SOLE SURVIVOR OF POSSE WHICH CAPTURED BOOTH DESCRIBES SLAYER'S END

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Of the party of troopers, detailed to pursue the fugitive, John Wilkes Booth, assassin of Abraham Lincoln, and who finally captured the slayer and avenged the murder of the Chief Magistrate of the nation, but one, W. A. McDonald, now a man of 80, and a resident of Long Beach, survives. McDonald, who has been visiting relatives in Central Illinois, tells something of the incidents of that memorable pursuit of sixty years ago. He was a member of Troop F, Eighth Illinois Cavalry, enlisting at St. Charles.

Booth killed Lincoln on the night of April 14, 1865, while the President was occupying a box at Ford's Theater in Washington. Stealthily opening the door of the compartment, Booth shot the President and then leaped to the stage below, the spur of his boot, catching in the flag that draped the box, mute avenger, and the assassin fell, fracturing his leg.

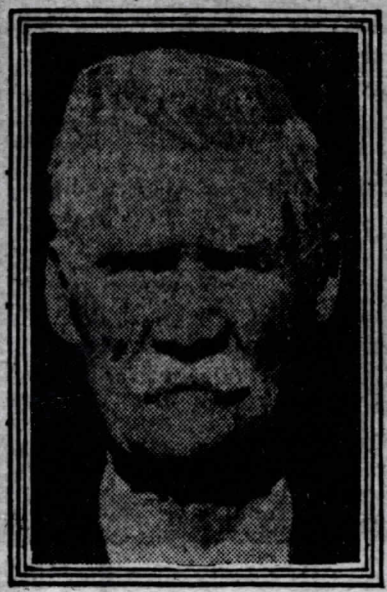
In the confusion, he escaped, and, mounting a horse which he had tied in the vicinity, fled to Maryland, going first to the home of Dr. Mudd, a Southern sympathizer, who reduced the fracture.

David Harold, a friend of Booth, joined him and assisted him to escape. The pair finally reached the home of J. E. Garrett, near Port Royal, Md., and they were allowed to sleep in the tobacco warehouse.

The cavalrymen of McDonald's command were in close pursuit, and finally, located the fugitives on April 24, about 9 o'clock at night. The warehouse was surrounded and the two men ordered to surrender. Harold was agreeable and came out of the retreat and was handcuffed, later being hanged for his complicity.

Booth refused to surrender and argued with the commanding officer. It was finally decided to set the building on fire, and the flames disclosed Booth. A member of McDonald's troop, Sergt. Boston Corbett, thrust his gun through a crevice in the boards, and shot Booth, despite the orders to take the fugitive alive. Corbett was court-martialed.

W. A. M'DONALD



Booth was carried from the warehouse to the porch of the Garrett homestead, where he died an hour and a half later. McDonald witnessed the end of the assassin, and is the only survivor of that group.

The body was placed in a wagon and hauled to the Potomac River, a short distance away, and then conveyed by steamer to Washington. McDonald asserts that the remains of Booth were first interred under a slab in the Federal arsenal at Washington, but later were removed to the Booth family lot in Baltimore. In the coat of the dead man was found a letter, written by Booth to Garrett, and enclosing a $5 bill to pay him for his hospitality, Booth, evidently, planning to depart that night for the South in the hope of making his escape.