Copy to Tom Starr 4-5-38 - EOH

Text of Otto Eisenschiml's lecture, "Why Was Lincoln Murdered" Royal Oak High School Thursday evening, February 17, 1938.

Eisenschiml began his lecture by relating that 25 years ago he saw a filming of the motion picture "The Birth of a Nation."

"A guard was supposed to be seated on the stool outside the President's box. In the course of the play the guard was shown to leave his seat. Undisturbed, John Wilkes Booth enters the box of Lincoln. If this guard had been in his place and done his duty, Lincoln would not have been shot. I used to wonder who this guard was. What did he look like? I went through books and newspaper files, and his name was never mentioned. I have never seen his picture. His name was John Parker. This question kept coming up to me all the time: how about this guard? If the guard had not moved two feet away from where he was, what would have happened to the history of this nation?

"I decided to go to the source of all wisdom, the War Department in Washington to try to break into the archives - which was about as easy as shooting a hole-in-one. I took it as a sporting proposition and was sent from desk to desk - which is a great indoor sport in Washington. I finally landed at the desk of Lucius Merriwether Smith." (Told at great length how Smith said he was going to test him on history, taking Smith's home town, Harrodsburg, Ky., and how he was able to answer the questions because he was familiar with the place.)

"I turned the War Department almost upside down, but didn't find what I wanted. I went to the White House where I was again examined - for sanity, I think. I found there had been 355 secret service operators in Washington during that period and that four were named John Parker. After much work I eliminated three and had the one I was after. I found not only all about his history, but also that he wasn't even court martialed;

even after this terrible delinquency he was allowed to remain in the White House. Archives contained nothing about the man's character.

"Remember that in this work you are not following one clue but as many as 20 at a time, and you never know how these parts intertwine.

"James R O'Bierne received orders giving him almost carte blanche authority to capture Booth. He could command troops and commandeer transports - every aid was at his service. By mere luck he struck Booth's trail along which Booth and Herold traveled from Port Royal to Cape George. O'Bierne had only one man left out of his original 25. O'Bierne crossed the Potomac and found Captain Beckwith and told him the story, Beckwith saying 'This is too important to keep from Washington' and it was transmitted by wire to Washington.

"They received the following orders from Washington, 'Hold O'Bierne. Bring him back to Washington and don't let him recross to Virginia again.'"

In the memoirs of the Chief of the U S Secret Service, 1867, General Baker adds that O'Bierne had come back to Washington happy and contented -(which Eisenschiml doubts).

"Thousands of letters went out to libraries, but I could not get anything by O'Bierne. By chance I heard of an auction sale to be held in New York in which the diary of James R O'Bierne was to be sold. I took the fastest plane I knew of to New York. I looked at the diary but there was nothing in it. I was told that a bunch of papers went with the diary, O'Bierne was a man who collected and saved everything from his birth certificate to theater stubs, and I found among other things in the collection, a letter which about knocked me off my feet. This letter referred to Parker and his appointment to the White House, dated April 3, 1865. It was an order to remove Parker from the streets and assign him

to the White House for duty. I later found that O'Bierne did not come back willingly. I could not afford to buy the diary but I could afford to buy the letter."

"I noticed in the motion picture that General Grant was not in the theater. Streamers announcing that General Grant and President and Mrs Lincoln were to attend were strung across the street and in prominent places. Why would Grant commit such a faux pas? I read Grant's own story about this. In his memoirs he states that he promised to go if he had his work done by the 13th. I found that story to be untrue. Another story was that his daughter, Nellie, was sick and that both he and Mrs Grant were worried about her, that they would not be able to keep their minds on the play.

"In Galine, Illinois I found some letters and one of these was dated April 14 from Burlington. In this Nellie writes to her brother Jesse that all were well and happy.

"If Grant had been in the box it seems to me that Lincoln would not have been shot. Booth was an athlete of 27; Grant was a short man of about 40. Mr and Mrs Grant were unknown. If the Grants had been in the box 500 opera glasses would have been trained on them and Booth would have been discovered immediately. Now, I say, here's real police work! If nobody told Grant to stay away, that would have been collusion. Grant had been told not to attend the show by Stanton!

(At this point, Eisenschiml quotes his professor in chemical and physical science: "Follow your clues - out of the window if you have to - but don't be prejudiced.")

"When the conspirators were brought back to Washington after the assassination, Stanton issued an order in his own handwriting that

they should be hooded. The people should not be able to see or to hear and there was only a small hole in front of the mouth for improper breathing and feeding.

"This was not to impose punishment; but to impose silence!

"This particular sort of torture prevented confession.

"The most important thing to do is ask ourselves the correct question. Mrs Surrat was unjustly hung, I believe. Was this a legitimate boarding house or a place to give dispatch bearers a home in Washington? It took an investigator seven months to go through all the advertisements in Washington newspapers and we found three - which we discarded because the evidence wasn't conclusive.

"Why were these people hooded, Let's leave that question open.

"Stanton ordered sent to the Dry Tortugas the men who were in the Albany penitentiary in order to keep them silent. General Baker warned the commander of the Dry Tortugas that there was a scheme afoot to deliver these prisoners, and they were put into solitary confinement. Booth could not be brought to Washington alive! Somebody supposed to be Booth was shot at the Garret barn. Who shot him, nobody knows, but a soldier named Roby said that he had been instructed by divine guidance to do so.

"Surrat in Europe - what to do with him? Leave him there and never bring him back to the United States!! He was captured in Liverpool, but Stanton stated that they did not want him back in the United States. But there was a reward of $25,000 on his head! Stanton had this revoked. It was two years before he was finally returned to trial - which was conducted in a shameful way against the prisoner. All the cards were stacked against him, but he was finally acquitted.

"Again we run into the name, Stanton, Stanton. Stanton himself said he was an intended victim the night of the assassination. He was saved by the fact that the door bell did not work. The bell repair man was told two days before to fix the bell and it wasn't fixed! I don't believe that story. Stanton was a very powerful man. I would like to have the name and address of that door bell fixer who disregarded Stanton's orders. The story doesn't ring true. We must find out if it was an electric door bell or not. Let's go back from 1888 in the advertisements of Harper's and Leslie's magazines, for the manufacturers would advertise in the family magazines. We went back to 1871 where we came across the first advertisement. Thus Stanton did not have an electric bell.

"The story was suppressed about the wires going dead so that accounts of the murder could not be sent out. said it was due to a crossed wire in the main battery. That couldn't be right and I objected. It can't be right for it worked again in two hours."

Eisenschiml told how he disproved this story. According to him the only way the wires could have been broken was for a strong wind to snap the wire, lay it across another causing a short circuit. Then a reverse wind would have to come two hours later and blow the wire back into place. E. says he wrote to Western Union asking about the possibility of such an occurrence, and received the answer that such a supposition was preposterous. Further proof in his favor was that the newspaper weather report of the day contained the figures 1-2-2, which patient investigation proved to mean that the wind was calm to a very slight breeze. Therefore the hypothetical could not have occurred. As he stated it, ". . And therefore this could not have happened, and a government employee did the damage."

"The idea that Stanton could have been connected with the murder gave me many headaches and heartaches. After much mulling on the subject the motive began to appear. It appeared in a public document. It was in McLellan's own story who reports - and no one has ever doubted McLellan's word - that a New Yorker asked, 'How Long will the war last.' And the answer was, "Long enough to crush the South." Here was a clue that the war was a political scheme.

"Lincoln did not make abolishment of slavery the primary issue; but the preservation of the union. It was a matter of life and death to the politicians not to let Lincoln have his way. Grant was ordered by Lincoln to make terms with Lee to bring the South back into the union. That could have been enough motive for the radical Republicans and Stanton.

"If you should be careless enough to read my book - and I advise you not to - keep this in mind: the writer states certain facts, theories and opinions. Keep them strictly apart.

"A photostat of a letter is an historical fact.

"Eye witnesses are very unreliable."

At this point E. reenacted the assassination scene assisted by two young men and two young ladies from the audience, taking the part of Booth himself.

"Parker was not on his post so Booth comes in here, turns around back of Mrs Lincoln, takes a five inch pistol and fires. Rathbone wrestles with him and is cut by a knife that Booth takes out. Booth jumps over the railing, catching his spur in the flag. It was all over in 15 or 30 seconds. Where was the mystery?"

Made a big ado about the fact that the bullet entered the left

side of Lincoln's head, just below the ear. Lincoln was seated with his head next the wall and it would have been impossible for Booth to shoot from his left side. Much research proved to E. that Booth was right handed and would not have reached arount to shoot from the President's left side. By extreme luck E. interviewed a man by the name of Ferguson who was the only eye witness of the actual firing of the shot. Ferguson was a great admirer of Grant and kept his eyes on the box all evening waiting for Grant to make his appearance so that when the assassination took place he was looking at the principals. The simple explanation is that there was a slight pause in the action on the stage and the audience became restless for a brief minute. Lincoln pulled aside the curtain and looked toward the audience, turning his head exposing the left side. At that precise moment, Booth fired the pistol:

"Perhaps if someone will come and help me solve a hundred other questions about which I do not know the answer, we may yet know why was Lincoln murdered."

Q: Was it true Lincoln had premonitions of death?

A: Lincoln was psychic in a way. He had three dreams that forewarned his death, but only one was told through a source we could believe. I doubt the story about Lincoln seeing the casket in the White House and being told that the President lay there, and the one about seeing two images in a mirror. He had a recurring dream that appeared before great crises - of a large object floating on a dark body of water towards some distant shore.

Q: Tell us about Dr Mudd, the doctor who set Booth's leg.

A: Dr Mudd was innocent. "A Prisoner of Shark Island" was not true to history. Mudd did not escape as depicted, etc.

Q: Did Mrs Lincoln have anything to do with Grant's absence from the theater?

A: She had nothing to do with General Grant's absence. She may have had something to do with Mrs Grant's absence - the two ladies were not friendly toward each other.

Q: Was any definite trace of John Wilkes Booth found after Lincoln was assassinated?

A: Now we are getting into a labyrinth which I refuse to enter. A lawyer named Bates wrote a book on the subject. Bates' story was torn to shreds by the Dearborn Independent - by a man named Fred L Black.

Q: Did Stanton have a definite object in these affairs during the war and after the assassination?

A: I believe it was personal ambition. He thought he would be the next President of the United States.

Q: Was Andrew Johnson absent from the theater because of intoxication?

A: Whatever intoxication Johnson suffered, was after he visited Lincoln on his death bed.

Q: Was there not an attempt on Grant's Life?

A: I believe that was a fake. (Mentioned the advantage to the plotters of staging spurious attempts on the lives of Stanton, Grant and the other Northern leaders).

Q: Do you think Grant was involved?

A: No! However, Grant may have been innocently responsible because of his order.

Q: What was that order?

A: Refusal to exchange prisoners.

Additional notes:

Lincoln went all over Washington without a guard. He took long walks alone. He could have been taken prisoner on the streets on any of these occasions.

I feel that Stanton was the master mind. I don't think, but I feel.

There is a diary of a radical republican which a Detroit man has seen. It is owned by a woman who says she will burn it before she dies; she says she can not give it up as it would be very damaging to her family.