

The Surratt Courier

Published Bimonthly by the Surratt Society

November/December 2024

Louise Oertly, Editor

Volume XLIX No. 6

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The Surratt Society wishes you and your family a happy and safe holiday.



The illustration is entitled "*Santa Claus in the Act of Descending a Chimney on Christmas Eve.*"

This is an early depiction of Santa Claus from *The Great Pictorial Annual Brother Jonathan*, January 1, 1845. The appearance of Santa is very different from the Santa Claus we know today.

This newsletter is a bimonthly publication of the Surratt Society. The Surratt Society's website is surrattmuseum.org surrattmuseum.org. Contact us at surratt.society@gmail.com or by mail at: Surratt Society, 9201 Edgeworth Drive #3853, Capitol Heights, MD 20791-3853.

The Surratt House Museum, a historic property of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The Surratt House Museum's phone number is (301) 868-1121.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I seldom write a “President’s Message” as I am not as eloquent or insightful as our Vice President and Editor, Louise Oertly. However, for this issue of *The Surratt Courier*, I have an announcement and a request. The announcement is that the Annual Meeting of the Surratt Society is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 12, 2025, via Zoom, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. EDT. We will have a brief business meeting for the election of officers for the 2025-26 term, and presentations by two speakers. Watch the Surratt Society website for the proposed slate of officers and the speakers. The meeting and presentations will be open to all; **HOWEVER**, you must register in advance. Details will follow and be on the website.

The request is this: Tom Buckingham and his wife Betsy had for many years been volunteers at the Surratt House Museum. In addition, Tom has served on the Executive Committee of the Surratt Society as Treasurer. Tom has indicated that he does not want to seek another term in that position, and we thank him for his many years of service to the Surratt Society and to the history that it represents.

Consequently, we are in need of a volunteer to serve as Treasurer of the Surratt Society, preferably—but certainly not mandatory—someone with some experience in budgeting and accounting. Tom has graciously agreed to assist with the transition, so it is not a heavy lift, and you will by virtue of the office be a member the Surratt Society’s Executive Committee. (The Executive Committee generally only meets once or twice a year via Zoom. The day-to-day operations of the Surratt House Museum are managed by the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission, a bi-county governmental entity which owns the property.) The Surratt Society is a separate organization from the Commission, and whose Bylaws specify that the Society needs to have a Treasurer, so we would be most appreciative if you would consider volunteering to serve in that position. You may self-nominate at surratt.society@gmail.com .

Bill Binzel
President, Surratt Society

In This Issue

This issue features past articles on Christmas Eve 1864 at the Union and Confederate White Houses. There is also a new article introducing you to the Lincoln conspirators and players.

On the last page of the *Courier* is a recipe I stumbled upon while looking for articles. It’s from a surprising source and I thought I would share it.

Abraham Lincoln's Last Christmas

From *A Civil War Christmas Book* by Philip Van Doren Stern

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, December 2006

Frost laced the edges of the windowpanes, vignetting the bleak winter landscape. Snow does queer things to places, he thought. In the twilight, the wide and flats near the ice-covered Potomac looked like the Illinois plains, and the Virginia hills on the other side of the river might be the Kentucky mountains he had known as a boy. Winter sounds were the same everywhere. A guard marching up and down under the White House windows crunched the hard, frozen snow crystals under his boot; some boys playing in the meadows near the river were shouting—their voices were brittle in the cold air. They were familiar sounds that brought back many memories.

A man in his fifties remembered many Christmases. Worst of all had been the one during that first terrible winter in Illinois when his family had been snowed in for weeks in the hastily built cabin on a bluff above the Sangamon. They had stayed in bed 18 hours a day to keep warm and to forget their hunger by sleeping as much as they could. He shivered when he thought of that desolate cabin where even the firewood had to be used sparingly because it was almost impossible to go out in the shoulder-deep snow to get more. But he smiled wistfully when he recalled the gingerbread men his stepmother made for him every Christmas during the hard years in Indiana.

Yes, a man in his fifties remembers many Christmases. There was that awful day in New Salem when he walked for miles to a lonely country cemetery to brush the snow away from Ann's grave. He could never bear the thought of rain falling on her, and the snow was even worse. Yet it must be lying deep there now on that deserted hill, and there was no one to brush it away. It was lying on so many graves—thousands and tens of thousands of them made during the last four years.

But all his Christmases had not been so bad. He remembered the first one after Robert had been born. Mary had lighted a candle at the foot of the cradle before there was any sign of dawn in the sky, and the waking child crowed with delight when he saw the yellow flame. They stood beside the cradle while the shabby room that was their temporary home lightened with the coming of day.

And then, during the later years, after the other three children had come, the big house in Springfield had resounded with their shouts and laughter each Christmas morning. Someday they would return there, after all this was over. But only two of his children would be with them. He forced his mind to turn away from those unhappiest of times. Bob would be home from Harvard for Christmas, and Tad would soon be coming in to say goodnight in his odd childish lisp.

He left the window and walked slowly toward the long table piled with papers and reports, knowing that he had to take up the business of the day. Word should be arriving soon from Sherman, whose ever-advancing army had reached Savannah and the sea. The war could not last much longer now. The coming year might see it over, and then there would be the complicated problem of peace to face. Sometimes he thought he dreaded them more than he did the war. He sat down wearily in his big chair at the head of the Cabinet table and called out to Billy Slade.

The old colored manservant opened the door noiselessly and came in to light the gas. In the growing light, the long white room took on shape and became more cheerful. Billy told him that Gideon Welles, his Secretary of the Navy, was waiting to see him.

“Send him in,” he said gladly. He knew why Welles had come. There would be Christmas pardons to sign, and his face brightened.

Secretary of the Navy Welles entered, his long white beard making him look oddly like Santa Claus. He seemed quite embarrassed, as he always did under such circumstances. He thought it a weakness on the part of the President to grant pardons so easily, yet he aided and abetted him, even going over Stanton’s head to see that they reached his attention.

“I’ve some papers for you to sign,” he began in a brisk voice. “Christmas pardons. We’ve discussed them already. You’ll remember this case, I’m sure.” He deftly slipped a sheet of paper covered with writing in front of the man at the table. The President put on his glasses and nodded when he recognized the case. “You agreed to commute his sentence,” Welles said, speaking rapidly as if to ward off argument. “It’s a routine matter now, needing only your signature to make it official.”

The President reached for his pen, wondering whether the commutation of a death sentence could ever be a routine matter. He marveled, as always, at the power that flowed from the fine steel point. The words “A. Lincoln” would set unseen wheels in motion; telegraph wires would carry the good news to a distant family; and somewhere a boy in a prison cell would be told that he did not have to die. He glanced at his signature with pleasure. There were some advantages of being President—especially on Christmas Eve.

Then Welles gave him other pardons to sign. When they were duly inscribed and dated, the august-looking Secretary of the Navy stood anxiously folding and refolding a small sheet of letter paper that was obviously not an official document.

“I have a favor to ask, sir,” he said hesitatingly. “Or rather, Mrs. Welles has. It’s a bit difficult to explain.” His eyes wandered to the burning gas jets, and his voice died away. The President waited patiently.

“It has to do with the Rebel female,” Welles blurted out at last.

“A Rebel female?”

“Yes, sir. A friend of my wife’s.”

Welles stood shifting about unhappily under the President’s gaze. “I know what you’re thinking, sir. That the family of a cabinet officer shouldn’t have such friends. We don’t make a practice of it, but this case is different.”

Lincoln’s expression was quizzical. He leaned back in his chair and put his fingers together. “And what does this Rebel female want?” He asked in an amused voice.

“Well to put it bluntly sir—she wants to get married.”

Lincoln grinned, “She doesn’t need my help for that. There’s no law forbidding marriage even for Rebel females. Whom does she want to marry?”

“That’s just the trouble, sir. Some rebel whelp in Richmond. She can’t get through the lines.”

“So you want me to give her a pass.”

Welles nodded vigorously.

“Has she taken the oath of allegiance?”

Welles frowned. “I’ve talked to her—and so has my wife. But she’s stubborn. I regret to say that she refuses to take the oath. Says she owes her allegiance to Virginia and not to the United States.”

“Yet you want me to grant her a pass. That might be interpreted by some as giving aid and comfort to the enemy.”

“Yes, sir, it might,” Welles said grimly.

“But you still want me to do it?”

“I don't think it would do any great harm, sir. We have never recognized the Confederacy, so Virginia is still part of this country. There still have to be marriages—and children. We have to think of the future. The nation has been seriously depopulated by this war.”

“Perhaps you better tell me more about this Rebel female,” the President said quietly. He motioned toward a chair. Welles sat down uneasily, spreading out the letter which he had folded so often that it looked like an accordion pleat. He glanced at it with surprise as if he had never seen it before.

“She came here at the beginning of the war,” Welles began. “Her mother was sick, and she had to take care of her. The mother died, so she has been stranded here ever since. As she says herself, the years of her youth are passing away. She's nearly four years older now and—”

“Just how old is she?”

“I don't know for certain, sir. About twenty-three, I'd say.”

“Hmm. Twenty-three. Practically superannuated for a Southern girl. We'll have to do something about it, Mr. Welles.”

“I suggest you read her own statement first. It's rather intemperate, I'm sorry to say.” He handed the letter to the President, who laid it face down on the table and shook his head.

“I'd rather not read it,” he said smiling. “It might prejudice my decision. Tell me more about her. Who is she, and where is she now?”

“Her name is Laura Jones—and she's sitting right outside the door this moment.”

The President looks startled. “Does she want to talk to me?”

“She said she ought to be here in case you wanted to talk to her.” He studied the President's face. “Do you?”

“I don't think it will be necessary. But I would like to see what she looks like. You can tell a great deal from a person's face.”

Welles stood up and asked rather doubtfully. “How do you want to arrange it?”

“You might go out and ask her some questions,” the President suggested. “You could leave the door open accidentally.”

Welles's face was properly sober, as he went to the door. Before he reached it, the President spoke again. “And then you might find some errand down the hall to keep you busy for a minute. I want to get a good look at her.”

The girl in the visitor's chair half rose when she saw the impressive-looking figure of the Secretary of the Navy advancing toward her. He motioned her to remain seated and spoke to her in a whisper. Then he was gone, padding softly down the hallway.

They sat looking at each other through the doorway for a long moment, the aging man at the Cabinet table and the young Confederate girl who had refused to take the oath of allegiance to his government. They were supposed to be enemies, he thought sadly. Her people and his were engaged in a deadly struggle on the battlefields that covered half a nation. Yet she was as American as he was, both citizens of a republic that had been born in war and rebellion. The State of Virginia, to which she gave fierce allegiance, had provided Washington and Jefferson as his predecessors in the office. They had many things in common, she and he, but not the least of them was the heritage Virginia had given the nation.

Hostility between them was unthinkable, he decided. His eyes sought her written statement, but he pushed it resolutely away. When he glanced up at her again, he saw she was smiling at him.

Her thin, forlorn face was transformed. He was tempted to get up and speak to her, but he heard Welles's footsteps coming down the hallway. He sank back in his chair and assumed the stern, presidential look. The girl was murmuring something to Welles. A moment later the Secretary entered the room and closed the door behind him.

"What did you think, sir?" Welles asked.

"I think she should be allowed to return to Richmond."

Welles smiled. "I thought you would. But don't you want to read her statement first? She makes no bones about her Rebel sentiments."

The President picked up the sheet of paper lying before him on the table and deliberately tore it into pieces. Then he took his pen and wrote out a pass. "I don't suppose it matters if I date this tomorrow?" Without waiting for a reply, he wrote the words, "Christmas Day, December 25, 1864," and appended his signature to the document.

"That makes it a Christmas present," he said, handing it to Welles.

His Secretary of the Navy bowed and put the paper carefully in his pocket. "I thank you, sir," he said gravely. "The young lady just whispered something to me, which I think I may repeat." He cleared his throat. "She said you weren't at all like the monster you have been pictured. She said you reminded her of her father. And she wished you a very Merry Christmas and many of them."

He shut the door silently and was gone. The President got up from the table and went to the window. It was dark outside now, and there was a faint glow of light on the snow from the gas lamps on the floor below. He could hear the steady crunching of the guard's boots. Somewhere a church bell was ringing, calling worshippers to vespers on Christmas Eve.

Yes, a man in his fifties remembers many Christmases. What was it, the girl had said? "The years of my youth are passing away." They had already passed for him, he knew. Suddenly he felt very old, as though he had lived out all of his life and there was nothing left. In a few weeks he would be fifty-six. He had seen many Christmases come and go, three of them in the White House—and tomorrow would be the fourth. But by this time next year, the war would be over. In another four years, he and Mary would return to Springfield to stay there in peace.

As he stood looking out at the darkness, the melancholy that had haunted him all of his life returned. The brief glow of happiness the Christmas pardons had given him was gone.

The frost was rimming the windowpanes again, reaching out with icy fingers to shut the world away. His hands and legs felt cold, as they so often did these days. He shivered. Tomorrow would be his fifty-fifth Christmas. How many Christmases could a man in his fifties expect to see?

Christmas with the Jefferson Davises in 1864

Excerpted from *The Southern Christmas Book* by Harnett T. Kane

Reprinted from *Surratt Society News*, December 1981

By Christmas of 1864, Southern spirits were on the wane. It seemed evident that the end [of the war] was near and that the Confederacy was doomed. In her now famous diary, Mary Boykin Chestnut, writing from Columbia, South Carolina, stated with great gloom, "The deepest waters are closing over us; and we in this house are like the outsiders at the time of the Flood. We eat, drink, laugh, dance, in the lightest of heart!"

Another woman later remembered in detail the holiday season in the Confederate White House in the last year of the war. Varina Howell Davis, Mississippi-born wife of the Southern President, declared: "That Christmas season was ushered in under the thickest clouds; everyone felt the cataclysm which impended, but the rosy, expected faces of our little children were a constant reminder that self-sacrifice must be the personal offering of each member of the family."

Because of the expense involved in keeping them up, Mrs. Davis had recently sold her carriage and horses. A warm-spirited Confederate bought them and sent them back to her. Now she planned to dispose of one of her best satin dresses to obtain funds; with Christmas on the way, the children had high expectations, and she would use all possible makeshifts in an effort to fulfill them.

The Richmond housewives could find no currents, raisins, or other vital ingredients for old Virginia mincemeat pie. But, Mrs. Davis went on, the young considered at least one slice their right, "and the price of the indigestion... a debt of honor due from them to the season's exactions." Despite the war, apple trees still bore fruit; with these as a base, she and the other women of the city would utilize other fruit that came to hand. A little cider and some salt were obtained, as was brandy, though the usual price was one hundred dollars a bottle in inflated Confederate money.

As for eggnog, the negro stable attendant, who brought in "the back log, our substitute for the Yule log," said he did not know how they would, "git along with no eggnog ef it's only a little wineglass." After considerable effort, the eggs and other makings were found. Plans progressed for a quiet home Christmas when unexpected word arrived. The orphans at the Episcopal home had been promised a tree and toys, cake and candy, plus a good prize for the best behaved girl, and something had to be done about that.

Something was done. With Mrs. Davis's help, a committee of women was set up and the members repaired to their children's old toy collection to salvage dolls without eyes, monkeys that had lost their squeak, three-legged and even two-legged horses. They fixed and painted everything, plumping out rag dolls and putting new faces on them, adding fresh tails to feathered chickens and parrots. Robert Brown, one of the house staff, volunteered to build a "sure enough house, with four rooms," for the orphan's prize.

The Davises invited a group of good friends on Christmas Eve to help make candle molds and string popcorn and apples for the tree; Mr. Pizzini, the confectioner, contributed simple candies. For cornucopias and other ornamentation, the Davises' guests used colored papers, bright pictures from old books, bits of silk foraged out of trunks. All in all, the Christmas Eve of 1864 was far from unsatisfactory. When the small supply of eggnog went around, the eldest Davis boy assured his father: "Now I just know this is Christmas."

The next morning, the Davises received their presents. For Mrs. Davis, there were, among other things, six valuable cakes of soap, made from grease of a ham boiled for a family, and a pincushion stuffed with wool from the pet sheep of a farm woman. The family walked to Saint Paul's church to hear the sermon by Doctor Charles Minnegerode, the Christmas tree pioneer. Doctor Minnegerode had entered the Episcopal Church to win high fame in his region.

After services, the Davises had their dinner. For it, the cook managed a turkey and roast beef, a spun-sugar hen, life-sized, and a nest of eggs of blancmange. The dessert made them all feel, as one of the party said, "like our jackets were button." The children's piece de resistance, however, was still ahead—the great orphans' tree. That night they went to the basement of Saint Paul's, where the Davises watched the many gradations of emotion "from joy to ecstasy." To Mrs. Davis, the evening was "worth two years of peaceful life," the kind of life she had not known for a long, long, time.

Notice that Mrs. Davis made no mention of Santa Claus visiting the orphans. For hundreds of thousands of Southern children, there was tragedy in the non-appearance of Santa Claus during the later war year.

Explanations were attempted:

The Yankees had captured the old Saint this year.

Or perhaps:

Santa had been caught in the blockade.

In journals were tales and poems designed to make the situation less gloomy for the young.

*I'm sorry to write,
Our ports are blockaded, and Santa, tonight
Will hardly get down here; for if he should start,
The Yankees would get him unless he was "smart,"
They beat all the men in creation to run,
And if they could get him, they'd think it fine fun
To put him in prison, and steal the nice toys
He started to bring to our girls and boys.
But try not to mind it—tell over your jokes—
Be gay and be cheerful, like other good folks;
For if you remember to be good and kind,
Old Santa next Christmas will bear it in mind.*

[Source of the poem unknown]

Lincoln Conspirators and Players:

Band of Misfits or Specifically Chosen?

By Dennis D. Urban

The story and the participants are all too familiar. But were they a ragtag band of misfits haphazardly chosen or were they specifically selected for their knowledge and skills? How did each of them get involved in the conspiracy? What motivated each of them? Let's examine the facts.

Mary Elizabeth Surratt: A 42-year-old Catholic widow, secessionist, and former slaveholder. [The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 declared all enslaved in states in rebellion to be free. Maryland remained in the Union, so it did not affect the enslaved in Maryland. However, on November 1, 1864, a new Maryland Constitution was passed which prohibited the practice of slavery.] Mary owned and operated the boardinghouse at 541 H Street in Washington City [D.C.] safe house for Confederate operatives and those involved in the conspiracy, as well as a legitimate boardinghouse for a family and several individuals not involved. She also owned and rented out the tavern and hostelry in Surrattsville in Prince George's County, Maryland, which was just southeast of the city and also a safe house and Confederate mail drop. Hers was the perfect cover location for the conspirators. Mary had a son in the Confederate army in Texas. According to President Andrew Johnson, she "kept the nest that hatched the egg." She was involved by virtue of her son, John. Mary participated in several actions which aided and abetted the escape of John Wilkes Booth. She knew her son was engaged in something nefarious but may not have known the details. She was hanged by the Federal authorities on July 7, 1865.

John Harrison Surratt, Jr.: John was a 21-year-old ardent secessionist and son of Mary. Early in the 1860s, he took over as postmaster at the Surrattsville tavern after the death of his father, the previous postmaster. He was soon terminated for disloyalty. As an active Confederate courier, receiving and transmitting messages across the Potomac River to and from Northern Virginia, he lived both in Surrattsville and at the 541 H Street boardinghouse in Washington, D.C. He attended a Catholic minor seminary with Louis Weichmann, who would later become an H Street boarder. John met with Booth many times in various places and purchased a boat intended to be used for the abduction of Lincoln with Booth's money. He was a catalyst for recruiting several of the conspirators. One was George Atzerodt at Port Tobacco, Maryland, who was to ferry the kidnapped President Lincoln across the Potomac. This kidnapping, of course, never occurred. He was not specifically involved in the assassination and was in Elmira, New York, on the evening of April 14, 1865, checking out the prison camp for Confederate soldiers for the Richmond authorities. He escaped the United States to Canada after the assassination, fleeing first to England than ultimately to Italy where he was captured more than a year later. Surratt was put on trial in Washington City, but saved by a hung jury and never retried. Interestingly, his jury consisted of a majority of Southern sympathizers. In 1872, Surratt married Mary Victorine Hunter, (a relative of Francis Scott Key) who was from Montgomery County, Maryland. He lived a long life in Baltimore, as a shipping company executive, and died on April 21, 1916. Had he been apprehended shortly after the assassination, he likely would have been hanged in place of, or along with, his mother.

Doctor Samuel Mudd: To many historians and students of the assassination, Dr. Mudd remains an enigma. But he should not be. Living on a working farm in Charles County, Maryland, a few miles north of Bryantown, the 32-year-old physician was a secessionist and former slaveholder [Maryland freed its slaves in November 1864], who had a close association with Booth. Mudd was not specifically involved in the conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln but had met Booth several times both at his home and in Washington City. Booth stayed overnight at Mudd's home on at least two occasions and Mudd assisted him in purchasing a horse from a neighbor. Given these facts, it is hard to believe that Booth disguised himself and his voice to such an extent that he was unrecognizable to Mudd early on the morning of April 15, when Mudd set his broken left fibula, and throughout the day, when they conversed freely. It is well established that Mudd, on a few occasions, lied to the authorities who were in the area searching for the assassins. Honesty would have gained him a significant reward, but his Southern loyalty would not permit such. At the trial, he escaped hanging by one vote and was sentenced to life in prison at Fort Jefferson in the Florida Keys. He was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson in 1869, returned home, and lived out his life on his farm. Dr. Samuel Mudd departed this life on January 10, 1883, at the age of 49. To this day, some members of his family assert his innocence.

Lewis Thornton Powell: Powell, who used the alias surname of Payne, was a cold-blooded killer and son of a Baptist minister. At age 20, he was a Confederate infantry veteran, who was wounded at Gettysburg and later rode with John Mosby for a while. He also had two brothers who served in the Confederate army. He first met John Surratt at the Baltimore china shop of David Parr, another Confederate operative. While staying in Baltimore after recovering from his hand wound, he assaulted an African American domestic at the row house where he was staying. He was arrested and the court banished him to remain north of Philadelphia for the duration of the war. Instead, he went south to Washington City, where he maintained contact with Surratt and briefly boarded at the H Street boardinghouse. At some unknown point, he made contact with Booth, probably through John Surratt. Prior to his execution on July 7, 1865, Powell maintained that Mary Surratt was innocent of the knowledge of the assassination. He also insisted, in regard to those caught up in the conspiracy, that "You have not got the one-half of them." He was certainly correct in that statement.

David Herold: David was born in Maryland, but we are not certain where, as his family moved later to Washington City. He was an avid outdoorsman and bird hunter, who knew the Maryland area well—especially along the eastern shore of the Potomac River in Prince George's and Charles counties. He lived outside of the Navy Yard with his parents and seven sisters. Only 22-years-old, he was not the "slow-witted, trifling boy" he was made out to be at the conspiracy trial and in subsequent histories. He was educated at Georgetown College (a secondary school) in DC and worked as pharmacology assistant. Thus, David had skills useful to the conspiracy. He knew John Surratt through his visits to the Surrattsville Tavern. He was later introduced to Booth. His mother was concerned that he had "fallen into bad company" in Washington. Quite an understatement this proved to be! Although he had many opportunities to escape from Booth during their getaway, his loyalty was unerring. For this, he earned execution on July 7, 1865.

George Atzerodt: George was not the brightest candle in the room, but was experienced at running the Union blockade on the Potomac River. At 35-years-old, he was an uneducated, timid, and easily influenced drunkard. Prior to the war, he and his brother had a carriage painting shop in Port Tobacco. Early in the war, George transported Confederate couriers across the Potomac to and from Virginia. He was recruited by John Surratt at Port Tobacco, where George had a common-law wife and a young daughter. At some point, he met Booth, probably through John Surratt. Money was his reason for entering the plot to kidnap Lincoln. He briefly lived at the H Street boardinghouse until his drinking got him thrown out by Mrs. Surratt. When kidnapping turned to murder, George lost his nerve to kill Vice-President Johnson. He got drunk and wandered around D.C. the night of April 14. He then escaped to his cousin's farm in Montgomery County, Maryland. For his knowledge of the assassination and due to vicarious liability, George was hanged on July 7, 1865.

Edman Spangler: Spangler was a carpenter by trade who, in earlier days, worked building the Booth home in Bel Air, Maryland, where John Wilkes Booth grew up. Thus, he had a long association with the Booth family. At 39 years-old, only Mary Surratt was older than him. Spangler was a rough, uneducated, hard drinker whose wife had passed away in 1864. He had no known children. A Baltimore native, Edman, worked for the Ford brothers in their theatres. His job was at Ford's Theatre in Washington City, where he worked as a carpenter and scene shifter. He became an inadvertent participant, who was essentially incarcerated at Fort Jefferson for briefly holding Booth's horse in the alley behind Ford's Theatre, prior to the assassination. Spangler assisted Doctor Mudd during the yellow fever epidemic at Fort Jefferson, for this he was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson. This was done days prior to Johnson leaving office. Spangler, who did not know Mudd prior to the trial, lived out his days at the Mudd farm on land Dr. Mudd had given him. He died there on February 7, 1875, and is buried in Old Saint Peter's Catholic Church Cemetery in Waldorf, Maryland, the original home parish of Dr. Mudd.

Michael O'Laughlen and Samuel Arnold: Both were boyhood friends of Booth and grew up in the same neighborhood as he. Both were young Confederate veterans who had served out their enlistments. O'Laughlen (24) was an engraver by trade and lately worked in his brother's feed store in Baltimore. Arnold (30) came from a family of Baltimore bakers, whose bread business still carries the Arnold name. The manner in which Booth brought both of these men into the conspiracy remains unknown, and they met together several times. When kidnapping became murder, both backed out of the scheme. O'Laughlen fled from D.C. back to Baltimore and took a clerk's job at Point Comfort, Virginia, while Arnold stayed in Baltimore. Both were arrested, tried with the others, and sentenced to life imprisonment at Fort Jefferson. O'Laughlen died there in the yellow fever epidemic of 1867. Arnold returned to Maryland after being pardoned by President Johnson. He died in 1906 at the age of 72. He rarely spoke of his role in the conspiracy, but authored the book, first published in 1995, entitled *Memoirs of a Lincoln Conspirator*.

Louis Weichmann: Louis is included here because he lived at the Surratt boardinghouse and may have been in fact Mary's first boarder. Weichmann was enamored of Anna Surratt, but she flatly rejected him. He was an intimate friend of John Surratt going back years in a minor Catholic seminary together. Through his clerkship job, he had access to Confederate prisoner numbers and camp locations, which would be valuable to the conspirators. Living in the boardinghouse, he was around its many visitors and, no doubt, party to many interesting conversations. He was a

conspirator “wannabe”, but they did not want him because he was not a horseman nor handy with a gun. Mary Surratt treated him like a son, and he reciprocated by helping her stage items for Booth at the Surrattsville tavern on Friday, April 14th. He somewhat cooperated with investigators and lied, when convenient, to save his own neck. Many believe that his testimony led to the hanging of Mary Surratt. Weichmann was never charged in the conspiracy. He lived out his life in Indiana, where he ran a business school. He also rarely spoke of his role in the assassination but authored a book that was also first published years after his death, *A True History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and of the Conspiracy of 1865*.

These ten individuals comprise the bulk of the active figures in the Lincoln assassination. There are many others, at least another ten folks, who were on the periphery of the plot and assisted in one way or another, especially in the aiding and abetting of the escape of Booth and Herold. These folks were never tried for their roles, but they certainly had various degrees of knowledge of the plot and/or the escape. They were known to investigators, and some were briefly imprisoned. A short time after the execution of the principals, the government and the public seems to have lost interest in pursuing the case further, and the worries of these folks were over.

Maryland Roast Turkey

Reprinted from the *Surratt Society News*, December 1981

Select a plump turkey and clean well.

Make a stuffing of:

Three cups of stale bread, crumbled fine and moistened.

Add the [turkey] liver and a slice of boiled ham, minced fine.

A hash of onion and parsley,

Salt and pepper to taste.

Mix well, adding, if desired, two well-beaten eggs and fill the turkey.

Season fowl with lard, salt and pepper.

Put in a roasting oven with a small quantity of water, just enough to prevent the pan from burning at the start.

Baste frequently with essence from the pan.

Roast, not too fast, until well done and golden brown.

Though listed in *The Southern Christmas Book*, this recipe came originally from Edwina Booth Grossman, daughter of Edwin Booth and niece of John Wilkes Booth.

Editor’s Note: Except for the boiled ham [we use all the gizzards], this is the recipe my grandmother, who was born and raised in Baltimore [and married a Lincoln from D.C.], passed down to my mother. What are the chances?