

The Surratt Courier

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Louise Oertly, Editor

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President's Message

**There will be a virtual meeting of the Surratt Society
on the afternoon of April 23, 2022, from 2 to 4 p.m. via Zoom.**

According to the Surratt Society's Bylaws, its annual meeting is to be held in April and the election of officers is to take place during that meeting. As the pandemic has precluded in-person meetings, the Executive Committee has decided to meet virtually again this year.

There will first be a business meeting, which will include the election of the Executive Committee. The proposed slate of officers are:

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

As we are going to be virtual, all votes will be taken by a show of hands or other means supported by the meeting platform.

As an added incentive to attend, after the business meeting there will be a "mini-conference" with Dave Taylor, speaking on "John Wilkes Booth: The Making of an Assassin." Dave's presentation will center on the early life of Lincoln's assassin, pointing out some of the key events that shaped Booth's mind and eventually put him on the path to Ford's Theatre.

Dave Taylor is a Lincoln assassination and Booth family researcher. His website, LincolnConspirators.com (formerly BoothieBarn), provides information on the Lincoln assassination

story through articles, maps, videos, travelogues, and picture galleries.

Dave has presented at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, and at several Surratt Society conferences about different aspects of the tragedy of April 14, 1865. Dave is also one of the narrators for the Surratt Society's popular John Wilkes Booth Escape Route Bus Tours.

An elementary school teacher in Southern Maryland for nine years, Dave now resides in Austin, Texas, with his wife, Jen, and stepsons, Attics and Noah.

If you have signed up on our e-mail list, you will get a notice about the conference. All are invited to "attend," however you must pre-register in advance on our website, surrattmuseum.org. Keep your fingers crossed that technology will cooperate with us, and this will be as successful as last year's virtual meeting

Hope you can join us on April 23.
Louise Oertly, President

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.

Who Was Invited to the Theater?

One hundred and fifty-seven years ago on April 14th, the Lincolns decided to go to Ford's Theatre to enjoy the play, *Our American Cousin*. [It was a flop in England, but a hit in the United States.] We know that Major Henry Rathbone and Clara Harris, who would have their own tragic story years later, were the Lincolns guests. We all know what happened at the theater that night, but what about earlier in the day. We know that the young couple was not the Lincolns' first choice of guests. Have you ever wondered who else may have been invited and what excuse they made to decline the invitation? Thanks to Roger Norton's *Abraham Lincoln Research Site*, I stumbled across the answer to this question. I've also added some additional information from other sources.

1) *General and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant*

Many of us know Harry Ford (and Booth) believed that the Lincolns and the Grants would be at the theater that night. In fact, Ford sent an announcement to *The Evening Star* that the both couples would be attending the play. This ensured that the Good Friday performance, which was usually a notoriously bad day for theaters, would have a good-sized audience. Everyone wanted to see the General. However, when the invitation was extended to Grant at the cabinet meeting that morning, he informed Lincoln that he would have to ask his wife. He added that they were going to visit their children in New Jersey and had planned to leave that evening, if possible. That evening the General and Mrs. Grant took the 6 p.m. train north toward New Jersey. Many believe that when Mrs. Grant heard of the invitation, she made sure their departure was that evening and had the General send their regrets, as Mary Lincoln was not her favorite person. Grant had traveled as far as Philadelphia when he received word that Lincoln had been shot. He took the next train to back to Washington.

2) *Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Stanton*

The Secretary of War and Mrs. Stanton declined the invitation. Stanton did not approved of Lincoln going to the theater. He thought it was too dangerous. Stanton told his wife to decline the invitation if she wished. Again, Mary Todd Lincoln was not her favorite person.

3) *Thomas Eckert*

Eckert was a telegraph officer in the War Department and known for his strength. Secretary of War Stanton said Eckert couldn't go to the theater because he was needed at work.

4) *Schuyler Colfax*

Speaker of the House of Representatives Colfax (from Indiana) turned down the invitation, because he was leaving for the Pacific Coast the next morning. Needless to say, he didn't leave town the next day. By midnight, Colfax and other government officials had arrived at the Petersen house across from Ford's Theatre.

5) *George Ashmun*

Former Congressman Ashmun (from Massachusetts) had presided over the 1860 Republican Convention, which had nominated Lincoln for president. According to Kunhardt and Norton, he turned down the theater invitation on the grounds of a "previous engagement."

However, Michael Kauffman's *American Brutus*, says Ashman was not invited by Lincoln. Whether he was invited or not, he was one of the last people to see Lincoln before his trip to the theater. Lincoln was running late, so he told Ashmun he would see him at 9 a.m. the next day.

6) *Richard J. Oglesby*

Oglesby was governor of Illinois. He declined the invitation in order to visit other friends, but told Lincoln he would be back to see him over the weekend.

7) *Richard Yates*

Yates was the ex-governor of Illinois. He excused himself from the invitation because he had other plans with friends that evening.

8) *General Isham N. Haynie*

Haynie, a visitor from Illinois, used the same excuse as Oglesby and Yates had employed—other plans.

9) *William A Howard*

Howard was postmaster of Detroit. He said he had already made arrangements to leave Washington later that day.

10) *Mr. and Mrs. William H. Wallace*

Wallace was the governor of the Idaho Territory. The couple refused the invitation on the grounds of weariness.

11) *Noah Brooks*

Brooks was a reporter who had always been friendly to the Lincoln administration. He said he couldn't go to the theater because he had a cold.

12) *Robert Lincoln*

Robert was the Lincolns' eldest son. Author Clara Laughlin interviewed Robert. He said that as his parents were departing for Ford's, his father said, "We're going to the theater, Bob, don't you want to go?" But Captain Lincoln (just home from his tour of duty with General Grant) wanted to turn in early that night. Tad Lincoln, then 12, said nobody ever asked him to go. Tad ended up going to see *Aladdin or The Wonderful Lamp* at Grover's Theatre, a few blocks from Ford's. Tad was at Grover's when he learned that his father had been shot at Ford's. Tad was taken to the White House and put to bed.

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Photos of the people who refused the Lincolns' theater invitation can be seen on page 347 of *Lincoln: An Illustrated Biography* by Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr.; Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter W. Kunhardt. According to the Kunhardts' book, "For some, Mary Lincoln's undignified, even unbalanced behavior of late rendered an evening at the theater with her unthinkable." The book also mentions that "The Stantons had been asked too. Ellen Stanton and Julia Grant had vowed that neither one of them would give Mary Lincoln the satisfaction, so she and her husband also sent their regrets."

Edman Spangler: A Life Rediscovered

By Michael W. Kauffman

Reprinted from the *Surratt Courier*, November 1986

[Editor's Note: The following is a brief synopsis of a talk given at the August 10, 1986, dedication of Ned Spangler's gravestone.]

In my travels to York, Pennsylvania, to research the life and background of Edman Spangler, I was frequently asked, "Why dedicate a monument to a criminal?" It seems the people of York knew little of their fellow citizen, who had gotten himself tangled in the Lincoln assassination conspiracy. They only knew that Ned Spangler was convicted of a horrible crime.

It is difficult to see Spangler as a criminal. In years of reading about the "conspirators" and their deeds, I do not recall having read anything about the criminal tendencies of this simple stagehand and friend of the assassin. He was a good natured, jovial, and dependable man whose only crime, apparently, was loyalty to a man he had known for a dozen years. If anything, Ned Spangler was a victim.

When John Wilkes Booth fired the shot that killed Abraham Lincoln, he left behind a number of victims besides the President. There were others—friends and associates of Booth—who would pay dearly for their association with him. We all know, of course, about Mary Surratt and Dr. Mudd. Their names are now familiar to school children. But what of Ned Spangler? He never had the influential friends or journalists he needed to argue his case before the public, and so he remains largely forgotten. This is very unfortunate, because Spangler claims a unique place in the history of the Lincoln tragedy. He was the only one of the eight conspirators tried in the case who was found **innocent** of conspiring to kill President Lincoln. He was convicted only of aiding and abetting Booth in his escape.¹

Were it not for his friendship with John Wilkes Booth, Edman Spangler would have lived and died in obscurity. He was the fourth child born to William and Anna Maria Baltzer Spangler in York, Pennsylvania. William was respected by the community. He owned a town house just three doors east of the town square, which was the site of the Nation's Capital building in 1777.² It was probably in this town house that Ned was born on August 10, 1825.³

Ned was only six months old when his mother died on February 14, 1826, at the age of 32.⁴ A year later, William Spangler took an appointment as York County Sheriff and he served in that capacity for three years.⁵ On October 3, 1830, he married Sarah Leitner Spangler, the widow of his cousin George. This woman, who had once lived in the old Baltzer Spangler mansion, became the only mother Ned Spangler would ever know. She and William had another four children of their own.⁶

Life was apparently uneventful for the family. They were devout churchgoers, attending the First (German) Reformed Church only a block from their home. All of the Spangler children were baptized there, and most were eventually married there as well.⁷ Little is known about their activities, but the 1850 census lists William Spangler as a laborer, and "Edwin" as a carpenter. Thus, at the age of 24, Ned was already established in his occupation.⁸

In 1853, two things happened: John Wilkes Booth came to York to attend a boarding school in the old Baltzer Spangler mansion; and Ned Spangler went to Bel Air, Maryland, to help

build a house for the Booth family. It is not clear which of these events occurred first, but it is quite certain that by the fall of 1853, John Wilkes Booth and Edman Spangler knew each other.

The home in Bel Air was called *Tudor Hall*, and Ned worked there under the supervision of James Johnson Gifford, an architect from Baltimore. Their work was completed by 1854, and at that time Ned followed his boss to the city, where more carpentry work was available. He took jobs at the Holliday Street and Front Street theaters doing stage work and odd jobs.⁹ His home, at 60 North Canal Street, was just a few blocks away from the theater district, and closer still to the town house of the Booth family.¹⁰ It was at this address that Ned met and courted Mary Brasheare, a woman ten years older than he. They were married on July 29, 1858.¹¹

In 1861, John T. Ford, of Baltimore, began renovating the old Tenth Street Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., with plans to convert the building into a theater. He hired James Gifford to work on the project, and Ned Spangler came along as well. Ned performed some of the rough carpentry duties, and he also acted as a “scene shifter” during the plays each night. He had done similar work in the theaters of Baltimore, and Ford (who also owned the Holliday Street Theatre) was very pleased with his work. Ford later said he was a good employee, and “a very good-natured, kind, willing man,” who did not mind doing “drudge” work for his friends. He did a lot of drudge work for John Wilkes Booth.¹²

The theatrical season ended late in the spring, and every summer Ned returned to Baltimore to pursue his favorite sport of crab-fishing. This pastime was almost an obsession with Ned, and he often invited his co-workers to go crabbing with him. It was during the summer of 1864, while Ned was in Baltimore, that his wife Mary died. She was only 49 years old—the same age at which her husband would later pass away. Ned buried her in Baltimore Cemetery.¹³

The following winter, John Wilkes Booth and Ned Spangler were both back in Washington. They saw a lot of each other.¹⁴ Booth frequently stopped in at Ford’s Theatre, and Ned was, by this time, actually living in the theater.¹⁵ Naturally, their friendship grew, and theater employees noted that Spangler seemed willing to do any menial chore that Booth asked him to do. In January of 1865, Booth rented an old shed in the alley behind the theater, and he had Spangler convert the building into a stable for his horses and buggy.¹⁶ Along with other stage hands from Ford’s, Ned took care of Booth’s horses.

Eventually, this helpfulness got Spangler into trouble. On April 10th—the Monday before the assassination—Booth told Ned that he would be leaving town soon, and that he needed to sell his horse and buggy. Ned consented to take them down to the horse auction the following day and make the sale. But as it happened, nobody at the horse auction would pay the price Booth was asking, so Spangler brought the horse and buggy back to the theater. That evening he told Booth what had transpired, and Booth replied that he had to sell the horse, perhaps in a private sale the next day. He asked Spangler if he would help him and Ned said “Yes.” A number of people heard the last part of that conversation and prosecutors would soon turn that business deal into a conspiracy.¹⁷

Ned Spangler’s job was shoving scenery “flats” into place on the theater’s stage. It was an important job, and if he ever left his post, the play would suffer from his neglect. So when John Wilkes Booth called for him on the night of April 14th and asked him to hold his horse outside the back door of the theater, Ned declined. However, he did arrange for Joseph “Peanut” Burroughs to hold the horse. He left the boy waiting in the alley while he went back inside to tend to his duties. A short while later, a shot rang out and pandemonium broke loose. In a few minutes, it was clear that the President had been shot and that John Wilkes Booth was the assassin. A few of the stagehands noticed that Ned Spangler seemed to be crying.¹⁸

In the investigations that followed the shooting, nearly everyone connected with the theater was suspected of being involved. Spangler, as a close friend of Booth, became a suspect immediately. Jake Ritterspaugh, another stagehand, swore that Ned had slapped him in the face and said “shut up!” when Ritterspaugh identified Booth as the assassin. The defense easily destroyed Ritterspaugh’s testimony by pointing out its contradictions.¹⁹ But that did not clear Spangler’s name; a piece of rope found in his carpetbag was brought into his case as “damaging” evidence. The prosecution inferred, vaguely, that Spangler intended to use the rope to block the pursuit of Booth. To even the most casual student, the argument seems ludicrous. Defense attorney Thomas Ewing brought forth a host of witnesses to show that Edman Spangler was a harmless, genial man who was simply under the spell of the charismatic Booth. This strategy was partly successful. Ned was acquitted of the most serious charges against him.²⁰ Before a panel of “hanging judges,” he drew only a six-year sentence. Convicted of aiding and abetting Booth in his escape, Spangler was sent to Dry Tortugas.

Prison life was certainly not easy, but some of the guards said that Ned Spangler endured his fate better than any of the other prisoners.²¹ He was assigned to work in the prison carpentry shop, where he made small boxes and items for the guards and their families.

In 1867, yellow fever broke out in the prison. It soon reached epidemic proportions. All of the “state prisoners”—Spangler, Dr. Mudd, Michael O’Laughlen, and Samuel B. Arnold—came down with the disease. They nursed each other back to health, as best they could, and three of them pulled through. Mike O’Laughlen did not make it. He had been well on his way to recovery, but had a sudden relapse and died within hours. Spangler, who was then making coffins for the fever victims, was hit hard by the loss of his friend and cellmate. He wrote to some friends in Baltimore telling them that perhaps he, too, would soon die. He wanted to be prepared for his death, and his way of preparing told a lot about the kind of man he was. He was making some things to send to his friends so they would not forget him. In his own pitiful way he was still thinking of others, even in the face of death.²²

Ned Spangler did not meet death in the Dry Tortugas. John T. Ford had lobbied long and hard to get his friend and employee out of prison. In 1869, his efforts paid off. Spangler’s pardon came just at the end of Andrew Johnson’s administration, after the public hysteria over the assassination had died down a bit. Dropped off in Florida and destitute of funds, Spangler had to find his own way back home.

Early one morning he appeared at the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd. When the doctor introduced him to Mrs. Mudd, Ned said, “I was afraid of your dogs, and I roosted in a tree” for most of the night. The Mudds welcomed him to their home, and there he remained for the rest of his life. Nettie Mudd later described Ned as “a quiet, genial man greatly respected by members of our family and the people of our neighborhood. His greatest pleasure seemed to be found in extending kindness to others and particularly to children, of whom he was very fond.”²³ He helped the Mudds’ gardener, Mr. Best, and did some carpentry work around the neighborhood. He intended to build a home on some land Dr. Mudd gave him, but his plans were never realized. Caught in a storm one winter, he developed “rheumatism of the heart,” and died on February 7, 1875. He was baptized a Catholic just hours before death, and was buried in St. Peter’s Cemetery near the Mudd farm.²⁴

The cases of Dr. Mudd and Mary Surratt have been widely publicized, but this humble man is part of the story as well. He suffered a harsh fate and bore his sufferings with uncommon dignity. He maintained his innocence to the end, but willingly stood aside to let history be his judge. For a time he seemed forgotten by his contemporaries. In death, he fared no better. His resting place

was long forgotten and only recently rediscovered. It is very appropriate that this spot is now being marked by the Surratt Society and the Dr. Mudd Society; two groups keeping the memory of Ned Spangler alive. And as Abraham Lincoln said, “It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.” Ned Spangler told his Baltimore friends that he did not wish to be forgotten. We dedicate this monument in hope that he will finally get his wish.

[Author’s Note: I am indebted to the York County Historical Society for their kind assistance in researching the Spangler family background.]

SOURCES:

¹ Benn Pitman, *Assassination of President Lincoln and Trial of the Conspirators* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach and Baldwin, 1865) p. 248.

To clarify a popular misconception, John H. Surratt, Jr., was never acquitted. His jury failed to reach a verdict, and he was never tried again.

² Spangler family data are from Edward W. Spangler, *The Annals of the Families of Casper, Henry, Baltzer, and George Spangler* (York: n.p., 1896)

York County, Pennsylvania, land records show that the only property owned by William Spangler was the eastern half of lot 54 (Deed book 3M, p. 276). This address is now 11 East Market Street, and a modern structure stands on the site. The town square is the place where the Continental Congress adopted the *Articles of Confederation*.

³ Birth records from Trinity United Church of Christ, give Ned’s name as Edmund, as do a number of other official records. However, Spangler always signed his own name as “Edman.” For example, see the *Lincoln Assassination Suspect File*, M-599, Reel 6, Frame 204.

⁴ *York Recorder*, February 21, 1826, clipping.

⁵ *Spangler Annals*, p. 214.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Birth and Baptismal records for the First Reformed Church

(now Trinity United Church of Christ) West Market Street, York, Pennsylvania.

Ned’s siblings were: Theodore (born July 17, 1815, died April 15, 1852); Margaret Ann, wife of Emerson J. Case (born January 12, 1821, died March 29, 1871); Sarah Rebecca, wife of John L. Getz (born February 20, 1823, died December 27, 1911). All are buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery in York.

⁸ 1850 Federal Census, taken September 30, 1850. South Ward, York Borough, p. 109.

⁹ 1855 Baltimore Directory.

¹⁰ Nettie Mudd, *The Life of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd* (N.Y.: Neale Publishing Co., 1906), p. 323.

After Spangler’s death, this statement was found in his tool chest at the Mudd farm and was published in Nettie Mudd’s book.

¹¹ Baltimore, Maryland, marriage records.

¹² Spangler’s statement in Mudd, p. 323. Ford testimony in Pitman, *Assassination*, pp. 102-104.

¹³ Records show Mary Spangler, age 49, died July 24, 1864, and buried in the lot of Eleanor Patterson. Her grave is unmarked.

¹⁴ Spangler Statement in Mudd, p. 323

¹⁵ Ford testimony in Pitman, p. 103.

Spangler slept in the theater, but took his meals at the boardinghouse of Mrs. Rosanna Scott, southeast corner of 7th and G Streets, Northwest. See testimony of Jacob Ritterspaugh and Charles Boigi in Pitman, pp. 97 and 112. Detective Charles H. Rosch (Pitman, p. 98) incorrectly gave the address as the northeast corner of 7th and H Streets.

¹⁶ Joseph Burroughs testimony in Pitman, p. 75.

At that time, Booth owned two horses and one buggy and harness.

¹⁷ Testimony of John F. Sleichman in Pitman, p. 73.

¹⁸ Testimony of Joseph Burroughs, Jacob Ritterspaugh, and James J. Gifford in Pitman, pp. 75, 97, and 107.

¹⁹ Ritterspaugh testimony in Pitman, pp. 97 and 107. Refuted by testimony of James Lamb, Louis J. Carland, pp. 106 and 108.

²⁰ Testimony of Charles H. Rosch in Pitman, p. 98. Findings in Pitman, p. 248.

²¹ Ben Perley Poore, *The Conspiracy Trial for the Murder of the President* (Boston: J.E Tilton & Co., 1865) vol. I, p. 12.

²² "Letters from the Dry Tortugas," *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1867, p. 1.

²³ Mudd, p 322.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Record of St. Peter's Church, Waldorf, Maryland.

Spangler's Statement

Reprinted from *The Evening Telegraph* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), June 24, 1869

The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

The Pardoned Conspirator Makes a Statement—His Knowledge of the Terrible Crime

In May, 1865, Edmund Spangler was tried on the charge of being one of the conspirators who leagued together to assassinate President Lincoln. For his participation in that plot he was sentenced to the Dry Tortugas, in company with the notorious Dr. Mudd. Just before his administration had closed, President Johnson pardoned these two individuals, and among people of pro-Rebel tendencies they have both, since their return, been extensively lionized. Spangler, it will be remembered, was a scene-shifter at Ford's Theatre, and was on the stage when Booth shot President Lincoln and jumped from the box to the stage. He has just written the following statement, and, as one would naturally expect, asserts his entire innocence, denounces the finding of the court-martial in unmeasured terms, declares against the justice of his sentence, impeaches the integrity of those who testified against him, and dwells at length on the "horrors" to which he was subjected while on the Dry Tortugas, in the face of many impartial accounts published since his incarceration, all agreeing that there was no special hardships indicted upon him. This is his statement, *verbatim et literatim*, as found in the *New York World* this morning:

I have deemed it due to truth to prepare for publication the following statement—at a time when I hope the temper of the people will give me a patient hearing—of my arrest, trial, and imprisonment for alleged complicity in the plot to assassinate the late President Lincoln. I have suffered much, but I solemnly assert now, as I always have since I was arraigned for trial at the Washington Arsenal, that I am entirely innocent of any fore or after knowledge of the crime which John Wilkes Booth committed—save what I knew in common with everybody after it took place. I further solemnly assert that John Wilkes Booth, or any other person, never mentioned to me any plot, or intimation of a plot, for the abduction or assassination of President Lincoln; that I did not know when Booth leaped from the box to the stage of the theatre, that he had shot Mr. Lincoln; and that I did not, in any way, so help me God, assist in his escape; and I further declare that I am entirely innocent of any and all charges made against me in that connection. I never knew either Surratt, Payne, Atzerodt, Arnold, or Harold [sic], or any of the so-called conspirators, nor did I ever see any of them until they appeared in custody. While imprisoned with Atzerodt, Payne, and Harold, and after their trial was over, I was allowed a few minutes' exercise in the prison yard. I heard the three unite in asserting Mrs. Surratt's entire innocence, and acknowledge their own guilt, confining the crime, as they did, entirely to themselves, but implicating the witness Weichman [sic] in knowledge of the original plot to abduct; and with furnishing information from the Commissary of Prisoners' Department, where Weichman was a clerk.

I was arrested on the morning of the 15th of April, 1865, and with Ritterspaugh (also a scene-shifter) taken to the police station on E Street, between Ninth and Tenth. The sergeant, after questioning me closely, went with two policemen to search for Peanut John (the name of the boy who held Booth's horse the night before), and made him accompany us to the headquarters of the police on Tenth Street, where John and I were locked up, and Ritterspaugh was released. After four hours' confinement I was released, and brought before Judges Olin and Bingham, and told them of Booth bringing his horse to the theatre on the afternoon of the 14th of April (1865). After this investigation I said, "What is to be done with me?" and they replied, "We know where to find you when you are wanted," and ordered my release. I returned to the theatre, where I remained until Saturday, when the soldiers took possession of it; but as the officer of the guard gave an attache and myself a pass to sleep there, we retired at 10 p.m., and at 1 a.m. a guard was placed over me, who remained until 9 a.m. Sunday morning, when I was released. I did not leave the theatre until Sunday evening, and on our return this attache (Carland by name) and myself were arrested by Detective Larner. Instead of taking us to the guardhouse, he said he would accompany us home to sleep there, but we all went to Police Headquarters on Tenth Street, and when Carland asked if we were wanted, an officer sharply said "No." I returned to the theatre that night, and remained the next day till I went to dinner, on the corner of Seventh and G Streets. That over, I remained a few minutes, when Ritterspaugh (who worked at the theatre with me) came, and meeting me, said, "I have given my evidence, and would like now to get some of the reward."

I walked out with Ritterspaugh for half an hour, and on returning to lie down left word that if any one called for me to tell them that I was lying down. Two hours after I was called downstairs to see two gentlemen who had called for me. They said that I was wanted down the street. On reaching the sidewalk they placed me in a hack and drove rapidly to Carroll Prison, where I was detained a week. Three days afterwards Detective, or Colonel, Baker came to my room, and questioned me about the sale of a horse and buggy (which belonged to Booth), and I told him all about it freely and readily. On the day following, I was called into the office of the prison in order to be recognized by Sergeant Dye, who merely nodded his head as I entered, and then he left. (Dye subsequently testified that he was sitting on the steps of the theatre just before Booth fired the shot, and to seeing mysterious persons about.) I was allowed on the fourth day of my imprisonment to walk the prison yard, but from that evening I was closely confined and guarded until the next Saturday at midnight, when I was again taken to the office to see a detective, who said: "Come, Spangler, I've some jewelry for you." He handcuffed me with my arms behind my back, and guarding me to a hack, I was placed in it and driven to the Navy Yard, where my legs were manacled, and a pair of Lillie handcuffs placed on my wrists. I was put in a boat and rowed to a monitor, where I was taken on board and thrown into a small, dirty room, between two water closets, and on to a bed of filthy life preservers and blankets, with two soldiers guarding the door. I was kept there for three days. I had been thus confined three days on the vessel when Captain Monroe came to me and said: "Spangler, I've something that must be told, but you must not be frightened. We have orders from the Secretary of War, who must be obeyed, to put a bag on your head." Then two men came and tied up my head so securely that I could not see daylight. I had plenty of food, but could not eat with my face so muffled up. True, there was a small hole in the bag near my mouth, but I could not reach that, as my hands were wedged down by the iron. At last, two kind-hearted soldiers took compassion on me, and while one watched, the other fed me. On Saturday night a man came to me, and after drawing the bag so tight as to nearly suffocate me, said to the guard, "Don't let him go to sleep, as we will carry him out to hang him directly." I heard them go up on the deck, when there was a great rattling of chains and other noises; and while I

was trying to imagine what was going on and what they intended to do, I was dragged out by two men, who both pulled me at times in different directions. We, however, reached a boat, in which I was placed, and were rowed a short distance. I could not say then where we stopped, for my face was still covered. After leaving the boat I was forced to walk some distance, with the heavy irons still on my legs. I was then suddenly stopped, and made to ascend three or four flights of stairs; and as I stood at the top waiting, someone struck me a severe blow on the top of the head, which stunned and half threw me over, when I was pushed into a small room, where I remained in an unconscious condition for several hours. The next morning someone came with bread and coffee. I remained here several days, suffering torture from the bag or padded hood over my face. It was on Sunday when it was removed and I was shaven. It was then replaced. Some hours after, General Hartranft came and read to me several charges—that I was engaged in a plot to assassinate the President and the day following I was carried into a military court, and still hooded, before all of its members. I remained but a short time, when I was returned to my cell for another night and day, and then again presented in this court. Mr. Bingham, Assistant Judge-Advocate, read the charge against me, and asked me if I had any objection to the court, and I replied "No," and made my plea of "not guilty." They then wished to know if I desired counsel, and when I answered affirmatively, General Hunter, the President of the Court, insisted that I should not be allowed counsel. He was, however, overruled, but it was several days before I was permitted legal aid, the court in the meanwhile taking evidence with closed doors. On every adjournment of the court, if only for an hour, I was returned to my cell and the closely-fitting hood placed over my head. This continued till June 10, 1865, when I was relieved from the torture of the bag, but my hands and limbs remained heavily manacled.

On one Sunday, while I was confined at this place (the Washington Arsenal), I was visited by a gentleman of middle stature, rather stout, with full beard and gold-framed spectacles. He noticed my manacles and padded head. I afterwards learned that he was Mr. Stanton, the Secretary of War. It is proper to state that when the hood was placed on me, Captain Monroe said it was by order of the Secretary of War. My first thought was that I was to be hung without trial, and the hood was preparatory to that act.

The first time I ever saw Mrs. Surratt was in the Carroll Prison yard, on Capitol Hill. I did not see her again until we were taken into court the first day at the Arsenal. My cell was on the same corridor with hers, and I had in pass it every time I was taken into court. I frequently looked into her cell, a small room about four feet wide by seven feet long. The only things in her cell were an old mattress laid on the bricks and an army blanket. I could see the irons on her feet, as she was generally lying on the mattress, and was the last one brought into court. She occupied a seat in court near the prison door. The seat was 12 inches high, and the chains between the irons on her feet were so short that she always had to be assisted to her seat. She was so sick at one time that the court was compelled to adjourn.

On the 17th of July, about midnight, I was conveyed to a steamboat, and arrived the next day at Fortress Monroe, and was thence taken to the gunboat *Florida*. The irons on my arms were temporarily removed, but Captain Dutton, in charge of the guard, ordered heavy Lillie irons to be placed on me, when General Dodd [2022 Editor's Note: For more on Dodd, see *The Surratt Courier* March/April 2022, p. 12], chief officer in charge, more humanely countermanded his order and had the irons again removed from my arms. I was placed for security in the lower hold of the vessel, and compelled to descend to it by a ladder. The rungs were far apart, and, as the irons on my feet were chained but a few inches apart, my legs were bruised and lacerated fearfully. The hold where I was confined was close and dirty, but after two or three days I was allowed on deck

in the daytime, but was closely guarded. I was allowed to speak to no one of the crew. We arrived at Fort Jefferson, on the Dry Tortugas, and were handed over to Colonel Hamilton, commanding, who placed me until the next day in a casemate. The next day I was brought before Colonel Hamilton, who informed me that he had no more stringent orders concerning me than other prisoners confined there.

I managed to get along comfortably for a while, though to some of the prisoners the officers were very cruel. One man by the name of Dunn, while helping in unloading a Government transport, got hold of some liquor and imbibed too freely; for which he was taken to the guardhouse and tied up to the window frame by his thumbs for two hours. General Hill then ordered him to be taken down and be made to carry a 32-pound ball, but as the hanging had deprived him of the use of his thumbs, he was unable to obey. The officers, however, put two 24-pound balls in a knapsack, and compelled him to carry them until the sack gave away from the weight of the iron. He was then tied up by the wrists and gagged in the mouth by the bayonet from 8 p.m. until the next morning. He was then taken down and thrown into the guardhouse, but was so exhausted that he had to be removed to the hospital. It was decided to amputate three of his fingers, but this was reconsidered. He lost, however, the use of his thumb and two fingers. This punishment was inflicted by Major McConnell, officer of the day, and was carried out by Sergeant Edward Donnelly.

Another poor prisoner named Brown was once excused by the doctor from work on the plea of illness, but the Provost Marshal insisted and, finding him too ill and lacking strength, made him carry a 32-pound ball. He staggered under the weight and was compelled from weakness to put it down. He was then taken to the wharf and with his legs tied together and his hands tied behind him, a rope was placed around him and he was thrown into the water and then dragged out. This was done three or four times, he begging for mercy most piteously. He was finally jerked out of the water and ordered to return to his ordinary work. The poor wretch crept off, apparently thankful for any escape from such torments. Captain Joseph Rittenhouse was officer of the day, and his orders were carried out by Corporal Spear.

During the latter part of last October, I was placed in irons and compelled to work with an armed sentinel over me. I did not know the reason for this, for I was unconscious of having given offense, and had conformed to every regulation. I was then closely confined and allowed to communicate with no one for four months. The pretense for this I afterwards learned, sprang from an attempt of Dr. Mudd to escape.

Colonel St. George Leger Grenfel, aged 65 years, was taken sick and went to the Doctor to get excused from work. The Doctor declined to excuse him. He then applied to the Provost Marshal, who said that he could not excuse him if the Doctor could not. Grenfel then tried to work and failed. They then took him to the guardhouse, tied him up for half a day, and then took him to the wharf, tied his hands behind him, tied his legs together, and put a rope around his waist. There were three officers, heavily armed, who drove spectators from the wharf. I could see and hear from my window. The colonel asked them if they were going to throw him into the water, and they answered "Yes." He then jumped in, and because he could not sink they drew him out and tied about 40 pounds of iron to his legs, and threw him into the water again, and after he had sunk twice they pulled him out again, and then compelled him to go to work. The officers who had him in hand were Lieutenant Robinson, Lieutenant Pike, and Captain George W. Crabb, assisted by Sergeant Michael Gleason, and Assistant Military Storekeeper G.T. Jackson, who tied the irons on his legs. Captain Samuel Peebles tied up Grenfel for saying that "he was capable of doing anything." Colonel Grenfel was forced to scrub and do other menial work when he proved

he was so ill as to have refused to eat his rations for a week. All of the officers hated Grenfel on account of a letter which appeared in a New York paper, which they said Grenfel wrote, about tying up the prisoner Dunn, which letter was truthful, as others and myself were witnesses to the details it related. One very stormy night Grenfel with four others, escaped in a small boat, and was evidently drowned near the fort. His escape was discovered, but the storm was so severe that it was deemed too dangerous to pursue them, although a steamer was at the wharf. Grenfel frequently declared his intention of running any risk to escape, rather than, to use his own words, "to be tortured to death at the fort." These are only two or three instances of the many acts or cruelty practiced at the fort. During my imprisonment at Fort Jefferson I worked very hard at carpentering and wood ornamental work, making a great many fancy boxes, etc., out of the peculiar wood found on the adjacent islands; the greater portion of this work was made for officers. By my industry in that direction, I won some favor in their eyes. I was released in March of the present year [1869] by executive clemency.

EDMAN SPLANGLER

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Editor's Note: After this article was published in the *New York World* on June 24, 1869, and reprinted in some form across the country, there were questions about who really wrote the article—Spangler or a ghost writer. Here is what June 26, 1869, issue of *The Evening Star* wrote to answer the question.

Spangler's Statement.—The *Chronicle* and *Republican* of this morning copy a paragraph from the Washington correspondence of the *Philadelphia Press* that Spangler's statement, a synopsis of which appeared in Thursday's *Star*, "was written up by a Washington letter-writer from notes taken during an interview with Spangler," and that the latter, "after much persuasion, was induced to swear to the so-called confession." We have evidence before us that the correspondent's statement is incorrect. Spangler wrote all of his statement voluntarily many weeks ago, and it was published as he wrote it, except some changes in the grammar to render it fit for publication. Ever since Spangler's return from the Dry Tortugas, he has worked at his trade in Baltimore as a journeyman carpenter. In no regard has he been lionized or favored. He is a strictly temperate man, while all of his relatives are among the most respectable people in York, Pennsylvania, and are good, radical Union people.

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Editor's Note: Another interesting article was found in the July 14, 1869, issue of *Clearfield Republican* (Pennsylvania), which was also printing the Spangler's statement the same day.

We hope our readers will not fail to read the statement of Spangler, one of Stanton's conspirators, in this issue. Every passing day fixes the proof stronger and stronger, that Stanton & Co., were the real conspirators, and that they murdered Mrs. Surratt, who was wholly innocent of either Booth's or Stanton's conspiracy.

The Forgotten Conspirator

Editor's Note: When searching for information on Michael O'Laughlen, I found that there was very little written about him. Maybe this was because he died while in prison and didn't have a chance to share his memories of his association with John Wilkes Booth, as Mudd, Arnold, and Spangler did. Whatever the case, I feel he is the "forgotten conspirator." As far as I can tell, this is the first time that an article on Michael O'Laughlen has appeared in *The Surratt Courier*.

###

Michael O'Laughlen

Courtesy of Roger Norton's *Abraham Lincoln Research Site*

Michael O'Laughlen was born in June 1840 in Baltimore, Maryland. He was one of John Wilkes Booth's earliest friends, as the Booth family lived across the street from the O'Laughlens. O'Laughlen learned the trade of manufacturing ornamental plasterwork. He also learned the art of engraving. At the outbreak of the Civil War, O'Laughlen joined the Confederate Army, but was discharged in June 1862. He returned to Baltimore and joined his brother in the feed and produce business.

O'Laughlen was one of Booth's first recruits. In the fall of 1864, O'Laughlen agreed to become a co-conspirator in the plot to kidnap Abraham Lincoln. O'Laughlen began spending time in Washington, D.C., with Booth picking up his expenses. On the night of March 15, 1865, O'Laughlen met with Booth and other conspirators at Gautier's Restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue to discuss the possible abduction of the President. Basically, the plan was to abduct Lincoln and take him to Richmond for the purpose of making the Union government exchange prisoners with the Confederacy.

Booth learned that Lincoln was scheduled to attend a matinee performance of the play *Still Waters Run Deep* at the Campbell Hospital on the outskirts of Washington on March 17, 1865. Booth, O'Laughlen, and the other co-conspirators planned on intercepting the President's carriage. However, Lincoln changed plans at the last minute, and this plan fell through. O'Laughlen returned to Baltimore.

Late in March, Booth proposed another kidnap plan. This time Lincoln was to be captured at Ford's Theatre, handcuffed, and lowered by rope to the stage. Then the President would be taken to Richmond. O'Laughlen was assigned to put the gas lights out at the theatre. However, Booth was not able to convince his co-conspirators that this plan was feasible.

According to O'Laughlen, this was the end of his plotting with Booth. However, O'Laughlen did return to Washington the day before the assassination. It is unclear whether this was due to the conspiracy or simply to spend time with friends in Washington, which was in the midst of a large celebration due to the Union victory. At the trial, there was conflicting testimony about O'Laughlen's movements on the day of the assassination. Whatever the case, O'Laughlen voluntarily surrendered on Monday, April 17th.

O'Laughlen was tried along with Mary Surratt, Lewis Powell, George Atzerodt, David Herold, Samuel Arnold, Edman 'Ned' Spangler, and Dr. Samuel Mudd. The government attempted

to prove he had stalked Ulysses S. Grant on the nights of April 13th and April 14th with the intent to kill and murder. This was not proven, but there was no doubt O'Laughlen was a willing conspirator through late March. He was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.

O'Laughlen was sent to Ft. Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas with Spangler, Arnold, and Mudd. He contracted yellow fever on September 19, 1867. Four days later, he seemed to be feeling better. He was up and about. But suddenly he collapsed, and Dr. Mudd tended to him most of the night. Dr. Mudd tried his best to save him, but O'Laughlen became yet another victim of the yellow fever outbreak that swept through the prison.

On February 13, 1869, President Andrew Johnson issued an order that O'Laughlen's remains be turned over to his mother. His body was then sent north to Baltimore. He was buried in Baltimore in Green Mount Cemetery—the same cemetery in which John Wilkes Booth and Samuel Arnold are buried.

Some Fort Jefferson History

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, November 1999

Editor's Note: The Florida Keys is the home to Fort Jefferson. The prison where four of the Lincoln conspirators were sent after their conviction in 1865. After spending four years in the prison, only three of the four had survived and were pardoned by President Andrew Johnson. In 1999, one of our members sent the following item of interest on the fort. It seems that not everyone's memory of Fort Jefferson was a bad one.

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In 1937, Richard Halliburton published a book entitled *Richard Halliburton's Book of Marvels*. In that, he included a letter that he had received from an elderly lady, Mary Wales Glover, who had seen an earlier story that Halliburton had done after his first visit to Fort Jefferson. Mrs. Glover was inspired to write about her childhood memories of living at Fort Jefferson in the late 1860s.

###

Dear Richard Halliburton:

In 1868, when Dr. Mudd was a prisoner in Fort Jefferson, *I lived there*. I was a little girl, thirteen years old, so you can see that I'm quite an old lady now. My father, an army lieutenant in the fort's garrison, had charge of the food supplies. A West Point graduate, he had been sent to the fort at the opening of the Civil War.

For some reason, he took my mother along with him, and my brother and sister and myself. We lived in the fort during most of the war. Just before the end of it, in 1865, when I was ten, my mother took us children to Key West to put us in school, as the only school in the fort was a tent, with one of the army sergeants as teacher. While we were in Key West, Lee surrendered to Grant; President Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth; and Dr. Mudd was sent to our prison.

Fortunately, we were still in Key West in 1867 when the terrible yellow fever epidemic of that year struck Fort Jefferson. My father was still on duty at the fort, but he had already lived through one attack of the fever and was immune. So he was able to help Dr. Mudd care for the stricken, when the regular army doctor died. I believe my father helped nurse Dr. Mudd when he was taken sick.

After the epidemic had passed, my father brought us back to the fort, and we stayed on there to the end of Dr. Mudd's imprisonment. I must have seen him among the hundreds of prisoners, though probably not very often, as we were kept away from the prison quarters.

The side of the fort in the picture that accompanies your story looks very familiar. Many times have my brother and I fished in the moat for crabs through the second row of portholes. In the picture I recognize the little house in the court where they condensed the sea water, so that we could use it for drinking. But I cannot find the long, low wooden barracks for soldiers that used to stand near the entrance.

I enjoyed your story about the sharks in the moat. But it is not true. There never was more than a single shark—one caught by two soldiers. They baited it was a piece of salt pork, and dragged it through the sluiceways into the moat. Then all the sluiceways were wired over so the shark could not get out. He was a sort of pet villain that we fed every day. I'm sure we could not have fed many sharks, as ham and canned meats were all the provisions we had and too expensive for shark food.

I do not believe there are any other people left alive who could tell you about Fort Jefferson, as it was at that time.

Forgive my writing at such length, but your story brought so many memories back to me, I could not help sending this letter.

Sincerely,

Mary Wales Glover
Newton, Massachusetts