Ford Motor Company

FACTORY AND GENERAL OFFICES
DEARBORN, MICH.

ALEXANDRIA, VA. December 13, 1937.

#8.

Mr. F. L. Black,
The Edison Institute,
Dearborn, Michigan.

Dear Mr. Black:-

Acknowledging your letter of December 6th to Mr. Mullan, relative to controversy surrounding the capture and death of John Wilkes Booth.

Writer has personally called upon Mr. H. L. Garrett, Superintendent, and Mr. John T. Clemens, Custodian, of the famous "Oldroyd" collection of Lincoln relics which the U.S.Government purchased from Mr. O.H.Oldroyd and which are now housed in the Old Ford Theatre in Washington. Have also visited the photographic section of U.S.Signal Corps, as well as the Office of Judge Advocate General, U.S.Army. From the above, we have developed the following information:

Among the collection in the Ford Theatre are pictures of John Ford and Harry Ford, owner-manager and Treasurer, respectively, of the Ford Theatre at the time of President Lincoln's assassination. We have arranged with Mr. Garrett for a photographer to furnish us with a photo of each, priced at 60¢ per print. As for photo of Blanche Chapman Ford, we are arranging to contact a grandson, whom we have located in Baltimore, Md., to ascertain if he or any other relative may have such a picture - there being none in the possession of any of the sources which I have just mentioned.

The U.S.Signal Corps possess only pictures of Pres.Lincoln and photos of Booth and the other conspirators, viz: Atzerodt, Herold, Arnold, Spangler, O'Laughlin and Payne (small bust pictures, individually grouped about the central picture of Booth, as one print); also various photos of Sgt.Boston Corbett of the 16th New York Cavalry, who shot Booth; Captain Doherty, Corbett's superior officer; the box in Ford's Theatre; chair in which Lincoln was sitting when shot; part of stage of Ford's Theatre, showing backdrop scenery.

Affidavits
Statement
Signed
Confessions

After several contacts with the custodian of the Booth exhibits in possession of the Judge Advocate General, writer was permitted to view such exhibits, which are stored in sub-basement of the old War Department, now used by the State Department in Washington. The custodian and I visited there today. The exhibits consist of the following (aside from documentary evidence as used in the trial of the conspirators, such as affidavits, testimony, etc.) articles:

Derringer pistol (45 caliber)
Bullet which killed Pres.Lincoln.
About six small pieces of bone from Pres.Lincoln's skull as removed in process of reclaiming bullet (these pieces in old-fashioned glass container, oval in shape, all contained in small, covered box.
Metal Probe, about 6" long, as used by surgeon in locating bullet.

Payne's saddle and bridle (horse found in the District of Columbia next morning, when returning to stable from where he was hired. He was in neighborhood of stable when captured).

Wooden Bar in size about 1½" x 2" and about 36" long, which Booth used in bracing the outer door of Lincoln box at Theatre, to prevent anyone from entering behind him.

Mrs. Lincoln's black opera glass case.

Booth's knife and shield therefor.

Booth's necktie (partial - front part, near collar).

Booth's horn or bone whistle, about 2" long, which it is claimed he blew just before firing the shot. It is claimed by some that he had confederate or confederates in the theatre or employed by the theatre and that it was anticipated by Booth that one of these would turn out the lights when he blew his whistle. This whistle is contained in a small leather pouch, something like a container for a slip of cartridges, or else a first-aid kit.

Booth's boot - a hip boot of yellow leather, which had to be cut by Dr.Mudd in order to treat Booth's broken leg. The name of "J.Wilkes" can be faintly seen in ink in upper or hip part of this long boot, inside, of course.

Booth's pocket compass, in small case.

Booth's pocket maps, (a) "Colton's" map of Maryland, Va., and Delaware, and (b) Perrin's war map of Southern States from "latest surveys".

Pocket Knife (with exceptionally long blade, when opened resembles a dagger. Not brought out in trial as to whether this was Booth's property or one of his conspirators).

Payne's Revolver, a long-barreled six-shooter, which he used in attempt to kill Secretary Seward. As you know, Payne had to fight his way into Seward's sick room, battling several secretarys and a trained male nurse and in the course thereof he struck one of the assistants with this revolver, which caused the barrel support to break and lock the firing pin. There are also two other revolvers, all like Paynes, with no identification as to ownership.

Booth's Rio Grande Camp Knife and Shield therefor. This is a real bowie knife. There are also two other bowie knives of Sheffield steel, property of the other conspirators.

Spencer repeating carbine of Booth's. There is also another carbine, same make and also a repeater, which was recovered

by Government soldiers from its hiding place beneath the flooring on second floor of the Surratt House. Booth decided to take but one carbine after the young Herold became frightened.

Rebel Circular Cipher. This was not in Booth's possession or in his effects but was captured in Richmond, Va., when that city was the capitol of the Confederacy. The connection is that various cipher writings among Booth's effects were deciphered by the use of this simple cylinder-letter cipher. This tended to show Booth's connection with the Confederacy.

Hemp Rope found in Spangler's Carpet Bag. Spangler testified that he used this rope when crabbing. It was same size as that used in moving scenery at the Ford Theatre. Believe you are also acquainted with the story of a plot to kidnap Pres.Lincoln from his usual ride in cab from White House to Soldier's Home and how on the day selected it turned out that Secretary Chase, who escorted the President, grew suspicious of the actions of the group of men in Soldier's Home grounds and dispersed. Arnold and Adzerodt testified they intended to kidnap the President and did not see eye-to-eye with Booth in murdering the President; in fact they left town when Booth decided on murder.

Pick and handle therefor which Payne carried up to Surratt House at time Federal investigators were there questioning Mrs. Surratt. Payne, when questioned, stated he came to do a job for Mrs. Surratt, as he had worked for her on several occasions in the past. On questioning Mrs. Surratt, she stated she did not know Payne and the latter was identified by a household retainer of Secretary Seward as the man who had attacked the Secretary in Washington with intent to kill. From all accounts I have heard, this Payne was a "killer".

Another exhibit, not introduced at the trial but now among the effects is a window pane, in a wooden frame, the glass of which bears the following inscription, cut by a diamond: "Abe Lincoln departed this life August 13th, 1864 by the effects of Poison". This exhibit was furnished by Miss Mary McHenry with letter of December 26, 1879, who in the letter to the Department states that J. Wilkes Booth-Baltimore registered at the McHenry House, Meadville, Pa., under date of August 13, 1864 and the inscription was noted on window-glass in his room after his occupancy.

The above comprise all of the exhibits, as contained in two large-sized wooden chests. There was no emblem in either chest and my informant, Mr. Pitts, Chief Clerk to the Judge Advocate General, advises me that while this question had been raised by other parties in the past, a most thorough search failed to show any authority for the statement that such an emblem was among the effects of Booth. What actually happened is that about the same time that Booth was captured, the Federal Government also captured a man by name of "Brinkley" who was the head of a secret order named Knights of the Golden Circle. The purpose of this order

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for George W. L. Bickley

was the eventual overthrow of the Government. It was natural that among its members would be found sympathasizers for the cause of the South. Mr. Pitts, however, assures me that an earnest investigation was made by not only himself but others before him associated with the office of Judge Advocate General of the Army and Custodians of the Booth Exhibits to run down this rumor, but nowhere, either among the exhibits themselves or in the documentary evidence or minutes of the trial of the conspirators is there the slightest evidence that John Wilkes Booth was ever a member of the Knights of the Golden Circle. From time to time all manner of rumors or stories have cropped up to discredit the fact that the real Booth was captured by the Federal authorities on the Garrett farm and if credence were given to such, the best that can be said of Booth was that he was an A-1 "Joiner", in that in some cases it was the Masons who helped a distressed brother to escape, in other cases it was members of the Roman Catholic Church who assisted him, or members of the Knights of Pythias.

Writer has been given permission by Mr.Pitts, as Custodian of the Booth Exhibits in the custody of the Judge Advocate General, to have photographs made of the exhibits or as many of them as you might wish. Such photographs will have to be taken within the building and while either Mr. Pitts or a representative of the Government is present. The War Department has no official photographer so it will be necessary that we make satisfactory arrangements for one, which I am endeavoring to do through the U.S.Signal Corps. I am endeavoring to work wholly within the Government organization, especially as to these particular exhibits. At present writing, am unable to advise you the price per picture as this matter must be pursued further. I should also like to know whether or not you would be interested in securing pictures of certain of the official documentary evidence - which I have not as yet seen, as it is filed away in still another building - such as affidavits of relatives, doctors, etc., who had known Booth and who certified to the fact that the corpse was that of Booth? I understand from Mr. Pitts that I may have access to these records, if desired. Therefore, I should like to know your views thereon before undertaking to have the other Booth exhibits photographed.

Writer has seen Booth's diary in its little leather covering. It is very brief, as you will note from the photostats which we herewith enclose and which are twice or more the size of the actual pencil writing in the Diary. Even holding the diary close under one's nose, it is very hard to decipher the words, the writing being very small, words and lines run together, the pencil outlines being alternately light and dark. The photostats enclosed have been the personal property of Mr.Pitts and he very kindly turned them over to me. It is my understanding that this is the first time that photostats have been released of the Diary - even the Lincoln Museum of the Government in the old Ford Theatre building lacks information as to the Diary;and Mr. Garrett informed me - before I interviewed Mr. Pitts - that he felt sure the Government would not release anything to me with reference to Booth's Diary - that he had not been able to get this information for the Museum. He was, therefore, very much surprised when I talked with him later in his office and showed him the photostats. Speaking of the latter, you will note pictures of certain ladies. Unfortunately, there is no positive identification on the backs of the original photographs, which were and are still reposing in a pocket of Booth's Diary. Undoubtedly they were friends of his,and while certain guesses have been made and names with question marks opposite appear on the back of each photo in pencil, the War Department has never been able to officially accept or verify such names. In addition to the photostats of the Diary itself, Mr. Pitts very kindly gave me a photostat of the typewritten translation of the complete diary, as well as photostats of a newspaper clipping, old with age, which is probably the article that appeared in the "National Republican"

(newspaper), issue of May 22, 1867. Incidentally, a writer, Edna M. Colman, author of "White House Gossip" (two volumes) quotes the diary in Vol.#2 of her work covering period from Pres. Andrew Johnson to Pres. Calvin Coolidge, and draws as her authority the issue of May 22, 1867 of the "National Republican". Her works are published by Doubleday-Page, Garden City, N.Y., 1927 (see Pages 14, 15 and 16 of Volume #2).

Both Mr. Pitts and Mr. Garrett are authorities on Lincoln. Mr. Pitts advises that hardly a day passes that his office does not receive some question on the Lincoln-Booth matter, whereas Mr.Garrett's correspondence deals mostly with matters pertaining to Pres. Lincoln alone - and the question "Did Mr.Henry Ford ever offer to purchase the Oldroyd collection for $100,000, which was ultimately sold by Mr. Oldroyd to the U.S.Government, in conformity with his own wish?" Could you advise me on this point, in order that I may reply to the enquiries of Messrs. Garrett and Clemens, who are curious to ascertain the facts. They tell me that in acknowledging correspondence in which this question is raised, they simply reply to the effect that they are not cognizant of such an offer on the part of Mr. Ford, and let it go at that.

Some day, Mr. Pitts intends, I believe, to write a book and the subject matter will cover "cranks and criticisms" or the Doubting Thomases as he designates the authors who often first come to Washington, discuss matters with him, secure his information and then proceed to assemble the data in a "crosseyed" manner. As he is an authority on matters pertaining to Booth, you can see that it rubs "the fur" the wrong way to accidentally or deliberately jumble the facts.

I read certain paragraphs of Izola Forrester's book "The One Mad Act" which Mr. Garrett has on his desk. Mr. Pitts intends to secure and read this book. Last Friday night, one of the Washington motion picture houses - one of our best - ran a preview showing (around midnight) of "The Man in the Barn". We enclose, for your information, Page 34 of the Washington "Daily News" of Thursday, December 9th, and have marked the paragraph in the theatrical news which deals with this Booth picture. I did not see the film, but Mr. Garrett informed me today that he was invited by the theatre management to witness the preview and express comments thereon - no doubt for the press - which Mr. Garrett respecfully declined to do; he stating to me that he had no desire to enter any arguments on that score at this date, and bearing in mind, too, his position with the Museum.

Perhaps you might be interested in endeavoring to secure - if you have not already secured - two books which contain the evidence of the trial. One book, containing very fine print, is entitled "The Trial of The Assassins and Conspirators - at Washington City, D.C., May and June 1865 For The Murder of President Abraham Lincoln". This is the complete and unabridged edition and contains whole of the suppressed evidence. It is a verbattum entry of evidence, published by T.B.Peterson & Bros. 306 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.,(entered according to Act of Congress in Year 1865 by T.B.Peterson & Bros. in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania). The other book, in narrative form, contains practically the same information and is entitled "The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of The Conspirators". This volume was compiled and arranged by Benn Pitman, Recorder to the Commission. Publishers were: Moore, Walstach & Baldwin, #26 West 4th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, or 60 W. Walker Street, New York, N.Y., and published in 1865. Both of these volumes are in the possession of Mr. Garrett. If desired, they may be found on old book-stands or in hands of collectors. I have checked, for my own information, certain book shops in Washington, D.C., such as Brentano's and Lowdermilk's, which specializes in old and rare books, but have been unable to locate copy of either book.

You may also be interested in securing copy of another book, by Mr. O.H. Oldroyd, entitled "The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln". Mr. Garrett advised that this is the same Mr. Oldroyd who collected the Lincoln relics later purchased by the Government and is one of the finest books on Lincoln ever written. It contains numerous pictures, including one of Gen. John F. Hartranft and his staff, in charge of the execution of the Conspirators; also two separate views of the execution, which was conducted in the yard of the old penitentiary, which occupied the space now occupied by the U.S.Army War College, Washington Barracks, D.C. Also in this book is a picture of the Booth lot and monument in Greenmount Cemetary, Baltimore, Md.

Both Messrs. Pitts and Garrett expressed considerable resentment at a new book, just recently issued entitled "Why Was Lincoln Murdered" by Otto Eisenschiml, published by Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 1937 and priced at $3.50. Mr. Eisenschiml has visited Mr. Pitts from time to time and discussed this Lincoln-Booth affair with him, finally securing a letter from the Secretary of War requesting the Judge Advocate General to permit Mr. Eisenschiml to personally inspect the documentary evidence. This courtesy was granted to Mr. Eisenschiml to inspect but not to borrow or take pictures of such evidence. He inspected the files and the book just cited above is the result of his study. Mr. Pitts feels it is most unjust criticism of the Government for the reason that Mr. Eisenschiml simply asks questions and fails to give the answers.

On my second visit to Mr. Garrett at the Museum, he very kindly dug out a large manila envelope, in which were contained numerous 8" x 10" pictures of places and men involved in the Conspirators trial. Believe you might be interested and with that in mind, took note of all of the pictures - which are, apparently, not part of the Oldroyd collection but the property of Mr. Garrett. The photos covered the following:

George A. Atzerodt (Hanged July 7, 1865);
Samuel Arnold;
John Wilkes Booth;
Payne, alias Wood, alias Hall (arrested as an associate of Booth in the conspiracy);
Dr. Samuel A. Mudd (who dressed Booth's leg and was sentenced to life imprisonment at Dry Tortugas, Fla. He was pardoned by President Johnson, 1869);
Dents Meadow, which Booth and Herold crossed in reaching Popes Creek (which is seen in the distant). Here Jones had secreted the boat which enabled Booth and Herold to escape across the Potomac;
Thomas A. Jones, who fed Booth and Herold while they were hiding in the thicket and who furnished the boat to enable them to cross the Potomac;
The Monitor "SAUGUS". A number of the conspirators, after arrest, were confined on board in the Eastern Branch in front of the Navy Yard;
Home of Mrs. Quesenberry, on Machodoc Creek, Va. To this house Booth was directed by Thomas A. Jones. Booth & Herold landed in Gambo Creek, three-quarters of a mile distant, and the latter made his way to the House for food and assistance, both of which were freely given.
Residence of William Lucas. Where Booth and Herold slept on the night of April 23, 1865, on their retreat South.
Garrett's House, on the porch of which Booth was carried from the barn, and where he died two and one-half hours later;
Old Browner Hotel (now St.Charles), Port Tobacco, Md. Where

Thomas A.Jones met Captain Williams on Tuesday and during a conversation at the bar of this hotel, Captain Williams made the offer of $100,000 to any one who would give information that would lead to Booth's capture.

Residence of Thomas A. Jones, the man who took care of Booth and Herold from Monday until Friday and refused $100,000 to tell where they were secreted.

The bridge over the East Branch of the Potomac leading into Anacostia, over which Booth passed on the night of the Assassination of President Lincoln, April 14, 1865.

Bryantown Hotel. Booth made this his stopping place upon several occasions and a number of citizens of the community who were suspected of being implicated in the conspiracy were confined here for a while.

Henry Woodland standing on the spot where he started Booth and Herold across the Potomac from Maryland to Virginia in a boat.

Residence of Samuel Cox, where Booth and Herold made their rest stop. They, however, failed to gain admittance but were directed by Cox to a thicket nearby, where assistance would be rendered them.

Michael O'Laughlin. Sentenced to be imprisoned at hard labor for life at Dry Tortugas, Fla. Died of yellow fever Sept. 23, 1867.

Tee Bee. Road which Booth took after leaving Surrattsville to Mudd's house.

Edward Spangler. One of the conspirators.

John Surratt, son of Mrs. Mary Surratt. He had fled to Europe; was located and arrested two years later, tried before civil court jury and finally acquitted.

Residence of Dr. Samuel H. Mudd, where Booth and Herold stopped to have Booth's leg set, which had been broken in jumping from the box. The upper right hand window marks the room occupied by Booth and Herold.

The flight of Booth. The Surratt House at Surrattsville, Md., where Booth and Herold made their first stop to get the guns and whiskey which had been secreted there some weeks before the assassination by Adzerodt and John Surratt.

David E. Herold.

Mrs. Mary Surratt.

The Old Capitol Prison. This building was situated on a hill in rear of present capitol, adjoining "Carroll Prison". It occupied the whole length of a square. Mrs. Surratt was confined as a prisoner in the "Old Capitol Prison" until she was transferred to the Monitor "Saugus".

Writer believes he can procure photos of the above from Mr.Garrett at 60¢ each. We cannot, however, retain the negatives of any photos secured from Mr.Garrett or the Museum of which he is Superintendent.

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As you probably know, Pres.Lincoln/shot between 10:15 PM and 10:20 PM the night of April 14th and died at 7:22 AM, April 15th, 1865, in a private residence located just across the street from Ford Theatre; which residence was subsequently used by Mr. Oldroyd to house his collection of Lincoln relics.

As for the collection of photographs possessed by the U.S.Signal Corps, we have checked through their files and find the following which might be of some interest to you:

File BA-92 - group picture of Booth and fellow conspirators, viz: Atzerodt, Herold, Arnold, Spangler, O'Laughlin and Payne.
" B-2611- Picture of Sgt.Boston Corbett, 16th NY Cavalry, who shot Booth.
" B-5188 - Another view of Sgt.Corbett.
" BA-1630- Box in Ford's Theatre at Wash. D.C. where Pres.Lincoln was assassinated. (this photo shows the draperies and flags).
" B-2041- Chair in which Pres.Lincoln was sitting when shot. It is a rocking chair (which you now have);
" B-41-Z- Part of Stage, Ford's Theatre. Lincoln's box was to right of the stage.
" B-1878- Photo of Sgt. Boston Corbett.
" B-2321- " " " " "
" B-3475- Photo of Sgt. Corbett and Capt. Doherty "his (Booth's) captor".

Any of the above can be rephotographed by a Signal Corps photographer, we believe, at nominal cost.

This is a very lengthy letter, but we wished to give you every bit of information we have been able to learn on this Booth matter and let you decide as to whether or not you desired any of the documentary evidence or photographs of the conspirators, etc., to supplement photos of the Booth exhibits, whichlatter you specifically requested.

Within next few days, we intend visiting Ports Conway and Royal, Va., and check up on the status of Mr. Elisha Seburn Shortridge and other relatives of Richard Garrett. We will also attempt to check the records of this Garrett family as may be recorded in the King George, Va. court house, and ascertain the names and residences of any living ancestors of Richard Garrett.

Your early comments will be greatly appreciated.

Yours very truly,
FORD MOTOR COMPANY,

J. W. Connolly
Traffic Department.

JWC/c