

# The Surratt Courier

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Louise Oertly, Editor

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As this July is the 155<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lincoln assassination, I thought it would be interesting to reprint some of the period newspaper articles that have appeared in past issues of *The Surratt Courier*. When I started going through the *Courier's* index, I realized I needed to narrow down my search and decided to concentrate on Mary's execution and her daughter Anna dealing with the aftermath.

Many of the news clippings were reprints from another city's newspaper, so I preferred to go to the original source, when possible. While verifying the dates of the newspaper articles on newspapers.com, I stumbled across the following article. You never know what you'll find, when reading old newspapers. Unfortunately, you can't just read the article you are trying to find.

This article appeared in the July 22, 1865, issue of the *Burlington Times*.

### **"Curiosity Hunters"**

"The persistent curiosity and activity of relic hunters is astonishing. The portico in front of the Surratt house, at Washington, has been literally hacked to pieces by these morbid persons, and one went so far the other day, as to offer a colored servant of the house \$100 for any piece of Mrs. Surratt's wearing apparel she could secure."

I knew that souvenir hunters were doing the same at the Petersen house. William Petersen came home to find his house invaded by strangers, locked rooms broken into, carpets and linens ruined, and souvenir hunters chipping away at his house. In fact, Mr. Petersen finally decided to make money by charging the outrageous sum of 50 cents for the privilege of viewing the room where Lincoln died--much to Willie Clark's dismay. As Willie put it, "Everybody has a great desire to obtain some memento from my room, so that whoever comes in has to be closely watched for fear they will steal something". According to one source, thousands willingly paid for that privilege.

As we have almost depleted Laurie's stockpile of articles (hint, hint), you will find that I will be reprinting articles from the early days of the Surratt Society. I hope you enjoy reading them, or in some cases rereading them.

Keep safe.

Louise Oertly, President

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*This newsletter is a monthly publication of The Surratt Society, a non-profit volunteer affiliate of the Surratt House Museum, a historic property of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 9118 Brandywine Road, Clinton, MD 20735. Museum phone number is (301) 868-1121. Annual Surratt Society membership is \$10. Visit our website: [surrattmuseum.org](http://surrattmuseum.org)*

## NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS ABOUT THE SURRETT LADIES

Over the years, our members have shared newspaper articles that they found on the Surratt ladies, Mary and Anna. My starting point will be Mary Surratt's execution and Ann's quest to give her mother a Christian burial. There will also be information on Anna's marriage and her own death. I have noted both the clipping's original publication information, wherever possible, and its publication date in the *Courier*. Also noted will be who provided the information. Some were just the clipping. Others were incorporated in larger articles, but all of them, except one, were published in the *Courier* last century. I hope you enjoy reading them this century.

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### SOME NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS ABOUT THE SURRETT

Provided by Dr. Joseph George, Jr.  
Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, March 1985

The following four newspaper articles, originally printed in the 1860s, reflect the sadness that befell the Surratt family as a result of the assassination of President Lincoln and the trial of the alleged conspirators involved.

The first item appeared in the July 22, 1865, issue of the *New York Freeman's Journal* on the front page. It deals with the efforts of Mrs. Surratt's attorneys to obtain her body for burial on the day she was executed. The documents quoted are still extant in the War Department Records, National Archives, and shows that the reporter was accurate in his account.

#### **Efforts to Secure Mrs. Surratt's Corpse for a Christian Burial** (Reprinted from the *Washington Constitutional Union*)

Before the body of Mrs. Surratt was cut down, her friends asked General Hancock for permission to remove the corpse and had in waiting Mr. Harvey, the undertaker.

General Hancock said he had no authority to grant the request, and referred the friends to the Secretary of War. They went immediately to the Secretary's office...and being refused permission to see him, the following note was sent to him:

*Washington, D.C., July 7, 1865*  
*To the Hon. Secretary of War:*

*Sir—The friends of Mrs. Surratt, whose sphere in life has not been widely different from that of other competent and respectable people, desire and earnestly ask permission to remove her body from its present grave in the enclosure of the Arsenal prison, and to be permitted to give it a Christian burial. They desire to do this this afternoon.*

*Yours, very respectfully,*  
*Fred. A. Aiken*  
*J.A. Clampitt*

In a few minutes, the above was returned, with the following endorsement on the back:

*Referred to the Judge Advocate-General...for report, and give such directions as to the disposal of the body as he deems proper.*

*Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War  
July 7, 1865*

General Holt...at last sent the following verbal message to Mr. Aiken, through one of his clerks, a Mr. Wright:

*Request will be considered, and at a proper time may be complied with, but not at present.*

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The second item, also from the *New York Freeman's Journal*, September 9, 1865, page 3, provided a glimpse of the grief affecting the daughter for her dead mother. Note that Miss Surratt is referred to as Annie.

### **Miss Annie Surratt—Sympathy for Her**

The Washington correspondent of the *Chicago Times* thus alludes to the unhappy young woman who through the bloody mistake of political factions is now an orphan. He says:

“The many friends of Miss Annie Surratt will be glad to learn that her health has greatly improved within a week or two, although she is far from being the happy, joyous girl that she once was. Hundreds of sympathizing friends have called to see her during the last ten days, but to most of them she begged to be excused. She feels deeply the kindness which they manifest, but she is not yet equal to the duties of society. Indeed, a deep and settled melancholy seems to have taken entire possession of her nature. She never smiles, and the expression of her face is that of agony struggling with resignation. Her only relief is the consolation of religion, and if it were not for that she would probably die. Her greatest grief is that she is not allowed to lay the remains of her mother in consecrated ground, not to say a prayer over her last resting place. She lives only in hopes of being able to do this, and it only needs one word from the Secretary of War to enable her to do it. Why is his permission withhold? Is not justice yet satisfied? Were not the requirements of the law fulfilled, when the life of the probably innocent woman was taken? Must vengeance pursue her beyond her tomb?”

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The third article, this time, is from the front page of the February 9, 1869, issue of *The Press* (Philadelphia). It deals with President Andrew Johnson's action, a month before he left office, to allow her family to claim Mrs. Surratt's body, as well as her re-interment in Mount Oliver Cemetery. The Mr. Towne mentioned was William Tonry, Annie's future husband.

## Remains of Mrs. Surratt

The President issued an order, yesterday morning, for the delivery of the remains of Mrs. Surratt to Father [J.A.] Walter of St. Patrick's Church, of this city, and yesterday afternoon at three o'clock, that gentleman, in company with Mr. Towne and Harvey & Marr, Undertakers, proceeded at once to the Arsenal, and the remains were disinterred. Immediately after the execution, Mrs. Surratt's remains, with those of Payne, Harold [sic.], and Atzerodt, executed at the same time, were placed in boxes and interred in graves near the scaffold, her body being at the north end of the row and the others adjoining her remains in the same order named above. The body of Booth was also buried near there, that is, inside the old Penitentiary building, near the main door of the warden's residence. The body of Wirz, the Andersonville jailer, was placed in the yard adjoining the body of Atzerodt. A wooden fence was erected around the graves, and a wooden headboard, with the name of the person buried below, placed at each grave.

In the fall of 1867, when the demolition of the Penitentiary building was determined on, it became necessary to remove the bodies, and they were buried in the warehouse known as No. 1, the second building below the principal office, the bodies being placed under the flagging. Mrs. Surratt's was laid next to the north wall of the building, and the others adjoining in the following order: Payne, Harold, Atzerodt, Wirz, and Booth. There the bodies of all remained until yesterday. The coffin, when lifted, was in tolerable condition and, when opened, the remains were found to be in an excellent state of preservation. The face, though black, was yet perfect in feature, and the whole body compact and firm. The dress looked well, and the gaiter shoes appeared to be not the least soiled. Upon the day of her execution, her daughter Annie, who visited her, took from her bonnet a steel arrow and stuck it upon her mother's dress close up to the neck, which remained where it had been placed by her daughter. The bottle, with the name of Mrs. Surratt written upon a piece of parchment within, was also in the coffin and, without shifting anything, the coffin was placed in the undertaker's wagon and driven to Mount Olivet Cemetery, where the remains were transferred to a handsome walnut coffin, and then placed in the vault until today. Annie Surratt, her brother Isaac, a lady friend of the family, Father Walter, and Mr. Towne will be present at the funeral, which will take place tomorrow at two and a half o'clock. It is intended that the interment shall be conducted with strictest privacy and, with the exception of the undertaker and those mentioned, no others will be present.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The files of John C. Brennan provide the answer why John H. Surratt was not present at the reburial. The *Washington Star* of February 18, 1869, reported that John had not yet returned from a voyage to South America, taken with a view to regaining his health. Major Henry Wirz, mentioned in the article, was the commandant of Andersonville prison, who was hanged in November 1865, after a trial before a military commission in Washington, D.C.

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The final article, also taken from *The Press*, the June 19, 1869, issue on page 8, recounts the marriage of Annie E. Surratt to William P. Tonry. But even on this occasion, the sorrow associated with the Lincoln assassination and its aftermath intrude. Most ironic, perhaps, is that

the bridegroom was then serving as a clerk in the office of the Surgeon General of the Army, headquartered at Ford's Theatre.

**Marriage of Miss Annie E. Surratt**  
(From the *Washington Republican* of yesterday)

Miss Annie E. Surratt, only daughter of the late Mary Surratt, was united in marriage with Mr. William P. Tonry, yesterday morning at 11 o'clock, at St. Patrick's Church, corner of F and Tenth Streets, the service being performed by the pastor, Rev. J.A. Walter, assisted by his associate, Rev. J.J. Keane, assistant pastor of that church.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Father Walter addressed a few remarks to the happy couple, after which the party proceeded in carriages to the Baltimore depot, leaving the city on the 12:30 train for New York on their bridal tour. The bride was neatly attired in a light drab traveling dress and appeared in better health than she has enjoyed for several years.

It was the desire of the parties that the marriage should be strictly private, and the usual publication of the bans was for this reason dispensed with by Archbishop Spalding. There were no bride's maids or groom's men. The bride was attended by her brother Isaac, and John H. Surratt occupied a seat in the pew directly in front of the altar. These and a few ladies and gentlemen, intimate acquaintance of the bridal party, were the only witnesses of the nuptial ceremony. Miss Surratt was for some time past engaged in teaching school in Baltimore, but recently resigned the position. Mr. Tonry is a young man engaged in the department of chemistry at the Surgeon General's office and is highly esteemed by all who know him.

The coincidences associated with the event of yesterday form a singular chapter in the history of a matter that has attracted world-wide attention. The officiating clergymen were intimate acquaintances of the Surratt family. Father Walter, it will be remembered, was the spiritual advisor of Mrs. Surratt during the trial of the assassination conspirators, and attended her in her last moments. Father Keane was an intimate friend of John H. Surratt, with whom he had been associated in boyhood days, both being companions at St. Charles College in Maryland.

It was also the anniversary of the empaneling of the jury to try the case of John H. Surratt, who was charged with complicity in the murder of President Lincoln...; while the avocation of the gentleman, who married Miss Surratt, is in the very building where the President received the fatal shot that led to the execution of the lady's mother.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A finale to the wedding just described occurred three days after Elizabeth Susanna Surratt became Mrs. William P. Tonry. On June 21, 1869, paragraph 3 of Special Orders No. 149, issued by command of General Sherman, decreed that, "By direction of the Secretary of War, Hospital Seward W.P. Tonry, U.S. Army, being no longer needed, he will be discharged from the service of the United States, to date July 1, 1869, upon the receipt of this order at the place where he may be serving."

## MORE RELATED CLIPPINGS

Also found were the following items, which complement the clippings presented in Dr. George's article.

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Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, March 1985

As a follow-up to the February 9, 1869, article from *The Press* of Philadelphia relating to the reburial of Mrs. Surratt, the following item from the Surratt House files appeared in *The Evening Star* on the same day in 1869.

### Removal of the Remains of Mrs. Surratt

#### Their Interment at Mount Olivet Cemetery

As we stated in yesterday's *Star*, the remains of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt were removed yesterday from the Arsenal grounds and carried to Mount Olivet Cemetery, where this afternoon, they were interred. On Saturday last, Rev. J.A. Walter of St. Patrick's Church, the spiritual adviser of the deceased, who with Rev. B.F. Wiget of St. Aloysius (now in Europe) attended her in her last moments, received from President Johnson the assurance that an order would be issued for the delivery of the remains to him and he immediately called on Messrs. Harvey and Marr, undertakers, and made arrangements for them to take charge of the body.

About 12 o'clock yesterday, Rev. Father Walter...and Mr. Tonnerly [sic.], a friend of the family, called on General Ramsey, Commanding at the Arsenal, with an official notification that such order had been issued. General Ramsey directed Major Hill to have the remains disinterred; and Mr. Tatsepough, about 2 o'clock, set two men to work, who by 3 o'clock had reached the case containing the remains and had placed ropes beneath it, preparatory to raising it. As stated yesterday, the remains of Mrs. Surratt were placed next to the north wall of the building—Payne, Herold, Atzerodt, Wirz, and Booth laying in the order named southward. There was about four feet of earth above the case and on removing it the adjacent case containing the remains of Payne was disclosed to view. The trench in which they all rested was about 15 to 18 feet in length and 8 feet wide.

Mr. R.F. Harvey, about 3 o'clock, arrived at the Arsenal grounds with his wagon and found there Rev. Father Walter, Miss Anna Surratt, the daughter of the deceased, and Mr. Tonnerly. The body was placed in the wagon and followed by those named above to Mount Olivet Cemetery, where it was deposited in the vault. The case in which the remains were in is six feet in length and twenty-two inches in width, and although of common white pine, is in good state of preservation. On the top of it was nailed the white headboard with the name "MRS. M. E. SURRATT" in black letters, which had been put at the head of the grave shortly after the remains were first interred.

On opening the case, the body was found to be much decomposed, there being but little flesh remaining; and the head laid to one side. The black dress, gaiters and silk bow at the neck were found to be in good state of preservation and the little arrow-shaped pin placed in the bow at the neck by the daughter, just before she took her last leave, was found in the same position.

Her hair was in perfect preservation and the undertaker, at the request of some of the family, cut off a portion for her friends.

This morning, a plain walnut coffin trimmed with merino was taken to the cemetery in which the remains were placed in the presence of several of the intimate friends of the deceased. Mr. Patrick Duffey, the Superintendent of the cemetery, at the instance of Rev. Father Walter, had the grave prepared for the reception of the remains. The grave is situated but a short distance from that of the lamented Col. J.P. Garnsche, in the northeaster position of the cemetery.

### **The Burial**

During the morning, the coffin was placed in a deal case and set on a bier in the chapel, preparatory to its burial. The lot on which the grave is dug is known as Lot 31, Section F, bordering on Olivet and St. Dominick's Avenues.

When the corpse was removed, a parchment slip in a vial, with the name Mary E. Surratt was found under her arm—this vial having been placed in the case by the military authorities.

At 12 o'clock, several carriages entered the grounds and proceeded immediately to the chapel, where the occupants formed around the bier. Among them were the daughter, Miss Anna Surratt, and Miss Fitzpatrick as mourners. Mrs. T.A. Stephens, Miss McCalla, Mrs. T. Berry, Mrs. Wm. Wall, Mrs. J.F. Ellis, Messrs. J.H. Kellager, A. Jackson, J.W. Drane, and Tonnyery.

The services of the church were performed by Rev. Father Walter, assisted by Rev. Father Keane. At the conclusion of the service, the corpse was removed to the grave, where the services were concluded.

Miss Anna Surratt and Miss Fitzpatrick seemed greatly affected during the services.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Again, Tonnyery is a misspelling of Tonny.

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At one time, Mrs. Surratt's original tombstone was on display at the Surratt House. Over the years, its existence is all but forgotten, except for the few who remember seeing it. The following is from the *Surratt Courier's* January 1983 and the April 2009 issues.

### **The Surratt Tombstone**

by Laurie Verge

Over the years, we at the Surratt House have been told that Mrs. Surratt's grave remained unmarked until 1878, when a stonemason donated a simple marker bearing the image of a full-blown rose with a broken stem and the simple inscription, "Mrs. Surratt." It remained on the grave for 100 years until it was knocked over and allowed to remain down on the grave. It broke into pieces and was going to be thrown out, until a member of the Surratt Society (John Brennan) salvaged it and gave it to the Surratt House, where it is in storage today. The cemetery replaced the stone with an engraving of a cross and still just "Mrs. Surratt" engraved upon it. A bronze plaque that they placed on the grave with a brief history was ordered removed by the family and is also stored at the Surratt House.

The 1983 also article states that:

Mr. Barry of the Catholic Cemeteries of the Washington Archdiocese visited Surratt House recently and made a “rubbing” from the marker, it will be placed in the official archives of the Archdiocese and is the only record they will have of her original monument.

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### **REQUEST FOR MRS. SURRATT’S BODY FOUND**

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, September 1980

Associate member Art Loux has tipped us off that the papers of George S. Bryan, author of the well-known Booth book, *The Great American Myth*, are in the annex of the New York Public Library. Mr. Loux and Mr. Richard Sloan, editor of *The Lincoln Log*, have found many interest articles in Bryan’s Lincoln-Booth file—including an undated letter from Anna Surratt, daughter of John and Mary Surratt, to President Andrew Johnson. It reads:

*His Excellency The President of the United States – The undersigned most earnestly and respectfully addresses your Excellency on a matter, which has been for more than three years to her a source of great affliction. She seeks the privilege of removing the remains of her deceased mother, to have them interred in consecrated ground. She fondly hopes that your Excellency will not allow your authority in the premises to expire without granting this request, prompted only by filial love and devotion to the memory of her dead mother.*

*(signed) Anna Surratt*

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EDITOR’S NOTE: The original note is in the Andrew Johnson Papers according to Guy Moore, author of *The Case of Mrs. Surratt*. However, it has never been published.

As history now records, we know that Johnson’s reply, dated February 5, 1869, was to the effect that the Secretary of War deliver the body to Anna for the purpose set forth in her letter. The body was delivered on February 8, and burial took place in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

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The next three items come from the July 8, 1865, issue of *The Evening Star*. They were provided by Raymond Martin and printed in the April 1981 issue of *The Surratt Courier*. It was noted that the originals were found on microfilm in the Martin Luther King Library in Washington, D.C.

### **MRS. SURRATT**

It is stated that Mrs. Surratt, before Booth was captured and while she was at the Carroll Prison, was offered a free and unconditional pardon for herself and son, if she would accompany an officer in a buggy and point out the road which Booth had probably taken. She protested that



she had no idea which road he took, and had no knowledge of his intentions to assassinate the President when he visited the house, and positively refused to accompany the officer, as she could not be of any service.

### **THE SURRETT HOUSE**

Yesterday afternoon and late last night, hundreds of persons visited the vicinity of the Surratt House, which is on H Street north near 6<sup>th</sup> in the anticipation of getting a view of Mrs. Surratt's body, which was many supposed would be brought to her late residence, but in this they were disappointed. At one time in the evening, the crowd became so great around the house that it was necessary to dispatch a detail of policemen to the spot to prevent intrusion upon the inmates. Before the arrival of the police, some of the relic-hunters went so far as to cut chips from the portico in the front of the residence. Today the house is closed and draped in mourning.

### **MISS SURRETT**

Miss Annie E. Surratt, after bidding a final farewell to her mother a few moments before the execution, was conveyed to the residence on H Street, where she gave vent to her feelings in such a manner to attract the attention of passersby. Later in the day, she broke down under the effects of the trying ordeal through which she had passed and at a late hour last night it was reported that she was dead, but this proved to be incorrect. This morning, however, she is completely prostrated, and fears are entertained by her friends that her constitution will not stand the terrible shock.

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The following is Anna Surratt Tonry's obituary, which was provided by John Brennan and appeared in the February 1979 *Surratt Courier*. It's interesting to see how, nearly 40 years later, she and her mother are remembered.

### **MRS. MARY SURRETT'S DAUGHTER DEAD**

A dispatch from Baltimore last night says Mrs. William P. Tonry, the only daughter of Mrs. Mary Surratt, who was put to death for being involved in the Lincoln conspiracy, died here today. (October 24, 1904)

Mrs. Tonry was born 68 years ago at Surrattsville and went with her mother to the Washington boarding house where the conspirators met. After Mrs. Surratt's arrest, she did her utmost to save her life. Later she married and moved to Baltimore. She had been an invalid for several years. The remains will be taken to Washington tomorrow, after requiem Mass at St. Anne's Church this city and will be interred in the Capital in Mount Olivet Cemetery beside her mother to whom she gave her utmost devotion and self-sacrifice in the closing hours of Mrs. Surratt's life and whom she might have saved by her heroic efforts at intercession with President Johnson, but for the orders of Secretary Stanton to allow no one to see the man who alone could grant this pardon she sought, It was not generally known until now disclosed by the death of her daughter that Mrs. Surratt's remains lie buried in Mount Olivet Cemetery.

Mr. Tonry, three sons, and a daughter survive her, also two brothers, John H. Surratt, who was accused of being one of the original conspirators to kidnap Lincoln and who escaped to Europe, was captured and brought back, but not convicted, and Isaac Surratt, both of whom live in Baltimore.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Anna Surratt was born January 1, 1843, so she was 61 years old at the time of her death. Also, did you notice that her full name was never mentioned in the obituary?

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I did not find this clipping in the *Courier*. I found it when I was verifying the dates and publications of another article. Ironically, the announcement of Anna Surratt's 1869 marriage appears in the column next to this item.

### **Remains of the Booth Family**

From the June 18, 1869, *National Republican* front page

Baltimore June 17—The remains of Junius Brutus Booth, the great tragedian, were removed today from the Baltimore cemetery, where they were buried some years ago, and reinterred in Greenmont cemetery. The fine monument of Booth has also been removed and will be placed over his remains.

It is proposed to place the remains of the children, now buried in Harford County [Maryland], and those of John Wilkes Booth side by side in Green Mount Cemetery. The members of the family will be present and the body of Wilkes Booth will be buried during the latter part of next week.

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## **POSTSCRIPT ON THE TREATMENT OF MRS. SURRETT WHILE INCARCERATED**

by William P. Binzel

Since 1865, there have been questions of whether Mary Elizabeth Surratt was "treated harshly" while imprisoned and tried for her role in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. While the conditions of her confinement were quite crude, they were crude for *all* imprisoned in that era. The evidence indicates that she was at least treated better than her male counterparts.

Virtually since the moment of her arrest, criticism arose over the "harsh" treatment she endured on the orders of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Stories circulated that Mrs. Surratt was manacled in irons; held in unsanitary and inhuman conditions; denied medical attention; and denied even the most basics of comforts. Many of those accusations have survived to this day. However, there are at least three letters that question whether they were or are justified.

The first is Stanton's letter of June 19, 1865, to Major General Winfield Scott Hancock (who was in charge of all matters relating to the Lincoln assassination conspirators), which

authorized him "to make any arrangement that can be done for the comfort of Mrs. Surratt consistent with her secure detention and also to allow her to be furnished with any food or necessaries she may divine that shall be approved by the Surgeon in Charge. Such changes or additions to her furniture as may add to her comfort are also authorized having due regard to the security of the prison and her safe custody."

The second letter was written in September 1873. A story appeared in the newspapers that Mrs. Surratt was held in irons throughout her trial. The editor of the *Washington Daily Morning Chronicle* asked Mrs. Surratt's defense lawyer, Frederick A. Aiken, if the accusation was true. Aiken responded: "Without reference to any other fact, or to any of the details in the case of that most unfortunate lady, I have to say in reply that at no time during her unlawful trial was Mrs. Surratt manacled, either on her wrists or her ankles, while in the presence of the court. I not only speak from my own absolute knowledge, but from Mrs. Surratt's oft-repeated statements to me that she was not manacled."

The third letter is more telling. It was written by Mrs. Surratt's 22 year-old daughter, Anna, and addressed to General John F. Hartranft (who commanded the military prison at the Washington arsenal, where the conspirators were held during the trial). Anna was allowed to visit her mother frequently and even stay and comfort her during the closing weeks of the trial. In a letter dated July 9, 1865, Anna asked for the return of some of Mrs. Surratt's personal effects and mentioned Powell's "confession" of her innocence. Most notable is how the letter concludes. Written a mere two days after her mother's execution, Anna wrote: "Remember me to the officers who had charge of Ma and I shall always think kindly of you." Perhaps it was just Victorian etiquette, but it seems unlikely that a young woman would want to be "remembered" to her mother's captors if they were abusive.

The full text of Anna Surratt's letter reads:

Washington D.C.  
July 9, 1865

Genl. Hartranft

Genl. Hancock told Mr. Holohan that you had some things that belonged to my poor Ma, which, with my consent you would deliver to him. Don't forget to send the pillow upon which *her head* rested and her prayer beads, if you can find them—these things are dear to me.

Someone told me that you wrote to the President stating that the prisoner Payne had confessed to you the morning of the Execution that Ma was entirely innocent of the President's assassination and had no knowledge of it. Moreover, that he did not think she had any knowledge of the assassination plot, and that you believed that Payne had confessed the truth. I would like to know if you did it because I wish to remember and thank those who did Ma the least act of kindness. I was spurned and treated with the utmost contempt by everyone at the White House.

Remember me to the officers who had charge of Ma and I shall always think kindly of you.

Yours Respectfully –  
Anna Surratt