



local
adventures
feature

TRAILING AN ASSASSIN

History buffs can follow the path that John Wilkes Booth fled

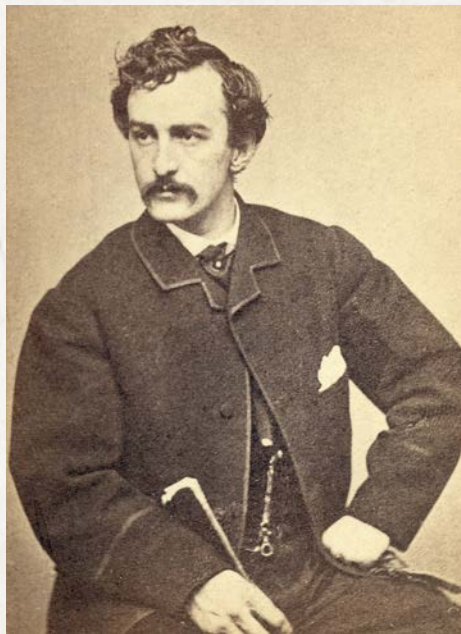
BY **GLEND A. C. BOOTH**

John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater in Washington on April 14, 1865, at 10:15 p.m. A Confederate sympathizer and actor, after shooting Lincoln, he leaped from the second-floor balcony onto the stage, charged out the back door and galloped into Maryland in the dark of night with his accomplice, David Herold.

Booth's motivation, plot and attempted escape through Maryland and Virginia have intrigued professional and amateur historians for 157 years. Retracing his route today still provokes questions: Who helped them along the way? Was the route planned? What was their ultimate destination?

Once today's travelers escape the Washington suburbs and drive into the quiet countryside of farm fields and dense forests, it's easy to envision two desperate men on horseback charging at a fast gallop down rural dirt roads in the dead of night, sneaking in and out of farmhouses and hiding in swamps and thickets.

History buffs can retrace Booth's and Herold's 12-day, 66-mile journey from Ford's Theater to Port Royal, Virginia, a small town on the Rappahannock River east of Fredericksburg. There, Booth met his



demise and Herold surrendered.

1 Ford's Theater
511 10TH ST. NW, WASHINGTON

Lincoln and his wife, Mary, were watching "Our American Cousin" from the balcony's presidential box, along with 1,400 other people sitting on portable wooden chairs. During a laugh line, Booth shot the

president in the back of the head with a derringer handgun.

Ever theatrical, Booth then jumped 12 feet from the balcony onto the stage and accidentally snagged his boot spur on either the framed photograph of George Washington or a flag draped across the balcony. When he landed, he broke his left fibula. Chaos ensued, and Booth disappeared into the night.

The theater today looks much as it did in 1865. The museum under the theater explores Civil War Washington up to the night of Lincoln's death and houses over 3,000 items related to the assassination, including Booth's gun, dagger, diary and compass, and features life-size replicas of four conspirators.

A major piece of incriminating evidence on display is Booth's boot that Dr. Samuel Mudd removed later that night to stabilize the fugitive's broken bone. Mudd stashed the boot under the bed Booth used. Because it had Booth's name inside, authorities surmised that he had been at the Mudd farm.

2 The Surratt House Museum
9118 BRANDYWINE ROAD, CLINTON, MD.

Maryland did not secede from the union, but in the 1860s, it was heavily pro-Confederate and slavery was legal. Southern



FORD'S THEATER

WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE SURRATT HOUSE

ZEKIAH SWAMP

THE MUDD HOUSE

FREDERICKSBURG

GARRETT FARM

POTOMAC RIVER

CHESAPEAKE BAY



HERE BOOTH DIED

ON THIS ROAD TWO MILES SOUTH IS THE GARRETT PLACE. THERE JOHN WILKES BOOTH, LINCOLN'S