

# The Surratt Courier

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Nothing signals the coming of spring in Washington, D.C. like the blooming of the cherry trees. In fact, spring is considered the most beautiful time of the year in the Nation's Capital. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people come from around the world to see these beautiful trees.

The history of the cherry trees is an interesting one. In 1906, Dr. David Fairchild, a plant explorer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was so taken with Japan's cherry trees that he imported one hundred of them and planted them on his own land in Chevy Chase, Maryland. The trees adapted so well that Fairchild began a campaign to have them planted along the avenues in the Washington area. In observance of Arbor Day, 1908, Fairchild gave cherry trees to boys from each District of Columbia school to plant in their schoolyards. In closing his Arbor Day address, Dr. Fairchild expressed his desire to see the "Speedway" (now Independence Avenue SW in West Potomac Park) transformed into a "field of cherries." Eliza Scidmore, a Washington travel writer, who, since her return from Japan in 1885, had been trying to convince the government of this same idea, was present at this lecture.

Mrs. Scidmore decided to try to raise money for this project. On April 5, 1909, she sent a letter to First Lady Helen Herron Taft outlining her plan. Mrs. Taft had lived in Japan and took up the cause immediately. When the Japanese consul heard of the plan, he offered to donate 2000 trees as a gift to Washington from the city of Tokyo. Sadly, when the trees arrived, the Department of Agriculture found that the trees

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Surratt House is open for guided tours on Thursdays and Fridays from 11 am to 3 pm and on Saturdays and Sundays from 12 noon to 4 pm, with the last tours beginning one-half hour before closing. Members receive free admission by showing their current membership cards.

April 12, 19, 26 & May 3 – **John Wilkes Booth Escape Route Tours.** Follow the trail of President Lincoln's assassin from Ford's Theatre to his death near Port Royal, Virginia. Contact Surratt House Museum at 301-868-1121 or visit [www.surratt.org](http://www.surratt.org) for further information.

May 3-4 – **Annual Spring Open House** at the museum with free tours offered from 12 noon to 4 pm each day.

May 6-8 – **Exploring Upstate New York**, a bus trip sponsored by the museum. Call 301-868-1121 for details.

May 31 – **Life of Leisure: Victorians at Play**, noon to 4 pm. Come join in an afternoon of fun and games from yesteryear on the grounds of Surratt House. No reservations required.

June 22 – **Senior Sunday**, noon to 4 pm. Are you a recent graduate from high school or college or a card-carrying senior citizen? Bring proof of either status and receive a free tour at the museum.

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### Pres. Message –con't-

were infested with insects, round worms, and plant diseases and had to be burned.

The mayor of Tokyo immediately paid to replace the trees, shipping more than 3000 from the stock of a famous group of cherry trees on the banks of the Arakawa River, near Tokyo. On March 27, 1912, Mrs. Taft and Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese Ambassador, planted the first two cherry trees on the banks of the Tidal Basin. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Mrs. Taft presented a bouquet of "American Beauty" roses to Viscountess Chinda. It took workmen eight years to plant the rest of the trees.

During World War II, the cherry grove along the Arakawa River that was the parent stock of Washington's first trees fell into decline. In 1952, Japan requested help in restoring the grove, so the National Park Service shipped cuttings from descendants of these original trees.

Currently, there are approximately 3700 cherry trees of different varieties around the Tidal Basin, in East Potomac Park and on the grounds of the Washington Monument. These beautiful trees are a tribute to the people who worked so hard to bring them to our Nation's Capital. And, more importantly, they are a testament to the friendship that exists between the United States and Japan.

MARY KAUFFMAN, President

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### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

F. Lewis Wood – Hampton, Virginia  
Llandra Reid – Washington, D.C.  
Frances Seay – Washington, D.C.

And warm welcomes to our newest Life Members, Randal Berry of Little Rock, Arkansas, and David Allen of Cuba, New Mexico.

### **A SYMPOSIUM ON PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S HEALTH**

Member Blaine Houmes of Iowa has alerted us to an upcoming conference at The National Museum of Health and Medicine on the grounds of Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The event will be held from 1-8 pm on Saturday, April 18, 2008, and from 1-5 pm on Sunday, April 19. The keynote address will be given by The Honorable Frank J. Williams, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island (and Surratt Society member), and speakers will focus on various medical questions and theories that have been raised on the health of our 16<sup>th</sup> president – including the recent declaration that modern medicine could have saved Mr. Lincoln in April of 1865.

For more information and reservations, call 202-782-2673 or [nmhminfo@afip.osd.mil](mailto:nmhminfo@afip.osd.mil).

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### **MEMBER AUTHORS NEW BOOK**

Society member H. Donald Winkler of Tennessee, author of *Lincoln's Ladies* and *Lincoln and Booth*, has announced the release of his newest work, *Civil War Goats and Scapegoats*. It examines the good, the bad, and the ugly among politicians and generals of the Civil War, describing major blunders made by generals in 17 battles in the eastern and western theaters and at Andersonville.

Mr. Winkler examines those who failed miserably on the battlefield and those who were blamed for the failures. He also examines some cases in which the verdicts of historians have changed over the years.

*Civil War Goats and Scapegoats* is a publication of Cumberland House Publishing. A longtime member of The National Press Club, Mr. Winkler is a journalist, historian, and political scientist, who has received 84 national awards as a writer and editor.



### BITS AND PIECES...

From time to time, we like to throw in bits and pieces of historical “trivia” that are in some way related to our focus on the Civil War and the Lincoln assassination – so here are some interesting little tidbits for your monthly history lesson:

One of the most frequently mentioned misconceptions related to the assassination is that the term “Your name is Mud” derives from the case of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd. Member Kieran McAuliffe of Canada recently sent an entry from World Wide Words ([www.worldwidewords.org](http://www.worldwidewords.org)), which explains the derivation.

- Q. Do you know where “Your name is Mudd!” began? I’ve been told that it came from Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, who set the broken leg of John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln’s assassin, and was subsequently convicted as a conspirator.

- A. The facts about Dr. Mudd are correct, but he wasn’t the source.

Dr. Mudd certainly treated Booth and was imprisoned as a conspirator in the assassination...The story is often told that his name prompted the expression. However, even a cursory look at the evidence shows that this can’t be true.

The Oxford English Dictionary, in an entry only recently revised, in December 2007, finds the first example of the phrase from 1823, more than four decades before Lincoln was killed. Moreover, the term appeared in a British publication, *A Dictionary of the Turf*. This was written under the pen name of John Bee by John Badcock, a man about whom so little is known that even his date and place of birth and death are unknown. It’s thought he was born about 1810 and died about 1830. A short life then, but one full of writings about horses and riding. His entry in the slang dictionary reads: “Mud, a stupid twaddling fellow. ‘And his name is mud!’ ejaculated upon the conclusion of a silly oration, or of a leader in the Courier.”

It’s not from the family name “Mudd” but from the wet sticky earth stuff. It builds on a slang sense of “mud” recorded in the previous century. A book called *Hell Upon Earth* of 1703 includes the word in the sense of a fool or a simpleton. In turn this probably derives from another sense that’s two centuries older still, in which “mud” referred to the lowest or worst part of something, the dregs.

We recently saw reference to the fact that the carriage in which the Lincolns and their guests, Major Rathbone and his fiancée, Clara Harris, rode to Ford’s Theatre that fateful night is part of the Studebaker Museum in South Bend, Indiana. We contacted the museum for information, but received no reply. However, Society member Roger Norton of Florida (who has a wonderful website, *Abraham Lincoln’s Assassination*) supplied us with newspaper articles detailing the history of the carriage.

Built in 1864 by Wood Brothers of New York, it was presented to President Lincoln in 1865, shortly before his second inauguration. There is some question as to whether it was a gift of Wood Brothers or of the people of New York City. Not only was it used to transport the Lincolns to Ford’s Theatre on April 14, 1865; the President and Mrs. Lincoln had been riding in the carriage earlier that day, as Mrs. Lincoln later related to William Herndon, and had discussed their future.



The black, leather-clad barouche was a very expensive, elegant vehicle for its day, with silver mountings and a door engineered so that the steps automatically folded out when the door opened.

After Lincoln's death, the carriage was inherited by his son, Robert Todd Lincoln. It later was sold to a New York physician, F.B. Brewer. Clement Studebaker, one of the founders of the Studebaker carriage company, bought it from Brewer in 1889 and displayed it for many years at the Studebaker Carriage Repository in Chicago. The carriage was eventually moved to South Bend, where it was displayed at the Studebaker Corp. headquarters and was part of a collection of Studebaker-owned vehicles given to the city in 1969.

The carriage was recently on loan to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum for its opening. Before going on display as part of a six-month exhibit there was considerable repair and conservation work done. At that time, conservators found that the vehicle was originally not black, but rather dark green with maroon, gold, and white details. They also uncovered an elaborate, cursive presidential monogram – A.L. – on each door, which had been painted over.

For all of our "city dude" members – What is horse faking? Here's an answer from Society member and museum guide, Rick Smith

In the Conan Doyle novel, *Silver Blaze*, while explaining to Dr. Watson how a well-known and very valuable racehorse that he has recently recovered could be successfully hidden for such a period of time, Sherlock Holmes says of the thief, "Oh, an old horse-faker like him has many a dodge." And, later, having informed the horse's owner, Colonel Ross, that he is indeed standing in the presence of his horse, Ross cries, "That is not my horse! That beast has not a white hair upon its body!" Later still, after Ross's horse, Silver Blaze, wins the stakes, Holmes says, "Let us all go round and have a look at the horse together." And then, "Here he is. You have only to wash his face and his legs in spirits of wine, and you will find that he is the same old Silver Blaze as ever." "Mr. Holmes, you take my breath away!" the Colonel exclaims. "I found him in the hands of a faker and took the liberty of running him just as he was sent over." ...

Horse faking. The subtle art of altering the appearance of a horse, whether for good or evil, is a practice that is as ancient as the horse itself. Stories of thieves altering a horse's appearance abound in the literature of antiquity and are the topic of modern day headlines.

For example, in March of 2003, a Florida stable was raided by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department and found to contain stolen and altered show horses, one of which was valued at over \$100,000. One horse, a well-known 16 hand Oldenburg, was disguised in an effort to prevent it from being recognized. A large, white blaze running from its forehead and down its muzzle, and a large, star-shaped scar on its shoulder had been sprayed with brown Rustoleum. Another animal's legs and hooves had been painted. The thief, a Chicago veterinarian, was arrested and charged with grand larceny. These horses had been missing since October of 2002.

My friend, William Richter of Tucson, Arizona, who is a skilled farrier [one who shoes and otherwise tends to horses' feet/hooves] and knowledgeable horseman, as well as being a member of the Surratt Society, tells me that not only are there methods by which the physical appearance may be altered, but there are ways to change the conformation [stance and movement or gait] of the horse by various means which render the animal temporarily sound or temporarily lame.



All of the forgoing is by way of introduction to a theory regarding the horses that were ridden by John Wilkes Booth and David Herold from Washington City the night of April 14, 1865. The "accepted" version of history as regards the fate of the bay mare and the roan gelding which carried the fugitives that eventful night is as follows: While giving them instructions relative to their safety prior to crossing into Virginia, Thomas Jones cautioned Booth and Herold that they would not be allowed to have a fire at their place of hiding, to be patient and stay quiet, and that their horses would have to be disposed of due to the risk they posed were they to be seen or heard. Then, depending on which version you believe, either David Herold, Thomas Jones, or Franklin Robey led the horses deep into the Zechiah Swamp, shot them, and sunk the carcasses in the muck.

I would respectfully take several issues with this view:

- If a fire and the nickering of horses would attract unwanted attention, then surely two gunshots would do the same. Especially if the reports came from a .52 caliber Spencer.
- Is the Zechiah Swamp of a nature that it would contain such deep mires and quick sand bogs of the kind as would be capable of sinking two 1500-pound animals out of sight? I have seen no evidence to suggest that the Zechiah is such a swamp.
- The idea that men of that time, who understood horses, would destroy such valuable animals is absurd, especially when there were other means of making those horses "disappear" rather than to have them put down.
- James Owens gives a firsthand account of two men riding into Newport and describes not only the men, but the horses ridden by them. The description of the horses given by Owens is an exact description of the horses ridden from Washington City by Booth and Herold. For those of you who have not read the Owens statement, or are otherwise not aware of it, he was giving a description of two men and their horses as they appeared in Newport, (Charles County) Maryland, *after* the time that the animals in question were supposed to have been destroyed.

Here is what I believe, based in part on my reading of the Owens statement:

- Booth and Herold leave their hiding place in the pine thicket near Rich Hill (home of Samuel Cox) and are led to Newport by seventeen-year-old Samuel Cox, Jr. In his statement to Colonel Wells, Owens mentions the two men riding into Newport on Thursday night [April 20]. "It was pretty late, nearly supper time, when two men came there on horseback, accompanied by a white boy..."
- Booth and Herold are hidden for about twenty-four hours in a pine thicket near the Adams Tavern, and according to Owens, they take meals at the tavern. "They stayed in the pines near the house until next evening, which was Friday night [April 21] and were at the house on and off at different times; they did not lodge at Mr. Adams', but only got meals there."
- Booth and Herold leave Newport after dark the day after arriving [April 21]. Says Owens, "They left in the evening after dark, and went towards Pope's Creek where Thomas Jones lives."
- Owens states further, "Their horses came back this way [to Newport] in charge of the boy. If I were to try to find them [the horses] I would inquire of the people who saw them..."
- The horses were then stabled at Adams's, at least for the time being. Both animals are faked, or altered with dye to cover or otherwise disguise any distinguishing marks, such as the star on the bay mare's forehead, or to darken the roan gelding's light colored coat;



their hooves are painted; their teeth are filed, and they are led to another location to await the conclusion of events in hiding. Or, they may have remained stabled at Adams's.

Recently, I was told that James O. Hall believed those two horses lived a good long life. I see absolutely no reason to disagree.

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## ON THE ROAD AGAIN...

by Rick Smith

NOTE: From 1912 to 1927, Washington's *Sunday Star* newspaper carried a regular series of articles by "The Rambler" – otherwise named J. Harry Shannon. The Rambler rambled around the city and its vicinity, visiting places with interesting history attached to them and reporting on them in picturesque, narrative style and enlivened by characteristic wit.

One of our museum guides, Rick Smith, has been rambling around sites related to the Lincoln assassination story for years now and has begun writing about his experiences at these sites in modern times. One thing that is remarkable about the escape route of John Wilkes Booth is that the majority of the places visited by Booth are still in existence. In this intermittent series, Mr. Smith will "reminisce" about the sites along the trail in 2008.

## FINDING KING'S CREEK

Richard Smoot spoke of it in his pamphlet, *The Unwritten History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, written long after the events surrounding the Lincoln assassination were over; and now, after a brief search, I stood on the spot which he had described – where King's Creek crosses, or actually, because of the built-up modern road and attending culvert, runs under the public road in Charles County, Maryland.

Laurie Verge, director of the Surratt House Museum, had asked if I could find the location that Smoot mentions in his booklet, not so much to find the point at which King's Creek and the public road intersect, as to determine where Lock Eleven Farm may have been.

Richard M. Smoot states in his narrative, "As a matter of fact, it was the intention of Booth, Atzerodt, and Herold, to ride from Washington after the shooting to what was known as Lock Eleven Farm, located near where King's Creek crosses the public road in Charles County, there turn their horses loose, and walk to the point on King's Creek where the boat was concealed, and cross the Potomac in it."

John Surratt, Jr., met with Richard Smoot in Port Tobacco in the early spring of 1865, to arrange the purchase of a boat, described by Smoot in this way, "I owned a good, large and stout boat, and fell into the way of transporting goods and passengers across the Potomac, and from that occupation to that of running the blockade was but a short step and an inviting one."

Mr. Smoot agreed to sell his boat for \$250 and to aid in having the boat hidden and ready for use, as Surratt told him, "In an emergency which might arise within a very short time," at a spot on King's Creek near Lock Eleven Farm.

"Sure, Laurie, I'll find Lock Eleven Farm." What was I thinking?!

"Lock Eleven Farm." Sounds as if it should be on a canal, or at least close to one. Are there any canals in Charles County?



And so, I find myself standing on Smoot's "public road," Blossom Point Road, to be precise, at the point where it straddles King's Creek. Well, fine and dandy; here is King's Creek, so where is, or was, Lock Eleven Farm?

On the morning of April 22, 1865, just to the southwest of this spot, near the mouth of Nanjemoy Creek, John Wilkes Booth and David Herold made landfall during their first attempt to cross the Potomac River. To my right, or to the north, only 2/10 of a mile away, was the former home of Peregrine Davis, once master of Indiantown Farm. Could Indiantown have been known as Lock Eleven Farm? Or was Lock Eleven nothing but a memory? Nothing much else nearby; open fields of broom straw, stands of oak and sweet gum; the wind and the crickets all that was to be heard; the sun on my face. It was peaceful, it was serene, and it was the back of beyond.

While I stand staring into King's Creek, or should I say, the creek bed; dusty dry now due to this summer's extreme drought; pondering things, a member of the Charles County Sheriff's Department draws alongside to ask if I have lost my way. I explain that I had been looking for King's Creek and....

"Well, you sure found it. This is King's Creek right here, or what's left of it. We used to hunt deer all through these parts."

"Thanks. I understand that this is King's Creek, but I'm trying to find the location of a place called Lock Eleven Farm. Any idea where that might be?"

"Nope. Never heard of it. And I've lived around here all my life."

I give the deputy a description of the farm's location from Richard Smoot's pamphlet.

"There's only ever been one farm of any size nearby, and that's Indiantown."

"Thanks for your help, I really appreciate it."

"Sure. Have a good one."

This is getting complicated. Again, I wondered if Indiantown Farm may also have been known as Lock Eleven Farm, but that doesn't seem to make sense. Since things have a way of changing over the years, it is possible that there was once a farm close by that bore the name Lock Eleven.

Before making my journey, I had made inquiries of the Charles County Historical Society and the College of Southern Maryland's Southern Maryland Studies Center regarding Lock Eleven Farm. The inquiries yielded no results.

Sadly, like so much connected with the Lincoln assassination, the location of Lock Eleven Farm would, for now, remain hidden.