

The Surratt Courier

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Louise Oertly, Editor

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President's Message

On April 23, the Surratt Society held its second annual virtual meeting. Thank you to all who attended. For those of you who were unable to attend, the Surratt Society held a short business meeting talking about the many changes happening within the Surratt Society and the Surratt House Museum. The election of officers for the 2022-23 term also took place. They are:

President – Louise Oertly

Vice President – William Binzel

Treasurer – Thomas Buckingham

Secretary – Rebecca Morris

Following the business meeting, Dave Taylor was our speaker. His topic was *John Wilkes Booth: The Making of an Assassin*. Dave's presentation centered on the early life of Lincoln's assassin, pointing out some of the key events that shaped Booth's mind and eventually put him on the path to Ford's Theatre. The recording of his talk will be posted on our website for those of you who would like to view it.

Listening to Dave's talk reminded me that numerous books have been written on John Wilkes Booth and also on his father, Junius Brutus Booth, and his brother, Edwin Booth. But who are the other members of his rather large family? Usually you have to go to books on the more famous members to glean information on them. That's why this issue features articles that appeared in past issues of *The Surratt Courier*, plus a few new articles, to introduce you to these lesser known members of the Booth family. I had planned to include the "other members" of

the Booth family in this issue, but decided to save those articles for the July/August issue.

September 2022 Booth Escape Route Tours Cancelled

Many of you have inquired about the status of the September John Wilkes Booth Escape Route Tours. The Executive Committee has decided cancel them for several logistical reasons. COVID is only a small part of them. Hopefully, we can resume offering them in April of 2023. We are keeping a list of the names of those who have inquired and will notify you next year when we make the decision about the April tours.

In Memoriam

For those of you who have read the books, *John Wilkes Booth and the Women Who Loved Him* or *A Finger in Lincoln's Brain: What Modern Science Reveals about Lincoln, His Assassination, and Its Aftermath*, I'm sad to announce that the author, Ernest "Ernie" Lawrence Abel, passed away on January 22, 2022. He was

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

Born in 1943 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. After graduation from the University of Toronto with a Ph.D., he spent a long career in the medical field, especially on drug and alcohol addiction research. He was a distinguished faculty member and professor emeritus at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. He was also an avid

Lincoln assassination historian. He authored more than 40 scholarly and trade books and more than 200 peer-reviewed articles and trade magazine articles. Ernie will be greatly missed.

Louise Oertly
President, Surratt Society

A Brief Description of the Booth Family AKA, the Cast of Characters

The family of John Wilkes Booth has been traced to Clerkenwell in London, England. Booth's great-grandfather John, a silversmith, and great-grandmother Elizabeth Wilkes, a relative of the English radical and politician John Wilkes, were married on February 15, 1747, at St. George's Chapel, Hyde Park Corner, London. Six of their children were baptized at St. John the Baptist Church in Clerkenwell. This included Booth's grandfather, Richard, who was baptized in 1759.

Richard Booth, a silversmith who also studied law, married Jane Elizabeth Game and fathered three children—two sons, Algernon Sydney and Junius Brutus, and a daughter, Jane [who was disowned when she married James Mitchell].

Junius Brutus Booth was born on May 1, 1796. Despite his father's efforts to introduce him to respectable professions, he knew by the time he was 17 that he wanted to be an actor. In 1814, Junius joined a theater group touring the Low Countries. While staying at a boarding house in Brussels, Junius met his future wife, Marie Christine Adelaide Delannoy (1792-1858). The house was owned by Adelaide's mother. Adelaide would follow him to London where they were married on May 17, 1815. They would have two children: Amelia Portia Adelaide (1815-1816) and Richard Junius (1819-1868).

In 1821, Junius left England for a theater tour of the United States. Accompanying him was a pregnant Mary Ann Holmes (1802-1885). Their first child, Junius Brutus, Jr., (1821-1883) was born in Charleston, South Carolina. They would settle outside of Baltimore, Maryland, in a hamlet known as Bel Air, where the rest of their children were born—Rosalie (1823-1889); four who died in childhood—Henry (1825-1836 small pox), Mary Ann (1827-1833 cholera), Frederick (1829-1833 cholera), and Elizabeth (1831-1833 cholera); Edwin (1833-1893); Asia (1835-1888); John Wilkes (1838-1865); and Joseph Adrian (1840-1902).

Junius managed to keep his first wife and son in the dark about his Maryland family for 25 years. However, his double life would be discovered in 1846. Adelaide arrived in Baltimore to claim her position as Junius' legal wife. An acrimonious divorce followed in 1851.

On May 10, 1851, John Wilkes Booth's 13th birthday, Junius married Mary Ann. However, it was a very short marriage. Junius died a year later on November 30, 1852.

The First Wife

Marie Christine Adelaide Delannoy

After performing in several small theaters throughout England, in 1814 Junius joined a theater group touring the Low Countries. It was while staying at a boarding house in Brussels, that Junius met his future wife, Marie Christine Adelaide Delannoy. The house belonged to Adelaide's mother and Adelaide was the youngest of three sisters. Very little is known about Adelaide's early background. According to her tombstone, she was born around 1792.

Adelaide would follow Junius to London where the 19-year-old Junius married the 23-year-old Adelaide on May 17, 1815. Less than five months later, on October 5, 1815, their first child, Amelia Portia Adelaide Booth, was born. Unfortunately, Amelia would not survive to see her first birthday. She died on July 7, 1816. Their son, Richard, was born on June 21, 1819.

Adelaide was described as "not pretty," but she was well-educated and had a head for business. A trait that helped her husband in promoting his early career. It also helped that in 1817 Edmund Kean failed to show for one of his performances and the young Booth took his place playing the part. The result was rave reviews in the newspapers and the demand for more of this new star of the London stage. Unfortunately, it led to a bitter and sometimes violent rivalry between the two and their fans, which may have been another reason for his next career decision.

In 1821, Junius told his wife that he planned an extended tour of the United States and would send money. Adelaide decided to return to Brussels with their son, while awaiting her husband's return to England. What Junius didn't tell his wife was that he had met and fell in love with Mary Ann Holmes, who was pregnant and going to America with him. Their first child, Junius Brutus, Jr., was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on December 22, 1821. They would settle outside of Baltimore, Maryland, in a hamlet known as Bel Air, where the rest of their ten children were born.

Junius managed to keep his first wife in the dark about his Maryland family for over 25 years. However, between his alcoholism affecting his performances and supporting his sister's family in the U.S. in exchange for not telling Adelaide about his American family, his available funds were stretched to the limit. After several years, the financial support sent to his English family was no longer arriving as scheduled. In 1842, Adelaide sent their son, Richard, to the U.S. to investigate and make sure her support payments began arriving again. Richard found his father and for several years Richard would act as his father's companion and dresser on his theater circuit. Somehow Junius was able to keep his other family a secret during this time. However, in 1846, that came to an end when someone accused Richard of "putting on airs" and called him the "illegitimate son of the great actor." At this point, Richard quickly learned about his father's other family and left his father to finish the tour on his own. He returned to Baltimore and sent word to his mother to meet him there and to bring proof of his legitimacy.

In December of 1846 Adelaide arrived in Baltimore, but decided not to confront her husband yet. She would let him finish his tour, which would mean more money to claim as his wife. In the meantime, Adelaide consulted a lawyer. Her plan was to sue Junius for the combined value of the Booth's Bel Air and Baltimore properties. As far as Adelaide was concerned, Mary Ann and the children had no claim on anything that her husband owned. It was legally hers. Her next step was to stalk Mary Ann, while awaiting Junius' return to Baltimore.

Junius returned in March of 1847 from his latest tour and a scandal quickly followed. Adelaide planned her confrontation with her husband carefully. She knew meeting him in public

would accomplish two things. After more than 25 years, Junius would know that his double life had been discovered and announced as publicly as possible, and she would make her financial demands known. Her plan was to blindside him at his next Baltimore theater rehearsal. Adelaide may not have seen much of her husband in 20 years (he had made a few trips to England over the years and had visited), but she had been married to him long enough to know how to set a scene. It was a very public scene that she orchestrated with stagehands, actors, etc., as witnesses. The truth about his Baltimore family was now public knowledge. Mary Ann would no longer be known as a married woman. She was now branded as a mistress (or kept woman) and her children as illegitimate. The stage manager escorted the two of them to his office, but their argument could still be heard through the closed door. Adelaide wanted money. She demanded Junius pay her \$2,000 [around \$76,000 today], which he didn't have. He agreed thinking she promised to not sue for divorce and wondering how he was going to get the money to pay her.

When Junius went back on his theater tour, 12-year-old Edwin accompanied his father to try to curb his drinking and erratic behavior and to make sure his father's salary made its way back to Baltimore. In the meantime, Adelaide planned to stay in Baltimore. Contrary to what Junius thought, she planned to sue for divorce. However, she was required to live three years in Maryland before she could petition for a divorce. She also decided to take her stalking of Mary Ann to the next level. She would accost Mary Ann in public "with violent, often coarse language, and opprobrious epithets." Mary Ann would remain silent and get away from Adelaide as quickly as possible to avoid the public humiliation. It was noted that the attacks were more vicious when Junius was out of town.

The divorce was neither quick nor painless. In February of 1851, Adelaide was finally able to file for divorce. She was determined to establish on public record that Mary Ann was Junius' mistress and their children illegitimate. Her grounds for the divorce were desertion and adultery. Her suit claimed that "Booth came to the United States in company with a woman with whom he has been in the habit of adulterous intercourse." She also claimed that "the fruits of said adulterous intercourse" was a large number of children. Ironically, her petition mentioned that she did not have "any desire to add infamy and disgrace" to Junius and Mary Ann's reputations. Her goal was the "vindication of her own rights." As Junius could not deny the charges, he agreed that the facts as stated were true. On April 18, 1851, the divorce was final. Adelaide had won and would remain in Baltimore for the rest of her life. She died on March 9, 1858, and still had to have the last word. On her tombstone is the statement, "Wife of Junius Brutus Booth, tragedian."

On May 10, 1851, John Wilkes Booth's 13th birthday, Junius finally married Mary Ann. After 30 years together, Mary Ann legally became Mrs. Booth. Tragically, Mary Ann's title would change from wife to widow a year later. Unfortunately for the children, the marriage made no difference their legal status. They were still illegitimate.

Sources:

Edward Steers, Jr., *The Lincoln Assassination Encyclopedia* (New York, Harper Perennial, 2010)

Nora Titone, *My Thoughts Be Bloody* (New York, Free Press, 2010)

Terry Alford, *Fortune's Fool: The Life of John Wilkes Booth* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2015)

That Legitimate Son – Richard Junius Booth

By James O. Hall

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, February 2001

Students of the Lincoln assassination know the circumstances of Junius Brutus Booth, the elder, running away to America with Mary Ann Holmes, a flower girl in Covent Garden—leaving behind a legal wife and son in England. Richard Junius Booth, the son of Junius Brutus Booth and Adelaide Delannoy Booth, was born in London on June 21, 1819. He came to the United States in 1842, located his father (and the “other” Booth sons and daughters), and took up residence in Baltimore where he became a language teacher. On December 31, 1849, he married English-born Sarah P. Ware. An oddity is that the 1850 Census shows them with four young children, three born before this marriage.

One persistent Booth family myth is that Richard went South during the Civil War, and all trace of him was lost. This is not correct. The land records in Baltimore show that he sold off his property there in 1860. Apparently, he left for England soon after and took up residence at the old Booth family estate, 10 St. John’s Square, Clerkenwell, London.

Richard’s wife, Sarah, died at this address on November 14, 1868, during a typhus outbreak. Richard bought a lot in Highgate Cemetery, London, and buried her there on the 16th of November. Richard died one month later on December 16, 1868, also a victim of typhus. He was buried in the same lot in Highgate on December 18. There are no stones to mark these Booth graves, but there are many fine, ornate tombstones in Highgate—including one for Karl Marx.

Meet Mary Ann

From James O. Hall’s research

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, April 2001

We received several words of appreciation after printing an article about Richard Booth, the legitimate son of Junius Brutus Booth and his first wife, Adelaide. Poor Richard usually gets forgotten amid the Booth history, and some of our readers were glad to find out what happened to him.

We also find that Junius’ second wife, Mary Ann Holmes Booth, gets forgotten by many researchers, despite her giving birth to a distinguished acting dynasty. Years ago, that inveterate researcher/scholar, James O. Hall, decided to remedy the situation and did a little genealogical detective work on who Mary Ann was before she became the “girl who sold flowers at Covent Garden and stole the heart of a married man.”

After traveling to England to do research and then working with a researcher in London, Mr. Hall was able to give some identity to Mary Ann. Working on a clue uncovered by Booth theatrical scholar, Dr. Stephen Archer, [in true James O. Hall fashion] one thing led to another. Dr. Archer discovered the diary of a London theater man, James Winston. In the diary, Winston had written in part: “It appears that shortly after [Junius] Booth got leave of absence from Drury

Lane a few weeks ago, he set out for America with [a] shopkeeper's daughter in the nighttime." That entry was dated 17 February 1821.

The entry for 14 March 1821 had more information. In this, Winston wrote that "a Mrs. Holmes" had come to see him at the theater to ask where she could find Booth. She told him that her husband, who kept a seed shop in Bridge Road, Marsh Gate, was [dying?] of a broken heart because their daughter had eloped with Booth some seven weeks ago. Further research pinned down a Robert Holmes as being a seed merchant and nurseryman in that same area at 3 Mount Street, Lambeth.

The London researcher was unable to pin down any family background on Robert Holmes, but she did find that he was married to Sarah Lewis on 19 July 1801, as per the church register of St. Martin's in the Fields. Sarah Lewis was the daughter of William and Ann Lewis, shown in the baptismal record of that church as born 20 September 1776 and baptized 27 September 1776.

In 1802, the Holmes family was living in Lambeth. This may have been where Robert Holmes was living at the time he married Miss Lewis in her own parish. The register of St. Mary's Church, Lambert, has the following baptismal entries:

- 29 August 1802. Mary Ann Holmes, daughter of Robert and Sarah Holmes (No date of birth shown, but her tombstone at Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore shows she was born 2 June 1802)
- 7 April 1805. Thomas, son of Robert and Sarah Holmes. (No date of birth shown.)
- 27 February 1807. William George, son of Robert & Sarah Holmes. Born 17 October 1806.
- 1 January 1820. Thomas Frederick, son of Robert Holmes, seedsman. Bridge Road, Lambeth, and Sarah Holmes. (No date of birth shown—either a late child or a delayed baptism.)

London directories for 1815 through 1828 list Robert Holmes variously as a seedsman, nurseryman, and florist at 3 Mount Street, Lambeth. Since most accounts state that Mary Ann was selling flowers in front of London theaters when she caught the eye of the actor Junius Brutus Booth, this would be reasonable given her father's occupation. Mary Ann soon abandoned those flowers and sailed to America with a very married Mr. Booth.

While the Winston diary hints at Mr. Holmes "dying of a broken heart," it must have taken some time. The burial register for St. Mary's, Lambeth, shows that Robert Holmes, 45, of Mount Street, was buried 23 December 1823. The family business remained at that address until the name, at least, was dropped in 1828. It is logical to assume that the widow Holmes and her three sons kept the business going for a time. No further information was given on the widow as to whether she remarried, when exactly she died, etc. The only clues came first in a letter written on 28 February 1862 by Asia, Mary Ann's daughter. She wrote to a friend, Jean Anderson Sherwood in Baltimore, that "My poor grandmother in England is dead, and Ned [Edwin Booth, Asia's brother] attended her funeral. She was 84."

Another clue comes in a statement made by Joseph Booth, the youngest son of the Maryland Booth clan. He was arrested in New York in May of 1865 and questioned by General Dix about the Booth family. In his statement, he indicated that he was in England in the early part of 1862 and that he "Had money and left at that time and went to England to see my brother Edwin there, and with the intention of seeing my grandmother just before she died. She lived in Reading. She was dead a couple of weeks before I got there." Edwin Booth went to London in late-September 1861 to fulfill acting engagements. So that leaves a strong possibility that Grandmother Holmes died in late-1861 or early-1862, but no record of her death has been found.

Mary Ann Holmes, oldest child of Robert and Sarah Lewis Holmes, would settle down on the family farm in Bel Air, Maryland, to raise a large family, most of whom distinguished themselves in the theatrical world. In later years, she would move to New York. She died there on 22 October 1885, and her body was returned to Baltimore to rest in the family plot in Green Mount Cemetery.

Mary Ann Holmes Booth – Actress?

By Terry Alford

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, May 1991

In Francis Courtney Wemyss's book, *Chronology of the American Stage, From 1752 to 1852* (1852), the author makes the following statement: "Mrs. Booth (wife of Mr. J.B. Booth, Sr.) made her first appearance on the American stage at the Chestnut-street Theatre, Philadelphia...in 1831." For years historians have been curious about Wemyss's claim. Did the mother of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth ever perform on the stage?

Recently some light on this question was shed by examination of a clipping found in a 19th century scrapbook at the William Seymour Theatrical Collection at Princeton University. The old clipping was that of an advertisement from an unidentified newspaper for a play at the Tremont Theatre in Boston. According to the advertisement, *Town and Country*, a comedy, was promised for "This Evening, Oct. 23." No year was contained in the ad, but an ink note on the old paper seemed to read "1828." The performance was being held as a benefit for the comedian James H. Caldwell. Of particular interest was the ad's promise of "Mrs. Booth [in the role of] Rosalie Somer." The advertisement noted that this would be "Mrs. Booth's second appearance on any stage."

While no first name is given for this "Mrs. Booth," her identity may not be impossible to ascertain. In the late summer of 1828, Junius Brutus Booth, Sr., then 33 years old and established as one of the nation's top actors, took himself and his young family to Boston. He had come at the invitation of the owners of the Tremont Theatre to manage the house on an interim basis and to star occasionally as well.

By a notice placed in the *Boston Palladium* of August 22, 1828, Booth requested that the actors and actresses attached to the Tremont "assemble in the Green Room" on Thursday, August 28, at eleven a.m. to commence their rehearsals for the season. Performances began on September 1, 1828. A full cast list for the theater at this time is available, and there is no Mrs. Booth among the 21 ladies listed as composing "the regularly engaged company" of the theater.

During this season of dual responsibility on the stage and for it, Booth performed well. His rich parade of acting talent won critical praise. And he proved sensitive to local tastes and prejudices. On one occasion, when objections were made to the moral tone of the play *Love in a Village*, Booth dropped it for *The Mountaineers*, described as "a piece wholly unexceptionable in language and sentiment." He also handled rather shrewdly another potential problem. The absence of free tickets, ads, or both from the Tremont led the editors of the *Jackson Republican* to complain that they were "Not under any very deep obligations for civilities" to the management. Immediately thereupon the Tremont commenced a regular series of advertisements in the paper.

These actions show the truth of one individual's subsequent observation that whatever the older Booth's flaws as an actor, as a manager "he was the most methodical, conscientious and industrious of men."

Nevertheless, some persons made "ungenerous remarks" early on with regard to Booth's management style. A friendly critic in the *Boston Statesman* replied in Booth's defense, "How it should be expected that any mortal should be able in a single week to organize and reduce to a perfect state of discipline a numerous company of actors, collected from different parts of the country, we cannot conceive." The writer went on to say it was "always impossible to satisfy that very squeamish, faultless monster....THE PUBLIC."

At the conclusion of his visit as a star, Caldwell (as previously stated) had his benefit performance. Two comic pieces were chosen, *Town and Country* and a farce titled *Three and Deuce*. In a published card, Caldwell stated that "he hoped the selection will meet with [the public's] approbation and secure their support." The same card also announced that "the part of Rosalie Somers, by Mrs. Booth, [is] her 2nd appearance on any stage." In keeping with advertising conventions of the time, ads for this performance do not give Mrs. Booth's first name. They don't give Caldwell's either.

It is to be regretted that none of the 11 different Boston newspapers consulted in research for this article commented on Mrs. Booth's performance. If she was astoundingly good, it might have drawn at least one compliment. Or she might have returned to the stage frequently in other roles. That she did not, may be due to lack of talent, time, or temperament, or perhaps to all three. Harry Hill said (on unknown authority) that Mary Ann Holmes Booth had "no special fondness for the stage in any way." Then, too, it is certain that she would not have sought a stage career in opposition to her husband's wishes. She knew it was ill-advised to oppose or cross him. Another factor could be that she was also the mother of four children.

By the time of Mrs. Booth's appearance with Caldwell, the bills had already announced that her husband, "the talented tragedian," would soon be leaving Boston "in consequence of engagements at the South." On October 28, 1828, at the conclusion of his two-month management, the Tremont Theatre Association showed its appreciation for his labors by presenting Booth with an engraved silver cup and plate valued at one hundred dollars.

In the course of searching Boston newspapers in research for this article, care was taken to see if the particular newspaper, from which the clipping in the Princeton scrapbook came, could be identified. It turned out that the ad came from page three of the *Boston Statesman* for Thursday, October 23, 1828.

Of more interest, perhaps, is the fact that this clipping appeared in a scrapbook kept by Junius Brutus Booth, Jr. This fact, coupled with the knowledge that the Tremont was being managed at the time by his father, leaves little doubt that the "Mrs. Booth" mentioned was Mary Ann Holmes.

The oldest item in the scrapbook, this clipping could not have been saved originally by the younger Booth himself. He was only seven years old at the time of the performance. But the old newspaper cutting was special to him. He inherited it and he saved it—because "Mrs. Booth" was his mother.

When Junius Met Mary Ann

Excerpts from Deirdre Barber Kincaid's article
Mary Ann Doolittle? The "Flower Girl" Myth of the Booths' Mother
Article printed in March 2004 issue of *The Surratt Courier*.

Junius Brutus Booth was indeed a married man when he met Miss Holmes. He and his wife, Marie Christine Adelaide Delannoy, had met [in 1814] when Booth was on tour in Belgium. But for further facts of the Booth-Holmes romance, let us look at some evidence nearer the date of their meeting.

Stephen Archer states, "Booth's account book contains a marginal note for 9 October 1820, a night he played Lear in Reading. Someone other than Booth marked the date with an X and inserted, 'The night Mother first saw my father.'¹" Archer says it is "anyone's guess" why Mary Ann was in Reading,² but in fact there might be a family connection. Mary Ann's mother died in Reading in 1861 or 62, having been a widow since 1823.³ If she had gone to live in Reading because she had relatives there, Mary Ann might have been visiting these same relatives when she went to the theater and saw Booth as King Lear. Whichever of her children it was who annotated the account book does not say that they actually met in Reading, there remains the possibility that the acquaintance began in London.

In his diaries, James Winston wrote on March 14, "His [Booth's] father has since called on Mrs. Holmes and wished her sanction to let her daughter live with [Junius] Booth. The father said Booth's wife [Adelaide] had left the country, and she was allowed 50 pounds a year."⁴ This is a crucial piece of information. If Adelaide had left the country, it very much looks as if the marriage was already over and she had gone home to mother: Mary Ann cannot be accused of breaking up a happy home. It seems the couple had made an informal separation agreement by which Booth supported his wife and their son Richard. Divorce was not a practical possibility in England at the time. Before the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, "a secular divorce required an act of Parliament and cost about 600-700 pounds,⁵" a huge sum in those days, and was thus the preserve of the very rich. Ordinary people had to make the best of an impossible situation. The visit of Booth's father to the Holmeses shows that he accepted the relationship and was proposing a pragmatic solution. The lovers' departure for the New World enabled them to make a fresh start where Booth's former marriage was not known. Other people did the same for similar reasons—Laura Keene, for one.⁶

When Booth returned to London to act in 1825, the *Sunday Monitor* insinuated that he had left his wife and child destitute, while "seducing from the roof of a father an infatuated girl," later named as *Miss H*.⁷ Once again, there is no mention of a profession for the girl herself. Mary Ann has so far been identified only as the daughter of a seedsman. It has been suggested that her being a "flower girl would be reasonable given her father's occupation."⁸ Nowadays, thanks largely to Shaw's (and Lerner and Loewe's) heroine Eliza Doolittle, being a flower girl sounds like rather a romantic occupation. However, the truth is far less, well, flowery.

Sources:

¹ Stephen M. Archer, *Junius Brutus Booth: Theatrical Prometheus* bb (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. 66 and illustration, foll. P. 82. The handwriting may well be Asia Booth Clarke's, but I am not an expert.

² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

³ See previous article, *Meet Mary Ann*.

⁴ Alfred L. Nelson & Gilbert B. Cross, eds., *Drury Lane Journal: Selections from James Winston's Diaries 1819-1827* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1974), p. 28.

⁵ Beverly Taylor, "Legal Milestones: 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act/Divorce Act." University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill). From Internet.

⁶ See, for instance, Ben Graf Hennecke, *Laura Keene: A Biography* (Tulsa, OK: Council Oaks Books, 1990)

⁷ October 16 and 23, 1825, quoted in Archer, pp. 100 and 101.

⁸ See previous article, *Meet Mary Ann*.

The Other Junius Brutus Booth

Reprinted from *The Surratt Courier*, September 2001

NOTE: Students of the theatrical Booth family are certainly familiar with the flamboyant and erratic patriarch of the family, Junius Brutus Booth. The other Junius, his son and namesake, seems to take low billing behind other members of the family. Here is some information that we shared with a young student and thought we would share it with you.

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Junius Brutus Booth, Sr., had a legal wife and son in England. However, he fell in love with Mary Ann Holmes, a charming flower seller at the famed Covent Garden, and when she became pregnant, the couple fled to America. Their first-born, named Junius, Jr., was born in South Carolina in 1821. The family soon moved to Baltimore and then on to a farm outside the city in the rural village of Bel Air, Maryland. Nine other children would be born into this family, but four would not survive to adulthood.

Junius, Jr., attended St. Mary's College in Baltimore and then followed his father onto the stage. He was to find his calling more in management, however. We cannot identify every place that he traveled nor the exact dates of his three marriages, but here are some highlights of his life and career.

His first wife was Clementina (sometimes referred to as Clementine) DeBar of St. Louis, by whom he had a daughter, Blanche. That marriage occurred sometime before 1843, the year when the couple moved to theater engagements in New York City. Junius's first appearance of any importance was at the New York Bowery Theatre in March 1847. That year, he alternated stock appearances between New York and Boston. It was in the latter city that he met Harriet Mace. [Editor's Note: The February 8, 1851, *Boston Times* reported that Junius' wife found out about the affair and had both of them arrested in Boston on charges of adultery and fornication. [Ironically, back in Baltimore, his father's wife filed for divorce that same month.] Following in his father's footsteps, he deserted his wife and daughter and ran off to San Francisco with Harriet.

There are some questions about his divorce from Clementina, but he appears to have married Harriet in San Francisco, where he managed the Jenny Lind Theatre and others from 1851 to 1864. He had a daughter named Marion by Harriet. Another daughter died in infancy. Harriet died in 1859, possibly by suicide.

Junius appeared with brothers Edwin and John Wilkes in a benefit performance of *Julius Caesar* in New York's Winter Garden on November 25, 1864, to raise money for the Shakespeare statue to be erected in the city. He was in Cincinnati at Pike's Opera House at the time of Lincoln's assassination on April 14, 1865. He was arrested and smuggled through a blood-thirsty mob to prison, but later released. For a while, he and the rest of the Booths left the stage.

In 1874, he visited his sister, Asia Booth Clarke, in France. Asia had exiled herself to Europe after the stigma of the Booth name was forever linked with Lincoln's assassination. Her brother's visit was made famous by an exhibition sword fight that he staged with a French champion.

Junius' third wife was Agnes Perry. They lived in Boston, and she bore him four sons: Junius III, Algernon, Sydney, and Barton. He managed a succession of theaters, including the Boston Theatre and the Edwin Booth Theatre in New York.

In his later years, he built and ran a hotel in Manchester, Massachusetts, called the Masconomo House. He died in Manchester in September of 1883, after a long fight with Bright's Disease [an inflammation of the kidneys, now called nephritis]. He was survived by Agnes and four of his seven children. He is buried in Rosedale Cemetery in Manchester.

Asia Booth Clarke Sister of John Wilkes Booth

By Lisa G. Samia

“so runs the world away”

Asia Frigga Booth was born on November 19, 1835, the eighth of ten children to Junius Brutus Booth and Mary Ann Holmes Booth on the family farm in Bel Air, Maryland. Six of the ten children, four boys and two girls, would reach adulthood. As with most of her siblings, Asia was born in a modest log cabin home. Interestingly, it would take many months before her parents chose the name Asia. They were undecided “whether to call her after the accomplished young [actress] Sydney Cowell (Mrs. Bateman), who was a great favorite of Mr. & Mrs. Booth, or Ayesha, in recollection of one of Mahomet's wives.” At length Junius wrote to his wife, “Call the little one Asia in remembrance of that country where God first walked with man, and Frigga because she came to us on a Friday...,” the day consecrated to the Norse goddess who presided over marriage and the home.¹ Asia was about 2 ½ years older than her brother John Wilkes.

Her parents emigrated from England in 1821. Her father, Junius, was already a famous actor even before coming to the United States. He performed from the 1820s to the early 1850s and earned, at various intervals, about \$5,000 a year, a very comfortable sum in those times. Asia had an older sister Rosalie, who was quiet and devoted to her mother. She also had two older brothers, Junius and Edwin, who would become theater managers and actors, and two younger brothers, future actor John Wilkes and youngest brother Joseph who would eventually become a doctor. Asia was the Booth family chronicler, writer and sometime poet. She was incredibly close to her brother John Wilkes.

In 1851, the elder Booth began construction on Tudor Hall on the farm property in Bel Air, Maryland. It is a one and half story gothic revival home, now well-preserved and owned by

Harford County, Maryland. Sadly, the elder Booth died in November 1852, while the home was still being built.

The Booths also had a Baltimore city residence on 62 N. Exeter Street purchased in 1845. It was a middle-class city townhouse on a tree-lined street with a grocer on one side and a banker on the other. This residence is no longer standing.

Asia's Education

There are not many facts about Asia's early education. Along with brothers Edwin, John, and Joseph, she attended a school in Baltimore run by Susan Hyde. It was here at the Hyde School that Asia met her future husband, John Sleeper Clarke [Editor's Note: He was born John Clarke Sleeper]. He would grow attached in friendship and business with her brother Edwin. She then attended the Martin J. Kearney School with John. For a short period of time, she attended an unnamed college for young girls. This was an all-girls college taught only by men. The next school in which Asia enrolled in was run by the Sisters of the Carmelite Convent in Baltimore, Maryland. It was there she received her formal education and its influence was profound. Asia later converted to Catholicism (the Booths were Episcopalians). At the time of John's death on April 26, 1865, near Port Royal, Virginia, it was observed that John had a gold medal around his neck inscribed "Agnus Dei," Latin for Lamb of God. It is to wonder if Asia gave John this Catholic medal.

Asia had a literary mind and loved to write poetry. Asia was "a very smart woman, by the by," stated one New York City columnist in 1884, "educated and mathematical and somewhat of a writer and tremendously 'strong minded.'"²

Asia as an Author

Asia was an author of three books. The first was entitled *Booth Memorials. Passages, Incidents and Anecdotes in the Life of Junius Brutus Booth (the Elder)*, published in 1866, is about the acting life of her famous father. The second book was written in 1874, but not published until 1938. *The Unlocked Book, a Memoir of John Wilkes Booth by His Sister Asia Booth Clarke* was a secret memoir hidden from her husband, John Sleeper Clarke. Asia's husband, John, blamed the Booth family, especially John Wilkes, for his problems so Asia wrote it in secret and gave it out of the family "to publish sometime if he sees fit." This is the longest and most extensive account of John Wilkes Booth by a family member. It is because of Asia that a picture of John in childhood and young manhood is so poignantly expressed. Asia provides insights into her brother John and the emotional reminiscences of their time together growing up at Tudor Hall in the mid-1850s. In the relative isolation of the Maryland countryside, Asia and John become constant companions. Here they were "lonely together,"³ as Asia expressed it. Her third and final book, *The Elder and the Younger Booth*, was published in 1882 and was about her famous father, Junius, and her brother, Edwin.

Asia's Married Life

Asia married John Sleeper Clarke in April 1859 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. But her closest brother, John Wilkes, did not approve of this union. Asia writes, "In 1859 Wilkes came from Richmond, where he was fulfilling an engagement, to be present at my wedding. He returned to that city immediately after the wedding, he was not pleased at my marriage, and the strange words he whispered to me were, 'Always bear in mind that you are a professional stepping-stone."

Our father's name is a power—theatrical—in the land. It is dower enough for any struggling actor.⁴”

John Wilkes and sister Asia were very close and remained so even after leaving Tudor Hall and going about their lives. Perhaps in this warning to Asia he not only perceived that John Sleeper Clarke's intentions were not entirely for her affection, but rather for his future advancement within the theatrical world. As he foreshadowed, Clarke and Edwin Booth would later become successful theater owners and managers.

Unfortunately, this prophetic warning would come back to Asia later in her marriage. She wrote to her brother Edwin (while she was residing in England years later) about the lack of affection from her husband and that he slept most nights at the theater and said he was leading a bachelor's life. Later, in a letter to her friend Jean Anderson, Asia wrote about John Sleeper Clarke (and not clearly in jest) “I married to please him.⁵”

Assassination Aftermath

Asia gave us a glimpse into the pain she and her family endured right after the assassination in the first book published in 1866. The book is entitled *Booth Memorials. Passages, Incidents and Anecdotes in the Life of Junius Brutus Booth (the Elder)*. Here she cries out, “A calamity, without precedent has fallen on our country! We, of all families, secure in domestic love and retirement, are stricken desolate! The name we would have enwreathed with laurels is dishonored by a son,—‘his well-beloved—his bright boy Absalom!’⁶” Asia referenced King David's third son, Absalom, from the Bible. Coincidentally, John Wilkes was the third Booth son to live to adulthood. The story of Absalom is that not only was he the handsomest man in the Kingdom (John Wilkes was called the handsomest man in America), he, in fact, rose up against his own father, trying to steal his kingdom whereupon he was not successful and destroyed himself.

While that paragraph comes from her book *Booth Memorials*, it is the second paragraph in the Introduction. This placement in the Introduction is striking as it states unequivocally the author's pain.

As Asia heartbreakingly pens in her memoir, “all written or printed material found in our possession, everything that bore his name was given up to the authorities, not a vestige remains of aught that belonged to him; his books of music were stolen, seized or savagely destroyed. Not even the little picture of himself, hung over my babies beds in the nursery. He had placed it there himself saying, “Remember me babies in your prayers.⁷”

She continued, “I loved my brothers devotedly, but Wilkes and I had grown nearer in those late years at the farm, where we were lonely together. My marriage, which he often urged me to free myself from, was becoming less pleasing to him; this and his professional pursuits separated us at long intervals. The doom that fell on him was not wrought from a maniac brain nor a wicked heart, not from an irreligious soul nor a degraded nature. I believe that with the kidnaping scheme was laid to rest, although with curses, the cherished hope of saving those he would have died to serve. But the fall of Richmond rang in with maddening exasperating clang of joy, and that triumphant entry into the fallen city (which was not magnanimous) breathed air afresh upon the fire which consumed him.⁸” “This man was noble in his life he periled his immortal soul and he was brave in death. Already his hidden remains are given a Christian burial and strangers have piled his grave with flowers.⁹”

Asia ends her memoir with a line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, “so runs the world away.¹⁰” [In *Hamlet* Act 3, scene 2, Hamlet says “for some must watch while some must sleep, so runs the world away.”] This phrase gave me pause to try to decipher what Asia meant by “so runs the

world away" and why she chose this particular line to end her memoir of John. Of all the lines in Shakespeare and all tragedies, she uses this one. Why is that? What is she trying to tell us?

Well, perhaps it is not so much that John Wilkes Booth performed in so many Shakespearean tragedies, it's that Asia is telling us that, *in the end, not only did John create the greatest of all American tragedies, he in fact became an American tragedy himself.*

Asia's Later Life

Asia moved to England in 1868 with her husband John and their children far away from the memory of brother John's assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Yet her life there was not happy. While her husband John Sleeper Clarke flourished in his career, she was lonely and increasingly ill with rheumatism so much that, she grew to detest London. Husband and wife were growing apart. She wrote to her brother Edwin that Clarke kept a private room at the theater and often slept there. "If he came home, it was late when all were asleep. He lives a life of mystery and silence as far as I am concerned. He lives a free going bachelor life and does what he likes."¹¹ She believed some of Clarke's time was being shared with another woman. She also wrote Clarke had limited involvement with their nine children. Three additional children had been born and died after the move to England, a daughter Joan and two others whose names are not known.

Asia had written to her friend Jean that she was getting "hardened to sorrow...like poor mother."¹² But the pallor of grief was yet to surround Asia once more. The favored child of them both, their son Edwin, became an officer in the British Merchant Navy. On December 10, 1881, while on a voyage from Australia, he was lost at sea. He was just 20 years old. After everything that had happened in her life, her son Edwin's death was a devastating blow and spirit breaker for Asia. Seven years later, in 1888, Asia Booth Clarke passed away in England at the age of 52.

The Booths have a family plot in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore, Maryland, and I have visited there many times. Most of the Booth family are buried there with the exception of Edwin and brother Junius. At Asia's request, John and her children buried her in the Booth family plot. She rests there just steps away from her brother, John, who is buried in an unmarked grave. This is the haunting tale of a love between a sister and brother, reunited, together, forever in oblivion.

Notes:

¹ Asia B. Clarke, *The Unlocked Book A Memoir of John Wilkes Booth by His Sister Asia Booth Clarke*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1938), p. 136

² *New York Mercury*, September 20, 1884

³ Asia B. Clarke, *The Unlocked Book*, p. 96

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 110-111

⁵ Terry Alford (edited), *John Wilkes Booth, A Sister's Memoir by Asia Booth Clarke*, (University Press of Mississippi, 1996), p. 22

⁶ Asia B. Clarke, *Booth Memorials: Passages, Incidents, and Anecdotes in the Life of Junius Brutus Booth, (the Elder)*, (New York, Carlton, 1866) vii

⁷ Asia B. Clarke, *The Unlocked Book*, p. 110

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 139

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 141

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 141

¹¹ Letter from Asia B. Clarke to Edwin Booth, July 14, 1879. Asia's letters to Edwin is with permission from the Hampden-Booth Library, The Players Foundation for Theater Education.

¹² Letter from Asia B. Clarke to Jean Anderson, February 15, 1866, ML518

The Oldest Sister and Youngest Brother

When talking about the Booth family, we know that Mary Ann Holmes and Junius Booth had ten children, six boys and four girls. Only four of the boys survived to adulthood [Junius, Edwin, John Wilkes, and Joseph] and two of the girls [Rosalie and Asia]. However, if you search for information on these Booths, there were two who were not in the public's eye like their theater-oriented siblings. As the oldest sister, Rosalie is usually only briefly mentioned in any books on her more famous siblings. The youngest Booth, Joseph, did work at theaters at various times, but eventually became a doctor.

Rosalie Booth, the Oldest Sister

Born on July 5, 1823, on the family farm near Bel Air, Maryland. Rosalie Ann was known in the family as Rose. She was the second oldest in the family, and one of the few Booth children that her father was present at their birth. She is also a bit of a mysterious figure in this famous family, as you get conflicting opinions of her. Many of the books that do mention Rosalie, imply that she was a social introvert or perhaps slow. Dave Taylor takes a different view in his lengthy article on Rosalie, which is available on his website. It was the most in-depth article I've found on Rosalie. From his research, Dave comes to the conclusion that Rosalie was intelligent. In her father's letter to her grandfather, he wrote that "Rosalie goes to school and improves very fast." In the 1850s letters Asia wrote to her friend Jean Anderson show a different view of Rosalie. Rosalie was social. She would go to Baltimore to shop and visit friends. In one letter, Asia complained that "Rosalie was in town and Mother and I had to do all the work." Asia's letter also hinted that her big sister may have been courted by a Bel Air neighbor. Another source says she doesn't interact with her siblings, but yet another source mentions Rosalie patiently making costumes for her stage-struck siblings.

It's easy to see how Rosalie fell into the position of her mother's helper and then companion, as life threw so many challenges her and Mary Ann's way. By 1836, Rosalie had lost four siblings, but by 1840 had gained another four. The oldest of this group was ten years younger than Rosalie. Her father was only home a few months of the year. The rest of the year he was traveling across the country to his theater engagements. Eventually, his drinking and erratic behavior was beginning to affect the amount of money the actor sent home. It was up to her mother to try to manage the farm and support her young family on her own. Next was the discovery and resulting scandal in 1846 that her father already had a wife. She and her siblings were now labeled bastards, and no doubt their social circle was reduced by the scandal. Add to the mix the actions of her brother John in 1865, and perhaps the idea of her being depressed is not too hard to believe. Dave surmises that the view of her being slow may be driven by Asia Booth Clarke's comment in *The Unlocked Book* that Rosalie was "an invalid." As Dave pointed out, the book was written in 1874. By that time, Rosalie was 51 years old. With all the family tragedies, Rosalie had become "withdrawn, and possibility infirm, woman."

After her mother's death in 1885, she would go to live with her brother Joseph. Rosalie died on January 15, 1889, and is buried with the rest of her family in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore. She was 65 years old.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is just some highlights of Rosalie's life. For a more in-depth examination of who Rosalie was, I encourage you to check out Dave Taylor's article at <https://LincolnConspirators.com/2013/11/25/the-forgotten-daughter-rosalie-ann-booth/>

Joseph Booth, the Youngest Brother

Joseph Adrian Booth was born 1840 on the farm in Bel Air, Maryland. He was the youngest of the ten Booth children. Unlike his brothers, the profession he initially chose was medicine, not acting. He was attending Charleston Medical College in April of 1861, when the Civil War began. He would briefly serve as a doctor in the Confederate Army. However, after the surrender of the Fort Sumter, he dropped out of medical school, which Edwin was paying for, and returned to Baltimore. He became Edwin's theatrical dresser and valet and would later perform the same services for his brother John Wilkes. According to his obituary, Joe "also went upon the stage, but only pursued his father's calling long enough to satisfy himself and his friends that he had no vocation in that direction." During the war, he decided to see the world, traveling as far as Australia before coming back to the States. Edwin got him a job as a letter carrier for Wells Fargo in San Francisco, but after three years of traveling, he decided it was time to go home. Ironically, the date he started his journey from San Francisco was April 13, 1865. Joe didn't hear the news of what his brother had done until his steamship arrived in Panama. Along with his other family members, Joe would be held briefly before he was released.

In 1869, Joe would be the one to identify his brother's body, when President Johnson released the conspirators' bodies to their families, and escort the remains back to Baltimore for John Wilkes' burial at Green Mount Cemetery.

After working at a variety of jobs, including six years as the treasurer of Edwin Booth's New York theater, Joe decided in 1884 study medicine again. Once he earned his degree at New York University, he practiced medical in New York until his death in 1902.

According to some sources, Joe was unlike his brothers. He never drank heavily nor womanized. He was married twice. First to Margaret C. Hatfield in 1882. She and their child did not survive childbirth in 1884. He married his second wife, Cora Estelle Mitchell (1870-1936), on November 6, 1894. They had one child, Edwin, who died before his second birthday.

Sources:

Edward Steers, Jr., *The Lincoln Assassination Encyclopedia* (New York, Harper Perennial, 2010)

Nora Titone, *My Thoughts Be Bloody* (New York, Free Press, 2010)

Terry Alford, *Fortune's Fool: The Life of John Wilkes Booth* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2015)