

The Surratt Courier

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Louise Oertly, Editor

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President's Message

I would like to thank those of you who have let me know that you have enjoyed the articles that I have been reprinting over the past several years. It's been fun going through and picking articles from the 40 plus years of *The Surratt Courier*. Of course, some of the reprinted newspaper articles need to be verified. I may have mentioned before that I love scrolling through the Library of Congress' site, Chronicling America. You never know what you might find, while you're looking for something else. For example, have you ever wondered what happened to Willie Jett, one of the Confederate soldiers, who took Booth and Herold to the Garretts' farm? According to the September 14, 1903, edition of *The Eaton (Ohio) Democrat*:

“William S. Jett, the man who led the soldiers to the hiding place of Wilkes Booth, after the assassination of President Lincoln, and who, for his connection with the capture of Booth and Harold [sic], has been immortalized in history, was a few days since sent to the State Lunatic Asylum, a raving maniac.”

It's a great story, but there is only one problem. In Fredericksburg, Virginia, a gravestone in Confederate Cemetery tells a different tale. Engraved on it is:

PVT
WILLIAM STORKE JETT
CO C
9 VA CAV
CSA
DEC 2, 1846-JUL 17, 1884

According to sources, he died at the age of 37 of apoplexy in 1884. The lesson learned from this 1903 article is to double check the information before you print it. I have no idea who this 1903 Willie Jett was or if that was even his real name. However, this may call for another (excuse to) search Chronicling America to see what I can find.

Another tool I use to help verify or add additional information to articles is my collection of books on the Lincoln assassination that are in paper and ebook form. Some of which are in both forms. A tip to other researchers, I've found that using the search option on my Kindle ebooks can find many more hits on an event or name than just using the book's index.

We are planning to have our next virtual conference via Zoom on April 22 from 2-4 p.m. ET. Speakers to be announced. If you have signed up on our email list (and I encourage our members to do so), you will get a notice with all the details, when they are available. Or you can check for details on our website in the coming weeks.

This newsletter is a bimonthly publication of the Surratt Society, a non-profit affiliate of the Surratt House Museum, a historic property of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The Surratt Society's website is surrattmuseum.org Contact us at surratt.society@gmail.com or by mail at: Surratt Society, 9201 Edgeworth Drive #3853, Capitol Heights, MD 20791-3853.

The Surratt House Museum's phone number is (301) 868-1121.

At the April conference, the election of the Surratt Society's Executive Committee will take place. The proposed slate of officers is:

President Louise Oertly
Vice President William Binzel
Treasurer Tom Buckingham
Secretary Rebecca Morris

As for the Booth Escape Route Tours, many of you have inquired about when they will resume. Unfortunately, there will be no bus tours this April, but we hope for better news for the fall tours.

Hope you have a healthy and safe new year.

Louise Oertly, President

Attention All Writers/Historians

We are looking for articles to use in *The Surratt Courier*. The topics can range from the social history of the time to the Lincoln assassination and its cast of characters. Or, if there are questions you would like to have answered, we will see if one of our experts can answer it. I can't guarantee that everything submitted will be used right away, but I will do my best.

Send your articles to surratt.society@gmail.com.

Where Are They and What Are They Doing?

By Wesley Harris

Research into Lincoln and the assassination continues even though our get-togethers have been curtailed and communication has been more difficult. I asked a few members to share what they have been doing over the past year. The projects mentioned are sure to delight us, when they become available.

Faithful Surratt Conference attendees **Phil and Linda Anderson** have been staying put for the most part, except for visits to see grandkids in New Jersey. They took a trip to Maine in October and stopped at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge to see Edwin Booth's grave. Linda has been working on articles about William H. Bell and Margaret Coleman, servants at Secretary Seward's house the night Lewis Powell launched his attack. "Bell's story is much more complicated than I had realized," Linda says, "so it's been interesting, but it also involves a lot of research."

Barry Cauchon has been busy building museums, but is gearing up to return to his Lincoln research. Barry says, "I had a person reach out from Texas, who was interested in some of our research on Fort McNair. It has been nice to share some of this with him. I had to blow off the dust from the files, but it was all still there. I am hoping this may trigger my interest again in the subject, so I can get back to doing more research." Barry is considering producing some online

presentations from his office, including his original presentations from the Surratt conferences. Barry completed a presentation for the Kansas State Historical Society, when they asked for help authenticating a three-foot section of the conspirators' scaffold crossbeam in their collection. "The presentation shows how I determined that I believe this to be the genuine article," Barry says.

Kathryn Canavan is working on an assassination-related book. "I've put it off for a few months to work on another project," Kathryn said. Her first book, *Lincoln's Final Days: Conspiracy, Terror, and the Assassination of America's Greatest President*, is available on Amazon in paper and for Kindle at a great price. Originally a crime beat reporter, Kathryn released a new book in 2021, *True Crime Philadelphia: From America's First Bank Robbery to the Real-Life Killers Who Inspired Boardwalk Empire*.

Jim Garrett says he's "more or less retired," but remaining busy. Jim provides walking tours of Arlington National Cemetery, usually three days a week. In 2020, he took up writing novels. The first one is with a senior editor in New York City, a second has been completed, and two more are in the works. The Junius B. Booth Society at Tudor Hall benefits from Jim's presentations several times a year. He attended the April wedding of frequent Surratt Conference presenter, Dave Taylor, in Granbury, Texas, the one-time home of John St. Helen, aka "J.W. Booth," the infamous mummy.

Wesley Harris has spoken at Surratt conferences about the weapons possessed by the assassination conspirators and the crime scene investigation (or lack thereof). He still intends to publish a book on the "CSI" aspects of the assassination, the weapons, and the many fakes related to the crime that have appeared in the years after Lincoln's death. "Sometimes life gets in the way, especially when you have too many ongoing projects." Wesley retired from law enforcement after a 43-year career and now works as a historian in a parish (county) library in Louisiana and teaches for the University of Phoenix.

Richard Sloan developed a passionate interest in how aspects of the Lincoln assassination story have been depicted in early melodramas, movies, radio, the stage, and TV. "I became a collector of the genre, too," Richard says, "published and unpublished plays, scripts, videos, films, publicity photos, reviews, programs, posters, lobby cards, etc. It was Jim Bishop's 1955 book, *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*, that first got me interested in the assassination. When I learned his book was adapted into a live TV show in 1956, my interest was piqued, and little by little I acquired some items connected with it." Richard recently saw a kinescope—a very rare copy of a 1955 live show, *The Story of Mary Surratt*. It was adapted from a 1947 Broadway flop that had starred Dorothy Gish. He plans to write a review of it for the *Courier*. He will appear at the East Meadow Long Island Library on April 14 to give a talk about the making of the live 1956 TV show, *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*. (The date of his talk is no coincidence. Friday, April 14, will be the 158th anniversary of the day Lincoln was shot.)

Booth escape route narrator and familiar speaker at the Surratt Society's conferences, **Dave Taylor** maintains an active website at LincolnConspirators.com. From his new home in Texas, he has almost completed a project documenting a different Lincoln assassination-related event for each day of the year. While these daily posts have been under his Twitter account @LinConspirators, he hopes to migrate them to a separate page on his website after the year ends. In March 2023, Dave and his wife, Jen, are planning a multi-day trip to Fort Jefferson, where Dave intends to record video for a short series about the conspirators' imprisonment there.

John H. Surratt, Sr. A Respected Deadbeat?

By John Walsh

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, April 1989

EDITOR'S NOTE: When John Surratt, Sr., died suddenly in August of 1862, Mrs. Surratt was left with approximately \$3,500 [in today's dollars, an amount more than \$100,000] in debts accumulated by her husband over years of unwise business dealings. Mrs. Surratt was forced to lease the tavern in 1864 and to move into Washington, D.C., to open a boarding house to make ends meet. Mrs. Surratt continued to deal with her husband's debts until that fateful day, April 14, 1865. In fact, Mrs. Surratt later stated that she had gone to the tavern that afternoon to meet with a man [John Nothey], who owed her money, so that she could, in turn, pay off a longstanding debt to the Calvert family.

QUESTION:

In the antebellum South, could a drunken deadbeat also be a respected civic leader?

ANSWER:

Apparently yes, if John Surratt, Sr., is representative.

John H. Surratt, Sr., was a respected tavern owner, postmaster, civic leader, and trustee of the Prince George's County Alms House.¹ At the same time, he "rarely managed to pay for anything;" "owed just about everybody;" and, apparently, was constantly in arrears.² Indeed, during the last three years of his life, he faced ever-increasing demands for payment of his past due accounts. His indebtedness was so extensive that, after his death, his widow, Mary, continuously faced liquidation judgments and less formal demands for payment of her husband's past due debts during the last three years of her life.³

Could it be that John Surratt was a respected civic leader, despite his credit record? Could it be that indebtedness was condoned in the antebellum South? According to the University of Florida's prize-winning historian, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, indebtedness in the antebellum South was not only condoned; it was applauded. Here's what he says about indebtedness in the antebellum South: "In a cash and credit-poor economy, ordinary indebtedness was not only unavoidable; it was a means to cement long-standing social connections. In fact, it could be said that the gentry ranks, even more than the yeomanry, were meshed together through intertwined promissory notes, indentures, and other forms of financial entanglements, all duly recorded at the county clerk's office. It would not do to turn down a friend's request for a loan or a signature to stand liable for someone else, a favored kinsman or boon companion. Repayments were, of course, expected, but sometimes, as court records attest, notes were carried for months, even years, beyond the date due. A man of wealth gained authority, as well as accrued interest, by allowing the number of those owing him to increase."⁴

As far as John Surratt's failure to pay the joiner, Jeremiah Townshend, for building the tavern, consider this 1863 statement by a contemporary Southern gentleman, W.J. Grayson, "...nothing is more common, both here and in Europe, than for men of honour to contract debts without intending to pay them."⁵ Wyatt-Brown puts it this way: "Not paying tradesmen and others

of lesser social standing was...no detraction from a man's reputation, and in fact, it made the lowly creditor obliged to the nonpaying client in hopes of eventual satisfaction of the debt."⁶

Wyatt-Brown concludes that, "In a sense, it was antisocial to neither borrow nor lend."⁷ A similar, but much briefer description of the antebellum South's attitude toward indebtedness may be found in W.J. Cash's *The Mind of the South*. However, Cash adds this tidbit of additional information: "...a friend or acquaintance's request for a loan needed no more collateral than an assertion that the loan was needed. To refuse to extend credit was a gross insult to the borrower; an insult that was usually redressed by a knife in the back."⁸ This may explain why, despite a "pile of debt" and a bevy of liquidation judgments, John Surratt, Sr., allowed the local citizens to run up substantial unpaid account balances for their drinks at the tavern and took no action on the past due promissory notes Nothey and Goddard gave him for their purchases of his Surrattsville land.

Rumors of civil war, and the war itself, changed these informal creditor/debtor "rules of the game." The pressures of uncertainty, increased money supply, and "abnormal" inflation changed the antebellum view of outstanding debt. Before 1859, creditors viewed accounts and notes in arrears as stores of value, which kept on accruing interest until paid. After 1859, inflation cut into the value of uncollected accounts and notes; debtors often disappeared; the nation was no longer cash-poor; and manufacturing became the dominant economic activity. The combination of these different forces resulted in new creditor/debtor "rules of the game." Past due accounts and notes were to be paid in full with cash or be subject to liquidation judgment proceedings; and trade credits would be extended for no more than thirty days. The country's business was essentially on a cash basis by 1861.⁹

These changes in the "rules of the game" coincide with the beginning of John Surratt's rising tide of liquidation judgments and less formal demands for repayment of past due debts. In fact, the available evidence indicates that, before 1859, John Surratt rarely faced a liquidation judgment or even a less formal demand for repayment.¹⁰

What does this all suggest? John Surratt may have been a bounder, but not because of his "no pay" or "slow pay" credit record. In the context of antebellum commercial credit practices, John Surratt's standing as a respected civic leader was at least partly derived from his indebtedness.

Footnotes:

¹ Joan Chaconas, "President's Message," *The Surratt Courier*, June 1988, p. 2.

² James O. Hall, *The Surratt Family and John Wilkes Booth*, Surratt House Museum booklet, 1983, p. 9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 137.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, Knopf & Co., 1941, p. 21.

⁷ Wyatt-Brown, op cit, p. 137.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ V. Clark, *History of U.S. Manufacturers 1607-1860*, McGraw-Hill, 1922, p. 9.

¹⁰ Based on a review of Surratt Society notes and records.

The Children of Mary Surratt

By Laurie Verge

Information from the *Historic Surratt House Training Manual*

There were three children born to John and Mary Surratt. Their oldest son, Isaac Douglas, was born in 1841; a daughter, Elizabeth Susanna (known as “Anna” or Annie” in most writings) was born on New Year’s Day in 1843; and John Harrison Surratt, Jr., arrived on April 13, 1844.

Very little is known of their life before the death of their father in 1862. Passages from letters to her priest indicate that Mary Surratt provided what education she could for her children, and it is known that Anna attended Miss Winifred Martin’s School attached to St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Bryantown (Charles County), Maryland. Young John appears to have received his early schooling from private tutors before being enrolled at St. Charles College near Ellicott Mills (now Ellicott City), Maryland. The following letters are regarding Mrs. Surratt’s quest for furthering her children’s education.

[EDITOR’S NOTE: Underlining and brackets added in the following letters. Also, in trial testimony in 1865, Father Wiget states: “I first became acquainted with Mrs. Surratt from having had two of her sons with me.”]

[From Father Nota to Father Wiget, who ran St. Thomas Academy at Bel Alton, Maryland]

Georgetown College, D.C.

Jan’y the 3rd, 1855

I have been last Saturday as near to you as Bryantown is... There is at the [Bryantown] Institution a daughter of Mrs. Surratt, a very interesting girl.... Her mother, living in Prince George’s Co., wishes to be recommended to you and besides begs a favor from you for her two sons that are still at home; viz., that with your known liberality you will have them both, or either of the two, taught at your school as cheap as you can afford. The reason of her begging for such a favor (which she has never done in her life) is, because her husband not being a Catholic and having suffered severe losses, is unable to give them a decent education. But the mother, an excellent Catholic, and very much attached to us, is very anxious to raise them well; her means, however, are very limited, as she is obliged (in consequences of the aforesaid losses) to keep a public house, where the public stage stops but occasionally. [NOTE: Actually, the stage stopped at Surratt House six days a week. There may not have been paying tavern customers each time, however.]

So you can see that this Lady, Mrs. Mary Surratt, is worthy of all we can possibly [do] for her and her children. She is a real Lady, but in distress and begs a favor for the sake of religion. I hope you will grant the request.

While at her house, I promised her to write to you & afterwards let her know your decision either to board & teach them altogether gratuitously, or at least for how much would you do so, and if you could not board them, where could they safely be boarded and for how much. I would suggest the house of Mr. Stone or some family like that one. But you know better by yourself.

Please answer as soon as convenient, and believe me to be

(s) L. Nota, S.J.

[From Father Wiget to the Very Rev. Ch. H. Stonestreet, who appears to be the regional superior for the Jesuits]

St. Thomas's Jan. 9, 1855

I enclose a letter of Fr. Nota, examine the request he makes...I could not obtain for the two boys anything from my neighbors except, maybe, cheap lodging. I could board them & in case of necessity could also lodge them, but do not think it would be justified to do more than to reduce the terms to the half, viz., to \$58.50 per 10 months, provided the boys be well behaved boys & not above 14 years of age... Please give an answer to Fr. Nota.

(s) Bernardin Wiget, S.J.

In January 1855 a letter from Mrs. Surratt to a priest friend in Boston, Father Finotti, has this to say. [NOTE: Spelling and grammatical errors in the next letters are as Mrs. Surratt wrote them.]:

"...Annah has gone to chool some three months ago I first intended to send her to Frederick, but Father John thought it best for me to send her to Miss Martins for a year or two for a beginning she is delighted with her Teachers and improves very fast. I am trying evry day to make some arrangement for Isaac to go to chool but I can not tell how it will be yet as you know how often misfortune has visit us in the last few years. Rev. Onte cald to see me a few days ago and wished me to send him to St. Thomas, but Mr. Surratt thinks it to unhealthy thire but I care not for what he thinks as it seams the hole charge of the children has fawlen on me I just trust in *God* and do the best I can for them."

In May of 1855, another letter from her to Fr. Finotti says:

"...Annah is still with Miss Martins and improving very fast she begins to play very well, and her teachers think her very apt she is getting a long very well with French;... Isaac is at St. Thomas chool it is chool that has been commenced in the last year under the direction of the Rev. Father Wiggett [sic Wiget] they have all redy 21 Borders besides thire day cholars he is improoveing very fast I hope he may be come a Preasat [sic Priest]. Johny I hope thire may be some opening that I may get him chool when the chool commences after the vacation for I have found out long ago a publick house is no place for children with a Fathers example..."

A January 17, 1858, letter from Mrs. Surratt states:

"As Mr. Surratt will not send Isaac to chool and I have sent him as long as I have any means I must now put him to doing something to get his living... I was advised by a friend to write to you as it was more than likely that you could get him a place in some drygoods house or some other place you would think fit for him... I intend taking Annie home after this year. She is still in Bryantown and doing very well with her studies... I hope I shall be able to send John to chool next year..."

A position was found for Isaac in Baltimore in a drygoods store, but the life had little appeal for the boy. There is some evidence that Isaac did obtain some higher schooling by studying engineering. John Jr. entered St. Charles College (Ellicott Mills, Maryland) in September of 1859.

On Inauguration Day 1861, young Isaac headed south. He appears to have worked for a stage line out west for a short period before joining the 33rd Texas Cavalry. Service to the

Confederacy would keep him away from home until the fall of 1865. After briefly trying to continue as postmaster in Surrattsville after his father's death in 1862, John Surratt, Jr., also served the Confederacy in the field of espionage, and his involvement with Wilkes Booth sealed his family's fate.

In the spring of 1865, Anna became the sole support of her imprisoned mother. From newspaper clippings of the time, we learn that Anna was quite devoted to her mother and pleaded valiantly for her mother's life up to the time of execution. She was only 22 years old when her mother was arrested on April 17, 1865, for complicity in the Lincoln assassination. Anna was also taken prisoner. She was eventually released, but her mother's jailor, Brevet Major General John F. Hartranft, made special arrangements so Anna could spend nights in Mrs. Surratt's cell.

Anna appeared briefly before the military tribunal in late May to testify on her mother's behalf. Henry Kyd Douglas, another witness for the tribunal, wrote: "She must have known that her testimony made no impression. Toward the close; she began to show signs of a collapse."

The *Philadelphia Daily Inquirer*, which covered the trial every day (culminating with the July 7 hanging), was less sympathetic when reporting on Anna's testimony: "During the middle, the girl began nervously glancing toward the [prisoner's] stand," a correspondent for the paper wrote, "She tapped her foot impatiently, asking, 'Where is Mama?'" [NOTE: Mary Surratt was not seated with the other conspirators.] The correspondent continued: "As Miss Surratt was leaving the stand, a member of the court handed her a small white pocket handkerchief which she dropped. She snatched it from him quickly and rudely without a word of thanks." Anna was not cross-examined, the correspondent said, because it would have been "cruel—a greater load of sorrow than she could bear."

But Anna did not shrink from the battle to save her mother's life. The death sentence was announced on July 6, 1865. That evening, she returned home to pick up some things. "Crushed with grief, she alighted from the carriage," the *Inquirer* reported. "Ladies standing near were moved to tears... Miss Surratt's every look and action betrayed her anguish."

She was up very early on July 7 and visited the White House, hoping to gain a reprieve for her mother. She threw herself at the feet of President Johnson's aides, grabbing their coats and begging for a three-day reprieve. The night before, she had visited Judge Advocate General Holt, asking him to intervene, but to no avail. She found no help through the President either.

As the end approached, Anna returned to the prison and lay in her mother's cell. "Is Mother resigned?" she asked several times, according to Mary's spiritual advisor, Father Walter. He replied in the affirmative, which calmed the daughter. In preparation for Mary's final public appearance, Anna somehow summoned the presence of mind to pin a black arrow brooch onto her mother's bombazine dress.

The final parting was quite affecting from all accounts. "The screams of anguish that burst from the poor girl could be distinctly heard all over the execution ground," the *Inquirer* said. Anna fainted several times during those last two days. Mercifully, she did not see her mother drop from the gallows. "During the execution, Anna was present in a room on the second floor of the Arsenal," wrote William E. Doster, one of the attorneys at the Conspiracy Trial. "She stood at one of the windows until the rope was fixed. Then she fell down in a swoon." Following the execution, Anna went into seclusion with family and friends in Prince George's County and Baltimore.

Isaac was mustered out of the Army in mid-September of 1865 and headed home. He was arrested in Baltimore because rumor had it that his "Southern friends" had put together a purse and that Isaac was to "take care of" President Johnson. The authorities, however, had to release him for lack of evidence

Before his return, the bulk of the administration of the family estate fell to Anna. This was an estate that had been in deep financial trouble prior to Mr. Surratt's death in 1862. The conditions had not improved by 1865. On September 1, 1865, Anna renounced her right of Administrator to her father's estate and requested that Mr. Edward E. Belt handle the affairs.

From 1865 to 1868, the tavern and its surrounding lands and outbuildings were rented to Edward Robey for \$550 a year—a sum which was never paid.

John H. Surratt, Jr., fled to Canada and finally to Italy, where he became a member of the Papal Zouaves (an international Catholic volunteer corps) in the Papal States under the assumed name of John Watson. His identity was discovered, but attempts to arrest him failed. He fled to Egypt, where he was finally apprehended and returned to the U.S. In June of 1867, John Jr. would stand trial in a civil court for the murder of Abraham Lincoln. Following a controversial trial, he was released on bond after the jury failed to reach a verdict. The government failed to get another indictment to stand against him, and John was released to join in the family struggles.

They had lost the H Street home in Washington as a result of equity proceedings filed by a man to whom Mr. Surratt had owed \$162.08 since 1852. This case was filed just four months after the execution of Mrs. Surratt. The house sale was ratified by the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia on November 13, 1867.

A similar fate befell the property in Surrattsville. It is obvious that the children wanted to hold onto this old home place. Witness a letter of August 1868 from George H. Calvert, Jr., son of Charles B. Calvert from whom Mr. Surratt had agreed to purchase the property in 1852. We do not know if the letter was to Isaac or John—we presume Isaac:

Mr. Surratt:

Dear Sir,

I enclose the within letter through your sister not knowing your first name; and likewise deeming it the better method for my letter to reach you. I write to you in connection with the matter upon which we had the conversation over some three months ago you then proposed that I should postpone the sale of the property at Surrattsville—advertised at Sheriff's sale—with the view of enabling you to try and make some arrangement prior to September—looking to the discharge of the claims upon the aforementioned property, due the estate of my late Father. You seemed to be then of the opinion that you would in some way be enabled to raise the money necessary for the payment of this long standing claim by September. And should you not be able to do so—expressed the wish, then, of asking no further delay. This matter is one of pressing importance, on account of my having to collect all funds due the Estate with a view of the settlement this fall. I shall expect, and hope to receive, your immediate answer in connection with this matter. You will therefore, please not delay in answering my letter at once.

Yours very Respectfully,

Geo. F. Calvert, Jr.

The Surratts were unsuccessful in their attempts, and on October 22, 1868, a bill of complaint was filed against the Surratt estate and its new administrator, William A. Jarboe. On March 11, 1869, the house and land was sold to Robert Hunter for \$2,500. The proceeds went to pay the Calverts and some of the other creditors. The amount was not sufficient to pay off all the debts.

Anna Surratt married William Tonry in June of 1869. Tonry had been a respected chemist in the laboratory of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army until his discharge by special order of the War Department on June 21, 1869, just four days after his marriage!

After some travels, particularly through the western states with the idea of relocating, the Tonrys returned to Baltimore where he established a laboratory as an analytical and consulting chemist and chemical expert. He gained an enviable reputation, chairing the Chemistry Department of the Maryland Institute and receiving an honorary PhD from Georgetown College, the first honorary degree ever bestowed by that institution since its incorporation in 1790. He was widely called upon to give expert testimony in cases of law—including some famous murder trials. He and Anna became parents to three sons and a daughter.

After trying his hand teaching and lecturing, John H. Surratt, Jr., also settled in Baltimore and worked for the Old Bay Line Steam Packet Company. He married Mary Victorine Hunter (a cousin of Francis Scott Key) and sired seven children.

Anna was the first of the three children to die. She had been an invalid for several years before her death on October 24, 1904. John Surratt, Jr., died on April 21, 1916, at age 72. His passing received a lengthy obituary, recalling his wartime experiences, in the April 22, 1916, edition of *The Baltimore Sun*. He was buried in New Cathedral Cemetery in Baltimore. Both Isaac and Anna, and Anna's husband, lie in unmarked graves beside Mrs. Surratt at Mr. Olivet Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

The Escape of John Surratt, Jr.

From the *Historic Surratt House Training Manual*
Research provided from James O. Hall and Laurie Verge

Young John Surratt, Jr., was not in Washington, D.C., on the night of the assassination. He was in Elmira, New York, on Confederate business. When he heard the news of the crime, he feared that he would be linked to Booth. He fled to Montreal, where he registered at St. Lawrence Hall, a well-known Confederate enclave in Canada, at 12:30 p.m. on April 18, 1865. However, it appears that from there he went almost immediately to the home of a Mr. Porterfield, who had been a Southerner, but was now a British subject. From Porterfield's he was taken to Rev. Charles Boucher, a Catholic priest in the parish of St. Liboire, 40 miles outside Montreal. He remained there under the name Charles Armstrong, from April 22 through the latter part of July. During his stay he did admit to being John Surratt.

In July, he was passed secretly to Father Lapierre, who hid him at Lapierre's father's home. In the fall, Lapierre and Boucher took Surratt by carriage to a steamer bound for Quebec. According to Osborn Oldroyd in his classic book, *The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, Lapierre kept Surratt under lock and key during the voyage from Montreal to Quebec—probably to ensure secrecy, not for security purposes. In Quebec, Surratt was disguised with glasses and dyed hair and taken to a steamer bound for Liverpool, England. He was handed over to the ship's physician, Dr. McMillan, and introduced as "McCarty." He later revealed his identity to McMillan.

On September 30, 1865, A. Wilding cabled William H. Seward, Secretary of State, that Surratt had arrived in Liverpool on September 25 and was staying at the oratory of the Catholic Church of the Holy Cross. Dr. McMillan had felt it his duty to report it to the authorities. However, the American authorities did not respond to Wilding's cable until October 13, when W. Hunter, Acting Secretary of State, wired back that, upon consultation with the Secretary of War and the Judge Advocate General, "...it was thought advisable that no action be taken in regard to the arrest of the supposed John Surratt at present." Was the government feeling the heat of hanging his mother?

From Liverpool, Surratt traveled to Rome (which was part of the Papal States until 1870), and under the assumed name of John Watson, he joined the Papal Zouaves and was sent to Company 3 at Sezze and to an outpost in the small town of Velleri. Here he was recognized by another Zouave, Henri B. Ste. Marie, who had been a schoolmate of Surratt and Louis Weichmann back in Maryland. (Talk about rotten luck!) Ste. Marie reported Surratt to Rufus King, the American representative to Rome. On June 21, 1866, he made a written statement as to his acquaintance with Surratt. The usual delay in corresponding between Europe and America ensued. In November, King asked Cardinal Antonelli if the church would surrender Surratt upon his indictment at the request of the State Department. Antonelli cited the lack of extradition treaties between the Vatican and the U.S. and the reluctance to release a fugitive where capital punishment might ensue. However, given the "presidential" circumstances, he agreed to arrest Surratt and have him escorted to the military prison in Rome. Surratt was on leave from Velletri at the time, but he was subsequently arrested in Veroli and returned to Velletri on November 6, 1866.

At 4 a.m. on November 8, he was escorted from prison under guard, broke free, and jumped over a steep cliff. He landed on a ledge where refuse from the fort was thrown and with a bruised back and arm, (and still in the conspicuous Zouave uniform), he escaped to Naples. On November 18, he boarded a steamer bound for Alexandria, Egypt—using the alias of "Walters" and claiming British citizenry. Some English gentlemen saw to his board while on the ship.

The U.S. authorities must have known of his whereabouts because the consul at Naples advised the consul at Malta, a scheduled coaling stop, of his departure. Again, legalities and slowness to act allowed Surratt to leave Malta on November 19. While the steamer took on coal at Malta, Surratt took on another name. He told a superintendent of police that he was a Canadian by the name of John Agostina.

The steamer sailed on to Egypt, reaching Alexandria on November 23; and all third-class passengers, which included Surratt, were placed in routine quarantine. On November 27, Charles Hale, Consul-General of the United States in Alexandria, boarded the ship, picked out Surratt (who was still in his Zouave uniform and rather "ripe" by this time!) and arrested him. He was transferred to a quarantine environment at the port and a telegram was sent to the Secretary of State to send a national armed vessel to retrieve the young man. On December 21, Surratt left Egypt aboard the *Swatara*. He landed at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., on February 19, 1867.

Charged with murder, his trial began on June 10, 1867, and lasted 62 days, resulting in a hung jury on August 11. The vote was eight (all Maryland, Virginia, and D.C. residents) for acquittal and four (none born below the Mason/Dixon Line) for conviction. He was kept in prison for a while and then freed on \$25,000 bail. He was arraigned again on conspiracy and treason charges, but his counsel showed that the law required indictment on such charges to be made within two years of the offence. More than two years had elapsed, John Surratt, Jr., was now a free man.

The Forgotten Son

By Laurie Verge

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, August 2006

With additional information from *The Surratt Society News*, August 1977

Most students of the Lincoln assassination are familiar with two of the children of John and Mary Surratt, daughter Elizabeth Susanna (Annie or Anna) and John Harrison Surratt, Jr. Few have heard of the oldest child, Isaac Douglas. He was born in June 2, 1841, while his parents were still residing at the Oxon Hill Hundred property.

Little is known of the early lives of any of the children, and this is more than true with Isaac. There is some evidence that Ms. Surratt tried to see to his education and also to find employment for him that would get him away from the drunken influence of his father. Not much else is known until Inauguration Day in March of 1861, when Isaac left home and headed south. It appears that he worked for a while with an express company (not the Pony Express as erroneously reported by some authors), but by May of 1862, the young man had joined the 33rd Texas Cavalry, 14th Battalion, Captain James Duff's Partisan Rangers in San Antonio, Texas. He was promoted to sergeant on March 1, 1863, and in 1864 was listed as Acting Quartermaster Sergeant. Under questioning in 1865, his mother would contend that she did not have a son in the Confederacy. That last she had heard from him, he was in Matamoros, Mexico. [It is rumored that he may have been involved for a while in the Mexican revolution before joining the Texas Cavalry, because he was recorded as being in Matamoros, Mexico, as his mother had stated.]

According to a jumbled obituary published in *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.) on November 5, 1907, Isaac's unit engaged in a number of battles and never surrendered after the Confederacy's defeat. Supposedly, "...the entire company of which he was a member fled to Mexico, their purpose being to join Maximillian's forces during the uprising in the latter country." However, Maximillian insisted on selecting the officers for the troop, which the members of the command resented and "...the Confederates hurriedly took their departure."

At the time of the assassination, Isaac's picture, instead of his brother's, appeared on the first wanted posters issued by the War Department—thus adding to the confusion. Isaac did not return to Washington, D.C., area until months after his mother's death. He was listed as a sergeant when he was paroled from the service at San Antonio, Texas, on September 18, 1865. There is some credence given to Isaac's presence in Mexico by a paper found in the Edwin M. Stanton Papers, Reel #10, at the Library of Congress—courtesy of member Kenneth Zanca:

Headquarters Div. of the Gulf, New Orleans, Oct. 18, 1865

To Hon. Edwin M. Stanton

Gen. Steele communicates the following intelligence:

Isaac Surratt, another son of Mrs. Surratt, left Monterey, Mexico, some three or four weeks ago to assassinate the President [Johnson]. This resolution was taken after he heard of the

execution of his mother, and the rebels of that place made up a purse for him. The young man was very frantic when he left Monterey some four weeks ago traveling toward the Rio Grande on horseback.

Isaac Surratt is about 32 years of age [NOTE: Isaac was actually 24.], olive complexion, five feet nine or ten inches in height, full beard, dark eyes, black curly hair and good looking—was a member of Duffs Regt. of cavalry.

P.[hilip] H. Sheridan

Oct 20 Cipher

To Gen. T.T. Eckert
Ass't Sec. of War

Baltimore, Md.
Oct. 19th, 1865

Isaac Surratt arrived in Balt. on Sunday morning; is here still.

L.[afayette] C. Baker

Eventually released for lack of evidence, Isaac did return to Washington, D.C. He took over the administration of his father's estate from his sister, trying in vain to keep the Surrattsville property in the family's hands. He was also present with his sister at the 1867 trial of his brother, John Harrison Surratt, Jr.

Isaac never married. He and his brother both found jobs with the Old Bay Line, a steam packet company, which ran down the Chesapeake Bay from Baltimore. In his later years, he lived with his sister, Anna, and her family. After Anna's death in 1904, it appears that Isaac lived with her son, Dr. Reginald I. Tonry, at 2206 York Road in Baltimore. According to one obituary, Isaac died "of indigestion" on November 3, 1907. He is buried in an unmarked grave in the Surratt family plot at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Reprinted from *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), November 5, 1907

INTERNMENT TODAY OF REMAINS OF ISAAC D. SURRATT

The remains of Isaac D. Surratt, former Confederate soldier and son of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, who was executed in 1865 for complicity in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, were interred about noon today in Mount Olivet Cemetery, this city, alongside the grave of his mother. The death of Mr. Surratt occurred in Baltimore last Sunday. Preceding the bringing of the body to this city today, requiem mass was celebrated in St. Ann's Catholic Church, York Road, Baltimore, by Rev. Father C.F. Thomas. The pallbearers were Dr. Reginald I. Tonry and Mr. William H. Surratt of Baltimore, and Messrs. Raymond Thorne and Archibald, Clarence, and Milton Donohue of Washington, all nephews of the deceased.

Isaac D. Surratt was sixty-six years of age and a native of the District of Columbia. He was a civil engineer, and at the outbreak of the civil war enlisted as a trooper in the 1st Texas Confederate Cavalry. Later Mr. Surratt went to Europe, where he spent several years. On his return to this country he went to the home of Mrs. Archibald Jenkins, where he learned for the first time of his mother's death. For thirty-five years Mr. Surratt had lived in Baltimore, where he was chief receiving clerk of the Old Bay Line. He was unmarried and made his home with his nephew, Dr. Tonry.

Born in the District

His birthplace was Foxhall, the old Surratt home, in the District of Columbia, which many years thereafter was destroyed by fire. When a boy, his family moved to Maryland and settled in Prince George County. It was there that young Surratt was reared, and when old enough attended St. John's College, at Frederick, Md., and later graduated with honors at St. Thomas' Academy, which in those days was located at Port Tobacco.

After completing his education Mr. Surratt took a course in civil engineering, and in later years was engaged in railroad work in the vicinity of Alexandria. Prior to the breaking out of the civil war, he went south and was for several years in the government mail service, carrying the mail from Texas to small points in Mexico. At the outbreak of hostilities the deceased, as stated, immediately joined a company attached to the 1st Texas Cavalry, under the command of Gen. Bankhead Magruder, and participated in many fierce battles.

Mr. Surratt was numbered among those Confederates who never surrendered, for when the news was received that Lee had laid down his arms at Appomattox, Va., the entire company of which he was a member fled to Mexico, their purpose being to join Maximilian's forces during the uprising in the latter country. But here trouble was encountered, for Maximilian insisted on selecting officers for the troop, and rather than submit to any such treatment, the company of Confederates hurriedly took their departure. Desiring to again reside in the state of his adoption, Mr. Surratt after returning from Europe went to Baltimore, and after remaining there a while secured employment with the Baltimore Steam Packet Company, where he remained until his death.

Where is Isaac?

A Note from Laurie Verge
Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, July 1986

There seems to be contradicting information in Isaac's obituary. Isaac was not in Europe at the time of his mother's death. He was technically still a member of the Confederate Army—not paroled until September 18, 1865, at San Antonio, Texas. At the time of his parole, he was a sergeant with the 33rd Texas Cavalry, Duff's regiment.

On October 18, 1865, Major General Philip Sheridan sent a telegram to Secretary of War Stanton in which he gave a description of Isaac Surratt. The following day, October 19, 1865, General Lafayette C. Baker wired Major Eckert of the War Department: "Isaac Surratt arrested in Baltimore on Sunday morning. Is still here."

It is, therefore, evident that Isaac was still in the United States at the time of his mother's trial and execution. It was his brother, John, who went to Europe after his mother's execution. It is likely that the writer of the obituary confused the two. An obvious question would be, did Isaac know of his mother's plight? Surely such news reached San Antonio.

The Next Generation

Reprinted from *The Evening Times* (Washington, D.C.), June 16, 1898

The Late Mrs. Surratt Two of Her Grandsons Are Fighting for Uncle Sam.

On June 21, 1869, a man employed in this city lost his position under peculiar circumstances and, it is said, with the approval of President Grant. He had served in the United States Army during the civil war, and he had been detailed as assistant chemist in the laboratory of the Surgeon General's office, which position he had filled with entire satisfaction.

The trouble was said to be that he had just married. He had married, at that, a woman whom any loyal citizen of the United States ought not marry, according to the views of the supposedly loyal citizens of the United States at that particular time.

William P. Tonry was this man's name, and his bride was Anna E. Surratt [sic]. The girl's mother had been hanged a short time before for alleged complicity in the assassination of President Lincoln.

At Chickamauga a few days ago, when the Fifth Maryland Volunteers were encamped there, they were under command of Gen. Frederick Grant. In that regiment were two men—one Reginald I. Tonry, sergeant in Company C commanded by Capt. Thompson, and the other Albert S. Tonry, corporal in Company I, commanded by Capt. Boyden. They were the sons of the man who had lost his position because he had married Mrs. Surratt's daughter, and they were grandsons of Mrs. Surratt.

These boys, in fighting for their country, were as loyal as any in the volunteer army—and still are, for they are now ready to go to Cuba—and they gloried in having for their commander the son of a man who had agreed to dismiss their father because he had married their mother.

This incident illustrates the things which have, within the last few months, convinced the skeptical that this is a reunited country. It is right in line with the appointment of Lee, Wheeler, and other pugnacious ex-Confederates to commanding positions in the Army of the present day. Gen. Grant's son—the present general—was sworn into office by an ex-Confederate. Lieut. Hobson, the Immortal, is and always has been a Southerner, but a Southerner no longer means anything else but an American. While at Chickamauga, Lieut. J. Markham Marshall, a son of the man who was Gen. Lee's aide, was appointed aide to Gen. Grant, a son of the man who had been Gen. Lee's sworn enemy.

There are lots of other similar incidents, and all these things count. Almost everybody remembers Mrs. Surratt's trial and conviction, after John Wilkes Booth had killed the President. They remember her execution, too, but very few remember that her son-in-law, a loyal Union

soldier, was discharged because he married her daughter. And very, very few know that Mrs. Surratt's two grandsons are now valiantly serving under the Stars and Stripes in one of the crack regiments of the volunteer army.

Mrs. Tonry had just left school when her mother was executed. She was probably about eighteen years old. [NOTE: Anna was 22 years old at the time.] She was the only daughter, but she has two brothers living in Baltimore—John Surratt, who underwent trial for the same crime of which his mother was convicted, and Isaac Surratt, who served in an independent Confederate company in Texas. They are now both in the service of the Old Bay Line in Baltimore.