Re: Photos of Booth Exhibits
Booth Diary & Lady's portrait

Ford Motor Company

FACTORY AND GENERAL OFFICES
DEARBORN, MICH.

ALEXANDRIA, VA. January 5, 1938.

#8.

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

Dear Mr. Black:-

After making numerous contacts in Governmental circles in Washington in connection with procurement of photographs of various Booth exhibits, particularly those in the custody of the Judge Advocate General of the Army, we have run into some "red-tape" in that it is now necessary for you on behalf of The Edison Institute, to address a letter to the Secretary of War, requesting permission to have such exhibits as your representative (writer) may select, explaining the reason for such request (for example, Museum historical collection of interest to the general public, etc.), and adding that writer has received oral permission from the Office of the Judge Advocate General, subject to official approval of the Secretary.

In connection with the above, in discussions had with Mr.Pitts Chief Clerk, Judge Advocate General's Office, and Captain Richard T. Schlosberg, in chargeof the Photographic Division, U.S.Signal Corps, the latter is agreeable to having one of their camera men arrange to take the pictures at the expense of Ford Motor Company, the Government, however, to retain the negatives; this in order to exercise control over the use of the negatives in the future. This arrangement would result in less expense to us, in view of the fact that any outside photographer whom we might employ would have to set up lights, etc. in the War Department sub-basement, whereas, within the Government organization, such matters may be handled differently.

If and when you address the Secretary of War, the letter will be referred to the office of Judge Advocate General. We request that in this letter you request permission of the Secretary to have the Photographic Division of the U.S.Signal Corps take the photographs. The Judge Advocate General, on receipt of the letter so referred by the Secretary of War, will, in turn, call upon the U.S.Signal Corps to do the work. Upon completion, either organization will retain the negatives, after supplying us with a print of each. The entire expense, however, is expected to be charged to us. I should like to have your comment upon this setup.

In your letter of December 21st, you referred to a man by name of John P. Simonton, who was associated with the office of Judge Advocate General about 20 years ago; also to a small medal, a Catholic insignia. Mr. Simonton died a number of years ago. He preceded Mr. Pitts as custodian and when the latter took over the "office" Mr. Simonton used to call on Mr.Pitts and together they discussed and exchanged confidences on matters pertaining to Booth. Quite often Mr. Simonton would bring friends along with him, visits were made to see the Booth exhibits in the War Department - but at no time was any reference

made to the presence of a medal in the collection, Catholic or otherwise. In fact, Mr. Pitts advises me that Booth was an Episcopalian.

We will be glad to arrange for photographing the diary, page by page, although Mr. Pitts states that the result will be unsatisfactory to you for the reason that the pages comprising the diary were torn out years ago, have been handled and re-handled, paper is dirty from thumb-prints and curled back from the edges and the writing, in pencil, is very light, very small in size and each line of words very close together. Speaking further on the diary, Mr.Pitts was somewhat doubtful that the actual, real diary has ever been photographed. At some time in the past, his attention was called to the fact that there was a magazine article in connection with which purported photographs were shown of the diary, but the information passed on to him was to the effect that there was a discrepancy in the writing and the location of the words comprising the diary, line for line, as compared with the original. No record, however, is available of the name of the magazine article, the magazine or the time of its appearance.

You requested in your letter of Dec. 21st, the names shown on the back of the photographs as contained in the Booth Diary. Here's what each shows on the back thereof in very faint pencil markings, with questinn marks to denote the fact that they are more or less mere guesses from contacts with stage associates or others who were acquainted with Booth.

"The full length picture" - Fannie Brown, actress.

"Head View (with Ear Rings)" - Anna Coyle (rough guess) - Daughter of John F. Coyle.

"Head View - head covered with shawl" - Perepa Rosa or Perepa Roso (?)

"Side View of Head - Having Long Curls" - Just a Guess - The Wife of Wm. E. Chambers, ex-Secy. of War.

"Half Side View of Head - Hair gathered in knot at back of neck - Just a Guess - Effie Germon.

The allegorical picture of the group, comprising an elderly man, young woman, two children and a dog had been the possession of Mrs. Surratt, having been seen on the mantlepiece of her home. It has no real significance in the Booth collection except to show his association with the group of conspirators.

You might also be interested in checking up on a story by Mr. O. W. Coursey, former National Chief of Staff, U.S.W.V., which appeared in serial or continued form in the "American Veteran". Don't know where or when this was published, but someone sent Mr. Pitts Page #8 of the issue carrying the concluding article (date of issue unknown). The article is headed "John Wilkes Booth, Assassin, Rumored Alive for 38 Years". This concluding article deals with his death in the mid-west, how his body was embalmed and exhibited in so-called "side Shows" through that territory for an admission charge. Along the same line, Mr. Pitts stated that about some four or five years ago, a fictional story about John Wilkes Booth appeared in the "Christian Herold". Even this story, while fictional, contained some very excellent material, factual material. Copies were not retained by Mr.Pitts for his collection, although his attentinn was called to the article at the time.

Yours very truly,

TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT.

JWC/c