April 1865 – The Month that Saved America

Part III – Hunt for Booth Begins, Davis Escapes, Johnston Surrenders – April 15-21, 1865

Lincoln dies and body is taken to Springfield. Hunt for conspirators begins.
The Plot is Formed

- Lincoln’s reelection inspires John Wilkes Booth to take action and he forms a plan to capture Lincoln and exchange him for Rebel prisoners.
- He recruits a “band of misfits, dregs, and old friends” from Washington and Baltimore.
- Booth confers with Confederate agents in Maryland, Boston, and Canada.
- Is the Confederate government involved in the plot?
- Lower levels of the Confederate secret service considered abducting Lincoln.

Lincoln delivers his second inaugural address. Lincoln stands in the center, with papers in his hand. John Wilkes Booth is visible in the photograph, in the top row right of center. (White, The Eloquent President)
The Assassination

THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN.
AT FORD’S THEATRE WASHINGTON, D.C. APRIL 14TH, 1865.
“Sic semper tyrannis!”
After shooting the president, Booth stabs Major Henry Rathbone.

He hurls himself over the balcony and lands on the stage.

Booth shouts “Sic semper tyrannis!” “Thus always to tyrants”

Then Booth said something to the effect of “The South is avenged!”, “Revenge for the South!”, or “The South shall be free!”

After Booth landed on the stage, Major Joseph B. Stewart climbed over the orchestra pit and footlights, and chased Booth across the stage.

Mary Lincoln's and Clara Harris' screamed and Major Rathbone shouted “Stop that man!”
Booth Escapes

- The audience now realized what had happened.
- Some men from the audience chased Booth, but could not catch him.
- Booth ran across the stage out the side door.
- Upon leaving the building, Booth approached the horse he had waiting outside.
- Booth struck Joseph "Peanuts" Burroughs, who was holding Booth's horse in the forehead with the handle of his knife, leaped onto the horse, kicked Burroughs in the chest with his good leg, and rode away.
- "Soldiers, sailors, police, all started in every direction but the assassin had gone."

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4/1/2015
Several doctors from the audience, decided that the president must be moved.

They decided to carry Lincoln across the street and find a house where he could be cared for.

A man holding a lantern called to them, “Bring him in here! Bring him in here!”

The men carried Lincoln into William Petersen's boarding house and into the first-floor bedroom where they laid him diagonally across the bed because his tall frame would not fit normally on the smaller bed.
“Bring him in here!”

William Peterson’s Boarding House  Ford’s Theater
Laid him diagonally across the bed

Room where Lincoln Died

Bed where President was placed
A vigil began at the Petersen House.

The three physicians were joined by Surgeon General of the United States Army Joseph K. Barnes; Charles Henry Crane, Barnes' assistant; Anderson Ruffin Abbott; and Robert K. Stone, Lincoln's personal physician.

Using a probe, Barnes located some fragments of Lincoln's skull and discovered the bullet was still in his skull.

Robert Lincoln arrived at the Petersen House after being told of the shooting at about midnight.

Tad Lincoln was at Grover's Theatre to see *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* and was not allowed to go to the Petersen House.

Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton came and took charge of the scene.
Mary Lincoln was so upset by the assassination that Stanton ordered her out of the room by shouting, "Take that woman out of here and do not let her in here again!" While Mary Lincoln sobbed in the front parlor,
While Mary Lincoln sobbed in the front parlor, Stanton set up shop in the rear parlor, effectively running the government for several hours, sending and receiving telegrams, taking reports from witnesses, and issuing orders for the pursuit of Booth.

For most of the night, Leale held the president's hand, and afterwards said that “sometimes, recognition and reason return just before departure.”

“I held his hand firmly to let him know, in his blindness, that he had a friend.”

Lincoln died at 7:22:10 a.m. on April 15, 1865.

Lincoln's secretary John Hay said that at the moment of Lincoln's death, “a look of unspeakable peace came upon his worn features.”

The crowd around the bed knelt for a prayer.

Stanton said, “Now he belongs to the ...” and either finished with “ages” or “angels.”
Powell attacks William Seward

- Booth assigned Lewis Powell to assassinate Secretary of State William H. Seward.
- Seward was recovering at home from an carriage accident.
- Herold guided Powell to Seward's residence.
- Powell, armed with a revolver and Bowie knife, persuaded the butler to let him enter the house to deliver medicine to Seward.
- Powell started up the stairs to Seward's third-floor bedroom, but was stopped by Seward's son, Assistant Secretary of State Frederick W. Seward.
Seward Survives Powell’s Attempt

- Powell assaulted Frederick and shoved Seward’s daughter Fanny out of the way.
- Powell ran to Seward's bed and began stabbing him repeatedly in the face and neck.
- He missed the first time he swung his knife down, but the third blow sliced open Seward's cheek.
- Seward's splint was the only thing that prevented the blade from penetrating his jugular vein.
- Powell's blows pushed Seward off the bed and onto the floor behind the bed and out of Powell’s reach.
- Others in the home tried to drive Powell away and Powell stabbed them.
- The commotion in the house frightened Herold and he abandoned Powell, who had no knowledge of the escape route.
- Powell exclaimed, "I'm mad! I'm mad!" and rode away.
- Seward spat the blood out of his mouth and said, "I am not dead; send for a doctor, send for the police. Close the house."
Atzerodt does not attack Johnson

- Booth assigned George Atzerodt to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson.
- Atzerodt was to go to the Vice President's room at the Kirkwood House at 10:15 p.m. and shoot him.
- On April 14, 1865, Atzerodt rented room 126 at the Kirkwood, directly above where Johnson’s room was.
- He arrived at the Kirkwood at the scheduled time and went to the bar downstairs armed with a gun and knife.

- Atzerodt asked the bartender about the Vice President's character and behavior.
- After spending some time at the hotel saloon, Atzerodt got drunk and wandered away through the streets of Washington.
- He tossed his knife away in the street and went to the Pennsylvania House Hotel around 2 a.m., where he checked into a room and went to sleep.
“Let the stain of innocent blood be removed from the land by the arrest and punishment of the murders”

The widely held belief was that the South was responsible for the attacks.

“All circumstances signify a plot laid in Richmond before the capture of that city.” – Edwin Stanton
Booth Escapes

- **April 14th** – 10:15 p.m. - Lincoln shot
- **April 14th** – 12:00 p.m. – Booth and Herod pick up weapons at Surratt Tavern
- **April 15th** – 4:00 a.m. - Dr. Samuel Mudd sets Booth’s leg
- **April 16th** – Booth and Herold hired a local man to guide them to Samuel Cox's house
- **April 16th-21st** – Cox takes Booth and Herold to Thomas Jones, who hides the men in Zekiah Swamp near his house for five days waiting to cross the Potomac River
Booth and Herold stopped at Dr. Samuel Mudd's house around 4:00 a.m. on April 15.

Dr. Mudd set the fractured bone and arranged for a carpenter to make a pair of crutches for Booth.

Booth paid Mudd $25 for his services.

Booth and Herold spent 12-15 hours at Mudd's house.

Mudd learned about the assassination either from Booth or during a trip Bryantown on April 15th.

Mudd waited until Sunday April 16th to contact the authorities.

This delay in contacting the authorities was a significant factor in tying Mudd to the conspiracy.
Government in Chaos - April 15

- Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, assumes the reins of authority.
- Stanton became the US government, issuing orders, military and civil, assuming all police control, taking depositions, arresting suspects, and tending to the security of the capital.
- Davis and cabinet leave Greensborough, NC.

The defining crossroad of American democracy - “It would be this: the nine long hours preceding 7:22 A.M. on April 15, and the three hours hence, until 10 A.M., about twelve hours all told, when the transfer of presidential power was set to take place - and the chaotic, rough, tumultuous days that followed in its uncertain wake.” --- J. Winik

Andrew Johnson takes the oath of office at 11:00 a.m. and assumes the office of president.
Vengeance

- “Shoot them!”
- “Hang them!”
- “Hang them again”
- “Kill the god damn rebels”

- “Treason is a crime – and crime must be punished.”
- “A very good way to disenfranchise the [rebels] is to break their necks!”
- “They shall suffer for this, they shall suffer for this.”

“Now it was the voices of revenge that could be heard loudest” --- Jay Winik

President Andrew Johnson
After leaving Greensborough, Jefferson Davis and members of his cabinet reach Lexington, KY.

Davis expressed regret at Lincoln’s death.

He later said that he believed Lincoln would have been less harsh with the South than his successor, Andrew Johnson.

In the aftermath, Johnson issued a $100,000 reward for the capture of Davis and accused him of helping to plan the assassination.

As the Confederate military structure fell into disarray, the search for Davis by Union forces intensified.
Lincoln’s body is brought to the East Room of the White House where it lies in state until the funeral ceremony on April 19.

Booth and Herold arrive at Port Tobacco on the banks of the Potomac where they hope to find some means to cross the river into Virginia.

Generals Sherman and Johnston meet at Durham Station to discuss peace.

Lincoln’s body lies in state
April 19

- Funeral services are held for the dead president in the East Room of the White House.
- Afterwards a long and solemn procession escorts the casket to the capital rotunda where the public will view it during the day.
- Davis and his party arrive in Charlotte, NC where they will stay for the next few days.
- Davis learns about Lincoln’s assassination.
- Union General John Pope writes to Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith suggesting he surrender all Southern troops west of the Mississippi on the same terms given General Lee.
• Lee writes Jefferson Davis telling him that he is opposed to the continuation of hostilities through guerrilla warfare and recommends an end to all fighting.

• For some time, Davis has believed that partisan warfare should be the second stage of Southern resistance to the North.
In Philadelphia, Lincoln's hearse was pulled by eight black horses outfitted with silver-trimmed harnesses. The crowd, described by one reporter as "a living mass of men, women and children," was tormented by pickpockets, triggering a chaotic scene during which one woman broke her arm.