N·W·AYER & SON
INCORPORATED

500 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

February 8, 1938.

Mr. F. L. Black,
Ford Motor Company,
Dearborn, Michigan.

Dear Mr. Black:

You may be interested in the attached publicity release from N. B. C. I presume you already know of Mrs. Nelson Todd, but she may reveal something on the broadcast next Saturday which will be useful to you.

Yours very truly,

Hay

H. L. McClinton,
N. W. AYER & SON INC.

Encl.

National Broadcasting Company
RCA Building, Radio City, N.Y.

February 4, 1938

(Broadcast NBC-Red, Feb. 12,
8:00 p.m., EST)

RIPLEY GUEST SAW LINCOLN SLAIN

Mrs. Nelson Todd, 98 years old, of Newark, N. J., one of the few living persons who saw Abraham Lincoln assassinated, will take part in the Lincoln's Birthday broadcast of Robert L. Ripley's Believe-It-or-Not program over the NBC-Red Network, Saturday, February 12, at 8:00 p.m., EST.

Mrs. Todd and her husband, who had eloped, were honey-mooning in Washington and were in the audience at Ford's Theater on the night of April 14, 1865, when John Wilkes Booth assassinated the President.

Ripley's players will dramatize the story of a mother, who, having lost two sons in the Union Army, made a personal appeal to the President to let her third and surviving son be discharged honorably.

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(Broadcast NBC-Red, Feb. 8,
9:30 p.m., EST)

ROSS TO SING "MATINATTA"

Lanny Ross will sing in a foreign language for the first time on the Hollywood Mardi Gras program in the NBC-Red Network broadcast of Tuesday, February 8, at 9:30 p.m., EST. His solo will be Leoncavalla's "Matinatta," in Italian.

Ross' popular number will be, "Begin the Beguin," in a new arrangement by Raymond Paige and his arrangers. "Two Guitars," an old favorite Russian gypsy tune, will be sung by the 72-voice chorus. Sixteen-year-old Jane Rhodes will sing "I Double-dare You," and the Mardi Gras Male Chorus will reply with "Who?"

The comedy highlight of the program will be a drama of the sea, starring Walter O'Keefe and Charlie Butterworth.

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Newark Woman to Tell Nation Of Witnessing Lincoln Shooting

Mrs. Nelson Todd, 92, in Talkie for News Reel—Believed One of Few Eyewitnesses Alive, She Says Booth Was Lassoed From Stage.

Newark Sunday Call - Feb 7 - 1932

IN Newark today there is a woman who is believed to be one of the few persons now alive who saw Abraham Lincoln assassinated.

Mrs. Nelson Todd of 39 Lincoln park, oldest living member of one of the oldest families in Newark, yesterday recalled the circumstances of the tragedy which shocked the nation on the night of April 14, 1865.

Despite the fact that she is in her ninety-third year, Mrs. Todd does everything but sit at home peacefully. She is in the habit of walking from her modern apartment to the vicinity of the Four Corners at least once or twice a day, dining out, and going out for an automobile ride when the spirit moves.

Motion picture theater patrons throughout the country will have an opportunity to see and hear Mrs. Todd in a "talkie" within the next few days, telling the story of how Lincoln was shot. A leading news reel concern requested her to describe the tragedy before its camera and microphone.

The picture was taken at the concern's New York studio one day last week. Her first experience before a movie camera evidently turned out well, because on the following day Mrs. Todd again went to New York for the purpose of lengthening the film.

Knew Both Personally.

Not only has Mrs. Todd shaken hands with Abraham Lincoln, but she was personally acquainted with John Wilkes Booth, the actor who fired the shot which ended the career of the Great Emancipator.

"I have shaken hands with every President since William Henry Harrison, who died in 1841, also with Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and Kossuth," said Mrs. Todd. "I have known many splendid and distinguished people, and of all I have known there was not a finer man than John Wilkes Booth, a fine looking, mannerly chap about my own age.

"I had heard that he had fallen into bad company. We all knew his sympathies were with the Southern states, and we learned later that he was a member of a set of fellows radicals we would call them today—who drew lots to see which one should kill Lincoln. It just happened that the lot fell to Booth.

"I shall never forget the first time I saw Lincoln nor the last. The first time was just a little before his second inauguration, when he passed through Newark by train. I was horse-back riding and rode through side streets so that I saw Lincoln not once but several times on the rear platform. My persistence must have attracted President Lincoln's attention. William Coulter, a friend of my father, the conductor of the train, told me later that the President pointed me out and said 'That young lady there is a fine horsewoman.'

"I was married in 1858. The war, as you know, followed a couple of years later. Those were awful times. What a relief when it ended on the ninth of April, 1865!

Memorable Trip.

"Immediately upon learning of Lee's surrender my husband planned a trip to Washington. The day after we arrived was Good Friday, April 14. I remember because we went to church. My husband was active in Trinity Church Sunday School, Newark. I was amazed when later in the day he said 'We are going to the theater this evening.' 'To the theater on Good Friday?' I said. He explained that the President was to attend a benefit and last night performance of Laura Keen in 'Our American Cousin' at the Ford Theater, and it being a gala occasion and our only opportunity, probably, of seeing President Lincoln, we might waive our religious scruples.

"Theaters began earlier in those days. We were in our places on the center aisle just a few rows back from the stage at seven-thirty, when the curtain rose. There was a flag-draped box on the left for the President, Mrs. Lincoln, Miss Harris and Major Rathborne. They sat in the second box.

"The curtain had gone up on the second act when there was a shot. At the same instant I was amazed to see John Wilkes Booth, whom I had known so well, half jump and fall from the first box to the stage, twelve feet below. His spur had caught in the drapery on the box, so that his leap turned out to be a bad fall.

"For an instant no one realized what had happened. It struck me that John Wilkes Booth had committed suicide. It was not until some seconds later that Mrs. Lincoln screamed. The house turned from the stage, where all eyes had been on Booth, and saw the President, his head fallen on his chest, slumped down in the old-fashioned rocking chair in which he had been sitting. Then, of course, we knew the greater tragedy that had happened.

"Few people knew how badly Booth was hurt in his fall. I have read accounts and seen pictures of him hobbling off the stage to make his escape. This is as false as the story that he shouted 'Sic Semper Tyrannis!'

Rope Swung Over Booth.

"Here is what did happen and I think I am the only person that knows how Booth made his escape. Knowing Booth, it was only natural my interest was keen enough to attract my attention back to him, even when I knew Lincoln was assassinated. When Booth's spur caught and threw him to the stage he broke his leg in a terrible way, so that the bone actually protruded through his trousers, and smeared the stage with blood. Naturally he couldn't move. Laura Keen leaned over and patted his head. Then, to my amazement, I saw a rope swing over, evidently thrown by some confederates, lasso him and whisk him into the wings. That was the last time I ever saw John Wilkes Booth.

"As we walked away from the theater and the great tragedy, my husband said to me 'What next?' 'We must go home,' I said. And so we went to the hotel, packed our things and went immediately to the railroad station. The streets were seething with people. At the station the trainmen on a cattle train that was about to leave for New York had not heard the news so they let us ride in the caboose.

"We rode all night from Washington and arrived in New York in the early morning. Newark was just a way station in those days and the trains did not stop there. When we got in we learned that Lincoln was dead.

"Our family was surprised to see us back before we had planned. Being strict Episcopalians we did not tell them we had gone to the theater on Good Friday, so we told no one of the thrilling scene of history we had seen enacted. Nor throughout my husband's life did we ever tell. It was only a few years ago that I let the truth out. I had gone to see a performance of 'The Birth of a Nation,' in which the assassination of Lincoln was shown. When I saw the scene I gasped out 'Why it wasn't that way.' 'How do you know?' I was asked. Then I told that I was one of the few remaining witnesses of that great tragedy.



MRS. NELSON TODD

Newarker Since Infancy.

Mrs. Todd has lived in Newark since she was an infant. She is the daughter of the late Aaron Rodwell and Elizabeth Garthwaite Rodwell of this city, and granddaughter of the late Jeremiah C. Garthwaite, donor of the site on which St. Paul's Episcopal Church stands at High and West Market streets.