in his observations. "Spangler wore a stupid air, and did not seem to feel much interest in the testimony."[130]

While there were no startling developments, as Townsend said, there was a matter of court jurisdiction that increasingly crept into the trial. The defendants' attorneys questioned whether their clients should be tried by military court since the killing was done during

---

[128]New York World, 16 May 1865.

[129]Ibid.

[130]Ibid.

peacetime. Arnold's attorney, Thomas Ewing, said the military court had no power to try Arnold since the war was over and the country was in a time of peace. The court overruled the plea and Ewing appealed to have Arnold tried separately. That motion also was overruled.[131] Moving on, Reverdy Johnson, attorney for Mrs. Surratt, cross-examined Lewis Weichmann about the conversation he had overheard between Lloyd and Mrs. Surratt concerning the "shooting-irons" that Lloyd was to have kept for Booth and Arnold. Weichmann admitted he was not entirely sure that he had heard the part about the "shooting-irons."

While the Weichmann cross-examination took up the entire morning session, several witnesses were called in the afternoon. All the witnesses served to tie Booth to several prisoners sitting in the defendants' dock. One female boarding house owner said that Booth, on numerous occasions, had visited Arnold and O'Laughlin at her establishment in Washington. She said the last time Booth was in a play in Washginton in mid-March, Arnold and O'Laughlin presented her with complimentary tickets given them by Booth.

Another witness said he accompanied O'Laughlin from Baltimore to Washington on the Thursday preceding the assassination. He linked Booth with O'Laughlin, saying Booth had tried to get in touch with O'Laughlin the day before the assassination.

Still another witness, David Stanton, son of the Secretary of War, said O'Laughlin was at the home of his father the night before

---

[131]New York World, 16 May 1865.

the assassination. The younger Stanton, not recognizing O'Laughlin, told him to leave.[132]

Following Stanton were two witnesses who placed Booth in a bar adjacent to Ford's Theater only ten minutes before the shooting. The owner of the bar said Booth was very distraught and nervous. He quickly downed a whiskey and left. A guard posted in front of Ford's testified he saw Booth confer with two men, soon after Booth entered the bar. The other two walked down the street. The guard also confirmed the restaurant owner's examination of Booth. He said Booth appeared nervous and erratic.[133]

In the press dispatch of May 17, President Andrew Johnson's secretary William Browning testified Booth had left a note at Johnson's hotel on the day of the assassination. Browning said the note read, "Don't wish to disturb you; are you at home?"[134] This note has troubled and haunted historians since its revelation. Why would Booth wish to speak with the vice-president? Did the two have something to speak about, or could Booth have used the message to determine if Johnson was at home only to lure him out for Atzerodt?

As much as Browning's statement stirred the courtroom, the next witness' statements were equally sensational. John Deveney said the conspiracy was initiated by rebel agents in Canada. Deveney said Booth was in Montreal shortly before the assassination. There he met

---

[132] New York World, 16 May 1865.

[133] Ibid.

[134] New York World, 17 May 1865.

with George Sanders, Clement Clay, Samuel Tucker, William Cleary and other Confederate sympathizers. Deveney, who recognized Booth from playbills, approached the actor asking if he were in a play there. Booth replied he wasn't and that he was there on a visit. However, on April 14, Deveney, back in Washington, again saw Booth, this time on the steps of a capital hotel. Deveney asked Booth how long he had been back from Canada and Booth replied that he had been back some time. When asked if he were in a new play in town, Booth replied that he had given up acting and (like his conspirators) was in the oil business. Deveney said he next saw Booth that night at Ford's Theater. Deveney had gone to see "Our American Cousin" and recognized Booth as the man jumping from the President's box after a loud shot.[135]

Townsend jotted down notes as suddenly the testimony had shifted from the defendants' guilt to the involvement of exiled Confederate agents in Canada. This alleged involvement, for it was never actually proven, ran the course of the trial.

The next witness, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, said he knew Jacob Thompson, implicated with Sanders, Clay and Tucker as a rebel agent in Canada. Grant said that he knew Thompson only as a rebel soldier.[136]

After Grant testified, the trial recessed for the mid-morning break. The commission went to Ford's Theater where they examined the scene of Lincoln's death accompanied by Townsend and several other reporters.

---

[135] New York World, 17 May 1865.

[136] Ibid.

After the theater visit the commission returned to the Old Arsenal Building and resumed taking testimony. The man who guarded the stage door at Ford's on April 14, John Barrows, said he saw Booth bring a horse behind the theater. There he was met by Spangler. Spangler then returned inside while Booth went around to the front of the theater. Barrows held the horse as he stood by his post at the stage door entrance. Soon, Booth came limping out the stage door. Barrows testified Booth knocked him down with the butt of his knife, took the horse and fled. Townsend judiciously noted at how the testimony had, since the mid-morning break, shifted back to the implication of Booth and the defendants.

The World reporter watched as Sgt. Silas Cobb, chief guard at the Navy-Yard bridge the night of the assassination, told the commission that Booth had crossed the bridge on April 14. As the reporter noted, Cobb questioned Booth on his crossing:

> I asked him who he was; he said his name was Booth; I asked him where from; he said the city; I asked him where he was going; he said he was going home; I asked him where his home was; he said in Charles, which I understood to mean Charles County; I asked him what town; he said he didn't live in any town; I said you must live in some town; he said I live close to Bryantown, but don't live in town; I asked him why he was out so late; if he did not know persons were not permitted to pass after that time at night; he said it was news to him, he said he had some ways to go, that it was dark and that he thought he would have a moon.[137]

Another witness that day, Lt. Alexander Lovett, detailed his arrest of Dr. Samuel Mudd. Lovett said that during his search for Booth, he and his troops came to the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd and

---

[137] New York World, 17 May 1865.

asked Mudd if any strangers had recently passed through his area. Mudd told him of two strangers, one of whom had a broken leg, which he had set.[138]

Lovett said he left Mudd's house to look for Booth and Herold. But Lovett returned to Mudd's residence April 21, dissatisfied with Mudd's answer that he was a stranger to the two harried men. Lovett arrested Mudd for further questioning. At this time, Mudd had his wife bring forward a boot, which Mudd said he had found in his house after Lovett had left the first time. Inside the boot were inscribed the words "J. Wilkes." Under oath, Lovett claimed Mudd changed his statements on the two separate visits. He said Mudd at first denied recognizing the two strangers but on the second visit, Mudd said one of the strangers looked like Booth. Lovett's testimony was circumstantial and its relevance should not have convicted Mudd.

By May 18, Townsend had noticed a rather disturbing absence. The reporter saw that Surratt's counsel, Reverdy Johnson, had not been in the courtroom for several days. He also noted that for the first time civilians were allowed in the courtroom, but first

---

[138] New York World, 17 May 1865. Mudd's grandson, Dr. Richard Mudd, 76, has tried for most of his life to get the conviction of his grandfather reversed. Samuel Mudd, after being sentenced to life in prison on the malaria-plagued Dry Tortugas off Florida, helped curb the spreading disease and was later pardoned by President Andrew Johnson. Although the pardon brought the doctor's release, his health and name were ruined. His grandson has examined the trial of the conspirators and has found numerous flaws. He feels his grandfather was persecuted. In 1976, Richard Mudd spoke to almost 3,000 people about his grandfather's innocence. He has taken his grandgather's case to congressmen and senators. He wants both houses of Congress to pass resolutions saying that Mudd was innocent, but as of late 1977, no resolutions have been passed by Congress.

consideration in seating was given the press. In his summary, Townsend showed his Union loyalties by convicting Booth's accomplices with such statements as:

> The nature of the evidence thus far has not been startling in a legal sense. The testimony is quite conclusive as to the agency of Booth, Payne, Atzerodt in a conspiracy to murder the President, Vice-President, and Secretaries of State and War.[139]

Townsend implied that O'Laughlin was really sent to Secretary of War Stanton's home to kill Gen. Grant. The World reporter even boldly declared that Booth sought counsel from rebel agents in Canada. For as the reporter said:

> That Sanders and he (Booth) have talked the matter over is beyond conjecture; and that Clay, Thompson and Cleary know of his intentions is likely. It remains to be established, however, that any one of them had advocated the diabolical scheme, or furnished any means for it.[140]

As a matter of fact, Townsend had few kind words for any of the conspirators. However, as has previously been said, it was the temper of the times. The conspirators had few allies. Townsend continued his attack on the conspirators:

> The character of the plotters is decidely below par. They are not, with the exception of Booth, the material for political purposes. They would seem rather to have been needy adventurers, whom Booth has picked up by one strange chance or other, and either bribed or cajoled into his plans.[141]

Rather than proceed with the trial, the reporter cast his descriptive eye on each of the defendants. Of each Townsend said:

---

[139] New York World, 18 May 1865.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

> Atzerodt: the meanest of the lot; Payne: has stolid bestial countenance, showing no emotion and shrinking intelligence; O'Laughlin: he stands abundantly convicted of a general knowledge of the plot; Herold: boyish-looking, a kind of humble satellite to Booth, as every star actor draws round him a kind of plebian lot of followers; Arnold: a king of messenger and gobetween; Mrs. Surratt: by no means a demon, capable of a perilous enterprise.[142]

One important part of the evidence Townsend summarized on May 18 was the testimony of Confederate officer William Jett. Jett was the officer Booth and Herold met on their sojourn across the Rappahannock. Jett testified that Herold boasted to him that he and Booth had just assassinated the President.

The day's evidence was highlighted by the testimony of Col. Conger and Sgt. Boston Corbett. As Townsend wrote, "Colonel Conger and Sergeant Corbett, of the cavalry who captured Booth, gave the details of the capture in Garrett's barn just about the same as they have been published in The World."[143]

Townsend quoted Corbett as saying that he had shot Booth just at the moment when the actor raised a carbine as if to fire upon another of the men approaching the barn. Corbett said from his vantage point he could hear Booth proclaim Herold innocent of all crime. Conger's testimony was startlingly similar to what had appeared in the World.

Townsend did not attend the trial on May 19. On another assignment, Townsend turned over his trial duties to colleague Jerome Stillson.

---

[142] New York World, 18 May 1865.

[143] Ibid.

Stillson's summary showed that Lewis Weichmann had been re-examined. Weichmann this time said he had been suspicious of the Surratt family because he thought it was engaged in blockade-running.

Townsend did not file a story on the trial for the May 20 edition of the World; however, he did write a sidebar story. Titled, "The Empty White House," Townsend examined life at the executive mansion since the assassination and burial of Lincoln. Townsend wrote of a Tad Lincoln running around the mansion oblivious to the mourning. The new President did not occupy the White House until shortly before the execution of the conspirators.[144] Townsend used the story to elicit more sympathy for the widow of Lincoln. Like many of Townsend's feature stories, it was a strong mood piece.

However, since Townsend did not cover the trial May 20, Stillson, who did not receive a byline for his work, was ordered to attend. The reporter surely was not disappointed. While several witnesses were questioned about the attempted murder of Secretary Seward by Payne, the most revealing testimony showed the Confederate sympathies of Mrs. Surratt.

Four military officers guarding Mrs. Surratt's house during the trial testified that upon searching her home they found many photographs, several of which were of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and other officials in the Confederacy. Pasted on the back panel of

---

[144]New York World, 20 May 1865.

a small photograph "Morn, Noon, and Night" was one of Booth, with his name written on it.[145]

A very small notation at the end of the reporter's story of the trial appears to sum up much of the mystery that surrounded the trial:

> Looking over the evidence, the pleading and the prisoners, one cannot but wonder more and more by what strange influence Booth should have found or intrusted such an awful crime with such a set of senseless and shallow-paled vagabonds. His personal popularity, his earnestness and eloquence might have won to his scheme political malcontents and the more desparate of the southern army. But that he should spend time and money and hold scout meetings, and parley and dally with a lot of men all of whom were vastly below him in social position, and but two of whom (Mudd and Surratt) seem to have ever risen to the dignity of a political opinion besides which a more clumsy set of villains it would be hard to get together.[146]

By the time Townsend returned to the trial, the prosecution was hard at work trying to connect the hierarchy of the Confederacy with the order to kill Lincoln and, to an extent, had some success. The prosecution had already tied several rebel agents exiled in Canada to meetings with Booth just prior to the assassination. While in Montreal a large sum of money was given to Booth--although it never was revealed exactly for what the money was to be used. After Booth died, a large sum of Canadian money was found in his pockets. Since none of the exiled rebel agents came to Washington to testify for the trial, the real purpose of the money never came out, although speculation had it the money was used to finance the assassination.

---

[145] New York World, 20 May 1865.

[146] Ibid.

On May 22, Townsend said that the prosecution once again attempted to tie Booth with the Confederacy, alleging the dead actor to be a spy for Jefferson Davis.

Charles A. Dana, assistant Secretary of War, testified that he had retrieved a Confederate cipher while searching the main offices of the Confederacy in Richmond after the end of the war. The cipher was identified as similar to one found in Booth's trunk after his death.

Following Dana, a witness said several messages found in the trunk corresponded with many found in Confederate offices at Richmond.[147]

As Townsend wrote, May 23 was a slow, uneventful day. At a closing point in the proceedings, reporters asked Holt if the panel was going to meet on Wednesday, May 24, since that was the day Washington would host the Grand Review of the troops of the Army of the Potomac. Judge Holt declared the trial would meet despite the celebration in the city.[148]

Townsend left the trial for the parade and filed pages of copy that described the review of the Army of the Potomac; his story filled the entire front page of the May 24 edition of the World and four of six columns on an inside page of the paper. Townsend was assisted by Richard T. Colburn, another World reporter. The review of the Army of the Potomac was an eagerly awaited event, the final

---

[147]New York World, 22 May 1865.

[148]New York World, 23 May 1865.

signal that the fighting between the states had ended. As the two wrote:

> The happiest event of the war approaches. Today the Army of the Potomac, whose eventful career has been watched with so much interest, has passed in its last review through the streets, and tomorrow the work of disbandment commences. . . . Both armies have made their last march, reached their last camp; another day will close their glorious career. Such an event which consigns them to the treasured past is a calendar day in American history.[149]

Because Townsend and Golburn's story had taken up so much space in the eight-page paper, some news had to be suspended. Such was the case of the conspiracy trial. For the first time since the assassination, something related to the assassination had failed to make the pages of the World.

The review of the Army of the Potomac was a two-day affair and on May 25, Townsend alone filled the front page with an account of the second day of the parade, and like the previous day news of the conspiracy trial failed to show in the World.

Much as news of the conspiracy trial was lacking in the World, the newspaper resumed with total front page coverage on May 26. By this time the defense had begun its case and was preparing testimony to use for the defendants. But as the trial progressed, the defendants increasingly became the objects of curiosity seekers. As Townsend said, "The morbid curiosity for sight-seeing led many delicate ladies and children to be crushed and squeezed to the point of fainting."[150]

---

[149] New York World, 24 May 1865.

[150] New York World, 26 May 1865.

Townsend noted that several clergymen were called to show that Mrs. Surratt was a loyal churchgoer. However, the priests were unwilling to testify as to how loyal Surratt was towards the union.

Perhaps the most sensational news of the day proved to be the perjury of one of the War Department's detectives, Lt. George Collingham. As Townsend noted:

> Officer Collingham acknowledged deliberately in open court that he had told Mrs. Surratt's counsel, so lately as last Sunday, with what motive does not precisely appear, that if called he would swear that Lloyd in his confession never mentioned Surratt's name. He now comes forward and states the very contrary under oath, frankly admitting his previous falsehood. The consternation of the defense and the amazement of the spectators at such a piece of brazen mendacity, may be imagined.[151]

Townsend's final sentence of his report on the day's testimony probably shocked World readers. The court and the World reporter were paying close attention to defense questions and Townsend noted that while the prosecution had free license in the courtroom, the defense was bogged down with court procedure:

> Correspondents are requested to call the attention of all legal students and lovers of civil liberty to the verbatim report of the trial hereafter. It must be evident that the grave question may arise whether counsel have any rights in a military court, or whether they are merely there on sufferance. In this case, it is supposed that the court and Judge Holt desire to bring to punishment the guilty and also to protect the innocent, but it will not be observed that while the evidence for the prosecution took the widest latitude, the defense is checked by technical objections at every point. The government has a case abundantly strong against the conspirators of the assassination, and should not suffer the sacred cause of justice to be jeopardized by the preconceptions of its subordinate servants.[152]

---

[151] New York World, 26 May 1865.

[152] Ibid.

On May 27, the defense raised the question of frequent objections by the prosecution. However, at this time Judge Holt declared that any objections made by his colleagues were to be sustained by the court. Needless to say, the defense was awe-struck.[153]

On May 31, two men, Lewis Bates and J. C. Courtney, testified that when Jefferson Davis heard the news of Lincoln's assassination, the president of the Confederacy spoke of great approval and expressed a wish that Johnson and Stanton had been included.[154] Despite the implication of Davis, the most sensational testimony of the day was given by Anna Surratt, Mrs. Surratt's daughter. Townsend described the defendant's daughter as nervous and frightened, constantly glancing about the room to see her mother, who had been concealed from her to prevent the outburst of emotion that may have followed a recognition under such circumstances.[155]

Townsend listened intently as Anna Surratt said Atzerodt had initially become a friend of Weichmann's because Weichmann got rooms for him at Surratt's inn. She said her mother found Payne and Atzerodt offensive and didn't like them staying at the inn. One upsetting fact about Anna Surratt was that every time she answered a question put to her by both the defense and prosecution she always asked, "Where is mama?"[156] Townsend noted the attention women in

---

[153] New York World, 27 May 1865.

[154] New York World, 31 May 1865.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

the courtroom paid the young Surratt, "As Miss Surratt was leaving the stand, the women crowded forward with eager faces and devouring eyes to witness the departure of the sorrow-stricken child from the preserve of the court."[157]

Before June 1, Townsend said that spectators were concentrating on Payne. While other defendants listened to their implications, Payne gazed out of the windows, totally unmoved by the proceedings. He even ignored the testimony when it pertained to him, so consequently, he became the most mysterious of all the defendants, interest centering on him only after Mrs. Surratt.[158] But on June 1, his attention swayed back from the walls and windows of the courtroom. As Townsend reported:

> The prisoner Payne today, for the first time almost, appeared to belong to our common humanity. His bearing has been throughout most remarkable. He nearly always sits bolt upright, entirely unmoved either by anything said or done in the room, and never speaking to the counsel, not bold and defiant, but composed, indifferent and self-possessed. Who is this man? Has he any friends? Where did he come from? What is his real home? These questions have been asked a thousand times, without avail. Today, he actually asked that three witnesses might be called in his favor--a lady and doctor living in Warrenton, Virginia, and a minister of the gospel living in Florida. In the conversation that ensued, his counsel also said he had sent Payne's brother to bring the witnesses from Warrenton. During this proceeding Payne leaned forward in his seat, with his face alternately white and flushed, and drew a long breath of relief when it was announced that the witnesses would be summoned.[159]

For the June 2 edition, Townsend departed from his usual introductory material summarizing the trial. In this instance,

---

[157] New York World, 31 May 1865.

[158] New York World, 1 June 1865.

[159] Ibid.

Townsend ran a descriptive piece concerning the seating arrangements of the prisoners and the appearance of each now that the trial was progressing and nearing an end. The story was a useless waste of space. Townsend merely reported the same facts that he had earlier described at the initial opening of the trial. The entire story was mere repetition of his earlier stories where he described the defendants and how their behavior was an accurate reflection of their character.

At this time a major factor that caused the commission to step up the tempo of the trial was exerting its full force--heat. As the reporter noted, the heat was so intense "as to render the courtroom quite uncomfortable."[160]

Townsend noted a new ploy by defense counsel as it theorized that Payne had been insane when he attacked Secretary Seward at his home. An agent of the government's "insane asylum" testified as to the actions of "insane" people; however, as Townsend reported, the testimony did not have a real bearing on the circumstances of Payne's attack on Secretary Seward.

While the court continued to remain open for spectators and press alike, there was an undercurrent of secrecy filtering through the trial. The military panel held secret sessions at the end of the day for the purpose of hearing testimony it deemed confidential and necessary to keep secret. Such was the case when the suppressed testimony of Sanford Conover, taken earlier in the trial, was

---

[160]New York World, 3 June 1865.

released June 5 to the court. Conover had been a New York resident but joined the Confederacy when the war began and subsequently lived in Canada. While in Canada, Conover met several of the rebel agents implicated as supporters of the assassination--Geroge Sanders, Jacob Thompson, Beverly Tucker, William Cleary, Clement Clay, John Surratt, and John Wilkes Booth. Conover said he had met Thompson at his room in Montreal. Sanders and Booth also attended the meeting. Conover said while the group was talking Surratt entered with a message from Richmond. The news came from Jefferson Davis and it urged the rebel agents to continue their plot. Conover said Thompson tried to enlist him in the plot and that Thompson said those to be assassinated were Lincoln, Johnson, Stanton, General Grant, Seward, and Judge Salmon Chase. Conover said he continued to question Thompson about the assassination, all the while sending his reports to the New York Tribune.

Thompson was outspoken and kept giving information to Conover, even going so far as to say that he was being paid by the hierarchy of the Confederacy to kill the Union's top officials.[161] It is understandable why such testimony was suppressed as it continued to tie the Confederacy to rebel agents in Canada as sources for the concept of assassination: a political end to the failing hopes of secession. Conover's testimony, never refuted, continues to stand as a basis for the theory that Lincoln's death was authorized in

---

[161] New York World, 5 June 1865.

Richmond, planned in Canada and executed by Booth and his accomplices in Washington.

While no new material had been entered by June 7, Townsend reported that onlookers as well as principals of the trial were watching defense counsel Reverdy Johnson, who was back in the courtroom after several days absence. Johnson prepared a closing argument to challenge all points of the prosecutor's evidence as well as the constitutionality of the trial itself.[162]

By June 10, Townsend again had been called away from the trial in Washington. In the June 10 edition, Townsend submitted an article dealing with the old forts around New York City and how they were being reconstructed since the end of the war. It must have been easy to call Townsend away from Washington since by June 10 the World, long tired of the slow, monotonous, stagnating trial proceedings, refrained from publishing long columns of testimony. The World merely published short synopses by its reporters of the arduous progress. The defense and prosecution did not help speed up the proceedings, rather they merely sparred on semantics of calling and recalling additional witnesses.

Before he returned to the trial, Townsend had written a story about past trials for treason and a travel piece on the newest summer resort at Newport, R. I. For Townsend, the resort story was not to be compared with the growing excitement of the trial in Washington. For by this time, the trial had closed, Judge Holt

---

[162]New York World, 7 June 1865.

recessing it for several days to allow counsel time to prepare its final arguments.

Townsend immediately returned to Washington from Providence, Rhode Island, where he covered commencement at Brown University. Judge Holt convened the commission on June 20, to hear the final arguments for the defendants.

Mrs. Surratt's counsel, Frederick Aiken, originally scheduled to submit his final arguments, declined because of lack of preparation. Nevertheless, fellow defense counsel, John Clampett, read the arguments of an ailing Reverdy Johnson to the tribunal. Johnson's arguments centered on the constitutionality of the trial--a theme that had been battered by the defense throughout the length of the proceedings. Johnson maintained during the trial that trying the defendants through a military court was a violation of the law, since the country was not in a state of war when Lincoln was shot. Even the city was not under martial law, although there were guards at all the exit roads out of Washington. Johnson listed several reasons why the court should have been convened, posing very strong arguments. However strong and convincing, his arguments fell on deaf ears. Johnson's persuasions also tended to be embarrassing, especially to the military commission since he flaunted army rules and regulations that would have put the trial in the civil courts under the panel of military men's noses. Unfortunately, the trial continued even when Johnson finished his arguments.[163]

---

[163]New York World, 20 June 1865.

On June 29, Judge Advocate John Bingham summed up the prosecution's case, relying mainly on the facts of the case and completely ignoring the question of jurisdiction by the military courts.

Not only did Bingham minutely detail the complicity of Booth's accomplices, he also linked Jefferson Davis and the rebel agents in Canada as framers of the assassination. Whereas, Reverdy Johnson's strong points as read by Clampett were surrounded with confusing, inciting rhetoric often cloudy and many times misleading, Bingham's remarks were clear, concise, direct and to the point. The clarity of his charges and use of simple sentences as opposed to Johnson's written legalese, must have weighed as a factor in determining sentences for the accomplices.[164]

The summations over, Townsend explained the next responsibility of the commission. The reporter said:

> The court meets to-morrow in secret session to render their verdict and pass sentence upon those whom they convict. The record is thus made up and sent sealed to Judge-Advocate Holt, who reviews it and sends it to the Secretary of War, by whom it is presented to the President for approval. The result is then made public. Public opinion generally concurs in the belief that Payne, Atzerodt and Herold only will be hung.[165]

In this particular instance, Townsend again passed the brink of objectivity, although he reflected accurately the general opinion of the people closely watching the trial.

On Friday, July 7, Washington was stunned to hear that Mrs. Surratt, in addition to David Herold, Lewis Payne and George

---

[164] New York World, 29 June 1865.

[165] Ibid.

Atzerodt, were to be hanged as accomplices in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The government news release showed that the four were to be hanged the following day. Dr. Mudd, Sam Arnold and Michael O'Laughlin were sentenced to life imprisonment, while Spangler received a six-year term at hard labor. Another reason the capital was shocked was the swiftness of the sentences. As Townsend said, the capital was shaken because the hanging was to be done within twenty-four hours of the reading of the verdict.[166] But Townsend was quick to recognize what all of Washington yearned to know. How did the prisoners react when they were told of their sentences? As the reporter said:

> Payne was as cool and unconcerned as when on trial. Atzerodt was completely unmannered and wept, and groaned bitterly. Herold seemed quite indifferent, and breathed easier when the ceremony was over. Later, he gave way to tears. Mrs. Surratt heard her verdict without any apparent emotion, but upon its conclusion begged the officers to extend her time since she was not prepared to die in so short a time, and finally asked for four more days.[167]

Townsend reported that all requests for clergymen were granted and that relatives of those sentenced to death were allowed access to the penitentiary. Almost as quickly as the verdicts were announced, counsel for Surratt and Herold began plans for appeal, and President Johnson had been urged to commute the sentence of Mrs. Surratt. Townsend also reported a rumor that four members of the commission signed a note to Johnson urging Surratt's sentence be commuted to life in prison.

---

[166] New York World, 7 July 1865.

[167] Ibid.

With such a quick sentencing, execution scaffolding had to be immediately erected. The scaffold was prepared through the night.

Townsend said that the prison yard was to be the scene of the execution and that no one would be admitted except on a special pass, and this privilege was limited to a few official witnesses and members of the press. The general public was excluded from the executions.

In the July 8 edition, Townsend confirmed his reputation as an avid reporter dissatisfied with a simple account of an event. He cemented his future with the most accurate and detailed version of the deaths of Booth's accomplices.

Townsend began his story by increasing reader tension. Speaking of the soldiers, the reporter wrote that they stood erect on the road from the arsenal gate guarding the way for the convicted assassins.

> The exhibition was the prelude to a very ghastly but popular episode--an execution. Three men and a woman were to be led out in shackles and hung to a beam. They had conspired to take life, they had thrilled the world with the partial consummation of their plot, they were to reach the last eminence of assassins.[168]

As the World reporter approached the gate at the arsenal in Washington, guards armed with rifles with fixed bayonets examined his pass and re-examined it carefully since many forgeries had been reported. Townsend reflected both the nature of man and the interest of the execution when he asked, "Is an execution, then, so

---

[168]New York World, 8 July 1865.

great a warning to evil-doers that man will commit forgery to see it?"[169]

The reporter was not without a description of the gallows, which served to heighten the tension surrounding the impending punishment. Surveying the scene, Townsend noticed another disturbing fact that would make the assassins even more fearful:

> Close by the foot of the gallows, four wooden boxes were piled upon each other at the edge of four newly excavated pits, the fresh earth of which was already dried and brittle in the noon sun. Here were to be interred the broken carcasses when the gallows had let go its prey. They were so placed that as the victims should emerge from the gaol door they would be seen near the stair directly in the line of march.[170]

Townsend reported that as everyone was milling about, he glanced outside the arsenal walls to a very high-roofed house. Atop the roof, spectators gathered in hopes of stealing a look at the hanging. But as Townsend said, those who were allowed to witness the hanging were filled with their own thoughts. He said some men were boasting over the number of executions they had witnessed, while others were asking fellow witnesses for whiskey. Cigar smoke hung heavy in the yard and as Townsend said, "There was a great deal of covert fear that a reprieve may be granted."[171]

Suddenly the door of the arsenal opened. Soldiers snapped to attention, sweat pouring down their faces. Spectators moved in closer to the scaffold. Reporters quickly put their pencils to paper.

---

[169] New York World, 8 July 1865.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Ibid.

A shudder came over the crowd as the prisoners entered the yard--they were not wearing the hooded sacks that Stanton had ordered them to wear during the process of the trial. The Secretary of War had invented an unusual and spectacular torture for them. He ordered eight heavy canvas hoods be made, padded an inch thick with cotton, with one small hole for eating, no openings either for eyes or ears. The prisoners were to wear the hoods day and night except when they were in the courtroom where the defendants were separated by soldiers. Stanton believed the hoods would keep the prisoners from talking when they were in their prison cells. But on the day of their death, they were spared the ignominy of the wretched hoods.

Townsend described Mrs. Surratt, the first to enter the yard, as "a middle-aged woman, dressed in black, bonnetted and veiled, walking between two bare-headed priests."[172]

Atzerodt followed; but Townsend's description was not as favorable. "The second party escorted a small and shambling German, whose head had a long white cap upon it, rendering more filthy his dull complexion and upon whose feet the chains clanked as he slowly advanced."[173]

The third station of guards and clergymen clustered around Herold, a short boy whose arms went limp upon seeing the gallows.

Payne continued to be the most enigmatic of the lot. Still emotionless, Payne walked out as "a barbarian walking in the shadow

---

[172] New York World, 8 July 1865.

[173] Ibid.

of his conqueror's triumph, rather than the assassin going to the gallows."[174]

All the victims, members of clergy, guards walked the stairs to the top of the gallows. There the prisoners were seated on chairs. Townsend watched as the victims were read the findings and warrants of the court as to their execution.

The reporter focused on Mrs. Surratt. "She was not so pale that the clearness of her complexion could not be seen, and the brightness of the sun made her veil quite transparent."[175] The priests continued their rites as she was masked. But while the reporter said she had lived a full life he also condemned her as a vital link in the plot to kill Lincoln.

Townsend described Payne as the "strangest criminal in our history, who sat dignified and self-possessed."[176] Of Payne, Townsend wrote, "He said no word; his eyes were red as with the penitential weeping of a courageous man. He had no accusation, no despair, no dreaminess."[177]

But Payne was not totally an insensitive man. Townsend said the large man occasionally glanced at Mrs. Surratt with the look of pity in his eyes. Nevertheless, as the reporter seemingly praised the criminal for his manner of accepting the punishment, he also

---

[174] New York World, 8 July 1865.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid.

criticized Payne as a human being, "I have a doubt that this man is entirely a member of our nervous race. I believe that a fiber of the aboriginal runs through his rough sinews."[178]

Townsend said he had trouble keeping in perspective that the criminals had plotted to kill a President and threatened the security of a nation. He felt, at some times, pity for the criminals, but, snapping back to reality, he said, "I remember that each would skin a sick old man."[179]

The World reporter said that Herold's actions on the scaffold surprised him. Townsend said he had expected Herold to be a whimpering coward but the youth looked "flippant-faced at the dangling noose before him."[180]

As for Atzerodt, Townsend also had mixed remarks:

> Atzerodt was my ideal of a man about to be hung--a dilution of Wallack's rendering of the last hours of Fagan, the Jew; a sort of brisk man, quite garrulous and smitten, with his head thrown forward, muttering to the air, and a pallidness transparent through his dirt as he jabbered prayers and pleas confusedly.[181]

After the charges were read, the priests addressed the crowd for the victims. Payne's clergyman conveyed Payne's wishes to thank all those who had taken good care of him during the proceedings. Herold's minister said that Herold wished to forgive those who had

---

[178] New York World, 8 July 1865.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid.

wronged him. The same appeal was made for Atzerodt. The priests for Mrs. Surratt wanted merely a moment of silence.[182]

Townsend said a shudder went through his body as they bound up Mrs. Surratt. As the ropes were being tied about her, she "half fainted and fell backwards, her limbs yielding to the extremity of terror."[183]

Atzerodt, as he was being tied, said, "Goodbye gentlemen, who are before me now. May we meet in the other world."[184]

A moment of silence ensued before the executioners were ready. The cord releasing the trap doors was pulled and all fell in one motion.

Mrs. Surratt died instantly of a broken neck. However, as Townsend reported, Payne died in misery:

> Payne died a horrible death, the knot slipped on the back of his neck, and bent his head forward on his heart, so that he strangled as he drew his deep chest almost to his chin, and the knees contracted till they almost seemed to touch his abdomen. The veins in his great wrists were like whip cords, expanded to twice their natural dimensions, and the huge neck grew almost black with the dark blood that rushed in a flood to the circling rope.[185]

Herold also suffered but Atzerodt apparently died quickly, like Mrs. Surratt. The reporter said, "They hung like bundles of

---

[182]New York World, 8 July 1865.

[183]Ibid.

[184]Ibid.

[185]Ibid.

carcasses and old clothes, four in a row, and past all conspiracy or ambition, the river rolling by without a sound."[186]

The reporter said that the bodies were allowed to hang there for about twenty minutes before they were cut down and buried in the shadow of the gallows.

Ending his report on the death of the assassins, Townsend said that he would repeat some of the reports of how the prisoners spent their last hours. Atzerodt received a female visitor who came for a short time and left. After she left, Atzerodt confessed his role in the assassination.

Townsend said that Herold slept well for several hours but in the hours he was awake he talked with his pastor. Payne talked with two doctors about religion, constantly sitting as erect as he had sat during the trial.

Mrs. Surratt had several visitors. Her daughter stayed with her throughout the night. Her counsel also visited her at one time during the night. As Townsend reported, she protested her innocence even to the end.[187]

Townsend's coverage for the World of the Lincoln assassins ended with his last paragraph on their deaths. In his conclusion, the reporter appears to sum up his devotion to journalism, his dedication to justice, as well as the role of the journalist in accurately reporting news to his readers.

---

[186] New York World, 8 July 1865.

[187] Ibid.

Townsend's fitting epitaph for the assassins, as well as his professional attitude, is as follows:

> Here ended the story of this tragedy upon tragedy. All are glad that it is done. I am glad particularly. It has sent me how many journeyings to Washington, how many hot midnights at the telegraph's office, how many gallops into wild places, and how much revolting familiarity with blood. The end has come. The slain, both good and evil, are in their graves, out of the reach of hangman and assassin. Only the correspondent never dies. He is the true Pantheist--going out of nature for a week, but bursting forth afresh every day and so insuring himself into the history of our era that it is beginning to be hard to find out where the event ends and the writer begins. On Monday night, Ford's Theater opens with the "Octeroon." The gas will be pearly as ever; the scenes as rich. The blood-stained foot-lights will flash as if old upon merry and mimicking faces. So the world has its tragic ebullitions; but its real career is comedy. Over the graves of the good and the scaffolds of the evil, sits the leering Momus across whose face death sometimes brings sleep, but never a wrinkle.[188]

No fitting description could be found to better show the reporter's scope on his trade than these, Townsend's own words, at the end of the trial of the Lincoln assassins.

---

[188] New York World, 8 July 1865.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

George Alfred Townsend continued to work for the New York World after the execution of the Lincoln assassins but he was never again to become involved in a story of such large proportions.

The Lincoln assassination, death of John Wilkes Booth and hanging of four of Booth's conspirators had a tremendous far-ranging effect--it shook the United States to its foundations.

As historians argue about different aspects of the "conspiracy" surrounding Lincoln's death, the reporter who brought Americans the news that Lincoln's assassin had been killed has eluded long-lasting fame and rests in obscurity. Townsend was a swift writer who could fill an entire broadsheet page of type in a matter of minutes. World compositor George Bartholomew already praised Townsend's talent in this area. The World reporter demonstrated this ability on many occasions during his work on the assassination. His stories alone on the death of Booth and the execution of the conspirators filled entire front pages and many columns on the paper's inside pages. Even the World's managing editor, David Goodman Croly, admired Townsend's reporting during this troubled period in American history.

Townsend's stories were painstakingly detailed and accurate; so much so that contemporary historians have used Townsend's writing as source material for their own books and interpretations on the death of Lincoln and the fate of John Wilkes Booth. A master of the human interest story, Townsend also was a perfectionist when it came to detailing a hard news story. Townsend grossly overwrote a story to include all the details he felt pertinent.

Such was the case when he described Washington shortly after Lincoln's death, Lincoln's White House while the President was lying in state, the scene at Garrett's farmhouse when Booth was discovered and finally the scene at the Old Arsenal courtyard where the conspirators were hanged. All serve as perfect examples of Townsend's ability to capture and organize the most minute details into a smooth, flowing and breathing story.

In addition to his speed, Townsend also enhanced his reputation as a dedicated reporter. No other reporter went with Baker's troops to capture Booth, yet Townsend, already suspicious of Booth's plans to travel South, rode along.

It is to Townsend's ingenuity and enterprise in reporting credit must be given for the stories of Booth's death. Because of his scoop, Townsend's reports on the actor's death were reprinted in hundreds of papers in the country.

Besides these reports, Townsend even wrote a brief biography of the actor to accompany his story on the assassin's death. The biography itself was as interesting to read as Townsend's dispatch on Booth's final hours.

Another factor that helped Townsend during this three-month period was his notoriety. He had already received high praise, from no less than now-famous reporter Henry Stanley, for his account of the Battle of Five Forks. Government officials seldom closed their doors to him.

For example, Townsend was allowed to walk the halls of the East Room alone while Lincoln lay in state. He visited Mary Todd Lincoln in the White House during the trial of the conspirators and was even the first member of the press to receive a pass to view the execution of the conspirators. His reports and features during this period, as well as the high praise bestowed upon him by esteemed peers Croly, Bartholomew and Stanley, prove that Townsend was no mediocre writer and reporter.

His rapid-paced writing, accurate attention to detail and already-established reputation helped Townsend boost his stature during the period of the Lincoln assassination, so much so that he enjoyed the fruits of his reporting even until his twilight years.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Published Books

The Assassination and History of the Conspiracy, A Complete Digest of the Whole Affair from Its Inception to Its Culmination. Cincinnati: J. R. Hawley, 1865.

Baker, La Fayette C. History of the United States Secret Service. Philadelphia: By the Autor, 1867.

Bingham, John Armor. Trial of the Conspirators for the Assassination of President Lincoln. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865.

The Lincoln Memorial: A Record of the Life, Assassination and Obsequies of the Martyred President. New York: Bunce and Huntington, 1865.

Mudd, Nettie, ed. The Life of Doctor Samuel Alexander Mudd. Marietta, Ga.: Continental Books, 1955.

Pitman, Benn. Assassination of President Lincoln and Trial of the Conspirators. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1954.

Poore, Benjamin Perley. The Conspiracy Trial for the Murder of the President. Boston: J. E. Tilton, 1865-1866.

Townsend, George Alfred. Campaigns of a Non-Combatant and His Romaunt Abroad During the War. New York: Blelock and Company, 1866.

_____. Rustics in Rebellion. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1950.

_____. Washington, Outside and Inside. Hartford, Conn. and Chicago, Ill.: James Betts and Company, 1873.

Magazine and Journal Articles

Baker, R. S. "The Capture and Death of John Wilkes Booth," McClure's Magazine 9 (October 1893): 574.

Blinn, H. C. "How I Lost $100,000: Trial of One of the Conspirators Who Plotted the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln." Overland Monthly 59 (January 1912): 21-23.

"Booth and Lincoln - An Unpublished Account." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 77 (April 1909): 917-918.

Brown, E. C. "The Death of Lincoln." Chautauguan 31 (June 1900): 521.

Clampett, J. W. "The Trial of Mrs. Surratt." North American Review 131 (April 1880): 223.

Ford, J. T. "The Vindication of Mrs. Surratt." North American Review 148 (April 1889): 484.

Holt, J. and Speed, J. "New Facts About Mrs. Surratt." North American Review 147 (July 1888): 83.

Leale, C. A. "Lincoln's Last Hours." Harper's Magazine 53 (February 1909): 7-10.

Mason, V. L. "Conspiracies Against Four." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 29 (April 1899): 889.

_____. "Four Lincoln Conspiracies; Including New Particulars of the Flight and Capture of the Assassin." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 51 (April 1896): 889-891.

Ruggles, M. B. and Doherty, E. P. "The Pursuit and Death of John Wilkes Booth." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 39 (January 1890): 443-449.

Shepard, J. A. "Lincoln's Assassination As Told By An Eyewitness." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 77 (April 1909): 919-920.

Speed, J. "The Assassins of Lincoln." North American Review 147 (July 1888): 314.

Townsend, George Alfred. "A Winter with the American Peripatetics." Galaxy Magazine 1 (May 1866): 57-66.

_____. "An American Colony in France." Galaxy Magazine 1 (July 1866): 387-394.

_____. "An American War Correspondent in England." Harper's New Monthly Magazine 30 (January 1865): 229-235.

_____. "Campaigning with General Pope." Cornhill Magazine 6 (December 1862): 758-770.

_____. "Demagogues." Chautauguan 17 (June 1893): 308-313.

Townsend, George Alfred. "How Wilkes Booth Crossed the Potomac." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 5 (March 1884): 822-832.

_____. "Jay Gould." Forum 2 (September 1886): 87-95.

_____. "New Washington." Harper's New Monthly Magazine 50 (February 1875): 306-322.

_____. "Recollections and Reflections." Lippincott's Monthly Magazine 38 (November 1886): 515-524.

_____. "The Chesapeake Peninsula." Scribner's Monthly 3 (March 1872): 513-524.

_____. "The Circuit Preacher." Galaxy Magazine 1 (August 1866): 684-686.

_____. "The Newspaper for the Day." Writer Magazine 2 (March 1888): 49-51.

Wallace, Lew. "Prevention of Presidential Assassinations." North American Review 173 (December 1901): 721-726.

Weik, J. W. "New Story of Lincoln's Assassination." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 85 (February 1913): 559-562.

Welles, Giddeon. "The Death of Lincoln." Atlantic Monthly 104 (November 1909): 586-593.

Newspapers

"Assassination of Lincoln." The London Observer, 30 April 1865, sec. 1, p. A2.

"The Assassination of President Lincoln." Nor'wester (Winnipeg, Manitoba), 13 May 1865, sec. 1, p. A2.

Charleston Daily Courier, April 20-July 12, 1865.

"Execution of the Assassins." Harrisburg Daily Telegraph, 6 July 1865, sec. 1, p. A1.

"News from the States - Execution of the Conspirators." The London Observer, 23 July 1865, sec. 1, p. A3.

The New York Times, April 16-July 19, 1865.

The New York World, April 12-July 14, 1865.

The Patriot and Union (Harrisburg, Pa.), April 16-July 8, 1865.

The Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph (Harrisburg, Pa.), April 16-July 5, 1865.

Special Collections

Townsend, George Alfred. The George Alfred Townsend Collection, 1864-1913. Personal correspondence, diaries and scrapbooks of George Alfred Townsend. The Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

_____. The George Alfred Townsend Collection. Personal effects and letters of Townsend's. The Morris Library, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware.

Secondary Sources

Published Books

A Catalog of the Alfred Stern Collection of Lincolniana. Washington, D.C.: United States Library of Congress, 1960.

Andrews, J. Cutler. The North Reports the Civil War. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955.

Angle, Paul McClelland. A Shelf of Lincoln Books. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1946.

The Assassination and History of the Conspiracy; A One Hundred Year Old Chronicle of the Assassination of President Abraham Lincoln from the Early Plotting to the Execution of the Conspirators. New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965.

The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1954.

Babcock, Mrs. Bernie (Snade). Booth and the Spirit of Lincoln. Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott, 1925.

Barrett, Frank William Zelotes. Mourning for Lincoln. Philadelphia: J. C. Winston, 1909.

Basler, Roy Prentice. The Lincoln Legend. New York: Octagon Press, 1969.

Bates, Finis Langdon. The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth. No data.

Bishop, James Alonzo. The Day Lincoln Was Shot. 1st ed. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955.

Borreson, Ralph. When Lincoln Died. 1st ed. New York: Appleton - Century, 1965.

Brooks, Stewart M. Our Murdered Presidents: The Medical Story. New York: F. Fell, 1966.

Bullard, F. Lauriston. Famous War Correspondents. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1914.

Coleman, John Winston. The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Capture of John Wilkes Booth. Lexington, KY.: By the Author, 1969.

Cottrell, John. Anatomy of an Assassination. London: Miller, 1966.

Crozier, Robert Haskins. The Bloody Junto or the Escape of John Wilkes Booth. Little Rock: Woodruff and Blocher, 1869.

Eisenschiml, Otto. Why Was Lincoln Murdered? Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937.

Elliott, Ian, ed. Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865. Dobb's Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1970.

Higdon, Hal. The Union vs. Dr. Mudd. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1964.

Hindes, Ruthanna. George Alfred Townsend. Wilmington, Del.: Hambleton Printing and Publishing Company, 1946.

Houser, Martin Luther. Lincoln Topics. Peoria, Ill.: Bradley University Press, 1951.

Johnson, Byron Berkeley. Abraham Lincoln and Boston Corbett. Waltham, Mass.: B. B. Johnson, 1914.

Kennelly. Ardyth. The Spur. New York: J. Messner, 1957.

Kunhardt, Dorothy (Meserve). Twenty Days. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

Laughlin, Clara Elizabeth. The Death of Lincoln. New York: Doubleday, 1909.

Lewis, Lloyd. Myths After Lincoln. New York: Press of the Readers Club, 1941.

Matheney, H. Major General Thomas Maly Harris. Parsons, W. Va.: McClain Printing, 1963.

McKinley, James. Assassination in America. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Monaghan, James. Lincoln Bibliography. Springfield, Ill.: Illinois State Historical Library, 1943-1945.

Moore, Guy. The Case of Mrs. Surratt. 1st ed. Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954.

Potter, John Mason. Plots Against Lincoln. New York: Astor Honor, 1968.

Roscoe, Theodore. The Web of Conspiracy. Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1960.

Sandburg, Carl. Abraham Lincoln. Vol. VI. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939.

Sands, Bryan George. The Great American Myth. New York: Garrick and Evans, 1940.

Scharf, J. T. The History of Delaware 1609-1888. Philadelphia: Publisher unknown, 1888.

Searcher, Victor. Lincoln Today. New York: T. Yoseloff, 1969.

_____. The Farewell to Lincoln. New York: Abington Press, 1965.

Shelton, Vaughan. Mask for Treason. 1st ed. Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1965.

Snyder, Louis L. and Morris, Richard B., eds. A Treasury of Great Reporting. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962.

Speed, James. Opinion on the Constitutional Power of the Military to Try and Execute the Assassins of the President. Washginton: Government Printing Office, 1865.

Stacton, David. The Judge of the Secret Court. New York: Pantheon Books, 1961.

Starr, Louis M. The Bohemian Brigade. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1954.

Stein, M. L. Under Fire: The Story of American War Correspondents. New York: Julian Messner, 1968.

Thomas, Benjamin Platt. Portrait for Posterity. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1947.

_____, ed. Three Years With Grant As Recalled by War Correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956.

Weisberger, Bernard A. Reporters for the Union. Boston: Little, Brown and Comany, 1953.

Magazine and Journal Articles

"An Interviewer Interviewed--A Talk With Gath." Lippincott's Monthly Magazine 48 (November 1891): 630-638.

Barbee, D. R. "The Phoenix Next." Saturday Review 29 (February 1945) 1946): 62.

Burger, N. K. "Honors for Dr. Mudd." The New York Times Magazine (October 4, 1959): 81-82.

Clarke, Asa Booth. "Unlocked Book - A Memoir of John Wilkes Booth." Saturday Review 18 (October 1938): 38.

Clark, D. "It Was Booth's Body." Harper's Magazine 188 (February 1944): 210-218.

Crook, W. H. "Might Lincoln's Life Have Been Saved?" Harper's Magazine 53 (February 1909): 30.

"Dr. Mudd Kept His Oath." Newsweek 54 (October 1959): 77.

Eisenschiml, Otto. "Reopening the Lincoln Case." Saturday Review 15 (March 1939): 10.

Ferguson, W. J. "Lincoln's Death." Saturday Evening Post 199 (February 1927): 37-49.

Fiske, A. "His Name Was Mudd." Today's Health 15 (February 1937): 110-111.

Fletcher, L. B. "The Assassination of Lincoln." Chautauguan 31 (June 1900): 243-244.

"Ford's Theatre - 1865 and Today." The New York Times Magazine (July 18, 1954): 20-21.

Frazier, J. E. "It Was On One Good Friday." Reader's Digest 86 (April 1965): 76-78.

Garrett, R. B. "Booth - End of a Manhunt." American Heritage 17 (June 1966): 40-43.

"He Belongs to the Ages." Senior Scholastic 85 (April 1965): 5.

Hertz, E. "At Ford's Theatre - 75 Years Ago Tonight." The New York Times Magazine (April 14, 1940): 4-5.

Higdon, H. "The Incredible Ordeal of Dr. Mudd." Today's Health 40 (April 1962): 36-37.

Hopkins, S. "The Assassination of President Lincoln." Saint Nicholas 49 (May 1922): 676-680.

"How John Wilkes Booth's Friend Described His Crime." Literary Digest 88 (March 1926): 58-60.

"A Hundred Years Ago." Life 58 (April 1965): 661-675.

Hynd, A. "The Other Plot to Kill Lincoln." Reader's Digest 88 (February 1966): 92.

King, H. "Judge Holt and the Lincoln Conspirators." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 39 (April 1890): 955-957.

Knox, J. S. "The Son Writes of the Supreme Tragedy." Saturday Review 39 (February 1956): 11.

Kunhardt, D. M. "Assassination! An Excerpt from Twenty Days." American Heritage 16 (August 1965): 12-35.

_____. "Lincoln Died Here Two Hours Before." Life 50 (April 1961): 12-15.

_____. "Rare Photographs of Abraham Lincoln's Exhumation." Life 54 (February 1963): 83-85.

"The Lights Are On At Ford's Theatre." National Geographic 137 (March 1970): 392-401.

"Lincoln's Funeral - Rare Still Photographs." Life 28 (April 1950): 11-15.

Loughlin, C. E. "The Death of Lincoln; The Story of Booth's Plot, Deed and Penalty." Bookman 29 (November 1909): 84-89.

MacCulloch, C. "This Man Saw Lincoln Shot." Good Housekeeping 84 (February 1927): 20-21.

McKibbin, F. L., Jr. "The Fortress That Became A National Monument." Travel 87 (May 1946): 27-30.

Miers, E. S. "Epilogue to Ford's Theatre." Saturday Review 37 (July 1954): 16.

Morris, C. "Recollections of John Wilkes Booth." McClure's Magazine 16 (March 1899): 299.

Moss, M. H. P. "Lincoln and Booth As Seen On the Day of the Assassination." Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 77 (April 1909): 950-953.

"Mrs. Surratt's Case." Newsweek 22 (August 1942): 72.

"A Peephole Let Booth See the Man He Hated." Life 64 (March 1968): 80.

"Portrait." Saturday Review 19 (February 1939): 11.

"Portrait - John Wilkes Booth." Scribner's Magazine 29 (March 1899): 174.

"Prisoner of Shark Island." Literary Digest 121 (February 1936): 22.

"The Prisoner of Shark Island Whose Name Was Mudd." Newsweek 7 (February 1936): 31.

"Prologue to Assassination." Life 40 (February 1956): 14-16.

Rankin, M. "News of Lincoln's Death Including Two Stories of John Wilkes Booth." American Magazine 67 (January 1909): 759-762.

Roscoe, T. "Excerpts from The Web of Conspiracy." Reader's Digest 76 (February 1960): 248-250.

Roth, Christian and Gray, A. "The Fate of the Conspirators." McClure's Magazine 37 (October 1911): 626-636.

Shaw, E. R. "The Assassination of Lincoln." McClure's Magazine 32 (December 1908): 181-185.

Shelton, V. "The Mask for Treason - Lincoln's Murder Trial." Saturday Review 48 (January 1965): 32-33.

Shepard, W. G. "Shattering the Myth of John Wilkes Booth's Escape." Harper's Magazine 149 (November 1924): 702-719.

_____. "They Tried to Stop Booth." Collier's National Weekly 74 (December 1924): 12.

Stern, Philip Van Doren. "The Man Who Killed Lincoln." Holiday 15 (June 1954): 102-103.

_____. "The Man Who Killed Lincoln." Reader's Digest 34 (March 1939): 68-77.

_____. "Unknown Conspirator." American Heritage 8 (February 1957): 54-59.

Thompson, J. W., Jr. "The Murder of Abraham Lincoln." American Mercury 41 (July 1937): 366-372.

Tilton, C. C. "The First Plot Against Lincoln." The New Republic 23 (February 1936): 5-7.

"To the Memory of Lincoln." Collier's National Weekly 42 (February 1909): 9.

Van Ark, D. H. "New Light on Lincoln's Death." The Saturday Evening Post 216 (February 1944): 82.

Wefer, M. and Keckley, E. "Another Assassination, Another Widow, Another Embattled Book - Excitement Behind the Scenes." American Heritage 18 (August 1967): 79-88.

"When Did John Wilkes Booth Die?" Literary Digest 91 (December 1926) 40-41.

"Woods, F. L. "Fort Jefferson - Bastille of the Gulf." Travel 66 (February 1936): 34-38.

Woodward, S. B. "Innocent or Guilty - Reply to A. Fiske." Today's Health 15 (March 1937): 75-76.

Newspaper Articles

"Delaware Civil War Writer May Lie in News Fame Hall." Newspaper unknown, 14 September 1962, page and section number also unknown. This article was sent, minus the name of the author, newspaper and page number, from the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, Dover, Delaware.

Theses and Other Papers

Turner, T. "Public Opinion: The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln, The Trial of the Conspirators and the Trial of John H. Surratt." Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University Graduate School, 1971.