

## 08-03-1884: George Alfred Townsend's Interview of Thomas Harbin

Source: Cincinnati Enquirer, August 3, 1884.

Thomas Harbin had once been the postmaster in Bryantown, Maryland, and worked as a Confederate spy in Southern Maryland during the Civil War. Journalist George Alfred Townsend interviewed him after Dr. Mudd died.

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“New York, August 1, 1884.

The writer of this article was twenty-four years old when President Lincoln was murdered, and he heard the news of the assassination in Richmond, Virginia, while still the charred documents of the disbanded Confederate government were lying in the gutters of that town. Returning to Washington, the writer became acquainted with most of the detectives assembled from the different cities of the country, or in the employ of the government, who were ferreting out the crime. He attended the trial of the conspirators, and saw four of them hanged; he was acquainted with John Wilkes Booth, the contriver of the tragedy; and the principal witness of the government – inhabitant of the house of Mrs. Surratt – was his schoolmate, John Yates Beall, who was hanged on Governor's Island not many weeks before President Lincoln's murder, and whose execution has been said to have precipitated the assassination, the writer also saw hanged.

As years drifted by, in the midst of a busy and changeful life, the writer found no event to touch his imagination and historical zeal so much as Booth's crime. Circumstances within the past two or three years have brought the writer into relations with the chief witnesses and associates of the conspiracy. In hardly any case has there been shown any evasiveness or suspicion, and it is now in the power of the writer to describe the closing days of the assassin for the first time.

Booth's arrival in Virginia. In another place I have related the escape of Booth from Washington, stopping first at Surrattsville, on Good Friday night, April 14, 1865, and next halting at the house of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd the whole of Saturday, proceeding Saturday evening to the house of Samuel Cox, and being conducted into the small pines, a mile or so from the house, where Thomas A. Jones, the friend and foster-brother of Mr. Cox, fed Booth, and Harold for a week, and made arrangements for them to cross the Potomac into Virginia.

They embarked in a skiff on Friday night, one week after the assassination, drifted up to Nanjemoy Creek or River, where Harold begged food, and Booth remained in the boat, probably a prey to his uneasy sensations. On Saturday night they again tried the foggy river, which at that point was several miles wide, and, on the ebb tide, struck the Virginia shore near Persimmon Point.

Booth was then lame and on crutches, and had no carbine, but was well armed in other respects. Harold started out through the brush to discover some human habitation, and he found the house of a man named Bryan, who is now dead. Bryan was an ignorant man, living with a negro concubine, and was entirely unaware of the presence of the assassins of Mr. Lincoln. although

they remained at his place the whole day. and he accompanied them and lent them horses to take them to the house of Dr. Stuart, several miles inland, toward the Rappahannock River. After Harold found Bryan's house he brought Booth up there, and the story was told to the inhabitants that the assassin had been thrown from his horse and had fractured one of the bones near his foot, and that he was about to be carried to his friends in Southern Virginia.

Killing the Horses. The fugitives had shot their horses in Maryland. Harold, under the direction of Cox's overseer, had led them up the revine between high banks to a spot where such animals had never before penetrated, and killed them with his revolver; and it is said by the two or three persons acquainted with the facts, that the buzzards did not scent these dead animals on account of the inclosing banks, which kept the smell from arising. I do not pretend to know any thing about the truth of this curious theory. It is sure, however, that the animals were not discovered.

Old Bryan. Bryan's house was a mere frame hut of plank, and with another hut put at its end, and a short passage connected them. There was but one room in the house, and it was dirty and inhospitable. Such was Booth's welcome to the State his mind populated with high spirits; so that, almost in the act of murder, he had uttered her motto as his apology. His own father's original residence, on the barrens of Maryland, had been somewhat of the character of the house he fled to. This wretched place was inclosed by a worm fence, and on the lawn, field or inclosure stood an oak tree, under which Booth took his repose, with his broken foot fretting the flesh and increasing his fever. He was dressed in black; he had a slouch hat; the shoe on the injured foot was cut open, and he had a pair of rude but efficient crutches, made for him at the house of Dr. Mudd. Harold wanted to buy two horses, one for himself and one for Booth, but Bryan rather demurred to selling his, but said that Mrs. Quesenberry, who lived close by, had several horses and wanted money. Harold therefore set off to this lady's house, about a mile and a half distant.

Here a word about the topography of the country. The Potomac opposite Pope's Creek, Maryland, is only three miles wide, but both above and below, it is much wider. Mr. Jones, in Maryland, had directed the two fugitives to enter Machodoc Creek and find the house of Mrs. Quesenberry. Machodoc Creek is about a mile wide, and the first house on the northern bank is the lady's mentioned. Bryan's house is hardly a mile from the Potomac River at a spot say two miles below Persimmon Point. The place where Booth landed was from one-half to three-quarters of a mile above Machodoc Creek, and on the farm of Dr. Hooe, whose family gave name to an ancient ferry at that place, found in all of the old maps of the United States. The landing place is rather flat and not high or bluffy.

Maximillian's heir's aunt. Bryan, in his little hut, had no slaves, but Mrs. Quesenberry had a delightful cottage, and was highly connected, and would have been a superior woman anywhere. She was the daughter of a Mr. Green, of Rosedale, an estate between Washington and its suburbs of Tennallytown. Her sister had married the son of the Emperor Iturbide, of Mexico, and Mrs. Quesenberry's nephew was at the very time Booth stopped at this house, a protege and perhaps adopted son of Maximillian. This little incident seems to connect, in some measure, the fates of two distinguished men, one of whom was speedily to follow the other to a violent death. The Emperor Iturbide's son had been a pupil at Georgetown College, in the vicinity of which the missing Green lived.

Mr. Quesenberry had been a Virginia planter, with slaves and good connections, and his house was not many miles from Washington's birth-place. The house was a beautiful cottage, trellised and ornamented, and with a lawn in front of it reaching to the wide creek, hardly fifty yards distant, and on this lawn, among other cabins, was a small school-house, fitted up for the education of the children of the family, who had a governess by the name of Miss Duncanson. During the war the rebel government had established on Mrs. Quesenberry's farm their permanent signal station to communicate with other rebels in Maryland, and hold open their mail route to the North and Canada. The signal officers, as a rule, were genteel men, and they all thought highly of the hostess, who was then about fifty years of age. They occupied the school-house, or at least two of them did, and one of them was a Maryland gentleman named Thomas Harbin.

This man was one of the original confidants of John Wilkes Booth in the scheme to abduct President Lincoln. Having been several times in his company, I can say, as of his brother-in-law, Thomas A. Jones, who "held the fort," so to speak, for the Confederacy on the other shore, that, while they do not conform to my ideas of politics, they materially softened my feelings on the subject of Mr. Lincoln's abduction by the frankness and fidelity of their character.

Harbin was a representative-looking Marylander; tall, almost gaunt; yet supple, with a smile ever near his countenance; dark-brown hair, high cheek-bones, with somewhat sunken cheeks, but cautious, and thoughtful and tender to women. He had as much respect for Mrs. Quesenberry and her family as if she had been the wife of Jefferson Davis. For some time he had kept the hotel at Piscataway, the old tobacco port, nearly opposite Mount Vernon, and he has since been a hotel clerk in Washington City, where he is highly esteemed. As a hotel-keeper his house was the resort of the active spirits of Maryland. He took intense interest in the Southern cause, reported at Richmond, and was intrusted with the business of opening a mail route to the North. On the opposite shore lived Thomas A. Jones, at a point where the bluffs of Maryland rose at least one hundred feet high. Jones' first wife had been Harbin's sister. It required no Masonic oath to bind these men together: they were the life of the Confederacy in its communication with Maryland and the North. Jones, in the early part of the war, had nightly crossed the river with passengers for the South. Arrested once on his return home from Richmond, he was sent to prison in Washington and kept there several months. When he was led out by some jail-opening commission he returned home to find every thing broken up by the war, and Harbin came to him after he had refused a man named Grimes, and they agreed to keep the ferry open. Every day, toward evening, a boat left Mrs. Quesenberry's place and crossed the river in the gray light to a spot where the rebel mail was deposited under the bluffs of Maryland, in a stump. This mail was taken out, a pouch for the South substituted, and the boat stole off in the gray evening unobserved, just before the Federal pickets were planted along the bluff, which was done about sundown. If Jones had kept the boat on his side of the river the Federals would have seized and destroyed it; he had no boat at all. And so the courier spirit lodged all day in Virginia, and flew once, toward night, to Maryland, and silently returned.

The Abduction Scheme. Harbin had been with Booth in the scheme to carry off Lincoln from Washington since the early fall of 1864. That scheme, as he had learned from John Surratt, in Richmond, had been abandoned a few days before. He gave himself no further concern on the subject, and never contemplated any such act as the president's assassination. He was a daring

spy, of the character of John Champe or Nathan Hale. In the midst of that war he was as familiar in Maryland as in Virginia, and often stayed a month on the Maryland side, and was regarded by those who knew him well as the most alert representative of the Confederacy in sight. I will relate an incident at this point of Harbin's mingled hardhood and chivalry.

There were in Lower Maryland earnest Union men, followers of Henry Winter Davis, not behind any of the Confederates in patriotism or enterprise. One of these was Thomas H. Watkins, the Union Provost Marshal, who was untiring in hunting down and arresting rebels, and he was finally assassinated by one of them, who is still alive. There was a neighborly courtesy among the Maryland people which forbade their giving up the better rebel sympathizers. Harbin did not annoy any of his old Union neighbors, and they kept their eyes on him to see that he did no great harm, but still did not betray him. Most of the people in that region are Catholics of the old English stamp, planted by Calvert or converted by his priests. It may have been that their common religion made them consider each other's liberty. Among these old Catholics was Dr. George D. Mudd, the cousin of the conspirator, Samuel A. Mudd. He was as firm a Unionist as could be found, but a humane man, and on one occasion he said to Harbin: "I am going to have an oyster supper at my house, and I would like to see, in the midst of war, good men on both sides meet each other kindly. If you will come to my house to the supper I am going to give I will engage that Watkins shall meet you, and you will like each other." "Very well," said Harbin, "I will do as you say." At Mudd's pleasant house in Bryantown the neighbors assembled, and great was the surprise to see Watkins and Harbin shake hands, and partake of the punch and viands.

Harbin recently said to me: "I found that Watkins was a noble man, courtly, frank and as good a person as one could desire to know. We spent most of the evening together talking over such things as were not disagreeable, and late at night we said good-night. He was killed not long afterward by an assassin named Johnny Boyle, a kind of trifling, vindictive fellow who never amounted to any thing in the Confederate service, but pestered people in Maryland. Watkins arrested him, and probably treated him roughly, perhaps handcuffing him, and Boyle waylaid him at his house and shot him dead. Boyle was condemned to a term of years in the penitentiary at Baltimore, and his father went to see the Governor, and had arranged for his pardon on a certain day. On that very day when he was to be pardoned out Boyle escaped from the penitentiary, and his father, who had meantime removed to New York, was standing in the St. Nicholas Hotel when a newspaper was handed to him, telling of his son's escape. The old man fell dead right there." Boyle is now employed by some railroad in Chicago.

What they were saying in Virginia. Harbin had heard of the president's assassination on Wednesday, five days after the event. He then knew that his friend Booth had done the deed. The family circle at Mrs. Quesenberry's discussed the matter in all the Christian spirit of a Northern household. Miss Lucy Hooe, an interesting lady, now unmarried, said at that circle: "This crime will hurt the Southern people more than the whole war has done. It has no good motive: was the ending of a man probably simple and honest, and its results will fall on us and our friends."

They little knew, while they were talking by the wood-fire on that April day, that the president's murderer was steering towards them.

There was a sick person in the house or neighborhood, and Harbin had taken a boat in company with one of his military associates, named Baden, and crossed Machodoc Creek to the fine estate of Colonel Baber, who had hot-houses and raised oranges and lemons to make lemonade. On his return the wind blew up from the Potomac River, and made the crossing almost dangerous, so that they had to creep around by the shores, and so they came to the lawn of Mrs. Quesenberry, who, by the way, was known to all her neighbors as Quesenberry.

Miss Duncanson, the governess, came down to the boat and said: "Mr. Harbin, there is a strange man here who has come to buy horses." Baden went up to reconnoiter, and returned, saying: "He says his name is Harold."

Harbin's heart sank a little; he knew Harold, and that he was one of Booth's conspirators, and that probably the assassin himself was close at hand. He said nothing to the lady, however, but went up to the house, and there he saw Harold covered with dirt, filth, and grime; unwashed, uncombed, the picture of a vacant-minded tramp. He took him apart and said: "Harold, where's Booth?"

"He's over here at the next farm, and you must go and see him," said Harold.

Baden and Harbin took Harold down to the school-house on the lawn and had him washed and combed and made human. At the time Harold arrived, Mrs. Quesenberry was not home, but had gone on her horse, Virginia-fashion, to some neighboring place; she arrived home, however, while Harold was there, and was disposed to sell him horses, because the close of the war had reduced her to poverty and she could not keep her horses. Harbin, with his thoughtfulness for the woman, took her aside and said: "You must not sell this man a horse; there are circumstances connected with him which make it my duty to tell you to give him nothing more than something to eat."

If the lady had sold Harold a horse, it might have been to the prejudice of her liberty in the subsequent Court-martial proceedings. Not a word was said by Mr. Harbin to any member of this family as to Booth being in the neighborhood until he had returned from his visit to Booth that evening. Mrs. Quesenberry was at the time a widow. Her husband died during the war, and was buried at the little church at Hampstead, in the neighborhood. She had two sons and two daughters, all young. The Hooe farm, on which Booth's boat landed in the neighborhood, bore the name of Barnesfield, and that he had embarked from in Maryland, Brent's field. The rebel signal camp had been on Mrs. Quesenberry's farm for about eighteen months.

Harbin had not been at her farm for some little time, but at the close of the war, when Richmond was abandoned, he returned there, and was waiting a few days, with nothing to do.

Harold safe. Mr. Harbin says that Harold's apparent courage was first rate; that the boy rather rejoiced in his heroism, and that he was surprised that Harold, of whom he expected so little, should show so much pluck; but that subsequent events proved that Harold at bottom had no courage at all. Mr. Harbin describes Harold as naturally a pretty smart boy, with no stability of character, rather bad, and a rover and truant. This very truant habit of gunning and fishing and

leaving his work made him available for Booth, who wanted to find out the roads and locate the country.

Harold had arrived at Mrs. Quesenberry's at ten or eleven o'clock in the morning; he and Booth had landed in Virginia before daylight; they had gone quite early to Bryan's house. About two o'clock Harold departed on foot, having partaken of food, and he carried with him a lunch for Booth. The day had become beautiful, although somewhat windy, and the fields were dry and all the frost out of them. Back of Mrs. Quesenberry's house extend two large fields, reaching almost a mile, and thus he entered the woods and walked in them to the small clearing around Bryan's house.

At near four o'clock in the afternoon Harbin set out on his horse, and as he came up to Bryan's worm fence and dismounted and tied his horse he saw Booth sitting under the oak tree in front of the shanty, with his foot at rest.

He walked forward and called him "John." Booth was very much changed; he was dirty, his black clothes were streaked and spotted, his shoe was cut open and showed his swollen foot, and his crutches were by him, for he could not walk without them. He was in pain, yet possessed all his courage, and showed no apprehension or nervousness at any time beyond the occasional twitching of his mouth as his broken bone scraped the flesh.

Old Bryan hung around the two men, inquisitive, yet dumb, and he could make nothing out of these mysterious strangers. He had probably heard of the assassination of Mr. Lincoln. It seemed queer to him that these two men should suddenly arrive on his place and then be met by another person, but he could make nothing out of it. His interference, however, prevented a full exchange of views between Harbin and Booth.

There was nothing of the reporter in Harbin's nature, although he was in the Secret Service. He does not appear to have asked Booth many leading questions or to have shown any anatomical curiosity as to his sensations and cares. He only saw before him a ruined and hunted man, who had committed a great crime, from an utter want of knowledge of worldly events and consequences; who had been brought up at the theater; had been a hard drinker, and probably had conceived this crime in some drunken frenzy. It is Mr. Harbin's opinion that the first conception of the murder of Lincoln came to Booth when in liquor. He says that Booth drank steadily, though he can not remember ever to have seen him drunk. Harbin shed tears in Booth's presence, and told him he would not live long. Said he: "John, you will not be able to get very far. The government is hunting you on all sides. They will capture you, or shoot you." Booth drew from under his coat a silver-mounted revolver of a large size, and said:

"No, they will never capture me; when I come to a tight place, I shall shoot myself through the head with this."

Harbin believes that Boston Corbett did not kill Booth, but that in the effort to put a bullet through his head, he shot himself through the top of the spine.

The above conversation did not immediately take place, but on the road, after they had left Bryan's.

Booth had no regret or remorse. He upbraided his associates for not having made more complete the work of murder in Washington. He said that he had fixed it up to have all the chief leaders of the Union murdered, and had only failed through the miserable agents he had been compelled to rely on. He did mention the name of John Surratt, and said that he had run away from his side the moment he (Booth) proposed to kill Lincoln, and this is an important historical matter, and I think there can be no doubt about it.

The time fixed to kill. On the 6th of April, eight days before the assassination, at a small hotel called the Kemble House, in the rear of the National Hotel, Booth assembled his little band, composed probably of Payne (Powell), Atzerodt, Harold, Surratt, O'Laughlin and Arnold, and said to them: "As we have been disappointed in our attempt to run this man off to the South, I am going to kill him." He called upon them to show their hands. John Surratt, according to Booth's narrative, arose and said: "I am opposed to it. I will not stay in it." Booth called him a coward, and told him he had better get out. The others felt the master will, and stood by Booth. That very night, according to Booth's statement, John Surratt left Washington City for Canada, and as he was about to return he heard the tidings of the assassination somewhere in the State of New York. Surratt went to Richmond also not far from the date here given.

Mr. Harbin asked Booth about his fractured leg. Booth said: "When I jumped out of that box I felt the bone give way in my leg, and a swooning sensation came on me, and I thought that I should fall to the floor. But," said he, "my courage took me through. If I had dropped there they would have captured me on the spot and that would have been the end of it. I rallied all my mental strength for the effort, and limped across the stage with a white face and went out of the door in the rear."

I said to Mr. Harbin, in an interview with him: "Was Spangler aware what Booth was going to do - Spangler, the scene-shifter?"

Hesitating a moment, with dropped eyes, Mr. Harbin looked at me and said, "Yes."

The Court-martial right. I may observe, at this spot, that the intuition and scent of the Court-martial seldom made an error. In sending Spangler to the Dry Tortugas they gave him only the consequences of his own folly, and in hanging Mrs. Surratt it becomes more and more apparent, as one gets to the center of this crime, that she had a guilty knowledge of a deep injury to be done to the Magistrate in whose capital she received a home and protection.

Harbin says that Booth was, in general, a modest man, and the only thing he was proud and almost boastful about was his physical strength. As a good spreer, fighter, good shot, good jumper and lover of the open air, he felt supreme. It was this passion for physical distinction which led him onward in his bloody scheme. The leap from the theater box and long horseback ride, the sense of joy, even after such a crime, in taking to the open country, and seeing trees and streams, were natural to the young boy, bred in the forests of Harford County, not far from the roaring Susquehanna.

I asked Mr. Harbin, if he could tell me, from Booth's talk, where Harold met Booth. He said: "Harold, I think, was at the mouth of the alley on F street, seated on his horse, when Booth, after killing the president, dashed out of the alley, and they rode together through F street to Judiciary Square, and then went down to Pennsylvania Avenue and over Capitol Hill. Booth changed horses with Harold somewhere, in order to get upon the single-footed rucker which Harold had hired, and he eased from his rough-trotting horse. Booth told me that his foot did not begin to pain him much after he got on the horse until he reached Surrattsville, where they halted a very brief instant. At that halt he began to feel the pain and throbbing in his foot."

Harbin is of the belief that Booth was not an insane man. He saw Booth four times in his life - three of those times in Lower Maryland, to which Booth made three visits. Mr. Harbin says that he has spent altogether two whole weeks in Booth's company. He says that Booth took his drinks regularly, seemed to be a practical man, and addressed himself to any thing in hand in a reasonable way. Said I: "What made Booth want to kill Mr. Lincoln?"

The secret motive. "Lincoln had refused him something - I don't know what it was. I don't think it was the pardon of John Y. Beall, because Booth had formed the plot to run the president off long before Beall was captured and hanged. No: Lincoln had refused him something else. He knew Lincoln well, and described him to me. He hated him."

Mr. Harbin's recollections of Booth's conversations are that he was not remorseful - rather took a rude joy in his act; believed that he would be able to get to the Confederate army, which was then in North Carolina, and from that make his way to Mexico. He said nothing about any want of money, did not ask for a doctor; merely looked before him and inquired about the roads, &c.

Lest I forget it, I will mention a curious circumstance: Bryan only knew Harbin under the name of Wilson. Old Bryan did not go anywhere much, and was coarse and ignorant, and he had never gained the confidence of an intelligent man like Harbin. In the course of time Bryan was arrested for having provided Booth with the horses, and he told the government inquisitors that there was a man by the name of Wilson who accosted Booth as "John," and that they evidently knew each other. The government set to work to find Wilson, never suspecting that Harbin and Wilson were the same. After the execution of the conspirators, and Harbin felt comparatively out of danger, he rode up to Bryan's house. Old Bryan had been kept a considerable time in the Old Capitol Prison, and was brooding over his wrongs, and he shouted to Harbin: "You infernal scoundrel! I am going to give you up to the government for having me sent to jail." "Look here," said Harbin, with his cold, playful, gray-brown eye, "if I hear any thing more from you I shall bring over from Maryland about eight young fellows, and we'll hang you to the branch of that oak-tree."

Bryan told everything he knew in Washington, and Harbin, aware that he had put himself in jeopardy, concluded to stay right at Mrs. Quesenberry's house and not to run away. The scent came very close to him, but he was so gentlemanly and obliging that the very officers of the law rather became confidential with him. When he had returned from his last farewell with Booth he told the folks at the house who their caller had been, and they conferred together.

The detectives. After Booth had been killed Lieutenant Baker and a detective and some soldiers

came to the place to make inquiries for Wilson. Harbin kept out of sight as much as possible. The officers said it was necessary that some one person should go up to Washington City to testify before the Judge Advocate. Harbin rather pressed that he should go, though the contrary was his design. Mrs. Quesenberry said she couldn't go on account of her children. Baden quietly dropped the remark that he had an old mother in Washington whom he had not seen for four years, and the humane officers took him along instead of Harbin. Baden's reward however, was to be sent to prison for about six weeks. A steam-boat came up Machodoc Creek not long afterward, and Mrs. Quesenberry was informed that it would be necessary for her to go to Washington. She demurred, but was told she could take her children along, and that her expenses would be paid by the government; and she was allowed while in that city to stay at the home of her childhood, Rosedale, but came into town every day to be examined, and when she was dismissed they allowed her to buy coffee, groceries, and whatever she needed, and send it back on the steamer. She is still alive, and, it is feared, is reduced in circumstances.

Going to Dr. Stuart's. To return to Booth. He desired to get into the interior and away from the river, and Harbin arranged with Bryan to let the gentlemen have horses. Bryan went along to insure the return of the horses, and rode ahead with Harold, while Booth and Harbin followed together. Here they chiefly conversed freely. When Booth mounted his horse he walked on his crutches to an orifice in the fence, where there was a sort of step or mounting-place. He had hardly got on his horse when his foot began to pain him. He had no spurs on at the time, and his broken foot had to hang, and at the different movements a twitch of pain would pass his countenance. He was steady and hopeful and self-reliant, however.

In that region of country the lanes or roads were closed by gates, which had frequently to be opened. The profile of the region is very much like that of Maryland opposite - high hills, deeply toweled by streams, and with swamps making up from the water and along the rills. Much of the way they passed through the solemn timber - pine, chestnut and oak. The design was to go to the house of Dr. Stuart, a wealthy man, and one of the owners of the National Hotel at Washington, who had conveyances, and it was thought that there they could obtain a carriage. After accompanying them two or three miles Harbin, with tears in his eyes, bade Booth good-by, and it was at this point that Booth showed the revolver, and said he would kill himself rather than be captured.

Booth arrived at Dr. Stuart's house some time in the evening. Dr. Stuart was a tall, fine-looking Virginia gentleman of good worldly sense, who had made up his mind that the assassins of the president, if they should ever come into his vicinity, should have no conversation with him. Hearing that two strange men were on the place he had them barely provided for, or rather allowed them to stay at the cabin of a negro named Lucas. Dr. Stuart lived in a handsome house, with a very broad hall running through the middle, large rooms, and all the accessories of a fine old planter. He was the wealthiest man in that part of the country, and is still alive. Booth wrote him a protesting letter about not having received him in the house, and sent him a few dollars to pay for the entertainment.

Very early Monday morning Lucas and his cart took Booth and Harold to Port Conway, on the Rappahannock River, and there Harold introduced himself to Captain Jett, a young Quartermaster of the Confederacy, who showed them to Garrett's house, where Booth was killed

the next morning but one. Harbin says he knew Jett well, and once rode with him from Port Royal to Bowling Green. Jett is now living in Baltimore like John Surratt.

An analysis of the crime. It is now my privilege to relate, from the active participants in the abduction scheme, the inception of the assassination. I am not able to say whether Booth formed this idea in Canada or in Washington, but the former is the probable place, because the letters of introduction he brought to Maryland were from Canada. Nor can I tell whether he first met Dr. Samuel Mudd or a Dr. Queen. Mr. Harbin says that in his belief Booth went to Dr. Mudd with full credentials to prove that he was a sincere Southern Man, and not a decoy. The official evidence is that Booth first appeared at the house of Dr. Queen, an old gentleman who lived about four miles south of the Bryantown Catholic Church, and that his letters of introduction were from Mr. Martin, in Canada. I am morally certain that Martin was a Baltimorean, originally from St. Mary's County, Maryland, who figured in the piratical seizure of the steamer St. Nicholas, at Point Lookout, in his native county, and, being hunted out of Maryland for this act, went to Canada. In Baltimore he had been a wine and liquor merchant. In Canada he was a broker, and afterward a blockade-runner from Halifax, where his partner was Alexander Keith, afterward known as Thomassen, the destroyer of the Bremen steamship by an infernal machine, first used in the service of the Confederate States, and now being used by the Irish malcontents against British property. Keith insured a steamer laden with goods to run the blockade, put his partner, Martin, in her, and the steamer never was heard of, and the late Marshal Kane, of Baltimore, told me that he had no doubt of Keith having blown up his partner to get the insurance, which he afterwards received. Thus multiform are the ways of violence when rebellion sets up its head against organized authority.

Booth's first coming. Mr. Harbin first met Booth, he believes, at the Catholic Church in Bryantown on Sunday at the preaching of the good Irish priest, Father John Gately, who is now at St. Patrick's Church in Baltimore. In that churchyard now lie the remains of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd and of Spangler, the scene-shifter, who died at Dr. Mudd's house some years after their release from the Dry Tortugas. There, like an evil spirit, with his pale skin, handsome mustache, gentlemanly, insinuating manner, broad chest and fine head, Booth appeared at worship. At the hotel in Bryantown Booth opened the conversation with Harbin about his plan to abduct President Lincoln. It may not have been that Sunday, but it was about that time. For the past eighteen years people have been saying that Dr. Mudd never knew Booth until he happened to come to his house with a broken foot, and that he suffered a cruel imprisonment for setting the foot of a stranger. The fact is known to every relative of Dr. Mudd that he was in the abduction scheme from the very start, and that he and John Wilkes Booth were the first men, in that quarter of the country, at least, to discuss the plan and to suggest adherents. Mudd himself knew this so well that, to the day of his death, he never so much as threatened legal proceedings against any body who had imprisoned him, and if the Court-martial had been as fully aware of his connection with the plot as we now are he would have been hanged. It took perjury, threatening and all the resources of his community to save his life. Mr. Harbin says that in Mudd's presence in October, six months before the murder, Booth acquainted him with the fact that he had a plot to run President Lincoln out of Washington, and wanted Mr. Harbin's cooperation.

Dr. Mudd entered into the conversation and favored the scheme. Harbin listened to it, thought it over, but hardly believed it feasible; and yet, having heart and soul for the Confederacy, he did

not discourage it; but the idea of bloodshed never entered into the talk. Booth described Lincoln, said he knew him well, and expressed hatred for him. Harbin said he would render any assistance in his line of operations.

Booth made three visits to the vicinity of Bryantown, In October, in November, and in December, and each time stayed four or five days, invariably at Dr. Mudd's, though he would spend a day or two, perhaps, at the hotel in the village. Harbin met him on each of these visits. John Surratt, Atzerodt and Harold were often in that part of the country, and were made adjuncts of the scheme; and Booth brought into it two of his schoolmates from Baltimore — Arnold and O'Laughlin. There were a number of other persons on the outskirts of the abduction plot whose names have never been printed.

On the 25th of January, 1865, Harbin, John Surratt and Atzerodt rose together from Bryantown through Port Tobacco, and down Port Tobacco River four or five miles to the house of a person who kept a boat, and who was to co-operate in carrying Mr. Lincoln and his captors across the river. It was late at night. Not wishing to be seen with those, Harbin tied his horse, and, taking two rails out of the fence, put them on the frozen ground and lay down there and slept while Surratt and Atzerodt transacted the business.

The Union mastiff. A Union man named Carpenter lived on that road who had a ferocious dog, which was the terror of blockade-runners. He would come out day and night and assault people on the road. As our trio were returning at eleven or twelve o'clock at night this dog heard their horses and came resolutely down to the road like a Union vedette. Harbin said to himself, "I think this is a good opportunity, my friend, to settle with you," and he drew his pistol and fired at the dog, hardly twelve yards distant, and, without one instant's staggering or quivering, the faithful animal fell dead. The party then returned to Bryantown and stayed there a day, and the next day they went out to Surratt's tavern to report that everything was ready, the road open, and the boat waiting. While there, Mrs. Surratt came down with the information that the abduction scheme had been postponed for two weeks.

Thus, Mrs. Surratt was acting for Booth nearly three months before the president's murder, and, it is believed long before that. I inquired of one of the most prominent men in the tragedy whether Mrs. Surratt was informed of Booth's intentions. He replied: "She must have known of the abduction project. Whether she knew of the assassination is an open question. I would like to think she did not, but in any other case the evidence would seem to be against her."

Indeed, Booth had obtained a powerful control over Mrs. Surratt by encouraging in her mind the idea that he might marry her. She was a widow, rather good-looking, still comparatively fresh, and she had never known a man of Booth's elegance and station in life. Her husband, who had died early in the war, had been a whiskey-drinking, card-playing country tavern-keeper. She had two sons, John and Isaac, and a daughter, Anna. Booth had greatly interested both mother and daughter, and the mother was of a peculiar, headstrong type, making a "hobby," to use the expression of one of the conspirators, of anything that she took up. If she was to abduct Lincoln, she thought of nothing else; and if she took the opposite view, would be just as headstrong. While she was in that mood Booth used her without the least regard to consequences, and she met a similar fate to his.

The scheme of Booth, as Mr. Harbin says, was to take Lincoln on his way to the Soldiers' Home; one person was to jump on the box by the driver, and one or two were to get into the carriage and immediately gag the president, and then they were to cross the Eastern Branch at Benning's Bridge and proceed by Surrattsville through "T.B." to Beantown and Port Tobacco. They were to cross the Port Tobacco River at the village of that name, and then go down the public road on the west shore to the point where the boat was concealed. One reason why Lincoln was not seized was the fact that on account of the very bad condition of the roads he did not go to the Soldiers' Home, nor could the conspirators go with any speed in a carriage, or even on horseback, through the clayey country, where at some places there would be frozen sleet, and again a horse would pitch in the mud to his knees. Booth had to provide the money to keep this band together, and they were all drinking, expensive people, and every time there seemed to be a chance to capture the president something would interpose and a postponement would be required, and then it would be hard to get the crowd together again. Atzerodt had been a blockade-runner. John Surratt was a boastful fellow of no force of character, and a very little prominence or responsibility affected his head. Payne (Powell), who proved to be as faithful and as bloody as Booth, was a Florida desperado whom Booth had picked up in Baltimore, Payne having known him slightly some years previously. Payne was at the time owing his board bill and was a deserter from the Confederate Army, and his circumstances were desperate.

The carbines. Mr. Harbin says that when Booth came to Virginia he had no carbine, nor had Harold. Booth told Harbin to go to Mrs. Surratt's tavern, and he would find between the ceiling and the roof a carbine hidden, which should become Harbin's property. The ropes that were left at Mrs. Surratt's were designed to be stretched across the road to throw pursuing cavalry off their horses if they were going at a hard ride.

Harbin would have been a valuable accessory to Booth in any scheme, but he now says he never had much faith in the abduction proposition, and that the assassination was aimed at the South as much as the illustrious victim, or that the consequences were as bad.

Taking the chances. On one occasion he concluded to go into Piscataway, where he had once kept a hotel, and about all persons in the town knew him, and all knew that he was the chief Confederate in that part of the country. The bar-room was full of Federal soldiers, and a whole regiment was stationed in the neighborhood. He walked to the counter and asked them all to drink - soldiers and citizens. The citizens stood trembling for fear he would be arrested or informed upon. Harbin himself reflected a moment that he had better be cautious, so he had his horse sent to the neighboring house of Dr. Dyer, from which he departed.

The boat in which Booth crossed the river was seized by the government at Mrs. Quesenberry's, and it is not known what became of it. Mr. Harbin says that Booth, in his belief, never was in Richmond during the war.

The rebel mail service which Jones conducted was almost as efficient as the United States mail at the present time. Washington, Baltimore, and New York newspapers were subscribed for by different rebel individuals in the vicinity of Allen's Fresh, the subscription price being paid by the Confederacy. The mail would get into Allen's Fresh some time in the afternoon, and one

person would go and call for the mail for all the neighbors. Those papers would be deposited in the stump under Jones' Bluff, and then the boat would come over as described, in the gray evening, and leave the rebel mail and take the papers out, and the next morning they would be in Richmond, going by the way of Port Conway, Port Royal and Bowling Green. That became the great route for blockade-runners and go-betweens, and finally Booth's route.

The recent story of Mr. Benson J. Lossing about Booth going to the Capitol to kill Lincoln at his second inauguration had no truth whatever in it, according to the persons who were in the abduction plot, and is merely one of those concoctions unenterprising locum-makers set abroad from a want of balance of mind.

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Transcript provided by Robert K. Summers