

# 12-day chase for lincoln's killer



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John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln in Ford's Theatre on 14th April 1865. John Wilkes Booth was assisted in his plan by several others including David Herold, Mrs. Mary Surratt, John Surratt, George Atzerodt, Lewis Powell and James W. Pumphrey. David Herold helped Lewis Powell into the house of Secretary for State William H. Seward and later fled due to the commotion and rendezvoused with John Wilkes Booth outside Washington. John Surratt was a friend of John Wilkes Booth while Mrs. Mary Surratt was his mother. She ran the boarding house where the conspiracy to murder Lincoln and other officials was hatched. George Atzerodt was supposed to kill the Vice President Andrew Johnson but was unable to muster the courage to do so. He spent the evening drinking instead. Lewis Powell entered the house of William H. Seward in hopes of killing him but failed to do so. James W. Pumphrey arranged the horse used by Wilkes to escape from the theatre after assassinating Lincoln. Wilkes hopes to decimate the leadership of the Union by assassinating the top three officials in the government. He believed that this would buy the Confederacy some time to react.

2. Jones's hid both John Wilkes Booth and David Herold for a full five days in Zekiah Swamp that was near his house. Later he gave them provisions to cross the Potomac River. Thomas Jones was a Confederate supporter so he hid John Wilkes Booth and David Herold. However, as the manhunt gained momentum, Thomas Jones felt it necessary to move the assassins to another location.

3. The Washington Press labelled Booth as a villain and a coward among other deplorable and condescending names. However, Booth noted in his journal that no matter what the newspapers said, he had acted boldly and would not repent on his actions. Overall he felt that he had served his country well by assassinating the President and that although he had hated to kill but killing

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was his only option. 4. John Wilkes Booth saw himself acting through this “role” far before the manhunt. His reference to “Venice Preserv'd” indicated his desire to murder the President. This was also reflected throughout the manhunt when Booth noted in his journal that he was being vilified for the same thing that Brutus was honoured for. He also related that Lincoln was far more tyrant than Julius Caesar. Similarly, when Booth was shot by Corbett, he told the men that his mother should be told that he died for his country. Upon death, Booth’s diary read that America owed its troubles to Lincoln and he had simply become an instrument from God to punish Lincoln. All of these things indicate that Booth saw himself as an unparalleled hero in the greatest “role” of his lifetime. 5. The reward money for capturing Lincoln’s assassin was put at some US\$ 75, 000 and it was distributed by a commission headed by Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt and his assistant E. D. Townsend. The members of the expedition and supporting people and officials were provided with reward in recognition of their efforts to apprehend the perpetrators. Namely Conger, Baker, Lafayette, Byron and Doherty were given sizable sums of reward money.