May
11th
1925

Mr Leon F Whitney
460 Prospect St
New Haven Conn

Dear Mr Whitney:

I was glad indeed to receive your letter of May 4th and to know that you were interested in the articles on Booth.

I have never made any serious effort to learn the religion of John Wilkes Booth but would hazard a guess that he was an Episcopalian, if he was a member of any church. Surratt was, of course, a Catholic. O H Oldroyd in his "Assassination of Abraham Lincoln" page 206, states that Booth and Herold were Episcopalians.

Junius Brutus Booth, the father of John Wilkes, was half Jewish racially, but I cannot find where he was a Jew religiously. His daughter Asia Booth Clark in her "Passages, Incidents and Anecdotes in the Life of Junius Brutus Booth" page 161, says that "In the synagogues he was known as a Jew, because he conversed with rabbis and learned doctors, and joined their worship in the Hebraic tongue. He read the Talmud and strictly adherred to many of its laws." She also says, "All forms of religion and all temples of devotion were sacred to him, and in passing churches he never failed to bare his head reverently;" and "several fathers of the Roman Catholic Church recount pleasant hours spent with him in theological discourse, and aver that he was of their persuasion, by his knowledge of the mysteries of their faith," further, "of the numerous houses of worship to which I have accompanied my father, the one he most loved to frequent was a floating church or "Sailor's Bethel." The congregation was of the humblest degree, and the ministry not at all edifying." He must have been a member of the Masonic Order, for after his death on a Mississippi River steamboat between New Orleans and Cincinnati, his daughter says (p. 153) "On reaching Cincinnati, the Masons had the body embalmed in a metallic coffin and deposited in the Baptist vault. When his body reached his home, the funeral service was pronounced by an Episcopal Church rector. Edwin Booth, the brother of John Wilkes, was an Episcopalian. Just what the Church membership of the other members of the Booth family might be, I am unable to say at this time.

possibly twice

John Wilkes attended a Catholic mass, at least once, at Bryantown, Maryland, while he was planning in November 1864 for the abduction of President Lincoln but this would not prove that he was a Catholic or had any interest in the service, since he attended in order to see Dr Mudd.

I am constantly looking for Booth and Lincoln material and if you have letters or clippings, I would appreciate knowing their contents.

Very truly yours

THE DEARBORN PUBLISHING CO

F L Black

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