

The Surratt Courier

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Louise Oertly, Editor

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On April 17th, the Surratt Society held its first meeting since September 2019. However, this meeting was unlike any other. For the first time in our 45+ year history, the meeting was held virtually via Zoom. More than 140 people registered and my thanks to everyone who attended the event. Before I share the details, I would also like to thank Bill Binzel and Julie Cowdery for all their time and effort in making this happen.

Before the speakers program began, the Surratt Society's Annual Business Meeting took place. In 2019, none of us could have imagined that a pandemic would hit and change life as we knew it. I acknowledged the many changes and challenges that have happened since our last meeting. For the Surratt Society, it meant COVID-19 restrictions brought about the closure of the Surratt House Museum, the cessation of *The Surratt Courier's* printing and mailing by the Commission, and the cancellation of our 2020 Conference and Booth Escape Route Tours. As a result, the Surratt Society is finding a new normal. *The Surratt Courier* is now being published bimonthly online. Our members, who volunteer at the museum, are awaiting word on when the museum will reopen and what that will mean. As for the Booth Escape Route Tours, we hope to resume them as soon as it is safe to put 50 people on a bus for 12 hours. As for future Surratt Society meetings and programs, virtual will definitely be an option we will explore. This will mean that more of our members,

who have never been able to participate before, will now be able to attend. Of course, many of us do miss seeing old friends in person.

As our membership has not been able to enjoy the benefits that come with being a member of the Surratt Society, it was announced that Executive Committee voted to extend all current annual memberships until November 2021.

By the way, I also mentioned that *The Surratt Courier* is always looking for articles. If you would like to submit an article for consideration, please do so through the e-mail address on our website, which is surratt.society@gmail.com or also surrattsociety@gmail.com works.

Over the past year, many of us have lost family and friends. A very significant loss was Laurie Verge, who dedicated over 40 years to the Surratt Society and the Surratt House Museum. A moment of silence was held to honor and remember Laurie.

Treasurer Tom Buckingham reported that due to the lack of activity in 2020, as noted earlier, the revenue and expenses of

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the Society remained relative flat. It was noted that donations totaling \$6,655.00 have been received in Laurie's memory and set aside for later determination on an appropriate gesture or memorial.

In the January/February 2021 issue of *The Surratt Courier*, Vice President Bill Binzel proposed and explained his reasoning for an amendment to Article IV, Section 2, of the Surratt Society's Bylaws. It would make the 2021-22 term the first of the three consecutive term-limit for the president. The proposed amendment was brought before the membership, seconded, and approved.

The next order of business was the election of officers. As there were no further nominations from the floor, the slate of officers was presented and approved by the membership. The officers for the 2021-22 term are:

Louise Oertly, President
Bill Binzel, Vice President
Tom Buckingham, Treasurer
Marietta Arenberg, Secretary

As noted in the March/April 2021 *Courier*, Veronica Gallardo is the new manager of the Surratt House Museum. As this was the first opportunity for her to address the membership, she was invited to say a few words. I look forward to working with her.

As there was no further business, the formal meeting was adjourned.

It was then time for the speakers program. The first to be introduced was Edward Steers, Jr. He spoke on several chapters from his new book, *Getting Right with Lincoln: Correcting Misconceptions about our Greatest President*. Next was Scott Schroeder's "Lincoln's Deathbed: Was it Ages or Angels?" He presented his research on what did Stanton really say at the time of Lincoln's death. Thanks to both Ed and Scott for making our first virtual meeting a success.

Stay safe,
Louise Oertly, President

Musings from the Museum

Greetings Surratt Society Members and Guests,

It has been a little over a month since I took the Director's position at the Surratt House Historical Museum Complex. I can't express enough how excited I am to be here, and how grateful I am to have you interested in supporting the site. For many of us, the past year has been challenging. We have experienced loss, found ourselves adapting to new realities, and witnessed our country in distress. As learners and interpreters of history, we make the connections between the past, present, and future. We connect to the human experience that feeds the

narrative in the world around us. With my guidance, we, the Surratt House team, will intentionally and strategically create a vision, value statement, and thoughtful impact statement that describes the site's significance.

I leave you with these thoughts to reflect upon:
"The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country."

This quote from Abraham Lincoln not only resonates with me, as a public historian working at a Civil War-era historical museum, but it also resonates in a time where history museums have to be courageous to be more relevant. This quote speaks to change, speaks to leadership, speaks to learning and adaptation, and innovation. President Lincoln told Congress that these things were vital for the survival of our country. These things are also crucial for the survival and relevance of our sector, the field of history and museums.

Please feel free to reach me at veronica.gallardo@pgparks.com. Let me know what you are interested in learning from the team. To the volunteers, I look forward to meeting you soon. Please keep a lookout for a meeting invite to discuss bringing back volunteers and their roles moving forward.

Best regards,
Veronica Gallardo
Museum Director

New on the Shelf

The Surratt Society was notified that the following books were recently published. As the Surratt House Museum's gift shop has been closed for the past year, none of these books are available from there. Unless noted otherwise, they are available through major retailers.

Getting Right with Lincoln: Correcting the Misconceptions about our Greatest President

By Edward Steers, Jr.

Steers "sets the record straight in this engaging and authoritative book, analyzing the facts and clarifying some of the most prominent misconceptions about the sixteenth president."

Lincoln among the Badgers: Rediscovering Sites Associated with Abraham and Mary Lincoln in Wisconsin

By Steven Rogstad

"Follows the travels of Abraham Lincoln, his wife Mary, and son Tad through their ventures into Wisconsin." Available from the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center, Wisconsin.

Rose Greenhow's My Imprisonment
Edited by Emily Lapisardi

This annotated edition of Greenhow's 1863 memoir "enhances her work for the first time with copious footnotes, a complete index, and an introduction placing it within the context of her years in the Nation's Capital, her espionage, and her diplomatic mission to Europe."

The Nameless and the Faceless Women of the Civil War

By Lisa G. Samia

"For the unknown women who witnessed the Civil War, whose lives and experiences were lost and forgotten in the pages of history." A collection of 28 poems and corresponding historical essays, along with historical images and personal photos.

Abe Goes to the Dentist

by Paul T. Fisher, D.D.S.

When thinking about presidential dentistry, the obvious example that comes to mind is George Washington (who never had wooden teeth, so let's put that old tale to rest). Since we have recently discussed his autopsy, I felt we could change direction and discuss another, relatively untouched, aspect of Lincoln—that of his teeth. Source material on the matter is relatively scant, so we will attempt as in-depth of a discussion as we can.

So far as we know, there is no real information regarding Lincoln's early life with respect to his dental health. We can only surmise that since Lincoln relates no dental memories from his youth that nothing noteworthy occurred. In 1860, Lincoln wrote a short autobiography during the presidential campaign. In it, he relates a story of being kicked in the head by a horse when he was ten years old. A biography by William Herndon and Jesse Weik records that the horse struck him in the forehead and knocked him to the ground.¹ A similar story involves another figure in the assassination saga, that being Lewis Powell. When he was around twelve years of age, Powell's pet mule kicked him in the head, resulting in a broken jaw and an avulsed (fancy dentist word for "knocked out") molar on the left side.² Anytime blunt-force trauma to the head is sustained, dental trauma can be a result, either directly from being struck or from hitting the ground or other objects. Lincoln records no dental trauma, so we must infer that his dentition emerged unscathed from the incident.

The first mention that this author has found regarding Lincoln and dentistry comes from a letter to Miss Mary Speed in September of 1841. In it he recounts that he had attempted to have a tooth extracted by a dentist in Louisville, Kentucky, but was unable to have the procedure completed for reasons unstated. What followed is best said by Lincoln himself:

"Well, that same old tooth got to paining me so much, that about a week since I had it torn out, bringing with it a bit of the jawbone; the consequence of which is that my mouth is now so sore that I can neither talk nor eat—I am literally [sic] 'subsisting on savoury [sic] remembrances'—that is, being unable to eat, I am living upon the remembrance of the delicious dishes of peaches and Cream we used to have at your house..."³

Many will think that his reference to the "bit of the jawbone" coming out smacks of barbarism on the part of the dentist. I can assure you that this happens on a routine basis in the practice of dentistry, and is no sign of malpractice on the part of the practitioner.

The paucity of information on Lincoln's dental health has been attributed by some researchers to higher concentrations of naturally occurring fluoride in the wells and springs of Kentucky and southern Indiana, where Lincoln grew up, resulting in less need for dental treatment.⁴ Fluoride has a proven record of reducing incidence of dental decay in populations that are exposed to it. However, exposure to higher levels of fluoride can lead to a condition known as fluorosis, which results in patchy white or brown discoloration of the teeth. Lincoln was never known to have shown his teeth in over one hundred photos taken during his lifetime, possibly for that reason, although very few people exposed their teeth in 19th century photos, as the exceptionally long exposure time made holding a toothy smile a bit impractical. Another reason that tooth color is unlikely as a reason to not smile is revealed by Mr. Edward Dicey, who described Lincoln's mouth as "a close-set thin-lipped, stern mouth, with two rows of large white teeth."⁵

As with many dental patients in the 1800s, a large majority of the treatment rendered was in the form of extraction of the offending teeth. Restorative dentistry was many miles behind what

we've come to expect at the dental office today, and it was often easier to remove the painful or bothersome tooth than to try to perform "hero-dontick," as we often call it in my office (hero-dontics being a euphemism for heroic treatment whose long-term success is dubious). Some had dentists, who were competent enough to place restorations (many weren't), or were well enough off to afford to have their teeth fixed rather than pulled. Our very own John Wilkes Booth was identified in 1869 by a tooth plugged with gold, courtesy of Dr. William Merrill.⁶ The other references we have concerning Lincoln and the dentist relate to having teeth pulled, in one instance with an ivory-handled turnkey.⁷ A "turnkey", or tooth-key as it was often called, removed teeth by means of a hook that reaches over the top surface of the tooth and levered the tooth out by using the jawbone as a fulcrum point. It bears a striking resemblance to a plumbing tool known as a basin wrench, for a non-medical corollary. It has proven to be a less-than-effective method of exodontia, often resulting in broken teeth or bits of bone being removed in the process.

Thus concludes our discussion of the dental condition of the 16th president. It is my hope that the reader will have learned something previously unknown and will be encouraged to research further into the world of information surrounding Lincoln and, specifically, his assassination. Perhaps more information will come to light as more people start digging and further illuminate the subject!

¹ William E. Bartlett, *There I Grew Up* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2008), 33-34.

² Betty J. Ownsbey, *Alias "Paine"* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1993), 7.

³ *Abraham Lincoln to Mary Speed*. [1841-09-27].

<https://papersofabrahamlincoln.org/documents/D200280>. The Papers of Abraham Lincoln Digital Library.

⁴ C.G. McDaniel, *Abe Lincoln Saw Dentist Four Times*. The Gettysburg Times (February 11, 1975) 9.

⁵ Edward Dicey, *Six Months in the Federal States. 2 Volumes*. (London: McMillan, 1863), Vol. 1, 220-221.

⁶ Arthur Loux, *John Wilkes Booth: Day by Day* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2014) 230.

⁷ C.G. McDaniel, *Abe Lincoln Saw Dentist Four Times*. The Gettysburg Times (February 11, 1975) 9.

George Andrew Atzerodt

Taken from research done by James O. Hall and Edward Steers, Jr.

Reprinted from the *Surratt Society News*, November 1981

Although assigned the task of eliminating Vice President Andrew Johnson, George Andrew Atzerodt shied away from the violence of April 14, 1865, and left town, only to be captured and brought to justice. What has been written about Mr. Atzerodt shows him to be one of the least likely personalities to be drafted into a scheme such as Booth's. And yet, he became a vital part of the plans—a part that failed to function.

Georg Andreas Atzerodt was born at Dorna, Thuringen, Kingdom of Prussia, on June 12, 1835, the fourth child of a blacksmith, Johann Heinrich Atzerodt, and his wife, Victore Friedericke Hahn. The Atzerodt home was actually in Seebach, but Johann had temporary employment at Dorna at the time of Georg's birth.

The Atzerodts immigrated to the United States, arriving at Baltimore, Maryland, on June 26, 1844, on the brig, *Apollo*. They were related to the Richters and, with them, bought a farm at Germantown, Montgomery County, Maryland. Johann Atzerodt later sold his interest in the farm

to the Richters and moved to Montross, Westmoreland County, Virginia. He ran a blacksmith shop just off the town square during the 1850s. After his death in the late 1850s, however, the family moved back to Maryland. The mother and married daughters settled in Baltimore. George and his older brother, John C., operated a carriage painting business in Port Tobacco, on the lower Potomac River, in Charles County, Maryland.

When the Civil War came on, the carriage painting business dwindled. John got employment as a detective with Maryland Provost Marshal James L. McPhail in Baltimore. George hung on in Port Tobacco, painting a few carriages, but mostly engaged in blockade running—rowing spies and agents (for both sides) back and forth over the Potomac River. He also had one child in Port Tobacco, born out of wedlock.

Interestingly, brother John, the detective, never managed to catch brother George, the blockade runner.

And then came Booth and his grand scheme for abduction. George's skills at running the blockade would be valuable in spiriting the captured Lincoln across the river and on to Richmond. John Surratt, Jr., had used these skills in his numerous trips back and forth and was probably the one who enlisted Atzerodt's help. Atzerodt soon saw the plans change from abduction to murder, however, and became an unwilling member of the assassination plot.

Although given the unlikely task of killing Andrew Johnson, Atzerodt had little stomach for it. As Booth, Paine, and Herold went after their victims, George wandered into Naylor's Stable where he had boarded his horse and invited the stable foreman John Fletcher, to join him in a drink at the bar of the Union Hotel. From there, he returned to his room at the Kirkwood Hotel, also the official residence of the Vice President. However, his courage failed, and George Andrew Atzerodt fled the hotel and headed out of the city.

His flight included several stops at various bars within the city and a long trolley ride from the center of town to the gates of the Navy Yard and then back to the corner of 6th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. On previous trips into the city, he had boarded at the Pennsylvania House (also known as Kimmel House), one of the city's seedier establishments. About 2 a.m. on the morning of April 15, the Lincoln conspirator decided to bed down for the night at this hotel. He left early the next morning without paying his bill and headed west into Georgetown. He had made up his mind to make a trip to his boyhood home of Germantown.

In Georgetown, he traded his revolver for a \$10 loan from John H. Caldwell, manager of a wholesale and retail grocery. From there, he visited a friendly widow, Mrs. Lucinda Metz, with whom he took Saturday morning breakfast, and then headed to the Montgomery House, also known as Cunningham's tavern. The Montgomery was a regular stage stop between Washington and Rockville, the county seat of Montgomery County. With his new-found funds, Atzerodt decided to take the Rockville stage. He was its only passenger that morning.

As the stage neared the community of Tennytown, it encountered a back-up of vehicles which were being inspected by alerted pickets. Atzerodt climbed down from the stage and began walking to the head of the long line, cheerfully chatting with people as he went. At the head of the line, he began talking with several soldiers and was soon sipping hard cider with them at a nearby sutler's store. Meeting a Montgomery County farmer by the name of Gaither, he talked himself into a ride on his wagon to the village of Gaithersburg. After stopping for a while to imbibe at the tavern and blacksmith shop of John Mullican, he headed off on foot for Germantown. About 11 p.m., he sighted the Old Clopper Mill and decided to prevail upon the kindness of the miller, Robert Kinder, for a night's lodging. Kinder knew the friendly German from previous

visits and was most obliging. He would later spend several weeks in Old Capitol Prison for his kindness.

On Easter Sunday morning, Atzerodt began his last leg on the journey to Hartman Richter's home. About 11 a.m., he stopped at the home of Hezekiah Metz for a noonday meal. For some reason, Atzerodt was known to Metz, and most everyone else in the area, as Andrew Atwood. Somerset and James Leaman were also guests at the table and engaged George in conversation about the assassination. Although reluctant to talk, he said just enough to arouse suspicions. Another visitor to the Metz home that day was one Nathan Page, who was a source of information for the military's underground network in that area.

About 3 p.m., Atzerodt reached the farm of Hartman Richter and was quickly taken in by his cousin. They were happy to have George stay as long as he wished, provided that he shared in some of the chores. For the next three days, Atzerodt was happy to do just that. On Wednesday night, April 19, he went to bed upstairs as usual. At 5 a.m., he was abruptly awakened by a blue-clad soldier and interrogated. Convinced that he had his man, Sgt. Z.W. Gemmill of the 1st Delaware Cavalry placed Atzerodt under arrest. The tip, passed from Nathan Page to James W. Purdum (a local farmer and "detective" in the army's employ), had found its way to Capt. Solomon Townsend of the 1st Delaware, who ordered Gemmill and six troopers to set out in search of this suspicious character.

From Germantown, Atzerodt was taken to Monocacy Junction, south of Frederick. It was soon determined that Andrew Atwood was indeed George Andrew Atzerodt and the hapless German was on his way back to Washington to stand trial for his part in the Lincoln assassination. On July 7, 1865, he joined Mrs. Surratt, Lewis Thornton Powell (Paine), and David Edgar Herold on the gallows.

Interestingly, within a few hours of his arrest at the Richter farm, a second posse arrived looking for George. This group was under orders from Provost Marshal McPhail of Baltimore to find and arrest Atzerodt. Brother John C. Atzerodt, a deputy under McPhail, had been on special assignment in Charles County when Lincoln was assassinated. McPhail's men were ordered to drop their current assignment and to begin looking for Booth. Upon learning that the government was also searching for his brother, John C. Atzerodt notified McPhail that Atzerodt might be at Richter's home in Montgomery County. McPhail delayed the posse for a few hours and, by the time the second group arrived in Germantown, Atzerodt had already been taken into custody. His brother may not have caught George at blockade running, but he almost caught him at something much bigger.

The Atzerodt Angle

2021 Editor's Note: The article you just read will give you a baseline on George A. Atzerodt's background and his role in the Lincoln assassination plot. The following articles are all "based" on Atzerodt's written statement. The first is copied from the seven-page, handwritten statement found by Joan Chaconas in 1978. The next three are from newspaper articles published in 1865 and 1869 that were said to be based on this "missing" statement. It's interesting to see the differences in the details that were supposedly from the same statement.

As for the articles, the grammar, punctuation, and spelling are copied from the original documents, so it isn't all bad editing on my part. Also, some of the names used in the statements might be unfamiliar to some of you. Lewis Powell's best-known alias was Lewis Payne. He also used James Wood. However, there is a sentence in "The Missing Statement" that says: "He [Wood] sent for letters to the post office for James Hall." Did he also use another, more ironic, alias? As for the Kate Thompson mentioned, that name and Kate Brown were both aliases used by Sarah Slater.

The Missing Statement

President's Message from Joan Chaconas
Reprinted from the *Surratt Society News*, October 1988

It was ten years ago this past September [in other words, 1978] that I made a trip up to Goshen, Connecticut, and met with the great-grandson of General W.E. Doster, the defense attorney for Lewis Thornton Powell and George Atzerodt. At this meeting, I was allowed to go through General Doster's papers; and in these papers, I discovered the missing statement of George Atzerodt.

This statement had been alluded to during the 1865 Conspiracy Trial. It was then passed over and never again pursued. It obviously found its way into General Doster's possession and thence into the hands of Doster's descendants.

The room I sat in as I thumbed through these old papers was quite cold, as it had been shut off from the rest of the house. Off to the side of the room was a chair made from the hide and hooves of General Doster's horse, Defender. Most of the papers I saw related to Doster's life before or after the Civil War. Only a few related to the Civil War period, and amongst these few was the Atzerodt statement! It was a thrilling find.

I held off publishing my find right away, because Mr. Hall asked me to. He wanted to do some investigative work on the contents of the statement. In the years that have passed, the original manuscript of the statement went to auction and is now privately owned.

I feel ten years is enough time to hold back such a find from public view and here, published for the first time, is the complete transcript of the Atzerodt statement.

My next two president's messages will also deal with the *Atzerodt Angle* and present other Atzerodt confessions that appeared in newspapers.

**Statement of George A. Atzerodt to Pro. Mar. McPhail
in presence of John L. Smith
on the night of May 1 – 1865 – bet. 8 & 10 p.m.
[While in custody aboard the monitor *USS Montauk*]**

James Wood [Lewis Powell] sometimes called Mosby boarded with Mrs. Murray an Irish woman on the corner of 9th & F St. in a three story house, front on the upper end of the P.O. [post office] and South End of Patent Office—with basement entrance on the left side going up 9th St.

from Avenue. He was a little over six feet, black hair, smooth round face, grey coat black pants & spring coat mixed with white & gray. Saw him last time on Friday evening about 5 o'ck with Booth. He sent for letters to the post office for James Hall. He was brought from New York. Surratt told me so. He said he had been a prisoner in Balto. [Baltimore] near the depot. He was arrested for whipping a negro woman. Mosby was Wood's nick name—did not know him by any other name than mentioned. Gust. Powell now arrested in Old Capitol [Prison] was one of the party. He went also by name of Gustavus Spencer, Surratt and Spencer came from Richmond, together just after it had fallen.

James Donaldson, a low chunky man about 23 or 24 years of age, small—potted dark complexion (not very) deep plain back suit; only saw him one time & this was Wednesday previous to the murder, he was having an interview with Booth and told him to meet him on Friday eve & he replied he would and left and went up Penn. Avenue toward the Treasury building. I was under the impression he came on with Booth.

Arnold, O'Laughlin, Surratt, Herold, Booth and myself met once at a saloon or restaurant on the Aven. bet 13 & 14 St.

The Saml. Thomas registered on the morning of the 15th April at Penn Hotel, I met on my way to the hotel, he was an entire Stranger to me. I left the Hotel alone on morning of 15th of April. A Lieut. in room No. 51 will prove this. Surratt bought a boat from Dick Smoot & James Brawner living about Port Tobacco, for which they paid \$300.00 and was to give one hundred Dolls. [dollars] extra for taking care of it till wanted. Booth told me that Mrs. Surratt went to Surrattsville to get out the guns (Two carbines) which had been taken to that place by Herold, This was Friday. The carriage was hired at Howards.

I saw a man named Weightman [Louis J. Weichmann] who boarded at Surratt's at Post Office. He told me he had to go down the Country with Mrs. Surratt. This was on Friday, Also. I am certain Dr. Mudd knew all about it, as Booth sent (as he told me) liquors & provisions for the trip with the President to Richmond, about two weeks before the murder to Dr. Mudd's.

Booth never said until the last night (Friday) that he intended to kill the President.

Herold came to the Kirkwood House, same evening for me to go to see Booth. I went with Herold & saw Booth. He then said he was going to kill the President and Wood, the Secy. of State. I did not believe him. This occurred in the evening about 7½ o'clock. It was dark. I took a room at Kirkwoods. Both Herold & I went to the room left Herold's coat, knife, and pistol in room and never again returned to it. Booth said during the day that the thing had failed and proposed to go to Richmond & open the theatre. I am not certain but I think I stayed one night at Kirkwoods (Thursday) we were to try and get papers to Richmond from Mr. Johnson. Booth spoke of getting papers. He would get him out of the theatre. Wood & Booth were apparently confidential with one another. Plenty of parties in Charles County knew of the kidnapping affair. One of the men named Charles Yates, knew all about it, he went to Richmond during the winter. He was to row the Presdt & party over. Thos. Holborn [Harbin] was to meet us on the road and help in the kidnapping. Bailey & Barnes knew nothing of the affair unless Booth told Bailey and he told Barnes. Booth had met Bailey on "C" St. with me. I did not meet Booth or any other of the party in Baltimore on or about the 31 of March. Boyle also killed Capt. Watkins near Annapolis last month, was one of the party, in the conspiracy. I repeat I never knew anything about the murder. I was intended to give assistance to the kidnapping. They came to Port Tobacco (Surratt & Booth) several times and brought me to Washington. The pistol given me I sold or received a loan on it Saturday morning after the murder from John Caldwick [Caldwell] at Matthews & Wells, Store, High St. Georgetown. The knife I threw away just above Mrs. Canby's [Condy's] boardinghouse

the night of the murder about 11 o'clock. When I took my horse to stable. I had the horse out to help to take the President. I did not believe he was going to be killed, although Booth said so. After I heard of the murder I run about the city like a crazy man.

I have not seen Arnold for some time, but saw O'Laughlin on Thursday evening on the Avenue at Saloon near U.S. Hotel. He told me he was going to see Booth. Wood did not go on the street in day time for fear of arrest. When he first came to Washington he boarded at Surratts. This was in Feby. He (Wood) went with Booth last of February to N. York. Booth we understood paid the way. I know nothing about Canada. Wood told me he had horses in Virginia. Saml. Arnold & Mike O'Laughlin ought to know where the horses & pistols were bought. Sam & Mike have a buggy and horse kept at stable in rear of Theatre. Booth had several horses at same place. I think the horses property was in Surratt's name. I sold one of the horses & paid part of the money to Booth and part to Herold, who said he would see Booth about it. I overheard Booth when in conversation with Wood say, that he visited a chambermaid at Seward's house and that she was pretty. He said he had a great mind to give her his diamond pin. Herold talked about powders & medicine on Friday night at Mrs. Candby's [Condby's]. Wood, Herold, Booth & myself were present. This was a meeting place because Wood could not go out for fear of arrest.

Kate Thompson or Kate Brown, as she was known by both names, put up at National & was well known at Penn House. She knew all about the affair. Surratt went to Richd [Richmond] with her last March & Gust. Howell made a trip with her to same place. This woman is about 20 yrs of age, good looking & well dressed. Black hair & eyes, round face from South Carolina & a widow. Did not see Surratt for seven or eight days before the murder nor have I seen him since. Miss Thompson or Brown had two large light trunks, one much larger than the other. Young Weightman [Weichmann] at Surratts' ought to know about this woman.

This remark made by me in Baltimore on the 31 of March alluded to blockade running & privateering altogether & Booth said he had money to buy a steamer & wanted me to go in it. I was to be one of them. In this way I was going to make a pile of money.

Booth said he had met a party in N. York who would get the Prest. certain. They were going to mine the end of Kirk[wood] House, next to War Dept. They knew an entrance to accomplish it though. Spoke about getting the friends of the Presdt. to get up an entertainment & they would mix in it, have a serenade &c & thus get at the Presdt. & party. These were (?) understood to be projects. Booth said if he did not get him quick the N. York crowd would. Booth knew the New York party apparently by a sign. He saw Booth give some kind of sign to two parties on the avenue who he said were from New York. My uncle Mr. Richter and family in Monty. Co., Md. knew nothing about the affair either before or after the occurrence & never suspected me of any thing wrong as I was in the habit of visiting and working in the neighborhood & staying with him. My Father formerly owned part of the property now owned by Richter.

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President's Message from Joan Chaconas
Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, November 1988

As I promised in my October message, the following article from the *National Intelligencer*, July 9, 1865, continues the theme of Atzerodt and his missing statement.

Note that there is mention of “a woman of strong southern feelings, living not far from” Seward’s house and also the statement that Booth “had sent provisions and liquor to Dr. Mudd’s.” These two comments appear in the missing statement of Atzerodt. How did this newspaper obtain this information?

[2021 Editor’s Note: in the next two articles there is a mention of a major formerly in the rebel army, who left Washington together with Mrs. Slater, John Surratt, and Mrs. Surratt. However, the first article uses the name “Barron” and the second uses “Banon” as the major’s name.]

National Intelligencer, July 9, 1865

Confession of Atzerodt: A Narrative of His Career Further Developments of the Plot

Baltimore, July 9.—The *American* has received a special report of the confession of Atzerodt, which was prepared by one who has known him since his arrest. The details of the plot to abduct and murder the President, which are set forth below were given the author by Atzerodt himself, but a short time before his death.

George Andrew Atzerodt was born in the kingdom of Prussia in 1835. He came to this country with his parents in 1844, and arrived in Baltimore, in which place he resided with his family for about one year, when with his parents, he moved to Westmoreland County, Va. His father farmed and carried on his business—that of a blacksmith—at the Court House. Atzerodt was placed as an apprentice to the coachmaking business at the Court House, where he learned the painting branch. He remained at the Court House until 1856, when he went to Washington and worked for Young and also for Mr. McDermott, well-known coachmakers. In 1857 he joined his brother in the coachmaking business at Port Tobacco. This continued for four years, when the firm was dissolved. After this he carried on painting in Port Tobacco until last fall, when he met with John H. Surratt [Jr.] and a man named Har—[Harbin]. Surratt induced him to join in the conspiracy of abducting President Lincoln. Atzerodt’s knowledge of men and the country in the vicinity of Port Tobacco and in fact of all the counties bounding on the Potomac, gave to the conspirators a valuable assistant. He was well acquainted with Herold, whom he was not long in finding out, and who was also engaged in the conspiracy. Surratt went several times to Port Tobacco, and often sent for Atzerodt to come to Washington, where he was known to as many as in Port Tobacco, and looked upon as a very weak-minded man, in fact was regarded as a very harmless and silly fellow. Surratt introduced Atzerodt to Booth, who feasted him and furnished him with money and horses, the horses being held in the name of Surratt, who appeared to be the principal in the absence of Booth. The first meeting of all the conspirators actively engaged was at a saloon on Pennsylvania Avenue called Gautier’s. At this meeting O’Laughlin, Arnold, Booth, Surratt, Herold, and Atzerodt were present.

The first attempt to abduct the President was to be on the Seventh Street road. This was about the middle of March. They expected the President to visit a camp. O’Laughlin, Arnold, Payne, Surratt, Booth and Atzerodt were present. Herold left with the buggy with the carbines for “T.B.” [Maryland]. The plan was to seize the coach of the President, Surratt to jump on the box, as he was consider the best driver, and make for “T.B.” by way of Long Old Fields to the Potomac River in the vicinity of Nanjemoy Creek, where they had a boat waiting with men to carry over the party. The boat was capable of carrying fifteen men—a large flat bottom bateau, painted lead-

color, which had been bought for the purpose by Booth from two men named Brauner [Brawner] and Smoot. This plan failed, the President not coming as they desired.

Herold went next morning to Washington. All things remained quiet for some time after this. Booth went North, Arnold and O'Laughlin to Baltimore, Payne, or Wood, left also for New York.

A man named Howell was about this time arrested. This alarmed Surratt, and he left with a Mrs. Slater for the North. This was about the 1st of April.

The next plan was to visit the theatre on the night the President was expected to be there. It was arranged that Surratt and Booth were to go to the box. Arnold, O'Laughlin, and Payne were to act some important part in getting him out. Herold and Atzerodt were to have charge of the horses, an actor was to be secured to put out the gas. Booth represented that the best assistant he had was an actor in this plan. Buggies and horses were to be used. A rope which was prepared and to be at Keyd's (?), was to be stretched across the road to impede the cavalry in the pursuit. The route this time was the same as before, except they were to cross the Eastern Branch bridge. This whole affair failed, and Booth said it was all up, and spoke of going to Richmond and opening a theatre, and promised Atzerodt employment in it in some capacity. Atzerodt was waiting for Booth to arrange his going to Richmond, when the affair was renewed again. He had taken a room at the Kirkwood House. Herold called on him and left his knife and pistol and coat in the room, and told him Booth wanted to see him at the Herndon House, to which place he repaired, in company with Herold. This was in the evening about ___ o'clock. They there met Booth and Payne. Booth told Atzerodt "You must kill Johnson." Herold laughed and wanted the key of the room. It was refused by Atzerodt, who expressed himself as fearful that harm would be done Mr. Johnson. Herold left to go see Booth, and Atzerodt went to the Oyster Bay. Herold came after and said Booth wanted to see him. Atzerodt did not return to the Kirkwood House that night. Booth told Atzerodt that Surratt was in the city. He had just left. Atzerodt did not see Booth after leaving him at the Herndon House, and he roamed about the streets nearly all night, and first heard of the murder about half past ten o'clock, while passing up the avenue. The cavalry were rushing by at the time in pursuit. He threw away his knife that night, and parted with pistol next morning to a friend (?) in Georgetown.

Atzerodt had nothing to say at any of the former meetings. He knew nothing about the rope found with Spangler. He believed Spangler innocent as far as he knew.

Booth when applied to for money, would remark that he had money in New York and would get some.

At one time in the spring or late in the winter, Mrs. Slater, Mrs. Surratt, John Surratt and a Major Barron formerly of the rebel army left Washington together. They got horses from Howard's. Mrs. Surratt stopped at Surrattsville. The balance went to the Potomac. Major Barron returned. He did not think Barron had anything to do with the conspiracy, although he was formerly in the rebel army. One of Booth's plans to obtain an entrance to the Secretary of State's room was an invention which, if successful, would have involved others in his foul acts. He had made the acquaintance of a woman of strong Southern feelings, living not far from Secretary's house, who was to make the acquaintance of a servant who was to be introduced to Booth, and by this means he would learn something of the location of the rooms _____. As far as known it failed.

Booth was well acquainted with Mudd, and had letters of introduction to him. Booth told Atzerodt about two weeks before the murder that he had sent provisions and liquor to Dr. Mudd's for the supply of the party on their way to Richmond with the President.

Michael O’Laughlin made no regular confession as far as is publicly (?) known, but he confessed to the original conspiracy, he denied any knowledge of the murder of the President and attempt on Secretary Seward’s life. That he knows much of all the affairs there is no doubt, and although an alibi (?) was tried to be made out, there is no doubt in the minds of those who know all the circumstances of O’Laughlin but that he did visit Secretary Stanton’s home as charged in the testimony before the Commission.

President’s Message from Joan Chaconas
Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, December 1988

The following is an article that appeared in the *Baltimore American* on January 18, 1869. It contains the statement about the “widow woman” living near Seward.

[2021 Editor’s Note: The article appearing in the December 1988 *Courier*, contained almost a page of duplicated copy. I couldn’t find the original 1869 *Baltimore American* article in chroniclingamerica.loc.gov, but I did find the next best thing. The article was reprinted in the January 22, 1869, issue of *The Port Tobacco Times, and Charles County Advertiser*, so I have reprinted one that instead. One paragraph that did not appear in the Port Tobacco newspaper, so I included it and indicated it origins. It’s also interesting to note in the last two articles that the Atzerodt statement was written “in his cell on the night before the execution.”]

The Statements of Arnold and Atzerodt

**Reprinted from *The Port Tobacco Times, and Charles County Advertiser*, January 22, 1869
Originally printed in the *Baltimore American* on January 18, 1869**

The *Baltimore American* publishes what purports to be a statement of Samuel B. Arnold, one of the prisoners at the Dry Tortugas, made in Baltimore, voluntarily, four days after the assassination of President Lincoln, and the confession of Atzerodt, made in his cell on the night before the execution. Both of these confessions, says the *American*, “we have in our possession in the handwriting of the prisoners, and they have hitherto not been made public under the expectation that they would be used in the trial of John Surratt.” The confession of Arnold was made in the office of Marshal McPhail, on the 18th of April, 1865, immediately on his being brought to Baltimore from Fortress Monroe. He sat down at a desk and voluntarily wrote it without any questioning. “The confession of Atzerodt was made in his cell, at Washington, on the night before his execution. He asked for paper, and it is written with a lead pencil, the disconnected manner of it indicating the state of mind of the prisoner.” The statement of Arnold details a plan which Booth had formed, and in which he (Arnold) agreed to join, for kidnapping and abducting President Lincoln—but Booth never said anything to him about killing President Lincoln. He also states that Booth knew and was in communication with John Surratt. The public are already familiar with the reported plan for the abduction.

The following incoherent statement is given as that made by Atzerodt:

[2021 Editor's Note: The following paragraph appeared in the *Baltimore American* article, as part of Atzerodt's statement, but not in the *Port Tobacco* reprint. I thought it was interesting enough to include.]

I had not seen John Surratt for about eight days before the murder. Booth told me a few days before the murder that he was in Washington. Kate Thompson, alias Brown [Sarah Slater], came from Richmond with John Surratt about the time that Richmond fell. She had come previously with Gustavus Howell, now in the Old Capitol Prison. Kate Thompson stopped at Mrs. Surratt's, and also at the National and Rinnel [Kimmel] Hotels. This woman was about 21 years of age, spruce and neat, medium size, black eyes and fair complexion. She had a sister in New York who, it was said was a widow. Surratt was made known to her in New York by a signal conveyed by a small switch with a waxed end and a piece of red ribbon on the butt, handled horizontally through the fingers. The sign was given on a hotel pavement on Broadway. He went with her South and hired a horse at Howard's stables for the purpose.

Herold came to the Kirkwood House and left the knife, pistol and coat on the evening of the murder about half-past six o'clock, as I was about leaving, I having told the clerk to tell whoever might call that I was gone out. This was before Herold came in. Herold and I then went to the Herndon House, Mrs. Murray's, corner of Ninth and F Streets. It was then about 8 o'clock, and saw Booth, Wood and Payne in Wood's room. Here the proposed murder was first mentioned. I refused to take part in it, when Booth said, "Then we will do it, but what will become of you? You had better come along and get your horse." I then left them and went to the Oyster Bay on the avenue, and stayed some time; then to the stable and got my horse and went up D Street. This was about 10 o'clock. I called at the Rinnel [Kimmel] House and got a drink. I saw none of the party after we separated about 9 o'clock that evening. I then went out C Street toward the Baltimore depot; went between the old and new Capitol; came back on the avenue again, and concluded to come back. I rode down the avenue and the cavalry were dashing by me. This was the first I heard of the murder. I then went up Eighth Street and left the horse at the stables opposite the Franklin House, and then went to the Herndon House, and heard a little boy talking about the murder. I then took a [street]car and went towards the Navy Yard. This was about 11 o'clock, and I met two young men named Briscoe and Spates, with whom I had some talk. After walking some distance, I took a car to the corner of Sixth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Here I met a man inquiring for a place to sleep at. I took him around to the Rinnel [Kimmel] House and we retired to one room with six beds in it. I left early next morning and passed through Georgetown on my way to Montgomery County. No one left the hotel with me.

I saw Mike O'Laughlin about a week before the President was killed. I never wanted O'Laughlin and Arnold's aid; met O'Laughlin once or twice at Suthard's and a few times in the street.

When we were at Murray's, on the night of the murder, Herold said he had a letter from a printer to Andy Johnson. He said he was going to give it to him, and he wanted me to give him the key of my room, which I refused to do.

Previous to the arrangement for the murder, Booth heard that the President was to visit a camp. The coach was to be taken on Seventh Street. Surratt was to jump on the box, as he was the best driver, and drive through Old Fields to the Long Bridge. This was about the middle of March. O'Laughlin, Samuel Arnold, Payne, Surratt, Booth, Atzerodt and Herold went to the Long Bridge with two carbines and were to wait for us. They did so until midnight and returned to Washington the next morning. This failed. All was quiet then for some time. Booth went to New York, Arnold to Baltimore, O'Laughlin also, and Payne left for New York. After this Howell

brought a woman across the Potomac. Howell was made prisoner and Surratt took her North, about a week before the murder.

Booth told me Surratt was in the Herndon House; on the night of the murder, the 14th of April, we were not altogether at the Herndon House. Booth told me Surratt was to help in the box, that he expected others in the box. Booth went from Herndon House down Ninth Street. The words of Booth were "I saw Surratt a few moments ago." All the parties appeared to be engaged at something on that night, and were not together. Booth appointed me and Herold to kill Johnson, in going down the street I told Booth we could not do it. Booth said Herold had more courage and he would do it. Herold and I were on Pennsylvania avenue together. I told him I would not do it, and should not go to my room for fear he would disturb Mr. Johnson. He left me to go for Booth. This was about nine o'clock. I went to the Oyster Bay, and Herold came in and said that Booth wanted to see me. Herold left me here. I promised to get my horse and come. I was not at the Kirkwood House after two o'clock. I have no recollection of being there after that. I had nothing to say at any of the meeting. One of the [kidnapping] attempts was at the theatre; the gas was to be put out, etc. No discussion was had about failure, and what to do in that case. The coil of rope at Lloyd's was to stretch across the road to trip the cavalry. I know nothing about Spangler's rope; I believe him innocent. Booth told me an actor was to be the best assistant in the theatre to turn off the gas. Arnold and O'Laughlin were to grab the President and take him off; and Booth said, when applied to for money, he would go to New York and get some, as he had it there. Mrs. Surratt, Mrs. Slater, Major Banon and John Surratt left Washington together; got horses at Howard's. Mrs. S. stopped at Surrattsville. John Surratt and Mrs. Slater crossed [to Virginia], and Banon and Mrs. Surratt came back. Banon was in the rebel army. I don't think Banon knew anything about the conspiracy. I sold a horse for Booth and thought the affair was about over. The murder was broached first on the 14th, at night, when Herold came for me. I did hear Booth say Lincoln ought to be killed. A widow woman was living near Mr. Seward's, and Booth said by her influence he could get entrance to Seward's house, through her influence with the chambermaid and house servant. The girl at the house was good-looking and knew the widow. Harborn [Harbin] was into it first; he came to Port Tobacco for me with John Surratt during the winter. The boat was at the head of Goose Creek and moved to Nanjemoy Creek. It was a lead colored flat-bottom boat, and will carry fifteen men. The boat was bought of James Brawner, the old man. Mrs. Slater went with Booth a good deal. She stopped at the National Hotel.

[2021 Editor's Note: The following did not appear in *The Surratt Courier*, but it gave a concise summary of Atzerodt's statement. I found it at chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.]

Summary of News

From *The Cecil Whig* (Elkton, Maryland), July 15, 1865

—Atzerodt, on the day before his death, made a statement to his brother and others of his connection with Booth and the conspiracy to abduct the late President to Richmond. He mentioned several of the plans by which possession of the President was to have been obtained, all of which failed from one cause or another. Every movement of Mr. Lincoln seems to have been closely

watched for the successful carrying out of the plans of the conspirators. One day, when it was known he was to visit camp or hospital out Seventh street, in his carriage, the assassins were lying in wait, and every preparation had been made for success.—Atzerodt said the carriage was to have been surrounded and stopped, the driver secured, and Surratt to mount the box in his stead, he being supposed to be the best driver.—The gang were supplied with horses and had relays provided along the road to Nanjemoy creek, where a boat capable of holding fifteen persons, was in readiness to convey the President across the Potomac. The scheme failed on account of the President not coming out as expected. Another plan was to have seized him while at the theatre in Washington, on the 14th of March, the gas to have been turned off by an actor, whose name is not given, but in this they were also foiled. Booth at one time entertained thoughts of endeavoring to kill the whole cabinet by getting possession of some place under the President's house and blowing it up while the Cabinet were in session. He also endeavored, through a neighbor of Secretary Seward's, to become acquainted with the servants at his house, in order the more readily to gain access thereto, but so far as known he did not succeed.

Adventures with Mr. Hall on the Trail of George Atzerodt

by Percy E. Martin

Reprinted from the *Surratt Society News*, July/August 1984

In December of 1982, this writer received a note from James O. Hall that contained some rather interesting information and a challenge. Mr. Hall, who needs no introduction here, was up to his usual game of unearthing new and exciting discoveries in his never-ending research aimed at closing the gaps still to be found in the Lincoln assassination history. A local buff was needed to scout the Baltimore area.

The quest was to find where Victoria Atzerodt was buried. Mrs. Atzerodt, the mother of Lincoln conspirator George A. Atzerodt, was one whose history Mr. Hall wanted for his extensive files of persons associated in one way or another with those convicted of the crime. An important motivation in this search, too, was the hope that some light could be shed on the mystery of what finally became of the body of her son George, who died on the scaffold in Washington's Arsenal Penitentiary.

A brief history will explain the history alluded to. As one of the final acts of his administration, President Andrew Johnson allowed the bodies of those condemned and executed to be released from their sequestered graves on the arsenal grounds for decent burial elsewhere.

George Atzerodt's remains were delivered to his brother John, a Baltimore resident and, previously, a detective on the staff of the Maryland Provost Marshal, James L. McPhail. John transferred his brother's remains to Glenwood, a local Washington, D.C., cemetery which, significantly, is located on the northern suburbs on an old roundabout route to Baltimore. Then on February 17, 1869, the body was placed in a holding vault. Here the trail ended in uncertainty and confusion until Mr. Hall took up the search.

In a letter to Richard Sloan of New York, dated August 8, 1979, the cemetery authorities attempted to explain what happened to Atzerodt's body, though their records were badly mixed up. Apparently, John Atzerodt had contracted for a burial lot in which to bury his brother, but he

never paid for it, nor is there a positive record of George having been buried there. Because later data showed other unrelated persons being buried in the lot, the authorities expressed the opinion that if George had ever been buried in their cemetery, he had been removed. They even suggested that the body had been taken by the brother elsewhere for secret burial.

Mr. Hall, early in his search, had theorized that the body was brought “home” to be next to his mother’s intended grave. After long research, the information about Mrs. Atzerodt’s death and funeral came to light in the records of Baltimore’s Lutheran churches (all in German language) at the Maryland Hall of Records. It was disclosed that Victoria had died at the age of 79 on January 3, 1886. She was buried from the Martini Lutheran Church on Henrietta and Sharp Streets in South Baltimore in a section known as “Little Germany.”

This writer then learned that Martini Lutheran Church was still a surviving parish located in a brand new structure, two squares removed from the dilapidated shell of the original. A visit to the new church before a Sunday service netted an introduction to Mr. William Lehr, whose family roots are entwined in the church’s history. It was soon learned that there existed in Druid Hill Park a burial place, St. Paul’s Lutheran Cemetery, that had “seen better days” and was now little used. Through the generosity of Mrs. Lehr, the keeper of the old records, a scanning of the burial register was conducted. The results were thought provoking, to say the least!

The records show that Victoria Atzerodt was buried in a lot owned by one Gottlieb Taubert, who married Mrs. Atzerodt’s daughter Mary in 1869. He was a 33-year-old tailor who lived in the same neighborhood as his mother-in-law.

Also listed for the Taubert lot were seven other burials over a 63-year period, from 1865 to 1928. A most intriguing entry was one of a burial dated February 19, 1869. The description of the deceased was, curiously, Gottlieb Taubert, aged 29 years. Now, everything about this particular burial is suspect. If, in fact, this was really George Atzerodt, then his brother would have had just the right amount of time to move the body from Washington on the 17th and prepare it for reburial on the 19th. The age of the deceased was consistent with that of Atzerodt, who had turned 30 just before his death in 1865. If the body were not that of George Atzerodt, then who was it? Certainly not Gottlieb Taubert, the lot’s owner, who lived until 1925 and who is duly recorded as being buried there in a later listing. A careful check of the Taubert genealogy turned up no other Taubert named Gottlieb. Further, there was no mention of a burial there on that date in any of the local papers. Incidentally, the gravesite today is devoid of markers and appears never to have had any.

This then is all the evidence of a possible secret burial of George Atzerodt in the same lot as his mother, Victoria. All of it is circumstantial, but this writer firmly believes it is much more conclusive than that which was used to place a rope around poor old George’s neck in the first place.