

# *The Surratt Courier*

Published Bimonthly by the Surratt Society

---

---

July/August 2024

Louise Oertly, Editor

Volume XLIX No. 4

---

---

## **President's Message**

On occasion, I am asked how it was that I got involved with the Surratt Society and how I became a volunteer docent at the Surratt House Museum (SHM). The answer is that Laurie Verge, the long-time Director of the Museum, used unfair and coercive tactics—she asked me nicely (as if I could ever say “no” to her).

I have been a life-long student of history (my undergraduate degree is in U.S. History), especially Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War, and Lincoln’s assassination. When I retired in 2013, I finally had the time to do something I had wanted to do—to cull through the files of James O. Hall in the research center bearing his name at the SHM. With the assistance of librarian at the time, Colleen Puterbaugh, I began my search. I was not looking for any specific aspect, and I had read most of the books on Lincoln’s assassination that had been published in the previous 30+ years, but I had the sense, largely fueled by *Come Retribution*, [see January/February 2024 issue] that there was more to the saga than had been told or explained.

I was a frequent visitor at the James O. Hall Research Center, and usually as I was leaving, would stick my head into Laurie’s office in the SHM Visitors’ Center to say hello. If she was working on something, it was just a wave. But more often than not, she would invite me into her office, and pepper me with questions of what I was working on, what I had found of

interest in the files, etc. And that led to numerous conversations. Ever the teacher, Laurie would suggest perspectives that had not occurred to me. [Personal Note: As much as I miss Laurie, I will forever be grateful that I knew her.]

At the conclusion of one of our discussions, Laurie asked, “Would you be a docent at the Museum?” My response was, “What does that involve?” Her answer was leading tours through the historic house dressed in period clothing. “Well, that’s a problem,” I said, “as I am not a re-enactor and do not own any 19th century clothing.” “We can help you with that,” she said. “What else?” I asked, and Laurie said “to be willing and able to talk about history.” I told her, “That I can do!” So, for many years, I was a docent at the SHM. Laurie even asked me to serve on the Executive Committee of the Surratt Society, as vice president, which I also agreed to do.

After Laurie’s death, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission wanted to take the SHM in a different direction and away from its focus

---

*This newsletter is a bimonthly publication of the Surratt Society. The Surratt Society’s website is [surrattmuseum.org](http://surrattmuseum.org) [surrattmuseum.org](http://surrattmuseum.org).*

*Contact us at [surratt.society@gmail.com](mailto: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.*

on the Lincoln assassination (which is a topic and discussion for a different day). None of the SHM staff associated with Laurie has been retained and, to the best of my knowledge, not one of the Surratt Society volunteer docents, including me, have returned to conduct the tours now favored by the Commission.

Over a year ago, I was encouraged by a former SHM docent (an unnamed and unindicted co-conspirator) to consider doing tours at the Dr. Samuel Mudd House Museum. I was hesitant, as I knew Louise Mudd Arehart, the founder of the Dr. Mudd House Museum, and if one were to suggest to her anything other than Dr. Mudd was simply a kindly country doctor, Mrs. Arehart would run you off the property. [James O. Hall was her prime target.] I was told that was no longer the case. Docents at Dr.

Mudd's are encouraged to relate the facts, as best we know them, and allow visitors to draw their own conclusions, exactly in the same vein of what Laurie asked of docents at the SHM. I began doing tours at Dr. Mudd's and realized how much I had missed the experience and the interaction with the visitors seeking to learn a little history.

My purpose in outlining this is to encourage former docents at the SHM, and anyone who would like to lead tours at a Lincoln assassination-related museum to consider becoming a volunteer at the Mudd House Museum. Send a message to me at the Surratt Society's email address ([surrattsociety@gmail.com](mailto:surrattsociety@gmail.com)) and I will respond with details and contact information. I promise that you will enjoy the experience.

Bill Binzel, President

\*\*\*\*\*

## **The Ladies at the Surratt Boarding House**

We know that Mary, John Jr., and Anna Surratt were living in Washington, D.C., when the Lincoln assassination took place. But do you know who else were residing at the boardinghouse? The following articles will introduce you to the ladies, who boarded or visited there in April of 1865.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Miss Dean**

By James O. Hall

Reprinted in the *Surratt Society News*, September 1979, but originally appeared in *The Enquirer-Gazette* (Upper Marlboro, Maryland), "Letters to the Editor," September 20, 1973.

In the spring of 1865, a little girl named Dean, aged about 11, was boarding with Mrs. Mary Surratt at 541 H Street in Washington. On April 17, 1865, when Mrs. Surratt was arrested as a suspect in the assassination of President Lincoln, little Miss Dean was away "visiting her mother." There it ends. The rest is silence. The identity of Miss Dean is not revealed in surviving

documents or in the testimony at the subsequent trials of the alleged conspirators. Yet she is mentioned dozens of times, always as “Miss Dean.”

Miss Dean’s stay with Mrs. Surratt must have been exciting for the little girl, what with mysterious people coming and going at all hours and with the handsome young actor, John Wilkes Booth, a frequent visitor. One night she attended a play at Ford’s Theatre along with another boarder, Miss Honora Fitzpatrick, aged 20; John H. Surratt, Jr.; and Lewis Powell, alias “Mr. Wood.” Booth, it seems, wanted Surratt and Powell to “case the joint,” so on March 15, he took the President’s usual box for the blood-and-thunder epic, *Jane Shore*. Miss Dean and Miss Fitzpatrick were taken along as unsuspecting “cover.” During the play, Mr. Booth dropped by the box and chatted. Little Miss Dean was all agog at this and bent the ears of the other boarders with accounts of the action and the costumes.

Somehow, I have a feeling that Miss Dean did not come to board with Mrs. Surratt as a total stranger. She was only 11 years old, and it seems doubtful that Mrs. Surratt would have taken the responsibility for her welfare, if she did not know the mother. Maybe there was some remote family connection. All this points straight back to Prince George’s County as Mrs. Surratt had only recently left her farm at Surrattsville to move into her house in Washington. She had never lived in Washington City.

There were Deans in Prince George’s County in the 1850’s and 1860s. These show up from time to time in records and census returns. One boy named Dean lived for a time with Mrs. Surratt’s grandfather Webster. Then there is Mary Catherine Dean who came to Washington to marry Luther DeVaughn in 1875. She would have been about 11 years old in 1865. One doubtful source states that Miss Dean’s first name was Appolonia (Polly?). And so, it goes. There are trails all over. All cold.

Somewhere there is a family legend about a great-grandmother who knew Booth and escaped arrest at Mrs. Surratt’s only because she was away visiting her mother. So, I search.

[Editor’s Note: Mr. Hall closed his “Letter to the Editor” by asking that readers write to him: “If you have even a guess as to Miss Dean’s identity.”]

\*\*\*\*\*

## **The Lost Has Been Found**

Reprinted from the *Surratt Society News*, October 1979

Our September 1979 newsletter carried an article by Jame O. Hall requesting information about a young girl named Dean, who boarded with Mrs. Surratt at her H Street boardinghouse. As usual, Mr. Hall has found the answer through his own research. He picked up the trail while looking for something else. He also received many letters from readers of the Society’s newsletter far and near, so he herein shares his findings with us.

\*\*\*\*\*

On April 24, 1865, a Mrs. Mary Dean contacted J.F. Brown, Acting Mayor of Washington. She told Mr. Brown that her daughter, Appolonia, was boarding with Mrs. Surratt and going to school. [I learned from another source that this was the Visitation School for Girls,

St. Patrick's Catholic Church.] Mrs. Dean went on to say that her daughter was at home when the 541 H Street home was closed by authorities, but that the child's clothing was still there in a trunk. She asked Mr. Brown to secure the release of this trunk. As a result, Colonel John A. Foster ordered Lt. John W. Dempsey, who commanded the guard at Mrs. Surratt's home, to comply with Mrs. Dean's request. The release was signed by Mrs. Dean with an "X" and gave the girl's name as Mary A. Dean. Thus, I now know that her full name was Mary Appolonia Dean, that her mother's name was Mary Dean, and that the family lived "near Alexandria." The rest of the research was slow, but not really difficult.

Various Fairfax County records and the census returns for 1860 and 1870 show that Mary A. Dean was the daughter of John Est Dean and his wife, Mary Thompson Dean, both of whom were born in Maryland. Based on an analysis of dates on census returns for 1860, 1870, and 1880, Mary Appolonia was born (in Virginia) between June 11, 1854, and December 5, 1854. So, she would have been just over ten years of age when she came to board with Mrs. Surratt around Christmas 1864.

According to Fairfax County [Virginia] marriage records, Mary Dean was married in Fairfax on December 19, 1872, to Napoleon Bonaparte "Harry" Grant. Her father's name, John, is listed on the record. The ceremony was performed at the home of the Rev. George H. Williams, a Methodist minister. The groom was a Protestant, but he later joined the Catholic church.

It was a tragic family. Several children died young. "Harry" Grant, as he preferred to be known, became an engineer on the Richmond and Danville Railroad. He was killed in a train wreck near Proffits, Virginia, on February 18, 1894. Mrs. Grant lived but three months after her husband's death. She died on May 14, 1894, leaving two children. The children were raised by relatives. The Grants were buried in Sec. I, Lot 36, of St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Alexandria, Virginia. Her age is incorrectly given on the tombstone as 38; actually, she was 39.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Further Research**

by Laurie Verge

Reprinted from the *Surratt Society News*, October 1979

In an accompanying letter with his above research on Mary Appolonia Dean, Mr. Hall states that he still believes that she was in some way related to Mrs. Surratt. One of our very supportive associate members has done extensive genealogical research on the Webster and Jenkins line from which Mary Elizabeth Jenkins Surratt descended. Upon reading the September article, Mrs. Phyllis Cox immediately suspected a tie-in. She has sent us what information she has gained, but there still exists a missing link to definitively tie little Miss Dean into the Webster tree.

Mary Surratt's maternal grandfather, James Gibbs Webster, Sr., had several wives. One daughter by his first wife, Sara, was named Ann. A Washington, D.C., marriage license dated July 10, 1824, shows that Ann Webster married Samuel Dean. Mrs. Cox knows of four children born to Ann and Samuel Dean: Robert, Isaish, Julia, and Mary Ellen. Mrs. Dean died prior to March 9, 1853, since an Equity Case No. 39 was filed on that date to assign dower and list of heirs—children of Ann Dean—deceased. Is this the connection? Ann Webster would be an aunt to Mrs. Surratt.

Mrs. Cox has also sent along some “fun facts” which she has unearthed during her research. She has a copy of Mary Surratt’s great-great grandfather’s will, William Webster (ca. 1693-1777). He attended and was an active member of St. John’s Episcopal Parish of Broad Creek, Maryland. A reading of several items seems to point out that the Protestant Webster family may have had some problems with Catholic conversion long before Mary accepted Catholicism. The will, dated what appears to be November 20, 1772, states: “I give and bequeath to my Son, James Webster, one hundred and fifty-two acres of land—description—after his death, I give and devise the aforesaid land to my grandson, William Bruce Webster and his heirs forever, but if he professes not the Protestant Religion, I give the aforesaid land to his next brother he being a Protestant....” Mary’s great-great grandfather must have turned over in his grave to have her embrace the Catholic faith.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Acquainted with Sorrow: Honora Fitzpatrick, Mary Surratt’s First Boarder**

By Susan Higginbotham

Condensed from the November 2014 and December 2014 issues of *The Surratt Courier*

Described by W.P. Wood as a “plain unassuming girl,” and more gallantly, but generically, by Louis Weichmann as “a very good and excellent woman,”<sup>1</sup> Honora Fitzpatrick, the first young lady boarder to join Mary Surratt’s establishment, vanished from the public eye after the 1860s and seemed destined to live her life in quiet obscurity. But while her later years were indeed obscure, they were also, like those of so many others caught up in the assassination of the President, tragic.

Honora (who spelled her name in a legal document in 1876 as “Hannora” but was generally known as “Nora”),<sup>2</sup> was the youngest daughter of James Fitzpatrick and Margaret Hierlehy, both immigrants from Ireland. Born around 1800, James moved to the United States in 1827 and soon thereafter came to Washington, where he was employed first in a store and then in the National Hotel before being hired as a messenger by the Bank of the Metropolis (later the National Metropolitan Bank).<sup>3</sup> The 19-year-old Margaret Herlihy, who arrived in Philadelphia on the ship *Gulnare* on May 14, 1832, bound for Washington, may be Nora’s mother. She and her companion, 23-year-old Jane Herlihy, who had embarked from Liverpool, were fortunate enough to travel in a cabin instead of steerage. Immigration officials described the young women, probably sisters, as dark-complexioned, and noted that they were born in Cork County, although Margaret’s obituary states that she was a native of Dingle in Kerry County.<sup>4</sup>

James and Margaret were married in Washington on June 1, 1836. They had five children: Hannah Marie (“Anna”) born on October 24, 1837; Peter Paul, born on June 29, 1839; Jane Victoria, who died in August 1842 at the age of 12 months; Margaret Theresa, who died in September 1844 at the age of 12 months; and Honora, born October 10, 1844. Anna, Peter, and Nora were each baptized at St. Patrick’s Church in Washington, D.C. the city of their birth.<sup>5</sup>

Nora’s mother died on June 19, 1847, along with an unnamed infant, leaving James Fitzpatrick with three young children to raise. Nora was not yet three years old.<sup>6</sup> Many men in

his situation would have solved their child-care problems by remarrying, but James never took this option. The 1850 census for Washington, D.C., shows that Ellenora McNamee, a 22-year-old Irish immigrant, was living with the Fitzpatrick family that year; perhaps she took care of young Nora. Patrick Fitzpatrick, age 27, also was staying with James and his children in 1850.

James provided good educations for his three children, all of whom proved able pupils. Peter studied at Mount St. Mary's in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and at Gonzaga College (then known as the Washington Seminary). He later returned to Gonzaga as a teacher and for a time taught at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, but in 1864-65, the period of his sister's stay at Mrs. Surratt's house, he was teaching at the fledgling Boston College. In 1869, he entered Woodstock College in Maryland as a student of theology and was ordained a priest in 1872. He continued to teach in Boston and Baltimore and spent the last years of his life as pastor at St. Ignatius in Baltimore and as a faculty member of Loyola College there.<sup>7</sup>

Anna Fitzpatrick graduated in July 1855 from St. Mary's Institute in Bryantown, Maryland. Her attendance there briefly overlapped with that of Anna Surratt, who testified that she was enrolled there from 1854 to 1861.<sup>8</sup> On October 4, 1856, Anna Fitzpatrick was received into the Carmelite convent in Baltimore. On October 14, 1857, she professed herself as a nun there, at which time she took the name Sister Michael.<sup>9</sup>

Nora attended St. Joseph's at Emmitsburg, the Visitation Academy at Frederick, and the Visitation Academy of Georgetown (D.C.).<sup>10</sup> Georgetown Visitation's records show that she was a student there for the terms of 1861-62, 1862-63, and 1863-64.<sup>11</sup> Nora's classmates would have included young ladies of good standing. Some notable alumnae of the past were Harriet Lane, President Buchanan's niece, and Dolley Madison's niece Adele Cutts, who would later marry Abraham Lincoln's political rival Stephen A. Douglas. Adele, as Douglas' widow, unsuccessfully attempted to intervene with President Johnson for the life of Mary Surratt in 1865.

Although Peter Fitzpatrick would later claim dourly that Nora "never profited from her studies," she too was an able student.<sup>12</sup> The Georgetown Visitation catalogue for 1861-62 indicates that she won a second premium in Sacred and Profane History, Geography, and Mythology; a second premium in Reading and Orthography; a first premium in Christian Doctrine; and a first premium in Grammar and Composition.

Described by her brother as indulged and self-willed,<sup>13</sup> Nora evidently had no desire to follow her siblings into the Church. Instead, in the fall of 1864, shortly before her twentieth birthday, she came to board at Mary Surratt's H Street house. Nora claimed that she was Mrs. Surratt's first boarder, although Louis Weichmann also claimed pride of place.<sup>14</sup> As Nora's father was also living Washington, her reasons for living apart from him have prompted some speculation and even suggestion that she was a spy. However, the most likely explanation is that given by Virginia Lomax, who recorded Nora as saying, "I had just come from school, and Father, not keeping house himself, wished to place me in some nice quiet family. A friend recommended Mrs. Surratt."<sup>15</sup> The 1860 census, city directories, and Federal tax records show that James Fitzpatrick lived at 479 11<sup>th</sup> Street West throughout the 1860s, apparently as a boarder; the address hosted multiple businesses and residents throughout the decade. As his job as a messenger would have kept him away from home during the day, perhaps he fretted about leaving his daughter unsupervised in wartime Washington, a city that had experienced a population explosion and the resulting influx of shady characters.

Which friend brought Nora to Mrs. Surratt's attention is unknown, but it seems most likely that Father Bernardine Wiget, who had employed Peter Fitzpatrick at Gonzaga and who had taught Mary's sons at St. Thomas Manor, was responsible.<sup>16</sup> Another possibility is that school

acquaintances of Anna Fitzpatrick and Anna Surratt brought boarder and landlady together. Whatever its origins, Nora's living situation must have seemed ideal to James Fitzpatrick. His willful daughter would be under the watchful eye of a respectable Catholic widow, and the presence of Anna Surratt meant that Nora would also have the company of a well-educated young lady close to her own age. She would have had the opportunity to get to know both mother and daughter intimately, as she shared a bed with Mrs. Surratt and usually with Anna as well.<sup>17</sup>

Nora, of course, would make new acquaintances at the boardinghouse that her father had not bargained for. Like Anna Surratt, she enjoyed the visits of the most prominent caller, John Wilkes Booth and purchased his photograph, which she tucked into her album. On March 15, 1865, John Surratt, Jr., and Lewis Powell (known to Nora and the other boarder as "Mr. Wood") escorted her and young Mary Apollonia Dean to Ford's Theatre, where the party watched a double bill of tragedy and comedy: Nicholas Rowe's *Jane Shore* and James Sheridan Knowles' *The Love Chase*.<sup>18</sup> Booth paid the quartet a visit in their box and spoke to the men privately. Unbeknownst to Nora and Miss Dean, the real drama that evening was occurring not onstage, but off. The men were plotting the kidnapping of the President, a conspiracy which would take a murderous turn the next month.

On the evening of April 17, she, Mary Surratt, Anna Surratt, and Mary's niece Olivia Jenkins were sitting in Mary Surratt's parlor when a knock sounded on the door. The police had come to arrest Mary and anyone unlucky enough to be at the boardinghouse with her. One wonders what Nora was still doing there, for at this point, all the other boarders had left. Louis Weichmann and John Holohan were "helping the police" stalk the missing John Surratt. The rest of the Holohan family had decamped from the Surratt residence, and little Miss Dean had left to visit her own mother, never to return.<sup>19</sup> Why had James Fitzpatrick not removed his daughter from this compromising location? Perhaps he was unaware of Booth's close association with Nora's landlady, or perhaps Nora had refused to leave.

As police searched the house, finding among other suspicious items Nora's carte de viste of John Wilkes Booth (concealed between two others in her album), the women, under guard waited for a carriage to haul them to the headquarters of General C.C. Augur. As Mary Surratt gathered wraps and the younger women sat silently in the parlor, yet another unexpected caller arrived—Lewis Powell. Like her landlady, Nora later claimed that she had not recognized the man she knew as "Mr. Wood." Pressed for an explanation, she said that she had been frightened by her arrest.<sup>20</sup>

Powell, his fate sealed, having been put under arrest as well, the women were at last transported to the Provost General's office for questioning, and then to the Carroll Annex of the Old Capitol Prison. There, Nora was imprisoned for three days before being released.<sup>21</sup> But she did not enjoy her freedom long. On April 23, she was recommitted with instructions that she be kept apart from the other ladies and not be allowed to communicate with them.<sup>22</sup>

According to her cellmate, 34-year-old Virginia Lomax, Nora was rearrested at a church fair—probably the one organized by Father Wiget of St. Aloysius' Church. Held in a specially constructed building on F Street by Gonzaga College, the fair ran from April 17 to May 8, 1865. Nora was standing behind a booth, when a man informed her that she was wanted at the Provost Marshal's office for a few moments. After consulting "Father W" (presumably Father Wiget) Nora obeyed the summons. At the Provost Marshal's office, when Nora did not answer the questions in the manner desired, her interrogators asked whether Mary Surratt had forced her to take an oath of silence, then they put her in an ambulance. Realizing that she was not being taken back to the fair but to prison, Nora recalled, "I knelt down in the ambulance and, making the

sign of the cross, placed myself under our Lord's protection. They brought me here and put me in this room. I was terribly frightened at being alone, and all night long I walked up and down; I would not have gone to sleep for anything in the world."<sup>23</sup>

Over the next few days, Nora—her identity disguised by Lomax in her memoir as “Mary”—and Lomax led a miserable existence. Before Lomax was committed, she recalled, she had encountered Nora's father, “an old man with snow-white hair, which hung down on his shoulders,” who told her that he had been coming to the prison day after day to see Nora, but was refused permission by the authorities. He was allowed to send a basket of cakes to his daughter, which Nora and Lomax ate in preference to the sickening prison fare until the mice and roaches found their stash. Each woman had an iron bedstead with sheets, pillows, and a blanket. On one evening, the pair was frightened by a yowling cat and on another by two drunken prisoners who attempted to visit them in their cell. Nora, on one occasion, was awoken at two in the morning to be questioned about whether she knew a Mrs. Callan, where the lady went to church, and who her confessor was. Lomax thought that Nora had been questioned at that hour in hopes of catching her off guard.<sup>24</sup>

On April 28, Nora was questioned by W.P. Wood, the superintendent of the Old Capitol Prison. She acknowledged that Booth, “Mr. Wood, [Lewis Powell]” and George Atzerodt (whom she knew only as “Port Tobacco”) had visited the H Street boardinghouse. Nora did not remember Mary Surratt letting anyone into the house the night of the assassination. In contrast to Louis Weichmann, who painted a picture of Mary as nervous and brooding after her return from Surrattsville on April 14, Nora described her landlady as “lively & talking” that evening after returning from the country.<sup>25</sup>

There was a particular reason that Nora was of interest to the authorities. An unidentified “Negro woman” [probably a new servant in Mary Surratt's boardinghouse named Susan Mahoney Jackson] had claimed that, on the night of the assassination, three men came to the house and went with Mrs. Surratt to the basement, where the servant was in the custom of bedding down for the night. There, the servant claimed, she feigned sleep as the men informed Mrs. Surratt that her son John had been in the theater with Booth that evening. According to the servant, Nora was a witness to this nocturnal exchange and assured the men that the servant girl was asleep and could not hear them. Both Nora and Mary Surratt were questioned intensely about this rather unlikely incident, to the evident bafflement of both lodger and landlady. Colonel John A. Forster wrote on April 30, 1865, that Nora's “acting as a spy over the servant” and her concealed photograph of Booth “induced her arrest & seem to call for holding her with Mrs. Surratt and Miss Surratt.”<sup>26</sup>

Mary Surratt was transferred to the Old Arsenal Prison on April 30.<sup>27</sup> According to Lomax, she and the other prisoners were mingling when Mary was taken away, to the great dismay of Anna Surratt. Lomax and Nora, however, expected Mary's absence to be only temporary and took turns watching all night for her return. Only later did the women realize that Mary's life was in danger. With Mary's departure, Nora was moved upstairs with Anna, where the young women remained until the conspiracy trial began the following month.<sup>28</sup>

At her landlady's trial, Nora testified for both the prosecution and the defense. For the prosecution, she named John Wilkes Booth, Lewis Powell, and George Atzerodt as visitors to the house and testified to her excursion to the theater. For the defense, she testified to sharing a room with Mrs. Surratt, buying a photograph of Booth at the same time Anna Surratt purchased hers and to having last seen John Surratt a fortnight before the assassination. In her opinion, Mrs. Surratt treated Louis Weichmann more like a son than like a friend. She joined other defense witnesses in attesting to Mrs. Surratt's poor eyesight. Nora claimed not to have recognized Powell when he



made his untimely appearance at Mrs. Surratt's house on the night of April 17, but testified that she recognized him later when he removed his makeshift skullcap at General Augur's office.<sup>29</sup> Evidently the prosecution had lost its faith in the servant's story about Mary Surratt's three visitors and Nora's spying on the servant as she feigned sleep, for Nora was not questioned about this incident.

At John Surratt, Jr.'s trial two years later, Nora reprised much of her testimony from the previous conspiracy trial, although she was put on the stand for much longer in 1867 than in 1865. Reading her testimony, it is hard to escape the conclusion that after the execution of Mary Surratt, she was determined to do what she could to help Mary's son avoid the same fate. On examination by the prosecution, she found many things difficult to remember, but her memory for detail sharpened considerably on examination by the defense—except where matters to which Weichmann had testified, such as Mary's requesting him to pray for her intentions, were concerned. On these, Nora had no recall whatsoever.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, the prosecution felt that it had elicited enough testimony from Nora to support its case, especially when her father was thrown into the balance. "Do you doubt her? She is a native of your city; the daughter of Mr. James Fitzpatrick, a gentleman of the highest character, and personally know, perhaps, to all of you."<sup>31</sup>

John Surratt's trial ended in a hung jury. Two years later, Nora made a last appearance in connection with Mary Surratt, when she was one of the select few attending Mary's reburial in Mount Olivet Cemetery on February 9, 1869—a sign that she had remained close to the family of her former landlady. *The Evening Star* reported, "Miss Anna Surratt and Miss Fitzpatrick seemed greatly affected during the services."<sup>32</sup>

Other than her trial testimony and her attendance at Mrs. Surratt's reburial, nothing indicates what Nora was doing in the years just after her landlady's hanging. City directories show that her father remained at his Eleventh Street lodgings throughout the rest of the 1860s, but where Nora was staying is unknown.

While Nora's days in the spotlight were over, her troubles were just beginning. In happier times for his family, John Surratt in a letter to his cousin had joked that he looked into the boardinghouse parlor and saw "Miss Fitzpatrick playing with her favorite cat—a good sign of an old maid—the detested old creatures."<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, John Surratt's prediction was incorrect. On January 13, 1870,<sup>34</sup> Nora married Alexander Whelan, a widower, and her choice of husband proved to be every bit as disastrous as her former landlady's.

Born in October 1836 in Quebec to Irish parents, Alexander Whelan came to the United States in 1855 and by 1860 had made his way to Baltimore, where he worked as a house and sign painter and a grainer. At the time, he was living with his first wife, Margaret, and their daughter, Mary Catherine, born in Baltimore on October 17, 1858. A second daughter, Anna Elizabeth, would soon follow. By 1863, Alexander, whose listing in the register of draft-eligible males as "married" indicates that his first wife was still living, had moved to Washington. In 1869, his business was at 513 H Street North, one door east of Seventh Street; his advertisement informed the public, "Espécial attention given to graining and marbling." He moved to 634 H Street, NW, near Third the following year. At the time the census was taken on June 25, 1870, he and a pregnant Nora were living with his two daughters, 11-year-old Mary and 9-year-old Anna.

It is difficult to imagine James Fitzpatrick, who had given his daughter such a good education being entirely happy with Nora's choice of a laboring man as a husband, even a skilled laborer. He may have had another reason for displeasure. On July 17, 1870, seven months after her marriage, Nora bore a child, James A. Whelan.<sup>35</sup> Either little James was the fortunate survivor of what at the time would have been a dangerously premature birth or Nora had been pregnant at

her wedding. But there was an even greater objection to the match which would soon become apparent, if it had not been so already, Alexander Whelan was an alcoholic. Nora's brother said to be dedicated to saving souls, could find no kind words for Whelan, whom he dismissed as "a worthless drunkard," and Anna, Whelan's own daughter, described him as a slave to drink.<sup>36</sup>

Nora's second son, Bernard Alexander Whelan, was born on January 27, 1874.<sup>37</sup> A third son, John Albert Whelan, was born on November 3, 1879.<sup>38</sup>

On May 6, 1876, Nora's father, James Fitzpatrick, age 76, died in Providence Hospital, having spent nearly half a century in Washington.<sup>39</sup> Such a fixture in the capital had he become that when he retired in May 1870, *The Evening Star* commemorated the event with a short article.<sup>40</sup> In his will, dated March 15, 1875, he left his two daughters \$25 apiece; the rest of his estate went to his son, Peter.<sup>41</sup> Anna Fitzpatrick, a cloistered nun, had no need for her father's worldly goods. But why did James all but disinherit Nora, the mother of his grandchildren? Later, and probably truthfully, Peter explained that his father, knowing that Peter would not allow his sister to want for anything, had favored him in order to protect Nora against her husband. Nonetheless, Nora contested her father's will and her brother's appointment as executor, but on December 12, 1876, her petition challenging the grant of letters testamentary to Peter was overruled, after which nothing more is heard of her case.<sup>42</sup>

Worse than disinheritance and a lost court case, however, was soon to follow for Nora. On August 24, 1885, Peter Fitzpatrick, in circumstances that will soon be explained, wrote a harrowing account of his sister's troubled life. For years, he claimed, Alexander Whelan had kept his family in "absolute destitution. Everything went for drink." Finally, in August 1882, Whelan abandoned his family. Peter then placed his sister and his nephews in a boardinghouse, on the one condition that Whelan not be allowed to enter the premises. Whelan returned, however, and persuaded Nora to leave the house with him, obliging Peter to pay the rent and grocery bills. Scarcely a month later, for reasons that Peter does not explain, Nora was taken to Providence Hospital, the children to the orphan asylum—and Whelan to the house of correction. Had Nora or her children been victims of domestic violence, or was Whelan imprisoned on other grounds? Was Nora hospitalized for a physical condition, a mental illness, or both? Whatever sent her to the hospital was serious, for she remained there as a private patient from January 1883 to May 1883, before escaping.<sup>43</sup>

Having absconded from the hospital, "under a boiling sun" Nora began "a wild and anxious search after her children," resulting in a fever which nearly caused her death. It was only at this point, according to Peter, that Nora began to suffer from mental illness. Her fever left her mind "so enfeebled" that she was sent to Mount Hope Asylum in Baltimore, where she remained for 14 months. "Grief [and] anxiety for her children wore her to a thread," however, and believed to be dying, she was transferred to Providence Hospital in September 1884. Her health improved in her new surroundings, but "[a]nxiety...for her children & unwillingness to submit to the restraints of the Hospital brought on occasional attacks of frenzy." In May 1885, Nora escaped from Providence Hospital once again. For several weeks, she had been docile, but a visit to the orphanage where her two younger children were staying, and the absence of [her 14-year-old] oldest one, upset her. Peter added that her condition was probably also aggravated by the "recent great heat." When Nora became "a source of annoyance & anxiety to others," Peter placed her at the Government Hospital for the Insane, then known unofficially as "St. Elizabeths," the legal name it bears today.

Nora's admission to St. Elizabeths in August 1885 stimulated a flurry of letter-writing. On August 4, 1885, Anna Bartlett [Nora's recently married stepdaughter] wrote a rambling, but

informative letter to Dr. William Godding [Superintendent of St. Elizabeths], which indicates that Nora had been suffering physically as well as mentally.<sup>44</sup> On about July 27, she wrote, Nora had been taken with a “flooding,” the first she had had in two years; she had also been suffering from “falling of the womb” for at least ten years. Nora had been patient in all of her sicknesses until her mind became so flighty, but she could not be held accountable for what she said. Anna wrote that her father, Alexander Whelan, had been a “slave to [drink] for many years” and that he went on sprees, forcing Nora to separate from him—an interesting variation from Peter’s account, which states that Alexander simply deserted his family. Anna added that her home life was such that she had been obliged to depend on her own resources for her living until she married her own sober and industrious husband.

Peter wrote to Dr. Godding on August 7, 1885, from Baltimore’s Loyola College. He stated that a Dr. Samuel Bond had informed him that Nora had been placed in the asylum and that Dr. Bond had drawn up the necessary papers. His agent [lawyer?], Mr. Fullerton, would visit Dr. Godding once he returned to the city. In the meantime, Peter asked that Dr. Godding inform him of Nora prospects for recovery. He requested that Sister Michael, his and Nora’s cloistered sister, not be informed of Nora’s condition, as “such distressing news could be attended by no good results.” Finally, Alexander Whelan was not to be allowed to see his wife, if he should call. “He is a worthless drunkard—the cause of her misfortune.”

In late November or early December 1886, Peter Fitzpatrick fell ill with a fever, believed to be typhoid or malaria. He had been thought to be improving when on the morning of December 10, 1886, having arisen in a cheerful mood, he died of “paralysis of the heart.” He was only 47 years old, and accounts of him suggest that overwork had hastened his end. It was noted that his older sibling, Sister Michael, felt his death keenly, but was bearing up bravely. The reaction of his younger sister at the asylum is unrecorded.<sup>45</sup> Father Fitzpatrick was buried at Woodstock College after a funeral was held at his church, St. Ignatius, on December 13, 1886.<sup>46</sup>

Although Peter had asked that Anna Fitzpatrick (Sister Michael) not be notified of Nora’s admission to St. Elizabeths for fear she might be distressed, he had underestimated the nun, who dealt both capably and compassionately with her institutionalized sibling. The year after Peter’s death, Sister Michael began writing to Dr. Godding. On September 2, 1887, she told him that she had had two or three letters from Nora, which seemed “sane enough but very carelessly written.” Sister Michael had also heard from Nora’s attendant, Mrs. Ryan, who complained of how “very trying she is at times and how very negligent about her personal appearance,” Sister Michael asked Dr. Godding to inform her of Nora’s mental state.

On March 11, 1895, Sister Michael died at her convent. She was buried at Bonnie Brae Cemetery. Her two oldest nephews, James and Bernard Whelan, were among her four pallbearers.<sup>47</sup>

Nora’s death certificate indicates that she died on January 7, 1896, of pulmonary tuberculosis, from which she had suffered for four years. Her psychiatric diagnosis was chronic melancholia.<sup>48</sup> Dr. Godding, who completed the death certificate, initially wrote “Widowed” for Nora’s marital status before correcting it to “Married,” which suggests that Nora’s husband had had little if any contact with the staff at the asylum. After a funeral at the Church of the Holy Name on January 9, 1896, Nora was buried at Mount Olivet near her father. The Hall research files contain a photograph of her simple grave marker, bearing only her surname WHELAN.<sup>49</sup>

Chronic melancholia is described in a 1901 medical manual as “the terminus of all other forms of spirit depression. It is the inevitable goal of continued mental shock, and worry, and brooding, and physical decay. The term is an epitome of all the disappointments of fickle

fortune. The condition a sarcasm upon human happiness, and the ultimate of vengeful fate. The means to this end are false and unsatisfying philosophies. Its field of operation is wide as the world, and the number of victims which this Giant Despair claims for his own is an myriad and legion.”<sup>50</sup> Given the lack of any treatment records, it would be irresponsible, especially for a layperson, to attempt to assign Nora a modern diagnosis, although it is hard to escape the idea that her gynecological ailments might have affected her mental health.

As for Alexander Whelan, he did not remarry after his long-institutionalized wife died. He may be the Alexander Whelan who, when being tried for disorderly conduct on November 1, 1901, acknowledged that he had been drunk, but did not remember being disorderly. The court, pointing out that he was charged with disorderly conduct and not with drunkenness, sentence him to a fine of five dollars or, alternatively, two weeks on the prison farm.<sup>51</sup> He spent his last days at his daughter Mary’s home at 924 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW, where he died on July 13, 1916, age 80. Probably the old man had been living rather comfortably there, as Mary was the owner of a thriving corset business on F Street. Alexander was buried at Mount Olivet in a lot some distance from Nora’s.<sup>52</sup>

---

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> William C. Edwards and Edward Steers, Jr., *The Lincoln Assassination: The Evidence* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 511; Louis J. Weichmann, *A True History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and of the Conspiracy of 1865*, ed. by Floyd Risvold (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, Special Term (Probate), In re Last Will and Testament of James Fitzpatrick (records held in National Archives).

<sup>3</sup> *The Evening Star*, May 7, 1870.

<sup>4</sup> Philadelphia Passenger Lists, 1800-45 (accessed through Ancestry.com); *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 22, 1847.

<sup>5</sup> District of Columbia Marriages 1811-1950; tombstone of James Fitzpatrick in Hall research file for Nora Fitzpatrick; personal communication from Geraldine Novak, St. Patrick’s Church, March 13, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Tombstone of James Fitzpatrick in Hall research files; *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 2, 1847. There is a discrepancy between Margaret’s tombstone, which has her dying at age 31, and her obituary, which has her dying at age 34. The death dates, however, match.

<sup>7</sup> Rev. John J. Ryan, S.J., *Chronicle and Sketch of Church of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Baltimore, 1856-1906* (Baltimore: A. Hoen and Co, 1907), pp. 29-30; *Woodstock Letters*, vol. 16 (1887), pp. 105-07; Gonzaga College Catalog, 1862; Rev. Owen A. Hill, S.J., *Gonzaga College: An Historical Sketch: From Its Foundation in 1821 to the Solemn Celebration of Its First Centenary in 1921* (Washington, D.C., 1921), pp. 73, 78; Charles F. Donovan, S.J., David R. Dunigan, S.J., and Paul A. FitzGerald, S.J., *History of Boston College from the Beginnings until 1990* (University Press of Boston College, 1990), pp. 41, 74-75; Holy Cross College Catalog, 1864.

<sup>8</sup> *The Evening Star*, August 2, 1855; Edwards Steers, Jr., ed., *The Trial: The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), p. 131.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Warren Currier, *Carmel in America: A Centennial History of the Discalced Carmelites in the United States* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1890), p. 256; *The Baltimore Sun*, October 4, 1856.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Peter Fitzpatrick dated August 24, 1885, in National Archives, St. Elizabeths Hospital, Case No. 6365. All letters quoted from Peter Fitzpatrick here are in this file.

<sup>11</sup> Personal communication from Suzie Egan, Director of Alumnae Relations, Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, March 4, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Fitzpatrick letter dated August 24, 1885.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Fitzpatrick letter dated August 24, 1885.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 507; Weichmann, p. 28; Steers, *The Trial*, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Virginia Lomax, *The Old Capitol and Its Inmates* (New York: E.J. Hale & Son, 1867), p. 83. For the unlikely suggestion that Nora was a rebel spy, see Kate Clifford Larson, *The Assassin’s Accomplice* (New York: MJF Books, 2008), p. 40.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Warren, *In the Web of History: Gonzaga College and the Lincoln Assassination* (Washington, DC.; New Academia Publishing, 2009), pp. 37-38.

<sup>17</sup> Trial of John Surratt, vol. I, p. 713; Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 1219. On the night of the assassination, Anna was sleeping on the top floor with her cousin Olivia Jenkins.

- <sup>18</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 511, 545; *The Evening Star*, March 15, 1865; Steers, *The Trial*, p. 121; *Trial of John Surratt*, vol I, p. 234.
- <sup>19</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 1219; *Trial of John Surratt*, vol I, pp. 675-76, 689.
- <sup>20</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 509, 545; William C. Edwards, ed., *The Lincoln Assassination: The Rewards Files* (Google Ebook, 2012), pp. 196-97.
- <sup>21</sup> Lomax. pp. 84-85.
- <sup>22</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 552.
- <sup>23</sup> *Diamond Jubilee of St. Aloysius' Church, Washington, D.C., 1859-1934*, p. 24; Lomax, pp. 85-86.
- <sup>24</sup> Lomax, pp. 38-39, 66-67, 74-75, 82-83, 92-93, 98-99, 105-07, 151-52. Lomax describes "Mary" as being only around sixteen (p. 67), though Nora was actually twenty. The discrepancy may be part of Lomax's effort to disguise Nora's identity, or perhaps Nora appeared younger than her true age.
- <sup>25</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 507-10; Weichmann, p. 174-75.
- <sup>26</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 509, 544-45, 1247.
- <sup>27</sup> Edward Steers, Jr., and Harold Holzer, eds., *The Lincoln Assassination Conspirators: Their Confinement and Execution, as Recorded in the Letterbook of John Frederick Hartranft* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), p. 72.
- <sup>28</sup> Lomax, pp. 171-75, 206.
- <sup>29</sup> Steers, *The Trial*, pp. 121, 132.
- <sup>30</sup> *Trial of John Surratt*, vol. I, pp. 232-35, 713-23.
- <sup>31</sup> *Trial of John Surratt*, vol. II, p. 1101.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Evening Star*, February 9, 1869. Correspondence by David Rankin Barbee with Anna Surratt's son, Dr. Reginald Tonry, in which Barbee refers to Nora as "an angel in that terrible ordeal," suggests that Nora was held in high regard by Mary Surratt's descendants. "His Mother's Memories," in *The Lincoln Assassination from the Pages of the Surratt Courier*, vol. 2, p. XI-23 (Clinton, Maryland, Surratt Society, 2000).
- <sup>33</sup> Weichmann, p. 106.
- <sup>34</sup> District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950.
- <sup>35</sup> North Carolina death certificate of James A. Whelan.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter of Peter Fitzpatrick dated August 7, 1885; letter of Anna Bartlett dated August 4, 1885. For Peter's description as being dedicated to saving souls, see *Donahoe's Magazine*, vol. XVII, February 1887, p. 197.
- <sup>37</sup> Draft registration card for Bernard Alexander Whelan.
- <sup>38</sup> Guardianship file for John A. Whelan in District of Columbia Archives; *The Evening Star*, February 2, 1920.
- <sup>39</sup> District of Columbia death certificate for James Fitzpatrick.
- <sup>40</sup> *The Evening Star*, May 7, 1870.
- <sup>41</sup> Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, Special Term (Probate), in re Last Will and Testament of James Fitzpatrick (records held in National Archives).
- <sup>42</sup> *The Evening Star*, December 13, 1878.
- <sup>43</sup> Peter's story can be partly corroborated at this point by *The Evening Star*, which in its account of year-end awards for schoolchildren records that James Whelan and Bernard Whelan, students at St. Joseph's Orphan's School, received prizes in June 1883. *The Evening Star*, June 21, 1883. My inquiry for patient records from Providence Hospital for this period met with no success.
- <sup>44</sup> Anna Whelan and William Bartlett were issued a marriage license shortly before July 3, 1885. *National Intelligencer*, July 3, 1885.
- <sup>45</sup> Notre Dame Archives, December 4 and December 11, 1886 (<http://archives.nd.edu/calendar/c188612.htm>); *Donahoe's Magazine*, vol. XVII, February 1887, p. 197; *Washington Critic*, December 11, 1886; Ryan, pp. 29-30.
- <sup>46</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, December 14, 1886.
- <sup>47</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, March 13 and 14, 1895.
- <sup>48</sup> Death certificate in Hall research file on Nora Fitzpatrick.
- <sup>49</sup> *The Evening Star*, January 8, 1896; Hall research on Nora Fitzpatrick. The marker appears to have disappeared, as I could not find it when I visited the cemetery on May 4, 2014, although the gravestone for Nora's parents and infant sisters remains in place.
- <sup>50</sup> Seldon Haines Talcott, *Mental Diseases and Their Modern Treatment* (New York: Boericke and Runyon Co., 1901) p. 105.
- <sup>51</sup> *The Evening Star*, November 1, 1901.
- <sup>52</sup> *The Washington Post*, May 16, 1909; *The Washington Post*, July 14, 1916; letter from Mount Olivet Cemetery dated December 7, 1971, in Hall research file on Nora Fitzpatrick.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Olivia Jenkins: Mary Surratt's Visiting Niece

By Susan Higginbotham

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, August 2015

On the evening of April 17, 1865, young Olivia Jenkins, whose visit to her Aunt Mary had already been marked by a late-night visit by the police, received yet another surprise—she was arrested, along with the other ladies in the house, and taken to the Carroll Annex of Washington's Old Capitol Prison. What had brought Olivia to her aunt's house, and what happened to her afterwards?

Olivia was one of at least seven children born to Mary Surratt's brother, John Z. Jenkins and his wife, Mary (nee Ridgeway): Margaret, Mary, Olivia, John, Eugenia, James Archibald, and Emily. Her parents were married in Prince George's County, Maryland, on April 13, 1843, and Olivia was born in 1846, in rapid succession behind her two older sisters.<sup>1</sup>

In late March 1865, when she was about 19, Olivia traveled from her home in Prince George's County, Maryland, to Mary Surratt's Washington boardinghouse in order to attend Easter services.<sup>2</sup> If she had also hoped to escape the quiet of the country to get a taste of excitement, she got more than her fair share: visits from Mary Surratt's most famous caller, John Wilkes Booth; the fall of Richmond and the ensuing celebrations; and the assassination of the President. The latter, of course, landed her in prison, where she was held as a possible accomplice of Booth.<sup>3</sup>

Olivia, however, did not have to languish long in prison. On April 21, William P. Wood, the prison superintendent, joined the search for Booth and his accomplices, and he decided to procure Olivia's release in hopes of encouraging her father, the brother of Mary Surratt and uncle of the fugitive John Surratt, Jr., to be forthcoming with whatever information he possessed. Wood also enlisted William Wallace Kirby, a friend of Mary Surratt; Aguilla Allen, who Wood described as a celebrated "slave catcher" who had the confidence of the "conservative copperheads and rebels" of Southern Maryland; and Bernard Adamson, a "hardy young man" whom Wood thought would be useful in the pursuit. This oddly assorted little party set off at around nine in the evening, having stopped by the Surratt boardinghouse to get some clothes for Olivia, and reached Olivia's house around midnight. Olivia, however, was not destined to have an immediate reunion with her father; he was being held prisoner at Robey's Post Office down the road.<sup>4</sup>

Although Special Officer George Cottingham, who was also on the scene interrogating witnesses, claimed that Olivia "was there when Surratt came to the house and [knew] all about the plot,"<sup>5</sup> Olivia did not testify at the conspiracy trial—not even on behalf of her Aunt Mary. Perhaps it was thought that her testimony would be redundant. At the trial of her cousin John Surratt two years later, she stated that she had never been questioned at length during her custody, other than being asked at the Provost Marshal's office if she recognized Mr. Payne [Lewis Powell].<sup>6</sup> Olivia did give one bit of interesting testimony at John Surratt's trial; she claimed that a caller at the house on the evening of April 14<sup>th</sup>, suspected to have been Booth, was actually a "gentleman named Scott of the navy," who left two papers for Olivia.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1868 and 1870, each of the three young ladies arrested with Mary Surratt—Anna Surratt, Nora Fitzpatrick, and Olivia—married. Olivia, the youngest, led the trio to the altar: a

marriage license was issued in Washington, D.C., for Olivia and Robert Thorn on February 20, 1868.<sup>8</sup> This is likely the Robert W. Thorn, who the 1860 census lists as 16-year-old living with his parents, Henry and Mary, in Prince George's County. The Washington City Directory for 1869 lists a Robert W. Thorn as a clerk; in 1872, he is listed as a grocer.

Robert and Olivia had two children: Nora M. Thorn, born in Washington in May 1870, and Joseph Raymond Thorn, born in Washington in February 1873.<sup>9</sup> By 1875 Thorn died, for Olivia is listed in the Washington City Directory that year as the widow of Robert Thorn, grocer. She was living at the corner of C and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets SE.

Olivia did not have to look far for a second husband. On October 9, 1871, her younger sister Eugenia had been issued a marriage license to wed Daniel T. Donohoe, and on October 18, 1874, another younger sister, Emily, was given a license to marry John Donohoe, Daniel's brother. In January 1879, at St. Peter's Church in Washington, Olivia completed the triumvirate of Jenkins/Donohoe marriages by marrying the third brother, James W. Donohoe.<sup>10</sup>

Born in Albany, New York, the Donohoe brothers came to Washington, where their father kept a saloon, in 1856. According to a later newspaper account, James worked as a clerk at the Willard, National, and Metropolitan hotels before eventually taking a government job with the Pension Office.<sup>11</sup> The couples were literally close: the 1880 census shows James, Olivia, and her two children (plus a boarder named James Ruggles) living on New Jersey Avenue SE, on Capitol Hill next door to Daniel, Eugenia, their three small children, and Patrick Donohoe, the patriarch of the Donohoe clan. James and Olivia lived at 417 New Jersey Avenue SE, which Olivia owned in her own right; she also owned property at 430 New Jersey Avenue SE.<sup>12</sup>

On March 20, 1896, John Z. Jenkins, Olivia's father, died. As he was Mary Surratt's brother, the press took an interest in his funeral which was held at St. John's Church in Surrattsville and which was attended by a number of Mary Surratt's relatives, including her son Isaac, her son-in-law William Tonry, and her grandson John W. Surratt. (Presumably Jenkins' children and their spouses attended as well, but their presence was of no interest to reporters.) John Z. Jenkins was buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Washington.<sup>13</sup>

John Z. Jenkins had made a will on March 2, 1894, in which he left a life estate to his wife, Mary. The remainder was to go to the three Donohoe brides; their sister Margaret, who had married Clement Brooke; and their brother James Archibald Jenkins, who as it turned out died in September 1895, predeceasing his father.<sup>14</sup> (The fifth sister, Mary, apparently had died before John Z. Jenkins made his will.) Evidently John Z. Jenkins' eldest son and namesake, John, had somehow displeased his father, for he was given only \$25 per year for 15 years to be used for clothing.

Not surprisingly, this did not sit well with the younger John Jenkins. He filed a caveat to the will, in which he claimed that, while visiting Washington, his father was constrained by undue influence to execute the will in question and that days before his death, he had expressed the wish that the remainder of his estate be divided equally among his children. This could have turned into a nasty fight, but, fortunately, on September 26, 1896, the parties reached a settlement under which it was agreed that the younger John would pay all the court costs associated with his caveat and that upon the death of their mother, the estate would be divided equally among the children.

Mary Jenkins, Olivia's mother, died on January 16, 1898.<sup>15</sup> Olivia was not at her deathbed, for she herself died on January 9, 1898, at the age of 51, of influenza and pneumonia. She had been ailing for about four weeks. After a funeral at St. Peter's, where she had married her second husband, she was buried at Mount Olivet on January 11.<sup>16</sup> *The Evening Star* for January 13, 1898, wrote, "A large concourse of friends and relatives assembled and many beautiful floral tributes

were placed around the bier. Six nephews of the deceased served as pallbearers. Mrs. Donohoe was very well-known on Capitol Hill, where the most of her married life was spent. She was of a deeply religious nature and delighted in advancing the cause of her church.”

Olivia had made her will on December 23, 1897. She asked that any cash she had be used to pay off the lien on her house on 430 New Jersey Avenue. Olivia left her residence at 417 New Jersey Avenue and its contents to her two children, on the condition that they allowed her husband to occupy the house and use its contents during his lifetime. She left the residue of her estate, including the 430 New Jersey Avenue house, to her children, directing them to provide for the comfort of her husband, but allowing them to sell the property. To Martin O’Donoghue, the priest who had conducted her funeral mass, she left a hundred dollars. Olivia’s sisters Emily and Eugenia, along with Oscar Luckett, witnessed the will.<sup>17</sup>

James Donohoe, Olivia’s widower, continued living at the New Jersey Avenue house with his stepchildren. Then, one evening in March 1901, having been detained downtown, he decided to check in at the Merchants’ Hotel at 485 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, instead of going home for the night. It was a disastrous choice, for around 4:00 a.m. on March 15, the hotel caught fire, injuring several people and killing one man, who suffocated in his third-floor room. That single fatality was James, who was buried with Olivia at Mount Olivet.<sup>18</sup> Their tombstone can be seen on the Find-A-Grave site.<sup>19</sup>

Raymond Thorn (he went by his middle name) married M. Emma Burns on July 5, 1900, in Rockville, Maryland.<sup>20</sup> He worked as a druggist, while Nora Thorn remained unmarried and worked as a government clerk.<sup>21</sup> Judging from the frequency with which the siblings’ named appear in the real estate sections of the Washington newspapers, both Raymond and Nora were avid investors. Raymond, along with some of his cousins, served as a pallbearer for both of Mary Surratt’s older children, Isaac and Anna, and for Anna’s husband, William Tonry, as well.<sup>22</sup>

Raymond died on January 4, 1919, of pulmonary phistitis and was buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery; his widow, Emma, survived until November 27, 1945. She had been a resident of Rixey Mansion, as elegant building in Arlington, Virginia, that now serves as the main building of Marymount College.

Nora Thorn died on September 5, 1935.<sup>24</sup> In her will, dated March 7, 1935, she made a number of bequests to charitable organizations and to various relatives. She also left \$300 to a priest to say masses for the repose of her soul and for the souls of her brother and her parents, thereby ensuring that Olivia would be remembered in prayer decades after her death.<sup>25</sup>

---

#### REFERENCES:

<sup>1</sup> Maryland Indexes (Marriage Licenses and Records, Index) 1649-1886, MSA SE27-81; Federal Census records from 1850-1870.

<sup>2</sup> William C. Edwards and Edward Steers, Jr., *The Lincoln Assassination: The Evidence*, p. 1219; *Trial of John Surratt in the Criminal Court of the District of Columbia*, vol. 2, pp. 750-51.

<sup>3</sup> Edwards and Steers, p. 550.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards and Steers, pp. 1372-73; William C. Edwards, *The Lincoln Assassination: The Rewards Files*, pp. 335-37, 342.

<sup>5</sup> *Reward File*, p 178.

<sup>6</sup> *Trial of John Surratt*, pp. 749-50.

<sup>7</sup> *Trial of John Surratt*, p. 746.

<sup>8</sup> District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950; *The Evening Star*, September 6, 1935 (Obituary of Nora Thorn).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Thorn death certificate, 1900 Federal Census



<sup>10</sup> District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950; 1870 and 1900 Federal Censuses. The marriage license was issued on January 15, 1879. The priest's handwriting recording the date of the ceremony itself is difficult to decipher, but appears to read either January 15 or January 16.

<sup>11</sup> District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950; 1870 and 1900 Federal Censuses; "Disastrous Fire," *The Evening Star*, March 15, 1901. Census records, James' death certificate and his tombstone differ on his year of birth. According to a notation on John F. Donohoe's photograph in the archives of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, held by the Kiplinger Research Library, John Donohoe came to Washinton on December 12, 1856.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Donohoe died in 1885, age 87. *The Evening Star*, September 29, 1885. Olivia's properties, listed in her will on file at the D.C. Archives, still stand; online valuation sites list each as being worth well over \$1 million in the current market.

<sup>13</sup> *Morning Times*, March 24, 1896

<sup>14</sup> *Morning Times*, September 12, 1895 (obituary for James Jenkins). John Zadock Jenkins' will and probate file, from which these and the following details are taken, can be found at the Register of Wills for Prince George's County.

<sup>15</sup> *Morning Times*, January 21, 1898; tombstone of John Z. Jenkins and Mary Jenkins.

<sup>16</sup> Death certificate for Olivia Donohoe.

<sup>17</sup> Will of Olivia Donohoe, D.C. Archives; *The Evening Star*, January 13, 1898. The 1897 city directory lists Rev. Martin O'Donohoe as the assistant priest of St. Peter's. The Oscar Luckett named in the will was probably the prominent Washington lawyer of that name, who is frequently mentioned in local newspapers of the period. On November 9, 1893, the *Semi-Weekly Citizen* in Asheville, North Carolina, gave its readers the gratifying news that Luckett, who had gone to Asheville with his wife for a "season of rest and recuperation" had gained seventeen pounds after a ten-day stay."

<sup>18</sup> "Disastrous Fire," *The Evening Star*, March 15, 1901.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=79121900>. Find-A-Grave notations indicate that Olivia's sister Eugenia and Emily and their husbands are buried in the same area along with Olivia's parents.

<sup>20</sup> *The Washington Post*, January 12, 1901.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Raymond Thorn death certificate; 1900 Census entries for Nora and Raymond Thorn; *Official Register of the United State, Containing a List of the Officers and Employees in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service, Together with a List of Vessels Belonging to the United States 1890, 1894, 1901*; *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, in response to Senate Resolution of April 19, 1894, transmitting a list of appointments, promotions, dismissals, resignations, by request, in the Department of the Interior, between March 4, 1893, and April 19, 1894*; *United States Food Administration and the United States Fuel Administration, 1918*; entry for Nora M. Thorn in 1930 census.

<sup>22</sup> *Baltimore American*, October 27, 1904; October 6, 1905, and November 6, 1907.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Raymond Thorn death certificate; *The Evening Star*, November 28, 1945.

<sup>24</sup> *The Evening Star*, September 6, 1935.

<sup>25</sup> Will of Nora M. Thorn, D.C. Archives.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Who Was Annie Ward?

By Laurie Verge

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, July 2008

There are so many obscure names that run through the story of the Lincoln assassination. One such name is that of Annie Ward, which keeps popping up in the Surratt story. She was called to testify at the conspiracy trial; but just who was she?

She was born in Ireland in September of 1836, according to the U.S. Census of 1900. Her parents were William and Elizabeth Ward. When she migrated to the United States is not clear, but our story first picks her up as an "assistant teacher" at Winifriede Martin's Catholic School for Girls at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Bryantown, Maryland (the same church where Dr. Mudd met John Wilkes Booth in the fall of 1864). She is so listed in the 1860 Census. Of course, young

Anna Surratt was a student at that school, and this must have been where Annie Ward came to know the Surratts.

By 1865, Annie Ward was in Washington, teaching at the Academy of the Visitation for Young Ladies (i.e., Visitation School for Girls), located at that time on the northwest corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and G Streets in the city. After the assassination, acquaintances of the Surratts were questioned. On May 1, 1865, General C.C. Augur issued an order for Special Officer C. Merrill and one assistant to go to the Visitation convent and arrest Miss Ward, confiscate her letters and papers, and deliver all to Colonel Henry L. Burnett. From that information, the authorities learned that she had been the person who arranged for a room to be rented for Lewis Paine [Powell] at the Herndon House on his return to Washington. She also served as a mail drop for John Surratt after he went to Canada. He would address mail to her, and she would deliver it to the Surratt boardinghouse. Some have even speculated that she and John were “an item.” That is unlikely since she was eight years his senior.

During the 1865 Conspiracy Trial, Annie Ward was called to testify as a witness for Mrs. Surratt. The main thrust of her testimony related to Mrs. Surratt’s poor eyesight. However, she also admitted to checking on the room at Herndon House but denied reserving it for a gentleman.

The most interesting tidbit about Miss Ward came 35 years later, when a Mrs. Harriet Riddle Davis of Washington delivered a talk to the Columbia Historical Society on May 7, 1900. Mrs. Davis was the daughter of former Congressman A.G. Riddle of Ohio, who had been in charge of gathering evidence against John Surratt in 1867. Her talk was entitled “Civil War Recollections of a Little Yankee.”

She recounted being a young student at a “Catholic Institute” or “academy,” where the priest was Father Walter (priest and confessor for Mary Surratt) and one of the teachers was “Ann” Ward. This refers to St. Patrick’s Academy of the Visitation for Young Ladies. She described Miss Ward as a tall, slender young woman with a stern, almost haggard, face. She was also said to be restless and nervous in her actions. The young Miss Riddle also observed that Miss Ward came and went frequently during the winter of 1864-65.

On Monday, April 10, 1865, (day that Washington City learned of Lee’s surrender to Grant) Miss Ward came into the room where the children were, locked the door, and demanded that the children all join her in prayers. She looked as if she had been on a journey—tired and worn. She prayed for the President of the United States, “...in this, his moment of peril.” She prayed for the Cabinet, using the expression “eight lost souls.” She prayed for the city “soon to be plunged into darkness.” Then the guns saluting the surrender of Lee began to boom, and Miss Ward sent the children home.

Two years later, after the John Surratt trial, Mr. Riddle made reference to Annie Ward. His daughter recounted the incident. Riddle considered going to the prosecution and offering up Annie’s name as a witness for the intended second trial of John Surratt. The trial never came.

The Washington directories through 1916 show Annie Ward as a music teacher. From 1880 on she was living at 230 Maryland Avenue, NE. She died on Thursday, September 28, 1916, at her home. The funeral was from St. Joseph’s Catholic Church with burial in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, final resting for the Surratts (except for John, Jr., who is buried in New Cathedral Cemetery in Baltimore). Her name is not listed on the tombstone erected for her parents.