

The Surratt Courier

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Louise Oertly, Editor

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President's Message

Happy New Year!

Did you ring in the New Year with a family tradition or superstition? My sister's in-laws, who have roots in the Carolina's, insist that the New Year's Day meal must include black eye peas.

The only thing I remember my mom insisting upon was that nothing was hanging on any of the doorknobs in the house when the clock struck 12. According to her German mother, who was raised in Baltimore and was very superstitious, if there were it would bring bad luck into the New Year. Is this true? I don't know, but I'm not about to find out. FYI, the way this year has gone so far, it didn't help. Sorry for the delay in getting this issue online.

With the start of the new year, there is some information I've been asked to share, so this is going to be a very short President's Message.

I hope you and your family have a happy, healthy, and safe New Year.

Louise Oertly, President

News and Information

*There will not be **Booth Escape Route Tours** in April. We hope to resume them in the Fall.

***The Surratt Society** will hold its annual meeting, virtually via Zoom. The tentative

date is the afternoon of April 13, 2024. Per the Bylaws, the meeting will include the election of officers and speakers to be announced. If you have signed up on our website's email list, a message will be sent when all the details are in place.

*The proposed **slate of officers** is:

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

*We are frequently asked about **Surratt Society Dues**, which were suspended in 2020. Access to the *Surratt Courier* online is open to the public and we are working on a better definition and the benefits of "membership" in the Surratt Society (which is a separate entity from the Surratt House Museum). Until then, all are welcome. Of course, contributions to the Surratt Society at the address below are welcomed as well.

This newsletter is a bimonthly publication of the Surratt Society. The Surratt Society's website is surrattmuseum.org 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, a historic property of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The Surratt House Museum's phone number is (301) 868-1121.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

It has been requested that the Surratt Society’s website provide current information from the **Surratt House Museum**. The Museum’s website can be found at <https://www.pgparcs.com/facilities/surratt-house-museum>.

Here are the highlights from the Surratt House Museum’s website:

“The Surratt House Museum provides a place for visitors to reckon with the historical legacy of enslavement and the enduring struggle for racial justice. Going beyond the site’s connection to the assassination of President Lincoln, the Surratt House uses history to acknowledge our past and promote a more just future.”

“HOURS & ADMISSION:

- Visitor Center and Historic House: Guided tours of the historic house depart every half hour between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Thursday to Sunday with the last tour at 4 p.m.
- Gift Shop: Open Thursday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Research Center: Open by appointment only.
- Check the website for holiday closures.
- General Admission: \$5”

“TOURS:

- For group reservations, please call or email.
- For school groups or non-school groups of more than 10 people, please visit the museum’s website for more information.”

“GUIDELINES

- Photography permitted, with no flash. Filming not permitted without a written request; please email the museum to apply.
- Food and drink not allowed in the historic house. Please enjoy all refreshments at our picnic tables.
- All children must have adult supervision while at the museum.”

‘Tis a Mystery

By Louise Oertly

On May 30, 1865, Anna Surratt was called to testify for the defense during the trial of the conspirators. According to the Ben Pitman trial transcript, Mary Surratt’s lawyer, Frederick Aiken, exhibited a picture (*carte de visite*) called *Morning, Noon, and Night* to Anna. Here is her testimony:

“That picture belonged to me; it was given to me by that man Weichman, and I put a photograph of John Wilkes Booth behind it. I went with Miss Honora Fitzpatrick to a daguerrean gallery one day to get her picture; we saw some photographs of Mr. Booth there, and, being acquainted with him, we bought two and took them home. When my brother saw them, he told me to tear them up and throw them in the fire, and that, if I did not, he would take them from me. So I hid them. I owned photographs of [Jefferson] Davis, [Alexander] Stephens, [Confederate Generals] Beauregard, Stonewall Jackson, and perhaps a few other leaders of the rebellion. My father gave them to me before his death, and I prize them on his account, if on nobody else’s. I also had in the house photographs of Union Generals—of General McClellan, General Grant, and General Joe Hooker.”

Why am I sharing this excerpt from the trial? I was recently contacted by a researcher. She had already sent a request for information to the James O. Hall Research Center, but she asked if the Surratt Society might have any information regarding the *carte de visite, Morning, Noon, and Night*. The print shows three generations (grandfather, daughter, and two grandchildren) in the parlor with a dog. The *carte de visite* (CdV) was found on a mantel at the Surratt boardinghouse in Washington, D.C., during the police search of the premises. On the back of the *carte de visite*, Anna Surratt had hidden a CdV of John Wilkes Booth.

Once the researcher explained her quest, I went through what resources I had, but didn’t find anything more than what she had already found. I then suggested to her that I ask *Surratt Courier* readers if they had any information that could help solve this mystery and be willing to share. Here is the information she sent me.

“As we discussed, many believe the *carte de visite* called *Morning, Noon, and Night* that was shown to Anna Surratt is this one. I can find no information vetting that claim nor establish any provenance to it being that one. The card and that association first appeared on Roger Norton’s site in 1997. [To see a photo of this CdV, go to Roger’s website at <https://rogerjnorton.com/Lincoln26.html> .] Roger himself has no other information, hence my inquiry to the Surratt House Museum,

who confirms that they do have a file on the image. [Editor's Note: The Museum received this CdV in 1977 and for decades this copy of the CdV was displayed in a Visitor Center showcase.]

“The card is the work of a noted French photographer, painter, and lithographer who in 1860 marketed his image entitled *Past, Present, Future* in both France and Germany. When the image made its American debut in Boston (1862), it appeared on a George W. Tomlinson card, whose reverse side promoted his collectible CdV filler card business. [There was no title on this CdV.]

“How it [*Past, Present, Future*] began to then be called *Morning, Noon, and Night* remains unclear. Unfortunately, the card called *Morning, Noon, and Night* and introduced at the trial has gone missing and without more information, *I can no other answer make other than to follow the metaphor which remains.*”

So, is *Past, Present, Future* the same CdV that we now call *Morning, Noon, and Night* or was it a different CdV that was presented at the conspirators' trial to Anna Surratt? If anyone can shed some light on this mystery, please contact me at surrattsociety@gmail.com and I will pass the information on to the researcher.

[Editor's Note: See the next article to explain what a carte de visite is.]

Carte de Visite

By John Walton, Jr.

Reprinted from *The Surratt Society News*, June/July 1977

Mr. Harold C. Goettner of Baltimore has donated to the Surratt House the carte de visite entitled, *Morning, Noon, and Night*. It was behind this carte de visite that the photo of John Wilkes Booth was discovered when the search was made at the Surratt's downtown Washington boardinghouse after Lincoln's assassination.

Our docents have enjoyed looking at *Morning, Noon, and Night*, and several of them wanted to know more about carte de visites. We asked John Walton [Prince George's County Historian at the time.], and he has shared with us the following information.

The term carte de visite, in reference to small photographic portraits mounted on stiff cardboard, originated in 1857. In that year, the Duke of Parma visited his photographer and requested that he make portrait photographs of him the size of

calling cards. The Duke then had these diminutive portraits of himself mounted on his personal calling cards, thus the name *carte de visite*.

The groundwork for *carte de visite* photographs, however, was laid three years earlier by Andre Adophe Eugene Disderi, a French photographer. In 1854, Disderi invented a camera which employed multiple lenses in a single camera body to produce as many as 12 images on one 6 ½ by 8 ½ inch glass plate negative. This innovation brought portraits within the financial reach of the common man and, coupled with the Duke of Parma's "new idea," led to the popularization of *carte de visite* photographs that soon became a world-wide fad.

In 1859, Disderi made *carte de visite* size portraits of Emperor Napoleon III, and it was only a short time after this that these small photographs became the rage in France. The new-found fad quickly spread to England and on to the United States. In fact, the earliest reference to the use of *carte de visite* photographs in America is to be found in a photographic journal published in 1859—the same year that Napoleon III sat for his portraits in Disderi's studio. By the end of 1860, "the fad was developing into a major fashion over the entire United States." In *Photography and the American Scene*, the author Robert Taft states:

"No wonder the fashion grew—and grew. At first, the *cartes de visite* left by visitors were placed on a tray; then, as the number increased, a basket was employed, but still the number grew. From the necessity, thus created, of finding a place to put the *cards* came the family album."

References:

Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*. (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1964.)
The Camera, a volume from the Time/Life *Library of Photography*. (New York: Time/Life Books, 1970.)

Come Retribution

Reprinted from *Surratt Society News*, June 1985

On April 15, 1985, three Surratt Society members, General William A. Tidwell, David W. Gaddy, and James O. Hall held a news conference to announce the completion of a one-thousand-page manuscript entitled *Come Retribution*. The manuscript advances a new theory in the study of the Lincoln assassination—a theory which considers John Wilkes Booth's plot to kidnap Lincoln as part of a more extensive Confederate strategy, and which has Booth killing the President when Confederate communications break down and he is left to do what he believes to be his duty.

General Tidwell on *Come Retribution*

Reprinted from *Surratt Society News*, June 1985

26 April 1985

Dear Laurie,

You asked for a few words about *Come Retribution*, and I thought that I might tell you the story of how we got into it.

In 1976 I bought some property in King George County, Virginia, with no thought to the old story that John Wilkes Booth had once passed that way. The property had a tumbled-down house on it that turned out to be a log cabin covered by planking. I restored the cabin, and the local newspaper did a story about it, since it appeared to date from about 1800. In the course of doing the story, the editor of the paper consulted the County Clerk's office to find out who had owned the property previously. The ladies of the Clerk's office remarked that they had recently looked up the same property for two men who were writing a book about John Wilkes Booth. According to the ladies, both men claimed that Booth had spent the night at my place on his escape.

This made me prick up my ears, and I began to try to find out some more details. Finally, my son, Robert, brought home from the school library a copy of *The Mad Booths of Maryland* by Stanley Kimmel. That has a detailed and documented account of Booth's escape, including pictures taken by Professor Kimmel in the 1930s. It was very helpful in understanding what was known about Booth's escape, but it was very unsatisfactory in another respect. Booth appeared to drift through the country from coincidence to coincidence, and Professor Kimmel never once raised the possibility that somebody might have been managing his trip. As a former intelligence officer, it seemed obvious to me that some of the events appeared to have been made to happen. It didn't look like the escape of a lone assassin—it looked like a clandestine operation mounted by an organization.

I began to try to find out something about Confederate intelligence organization and quickly found that the only organized writings on the subject tended to belong to the "gee whiz" category—they told sensational stories but gave no serious idea of organization or techniques. This led me to try to learn something by going after the separate pieces. The first place turned out to be an article on the chief of the Confederate Signal Corps by that loyal member of the Surratt Society,

David W. Gaddy. The name sounded familiar, and I called him on the phone. “Do I know you?” I asked.

It turned out that Dave and I had worked together on a project about 15 years earlier. I outlined my concerns to him, and he suggested that I get in touch with Mr. James O. Hall, who knew “everything” about the Lincoln assassination. I described my feelings about Booth’s escape to Mr. Hall and discovered that he too had misgivings about the conventional interpretation of those events. He shared many of his voluminous files with me and helped steer me into the U.S. National Archives.

After a period of a year or so, it became obvious that we were on the right track. It seemed clear that there was organized Confederate intervention on behalf of Booth. It also seemed clear that there was a lot more to the Confederate Intelligence organization than had ever been described in print.

We decided that there was a real story here, but we felt that we would have a problem of acceptance with many readers, who did not have our background in clandestine operations. We decided, therefore, that if we were to write our findings, we would have to devote the first part of our work to describing Confederate Intelligence activity, so the reader might put the Booth part into an understandable context. We thereupon drew up an outline and assigned parts to Hall, Gaddy, and myself.

We learned a lot as our work proceeded. The biggest surprise of all was to find how the Booth operation fitted into Confederate plans for the conduct of the war. All of a sudden things began to make a lot of sense. Instead of the crazy assassin, we found that we were dealing with a rational plan and could trace the sequence of events that brought Booth to make what turned out to be a bad decision.

We picked *Come Retribution* as the title of our book because that was the phrase adopted by the Confederates to use as the key to their cipher system during the time that Booth was trying to capture President Lincoln. It reflected the intensity of Southern feeling about the miseries that had been inflicted on the South and in a curious way also reflects the fate that befell Lincoln, Booth, and the Confederacy.

Sincerely,
(Bill)
W. A. Tidwell

p.s. Booth did not stay at my place.

General Tidwell Speaks on Confederate Espionage

Reprinted from the *Surratt Society News*, May 1980

Was it the act of a madman with a ragged group of followers or a well-planned strategy of war aimed against the enemy?

General William A. Tidwell, speaker of the April [1980] meeting of the Surratt Society, posed such a question to the audience and then built a strong case to show that the fate of Lincoln may well have rested in the hands of four men: Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy; Judah Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of State; James A. Sedden, Confederate Secretary of War; and John Wilkes Booth, Confederate agent.

The central theme was based on the premise that the kidnap/assassination plot was orchestrated from the top policy group of the CSA. It was a high priority, complex plan to kidnap (first) approved by Davis. Booth was only one of several key figures and may well have been trained for his role.

In order to substantiate such a premise, General Tidwell took us to “Confederate Spy Country” and explained the sophisticated Southern underground which flourished in lower Maryland. By July of 1861, the transportation of letters across the Potomac was already established and soon became a vital part of the Confederate Intelligence System. The use of torpedoes (mines) in the river became a part of the war strategy; and out of this line of communication, several names began to appear. Chief among these were Thomas Nelson Conrad and Mountjoy Cloud, but other names such as Joseph Baden and Thomas Harbin crisscross through military records. The latter two were later loosely affiliated with Booth. However, Conrad and Cloud began to head-up control of the river. In September of 1864, “The Gray Ghost,” Lt. Col. Mosby, and Chief Signal Officer, Charles Cawood, were ordered to assist Conrad. Research has turned up correspondence indicating that Conrad and Cloud were on the payroll of Judah Benjamin and, at least once, received \$400 in gold.

A Union expedition in 1864 was aimed at marching on Richmond, releasing prisoners, burning the city, and killing Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet. When official papers were confiscated, the South may have reacted by placing the blame on Lincoln. Did he then become the target? From 1864 on, Conrad and others seem to have formulated missions aimed at the seizure of Lincoln.

Conrad’s mission was never fulfilled and, somewhere, Booth emerged as the key agent. When the kidnap plot of March 17, 1865, failed, did John Surratt, Jr., return to Richmond with the recommendation to attempt an alternate plan? Was the recruitment of Lewis Thornton Powell (alias Paine) done by chance? He had served

with Mosby. Did the laying of the mines (which increased in January of 1865) indicate a means of stopping Union troops from pursuing the kidnappers? When did Booth become a key factor in a carefully organized plot against the Union and Abraham Lincoln? When did the orders for assassination come and from whom? General Tidwell feels the answer to such questions lie hidden in the Intelligence section of Confederate military history.

Come Retribution

How the South Planned to Win the Civil War

By David W. Gaddy

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, November 1988

Editor's Note: The following is the text of a talk delivered at the National Archives on July 20, 1988, by David Winfred Gaddy concerning the book, *Come Retribution*, co-written with William Tidwell and James O. Hall.

“Time Bomb Blows Up Base; Commanding General Narrowly Escapes.”
“Attempt to Free Prisoners from Deplorable Conditions Fails; Leak Blamed.”
“Guerrilla Raids Staged from Friendly Sanctuary and Return.”
“Reprisals.”
“Germ Warfare.”
“Assassination of Enemy Leaders Plotted; Executive Staff Implicated in Covert Activity; Signs Point to President's Knowledge.”
“Congress Votes Covert Funding; Is Denied Knowledge of Operations.”
“Newspapers Breach Administration Secrecy—Leak Plans of Operation.”

If those were headlines, they'd have a very modern sound to them, wouldn't they? But those are factual events from a century and a quarter ago. [Editor's Note: more like over a century and a half years ago today.]

That isn't the familiar version of the American Civil War. That isn't the colorful uniforms and banners we see in re-enactments. This is a war new to most of us.

The third year of the War for Southern Independence was markedly different from those that preceded it. The gaily dressed, ill-disciplined, indifferently armed citizen soldiers who stumbled into each other in patriotic fervor were no more. Those who survived had undergone the most rigorous form of military training, first-hand experience in combat. By 1863, the armies were professional in many respects. But war weariness had already set in. The mounting costs in bullion, manpower, and material were unimaginable for the two young republics. Leaders on both sides were under growing pressure to “end it” at whatever cost, but end it. The clamor, the impatience, may have been instrumental in the nasty turn that warfare took in 1864. The last year and a half of the war was a dirty, “knock-down-drag-out” struggle, a war of grinding down the South through a policy of attrition. It was no longer a gentlemen’s war. Cynicism reigned. Profiteering was rampant. Desertions went on both ways. With twenty-twenty hindsight, we look back on this time as the twilight of the Confederacy, an attitude well illustrated in these words from the book, *Traveller*, by novelist Richard Adams:

“Early May 1864. The Confederacy is undone and its cause doomed. Irreplaceable losses in numbers—which were always inferior—not only of men, but also of horses; shortage of boots, clothing, and ammunition; lack of means to replace worn-out artillery and small arms; near starvation, owing to a grossly defective commissariat, itself dependent upon the economy of a ruined country—these make up the hopeless prospect. Yet there is no will to capitulate. On the contrary, the Army of Northern Virginia still believe themselves superior to the enemy.

“The hope, when it existed, was that the North, though certainly unconquerable by force of arms, would become weary of continued casualties and the strain of the war, and rather than continue to oppose the indomitable South would desist and agree to negotiate peace. That this has not taken place—that the North still matches the South in determination—is due in large part to the political skill and pertinacity of a single man, President Abraham Lincoln. If there is one imponderable that has tipped the balance towards continuation of the war until the Confederacy is overthrown, it is a will of the President.”

This is the period that a trio of Washington area researchers came to study, and the result is quite unlike the impression left by the words I just read. On the contrary, what emerged is an amazing picture of a chief executive with his back to the wall. Jefferson Davis was determined never to give in and willing to risk all to save his nation. Let me tell you how this came about.

This fall [1988] the University Press of Mississippi will publish a book titled *Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln*. The principal author is retired intelligence officer General William A. Tidwell, assisted by Mr. James O. Hall, whose knowledge of the Lincoln assassination is legendary. My own interest centers on the Signal Corps of the

Confederate Army. The headquarters of the Signal Corps in Richmond also housed the Secret Service Bureau [Editor's Note: "Secret Service," as the Confederates used the term, referred to clandestine or covert missions and operations.] of the Confederate War Department, and the same man, a Yale-trained lawyer from Reisterstown and Baltimore, Maryland, William Norris, ran both. Among those who worked for Major Norris was one John Harrison Surratt, Jr., whose mother owned a wayside tavern in Prince George's County and later moved to H Street in Washington, D.C. You can see the plot thickening.

General Tidwell's interest in intelligence and in the War combined to suggest to him that an inquiry into Confederate intelligence operations might make an instructive text for modern trainees. Mr. Hall and I shared our findings with him. From there the process was not unlike what archeologists go through, as they piece together the shards of pottery. Bits and pieces, names, chronologies, kinship, and geographic coincidences—these became our shards. But even we were unprepared for the resulting pottery.

There was a period of some weeks in 1861 when the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia was in fact chief executive of a sovereign nation. Governor John Letcher combined a newspaperman's instincts with those of a statesman. His sources of information in Washington and Maryland were excellent, and he knew how to exploit them. The Confederate government, which came to Richmond, owed much of the groundwork laid by the governor, a role that has not been noticed by previous historians.

As we examined the types of information needed by a modern nation-state and the sources present in the 1860s, we saw the familiar evidence of well-meaning, but poorly prepared, amateurs; we saw the bumbling of generals and untrained outposts; but we also traced the emerging professionalism of military intelligence and cloak and dagger operations as the war continued. Major Norris ran a series of lines into and through U.S. territory to Canada and beyond, and into Union-held Fort Monroe, Virginia. The most important of those lines crossed the Potomac into Southern Maryland and ran into the District of Columbia and Baltimore, thence to New York. These lines moved agents—men and women (please note that the Confederacy was an equal opportunity employer in its intelligence operations), as well as secret correspondence, Northern newspapers, and agent reports.

We saw how sabotage came to be employed against the North, and efforts to develop a "Fifth Column" within the North. Guerrilla warfare, not just on land, by such stalwarts as Colonel Mosby, but on the waters of the Chesapeake. We saw how secret weapons were developed, especially mines and bombs. These represent the traditional weapons and tactics of the underdog, but we were interested to see Confederate innovations—how they exploited the profit motive with their incentive program. They offered to pay the saboteur or raider with a percentage of the

estimated value of the property destroyed. But as our research continued, more and more the bits and pieces pointed to Canada, and to a popular young actor named John Wilkes Booth.

By deciding to look at the Lincoln assassination as a possible Confederate operation, we were able to tap into Mr. Hall's unequalled store of information. [Editor's Note: Which now resides at the James O. Hall Research Center at the Surratt House Museum's campus.] But where he had previously had the assassination as his main focus, we substituted a new premise, one to which we were led by those bits and pieces we had been gathering. From the outset there had been reports—generally disregarded—of attempts to capture President Lincoln. We came to take those reports seriously—indeed, to conclude that the Confederate government did authorize such an effort. And they backed it up on a scale previously unimagined, perhaps even by the Union prosecutors in 1865, who were anxious to hang as many rebels as they could get their hand on. It became clear that the Confederate President, Jefferson Davis, had to have been aware of such plans, for we uncovered the procedures involved in the authorization and disbursement of Secret Service funds, as only the President could approve such expenditures. The Secretary of State, Judah P. Benjamin, controlled the disbursement, even to the Secretary of War.

Jefferson Davis was the first American executive given both the ability to consolidate the control of the dark forces of covert action, military and civilian, and to be pressed into circumstances that tempted him to use that capability in combination with conventional military warfare.

We believe that the catalyst was the abortive Dahlgren-Kilpatrick raid on Richmond in February-March 1864. Papers found on the body of young Dahlgren, son of the Admiral [John Dahlgren], showed his goal was to kill President Davis and the cabinet and put the city to the torch. Surely, some around Davis argued, Lincoln must have known of and must have sanctioned this objective. And, if that were the case, well, “no more Mr. Nice Guy,” as we'd say today. Trial and error had resulted in improvements in Confederate intelligence operations prior to this date, but afterward they seem to have had a greater urgency and clearer sense of direction. By the winter of 1864-65, the Confederate Congress debated in secret session and later passed legislation to establish a central intelligence agency of a type unknown in the United States until the 1940s. The very ability to control such forces carried an imperative of its own, as we well know from present-day parallels. Once embarked on that slippery slope, it was difficult to step back.

Remember that in the American system of government the President is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces. We pay lip service to that fact, but perhaps don't really take it very seriously. Given the circumstances of the American Civil War, a struggle to the death, it might have become a very attractive prospect to

imagine the successful capture of the opposing chief, a supreme hostage, and the confusion that would cause in Washington. And confusion—what we would term today, “disrupting the enemy’s command and control”—was high on the Confederate agenda, for the capture operation was planned in tandem with a daring military operation—a breakout from the Petersburg-Richmond stalemate to the North Carolina border area, a link-up with Generals Johnston and Beauregard, and the defeat of Sherman’s isolated army—relief for the Army of Northern Virginia, a prize hostage, rampant chaos in Washington, and newspaper headlines all over the world! That, in a nutshell, emerges as the Confederate plan for the 1865 spring offensive. Major Norris captured the mood of the high command in his choice of a new cipher key for the secret correspondence out of Richmond in February of 1865: “Come Retribution.”

Records from the National Archives and repositories elsewhere in this country and abroad helped us piece together the story and to heighten our appreciation of the skill and professionalism the Confederates brought to bear. Even as secret agents sent to Washington were studying Lincoln’s patterns of activity and assessing exit routes (finally selecting two, one to the west and south via Mosby country, the other east and south down the axis of present day Routes 5 and 301 in Southern Maryland), arrangements were underway in Virginia. With feverish haste, some of the best topographical engineers in the Confederacy were mapping in great detail the counties involved in Northern Virginia and the Northern Neck. Mine warfare specialists had been dispatched to sow minefields to turn back pursuers. Most interesting to us was the means used to assemble in northeastern Virginia what we come to think of as “the task force.”

The Confederates knew that Union intelligence would pick up troop movements from the Petersburg-Richmond front. They adopted a shrewd technique of extracting individuals, rather than whole units, and sending them back home on furlough. At a time when every able-bodied man was presumed to have been in the trenches around Petersburg, the lenient furlough policy surprised us, until we realized what was going on. These men were natives of the area involved in the operation. Their presence would attract little attention. They might even be passed off as some of Mosby’s men. In this way, perhaps the equivalent of a regiment was deployed in a loose screen to the northeast of Richmond, in an arc to the east of Fredericksburg. The bulk of the evidence for the existence of this task force came from General Tidwell’s discovery at the National Archives. The members were being paroled at Ashland, north of Richmond, whereas their parent units were with Lee at Appomattox.

Booth’s March attempt to capture Lincoln failed. It must then have been decided to raise the stakes: a demolition expert was sent via Mosby to try to get into Washington. The objective was to blow up the White House complex while a high-

level meeting was underway. The slippery slope again. But the expert was involved in a skirmish along with some of Mosby's men and was captured. That was perhaps the final official effort to act against Lincoln personally.

Then fate intervened. Fate and General Sheridan. Grant stretched Lee's Petersburg line to the breaking point, then threatened to turn his flank. A premature evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond was forced, and Davis and the high command departed for Danville, followed by the army. Ahead of that army sat warehouses of supplies, prepositioned for them—rations, ordnance, medical supplies, uniforms—if only they could reach them. As you know, that was not to be. At Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia.

In Washington, the Confederates left behind a “ticking time bomb,” as Mr. Hall once put it—the actor John Wilkes Booth. Thwarted in his March attempt to capture Lincoln, Booth had gone undercover to seek another opportunity. The dreadful news of Lee's surrender hit him like a thunderbolt. But it did not betoken the end of the war, as we think of it today. True, the General-in-Chief, Lee himself, had surrendered with perhaps the best-known Confederate army, but it was by no means the only Confederate army remaining in the field in the Carolinas and across the South. How could he best contribute to their relief; how could he relieve the pressure on President Davis and his displaced cabinet; how could he still sow some of the confusion that was the original goal? We suspect that those were among the considerations that led Booth to seek total chaos: to raise havoc with the Constitutional succession; to throw Washington into unimaginable confusion by killing the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State, plus General Grant if possible. And so, he acted.

Not a mad man, as he is often pictured, Booth considered himself the agent of his country, contributing what, under the circumstances, he imagined that he alone could contribute to the war effort, repulsive as the act might have seemed, even to him. The horror it invoked instead bewildered the injured escapee from Ford's Theatre. Increasingly, as word spread and as Booth moved down an exit route intended for transporting a live hostage, he found doors slammed in his face. He was no help; he was a liability. Then and later, men were to deny association with him and seek to destroy all traces linking them. Better the world thinks him a mad man, acting on his own. Better the world never knows the hidden dimensions of the Southern plan to win the war. Best not even to talk about planning a spring campaign for May 1865. After all, as we all know, the war ended on April 9, 1865, with the surrender of Lee. [Editor's Note: Or, if you prefer, after the last surrender on May 26, 1865.]