Ford Motor Company

FACTORY AND GENERAL OFFICES
DEARBORN, MICH.

ALEXANDRIA, VA. January 3, 1938.

#8.

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

Dear Mr. Black:-

Further in connection with your letter of December 24, 1937, on the John Wilkes Booth matter.

Herewith are typewritten copies of two of the items referred to in your letter of Dec. 24th. Am having the Photostat Division of the U.S. Library of Congress made photostats of the original items, i.e., the article appearing in the Richmond "Enquirer" of Sept. 11, 1873 (almost a column long) entitled "A Strange Story - Is Wilkes Booth Still Alive?", and all of Page #153 of Herbert Tobias Ezekiel's book "The History of The Jews of Richmond" (period 1769 - 1917).

To check all of the Richmond, Va. papers for year 1858 may take some time, and it is my thought, in that connection, to also check the same papers for January, 1859, in view of the reference in Izola Forrester's book to the fact that her grandparents were married in Cos Cob in January, 1859, by Rev. Peleg Weaver. There may possibly be some reference to the marriage in the social notes.

Will also endeavor to locate the copy of Harper's Magazine carrying the photo of the Booth Diary. Have been unable to locate the negative in Washington, or any reference thereto. Have followed the lead you suggested but no one has any knowledge of this photograph.

Talked with Mr. Garrett of the Ford Museum yesterday on my way to the Congressional Library. For the photos and the loan of the Peterson book, he would like to have a letter from you requesting these items, in order that he may take up the matter with the Chief of the National Parks Service, with which he is connected under the jurisdiction of the Department of The Interior, for necessary authority.

Yours very truly,
FORD MOTOR COMPANY,

J. W. Connolly
Traffic Department.

JWC/c

"THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF RICHMOND"
1769 - 1917.
By Herbert Tobias Ezekiel and Gaston Lichtenstein.

(Richmond, Va., Herbert T.Ezekiel, Printer and Publisher, 1917).

PAGE 153 (all of Page)

"CHAPTER XXVIII"

"THE GRAYS".

"Another command popular with the Jewish youth was the Richmond "Grays", Company G of the 1st Virginia Infantry, but later Company A of the 12th.

"While long expected, to show that in the end how suddenly the war came on, just one month before the John Brown raid, in October, 1859, The Grays paid a visit to New York, where they were entertained by the citizen soldiery of that city. With the Grays at that time were Ellis Ellis, Herman Hirsh, Isadore Lovenstein, Ezekiel M. Ezekiel, Philip Whitlock, and Simon Rosenfels.

"On the 19th of November following, the command was ordered to Harper's Ferry. John Brown had incited the negroes to insurrection, and it was rumored the Abolitionists were about to free the slaves. At Washington word was received of the capture of Brown, and the Company returned home.

"Later it went to Charlestown upon the occasion of the handing of Brown. In numerous homes throughout the country are pictures of Brown taking a negro baby from the arms of its mother and kissing it as he ascends the scaffold. Scores of newspapers have published heart-rending accounts of the alleged event. Notwithstanding this, Philip Whitlock says he was within fifty feet of Brown when he was hung, and states positively that not only did the sage of Ossawatomie fail to indulge in the luxury of kissing a negro baby, but that as a matter of fact there was not a colored person in sight.

"Whitlock says, there stood near him a young man who, shortly before had joined the company and had been made a non-commissioned officer. As the drop fell he turned very white. When asked the reason for his paleness, he expressed a desire for a "good stiff drink of whiskey". This young man was John Wilkes Booth, who as the murderer of President Lincoln occupied the limelight less than six years later."

The Richmond Enquirer
September 11 1873

Our own opinion is that he is dead - dead as old Marley, or a door nail or a nail in a coffin, but there are some who doubt and would not believe even though his proper ghost were to appear and make assurance doubly sure. The Missouri "Republican" has "seen a man", not the man around the corner, but another man, who has seen Booth in the Flesh, since his body was administered upon by the Washington military commission. The story as related to the "Republican" reporter, by an old sailor, is briefly as follows:

TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION

My name, said the narrator, is Carroll Jackson Donelson, and I am a blood relative of Andrew Jackson Donelson, who died recently at Memphis Tenn for which city I am now en route to assist in the settlement of his estate. During the war between the sections I was a Captain in the 8th Texas Cavalry known as Terry's Rangers, and was at Terry's side when he fell, on the banks of the Green River, in a charge upon Willichs Germans. At the close of the struggle I returned again to the sea, and in 1866 I found myself in San Francisco. There I shipped on board the ship Kate Hooper as first mate, having on board as passengers 30 Chinese women bound for Shanghai. Reaching Singapore we took in a cargo of Mahogany, sandal wood, rattan and sugar. It was in the month of Sept. when we sailed from Singapore in the Strait of Malacca, South of Borneo and rounded through the Molucco Isles, avoiding the monsoons, and passing on the western side of the Pelew Islands, a small group north of the equator and near the tenth parallel.

We landed on the Island for water; and found a tent there occupied by white men. Five men and one woman made there appearance from the tent. The first that advanced toward me and extended his hand was John Wilkes Booth. There was no mistake as to his identity, as I had been an intimate friend of his in Montgomery, Alabama years before. He directed my men where water could be procured, and then entered into a confidential conversation with me, asking that I should not reveal his name to my men, nor to anyone for a period of one year; besides, said he, "the world would not believe you if you were to say that John Wilkes Booth lives, I have lost my identity among living men. A great government has killed me, and buried me, paid its reward, and I live a new and original existence."

His conversation with me was long and earnest, he stating, that but one person in his party knew that he was Booth and that was the female who accompanied him.

"And she, " he said, "Is my wife."

How he made his escape from the United States he did not reveal, except that he did not leave Washington City for thirty days after the assassination. During his wanderings he had been in Mexico, South America, Africa, Turkey, Arabia, Rome and latterly in China. While in Rome he met John Suratt. In China he entered the imperial service under Ward, the American Irishman who commanded the Emperor's forces against the rebels of the Tartar breed, the latter being under the command of an American from New Orleans of the sobriquet of "Peacock".

While under Ward, he was engaged in many battles, and fast gained the Emperor's favor, when an accident served to cause him to leave the country hurriedly by command of Ward.

A MOST ROMANTIC STORY

While in Shanghai which has three divisions of foreigners - Americans, English and French - his old passion for the stage returning, he and several English and American naval officers and residents, with the countenance of Ward, organized a dramatic club, and Booth being the leading spirit, was cast in the character of Richard in the play of Richard III. All were astonished at the grace and bearing of the youthful actor throughout the performance, until the little scene where Richard and Richmond fight with such terrific energy, when astonishment gave way to a wild storm of applause, and high over all the tumult came the ominous words, "Booth! Booth!" meaning very likely, the elder Booth. The name, the situation, and the startling words so piercingly distinct, caused him to become forgetful of where he was. Perhaps the recollection of the burning hate with which his name was heralded throughout the world, caused him to poise his sword and glare like a tiger at the audience. The excitement proved too much for him, and the curtain fell upon an unfinished play with a living Richard.

HE IS STARTED ADRIFT AGAIN

Ward waited upon Booth the next day and informed him that a lurcher and crew awaited him. No explanations were given, and he set sail for the Carolina Islands as a temporary place of abode; but hard winds and bad weather caused him to put into the Pelew Island where I found him. On leaving Booth he gave me a token which he said his brother Edwin would recognize.

My departure from Booth was hurried by the booming of a gun from our ship, warning us that a breeze had sprung up.

I did not reveal the secret of having met him until the expiration of the year, and when it was told it gained no credence and was treated as the trivial fiction of a seafaring man. After the event on the Pelew Island, while on the coast of New Guinea, I learned from Americans that the lurcher described had been sighted on that coast.

The token spoken of by Donelson was produced for Maury's inspection, and was a heavy gold medal, heavier than the Mexican Silver Dollar, bearing appropriate inscriptions, having been presented by the citizens of New York to Booth's father years before the famous actor's death, while he was at the apex of his histrionic greatness.