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# The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

Ford's Theatre, 1861–1990

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection





**Ford's Theatre National Historic Site**  
**<http://www.nps.gov/foth/faqs.htm>**

**What happened to the Ford's Theatre building after the assassination?**

The building was saved from destruction when Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, ordered a 24-hour guard be placed around the brick building to protect it from an angry crowd wanting to burn it down because of the assassination.

In July of 1865, theatre owner John T. Ford was ready to resume performances but emotions ran high against the reopening; the theatrical operations did not resume. At the same time, Washington's YMCA announced in the newspapers its intention to purchase the building and to open Ford's Theatre in its décor of April 14, 1865; it would be renamed "The Abraham Lincoln Memorial Temple". Within a few weeks this plan faded away due to lack of financial support.

The federal government managed to negotiate a deal with Ford to rent the building with an option to buy. In the fall of 1865, a Brooklyn firm removed the entire interior of the building and converted it into a federal office building for \$28,000. No alterations were made to the façade but three floors of the office space were created inside. The option to buy was exercised in 1867 and the government purchased the structure for \$100,000.

The building operated as an office until June 9, 1893 when the interior of the historic building collapsed. Twenty-two clerks died in the tragedy and sixty-eight others were seriously injured. Within a year the damage was repaired and the former theatre was remodeled into a government warehouse; again the original was altered.

The building remained in this form until 1931 when workers returned to modify the first floor. It was converted into a museum dedicated to displaying artifacts of the life of our sixteenth president. Many of the museums artifacts were from the Osborn Oldroyd collection which had been purchased for \$50,000 in 1927 including dozens of unique items associated with the assassination.

During the 1950's a bill was introduced in Congress to fund the restoration of Ford's Theatre to its 1865 appearance. In 1968, the fully restored Ford's Theatre reopened as a working theatre, 103 years after the assassination of President Lincoln. Also in 1968, the Ford's Theatre Society became a partner with the national park service.

In October 2008, Ford's Theatre became an independent unit of the National Park Service system managed by a park superintendent with a staff consisting of park interpreters, maintenance and curatorial support along with volunteers who help tell the story of the theatre and the National Park Service mission. Ford's Theatre National Historic Site is co-managed by the National Park Service and the Ford's Theatre Society.



In The Star of December 5, 1861, is the following brief announcement of the project which resulted in the construction of the theater in 10th street in which  
**Ford's Theater.** President Lincoln was shot a few years later:

"A number of gentlemen, we have learned, united with Mr. John T. Ford of Holliday Street Theater in Baltimore to build a modern and elegant temple of the drama in our city. The location will be the site of the place now occupied by George Christy's minstrels, on 10th street, which is very centrally situated. The proposed building will in size, elegance and style be similar to Laura Keane's Theater in New York, and will seat as many auditors. It will be completed and opened early in the spring. Until the timbers are framed and everything is readiness to commence the new place the present building will be occupied by the Christy minstrels."



FORD'S THEATRE. "Malakoff," the well-known Paris correspondent of the New York Times, makes the following suggestions as to the disposition of the building in which the President was assassinated:

In 1820, when the Duke de Berry, brother of the King, was assassinated in Paris at the door of the Opera House, it was at once decided to tear down the house, and leave the ground forever afterward free from any habitable structure. And in effect the Place Louvois, in the Rue Richelieu, with its beautiful garden and fountain, mark the spot where the Opera House stood. Why does not the federal government in like manner seize and demolish Ford's Theatre, and erect on its site either a monument, a statue, a fountain, or a chapel? Not a timber of that theatre ought to be allowed to stand in its place if there be money enough in the treasury to indemnify its owner.





## MUSEUM

### LINCOLN MUSEUM IN WASHINGTON

Bill in Congress Provides for This as  
Well as for Headquarters for  
G. A. R.

Harding Camp No. 5, Washington, D. C., through its legislative committee, Brothers Phelps, Walker and Williams, is busily engaged in pushing the bill before Congress providing for the use of the Ford Theatre building as a Lincoln Museum and Headquarters for the Grand Army of the Republic. Brothers will remember that this project was started by Harding Camp last spring, through its Commander, Lt. Col. U. S. Grant, 3rd, and a bill, H. R. 16656, was introduced by Hon. H. R. Rathbone, Representative in Congress from Illinois, which failed of passage, due to the pressure of other business in the short session of the 69th Congress.

Camps and Divisions were urged, in the "Call to Arms," issued May 4, 1927, to adopt resolutions, to be presented to their Senators and Representatives, urging the passage of this legislation. Quite a large number of Camps have complied with this request. Harding Camp is very grateful to them for their assistance. Dept. Sec.-Treas. Everett F. Warner has also been untiring in his efforts to bring this matter to the attention of the Camps throughout the United States and the Camp appreciates his valuable assistance.

The bill has been introduced by Mr. Rathbone in the present, 70th Congress, and is now known as H. R. 7206. A favorable report thereon was made by the Committee on the District of Columbia, to which it was committed, and it is now before the House of Representatives, awaiting an opportunity to secure its passage.

The report of the District Committee calls attention to the fact that the building in which the collection of Lincoln relics, gathered by Comrade Oldroyd of the G. A. R., and which has recently been purchased by the United States, is now housed, is not fire proof, and is also becoming unsafe for large crowds of visitors. Further, it is not large enough for the present collection of Lincoln relics, to say nothing of further like collections, which are promised to be added thereto, if suitable provision is made for their preservation.

Brothers will doubtless remember that Ford's Theatre is where President Lincoln was shot in 1865. It is a

### LINCOLN MUSEUM IN WASHINGTON (Continued from Page One)

fire proof building and is now used as a storehouse, which surely is not compatible with its historic associations, as it was acquired by the United States so that it might never again be used as a theatre or for any other commercial purposes.

Camps which have not yet endorsed this legislation are urged to do so at once. Send copies of your resolutions to your Senators and Representatives and help us to put this bill over. All three of the Washington Camps, Lincoln, Cushing and Harding, are actively assisting in this movement. Brothers, Harding Camp needs your assistance in this matter. DO IT NOW!





# FORD THEATER TO BE MUSEUM

## Remodeling of Place Where Lincoln Was Shot To Start Soon

1322 New York Avenue.  
Sun Washington Bureau.

WASHINGTON—The old Ford theater, which is down on Tenth-st, where Pres. Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth in April, 1865, is to be remodeled for use as a national war museum and national headquarters of the G. A. R.

The old building, acquired by the government shortly after the tragedy in order that it might never again be used as a theater or put to commercial use, has been used as a government warehouse for more than a generation. Visitors are not permitted inside.

### TOURISTS VISIT HOUSE

Across the street is the house where Lincoln died, then a boarding house, which contains the famous Oldroyd collection of Lincoln relics, purchased recently by the government. Thousands of tourists visit this building every year.

The little room where Lincoln breathed his last is the same today as it was then. The same bed stands in the corner, the same bedclothes are on it and the same paper is on the walls.

### G. A. R. OFFICE PLANNED

Under the plan now before congress, \$100,000 will be appropriated to remodel the old Ford Ford theater into a museum and the Oldroyd collection of Lincoln relics will be transferred there. A section will be set aside for national G. A. R. headquarters, now

occupying a small and rented space in a building that is soon to be torn down.

The Ford theater building is practically in the heart of the Washington of today, almost midway between the White House and the Capitol and only a few blocks off Pennsylvania-av. A gasoline station adjoins it now.



(From The Post, June 10, 1903.)

## BURIED IN THE RUINS

A Government Office Collapses  
Without Warning.

## FORD'S THEATER FALLS

Twenty-two Killed and Sixty-Eight Injured.

## FULL LIST OF THE VICTIMS

Nearly Five Hundred Men in the  
Fated Building.

## THE STORIES OF SURVIVORS

Complete List of the Dead and Wounded—  
Miraculous Escapes of Many Employes  
from Instant Death—Pathetic Scenes at  
the Morgue and at the Hospital—President  
Cleveland Contributes to a Fund for the  
Families—A Meeting of Generous Citizens—  
The Dangerous Condition of the  
Building Was Reported to Congress Nine  
Years Ago, but Nothing Was Done.

eral contractor; Richard G. Fletcher, foreman for the subcontractor for cement and mason work; John L. McDonald, subcontractor for the steel in the roof; Thomas L. Costigan, engineer in the office of the building inspector at the time the building was erected, and John R. Downman, assistant building inspector at that time. They were held in \$5,000 bond on charges of homicide.

The grand jury subsequently indicted five of these—Geare, Ford, Downman, Fletcher and Wallace; but, on July 24, 1922, the indictments were thrown out of court by Justice Frederick L. Siddons, on the ground that they were "too vague." No civil action has ever been successful on the part of the estates of those killed, or by those injured.

Since the disaster the Ambassador Theater has been erected on the site of the former Knickerbocker.

Mr. Geare, the architect, committed suicide August 20, 1927.

Reginald W. Geare, architect, who designed the theater; John Howard Ford, engineer, who revised the steel roof plans; Morris Hacker, District building inspector at the time the theater was built; Donald Wallace, general foreman for the builder; Frank L. Wagner, gen-





# 120 Killed, 213 Injured in Collapse of 2 Theater Buildings in Washington

*Post Dec 6-97*  
**Ford Catastrophe in 1893  
Took Lives of 22 U. S.  
Clerks at Work in the  
Structure; Post Put En-  
tire Staff on Story.**

*Nash Post Dec 6*

On Friday morning, June 9, 1893, at 25 minutes to 10 o'clock, there occurred one of the most terrible tragedies in the history of Washington, when the old Ford's theater, on Tenth street, scene of that other tragedy, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, collapsed, killing more than a score of Government clerks, and injuring a great many. The Post put its entire staff at work, and its report of the disaster and the subsequent inquiries constituted another of its journalistic triumphs.

In its edition of June 10, it not only carried a complete story of the accident, but announced that it had started a relief fund, and had already, the first day, received nearly \$3,000. President Cleveland sending the first \$100. Woodward & Lothrop contributed \$1,000, and the response of the city was generous, for it was shocked and stricken by the frightful horror.

By the second day The Post's fund amounted to more than \$9,000. It did not wait for the slow process of organizing a committee, but took the liberty of designating certain men in the various Government departments to receive subscriptions, and so the money poured in.

## Death List Was Correct.

The Post had at first reported that 22 had been killed and this was the correct death list. There were 80 maimed.

Ford's Theater was used at that time by about 500 clerks of the record and pension division of the War Department. It was unsafe, and its use by the Government was a reproach. The Post said that it had been "patched, bolstered, remodeled, braced and propped until nothing of the original was left." It was five stories high, was without fire escapes, was known to be a death trap, but still the Government used it. One stairway stood between its occupants and death. In the center of the rattle-trap a square court pierced the building to the roof, and on the galleries around this the clerks were packed.

At the front of the first floor a 30-foot space had been roped off for two weeks prior to the accident, and placards announced "Danger!" Beneath this space an excavation, 12 feet deep, was being dug for the installation of an electric dynamo.

## Sinking Pillar Starts Collapse.

At 25 minutes to 10 o'clock a pillar on the southwest corner of the spot marked "Dangerous" began slowly to sink. The clerks jumped for their lives, but they knew not which way to run.

The second floor above the pillar began to drop, the third floor caved and fell through to the second, and in a few seconds the whole mass of timbers, brick and humanity was blotted out by a dense cloud of blinding, choking dust. It was as ghastly a spectacle as Washington has ever beheld as the

ruins were explored and the mangled, dead and living, were taken out.

There was a rising tide of anger against those responsible. The Post had protested against the continued use of dangerous buildings by the Government service, and now demanded a policy of safety. On June 10, in discussing the disaster editorially, it said:

"Whether The Post says it or not, every one who knows the wicked and humiliating truth will understand that Friday's tragedy was a direct, logical and long-foreseen result of the mean demagoguery that parades a spurious economy at the cost of justice, decency and humanity. For years the clerks and other Federal employes have been huddled in innumerable death-traps, to lose their health by slow degrees, or die outright by sudden accidents, in order that a few selfish impostors might flaunt themselves before a crowd of gulls."

## Coroner Conducts Inquest.

The inquest was held, beginning June 12, in Willard's Hall, by Coroner Patterson, where friends of the dead organized an indignation meeting. Violence was narrowly averted, as the people denounced those whom they thought responsible as "murderers." B. H. Warner, a member of the jury, addressed the crowd and quieted it at a moment when it was about to be transformed into a mob.

On June 20 the coroner's jury rendered a verdict as follows:

"We find that Frederick C. Ainsworth, William G. Covert, Francis Sarse and George W. Dant were, and each of them was, guilty of criminal negligence, and we further find that they are responsible for the killing of Frederick B. Loftus."

Feeling was running particularly strong against Col. Ainsworth, then the chief of the record and pension division of the War Department. The jury heaped censure upon the War Department. The four men were released under bonds of \$10,000 to answer to the charge of manslaughter, but no arrests were made.

## Indictments Are Quashed.

On July 24 the grand jury returned indictments for manslaughter against the four men. After long legal proceedings the Court of Appeals quashed the indictments. Another effort to punish somebody was made, and, finally, almost a year later, on April 2, 1894, the grand jury returned one indictment against Col. Fred C. Ainsworth, fixing responsibility on him.

Col. Ainsworth was arraigned in Criminal Court No. 2 before Justice Cole on April 19, and pleaded not guilty. On May 31 Justice McComas sustained the demurrer to the indictment. District Attorney Birney appealed to the Court of Appeals, which on June 8 dismissed the appeal, and thus the case ended.

On June 14, 1893, The Post announced that a total fund of \$25,738.82 had been raised for the Ford's theater victims, of which The Washington Post's fund amounted to \$16,598.37. The total was later increased to \$30,000.

In 1895 Congress paid \$105,000 to the 21 heirs of those who lost their lives in the disaster. On May 11, 1896, Senator Faulkner presented to the Senate the final report of the joint commission on the Ford Theater disaster, accompanied by a bill appropriating \$144,800 in full settlement of all claims for injuries by the 105 clerks who were injured in the accident. The amounts to be paid to each ranged from \$4,500 to \$50. The list of the claimants and the awards is contained in The Post, May 12, 1896.





# AN HISTORIC HOUSE.

FORD'S THEATER, WHERE LINCOLN WAS SHOT.

The Recent Collapse of the Ill-Starred Building Recalls the Horrible Crime of J. Wilkes Booth—Some Details of the Assassination.

A Page from History.

Ford's theater, the scene of the recent terrible disaster at Washington, in which so many were killed and injured, was, as is well known, the scene of Lincoln's assassination.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

the most tragic as well as the most pathetic incident in all our national history. The superstitious may see in it divine interference, and it is at any rate a queer coincidence that at the very hour when words of prayer and benediction were being spoken over the lifeless clay of Edwin Booth, the brother of Lincoln's murderer, the building, which had witnessed John Wilkes Booth's awful crime, should crumble into dust.

Early April, 1865, marked a time of joy which this country had not felt for many years. The black and heavy storm clouds of war were passing away and the fair sun of peace was shining forth and fertilizing the seeds of hope in every heart. The Confederate government had evacuated Richmond on the 2d, Lee and Johnson had surrendered and those under the command of Gen. Kirby Smith had laid down their arms. April 11 President Lincoln had delivered an address in which, as if awed unconsciously by



Miss Harris' betrothed. After receiving the Lincoln party the audience turned its attention to the stage and became engaged wholly with the play. Suddenly the report of a pistol was heard and the bewildered audience saw a man wrapped in a dark cloak leap from the President's box to the stage, a distance of nine feet. His spurred boot caught in a fold of the flag, which was used as a drapery, however, and he fell heavily, breaking his leg. He stalked theatrically across the stage, and, in the middle, waving a bloody knife, cried out: "Sic semper tyrannis. The South is avenged." The bewildered audience did not gain an understanding of the facts until he had disappeared and then wild and tumultuous cries broke out, "Stop him, he has shot the President." Some leaped upon the stage, while many rushed to the President's box. There Lincoln was found, the blood pouring from his death wound, while Major Rathbone was discovered to have been wounded in the side by the assassin's knife. Tenderly was Lincoln lifted and borne to a house across the way, where he died at 7:22 the following morning.

Lincoln's Assassination.

The assassination of Lincoln was the sudden result of a plot in which several desperate men were engaged. They conspired to abduct President Lincoln, but the closing of the war rendered this impracticable. Then those who were most influential abandoned the matter, but there were still some who resolved on bloody and violent measures. Chief of these were John Wilkes Booth, Atzrott, and Payne. These men re-

grappled with him and wounded quite severely. Then going into Seward's room he hacked at the man and at the nurse, causing bloodshed, though no death, finally fled.

Atzrott found the murder of



HOUSE IN WHICH LINCOLN DIED.

Grant impossible of accomplishment. Grant was surrounded all day by friends, and the would-be assassin could get no chance at him. Surratt, a boarding-house keeper

solved to assassinate Lincoln, Grant, and Seward. Booth was chosen to assassinate the President, Atzrott was to murder Grant, while Payne was to make away with Secretary Seward. Booth, on the fatal evening, knowing that the President was in the theater, went to the box office and, producing a card, told the attendant that Lincoln had sent for him. He was allowed access to the corridor on which Lincoln's box opened without question. He quietly bored a gimlet hole in the box door, and so obtained a view of his victim. Then he pulled a pistol and fired. As the President sank back unconscious Booth dashed into the box, and drawing a long knife stabbed Maj. Rathbone, who had grappled with him. Suddenly he let

where Booth, Atzrott, and Payne lived, knew of the plot to abduct Lincoln, though probably not of the one to kill him. Her son was also thought at the time to be concerned in the murder. Other conspirators were McLoughlin and Harold, the last of whom was a somewhat weak-minded young man, who helped by having a horse in readiness for Booth's escape from the theater. These all were brought to punishment. Atzrott, Payne, Harold, and Mrs. Surratt were hanged; Dr. Mudd, Ned Spangler and McLoughlin were sent to the Dry Tortugas. Mrs. Surratt's son escaped to Canada. Eventually he was discovered serving in the Papal Zouaves. He was tried, but was found to have been innocent of any attempt at murder, and was acquitted.





# OF FORD'S THEATRE

**Dell Sumner Writes Entertainingly of  
Tragedy of '65.**

**Some Bits of History Not Known by  
Public Before.**

**House Where Lincoln Died is Mem-  
orial Building.**

Washington, Feb. 19.—(Special Correspondence)—Perhaps it will be of interest to the readers of the Daily Courier to know something about Ford's theatre, which still stands between E and F streets, on the east side of Tenth. It is not my intention, however, in connection with this to repeat to you all the facts with which you are so well acquainted in regard to that awful, yet romantic, incident, which took place on the 14th day of April, 1865, but only to point out a few happenings, with which I think you may not be familiar.

Ford's theatre was formerly a church and was remodeled somewhat, but on December 30, 1862, this structure was totally destroyed by fire. Mr. Ford's loss was heavy, but he proceeded at once to build this present structure, which was completed in 1863. It was considered a fine theatre, very prettily decorated, and was patronized then by most all the public men and President Lincoln, who was a great lover of the play. It was on the night of April 11 Laura Keane was playing in "Our American Cousin," and President Lincoln, with his wife, Major Rathbone and Miss Harris, was present to witness it. It was some time, however, before Lincoln could be present and it was late in the first act when the tall form of the man, so loved by the people, was seen to take his seat.

Booth was seen to enter and re-enter five times, by Mr. Buckingham, the door keeper, but nothing strange was thought of this, as he not only knew Booth well, but he was well known throughout Washington, and was never suspected of such a deed. The last time he was noticed by Mr. Buckingham was as he went upstairs into the balcony, humming a tune as he went. But in a few minutes a pistol shot was heard, and immediately a struggle ensued between the murderer and Major Rathbone. Rathbone was struck with a long knife on the left arm as the wretch leaped from the box to the stage and cried, "Sic Semper Tyrannis." But at these words the leader of the orchestra was on the stage and gave chase. Booth had broken his leg, was desperate and slashed wildly with the long knife. Mr. Wilhers has the coat today which bears the slashes of Booth's knife.

Booth had laid his plans well; rushing to the rear of the theatre, he mounted his horse and accompanied by Herold, made his escape across Navy Yard bridge to "Surrat's Tavern," where they got some carbines and whiskey. Then they went to Dr. Mudd's where Booth had his leg dressed and shaved off his mustache.

At the theatre everything was in a panic. Women fainted, doctors rushed to the assistance of the president. With great presence of mind Laura Keane entered the box and supported the head of Lincoln, while the physicians made a nasty examination. The president was then carried to the house of Mr. Peterson, just across the way. The theatre was taken charge of by United States troops, and at 7:23 a. m., April 15, 1865, the country mourned the loss of the greatest man since Washington.

This house in which Lincoln died is now a memorial building. In the room in which he died is the same paper and decorations, the coverlet and pillow cases have been retained and still bear the stains of blood from the wounds of the martyred president. The government is contemplating buying this building and it will then be free to the public. At present an admission is charged, except on Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays. Among other interesting relics is a rail which was split by Lincoln when he was in training for greatness, and this reminds me of one of his sayings, "I'll study and get ready may be the chance will come." How well he improved his opportunities and how meagre they were.

But to return to Booth and Herold, who left Dr. Mudd's and took refuge in Garrett's barn near Port Royal, Va., where they were found by Lieutenant Dougherty and command. Booth and Herold tried to protect themselves and finally Herold gave himself up. Booth remained in the barn, which was set on fire, and as the flames leaped up, came out and tried to escape, when he was shot by Sergeant B. Corbett.

It will be remembered that there was a conspiracy which embraced, not only the assassination of Lincoln, but of all the cabinet officers. Payne attempted to kill Seward the same night Lincoln was shot. The conspirators were Mrs. Surrat, Lewis Payne, George Atzerodt and David Herold, all of

whom were hung, while Dr. Mudd, Michael O'Laughlin and Samuel Arnold were sentenced for life. They used to meet at the home of Mrs. Surrat, 604 H street, Northwest, which is still an interesting place for sight-seers.

Some say the real cause of Lincoln's assassination will never be solved, while others claim that Booth was hypnotized. But this is certain, that Booth was very popular in Washington, with a good reputation and the last man on earth one would have thought capable of committing such a crime. Only a short time before he had played in Ford's theatre in "Pescara, the Apostate," while only a week before he played in "Romeo and Juliet" at the National. He was quite well off and had an income of about \$20,000 a year and came very near marrying the daughter of a prominent New England senator.

After Lincoln's assassination Ford's theatre was bought by the government and was in use as a part of the pension office, I think, in 1893, when another terrible accident occurred—three floors fell, carrying with them hundreds of clerks. Twenty-two were killed and many injured.

Probably the man now living who knew Lincoln best is Senator Cullom, of Illinois. He knew him when a lawyer and believes that a murder case in which Lincoln was counsel was the greatest he ever witnessed. He knew him when a candidate for congress and when he had his joint debate with Douglass, which is acknowledged to be the greatest ever held in the country.

DELL SUMNER.

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**FEBRUARY 22, 1902.**

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Utica Globe.

Oct. 26, 1912

## A TRAGIC LANDMARK.

### Old Ford's Theater, Where Lincoln Was Shot, to be Torn Down.

One of the most interesting relics in the national capital is to be torn down. For weal or woe, Old Ford's Theater in Washington was the canvas on which our nation, paralyzed and mute, witnessed the evolution of its history undergo a change in the twinkling of an eye. The bullet that pierced the brain of President Lincoln on that unfortunate Good Friday in 1865 carried with it not only the death of a martyr but the complete frustration of the humane policies which the godlike "rail-splitter" had shadowed forth and upon which he relied to heal the sore wound made by the civil war. As it was, it took over 30 years to effect a permanent reconciliation. But it is safe to hazard that had Lincoln been permitted by Providence to serve out his second term as President the deplorable

mistakes of the "reconstruction," the callous and unconscionable tyranny of the "carpet baggers," would not have been added to the already sufficient humiliation of the military defeat of a proud people.

A few days before his death Lincoln outlined his plan of reconstructing the governments of the southern States, generously and loyally upheld by his successor, President Johnson, but vetoed by Congress after the tragedy. On April 14, with Mrs. Lincoln, Maj. Rathbone and Miss Harris, the President occupied a private box at Ford's Theater. During one of the most absorbing scenes of the play, about 10:30, the sound of a shot startled the crowded house and following it a wild figure, brandishing a dagger, jumped from the President's box to the stage shouting: "Sic semper tyrannis! The south is avenged." The assassin, John Wilkes Booth, accomplished actor and mad fanatic, escaped through the stage door and with a broken leg led a curious and strange existence for 12 days until his pursuers finally rounded him up in a deserted barn and shot him to death. The dominating figure in this wretched conspiracy was a woman and she was hanged legally. Her son, also involved in the plot, escaped to Europe and subsequently had the temerity to return and end his days peacefully in America.

In recent years this famous theater, the scene of an infamous crime, has been utilized for a Lincoln museum. It has, however, been declared unsafe and another memory of the turbulent times of our republic must disappear. It is not necessary though that it should be preserved. A material witness to a great soul can be dispensed with. Enshrined in the hearts of the American people is "the memory of a grace higher than that of outward person, and of a gentleness deeper than mere breeding. Never before that startled April morning did such multitudes of men shed tears for the death of one they had never seen, as if with him a friendly presence had been taken away from their lives, leaving them colder and darker."



THE SCENE OF AN INFAMOUS CRIME.

FORD'S THEATER, WHERE LINCOLN WAS SHOT, TO BE TORN DOWN.

Utica Globe, Oct. 26, 1912.





Booth Tripped by Washington's Picture

# Incidents of Lincoln's Assassination.

Editor National Tribune: The theory universally accepted in regard to Booth's injury to his leg after shooting the President and vaulting to the stage is that his spur caught in the Flag that draped the box and turned his course, causing him to fall. A far more satisfactory explanation is given in a letter from Mr. John T. Ford to Mr. Joseph Sessford, ticket agent of Ford's Theater at the time of the assassination, while examination of the Washington picture from a photograph taken the day after the assassination gives corroborative evidence in its broken corner. The letter is as follows:

"Baltimore, April 22, 1865.

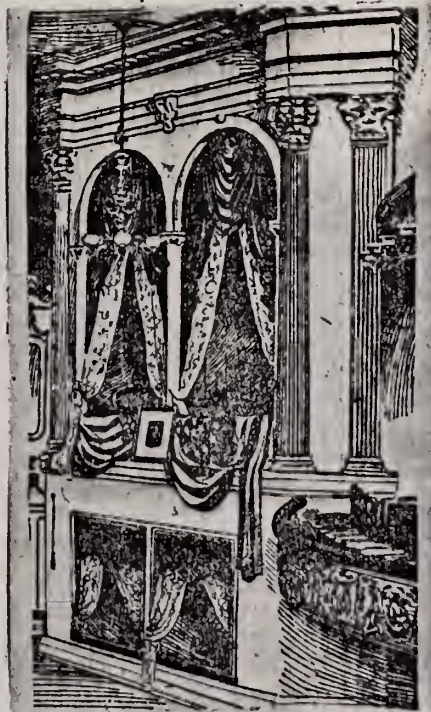
"Dear Sessford: Mr. Stidham is entirely in error as to the time of the ball and consequently about the picture. The ball took place some time previously. The Flags were used then and borrowed again for Good Friday by J. R. F. from the Treasury Department. The picture was placed by Harry in front of the box and Flags draped on its side. The spur caught and tore one Flag and then cut a splinter from the picture frame,

which (the splinter) was found on the ledge of the lower box pediment. As 'one of the Fords' did not know the President was to visit the theater until he sent for the box on Friday at 12 m., it is not probable he could have borrowed the Flags a day previous for the purpose. The Flag tore easily; the frame of the picture was not so easily broken; hence the spur, catching in it, caused a twist that resulted in John Wilkes Booth breaking a bone in his ankle when he struck the stage when you saw him jump. Yours as ever—J. T. Ford.

"Laura Keane acted every night of the week. Reference to the files will show that."

The splinter was in possession of Mr. Sessford until his death, about 10 years ago. The picture is in possession of Mrs. J. T. Ford, now living in Baltimore.

National Tribune,  
Aug. 21, 1913.



LINCOLN'S BOX AT FORD'S THEATER.

Note.—The framed picture of Washington, referred to is shown between the Flags.





# CLEVER MANEUVERING SAVED FORD THEATER FOR U. S. USES

## Lincoln's Secretary of War Leased Building and After Wrecking It Forced Government Purchase.

*Sunday Star 2-13-27*

Only by luck and a bit of "patriotic trickery" did the United States still own the Ford's Theater Building, on Tenth near E street, where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

The story is revealed in the correspondence of J. A. J. Creswell of Maryland, who was Postmaster General in the Grant administration and a member of Congress during the Civil War, which has recently been received from members of the family by the division of manuscripts of the Library of Congress. It was discovered by Dr. Charles Moore, head of the manuscript division, in a letter to Creswell from H. Winter Davis of Baltimore, a former member of the House and attorney for John H. Ford, owner of the building.

Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's Secretary of War, realized at once that the building was invaluable as a historical relic, but could not purchase it without an appropriation from Congress. He could, however, lease it for the purposes of the War Department and did so immediately. The lease gave the Government an option to purchase at the end of the year for \$100,000, the rent paid to go toward the purchase price.

Stanton, however, had little faith in Congress. As soon as the building was in his hands he proceeded to so disarrange and wreck the interior that it would cost the Nation more than \$100,000 to pass it back to Ford in its original condition, as was stipulated in the lease, and Congress actually would save money by buying it.

### Theater Would Have Been Lost.

Had it not been for this, Dr. Moore believes, Ford's Theater long since would have disappeared, instead of remaining as an appropriate home for a museum of American history to house the Lincoln collection, as proposed in the Rathbone bill now before Congress. The letter from Davis, written in Baltimore December 13, 1865, just 17 days before the writer died, is as follows:

"I have a matter to take up with you in which I have some personal interest. I was Ford's counsel to settle affairs about the theater with Stanton. Mr. Stanton was to purchase it for \$100,000, as authorized by Congress, and in the meantime to pay rent to be deducted from the purchase price. He has torn it almost to pieces and the cost to restore it would equal the price asked. He has fitted it up for a deposit for the rebel archives.

"Ford was reluctant to sell and would have preferred to continue his business in the theater, but found the Government would not give its assent. It was at my earnest representation that he offered to sell under duress. Now, please see if Stanton has called the attention of Congress to the matter and see if the appropriation is made. I ought to say that I have part of my fee unpaid."

### Has Tragic History.

The building has remained in the possession of the War Department ever since, due to Stanton's foresight. It has had a tragic history, even since the assassination of Lincoln.

For years after its purchase it was used for files of the Medical Department of the Union Army. Records were kept there of the men who had been cared for in Washington hos-

pitals, and to the small force of clerks on duty there inquiries were sent from the Pension Office. The records were in bad shape. Names were listed according to the hospital where they had been treated. During the war almost every church in Washington had been used as a hospital, and often the veteran applying for a pension had no idea of the exact place to which he had been taken. Inquiries would come in over and over again until the hospital finally was located.

The records finally were put in order by Harrison Ainsworth, later librarian of Congress, who got the extra work done by making the clerks attend to it in their spare moments.

Ainsworth had the reputation of a hard taskmaster and became unpopular. When one of the walls of the building collapsed, killing more than a score of workers, he narrowly escaped lynching.

### Need Held Imperative.

The need of this building as a museum now is almost imperative, according to Dr. Moore, who is chairman of the Fine Arts Commission, as well as head of the manuscript division. The Government, he points out, has acquired the Oldroyd Lincoln collection, now housed in the building across the street where Lincoln died, and has no adequate place to put it. In its present quarters the collection can be seen only by a few persons at a time, and space is so crowded that any additions are impossible.

Besides, the Oldroyd collection is considered far from complete. It has been gathered by an individual, with no official backing or assistance. Lincoln relics are scattered all over the country and particularly in Washington. Some of those here never are seen by the general public, although they are among the most interesting articles connected with the life of the Civil War President. Also there is a wealth of material illustrating the life of the Civil War period which cannot be exhibited for lack of room.

In the custody of the War Department, unknown to the general public, are Lincoln's diary, the pistol with which he was shot by John Wilkes Booth and some of his official papers dealing with military affairs during the Civil War.

### Collection in Museum.

In the National Museum are the following articles which belonged to Lincoln: His black broadcloth coat, black silk cravat, black cloth waistcoat, black broadcloth trousers, his black silk hat, an iron wedge marked "A. L.," which he used when he was splitting rails at New Salem, Ill.; the model of an invention for uplifting vessels over shoals patented by Lincoln in 1849 and plaster and bronze casts of his face and hands.

Besides, the National Museum has an enormous amount of material dealing with the Civil War period, which it must keep stored away and exhibit, if at all, only for short periods, because there is no space for it on the exhibition floors.

Some of the most precious of Lincoln relics have disappeared completely. Among them is the celebrated "Mrs. Bixby" letter regarding the death of her son in the Union Army, which is one of the classics of American literature. The popular impression, according to Dr. Moore, is that this letter is hanging in one of the

colleges of Oxford University in England, and this statement is made in most biographies of Lincoln. As a matter of fact, he says, the original cannot be located and probably never will be.

### Deathbed Removed.

The bed on which Lincoln died was taken out in some way from the house on Tenth street and now is owned by the Chicago Historical Society. Representative Rathbone believes it can be brought back to Washington if the museum is established.

The location of Lincoln's family Bible also is known, Dr. Moore said, and could be secured for the museum.

The Library of Congress has a great many Lincoln manuscripts and facsimiles of other papers. These will be greatly increased by the Robert Todd Lincoln collection, which is in possession of the Library, but which cannot be made available to the public as yet because of the terms of Mr. Lincoln's will. These, however, will be kept at the Library.

For the museum other important Lincoln relics have been promised, once it is established.

The Tenth street house where the Oldroyd collection now is kept, Dr. Moore believes, should be restored to represent the typical Washington home of the Civil War period, with

characteristic furniture, silver, pictures, rugs and linen.

Material connected with the life of Lincoln, it was explained at the division of history of the National Museum, is rarer and consequently more valuable than is the case with most of the Presidents. Lincoln remained a poor man to the end of his life and had acquired little in the way of household goods. He was true to the democratic type and lived and dressed simply. He had few clothes and received practically no decorations.

The Ford Theater building, Dr. Moore believes, could also be made the depository of a Civil War library and become a headquarters for Civil War veterans.

The building was originally a Baptist church, which was remodeled into a theater in 1861.





# LINCOLN SHRINE PLANNED

JAN 16 1908

## *Ford's Theater Where President Was Shot Will Be Restored as Memorial to Martyr*

WASHINGTON, Jan. 15. (Exclusive)—Another Lincoln shrine is to be perpetuated in Washington. Old Ford's Theater, where on the night of April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth fired the shot that killed Abraham Lincoln, is to be restored by the government at a cost of \$100,000 and made a Lincoln and war museum and national headquarters for the Grand Army of the Republic.

The three-story structure in Tenth street long has been owned by the Federal government. It now is used by the War Department for the storage of blank forms and not half a dozen persons work in it.

As a consequence of intense feeling throughout the nation it was determined soon after the assassination of Mr. Lincoln that the building, then one of the most celebrated and richly appointed theaters in America, never again should be used as a playhouse. Purchase by the government and obliteration of the interior aspect of Ford's followed. Since then the building has been a mute and futile reminder of the supreme individual tragedy in the annals of the republic.

That it shall no longer be inutile is the purpose of Representative Rathbone's bill which the District of Columbia Committee of the House of Representatives has reported not only favorably but also with no dissenting voice. Secretary of War Davis also is in favor of having the War Department relinquish the building to uses more in keeping with its austere historical significance than its present use as a storage house.

Hence Mr. Rathbone's bill provides that the structure shall house documents, books and relics illuminating Lincoln's public and private life; shall be a repository for distinguished relics of the Civil War, and shall be dedicated forever as a national Lincoln shrine and national headquarters for the Grand Army of the Republic and other veterans' organizations.

The work of restoration will be carried on by the Federal government's director of buildings and grounds, Col. Ulysses Grant, grandson of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, who was to have gone to the theater with Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln on the night of April 14 and whom also Booth had hoped to slay; another coincidence is that the bill creating the new memorial was introduced by the son of the Maj. Rathbone who, with his affianced, was that night with the Lincolns, not, however, as bodyguard—as some suppose—but as guest.

Outwardly the old playhouse is about the same as it was sixty-three years ago and the configuration of the courts and alleys through which Booth made his escape from the theater is unchanged. Certain pathways outside the building which were used will be restored.



## LINCOLN MUSEUM IN WASHINGTON

Bill in Congress Provides for This as  
Well as for Headquarters for  
G. A. R.

Harding Camp No. 5, Washington, D. C., through its legislative committee, Brothers Phelps, Walker and Williams, is busily engaged in pushing the bill before Congress providing for the use of the Ford Theatre building as a Lincoln Museum and Headquarters for the Grand Army of the Republic. Brothers will remember that this project was started by Harding Camp last spring, through its Commander, Lt. Col. U. S. Grant, 3rd, and a bill, H. R. 16656, was introduced by Hon. H. R. Rathbone, Representative in Congress from Illinois, which failed of passage, due to the pressure of other business in the short session of the 69th Congress.

Camps and Divisions were urged, in the "Call to Arms," issued May 4, 1927, to adopt resolutions, to be presented to their Senators and Representatives, urging the passage of this legislation. Quite a large number of Camps have complied with this request. Harding Camp is very grateful to them for their assistance. Dept. Sec.-Treas. Everett F. Warner has also been untiring in his efforts to bring this matter to the attention of the Camps throughout the United States and the Camp appreciates his valuable assistance.

The bill has been introduced by Mr. Rathbone in the present, 70th Congress, and is now known as H. R. 7206. A favorable report thereon was made by the Committee on the District of Columbia, to which it was committed, and it is now before the House of Representatives, awaiting an opportunity to secure its passage.

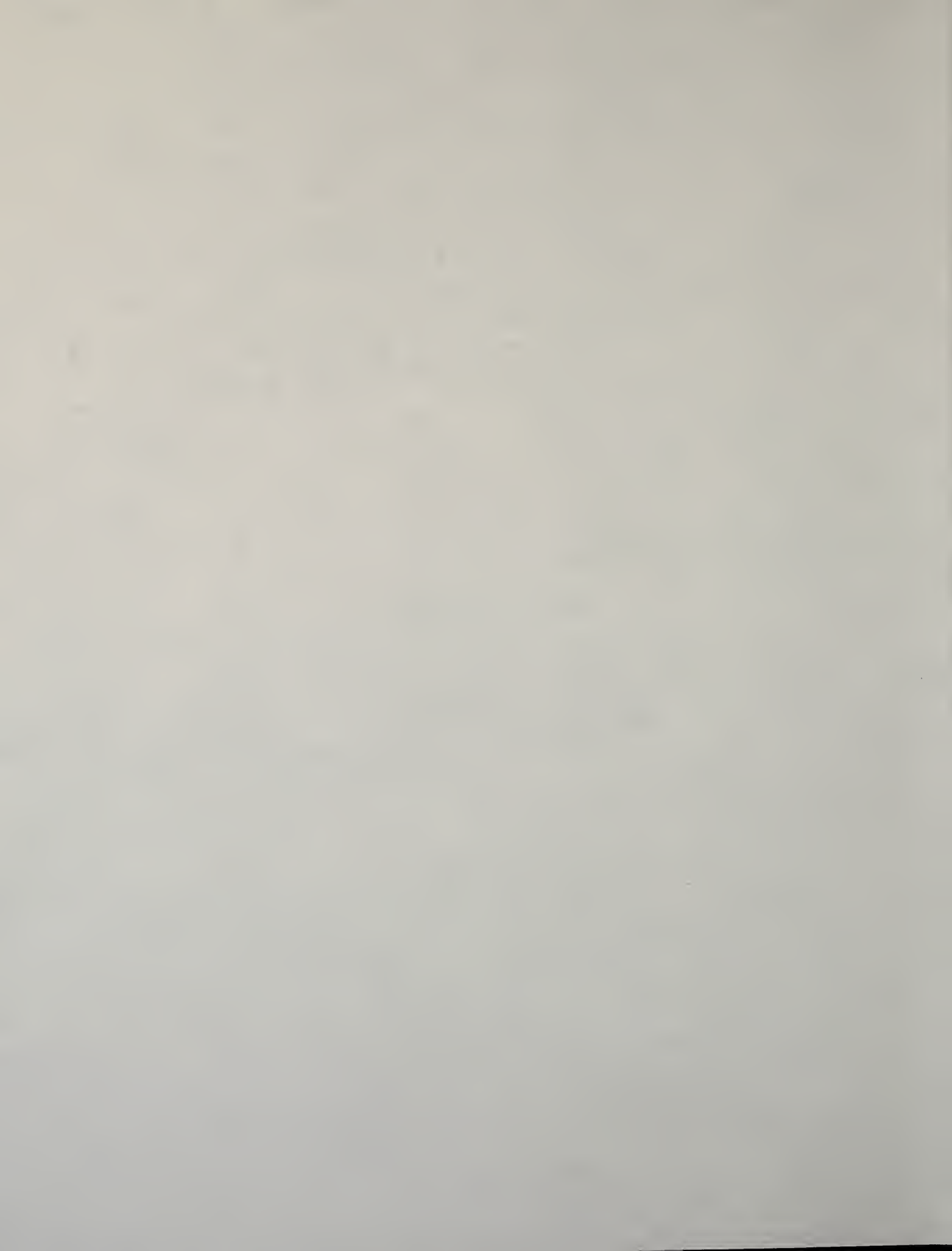
The report of the District Committee calls attention to the fact that the building in which the collection of Lincoln relics, gathered by Comrade Oldroyd of the G. A. R., and which has recently been purchased by the United States, is now housed, is not fire-proof, and is also becoming unsafe for large crowds of visitors. Further, it is not large enough for the present collection of Lincoln relics, to say nothing of further like collections, which are promised to be added thereto, if suitable provision is made for their preservation.

Brothers will doubtless remember that Ford's Theatre is where President Lincoln was shot in 1865. It is a

fire proof building and is now used as a storehouse, which surely is not compatible with its historic associations, as it was acquired by the United States so that it might never again be used as a theatre or for any other commercial purposes.

Camps which have not yet endorsed this legislation are urged to do so at once. Send copies of your resolutions to your Senators and Representatives and help us to put this bill over. All three of the Washington Camps, Lincoln, Cushing and Harding, are actively assisting in this movement. Brothers, Harding Camp needs your assistance in this matter. DO IT NOW!

The Banner  
February, 1928.





# FUNDS ASKED TO SAVE OLD FORD THEATER

Scene of Lincoln's  
Death Is Now Used  
for U. S. Offices.

*Milwaukee Sentinel 4-15-28*

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 14—Ever since the United States purchased the old Ford theater, where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, it has served as office space for overcrowded departments of the government.

Now congress is asked to appropriate funds to preserve its fast decaying walls and interior and to provide for the housing in the theater of the valuable Oldroyd collection of Lincoln souvenirs, now installed across the street in the house where Lincoln died.

The author of the measure is Representative Henry H. Rathbone of Illinois, a grandson of Maj. Rathbone, who was in the box with the President and Mrs. Lincoln on the night the president was shot and who carried the wounded man across the street.

The war department, which has used the Ford theater since it was bought by the government, has indicated that it will be ready to vacate the building by June 30. The records and patents bureau also has been using the theater for its offices.

If the Rathbone bill does not pass, the theater will be turned over again to the building commission, for assignment to any other federal department or bureau which needs office space. E. F. Concklin, special assistant to the public buildings commissioner says that neither the war department nor the commission has money enough to put the historic structure into suitable condition.

Representative Rathbone's grandfather was seated just behind the president on the night of April 14, 1865, as Lincoln and his party watched the play "Our American Cousin," from a box at the left of the proscenium. As soon as he heard the shot, he jumped to his feet and shouted down to the stage directions for capturing the actor, John Wilkes Booth, who had fired and then jumped from the box. Then he bore Lincoln across the street to the house where he died in the early hours of the next day.



## Daily Doings In Nation's Capital

(By Associated Press) 930

WASHINGTON, July 31—The old Ford theatre on Tenth Street in the capital—a structure which is as melancholy in appearance as its history is tragic—may be facing its ultimate destiny.

On the calendar of the house of representatives, listed as unfinished business, is a bill which would make of this historic building a Lincoln museum. Under the measure \$100,000 may be appropriated for the work of reconstruction.

It is planned to reconstruct the interior to some semblance of the way it looked when John Wilkes Booth killed the Civil war president.

The extensive collection of Lincoln relics, now housed in the Old-royd residence on the same street where Lincoln died, after being brought across the street from the theatre, would be moved to the old playhouse. Offices for patriotic so-

cieties also would be provided.

The proposed new use of the theatre would climax a history of a century. The building was erected in 1832 as a Baptist church, and remodeled during the Civil war period as a theatre.

### Later Collapsed

There never was a play given in the theatre after Lincoln's death. "The Octoroon" was billed, but pub-

lic sentiment against the showing was so intense that the promoters were forced to cancel the engagement. Subsequently congress purchased the building.

Later another tragedy was enacted within the old walls. Used as a war department office, the interior wall collapsed June 9, 1893. Twenty-two men were killed, and 108 injured.

During the World war period, the building housed government overflow. There was an army recruiting office there until two years ago.

But it is desolate now. The only life within its dim-columned interior is the government watchman. One is on duty at all hours of the day and night.

### Witness Living

Perhaps the most keenly interested person in this latest move to establish the statue of the theatre is Charles S. Wilson, 83 years old and a resident of the capital.

Wilson claims, and as yet he has not been challenged, to be the only living eye witness in Washington of the tragedy within the walls of the theatre on Good Friday night, April 14, 1865.

He was 18 years old at the time, and remembers the incident vividly. There was the report of a revolver, he said, and in the great confusion, he was forced to the street.

"I was dazed," said Wilson, describing the event. "As I waited for transportation home to where I lived on capitol hill, I remember hearing rumors that Grant and Seward, too, had been killed."





# OLD FORD THEATER TO BE MUSEUM OF RELICS OF LINCOLN

BY RODNEY DUTCHER

Washington.—The old Ford Theater, where Abraham Lincoln was shot, is being painted and prettied up. Its days as a catch-all storehouse for the government are over. By fall it will have become a federal museum, receiving the remarkable Oldroyd collection of relics from the old firetrap across the street in which Lincoln died.

The building hasn't resembled a theater for many years. Things were done to it when the government acquired it shortly after the assassination and about 40 years

ago, while it was being used by the adjutant general's office, its floors caved in, killing a score of employes and injuring scores more. After reconstruction it was used to store and issue the War Department's publications and printed matter until about three years ago when it came to be used for general temporary storage by various bureaus and departments.

## Museum on Ground Floor

Nothing more is heard of the proposal to restore the theater so that it would look as it did on the evening of April 14, 1865. Prejudice against rebuilding and perpetuating the setting of an assassination killed that.

The ground floor, to be used as the museum, is now only one big bare room, its ceiling supported by many equally spaced iron pillars. The former front entrances are now large windows except for one. Over in a corner at the rear

is a small door corresponding somewhat to the exit John Wilkes Booth took as he fled into what is now an alley to mount the horse held for him by "Peanuts" Burrows. The whole place is approximately fireproof and the work on it has been confined to general repairs and plenty of painting inside and out. The old dirty gray paint outside was sandblasted and the bricks painted so that they look like new.

## U. S. Grant III in Charge

Present operations are being carried out through the initiative of Colonel U. S. Grant III, director of public buildings and grounds. Grant was worried about the fire hazard which has always threatened the Oldroyd collection and points out that it can now be successfully shown to only eight or nine people at a time. You can't watch more than that many in the present quarters and souvenir hunters are

always a danger. A quarter's admission will be charged at first in the old theater because Congress has not appropriated any money to operate it as a museum.

Three years ago the government bought the Oldroyd collection for \$50,000. It contains about 3000 items. Oldroyd, who died recently, was a Civil War veteran and Lincoln admirer who devoted his life and money to the collection. He refused several private offers for it.

The prizes of the collection are considered to be the last thing which Lincoln wrote—a brief message advising a couple of applicants for a pass that they needed none to leave the District of Columbia because the war was over, the Bible which Lincoln read as a boy and which affected his literary style importantly and various pieces of furniture from the Lincoln home in Springfield, Ill.

The assortment also contains

such items as a piece of the fringe that hung over Lincoln's head in the theater that night, a small piece of a towel used at the deathbed, a dried rose taken from the dead man's bosom as he lay in death, sheet music devoted to Lincoln—including about 90 different funeral marches, a roll of white ribbon left after decoration of the catafalque, about 600 pictures which include a hundred original photographs of the president, front pages from many newspapers carrying news of the assassination, scores of mourning badges, autographs of all members of the military commission which tried and convicted the conspirators, a library of hundreds of books of Lincolniana, the old wood cooking stove from the Lincoln home and a wheel from the Lincoln family carriage, Lincoln's own books, letters written by Lincoln, many political cartoons of

the period, many small personal belongings and both life and death masks.

Various additions to the collection have been donated since the government bought it and Colonel Grant says there will be many good things that the government itself can add.

The house where Lincoln died, now housing the collection, probably will be preserved and restored as nearly as possible to its appearance 65 years ago.

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**T**HE life mask and the death mask are also in the museum; the shaving mug he used and one of the shawls he wore as President are also to be seen. Bound volumes of all the sermons preached on Lincoln on the Sundays immediately following the assassination, about 2,000 pictures in which Lincoln appears alone or as one of a group, the original order relieving General George B. McClellan of the command of the Army of the Potomac, are just a few of the hundreds of other exhibits which are to be shown in the new Ford's Theatre Museum.



## WAR DEPARTMENT

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE

IN REPLY AG 095 Terry, Howard K.  
REFER TO (11-23-31) Misc1.

WASHINGTON

December 16, 1931.

Mr. Howard K. Terry,  
9528 Wisteria Street,  
Bustleton,  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Sir:

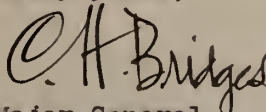
Reference is made to your letter of November 15, 1931, addressed to Col. U. S. Grant, Director, Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, which has been referred to this office for reply, requesting information with reference to the old Ford theatre in this city, with particular reference to certain pillars which are said to have been taken from the building and placed in the Hotel Central, Panama City.

There appears to be no history or chronological account of events connected with the Ford theatre building available in compiled form and no reference can be found in the records to the pillars to which you refer in your letter.

The building was converted into an office building following the Civil War and in 1893 part of the building collapsed, necessitating elaborate repairs. The work on both occasions was doubtless done under contract and it is possible that certain parts of the building not needed in reconstruction were removed and disposed of.

It is regretted that additional information on the subject is not readily available.

Very truly yours,



Major General,  
The Adjutant General.

Two-cent postage  
stamp returned.





# LINCOLN LORE

No. 146

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

January 25, 1932

## LINCOLN LORE

BULLETIN OF  
THE LINCOLN  
HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION



ENDOWED BY  
THE LINCOLN  
NATIONAL LIFE  
INSURANCE  
COMPANY

Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

### MOVING A NATIONAL MUSEUM

One of the most impressive Lincoln birthday celebrations this year will be the formal opening of the Lincoln Room in Ford's Theatre, Washington, D. C., where Lincoln was assassinated. The building will shelter the collection of Lincoln relics displayed for many years in the old house where Lincoln died just across the street from the new quarters.

It is encouraging to know that the priceless mementos of the martyred president are already being transferred to the new room, which will, to a large extent, remove the serious fire hazard which has ever been present during the years the collection has been housed in the building at 516 Tenth St. N. W., where many thousands have viewed it.

The change in location will bring into their former environment many items in the collection which had their origin in Ford's Theatre. While there may be some objection to emphasizing the assassination of Lincoln by making a shrine of the building, it will create a proper atmosphere in which to display the many mementos of America's greatest tragedy.

Osborne H. Oldroyd was largely responsible for the gathering of this valuable collection—it was, in fact, the result of his life's work.

At the age of eighteen, the future relic-hunter opened a news stand in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, where he was born. It was in 1860, the year Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin were the standard bearers of the newly-formed Republican party. Out of the bundle of new publications which came from a Pittsburgh distributor one day there fell the book about "Abram" Lincoln. The young merchant read and re-read the engrossing tale of the Republican candidate's rise from obscurity to fame. There formed within him the conviction that any man who in the face of seemingly insuperable obstacles could accomplish all that Lincoln had, not only would make a good President but also would be worthy of a lifetime's study. This conviction gave rise to a determination by young Oldroyd to collect every scrap of printed material and every memento concerning Lin-

coln he could obtain by contribution or purchase.

In all parts of the country he unremittently prosecuted his search and today the result stands unique among all Lincolnia. It ranges from the books the boy Lincoln studied in the rude log cabin of his youth, to the famous gray woolen shawl which the President wore.

There are in the collection several pieces of furniture used by Lincoln in the White House and when he was practicing law in Springfield. In one cabinet are three well-thumbed books which were the beloved companions of Lincoln's youth. They are the Bible, in which he scrawled his name. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Weems's *Life of Washington*. To a later period belongs a black locust rail split by "Abe" and taken from the fence around his father's home near Decatur, Illinois.

Among the most interesting relics in the collection is the flag which draped the theater box, and in which the assassin's spur caught as he jumped, tearing the flag and causing him to fall on the stage in such a manner as to break his leg. The rent made by the spur is plainly seen, and the spur which made it is hung on the wall near the flag. Here also are oil paintings of Mr. Lincoln, made in 1842 and 1846; several groups in which he appears, including the President and his cabinet; Lincoln studying at night by the firelight in his father's cabin. A corrected draft of the immortal Gettysburg speech; different receptions at the White House, including his last one; scenes in Springfield, portraying Oak Ridge Cemetery and the Lincoln Monument; the Globe tavern, where Lincoln boarded when he was a brilliant and popular lawyer, and where his son Robert was born; the proclamation of freedom, dated January 1, 1863; scenes on the night of the assassination, and photographs of places connected with the history of the capture of Booth are in the collection. A large photograph of the log cabin near Farmington, Illinois, and one of an interior of this cabin, with the remains of an old spinning wheel used by Lincoln's step-mother may be seen. It was in this cabin that Lincoln's father died in 1851, and in which his step-mother enjoyed the realization of her hopes of greatness for her foster son, as she lived here until after his election as President of the United States.

The collection originally was housed in the Lincoln home in Springfield, Illinois, which property Oldroyd was instrumental in having presented to the state by Robert T. Lincoln. Here the collection remained for ten years until the Memorial Association of the

District of Columbia invited Mr. Oldroyd to bring his famous collection to Washington, D. C.

The association had rented for the purpose of housing the collection the old Peterson house where Lincoln died. It is located just across the street from Ford's Theatre, the scene of the assassination.

In 1897 by act of Congress and sponsored by a Congressman from a southern state, the historic old home was acquired by the government for the sum of \$30,000. Here over a period of more than thirty years, with a small fee of admission as his only reimbursement, Mr. Oldroyd continued to display his remarkable collection.

The state of Illinois, realizing that a grave mistake had been made in allowing the famous collection to leave Springfield, bestirred itself, and proposals for its return were made to Mr. Oldroyd.

While the collection was still in the possession of Mr. Oldroyd, Henry Ford made an offer for the material assembled by the veteran collector, but public opinion which decreed that a collection of so national a character should not pass into private hands, was highly influential in bringing about its purchase by the government.

Mr. Oldroyd had always cherished the idea that the government might finally become the purchaser of his collection so that there would be no danger of his work of a life time being wasted by the scattering of this rare Lincolnia.

It was not until 1925, however, that there was any assurance that this hope would be realized. A bill was presented to Congress authorizing the purchase of the collection by the United States at a price of \$50,000. Loyal support was given to this project by Congressman Rathburn of Chicago, whose father and mother were in the box with the Lincolns the night of the tragedy.

The appropriation was made by the government for the purchase of the collection and Mr. Oldroyd was made curator emeritus with a salary which was sufficient to care for him the rest of his days.

Possibly one of the most cherished mementos secured by Mr. Oldroyd during his whole life was the pen with which President Coolidge signed the measure authorizing the purchase of the Lincoln collection.

While Mr. Oldroyd remained as curator emeritus of the museum up to the time of his death the oversight of the valuable collection was largely given over to Mr. Lewis G. Reynolds, the present efficient curator. Under his direction the removal of the relics to their new location is taking place.





FEBRUARY 7, 1932.

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

# FORD'S THEATRE NOW A MUSEUM

## The Building, Restored by the Government, Will House Thousands of Lincoln Relics

By L. C. SPEERS

WASHINGTON.

**F**ORD'S THEATRE where, almost sixty-seven years ago, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, will be opened to the public as a national museum on Friday, the 123d anniversary of Lincoln's birth. In it will be shown a great collection of relics connected with Lincoln's life and death. Unlike Mount Vernon and Monticello, which are under private control, the Lincoln Museum is owned by the United States Government and by it will be guarded and preserved. More than 5,000 Lincoln relics are now being placed in the building and later, it is expected, this number will be increased manyfold.

The old theatre on Tenth Street, to which, on the night of April 14, Lincoln, happy because the war was ended, and fervently hopeful that the wounds of the conflict would rapidly heal, went for what was to be his last night on earth, has been outwardly restored and is to the last detail exactly as it was on the night of the assassination. The interior has, of course, been entirely changed and inside there remains nothing to indicate that there was a time when the building was a Baptist Church or subsequently the playhouse of John T. Ford.

Despite the fact that the building dates back almost a century, outwardly it is not much different in appearance from the average American theatre of the present. As restored by the Department of Public Buildings and Public Parks, under the supervision of Lieut. Col. U. S. Grant 3d, the director, the front of the old theatre is a true reproduction in every respect of the original structure. It is made of the same red brick and has the same number of windows and entrances. There are thirteen windows, three on the first, or street, floor and five each on the second and third, and two entrances, the main one in the exact centre, the other, the old stage entrance, at the end nearest E Street.

**I**N the reconstruction of the interior for museum purposes it was necessary to alter the building completely. What was the dress circle in Lincoln's time is now a single great room where is being put in place the famous Oldroyd collection purchased by the government for \$50,000 in 1926.

Henry Ford had offered Colonel Oldroyd \$100,000 for the collection, the intention of Mr. Ford being its transfer to the Ford Museum in Dearborn, Mich. Colonel Oldroyd, however, wanted the government to own it and finally, in 1926, Congress, after debating the question for nearly five years, voted the money necessary to acquire the collection. This was followed with an appropriation of \$100,000 for the modernization of the interior of the theatre for use as the nation's own permanent museum.

The display cases are in place, the scores of Lincoln portraits, some originals, others authentic copies; newspapers in which appeared his election to the Presidency, his assassination and his funeral; cartoons, most of them of the lampooning kind, published during the stormy years of his Presidency; the books he owned and studied as a boy, a complete library of everything written about him in the sixty-seven years that have passed since he was killed, old furniture from his home at Springfield, pathetic relics of his last hours—all these are included in the more than 5,000 exhibits which will be in the museum when it is officially opened.

The two upper floors for the present will not be a part of the museum, as the main floor offers ample space for the present display. Eventually, when the collection has assumed greater proportions,

the remaining floors will be taken over. In the meantime, it is probable those floors will be used by patriotic societies to whom the government will issue temporary permits.

Just across the street and almost directly opposite the main entrance to Ford's Theatre stands the old boarding house, in a hall room of which Lincoln died seven hours after Booth shot him. It also is owned by the government and will be preserved. For many years it housed the Oldroyd collection, but was too small for the proper display of the relics.

Strange to say, the cataloguing of the Oldroyd collection has only recently been started. An adequate description of the relics would fill a book of imposing proportions. Among the more important items are the following: Two old black horsehair sofas that were in Lincoln's Springfield home, along with an ancient rocker of the same material; Lincoln's favorite chair; the iron stove, on which was cooked the last meal Lincoln ever ate in his Illinois home; the round table made of massive walnut lumber that stood in the centre of his study; the desk he used when he was struggling as a young lawyer, a cheap home-made affair with six

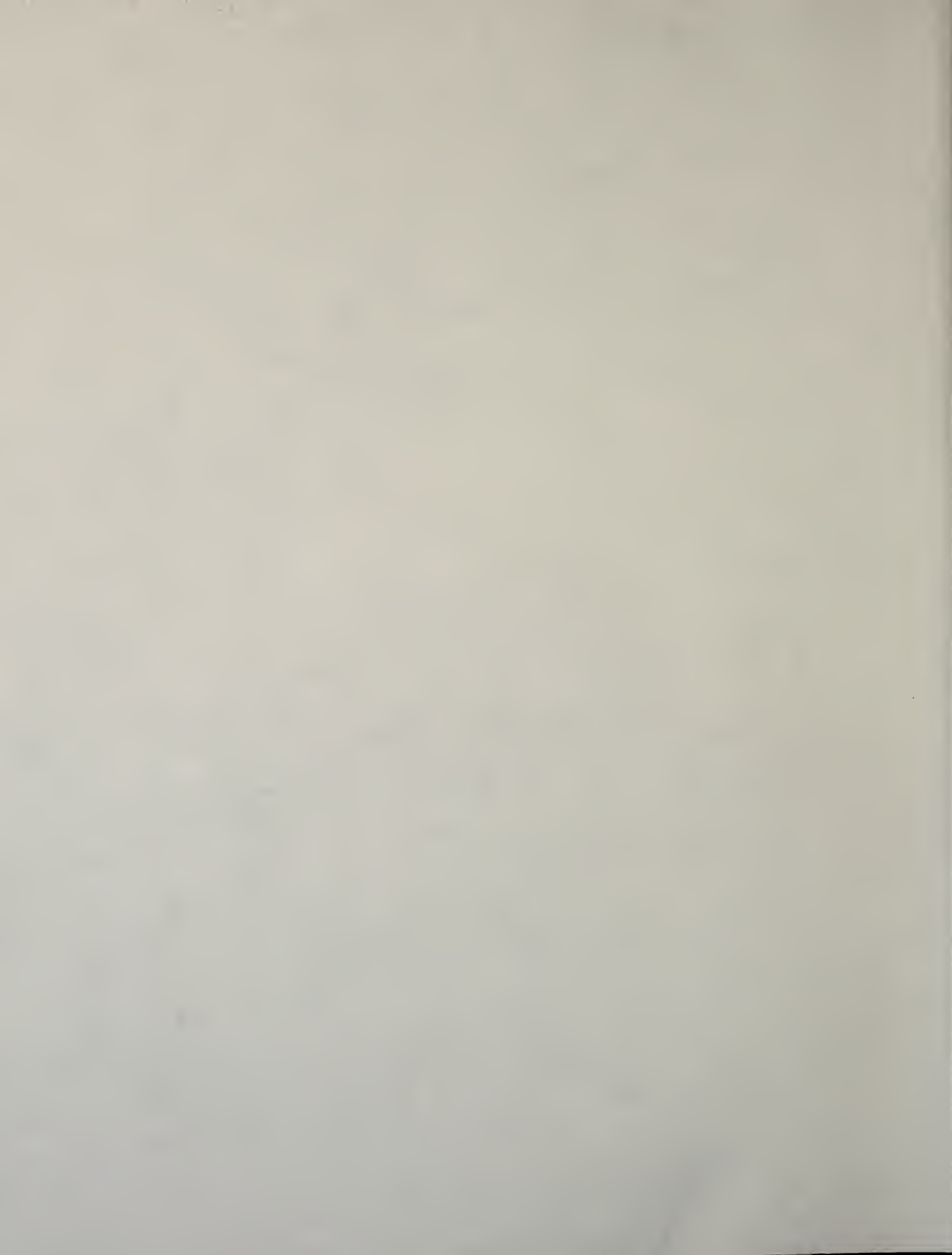
pigeon-holes and from top to bottom not more than four feet high.

Also there is a quaint "what-not," several chairs and the old-fashioned crib in which all of the Lincoln children were rocked—all from the Lincoln home in Springfield.

The personal books of Lincoln are among the most valued relics in the display. First among them is the Bible his mother used and which was her last gift to him. In it, in Lincoln's handwriting, written when he was in his teens, is his signature, the "Abraham" on one line and the "Lincoln" just under it. The Bible was printed in England in 1799 and the first words the young Abraham ever heard read, according to legend, were from this old Bible.

Another book prized by Lincoln was the history of the Indian chief Black Hawk, for Lincoln was a Captain of Illinois Infantry in the Black Hawk War in 1832.





March 10, 1937

Mr. Harrell L. Garrett  
Ford Theatre Museum  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Garrett:

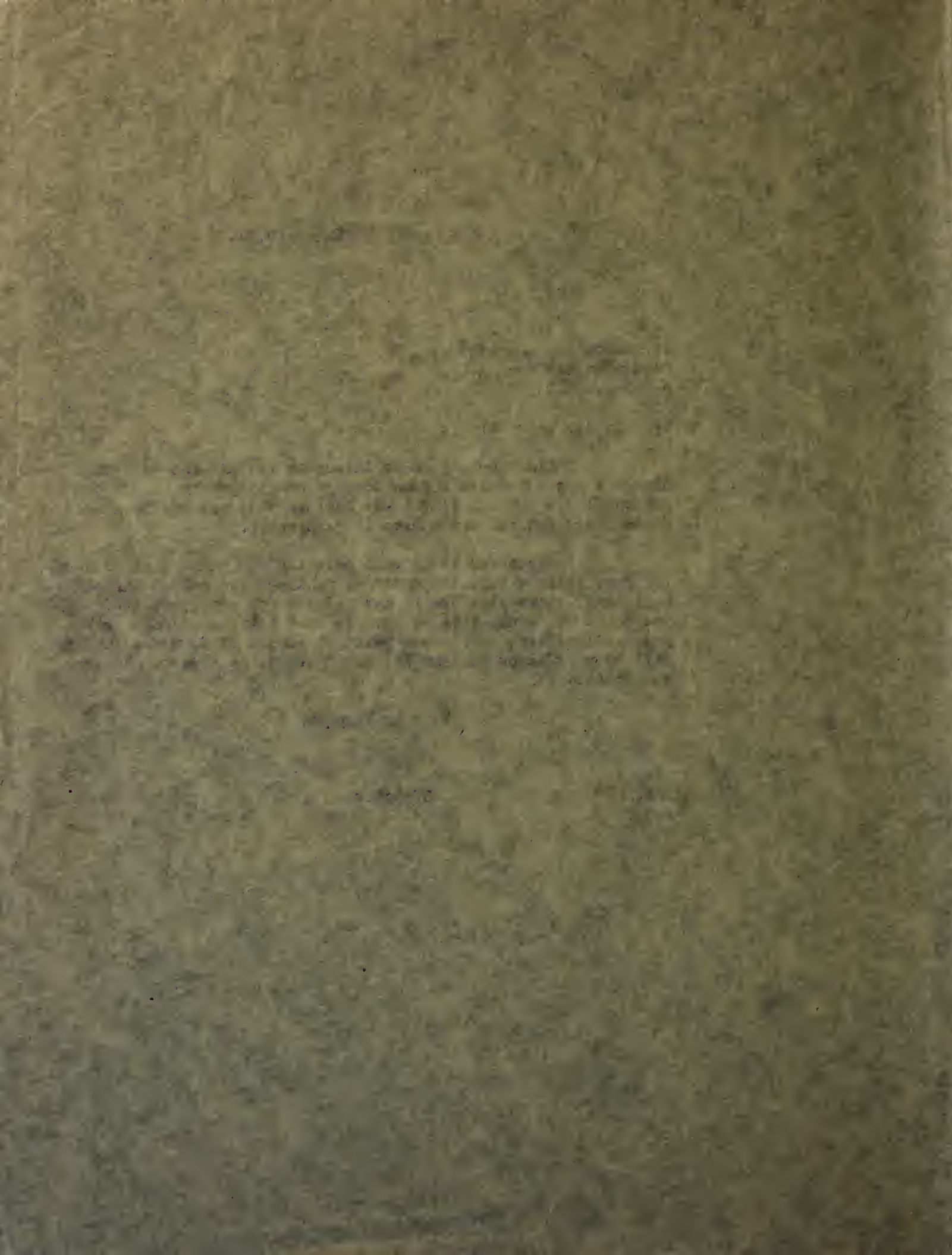
While recently on an itinerary through the Eastern States I was scheduled for an address at Gettysburg before the Rotary Club, at which time I was advised that you had been made Custodian of the Lincoln Shrine in Washington.

It occurred to me that possibly you might like to have for your files a bulletin which we publish here called Lincoln Lore, and I take pleasure in enclosing a few sample copies. If you think you would like to have it sent to your address will you kindly advise us to what point it should be forwarded and we will be very happy to send it, and there is no expense whatever attached to it.

Very truly yours,

LAW:EB  
Encs.

Director



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Lee Mansion,  
Arlington, Va.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON

Lincoln Museum  
House Where Lincoln Died

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
511 Tenth Street, N.W.

March 17, 1937

Dr. Louis A. Warren,  
Director, Lincoln National Life Foundation,  
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

My dear Dr. Warren:

I have received your letter of March 12, containing your offer of copies of Lincoln Lore for my file. I wish to express my sincere appreciation of this offer, but, inasmuch as the copies which you have been sending to Captain Clemens are placed in our files, I do not believe that it would be necessary to send additional ones. I would also like to add that Captain Clemens still remains the Custodian of the Museum.

I am very sorry that I missed seeing you while you were in Washington. Captain Clemens told me of your visit. Also, we both wish to express our regrets at not being able to attend your lecture. We received instructions to keep the Museum open until ten o'clock that night and it was necessary for us to remain on duty.

Sincerely yours,

*Harper L. Garrett.*  
Harper L. Garrett,  
Acting Superintendent.





# The Tragedy at Ford's Theater

2-11-37  
By HARLOWE R. HOYT

*In a previous installment Mr. Hoyt pointed out that no less than a round dozen of persons connected with the assassination of Abraham Lincoln met violent deaths, committed suicide or went insane. This is the last of two articles.*

## The Old Church

Ford's Theater was originally a church. It was built in 1833 by Washington's First Baptist Congregation on the east side of Tenth Street, between E and F. It passed through many vicissitudes, as do all congregations, with different pastors and varying fortunes. But in 1861, a new site was chosen and the trustees sold the property to John T. Ford.

The building was opened for concerts and minstrel shows since no alterations were required for this simple form of entertainment. Then it was rebuilt and became a bona fide theater. Sharing fortunes with Grover's Theater, its only opposition, the new place enjoyed marked success until Dec. 30, 1862, when fire broke out during the afternoon when the place was deserted. The building burned to the ground.

## John T. Ford

Burning of a structure in those days meant much to the management. The stock system was employed, where the actors supported only the visiting star and one or two others. Standard plays were given and the visitors stepped in to head the cast. The fire meant the destruction of all scenery, properties and costumes, which were the backbone of the system. But Ford started without delay and the following August opened a new Ford's

Theater, which is the structure that stands in Washington today.

John T. Ford was a product of Baltimore. He was an intimate friend of the Booth family and sponsored John Wilkes when he made his first stage appearances. He owned two theaters in Baltimore in addition to his Washington house and was recognized as one of the leading managers of his time. When the new theater opened, it was patronized by the opposition—that clique of politicians who opposed Lincoln's policies—and for that reason, the president preferred to attend Grover's Theater, where his son, Tad, had the run of the stage. The fatal April 14 marked his first visit of the season to Ford's and he went then only because he desired to see "Our American Cousin," which Laura Keane played in Chicago when the Republican convention nominated him to the presidency the first time.

Following the murder, authorities seized the theater. It was closed and kept under guard. John Ford; his brother, Clay; J. E. Buckingham, the door tender; Ned Spangler, stage hand, and the company, part and parcel, were arrested during Secretary Stanton's first general sweep and each was placed in prison. All but Spangler were released after a bit but he went to the Dry Tortugas on the supposition that he played a small part in the death plot.

## Transfer

Ford felt himself practically ruined. But after 40 days' incarceration he was exonerated. His theater was still in the hands of the government and red-tape

promised to keep it there. With considerable difficulty, he finally induced Congress to pay him \$100,000 indemnities. The government retained the theater.

Again a Ford's theater was completely remodeled and used as a part of the surgeon general's office of the War Department. It was given over to the display of peculiar wounds and diseases which had developed on the field and in hospitals during the war. Among the specimens, it might be noted, were three of the cervical vertebrae of Booth, showing the wound made by the bullet that killed him. What is left of this relic is now in the army museum and can still be seen.

Things ran along smoothly for a time. Then came June 9, 1893. Whether the building was poorly constructed or whether materials had been defective was never ascertained. By this time, 500 government clerks were housed there. There were numerous heavy files, for classification had become part of the work, and desks and office paraphernalia added their weight.

## Disaster

Suddenly, with no hint or warning, the lower three floors of the structure collapsed. The 300 employees unfortunate enough to be in dangerous territory went down in a mass of mortar, timbers, splintered flooring and iron work. Police, firemen, the army itself, were called upon to effect a rescue. One by one, wounded and dead were extracted. Some escaped with minor injuries. Some went to the hospital for months. Many were left crippled for life. Twenty-eight were dead when their bodies were recovered. For the greater part, they were employees on the first floor, buried under the greatest portion of the debris.

Again the building was rebuilt. But this time, it was made into a national museum and such it remains to the present day. Capt. O. H. Oldroyd, Lincoln enthusiast and Civil War veteran, commenced a collection of Lincoln relics in Springfield, Ill., in the old home-stand. Later, he moved his collection to Washington and housed it in the Peterson lodging house where Lincoln died, across from the theater. Still later, this was moved to the Lincoln Museum. But many changes have been made and most of it today is in the army museum.

So ends the story of Ford's Theater; and in the wake of the murder of a president, so ends the list of 40 deaths that might be said to be connected with that tragedy.



in order to try to carry on that building as a museum, so that it will not be an expense to the Federal Government in times like this. I believe Lincoln would approve it if he were here, and I hope there will be no reduction in any fees that are now charged those who visit these shrines, whether it be Lincoln's shrine or any other shrine, because the solvency of the country certainly requires that these admission fees be retained. I hope the amendment will be voted down.

Mr. WHITE. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. JOHNSON of Oklahoma. I yield to the gentleman from Idaho.

Mr. WHITE. I wonder if the gentleman from Pennsylvania is in favor of charging an admission to the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial? We could get a big revenue there.

Mr. RICH. I would so recommend at this time of such great need for funds to keep this country from going into bankruptcy, we are on the very verge of it—the enormous deficits of the past 10 years have created the greatest debt our Nation has ever experienced; it is twice as great as it was after the World War at the highest point.

[Here the gavel fell.]

Mr. JOHNSON of Oklahoma. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that all debate on this amendment and all amendments thereto close in 6 minutes.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. JOHNSON]?

There was no objection.

Mr. DONDERO. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the amendment offered by the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DIRKSEN].

Mr. Chairman, the amendment offered by the gentleman from Illinois seeks to strike from this bill the charge of 10 cents to visit the old Ford Theater, where Lincoln was assassinated, and the house in which Lincoln died, at No. 516 Tenth Street, in this Capital City. I do not know by what authority the Department of the Interior ever levied that charge to visit those two places.

The chairman of the committee has raised the question that protests and objections have come to him because of the charge to visit the home and the shrine of the Father of Our Country. This property does not belong to the Federal Government. It belongs to an association. That is not true of the house in which Lincoln died or of Ford's Theater, where he was assassinated. Both of these places belong to the Federal Government.

It seems to me that at a time like this, and under conditions in which we find our country today, this Congress could do much to preserve for the American people and the children of the rising generation the great characters of our Nation by making it just as easy as possible to visit these shrines without charge.

I know that many thousands of people come to the city of Washington, and they do not even know that Ford's Theater is open to the public until they are told. Invariably, when they find it out,





# Capital Visitors Find Ford Theater, Lincoln Shooting Site, Is Neglected

BY DICK CULL JR.

The Daily News Bureau  
614 Albee Bldg.  
Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON, July 25. — Not long ago a Dayton-area woman expressed the universal disappointment of visitors here who look inside nearly-neglected Ford's theater, the place where President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated the night of April 14, 1865.

"It's a shame to leave the place go to ruin," the woman wrote to Republican Sen. Milton R. Young of North Dakota, who is co-sponsor of a resolution in Congress to restore the theater's interior as it was on that fateful night.

Not many historical landmarks in this national capital are as disappointing to the thousands who come here every summer as this hallowed site on Tenth st., north-west.

Gone from its interior are the original equipment and furnishings. And there is nothing on the inside to convince you of being in a theater.

Only a painted line across the floor outlines the stage upon which the comedy, "Our American Cousin," was being given when John Wilkes Booth's fatal shot rang out.

Only painted footprints indicate the path of Booth's flight. After jostling Laura Keane, star of the show, in the wings, he fled out a rear door. That door now is a window.

\* \* \*

ALL THAT remains of the presidential party's box is the door in which Booth cut a peephole to watch Lincoln.

In short, it's only by drawing on the imagination that visitors can

reconstruct the setting of a joyous April night that was to end in one of the great tragedies of American history.

Because he, too, was disappointed by his visit to Ford's theater—which is now known as the Lincoln Museum—Sen. Young decided to do something about it. Along with Republican Rep. George A. Dondero of Michigan he introduced a resolution to restore the theater to its appearance on the night of the shooting.

The letter from the Dayton-area woman is only one of those received by Sen. Young in which disappointment is expressed. Others have come from all over the country.

A grandniece of a Lincoln bodyguard, who had helped carry the wounded President across the street to the house where he died, said she also was "disappointed . . . to find it an office building."

Additional evidence that Ford's theater does not rank with other tourist attractions here is the fact that last year 1,793,000 persons visited the Lincoln memorial, 1,056,000 were at Mount Vernon, 985,000 at the Washington monument, but only 146,000 visited Ford's theater.

AFTER SEN. YOUNG offered his resolution, a descendant of John T. Ford, who owned the theater at the time of the shooting, offered to help track down its furnishings.

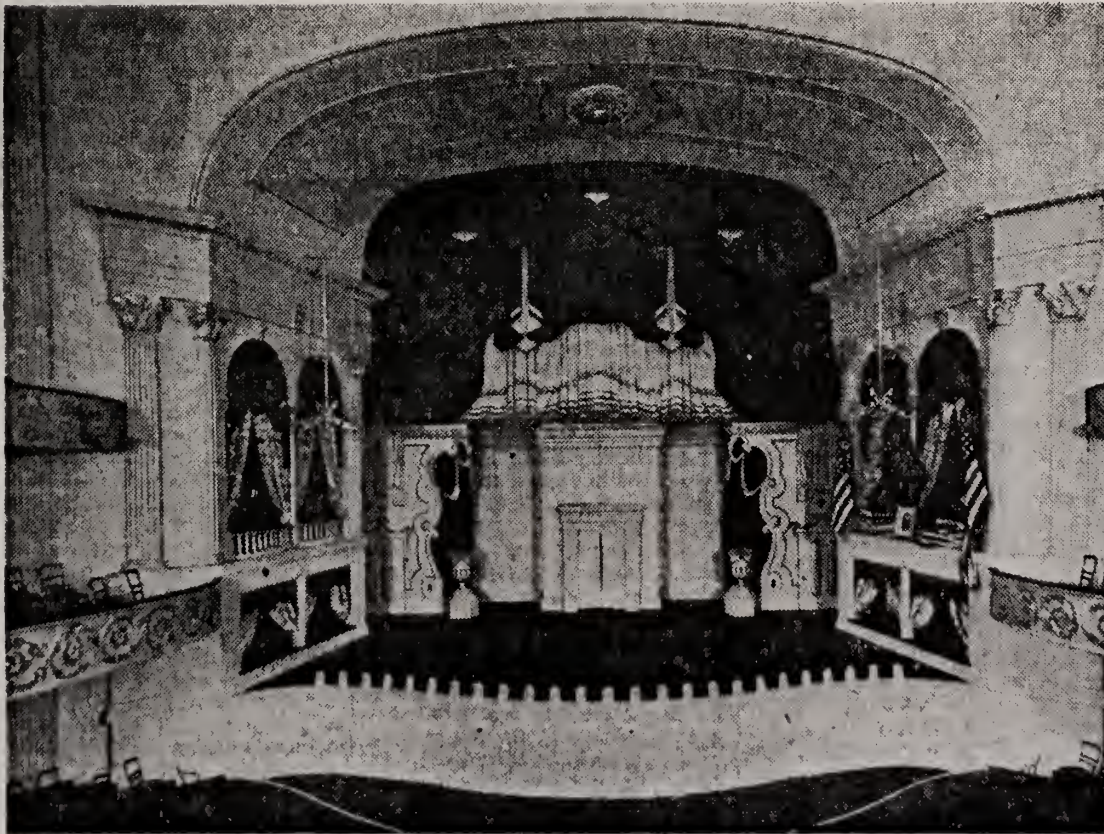
That will be difficult, to say the least.

Records and plans have vanished—even if they ever existed. The box office was in the building's south front but there is no known record of its size or appearance.

A stairway to the upper balconies was in the north front corner, but there is no evidence as to whether it was angular or circular, wide or narrow.

Fortunately, pictures of the stage and the box Lincoln occupied are available. Taken for trial evidence purposes, they would enable accurate reproduction of the historically important parts of the interior.

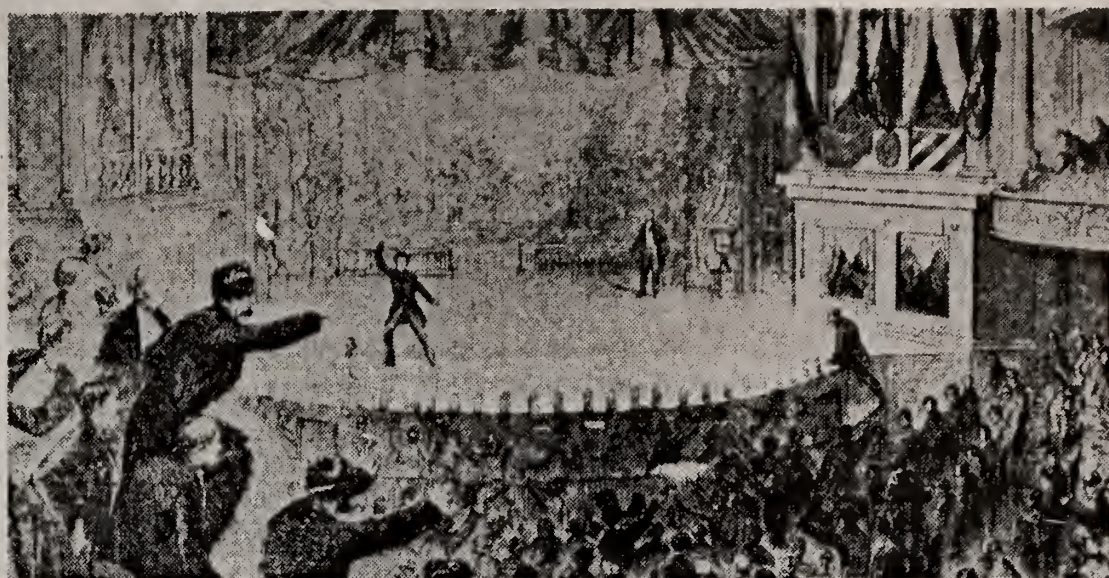
Nevertheless, enthusiasts for the restoration are hopeful that, as word spreads, a long-forgotten let-



. . . This is how the same stage looks today to visitors at the Lincoln museum, which the theater has become . . .







WASHINGTON, July 25.—The sketch above, by A. Berghaus, shows John Wilkes Booth crossing the stage of the Ford's theater here the night of April 14, 1865. Booth, who had just assassinated President Lincoln, is being pursued by Maj. Joseph B. Stewart, a member of the audience . . .

ter or picture or set of plans will turn up.

Restoring the theater would not be necessary had a fund drive shortly after the assassination succeeded. The YMCA attempted to raise money to buy the building to preserve it as a Lincoln memorial. The drive fell short.

**MAYBE THE OLD** building has been jinxed from the start.

The original structure on the site was the First Baptist church. When the congregation moved in 1859, the building was sold to Ford. He remodeled it into a theater, Ford's Athenaeum. In 1863 it was wrecked by fire.

After Lincoln was shot in 1865, public indignation prevented Ford from reopening the theater.

Consequently, the government rented it from him for a time before buying it outright for \$100,000 in 1866. It was remodeled into a warehouse and offices and that is when the theatrical furnishings vanished.

Tragedy again struck in 1893 when the floors collapsed, killing 22 persons and injuring 68 others. The interior again was rebuilt and it was used for governmental purposes until the present museum was set up in 1933.

The play presented at Ford's theater on the night of April 14, 1865, was Tom Taylor's celebrated comedy, "Our American Cousin," with Laura Keane, a distinguished actress, in the leading role.

The importance of the occasion was heightened by the presence of President and Mrs. Lincoln, who had as their guests Maj. Henry R. Rathbone and his fiancée, Miss Clara Harris.

The third act of the play was drawing to a close when John Wilkes Booth, prominent actor, entered the building and made his way leisurely from the dress circle to the presidential box, located on the right of the audience.

vestibule of the box, the actor barred the door from within. After observing the President's position through a small hole in the inner door, Booth, familiar with the play, entered the box about 10:15 p. m., when only one actor was on the stage.

Lincoln sat with his back to the door, engrossed in the play. Suddenly the fatal shot was fired and the mortally wounded President slumped in his chair.

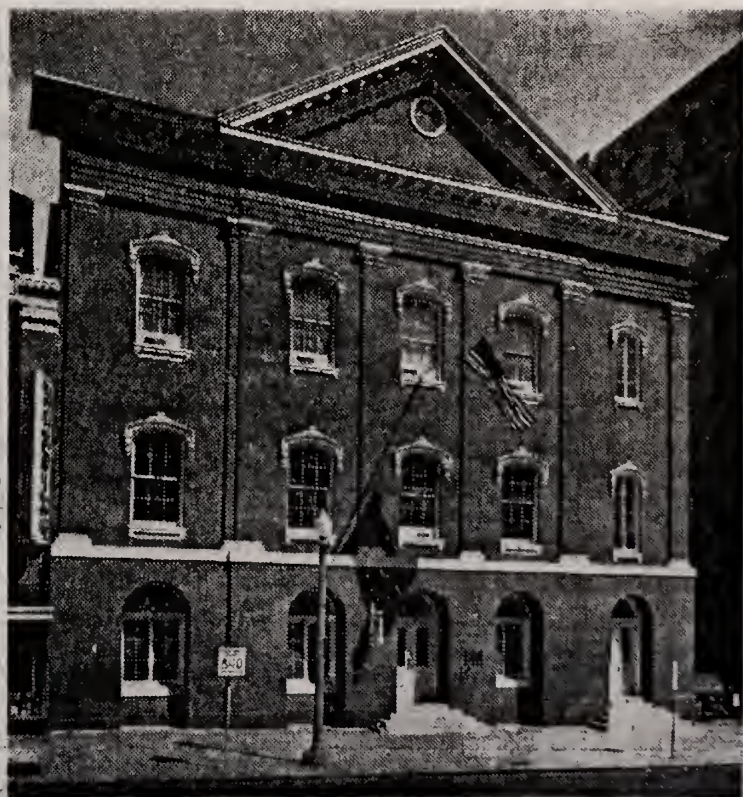
As Maj. Rathbone sprang at the assassin, Booth dropped his single-shot derringer and, with his dagger, stabbed Rathbone in the left arm, forcing him to relinquish his hold.

As Booth leaped from the box, the spur of his right boot became entangled in the colors of the U. S. Treasury Guards, decorating the center of the box. Thrown off balance, he landed awkwardly on the stage, at least 11½ feet below, fracturing the large bone in his left leg above the ankle.

Booth instantly regained his feet and, brandishing his dagger, is asserted to have shouted "Sic semper tyrannis" (Ever thus to tyrants), the motto of the commonwealth of Virginia, before dashing from the stage.

Maj. Joseph B. Stewart, who was in the audience, crossed the footlights in pursuit. Escaping by the rear door, the murderer mounted his horse, held by Joseph "Peanuts" Burroughs, the stage doorkeeper, and rode out of the alley to F st.

Booth fled into Maryland, and, aided by Southern sympathizers, reached Garrett's farm, near Port Royal, Va., where he was shot and killed on April 26.



. . . Pictured above is the Lincoln museum from the street.

THE DAYTON DAILY NEWS

SUNDAY, JULY 26, 1953

GAINING an entrance to the





**PERMANENT REPERTORY**

## ***Groups Want Ford Theater Made Theater***

Ford's Theater, at 511 10th-st nw, currently being restored to its Civil War era condition, may come alive theatrically again if the American National Theater Academy and the National Repertory Theater have their way.

The two groups have proposed a year-round repertory troupe to put on plays produced in Lincoln's time or contemporary works about the assassinated President and the Civil War. Examples would be "She Stoops to Conquer," a British farce performed at the theater a week before Lincoln's death, and "John Brown's Body," "The Last Days of Lincoln," and "Abe Lincoln in Illinois."

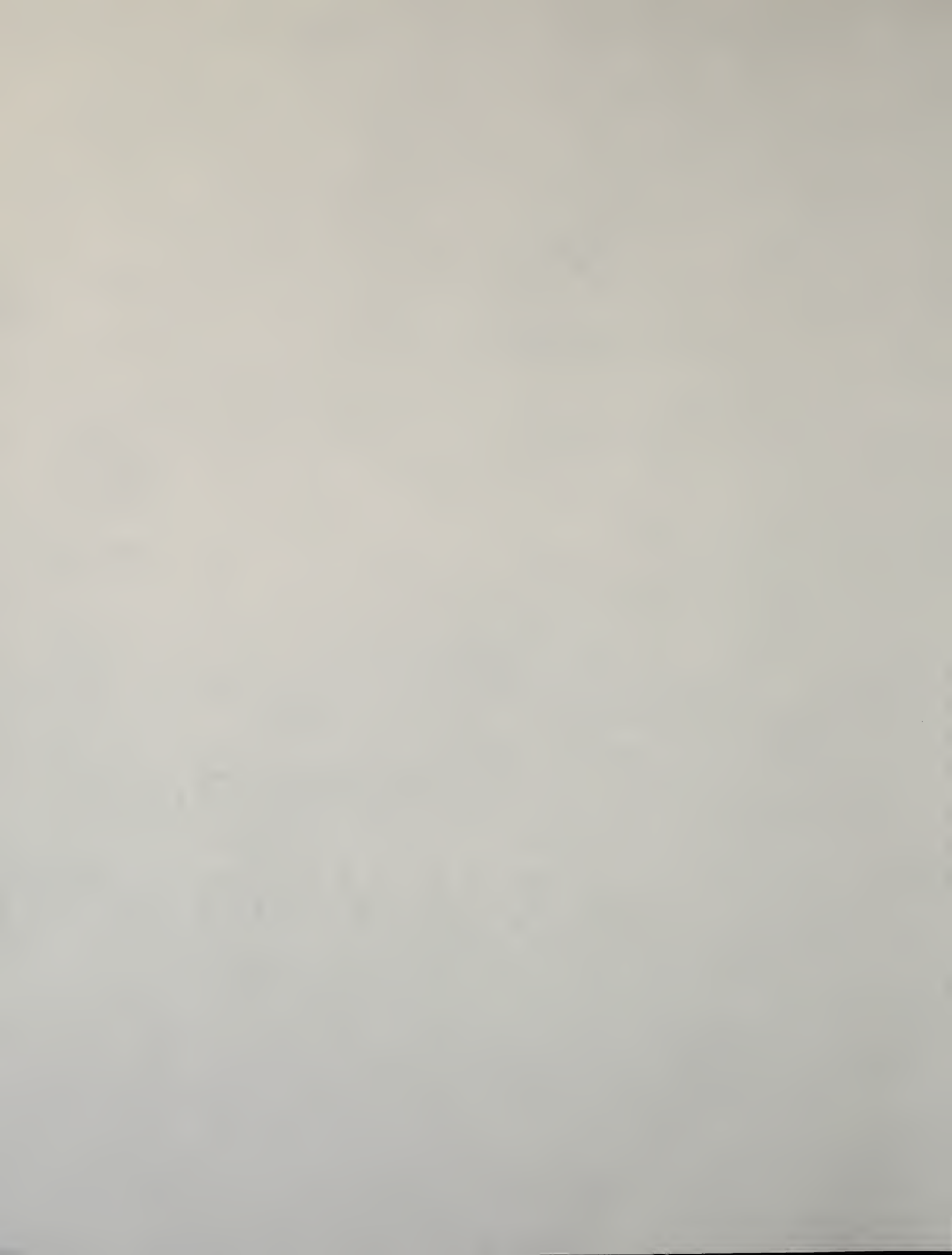
Michael Dewell, co-producer

of NRT, said some changes would be required in the theater's design — permanent stage lighting, lines for pulling scenery up and down, dressing room space — before it could be used for full-scale production. "This is an opportunity to do plays of tremendous historical and cultural importance," he said.

Dewell said the project could be financed either by the National Park Service or the Health, Education and Welfare Department. The Interior Department said it was "quite interested in the project."

According to the latest estimates, the \$2 million refurbishing of the theater is to be finished in about 10 months.

WASHINGTON DAILY NEWS, SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1967



# Restoration of Ford's Theater Is Planned

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5 (AP)—One thing visitors to historic Ford's Theater want—and at last may get—is realism.

They expect to see the Flag-draped balcony box where John Wilkes Booth, a deranged actor with flashing black eyes and murder in his heart, assassinated Abraham Lincoln.

And they expect to see the stage where Booth fell and broke his leg after catching a spur in the colors of the Treasury Guards that night when the Civil War President was viewing a farewell performance of the celebrated comedy, "Our American Cousin," starring Laura Keane.

"People are terribly disappointed when they don't find the stage just as it was on the night of April 14, 1865, when Lincoln was shot," says Randle B. Truett, long-time chief custodian of the Lincoln Museum.

"When they find that all the theatrical trappings have disappeared—the stages, boxes, chairs and so on—they want to know what happened.

## Used for Offices

"What they don't realize is that while the theater building itself still stands, the inside was ripped out a few months after the assassination to make room for Government offices."

Truett and others interested in preserving historic sites are hoping that the 84th Congress will provide funds to restore Ford's Theater, so far as possible, to duplicate the exact scene of that fateful night almost 90 years ago.

By joint resolution of the last Congress, the Interior Department has been instructed to draw up plans and estimates for the restoration and present them to Congress this year.

Truett estimates the job would cost about \$800,000. Other officials think \$1,000,000 would scarcely do the job.

It would cost about \$5,000, for example, just to restore the tattered and age-yellowed flag of the Treasury Guards regiment which draped Lincoln's box on the night of the assassination.

## Stage Trappings Gone

Another difficulty is that most of the stage trappings have long since vanished and are believed to have been destroyed.

"But we know that the red damask rocking chair Lincoln sat in when he was shot is now in the Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan," Truett said in an interview. "And the bed,

where he died is in the Chicago Historical Society Museum.

"Of course we would like to have them back, if possible. We have already been communicating with the Dearborn museum about the chair, but the outlook isn't too bright, I'm afraid."

Truett hopes, too, that some long-sought pieces of stage equipment may be found.

"It is strange how a little publicity will bring things out of storerooms and attics," he said. "We still hope somebody will find something."

## Floor Plan Lacking

"For instance, we have never been able to find the floor plan of Ford's Theater. We have newspaper drawings and photographs made immediately after the assassination, but not the floor plan."

Truett said many persons in trying to supply relics associated with the historic event, have come forward with what they thought were "genuine copies," now extremely rare, of the original New York Herald account of the shooting.

"They look authentic, all right," he said, "but I don't even bother to look at the front page. I turn the page over and look at the advertisements. Invariably I find an advertisement for a patent medicine with letters of endorsement from satisfied users."

"The letters," he signed, "are dated 1895—some 40 years after the shooting."

Truett explained that a patent medicine manufacturer sent out thousands of these replicas by way of advertising his wares.

Although people come from all over the country to see Ford's Theater, it ranks far below other capital landmarks as a tourist attraction.

"We think that's because it is

just a museum," Truett said. "We think a lot more people would come to see it if the stage and boxes and the whole dramatic scene of the assassination were restored."

## Attendance Figures Given

Figures show that 152,226 persons, including 17,070 school children, visited the theater museum in 1953. By contrast, the Lincoln Memorial drew nearly 1,750,000, the Washington Monument more than 1,000,000.

Aside from a small-scale replica of the theater stage, flanked by the box where Lincoln received the fatal bullet, the chief attractions in the museum are:

1. The stubby 6-inch derringer, a single-shot muzzle loader, which Booth fired into the back of Lincoln's head.

2. Booth's diary, written during his flight through Southern Maryland, in which the assassin wrote: "I can never repent it, though we hated to kill."

3. The riding boot which a doctor cut off Booth's shattered leg before he was tracked down by Federal troops and bloodhounds and shot to death in a burning barn near Port Royal, Va., on April 26, 1865.

Booth's body is now buried in the Booth family burial ground in Baltimore. His grave is unmarked.





# Theater Where Lincoln Was Assassinated May Be Restored to Original Setting

By ROGER D. GREENE

WASHINGTON (AP) — One thing visitors to historic Ford's Theater want—and at last may get—is realism.

They expect to see the flag-draped balcony box where John Wilkes Booth, a deranged actor with flashing black eyes and murder in his heart, assassinated Lincoln.

And they expect to see the stage where Booth fell and broke his leg after catching a spur in the colors of the Treasury Guards that night when the Civil War President was viewing a farewell performance of the celebrated comedy, "Our American Cousin," starring Laura Keane.

## People Disappointed

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"When they find that all the theatrical trappings have disappeared—the stages, boxes, chairs and so on—they want to know what happened."

"What they don't realize is that while the theater building itself still stands, the inside was ripped out a few months after the assassination to make room for government offices."

## Play Duplication

Truett and others interested in preserving historic sites are hoping that the 84th Congress will provide funds to restore Ford's Theater, so far as possible, to duplicate the exact scene of that fateful night almost 90 years ago.

By joint resolution of the last congress, the Interior Department has been instructed to draw up plans and estimates for the restoration and present them to Congress this year.

estimates the job would cost \$100,000. Other officials estimate it would cost \$250,000.



**CHANGED SET**—Ford's Theater in Washington, where Abraham Lincoln was shot almost 90 years ago, as it appears today. In the center background Galdine Harsch, 9, from San Antonio, Tex., originally and now living in Washington; stands on what was once the stage directly below the spot where Lincoln sat in a balcony box at the time of the assassination. (AP Newsfeatures)

It would cost about \$5,500, for example, just to restore the tattered and age-yellowed flag of the Treasury Guards regiment which draped Lincoln's box on the night of the assassination.

## Trappings Vanished

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HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES  
SIGNIFICANT IN THE RESTORATION OR PARTIAL RESTORATION  
OF FORD'S THEATER



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS

JANUARY, 1956.



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# INFORMATION BULLETIN

The Library of Congress

Washington 25, D.C.

Vol. 19, No. 43

October 24, 1960

*Fonds Theatre  
Pages 610-612*

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## Acquisition Notes

Addition to the John Rodgers Papers. Louisa Rodgers Alger of Cambridge, Mass., has given the Library of Congress thirteen letters (1809-1870) written by Mrs. John Rodgers, her daughter, Mrs. Montgomery C. Meigs, and others. Their letters add materially to knowledge of the life of the Commodore Rodgers family at Sion Hill, Havre de Grace, Md. Also reflected throughout their letters are glimpses of the important part the Rodgers-Meigs family played in the affairs of their times. In anticipation of a visit home by the Commodore, Mrs. Rodgers wrote him on March 17, 1810:

At the first perusal of your last letter I flattered myself with the expectation of seeing you in a week or two, but on reflection I am afraid that I am too sanguine, and that the Torpedo system will not prove of sufficient importance to call you to Washington-- Altho I neither know or care anything about Fulton or his experiments I shall be very much rejoiced if his visionary Scheme should prove the means of seeing you earlier than I expected, and I should trouble myself but very little concerning the sums which the nation might think proper to throw away on the subject.

[Elizabeth G. McPherson]



## Events in the Offing

The Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation in the Library of Congress will continue its anniversary season with two chamber music concerts featuring the Budapest String Quartet and Mitchell Lurie, eminent clarinetist, on Thursday and Friday evenings, November 3 and 4. The program for both evenings will include Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A major, K 581, Beethoven's String Quartet in F major, op. 18, no. 1, and Brahms' Clarinet Quintet in B minor, op. 115.

Both concerts will begin promptly at 8:30 p.m. in the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library. The Friday evening concert will be broadcast in its entirety by Station WGMS of Washington and will be made available to radio stations in other cities.

Tickets will be distributed by the Hayes Concert Bureau, 1108 G Street, N. W., beginning at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, October 31. A service charge of 25 cents is placed on each ticket, and only two tickets will be distributed to an individual. Telephone reservations may be made on Monday morning by calling DIstrict 7-4387. Mail orders are not accepted.

Assembly of State Librarians. The Librarian of Congress has invited the State librarians, law librarians, and directors of legislative reference services of the States and territories to convene at the Library of Congress November 16-18 for the Second Assembly of State Librarians.

The agenda for the assembly will include discussions of the public documents of the States, the reference and research services and compilations of State libraries, the Library Services Act and the States, and State agencies and the development of public libraries, as well as reports on the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections and on the 3d edition of the Union List of Serials. The meetings will be held in the Whittall Pavilion and in the Wilson Room.

The members of the Agenda Committee are Ralph Hudson, State Librarian of Oklahoma, Chairman; Louise Nixon, Executive Secretary, State Public Library Committee, Lincoln, Nebr.; Robert C. Sale, State Librarian of Connecticut; Loleta D. Fyan, President of the American Association of State Libraries; and Jennings Wood, Chief of LC's Exchange and Gift Division.

## Library of Congress Publications

Digest of Public General Bills and Selected Resolutions with Index. 86th Congress, 2d Session. Final issue, 1960. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., at \$2 for this issue or \$10 a session (\$2.50 additional for foreign mailing).

Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions. Vol. 17, no. 4, August 1960. (pp. 221-326.) For sale by the Government Printing Office at \$1 for this issue or \$2 a year, domestic, and \$2.50 a year, foreign.

The WRA Travel Club will meet at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, November 2, in the Page School Library. Jacques McKenzie will show slides of his recent European trip.

#### Library of Congress Footnotes

Proofsheets of Civil Service Revisions of 1887. Four years after the passage of the Civil Service Act and the appointment of the first Civil Service Commission, President Cleveland received from the United States Civil Service Commission the "Proposed Revision of the Amended Civil-Service Rules and Regulations, Proposed June 30, 1887." These "proposed revisions," in the form of 57 unbound proofsheets, were presented to the Librarian on Wednesday, October 19, by King V. Hostick, collector of Chicago and Springfield, Ill.

Mr. Hostick secured the proofsheets from the estate of Alfred P. Edgerton, who was once a Civil Service Commissioner. The importance and interest of the gift rest in the fact that this copy of the "proposed revisions" is the copy which was submitted to Grover Cleveland for his study and recommendations. The document is heavily annotated throughout in the careful and meticulous fashion for which Cleveland was known. His pencilled notations indicate his thorough knowledge and his deep interest in the civil service and the legal implementation of its provisions. On page 5, for example, Cleveland has written this marginal note which may well prove to be the origin of veterans' preference: ". . . persons in the classified service who were honorably discharged from the military or naval service of the United States and the widows and orphans of deceased soldiers and sailors shall be exempt from such examinations."

Grover Cleveland, more than any other President of the United States, was obsessed by the problems of civil service reform. At one time he wrote to a friend: "I have fallen into the habit, lately, of wrestling with this cursed office-filling even in my dreams" (Biography of an Ideal, Washington, U. S. Civil Service Commission, 1959 [p. 61]). President Cleveland, as Governor of New York, had signed the first State civil service law to be enacted (which, incidentally, resulted from a bill introduced into the State legislature by young Theodore Roosevelt, who at that time was beginning his career). Civil service reform was an important issue in the 1884 election, when Grover Cleveland was elected to the Presidency. He struggled valiantly to support the new Civil Service Act of 1883; at the close of his first term of office, he made what was, until his second administration, the largest single extension of the classified service. During his second term of office (1893-97), by a single executive order, he increased the classified service by more than a third--proof of his support and praise of the merit system.

The document presented to the Library by Mr. Hostick is testimony to President Cleveland's interest in the civil service system and the care he gave to his official "homework." It will be in the custody of the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress.



An unusually artistic reconnaissance topographic map of Mt. McKinley, Alaska, presented to Delegates to the International Geographical Congress at Stockholm, has been received in the Map Division.

The map, which covers some of the most interesting and roughest terrain in North America, is the result of many years of field work by Bradford Washburn, Director of Boston's Museum of Science. Its printing results from collaboration between the Museum, the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, Wild-Heerbrugg, Ltd., the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Swiss Federal Institute of Topography, which printed the map at Berne. Scaled at 1:50,000, it shows the glaciers and perennial snow areas in blue and the grass or moss areas in green. The rugged mountain slopes are emphasized by brown hachuring.

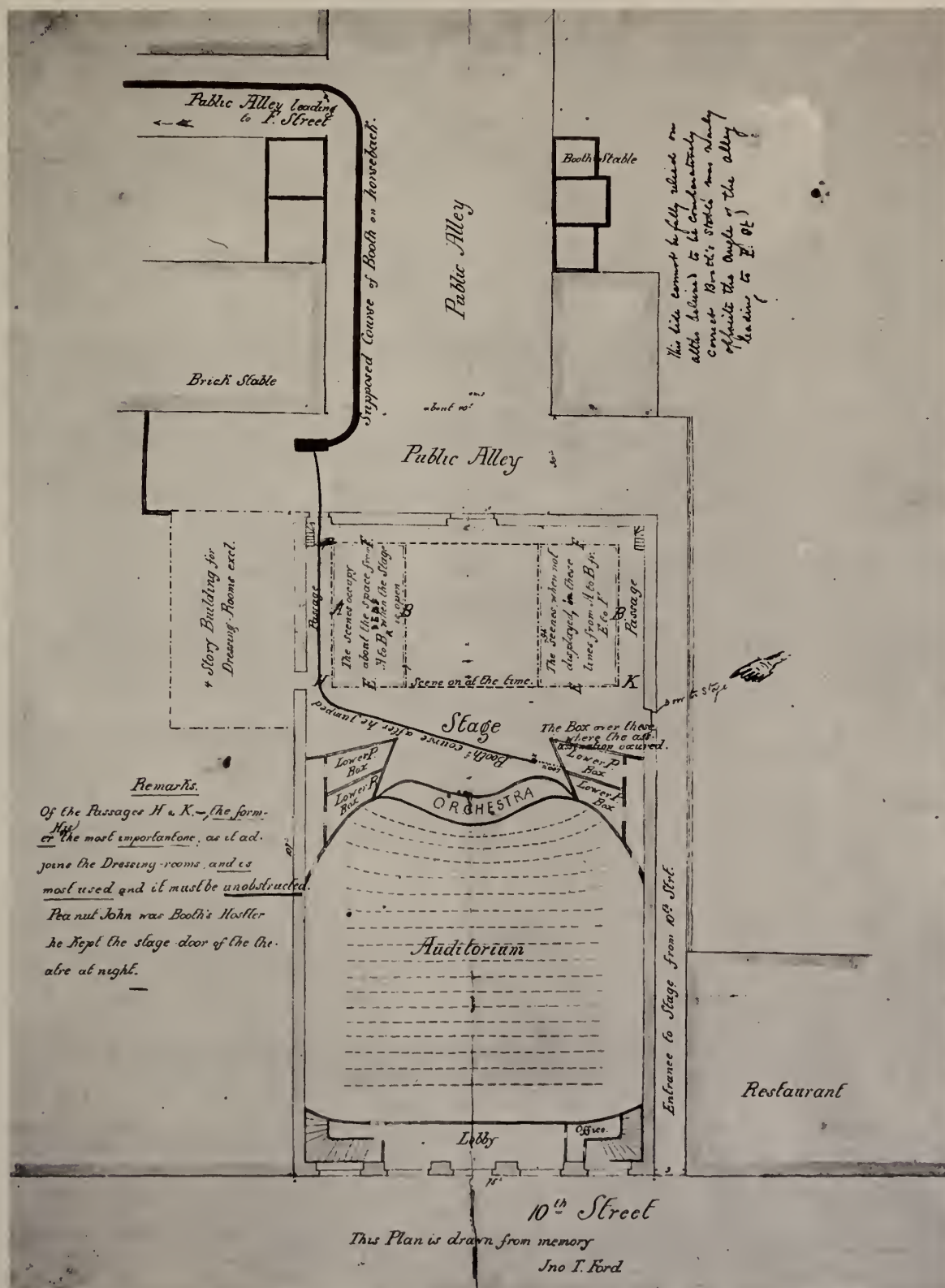
A copy will be included as an enclosure with the 1960-61 edition of The New Mountain World [Berge der Welt] to be published in Zurich, London, and New York. It will also be included in the April 1961 edition of The Geographical Review, New York. [Catherine I. Bahn]

Ford's Theatre. John J. dePorry of the Manuscript Division has recently called attention to the presence, in the papers of Thomas Ewing, Jr. (1829-1896), of a plan of Ford's Theatre, as it stood on the evening of April 14, 1865, when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. [See illustration accompanying this article.] Executed in watercolor, by a skilled draftsman, it bears the statement: "This Plan is drawn from memory Jno. T. Ford." It is endorsed: "Theatre plat," in the General Ewing's hand. The plan is undated and bears pencilled annotations, written by John T. Ford. It appears to be a formalized and more professional rendering of a rough sketch in the possession, as recently as 1943, of Col. John T. Ford III (ret.), R. F. D. No. 1, Bel Air, Md.

This curious document raises several questions. When and for what purpose was it executed? Why, if actually contemporaneous, was it necessary to draw it from memory? Could not access to the theatre have been gained in order to make it completely reliable and correctly proportioned? How did it come into the possession of General Ewing?

John Thompson Ford, the proprietor of the theatre, was not in Washington on the night of Mr. Lincoln's murder. "I was," he later testified, "in Richmond. Hearing of the partial destruction of that city by fire, I went there, anxious to ascertain the condition of an uncle, a very aged man, and my mother-in-law. I did not hear of the assassination until Sunday night, and then I heard that Edwin Booth was charged with it. On Monday morning I started for Washington by the 6 o'clock boat." By the end of the week he was arrested and clapped into the Old Capitol Prison, where he languished for 39 days. This could explain why he would have had to depend upon his memory.

As for General Ewing, he represented Samuel B. Arnold, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, and Edward Spangler in the trial of the conspirators. In the case of Spangler, Mr. Ford took a special interest and, from records in Ewing's letterbooks (August 9 and September 1, 1865, and January 12, 1865), clearly guaranteed payment of counsel's fees. He even testified in Spangler's behalf.





On Friday, May 19, 1865, James J. Gifford was on the witness stand. He described himself as "the builder" of Ford's Theatre who had continued in its service as a carpenter. Upon cross-examination, General Ewing exhibited to him "a plan of the theatre" and asked if it was "approximately correct." Gifford objected to the lines in the orchestra. Whereupon General Ewing immediately introduced another plat. This, although not faultless in the opinion of the witness was finally "offered in evidence without objection." It survives in the National Archives.

Presumably, then, the plan in the Ewing papers is the one which was first produced and hastily withdrawn. But it is not wholly without value. The late Congress voted \$250,000 for appropriate research, engineering studies, and architect's drawings looking to the restoration of the building. Col. Randle Bond Truett, National Parks historian in charge of the undertaking, has been reported as saying that the Ford-Ewing plat supplies "the first clear detail of the lobby end of the theatre." Mr. Gifford had not taken exception to that. [David C. Mearns]

#### News in the Library World

Recent announcements from the American Library Association include news that ground will be broken this fall for a 5-story, \$1 million-office building to house the national headquarters in Chicago. The present headquarters building will be dismantled to make way for the new 45,000-square foot building, which will be erected in a reverse "L" shape in two stages as the old building is torn down, thus enabling the staff to work without interruption. The first stage of the building, the construction of a 5-story structure located in what is now the ALA's parking lot, is expected to be completed by fall of 1961. The second phase of the building will be completed by the spring of 1962.

An annual grant of \$25,000 has been given to the ALA by the publishers of the World Book Encyclopedia to support association programs in public and school library service. The grant equals an endowment of \$600,000 in terms of annual income to the Association. This first award will be earmarked for the current \$1 million-fund drive for the new headquarters building, but in future years the money will be presented as the "World Book Encyclopedia--ALA Goals Award" to support an outstanding Association project each year.

Under the sponsorship of the Committee on Intellectual Freedom of the ALA, the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom, a roundup of editorial news and comment on the freedom of information controversy, will resume publication under the editorship of Everett T. Moore, head of the reference department, University of California Library, aided by funds from the Freedom of Information Center, School of Journalism, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo., and subscriptions to the Newsletter. A subscription to the Newsletter is \$2 a year, and persons interested in subscribing may write to Subscriptions Department, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago 11, Ill.

# Shot 99 Years Ago Ended Ford Theatre

By J. W. DAVIS

Associated Press

Washington — Ninety-nine years ago today the curtain went down at Ford's Theatre with an awful finality.

That was the night it became the most famous—or most infamous—theater in America.

The curtain stayed down. The building was never again used as a theater. It was stained forever that night with the blood of President Abraham Lincoln, assassinated while he sat in its presidential box and watched its last play.

The theater has been a museum since 1932.

But now, there is a strong

and possibly winning campaign well under way, with considerable support in Congress, to restore the building to what it was the night John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln.

## 'We're Ready To Go'

Col. Randle B. Truett, National Park Service historian, a dedicated and enthusiastic supporter of the restoration dream, says, "We're ready to go, once Congress gives us the money. Plans have been drawn. We now have a most detailed historical report on the theater.

"The restoration will be to a complete theater, not just the presidential box, but all the seats, in the orchestra, in the dress circles, everything. Even the box office."

There is some difference of opinion as to whether the building should be turned into an active playhouse, in view of the tragedy it symbolizes.

As Truett put it:

"We view it as a national memorial to Lincoln and as such, the use of it would call for a certain restraint."



1867

1867

1867

**MORE AUTHENTIC**

## Famous Ford's Theater Renovated

By **MOHAMMED A. RAUF**

*Scripps-Howard Staff Writer*

WASHINGTON—Ford's Theater here is undergoing a \$2-million renovation to make it look as it did a century ago when it was the scene of Lincoln's assassination.

The building since 1932 has been the Lincoln Museum, owned by the Federal Government.

George Olszewski, a Department of Interior historian, is in charge of the restoration. Through pictures made by the noted Civil War photographer, Matthew Brady, and from designs preserved in the files of the assassination trial, Olszewski has blueprinted the theater's interior and exterior as they were on that fateful April 14, 1865.

**AMONG OTHER THINGS**, he found the design of the theater's 1024 original chairs. He is having the same number of chairs made, in the old pattern.

The original chairs were distributed throughout the government departments when the theater became federal property 100 years ago. Not one can be found today, but the design is clearly distinguishable in Brady's photographs.

Another picture also reveals the design of the original wallpaper, and Washington newspapers of the time show pattern colors. So Olszewski can even restore wallpaper.

**THE COACH IN** which Lincoln rode to the theater is now the property of the Studebaker Corp. Olszewski hopes it will be donated to the Lincoln Museum, which will now be moved to the theater basement.

### Columbus 50 Years Ago

Feb. 11, 1916—Dr. Washington Gladden, pastor emeritus of First Congregational Church, came home between lectures to attend his 80th birthday party at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Jeffrey, 581 E. Town-st. Among the 250 persons there was Miss Marie Hertenstein who was baptised as a child by Dr. Gladden. She played several piano selections.

Cal C. Lyon, Citizen reporter, spent nine days as an Ohio Penitentiary prisoner, using the alias of Frank Mullin, then wrote of his experiences. Lyon looked too pleasant when getting his mug shot. The photographer, who was a prisoner, advised him to look glum for the camera so Parole Board members would feel sorrow for him.

From descendants of John Ford, the theater's old owner, Olszewski has acquired the clock which was in the original lobby.

A curious fact discovered by Olszewski is that there were no public toilets in the old theater. He has gone through dozens of plans and has come across no space so marked.

"However," he says, "in the nearby Star Saloon, which was a part of the theater, there was a second-floor lounge, and we can assume it had a lavatory. It was at this saloon that John Wilkes Booth had a drink before he entered the theater to kill Lincoln."

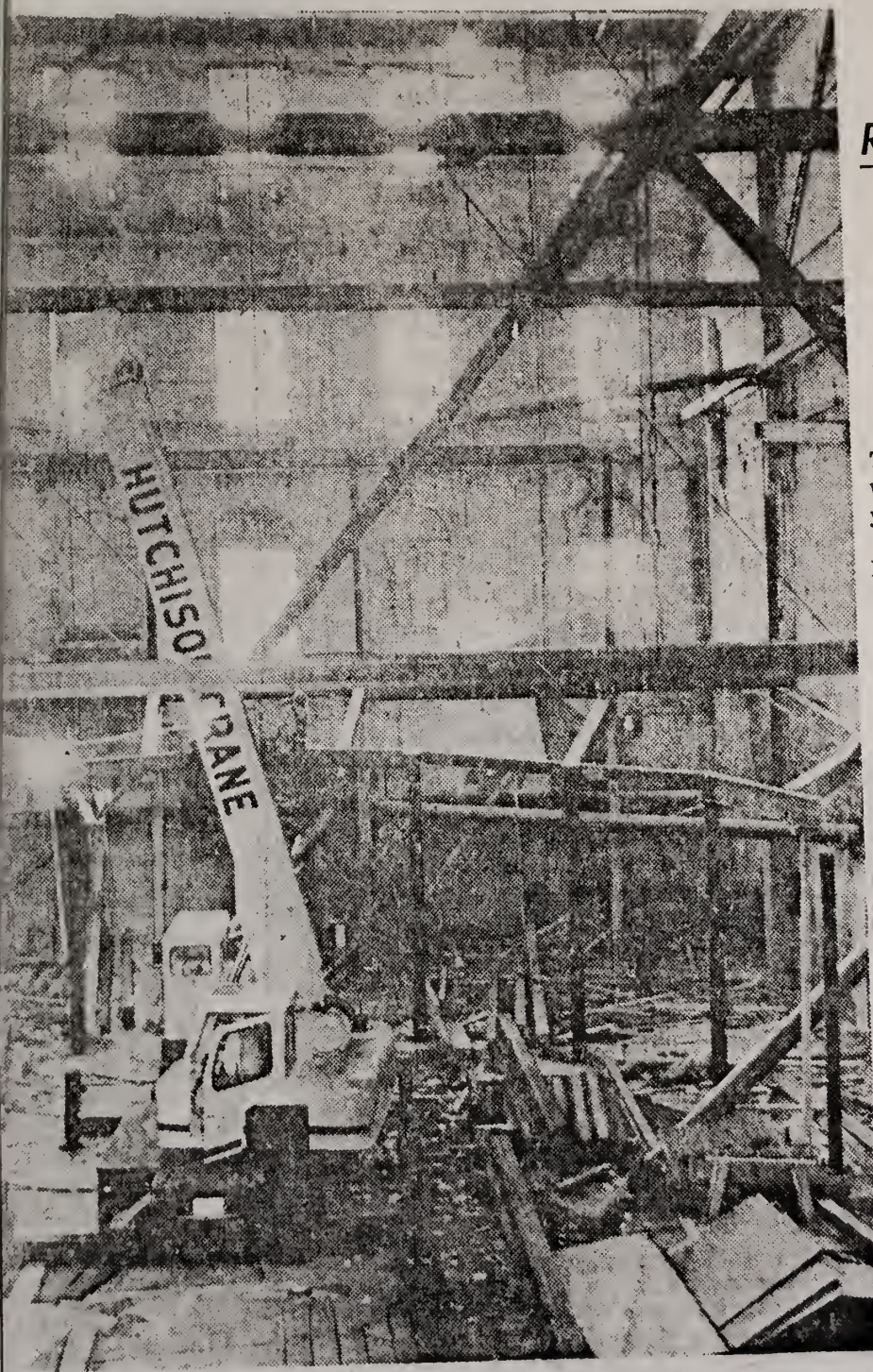
**THE NYLON FLAGS** in the present museum will be removed because there was no nylon in those days. Cotton flags, with 36 stars, are being made and they will be displayed according to their arrangement on the assassination day.

The renovated theater will be used for occasional performances of historical plays but only on a non-commercial basis. Formal opening is set for April 14, 1967, the 102nd anniversary of the assassination.









—Star Photographer Francis R.

The interior is cleared for restoration, to be completed next year.

## REALLY REBUILDING

# Restoring Ford's Proves a Big Job

By JOHN SHERWOOD

Star Staff Writer

The historian in charge of the restoration of Ford's Theater stood in what looked like a bombed-out ruin and wondered how they ever held the place together all these years.

"You know, they built the theater in six months," said Dr. George J. Olszewski of the National Park Service. "And it was still unfinished when it opened on Aug. 27, 1863." It closed in 1865.

Shut down for restoration since January 1965, the interior has been completely demolished and the foundation excavated to a new depth of 40 feet to house the Lincoln Museum that will go in the basement.

"The old foundation was just three feet deep," Olszewski pointed out.

"Instead of bolting the iron support girders to the iron columns," he added, "they just laid them on top like they were assembling a toy set of Lincoln logs."

The historian, in a thoroughly documented "historic structures report" on the restoration, notes that the unfinished building had rather poor brickwork, there was an observable bow in the 10th Street facade, and the front wall was out of plumb at the center.

A partial section of the interior collapsed in June 1893, killing 22 and injuring 63 government employees. Because of this, the rear wall had to be rebuilt.

During the current restoration the three original walls have been strengthened by grouting 1,000 bags of cement under pressure between the inner and outer walls.

The roof of the theater, which was seriously defective and forced the closing of the museum if four inches of snow fell, has been completely replaced.

The original timbers are now reinforced with steel tie rods. In addition, steel trusses also were placed between the wooden supporting beams.

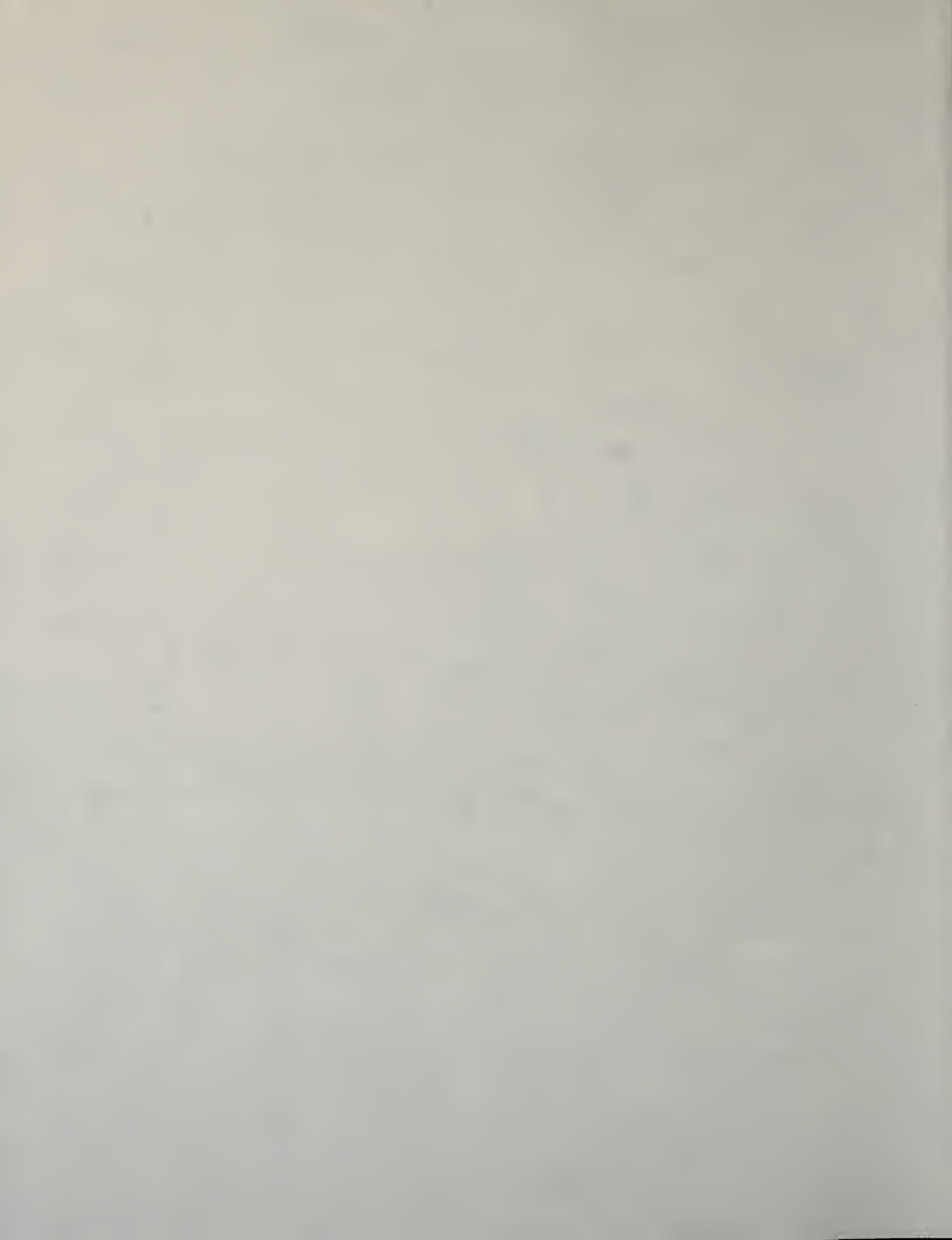
One of the major accomplishments of the restoration during the past 14 months has been the completion of piling, underpinning, and bracing of all walls. The last pile was driven in January.

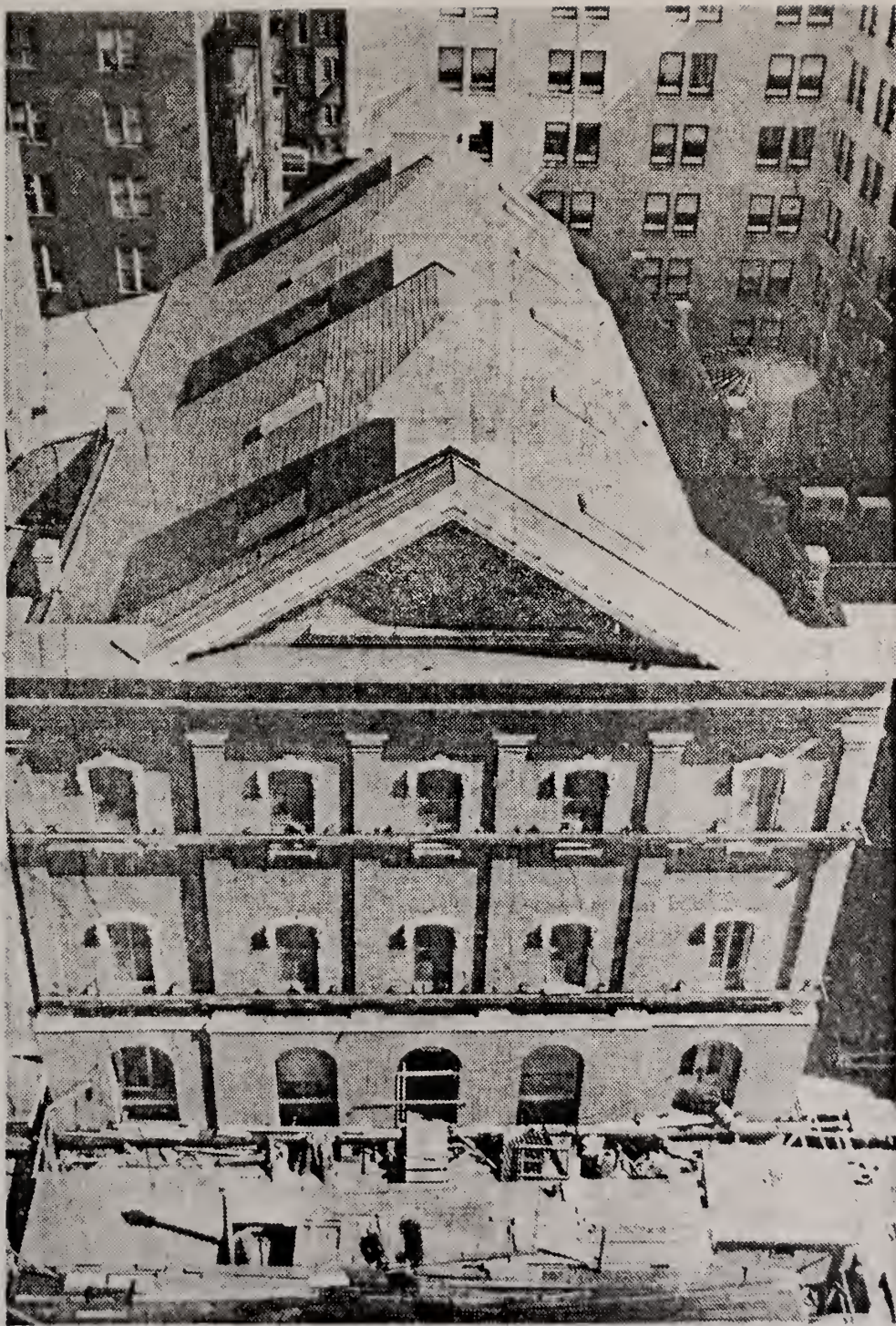
Olszewski is now preparing a furnishings plan to re-create Ford's exactly as it was on the night of April 14, 1865, when President Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth.

Provisions are also being made for the seating of 600 persons in the audience for occasional "live" theater presentations.

Olszewski hopes it will be possible to dedicate the restored theater by April 14, 1967, the 102nd anniversary of the assassination.

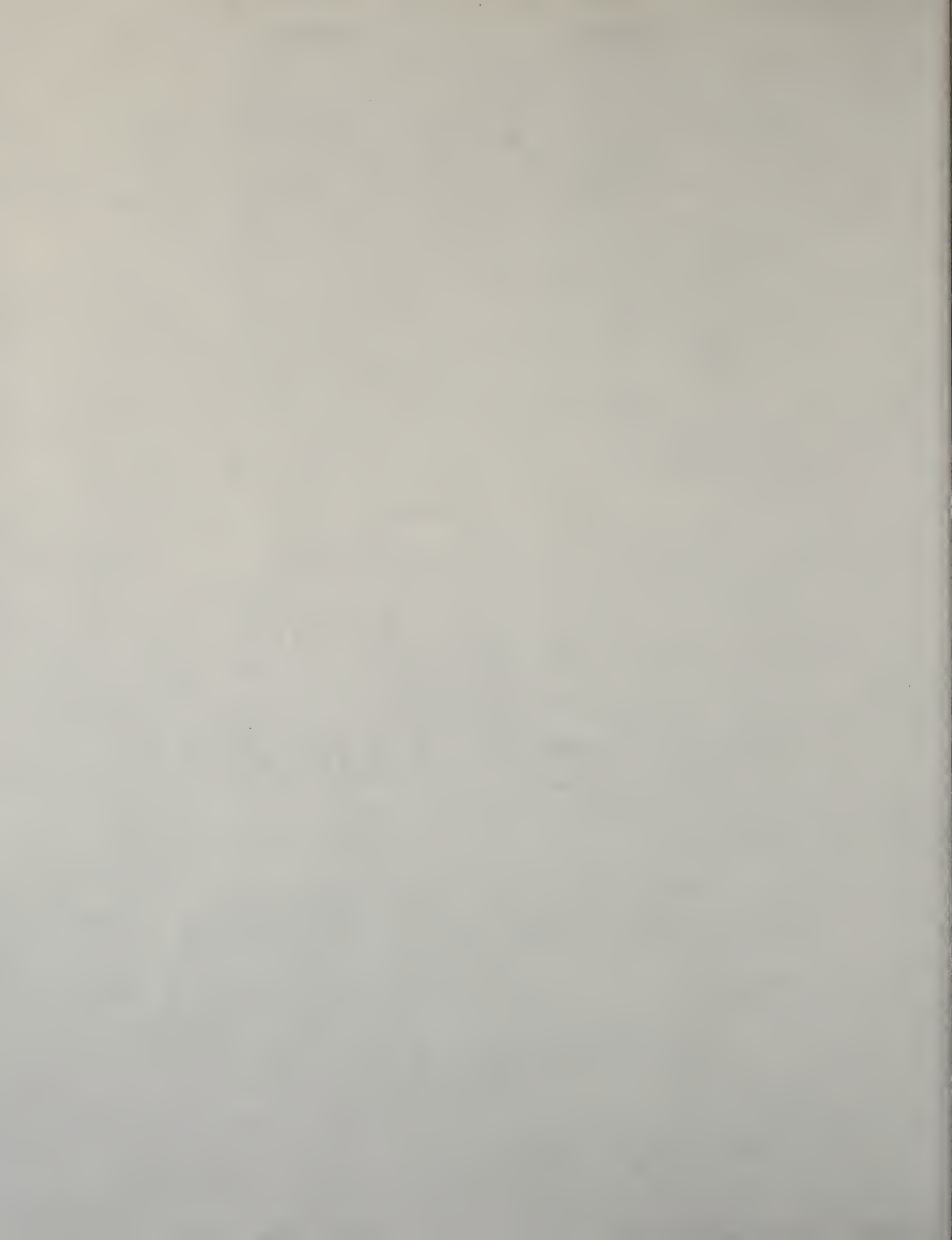






A brand new reinforced roof is part of the Ford's Theater restoration.





# Excavation Turns Up Reason For Ford's Theater Collapse

Excavations at Ford's Theater have turned up what may be new evidence about the cause of a disaster that killed 22 government workers and injured 65 others when the building's floors collapsed in 1893.

Ford's, the historic site of President Lincoln's assassination is undergoing a \$2 million restoration to the exact condition it was in on the night of the President's death.

G. J. Olszewski, National Park Service historian of Ford's Theater, said yesterday that the tragedy, which prompted a lengthy congressional investigation at the time, could have been caused by inadequate construction methods when the theater was converted to a three-story government office building in 1865 after Lincoln's death.

While the building was being worked on during the past year, Olszewski noticed that iron girders supporting all three floors were neither bolted nor otherwise fixed into place.

"They were just propped across a bearing beam," he said. "It was a shoddy job."

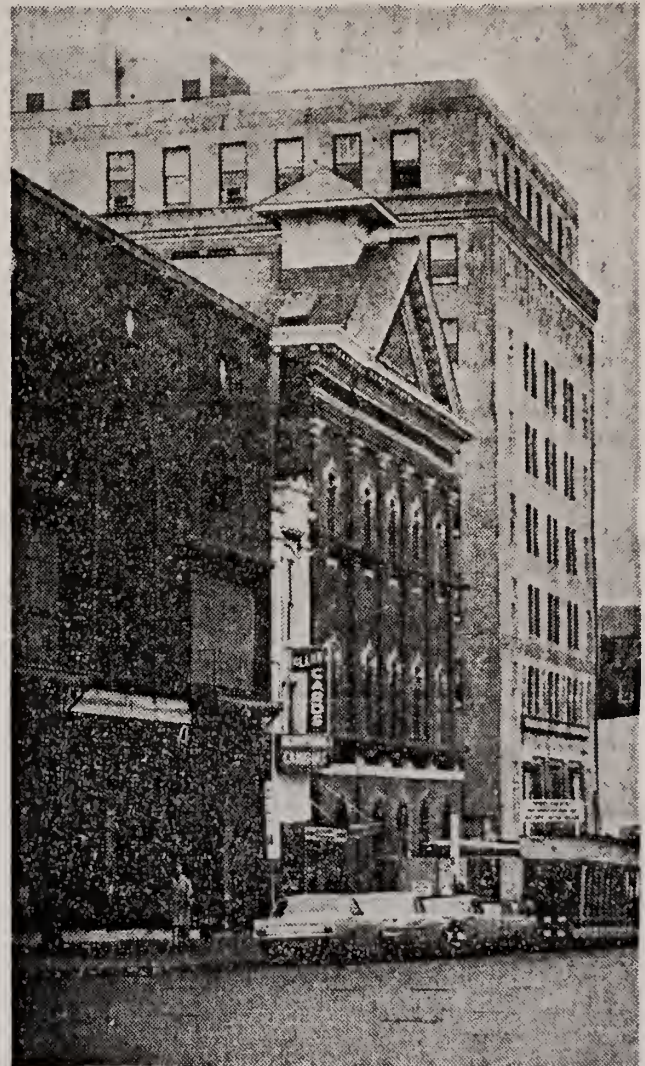
Thus, when basement pilings gave way on June 9, 1893, under the weight of file cases, desks and 400 government clerks, the unfastened girders were not strong enough to keep the floors from caving in.

A 40-foot section of the front of the building plummeted downward, hurling men, desks and heavy file cases into the cellar. The congressional investigation pointed to George W. Dant, a building contractor who was then reinforcing pillars in the cellar, for inadequately shoring the pilings supporting the floors.

Another factor was overloading of the upper floors. But Olszewski theorizes, with the support of a local civil engineer who has studied the Ford building, that if the floor girders had been bolted to the walls or fixed to additional supporting beams, the floors would have sagged, but not collapsed.

Restoration workmen are making certain that the tragedies that haunted Ford's throughout its history will not recur when the building reopens to the public sometime in 1967.

The past year has been



The Washington Post

**NOW —** This is how Ford's Theater looks today from F Street nw. just beyond it on 10th Street is the modern building of the Potomac Electric Power Co.

spent piling, underpinning and bracing all the walls of the theater, and driving piles that will support the balconies. Steel reinforcing bars are now being installed and welded between each piling. The entire area will be tied together with reinforced concrete.

About 40 per cent of the restoration is complete, Olszewski estimates, including strengthening of the roof, which was in a seriously weakened state, and restoration of the 10th Street facade, which involved recasting molds of the original 1863 cast iron lintels and purchase of hand-made colonial brick, weatherproofed and tested for durability.

Next comes pouring of the reinforced concrete, installation of plumbing lines and building the first floor.

Steps are already under way toward manufacture of facsimiles of the original wallpaper, carpeting, chairs, draperies, and the stage setting for Act III, Scene 2 of "Our American Cousin," just as it was when John Wilkes Booth leaped to the stage from the President's box.

Although various problems have put the restoration behind schedule, Olszewski is still hopeful the theater can reopen on April 14, 1967, the 102d anniversary of the Great Emancipator's death.

Meanwhile, the city prepared to celebrate the 157th anniversary of Lincoln's birth today. Sen. John J. Sparkman (D-Ala.) will give the Gettysburg Address, in noon ceremonies at the Lincoln Memorial.





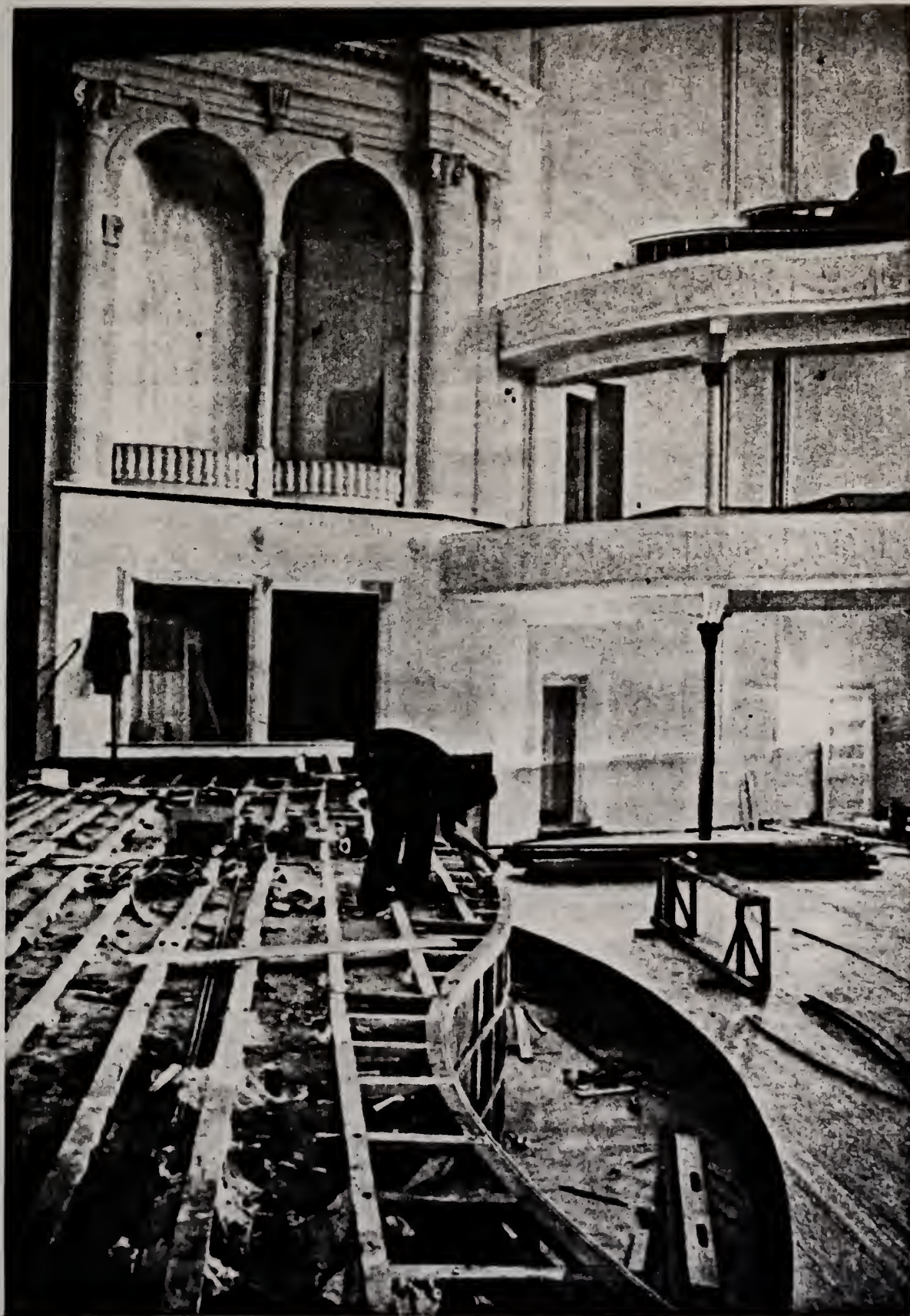
# Lincoln Assassination Scene Restored In Washington



Center of a lot of attention these days is Ford's Theatre, scene of the assassination of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. Comparatively neglected for years, the theater is being restored. At right is the Star Saloon, also being reconstructed.







Rebuilding history, a workman stands on the stage of Ford's Theatre. The orchestra floor is just visible in the background beyond the pit. Above are the dress circle and family circle. At left, above stage, is the Presidential Box.







James R. Stevens III, who is supervising the project, sits in the presidential box. The hand in the photo is positioned in the area where John Wilkes Booth is believed to have fired the shot.

JULY 22, 1967



A workman has the stage to himself during reconstruction. Stage, balconies, entrances and the Presidential Box are being rebuilt.





A BAPTIST CHURCH built in 1833, in Washington, D.C. was abandoned sometime after 1859. In 1861, a theater entrepreneur leased it for five years with an option to buy. One member of the church board predicted a "dire fate" for anyone who turned the former church into a theater.

That prediction seemed to come true in 1862. Renovated earlier in the year, the building burned down. The theater man rebuilt. From Aug. 27, 1863, to April 14, 1865, he presented some of the best of the theatrical and musical talent available on the American stage.

The theater man was John T. Ford and on that April 14 his theater entered history as scene of one of the most important events, one of the greatest tragedies in U.S. history.

"Our American Cousin," a comedy, was being performed for an audience that included President Abraham Lincoln. Laughter turned to hushed stillness, horror—and later, the tears of a nation—after the most important scene ever played out in Washington's Ford's Theatre — the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

After Lincoln's death, Ford tried futilely to reopen his theater. The government took it over as an office building. In 1893, part of the structure collapsed and 22 government employees were killed. Thereafter, it was the site of minor government agency activities—was a publication depot until 1931. In 1932 the Lincoln Museum was opened on the first floor. A wing of the structure was demolished in 1930 and the area has been used as a parking lot.

The past six years have been a kind of restoration period for Ford's Theatre. During the last two, the National Park Service has been reconstructing the interior, trying also to furnish it as closely as possible to the way it was on the night of the assassination.

Remodeling through the years has almost eliminated almost every vestige of the old theater. Stage, balconies, entrances and the presidential box are being rebuilt. Plans call for a museum in the basement.

Original furnishings are hard to come by. Many are in museums and some were lost to souvenir hunters soon after the assassination. Furnishings are being carefully reproduced. Stage scenery is being fashioned to look as the scenery did on the tragic night.

The project also includes restoration of the Star Saloon, next door. The White House guard, who was supposed to be on duty outside the presidential box, was drinking there when John Wilkes Booth fired the fatal shot.

Plans also call for presentation of plays that were performed in the theater in the 1860's. There is talk of a resident company of players for the 600-seat theater.

It is hoped that Ford's Theatre, a kind of shrine to one of America's greatest men, will reopen again some time next year. (UPI Photos)

These United Press International pictures by Darryl Heikes present a view of Ford's Theatre as it is today, during its "restoration period."

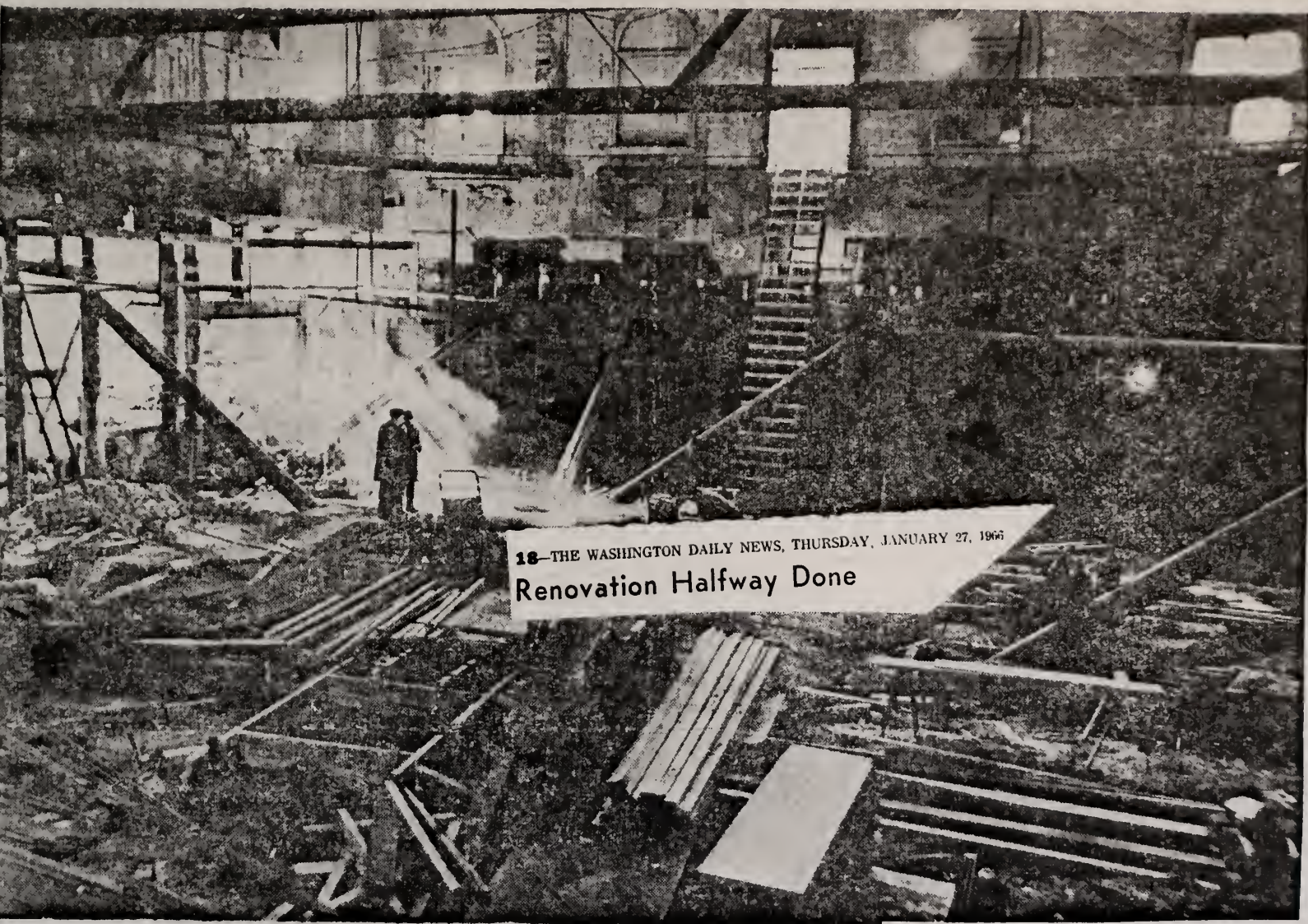


Work has been going on for six years. Interior construction began two years ago. This is a view of the orchestra floor, the dress circle (center) and the family circle (top).





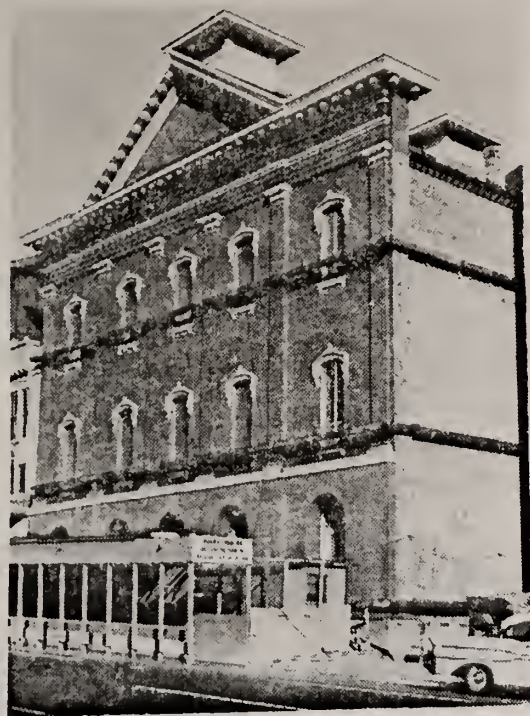
# Curtain Soon Will Go Up at Ford Theater



18—THE WASHINGTON DAILY NEWS, THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 1966  
Renovation Halfway Done







The theater: the facade is new, and so are the emulias.

By MOHAMMED RAUF JR.

Apparently there weren't any washrooms in Ford's Theater a hundred years ago. At least researchers haven't found any.

National Park Service historian George J. Olszewski, who's in charge of a \$2 million restoration of the theater, concludes patrons had to go to the Star Saloon next door.

#### ACT

The theater, by act of Congress, is to be fixed up exactly as it was on the day President Lincoln was assassinated, and Dr. Olszewski hopes to have the work done by April of next year, the 102d anniversary of the assassination.

He began his research in 1961, pouring over old newspapers and books for pictures and descriptions of what the place looked like in 1865.

Among other things, he found the design of the chairs in the theater — all 1024 of them. The chairs are now being made in exactly the same pattern.

The coach in which Mr. Lincoln rode to the theater on the fatal night is now the property of the Studebaker Co. Dr. Olszewski is trying to have them donate to the theater.

He'd put it on display in the basement.

#### WALLS UP

Only the north, south and east walls of the original theater remain, and it has taken 1000 bags of cement to repair them. (The fourth wall collapsed in 1893, killing 22 people.)

A Brady photograph preserves the design of the original wall paper. The design is being duplicated—alho the color might not be precisely the same.

Ford's theater was originally a Baptist Church, built in 1833. It was later turned into a theater, and in February, 1863, John Ford bought it, redecorated it, and opened it as the New Ford's Theater.

After the assassination, the theater was padlocked by Federal order. When the assassination trials were over, Ford tried to reopen it, but he received so many threatening letters that he gave up the idea.

A year later the Federal government bought the theater for \$100,000, and turned it into a three-story office building for the storage of Civil War records. In 1932, the Lincoln museum was opened there.

#### RELATIVES

Two of John Ford's grandsons

are living. Frank Ford of New York, and George Ford of San Francisco. Both are in their 80's. They contributed the family Bible to Dr. Olszewski, and he used it to verify dates in the history of the building.

Another branch of the family has donated the clock that was in the lobby.

The restored theater will be used for the occasional performance of historical plays.





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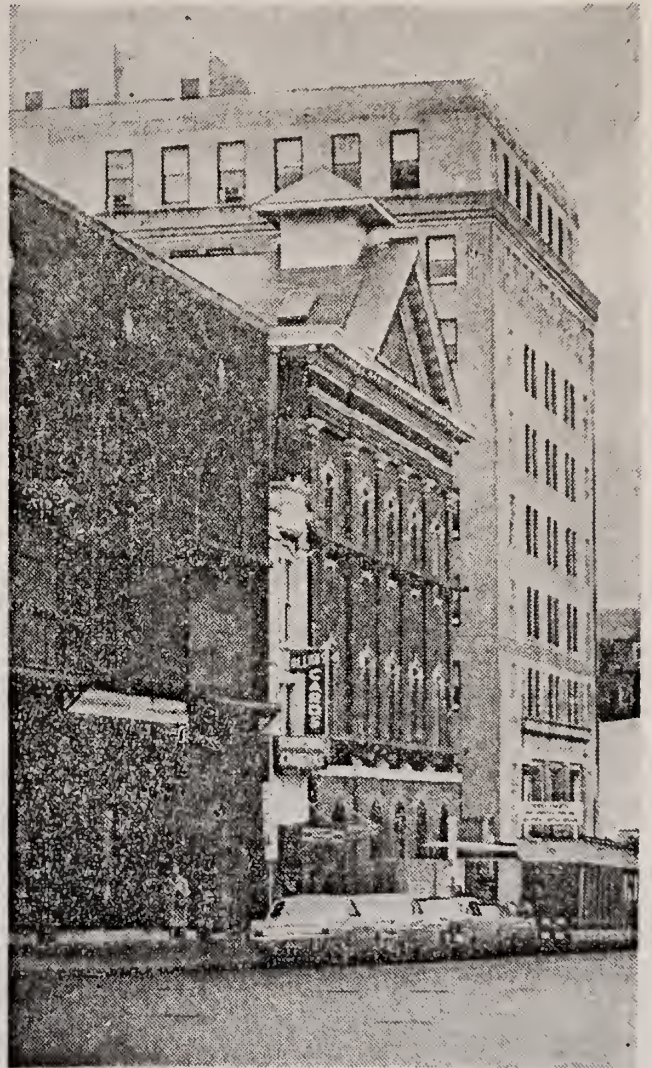
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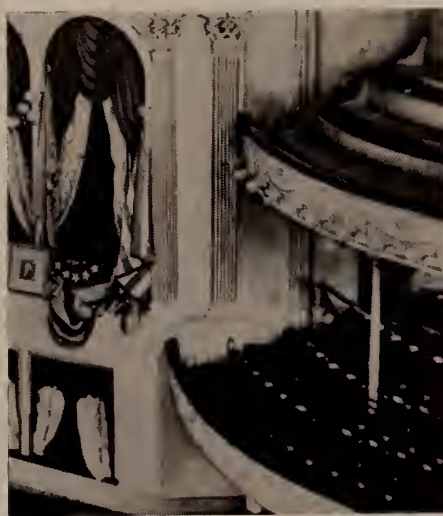


Brady's photograph of Ford's Theater after the assassination



Pictorial Parade

Booth's leap to the stage



Matthew Brady

Lincoln's box

## Where Lincoln Was Shot

The night Lincoln was shot was the last night of Ford's Theater in Washington. Secretary of War Stanton immediately ordered the building seized and held under armed guard. When the owner, John T. Ford, tried to reopen it three months later, threatening letters and a hostile crowd outside the theater forced him to reconsider. Subsequently the government bought the theater for \$100,000, gutted the magnificent white-and-gold interior, turned it into an office building, and it sank slowly into decrepitude. In 1893, a section of it collapsed, killing 22 government workers. Finally in 1932 it was converted into a Lincoln museum, a dark, dusty repository for musty artifacts. But by the end of 1967, Ford's Theater will reopen, and even the gaslights will reflicker. Not only will it be a nearly exact duplicate of the original structure, but plans are underway to make it a living theater, with a

permanent, year-round repertory company in residence.

The original plan, for which Congress appropriated \$2,076,300 last year, was merely to restore the red-brick building into a theater-museum, with the stage set, as it was at the time of the assassination, for Act III, Scene 2 of Tom Taylor's play "Our American Cousins." For the past six years historian George J. Olszewski has been tracking down clues to the design and décor of Ford's Theater, no easy task considering that souvenir collectors had long since stripped the theater bare. Olszewski has had to rely mostly on memories, which can be faulty, and records, which are sometimes contradictory. His best source was the great Civil War photographer Matthew Brady, who soon after the assassination spent two days photographing the interior. From microscopic examination of the Brady photographs, Olszewski was able to confirm that the boxes were draped in heavy brocade, the curtains

were of Nottingham lace, and many of the chairs were spindle-back Windsor.

Olszewski has solicited, and has been receiving, contributions of the original materials—two pieces of maroon drapery from the daughter of a man employed in the theater at the time, the tufted silk sofa from Lincoln's box from descendants of the Ford family, who also supplied the engraving of George Washington that was nicked by Booth's spur as he leaped to the stage. Olszewski is unflagging in his regard for detail. "Every other person in the country considers himself a Lincoln expert," he says. "We can't make a mistake."

**Actors' Equity:** As restoration plans proceeded, several bizarre proposals were made. One was to re-enact the assassination, shot, jump and all. Another was to restore the saloon where Booth took a nip just before he did his deed. Then Actors' Equity brought forward the suggestion to put on real live theater at Ford's. Theater groups all over the country took up this idea and offered their services.

The Washington Shakespeare Summer Festival, the Helen Hayes Repertory Company, a group of Texas high-school students, and even a German bund singing society (founded during the Civil War) have volunteered to play there. Last week representatives of Actors Equity, ANTA and the National Repertory Theatre met in Washington to discuss a joint proposal to be submitted to Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall (who last year gave general approval to a program of live theater). Under the proposal NRT would present an "appropriate" repertory, consisting of period productions of plays that were once performed there, such as Shakespeare (Lincoln saw several Shakespeare plays at Ford's, including one starring John Wilkes Booth) and modern plays of special relevance, such as Mark Van Doren's "The Last Days of Lincoln."

**Authentic:** But even if the proposal is accepted, many technical problems will remain. Room must be found for modern theatrical equipment and adequate backstage and rehearsal space, and money must be forthcoming from the foundations and the government. But just as George Olszewski is committed to a revival of the building, NRT is committed to a revival of theater in it. Last week, with Ford's new roof already in place, Michael Dewell, founder of NRT, said: "We would be creating something that has never existed before—living museum theater. It is terribly, terribly exciting . . . The theater will be absolutely authentic from the detail of the moldings to the scale of the gas lamps. And when the curtain goes up on a production done exactly as it was then, the person in the audience will literally be a theatergoer of 1865."



sor Geoffrey Shurlock. In New York Valenti saw the picture and upheld Shurlock's decision. But the ruling was reversed by the MPAA's Production Code Review Board.

Last week the duly initiated Valenti left his Washington office and headed West for his first official visit to Hollywood, which he called "this seedbed of creativity." First on the agenda was a ritual press conference at the Beverly Hills Hotel. He wanted, Valenti said, to develop young talent. He also wanted to construct a new code of conduct that would "enlarge the creative dimensions of the film" without encroaching on society's rights; in other words, allow the producers to be adults, but nice adults. An elderly British reporter asked if he had "any idea when and why the Ten Commandments went out of fashion." If Valenti knew, he wasn't telling.

**Dreams:** His first mass encounter with the industry panjandrums was at a luncheon given in his honor by the MPAA, a tight little band of Hollywood's major distributors which also honors him with a \$125,000-a-year salary and an extra \$50,000 each year for popcorn money. At the luncheon, where grown men called each other "sweetheart," the new president spoke of his dreams and ideals before an assemblage of studio chiefs, union leaders, theater owners and actors. He discussed quality and excellence for the benefit of producers who find those words more offensive than any gutter oath in "Virginia Woolf." He praised the virtues of art to men who collect it but do not practice it. He quoted Socrates to the effect it is "better to be than to seem," an unseemly thing to tell people who make their livings at illusion.

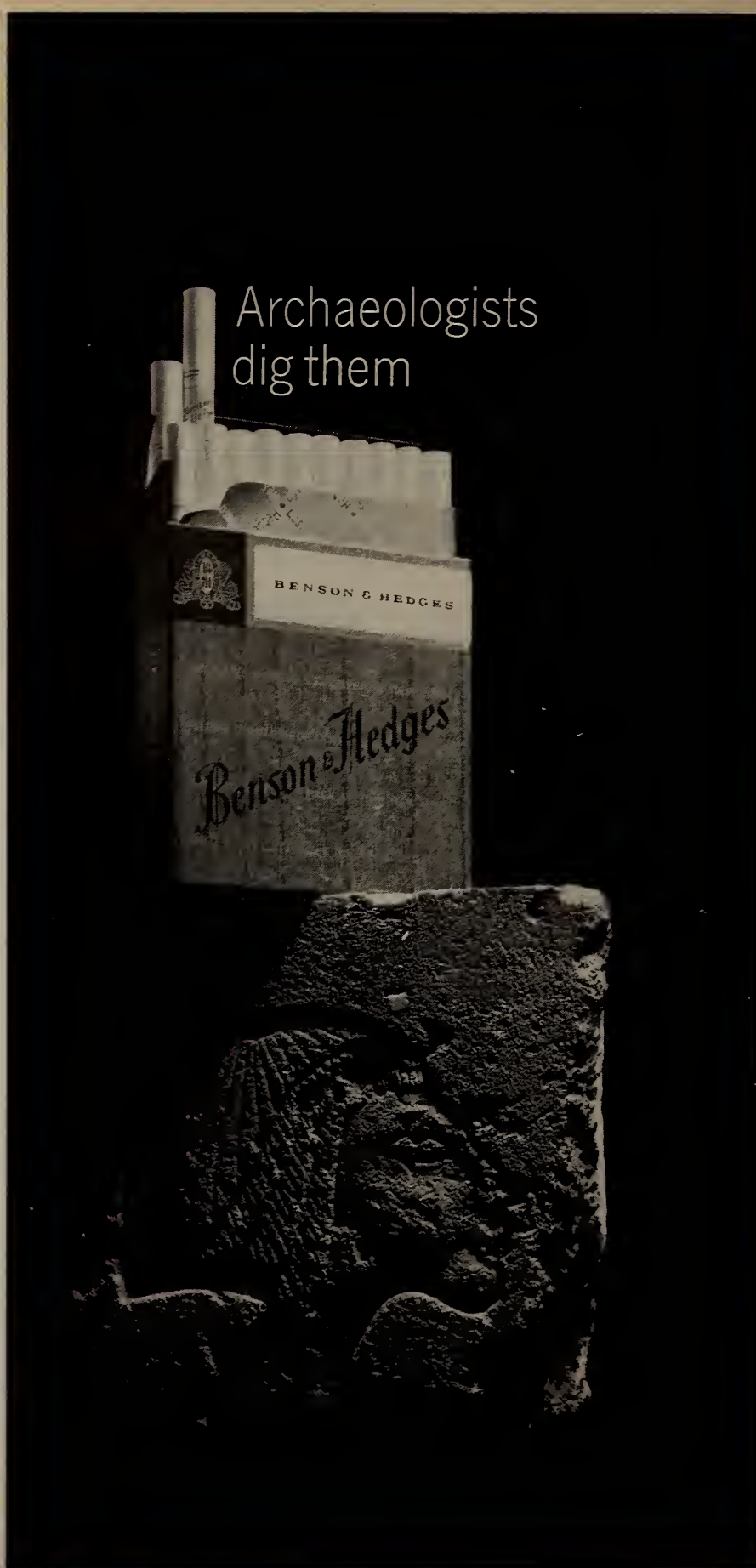
"I think he's going to do a hell of a job," said independent producer Joseph E. Levine. "At least, if I were an MPAA member I'd let him," Levine added, pointing up the absurdity of an industry association that fails to give full representation to the powerful independent producers who now account for most of Hollywood's feature productions.

**Mouth:** "I'm very impressed with him," said Twentieth Century-Fox production chief Richard Zanuck. "I think he's tough and fair. We need a strong hand there and we haven't had one; there's no real unification within our business. I think Valenti's first and toughest job is going to be getting us all speaking out of the same mouth."

"I'm not going to be a puppet, a marionette, a front man," Valenti told NEWSWEEK's Joseph Morgenstern. But he cannot move further than the industry can see, and despite his Great Society rhetoric, it remains to be seen if he will be more than a front man, a resplendent chief usher to the world. The biggest guns in the West didn't saddle him up to be a Trojan Horse.

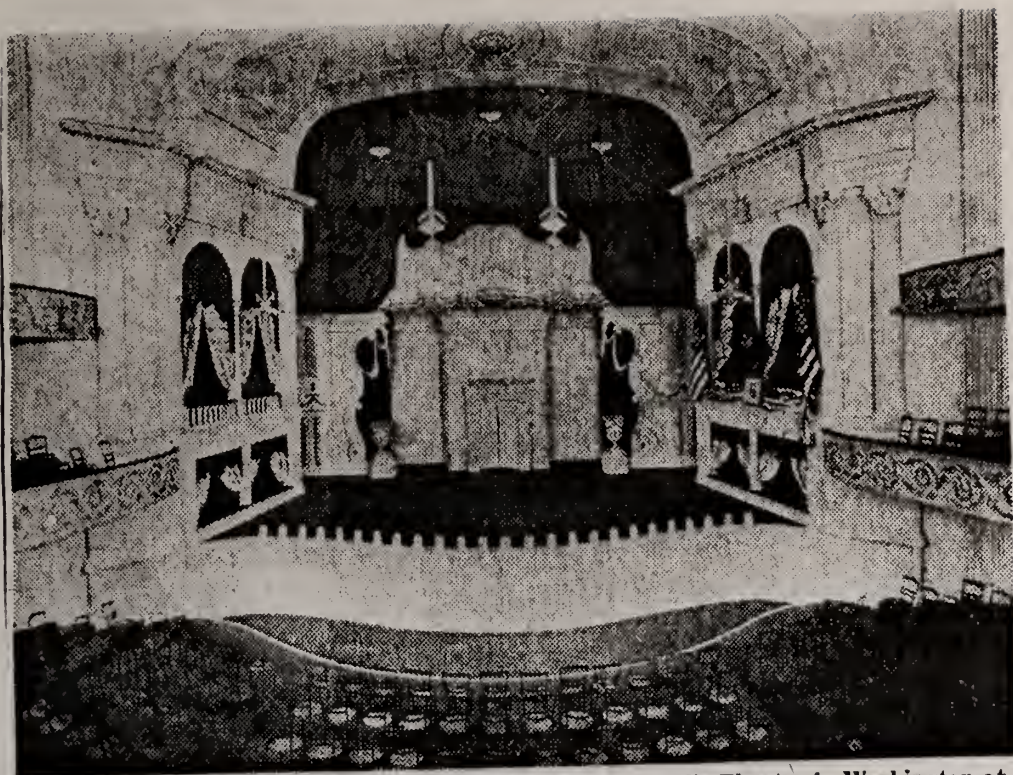
July 4, 1966

Archaeologists  
dig them



You pay more for Benson & Hedges Deluxe. And, from recessed mouthpiece to personal case, you get more.





SCENE AS LINCOLN WAS SHOT: Representation of Ford's Theater in Washington at the moment President Lincoln was shot. Theater, restored, will be dedicated in spring.

## Restored Ford Theater to Be Dedicated April 14

By SAM ZOLOTOW

The restored Ford's Theater in Washington is expected to be dedicated next April 14, the 102d anniversary of Lincoln's assassination there.

Sixteen plays, many that were performed at Ford's before it ceased to be a theater, will be presented in the 600-seat house. Among them will be "The Rivals," "She Stoops to Conquer" and "The Imaginary Invalid." In addition, existing or original plays dealing with the Lincoln era will be put on.

The program is being collated by Michael Dewell, coproducer with Frances Ann Dougherty of the National Repertory Theater, in conjunction with Lucille Lortel of the American National Theater and Academy. A resident company will be organized by N.R.T. Funds will be sought from foundations, United States Office of Education and the National Council on the Arts.

The restoration of the theater to its original state was authorized as an historic heritage by Congress at a cost of \$2,730,000. It will contain a Lincolnia museum, where a documentary on the significance of the theater will be shown. From 1931 until 1964 the house was used as a museum. Reconstruction work started last Jan. 5.

### Date Is 102d Anniversary of Lincoln's Assassination in Washington House

#### Saw Booth in Play

Between 1862 and 1865, Lincoln saw nine offerings at Ford's. One was "The Marble Heart," in which John Wilkes Booth, his assassin, was the leading actor. The records show that Lincoln attended two performances of "Henry IV" on consecutive nights.

The last play seen there by him was "Our American Cousin." He was assassinated during Act III, Scene 2. A reproduction of that scene is being designed by Sointu Syrjala. He is also designing the stage rigging. The contract calls for the installation of his work by March 1. Mr. Syrjala is a scenic designer for the stage and television as well as art director for industrial films. Asked how he obtained the commission from the Interior Department, Mr. Syrjala said yesterday:

"I had gone to Washington in 1956 to do research for the scenery of Robert Montgomery's television program, 'Good Friday, 1865' [the day of Lincoln's assassination] and met Randle B. Truett, chief historian of the Interior Department's National Capital Region.

#### Used Brady Photographs

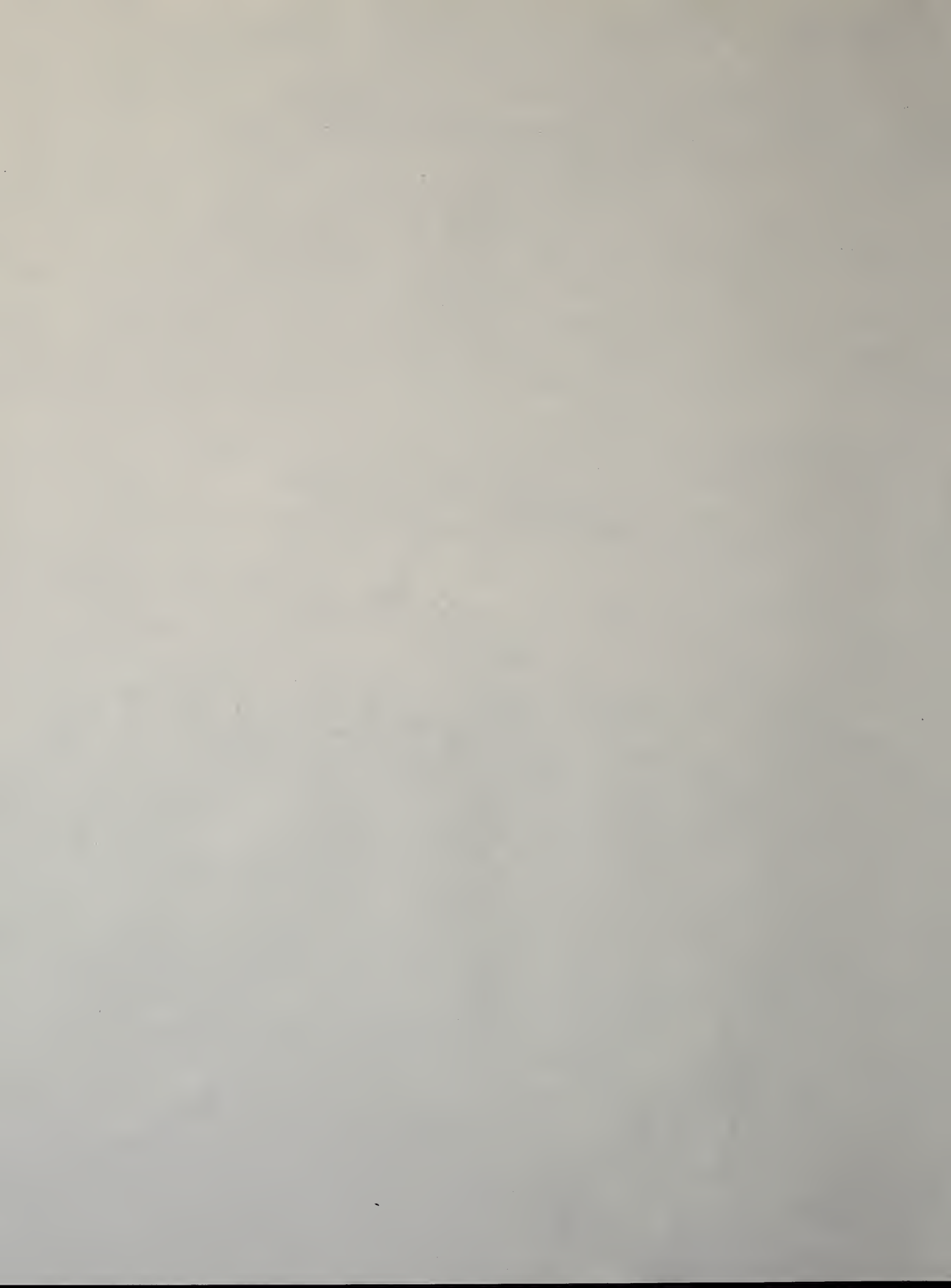
"He gave me photographs taken by the Civil War's celebrated photographer, Matthew Brady, showing the interior and exterior of Ford's. Those helped me in designing part of the scenery of 'Our American Cousin' and the Presidential box for 'Good Friday, 1865.'

"Two years ago I was assigned to draw what the stage of Ford's was like and the theater. Aiding me in my work was George J. Olszewski, an historian on the Interior Department's staff."

"Our American Cousin," witnessed by the Lincolns and a party of three, was written by Tom Taylor, a British dramatist, who wrote more than 70 plays. The performance was a benefit for Laura Keane, a popular actress, who appeared in it.

The suggestion to give live performances at Ford's was made by Actors Equity in 1964 and approved by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall. Architects participating in the reconversion are William M. Haussmann, Charles W. Lessig and the firm of Macomber & Peter.

daughter of a baronet who, under duress, is about to marry the lawyer who drove her father into bankruptcy. She is saved from that fate by a clerk in the lawyer's office.





1067

**FORD'S THEATRE**  
**THE HOUSE WHERE**  
**LINCOLN DIED**





The traditional birthplace of Abraham Lincoln.



Poisonous snake, whose cause the death "milk sickness."



The greenhouse of Nancy H. Lincoln.



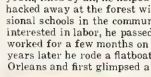
Little Pigeon Baptist Church, which the Lincolns attended in Indiana.



George W. Armstrong.



A book which greatly moved young Abraham.



An Ohio River steamer, The General Pike, in 1818.



A page from a book, New Salem as Lincoln knew it, assembled in Indiana. It. A plot made in 1866.

## THE FORMATIVE YEARS



The Lincoln family Bible.

Thomas Lincoln

"It is great folly to attempt to make anything out of me or my early life," wrote the candidate to a supporter. "It can all be condensed into a single sentence; and that sentence you will find in Gray's Elegy: 'The short and simple annals of the poor.' That's my life and that's all you or anyone else can make out of it."

Abraham Lincoln, elected 16th President of the United States soon after penning these lines, aptly summed up his humble beginnings. He was born on February 12, 1809, in a log cabin on the Kentucky frontier. His parents—Thomas Lincoln, a carpenter and backwoods farmer, and Nancy Hanks, a shadowy figure of obscure lineage—were hardworking and religious but without schooling. When Abe was 2, his father took his family to another, more fertile farm 10 miles north. This was the Knob Creek place, and the boy long remembered his years here. He swam in the creek with companions, attended A.B.C. schools with his sister Sarah for a few months, and accompanied his father on chores.

In Abe's 7th year, title troubles again drove his father off his farm. Seeking secure land and—his son said later—free soil, Thomas carried his family into the Indiana wilderness and settled near Little Pigeon Creek. Two years later, in 1818, Abe's mother died, a victim of the terrible "milk sickness," and the family sank into a rough existence from which it did not emerge until Thomas remarried.

His new wife was Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow with three children. Cheerful and energetic, she brought a new tone to the Lincoln cabin and raised the boy and his sister as her own.



Sarah Bush Lincoln



Lincoln's surveying equipment.

In 1830 the Lincolns moved once more. Lured by reports of rich black soil, they piled all their goods into wagons and set out for Illinois. Soon they reached a spot on the banks of Sangamon River, a few miles from Decatur. Abraham was now 21, free to come and go as he chose, but he stayed with his family for a year, breaking ground, splitting rails, and planting corn. After another trip down the Mississippi, he drifted into New Salem, a thriving village.

For a while he clerked in Offutt's store. When it failed, he grasped at a new opportunity. Encouraged by his friends, he ran for the State legislature, advocating a variety of public improvements. Though he lost the election, he carried his own neighborhood by 277 votes to 7, a source of great pride for many years after.

## EARLY POLITICAL CAREER



The Statehouse at Springfield.

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN



1809-1865

Springfield, the new State capital. Licensed an attorney the year before, he formed a partnership with the able John T. Stuart and soon dipped into local politics. After marrying Mary Todd, a Kentucky belle, in 1842, he settled down in earnest to the law. From 1847-49 Lincoln served in Congress. He worked hard in office, but his opposition to the Mexican War proved notably unpopular back home, and he was passed over for re-nomination. Sadly he returned to Springfield, and resumed his law practice. Honest, shrewd, and effective before juries, he soon rose to the first rank of the Illinois bar. Over the next 5 years Lincoln devoted much time to studying the American past and the looming issue of slavery.



Lincoln's men celebrated law cases, the defense of young "Doc" Sumner in 1858.



A political rally held during the Lincoln-Douglas debates.



The home in Springfield.

Early in 1860 Lincoln journeyed east to lecture in New York City. He called for the exclusion of slavery from the territories, deplored efforts to destroy the Union, and urged friendship toward the South. The speech was a triumph, and the number of his supporters grew. When his rivals proved weak in the national convention, Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency on the third ballot.



A political rally held during the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

From his doorstep in Springfield Lincoln ran a quiet campaign, receiving delegations and political leaders while avoiding speeches and stumping. In November 1860 the Nation voted. Lincoln won a large electoral majority (180 votes to 123 for his three opponents), but he polled less than half of the popular vote. The South voted almost solidly against him.



Mary Todd Lincoln

A. L. in 1847.

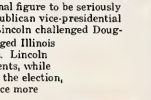
Lincoln spent 6 important years in New Salem. Defeated for office, he turned to storekeeping, then was appointed postmaster, became a surveyor, and plunged into law studies. In 1834 he was elected to the legislature as a Whig, where he denounced slavery as "founded on both injustice and bad policy" but opposed the spread of abolition societies. Three years later Lincoln moved to Springfield, the new State capital. Licensed an attorney the year before, he formed a partnership with the able John T. Stuart and soon dipped into local politics. After marrying Mary Todd, a Kentucky belle, in 1842, he settled down in earnest to the law. From 1847-49 Lincoln served in Congress. He worked hard in office, but his opposition to the Mexican War proved notably unpopular back home, and he was passed over for re-nomination. Sadly he returned to Springfield, and resumed his law practice. Honest, shrewd, and effective before juries, he soon rose to the first rank of the Illinois bar. Over the next 5 years Lincoln devoted much time to studying the American past and the looming issue of slavery.



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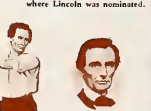


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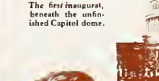


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"The fiery trials through which we pass will light us down, to honor or dishonor, to the last generation." SECOND ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

## THE WAR YEARS



The first inaugural, beneath the unfinished Capitol dome.



Lincoln's Cabinet. At night, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.



The bombardment of Fort Sumter, April 12-14, 1861.



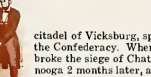
Lincoln's cabinet, just after the battle of Antietam.



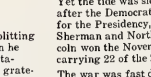
A 1864 political cartoon, pointing toward the state of reunion.



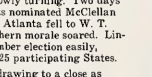
The Emancipation, as the plain people saw it.



The siege of Vicksburg, splitting the Confederacy.



The assassin's weapon.



The assassin's weapon.



The assassin's weapon.

When Lincoln took office on March 4, 1861, secession was an accomplished fact. The lower South had withdrawn from the Union and set up a rival government. The guns roared first at Fort Sumter, turning back Lincoln's relief expedition. Both sides called for troops, more Southern States seceded, and the Nation plunged heading into civil war.

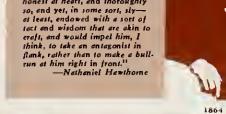
The fighting went badly at first for the North. Plagued by poor generalship, the Federal army in the East was roundly trounced in 1861 and through most of 1862. George B. McClellan's repulse of Robert E. Lee at Antietam Creek was the solitary

triumph. The Emancipation Proclamation, declaring free all slaves in rebel territory, but words could not substitute for victories. Now Lee was marching northward again. In July the armies clashed at Gettysburg, and Lee retreated with bloody losses. As the North rejoiced, more good news came from the West. Stubby, quiet-spoken Ulysses S. Grant captured the strategic



The Emancipation, as the plain people saw it.

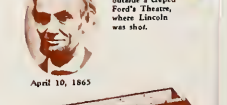
citadel of Vicksburg, splitting the Confederacy. When he broke the siege of Chattanooga 2 months later, a grateful Lincoln brought him east to command all the Union armies. In May 1864, while another Union force set out across Georgia, Grant advanced southward, bent on destroying Lee's army. Lee fought desperately in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania. Casualties mounted, and quick victory seemed as far away as ever.



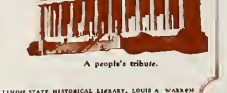
The Emancipation, as the plain people saw it.

"The whole physiognomy is as coarse as one as you would meet anywhere in the length and breadth of the States; but which, it is redeemed, illuminated, softened, and brightened by a kindly, though serious look out of his eyes, and an expression of homely severity, that seems weighted with rich results of village experience. A great deal of native sense; no haughty collection, no refinement; honest at heart, and thoroughly so, and yet, in some sort, shy—of least, endowed with a sort of tact and wisdom that are akin to craft, and would tempt him, I think, to take an emerald in flank, rather than to take a ball, run at him right in front."

—Nathaniel Hawthorne



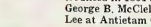
The assassin's weapon.



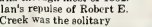
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The assassin's weapon.



The assassin's weapon.



The assassin's weapon.



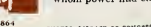
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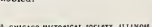
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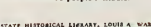
The assassin's weapon.



The assassin's weapon.



The assassin's weapon.



The assassin's weapon.



The assassin's weapon.



# FORD'S THEATRE THE HOUSE WHERE LINCOLN DIED

Ford's Theatre and The House Where Lincoln Died,  
in the heart of downtown Washington, commemorate  
the tragic death of Abraham Lincoln

## April 14, 1865

was a day of celebration and thanksgiving in the Northern States. After four long years of war, Gen. Robert E. Lee had surrendered and the capitulation of the Confederate Army of Gen. J. E. Johnston was expected soon. At Ford's Theatre on 10th Street the celebrated comedy "Our American Cousin" had opened a 1-night stand. The play featured Laura Keane, a distinguished actress, in the leading role.

About 10:30 a.m., a White House messenger came to the theatre to make arrangements for President and Mrs. Lincoln to attend the evening performance. Gen. and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant were to accompany them, but in the afternoon other plans forced them to cancel the engagement. In their place the Lincolns invited Maj. Henry R. Rathbone and his fiancée, Clara Harris. The theatre managers made elaborate preparations for the Presidential visit. The partition between the two upper boxes on the right of the stage was removed. A sofa and some chairs, including an upholstered rocking chair which Lincoln had used on previous visits, were brought into the box. They placed American flags on staffs beside the box and draped others on the railing. The blue regimental flag of the U.S. Treasury Guards hung from a staff against the center pillar. Directly below was an engraving of George Washington.

At 8:30 p.m., the President's carriage drew up in front of the theatre. His bodyguard met the party and escorted them up the stairs and on to the Presidential box. The play was in progress, but on the arrival of the President the orchestra struck up "Hail to the Chief." The audience rose and cheered as they caught sight of the President, and Lincoln moved to the front of the box and bowed. After the party was seated, the play resumed.

About an hour later, John Wilkes Booth, a prominent actor of the day, rode up to the back door of the theatre and called for a stagehand to hold his horse. Crossing under the stage, he made his way to the Star Salon next door and ordered whiskey. Shortly after 10, Booth returned to the theatre and climbed the stairs to the dress circle where he watched the play for a few minutes. Then he quickly entered the passageway to the Presidential box. Barring the door, he stepped into the box carrying a single-shot Derringer and a dagger. He was now directly behind Lincoln, who sat with his head slightly turned toward the audience. It was about 10:15 when the muffled shot sounded. The President slumped forward in his chair, then sank backward. Major Rathbone leaped to his feet and grappled with the assassin. Booth stabbed him in the arm and vaulted from the box onto the stage, brandishing his knife. As he jumped, his spur caught in the Treasury Guards' flag and hit the Washington picture. Thrown off balance, he landed awkwardly on the stage, breaking his left leg. Even so, he was able to escape through the back door, shaking the orchestra leader on the way. He hurriedly mounted his horse and pounded down the alley to F Street.

The audience was momentarily stunned by Booth's mad act, then confused and terrified. Three doctors from the audience examined the stricken President. The bullet had entered just above the left ear and lodged behind the right eye. Lincoln lay unconscious and barely breathing. Recognizing his condition as serious, the doctors knew that a ride over the rough cobblestones to the White House might cause a fatal hemorrhage.

Across the street William Petersen, a tailor, lived in a modest three-story row house. The noise in the street awakened a roomier, one Henry Stafford. Told that the President had been shot, he called for the men carrying the unconscious body out of the theatre to bring him inside. They carried the President into a small first-floor bedroom and laid him diagonally across the bed. Throughout the night the doctors kept watch, at a continuous parade of Cabinet heads, Congressmen, Army officers, and friends came to the bedside. Mrs. Lincoln, overcome with grief, occasionally left the front parlor to go to her husband. In the back parlor Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton began his investigation of the assassination. He interviewed several witnesses and gave the orders that enabled the Government to function throughout the night of crisis.

Nothing could be done to help the dying President, and at 7:22 the next morning the struggle ended. Six days after Lee surrendered at Appomattox, President Lincoln was dead.

## Ford's Theatre

The cornerstone of the present building was laid on February 28, 1863, and a few months later Ford's Theatre was finished. It replaced an earlier building, The First Baptist Church, which dated back to 1834.

In 1859, the congregation merged with another church, and the building was abandoned. Two years later John T. Ford, a Baltimore and Philadelphia theatrical producer, bought the property and converted it into a theatre—only to see it burn down on December 30, 1862.

Ford's new theatre was much more elaborate than the earlier converted church. Built of brick, it followed the best designs of the day and was regarded as one of the finest theatres in the country.

After Lincoln's assassination, the War Department stationed guards outside Ford's Theatre and canceled all scheduled performances. In June 1865 the building was restored to Ford, who planned to reopen it. But since public opinion was aroused, the Government again took charge of the building and prohibited its use as a theatre.

Soon the Government began remodeling the theatre into a fireproof building for the storage of Government records. All woodwork was removed, and the building was divided into three stories. In 1866 the Government purchased the building, and, for many years after, it was occupied by agencies of the War Department.

On June 9, 1893, a second tragedy occurred when the three floors collapsed, killing 22 clerks and injuring 68 others. The building was repaired the following year.

Since 1932, Ford's Theatre has housed the Ogden H. Oldroyd collection of Lincolniana. Oldroyd gathered his collection for more than 60 years. It was first displayed in the Lincoln home in Springfield, Ill. In 1893 it was brought to Washington and placed in the Petersen House. The Government purchased it in 1926. The collection includes books from Lincoln's library, the playbill for the night of the tragedy, and letters, documents, and other objects relating to Lincoln. Items later added include Booth's Derringer, his diary, the Treasury Guards' flag, the sofa, and the engraving of Washington from the Presidential box.

In 1964, Ford's Theatre was closed for restoration to its appearance on the night of the assassination. The interior was removed, then rebuilt according to the findings of extensive research. The furnishings and accessories are either authentic period pieces or faithful reproductions.

## The House Where Lincoln Died

The house in which Lincoln died, now 516 10th Street NW., was built by William Petersen in 1849. Before the house had more rooms than they needed, the family kept roomers. William T. Clark, employed by the Quartermaster General's office, occupied the room to which Lincoln was taken. In 1878, heirs of the family sold the house to Louis Schade, who published *The Washington Sentinel* in the basement fronting on 10th Street for many years. The Government purchased the house from the family in 1896 for \$30,000. Though substantially unchanged since 1865, the house has been renovated by the National Park Service.

In the front parlor are a horseshair sofa and a high-back rocking chair from the Lincoln home in Springfield, and corner whatnots and center table similar in appearance to those in the room on the night of the assassination. The back parlor has a sofa also from the Lincoln home in Springfield. The center table resembles the one used by Col. James Tanner while taking notes from witnesses of the tragedy.

The small bedroom where President Lincoln was taken is furnished much as it was on the night he died. A copy of the "Village Blacksmith" replaces the one on the wall, while above the bed is a copy of Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair." The wallpaper is similar to the original pattern, and the bed and chairs closely resemble those in the room at the time of Lincoln's death.

## ADMINISTRATION

Ford's Theatre and House Where Lincoln Died are administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which these buildings are units, is dedicated to conserving the great historical, natural, and recreational places of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.

A superintendent, whose address is Central National Capital Parks, 900 Ohio Drive SW., Washington, D.C. 20240, is in charge of both units.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

ALL PHOTOS: MANSIEVE COLLECTION



Lincoln's box, photographed after the assassination.



Onlookers cluster outside the death scene.



Abraham Lincoln's blood-soaked bed, photographed by a boarder in the Petersen house minutes after the President's body was fitted up to be carried back to the Executive Mansion. From the book on Lincoln's assassination, *Twenty Days*, by Dorothy Mearns Kambourell and Philip B. Kambourell Jr.



Abraham Lincoln, April 10, 1865



Laura Keane



The chair in which Lincoln was sitting.

GPO 1967 O-290-959

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Abraham Lincoln, April 10, 1865



Laura Keene



The chair in which  
Lincoln was sitting.

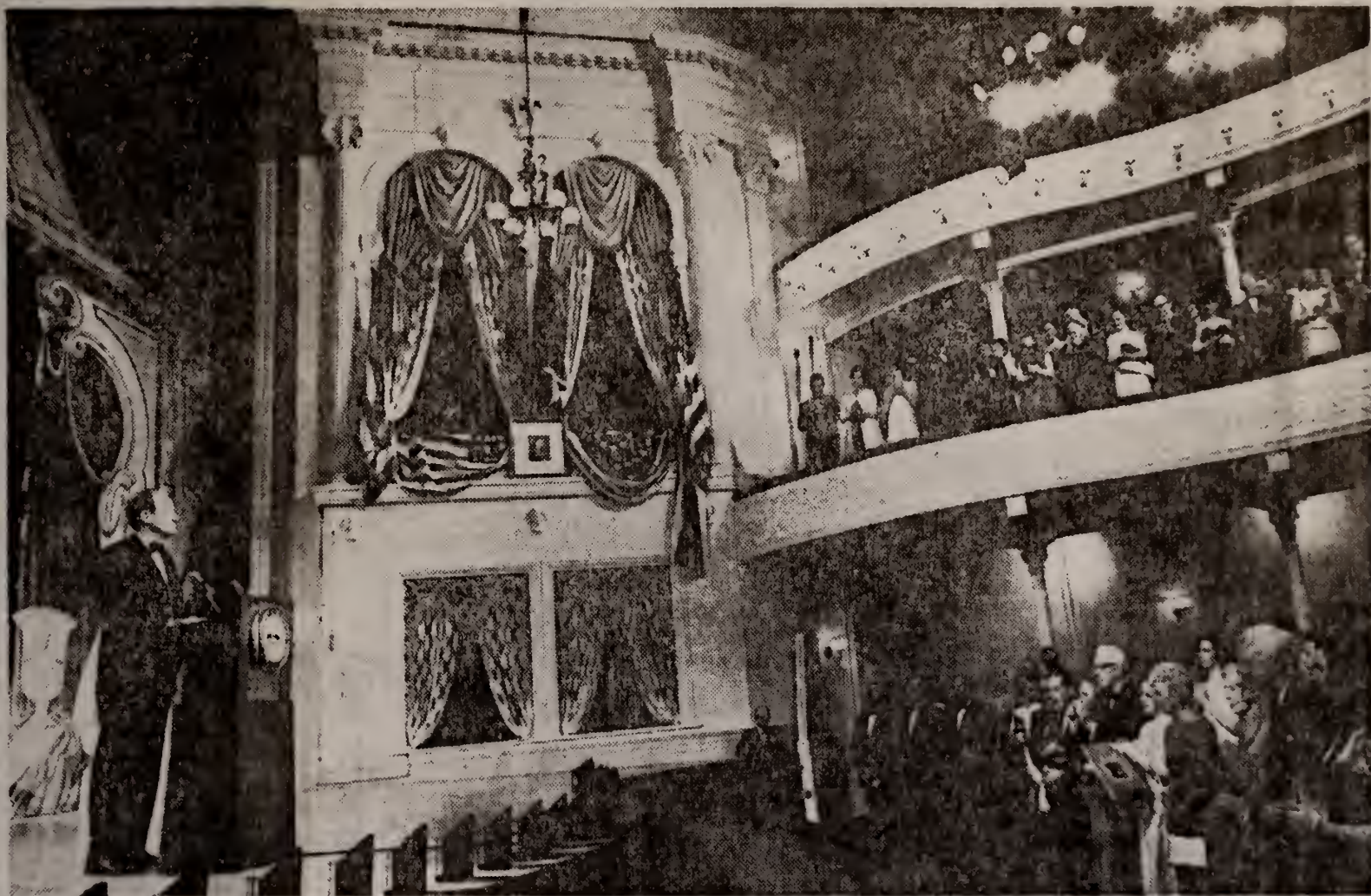
GPO : 1967 O-255-909

President's body was lifted  
Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents,  
U.S. Government Printing Office,  
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WASHINGTON, D. C., WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 1968



—United Press International

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey greets first nighters—mainly high government officials.

ry Rood, the vice president and Mrs. Allen Steere, vice president and Mrs. Edward Auer and the company's Lincoln scholar and librarian, Gerald McMurtry, and his wife.

Lincoln Life not only bought the TV time for the show last night, but it gave \$250,000 to the Ford's Theater Society.

Guests began arriving soon after 7 for the 7:30 scheduled start. But the Humphreys did not arrive until shortly before 8 and it was 8:05 when Helen Hayes, with that enormous presence of hers, walked on the stage, head erect, smiling — the first member of the acting profession to set foot there in 103 years.

Udall had said in his greeting: "From this moment on, let this place be known more for histrionics than history."

But last night's performance by 12 stars was both. As each read or sang or spoke or played or danced, Lincoln's life and character unfolded.

**THE VICE PRESIDENT** had said that the "life of Lin-

coln is recorded in more than a million published works," and the man chosen to play his part, Fonda, who played Abe in "Young Mr. Lincoln," is a Lincoln buff.

He said afterwards: "I feel that I have read everything written about him."

This was at the party for the cast given by Nina Foch and Michael Dewell after the Udall party.

Nina, who did a monologue from "King John" last night and Michael, cofounder and coproducer of the National Repertory Theater to be housed in Ford's henceforth, were married two months ago and have leased the house at 2433 Tracy Place.

Andy Williams had to miss both parties and catch a plane out right after his second singing of the Civil War song, "Tenting Tonight" and "Home Sweet Home." But Harry Belafonte, Richard Crenna, director John Houseman, Kenneth Crosby, cochairman of the opening, and his wife Cricket, and others dropped by during the evening.

Houseman called Carmen de Lavallade the "greatest dancer today," and those who saw her fantastic grace last night agreed.

**OF THE THEATER ITSELF**, Fonda said: "Oh, it's beautiful. We were tremendously impressed with it. When I first heard it was going to happen and I was asked to participate — I was so excited to be asked. I think they have done a beautiful job."

The buffet reception that

took place between the first and second shows was held in the Pepco Building next door and approached under a canopy covering the sidewalk.

Against a backdrop of tempting shiny new refrigerators, Secretary of Labor Wirtz told the vice president that the Viet Cong had been driven from the American embassy. "Good!" exclaimed Humphrey looking pleased.

Secretary of the Treasury and Mrs. Fowler, Sen. Harry Byrd and Sen. and Mrs. Clai-

borne Pell were in the group heading for the next performance.

Pell was talking about the superb sermon given by John Sharon at the special Congressional Service in All Souls Church last Sunday. Clark Clifford called it "The best sermon I have ever heard." It will be broadcast over WGMS at 9:05 p.m., tomorrow night.

It was a sermon on conquering fear. The chanting sidewalk group of last evening should listen to it.









—Star Photographer Rosemary Martuffi

George Ford, son of the manager of Ford's Theater in Lincoln's time, arrives for the reopening of the theater with Dorothy Bock Pierre.

## EXCLUSIVELY YOURS

# A Brilliant Opening At Ford's Theater

By BETTY BEALE  
Star Staff Writer

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Justice and Mrs. Abe Fortas, Sen. Allen Ellender, Sen. and Mrs. Edmund Muskie and Sen. and Mrs. Hickenlooper also were in the audience.

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When people talked of the Viet Cong forces occupying the first floor of the American embassy in Saigon, it gave more meaning to the empty, flag-draped box where the Civil War president had sought respite from his war cares.

The analogy must have crossed the mind of Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who opened the brilliant show, as it surely crossed the minds of a somewhat subdued audience.

As Humphrey left the theater around 10 p.m. he heard a cry that Lincoln must have heard many times. A chanting group on the opposite sidewalk yelled out absurdly, as soon as they caught sight of him: "End the war!"

It was absurd, because nobody wants more to see it end than Johnson and Humphrey.

"SOME THINK I DO WRONG to go to the opera and the theater; but it rests me. . . . A bearty laugh relieves me; and I seem better able after it to bear my cross."

The words of Lincoln uttered by Henry Fonda from the stage of the beautifully restored theater further pointed up the similarity between Washington a hundred years ago and today.

It was a brilliant if not hilariously gay opening. It was not an event that called for hilarity — with that empty box so perfectly duplicated that even the blue Treasury flag like the one John Wilkes Booth caught his foot in was in its right place.

The humor was the subtle, soft, wise humor of Lincoln.

He said of the South's song "Dixie" which he, too, liked: "It's as American as my nose."

And of his attitude toward work: "My father taught me to work, but not to love it."

And to the fat woman who sat on his tall silk hat: "I could have told you it wouldn't fit before you sat down."

The orchestra and first balcony of the little theater that seats only 750 in all were filled with Washington officials who were enchanted with the show.

IN THE FIRST ROW with the Humphreys were Alice Longworth, Chief Justice and Mrs. Warren and Mrs. Dean Rusk, whose husband was kept away by the new crisis. Mrs. Walt Rostow, whose husband is foreign affairs assistant to the President, brought her daughter while Walt stayed at his White House desk.

Receiving inside the center door of the theater were Secretary of the Interior and Mrs. Udall who gave an after-theater party for the cast at the Federal City Club with an orchestra, gay dancing, etc.

The National Park Service, which restored the theater, is under the aegis of the Interior Department. The original cost of the theater, by the way, was \$75,000; the cost of restoring it, \$1.9 million.

Sen. and Mrs. Charles Percy were there, but they had been given seats in different rows. Sen. and Mrs. Gale McGee, Sen. and Mrs. Gordon Allott,

Justice and Mrs. Abe Fortas, Sen. Allen Ellender, Sen. and Mrs. Edmund Muskie and Sen. and Mrs. Hickenlooper also were in the audience.

Three Senate doves, Mike Mansfield, Bill Fulbright and Mark Hatfield and their wives seemed to gravitate toward each other during the reception that was sandwiched between the first and repeat performances.

Antoinette Hatfield, in a long white evening dress with horizontal silver stripes, observed cheerily that with all her jogging and other exercising she has added an inch to her waistline.

Spanish Ambassador and Marquesa de Merry del Val swept in shortly before the show began—she in a headed long pink crepe gown.

Most of the women were in floor-length dresses to mark the importance of the historic, invitational affair.

Frankie Hewitt, president of the Ford's Theater Society, was striking in a long white crepe with narrowed neck effect pinned with a diamond brooch.

MOST STUNNING GOWN seen all evening was worn by Bassima Al-Ghoussein who, with her husband, the Kuwaiti ambassador, went to the second show after dropping in on the reception. She wore a black Larry Aldrich gown with a deep turtle neck of rhinestones.

George Ford, the 87-year-old son of the manager of the theater in Lincoln's time, linked the historic closing and century-delayed opening by his attendance. He came with Mrs. Dorothy Bock Pierre.

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Releases

## THE ARTS

# The Sun

WASHINGTON, D.

# Ford's Is a Museum

By BENJAMIN FORGEY

Star Staff Writer

Ford's Theater, in its pristine-pure reincarnation, has an identity problem.

Ford's Theater is a memorial.

Ford's Theater is a museum.

Across 10th Street from the House Where Lincoln Died, Ford's Theater is the Place Where Lincoln Was Shot.

Is, then, Ford's Theater a theater?

It was a theater — one of Washington's finest — for a little less than two years prior to the night of April 14, 1865, when, in the words of Stephen Vincent Benet, Lincoln and his wife

*Went to the theater in their flag-draped box.*

*The play was a good play, he liked the play,*

*Laughed at the jokes, laughed at the funnyman*

*With the long, weeping whiskers.*

*The time passed.*

*The shot rang out. The crazy murderer*

*Leaped from the box, mouthed out his Latin phrase,*

*Brandished his foolish pistol and was gone.*

After the awful event, some months after, John T. Ford tried to stage another play in his theater. The public temper would not allow it. The federal government took over the property, and for almost a hundred years the building languished, successively, as a center for medical research, a storehouse for Civil War records, a warehouse for Army publications, and a dusty repository for Lincolniana.

In 1964, however, Congress appropriated money to restore Ford's to its original state. Lacking detailed architectural plans, but armed with Matthew Brady's photographs of the interior and a fanatical devotion to accuracy, historians of the National Park







—Star Photographer Rosemary Martuffi

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## THE ARTS

# The Sunday Star

Amusements—Books—Art—Music—Records  
Hobbies—Schools—Radio—Gardens

WASHINGTON, D. C., FEBRUARY 11, 1968

## Ford's Is a Museum but It's Also a Theater

By BENJAMIN FORGE  
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In 1961, however, Congress appropriated money to restore Ford's to its original state. Lacking detailed architectural plans, but armed with Matthew Brady's photographs of the interior and a fanatical devotion to accuracy, historians of the National Park Service supervised the project.

### A Ford Hope

Midway through the reconstruction, it was decided — Interior Secretary Stewart Udall decided — to make the building more than a museum. Ford's was to be equipped for dramatic productions again, to be dedicated as a "living memorial" to the president who, perhaps more than any other president, made living theater a part of his life.

Tonorrow night the National Repertory Theatre will begin a three-play repertory season with a performance of an adaptation of Benet's long narrative poem, "John Brown's Body." (Tomorrow's performance will not be the first on Ford's stage for the troupe, which gave five invitation-only preview-benefit performances last week.) The hope is to make NRT a permanent home at Ford's, and if that hope comes true, to give "John Brown's Body" a permanent place in the repertory, to make it sort of the play for Ford's Theater.

The 14-week stand should go a long way toward proving, or disproving, the thesis that Ford's can become a unique theater-museum. The crucial question, in terms of the quality of the



—Star Photographs Gene Lewis

Players of the Notional Repertory Theatre rehearse a scene from "John Brown's Body" at Ford's Theater.

theater ultimately produced there, is whether player and playgoer alike can overcome the tendency to be overly sentimental, overly reverent, about the death of a great president.

But a more crucial issue, in the short run, is whether enough money can be raised to lure NRT back to Washington next fall for a full season at Ford's. The Ford's Theater Society — a nationwide group of high-powered individuals created especially for the purpose — is working on that.

According to Kenneth Crasby, head of the Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith branch here and treasurer of Ford's Theater Society, about \$1.1 million in private donations must be

raised to subsidize a full-time, three-year schedule at Ford's for the National Repertory Theatre.

Why so much? Preliminary estimates, Crasby says, show that it will cost about \$5,000 more each week of production than can be taken in by box office returns. The theater, into which during Lincoln's day apparently 1,200 persons could be jammed, now has a capacity of 742 persons, in accordance with District fire regulations.

The top ticket price will be \$3, and because NRT, in order to fit its own idea of what theater should be and to attract foundation money, operates a large educational program, a substantial number of seats for each perform-

ance will be sold at reduced rates to student groups.

Although it is too early to tell, the fund-raising effort got off to a good start when the Lincoln National Life Insurance Co. provisionally gave \$250,000. At any rate, NRT will have to know whether the money is forthcoming or not sometime during the next three months in order to begin preparations for the fall season.

If live theater can survive at Ford's, the National Repertory Theatre should be able to do the job. Created in 1961, the company (which varies in size from 25 to 30 actors and actresses) has annually toured the country playing a repertory of "classical" plays. The

repertory has ranged from Schiller's "Mary Stuart," and Moliere's "The Imaginary Invalid," to Anouilh's "Ring Around the Moon" and Miller's "The Crucible."

In addition to "John Brown's Body" the series for the Ford's season this year includes Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors" (opens Feb. 28) and Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" (opens March 26). The plays will be presented in alternating repertory until the brief, trial season closes May 19.

"John Brown's Body" is a fitting production with which to reopen Ford's as a theater. Historically relevant, it is full of awe and pathos and

and stirring words, a verbalization of a kind of necessary national myth. It is not, really, a play but a series of vignettes, which, in the words of director Jack Sydow, "put a poem on the stage."

First published in 1928, it was first adapted for the stage in 1962 by Charles Laughton, in a three-actor production which toured the country to the sound of almost continuous applause. (The players? Tyrone Power, Raymond Massey, Judith Anderson.) Sydow, using Laughton's cutting as a basis, adapted the play for NRT.

The players seem to have adjusted fairly quickly to playing at Ford's. The troupe arrived in town on Jan. 22, and Sydow says, "In the first couple of days, the actors were terribly awed by the theater. The atmosphere was so strange, almost eerie. There was always that flag-draped box. I finally just had to tell them not to be spoiled, that the box and practically the whole theater are reconstructions."

The stage at Ford's is a typical Restoration stage of the period, a kind of modified thrust with an apron extending 15 feet in front of the proscenium arch. From the proscenium to the rear wall is 25 feet. It (the proscenium) is draped with an old fashioned "roll" curtain painted with "perspective" — in this case a park-like vista of river, tree and mountain, with a bust of Shakespeare on a pedestal in dead center — as authentic and as American as corn.

### Some Adjustments

How does a contemporary company adjust to performing on the restored stage? The word last week was: Easy. Lighting was a problem, but it seems to have been solved to the satisfaction of all.

It is crowded backstage — the big air-conditioning units there are part of an unauthentic restoration hidden from public view — and storage is a problem.

But problems? Such problems, most theaters should have.

On the other hand, there are the advantages of the open stage. Director Sydow: "There are some adjustments one has to make. The smallness of the backstage area forces everything downstage, and changes the patterns of movement. Entrances and exits are made upstage, and you have to plan for the exits."

"But when you want to get greater contact with the audience, when you're striving for greater intimacy, you can move onto the apron. In 'John Brown's Body,' for example, I used the apron mainly for individual scenes. It makes for the kind of intimacy and emphasis you can't get on a proscenium stage."

But on the apron, looking out over the empty house, with its straight-back black rail chairs and its small, round tables, one can feel the intimacy of the playhouse. It is a small, lovingly detailed theater, a place where the perfect can be met now than in its original version, when the fumes from gas lighting must have turned the walls dirt-gray.







New York Times March 3, 1968

# If Lincoln Had Lived

By WALTER KERR

THE theater has just won a small, belated, but I think decisive victory. Ever since the night of Lincoln's assassination in April of 1865, Ford's Theater in Washington has lingered like an untreated sore in the American consciousness. The building was there, all too intensely there for what had happened in it. It could be used, if anyone could think how it should be used. An attempt was made to reopen it in the very year of the President's death—as soon as the convicted conspirators were hanged, in fact. Two hundred people bought tickets for an announced performance of "The Octoroon." They were met at the doors by a possibly dangerous crowd, by a group of soldiers, and by an order from the Secretary of War closing the building. Someone had threatened to burn the place down if an actor dared set foot on the stage.

Once it had been abandoned as a playhouse and later reduced to a shell, the battle of morbidities continued. There was constant agitation to restore it; after all, Matthew Brady had photographed it so thoroughly that even its ceiling designs could be flawlessly copied. But weren't the restorers' motives morbid? Why would anyone want to go into such a reconstruction except to feel that titillating little shiver of regret and distaste that the prying like to get in the presence of remembered catastrophes?

There is always something particularly garish about catastrophe in the theater, an obvious mismatching of intended gaiety and actual disaster, blood on the clown's face. The sentimentalists who wanted the playhouse back again were suspect. Necrophilia in the wings, as it were. And of course those who so bitterly opposed the notion of brightly lighting what they preferred to think of as a tomb were plainly morbid, too. A place was damned by a deed; it could scarcely be passed without making a sign to

ward off evil. With superstition on the one hand and a kind of corrupt nostalgia on the other, what good could possibly come of the battle or the bother? I am told that even now the Government department that has so lovingly put every last bit of lace curtain in place—are you surprised to hear that the playhouse has lace curtains in its boxes?—is faintly uneasy about permitting continuing performances. What do people think and feel as they come ostensibly to be entertained?

I can tell you what I felt, and it surprised me. Although the President's box, with its flags draped out of symmetry just as they were when Booth's spur caught in one of them, asserts itself plainly and prominently at the right side of the auditorium, I spent no time at all thinking a man had been killed there. The only thing that entered my head was how much he had liked to come there.

The house makes the difference. It's an enveloping house, a rippling house, an easy embrace that makes a casual but unmistakable gesture of community. This is where to come not simply to see a play but to see neighbors. The stage is a graceful scallop, curving so far forward that it passes and absorbs the four boxes on either side, moves into the area where the audience is. The two balconies undulate in response to the apron, overhanging and echoing its outgoing impulse; they begin not at the rear or even halfway through the house, but at the very point where stage and boxes leave off, seeming to link arms with the platform on which actors walk. To sit in the balconies is to hover over the stage, peering directly down into the players' faces looking up. It is as though we had all gathered at first- and second-story windows to lean out and over a busy event in the courtyard. Heads don't quite converge, but you feel that they might.

The walls and ceiling are white, or a very lively near-white, infrequently broken by exceedingly simple line decorations. This is, at first glance, astonishing. White walls, or even light walls, are thought taboo in our own playhouses, for most definite reasons. They pick up too much reflected glow from the stage, pulling our eyes away from what is going on under the proscenium, diffusing our attention as they attract needless notice to themselves. While a show is going on, who wants to be conscious of the auditorium proper?

As soon as you settle into the proportions of this playhouse, though, you see why the walls can afford to insist upon themselves. We aren't looking at the stage through a tunnel of darkness. We are in it, nearly on it, joined in the same friendly space. The actors' walls are our walls, more or less; we are more nearly in the ballroom of a mansion than in a corridor with a distant door, and it is proper that we should share the same gas lamps. Proper, even, that lace curtains should be draped here and there. Lace curtains are used in homes, and we have not gone all that far from home tonight. This is a meeting, not a magic-lantern show.

I should say at this point that the National Repertory Company, which is presently installed in the theater and has begun its three-play season with a new staging of Stephen Vincent Benét's "John Brown's Body," is by no means taking full advantage of the most striking characteristics of the theater. Con- (Continued on Page 3)





# If Lincoln Had Lived

Continued from Page 1

temporary acting and staging habits are not that easily broken, particularly by a company not overly imaginative to begin with. Director Jack Sydow is still in love with the vast deeps under and inside the proscenium; for the most part he huddles his actors there as though backstage were home base, letting them advance only occasionally — one or two at a time—to explore the resources of the courtyard we've really come to. (Hasn't he noticed how the players' voices suddenly acquire timbre as they get past the curtain line, or how re-

sponsively audiences sit up on the cane-bottom chairs when they feel they are at last being approached?)

This is a house, and a forestage, built for asides, for full-throated confidences. It is the sort of place in which one actor can converse with one side of the auditorium, another with the opposite side, while all of us together hear and relish the cross-hatched intimacies of both. At no time does Mr. Sydow attempt to explore the possibility, though the fragmented and impressionistic parallels of the Benét poem readily lend themselves to— even seem to call out for—

such felicitous simultaneity. Neither does the director ever escort one of his actresses to the wave-like lap of the apron and encourage her to follow its inviting swell, brushing eyes with us the long and supple way across.

\*

Not until the second half of the entertainment does he use the one real virtue of combining backstage with forestage: that of propelling an actor out of the dark and distant reaches on a strong trajectory that seems to cannonball him in our direction. (And when he does, the actor hesitates just shy of us, wary

of our presence instead of welcoming it.) The Brady photographs, by the way, show that the scenic walls and doors for "Our American Cousin" were stationed flat at the curtain line, shutting off the area that is being most used now and making no bones about the fact that the play is to be played where the audience is. As soon as possible a production should be mounted in this manner, not because there is any virtue in being piously antiquarian about 19th-century practices but because now that we have the building we should discover what it was built for.

We have the décor; let us also have the experience.

Ford's is a fine laboratory, not just for research but for intimating change—for making our awareness of change real. We have no other house (nor do we need one, this will do) capable of suggesting to us the subtle social differences between an experience of theater at one earlier point in our history and our customary experience of theater today. We are much interested in altering our own overfamiliar and rather tired experience; if we weren't we wouldn't be spending so much time on arenas, on thrust stages, on pattern-cracking happenings. And though snuggling inside a sensation earlier than our own certainty isn't going to tell us what to do the day after tomorrow, it can help alert us to the fact that there are no theatrical absolutes and that some theatrical relatives may be cosier or more direct, or even more binding than others. The strongest sensation I had on coming away from Ford's was that if Lincoln had lived he'd have been back next week.

The sense of his pleasure is stronger, much stronger, than the sense of his death. That is why I've called the reconstruction a victory for the theater: In effect, the stage's purpose has won out over Booth's. The house smiles. It is gregarious. It has a character and reflects a character. Going into it is almost like meeting a person, more like meeting one than losing one.





## BENEFIT OPERA AT FORD'S

# Mrs. Lincoln Comes to Life

By **BARBARA KOBER**  
Star Staff Writer

The Mary Todd Lincoln few have ever known came to life last night on the stage of the theater where her husband was murdered.

Under the patronage of Mrs. Richard Nixon and Mrs. Spiro Agnew, the Mary Todd Lincoln Opera Committee presented at Ford's Theater the premiere of "Wing of Expectation" an opera depicting the troubled life of the wife of Abraham Lincoln.

The performance, which is being repeated tonight, is for the benefit of the house across the street where Mrs. Lincoln kept a night-long vigil until her husband died in the early morning hours.

Proceeds will be used to help refurbish the Peterson House, "The House Where Lincoln Died," one of America's historic shrines.

Mrs. Agnew made her entrance last night into the theater just before the program was scheduled to begin but was forced to leave a short time later because of a slight illness.

She said she had taken medication to "help me get through the evening," but was unable to stick it out.

"I got up this morning feeling this way," the vice president's wife said.

### Violence Discussed

At a reception in the National Portrait Gallery before the opera, the wife of the President of the University of Kentucky discussed last week's violence on the campus at Lexington.

She praised the judge who just hours earlier had dismissed a case brought by the Association of University Professors asking the court to remove National Guard troops from the campus.

Mrs. Otis Singletary, whose

husband was detained in court too late for him to make the trip here, said Judge Mac Swinford delivered "a lecture on law and order I wish everybody in the country could hear."

The university president's wife insisted that only "about two or three hundred of the 16,000 students enrolled at the school caused the trouble."

During the protests, Mrs. Singletary said, she had visited the dormitories and talked to the students.

"They are torn and mixed up," she said. "I told them demonstrations are all very

well but you are not going to convince anybody by antagonizing them."

### Composer There

Among the many Kentuckians attending the reception was the composer of the opera, Dr. Kenneth Wright, head of the music department at the University of Kentucky, who conducted the orchestra.

"I'm not going to answer my telephone tomorrow," he said. "We treat the Lincolns very personally in the love story between the President and Mary Todd."

Wright said he was especial-

ly worried about reaction from Mary Todd's descendants who watched the scene of her insanity trial. Robert Todd Lincoln, instigator of the trial against his mother, was depicted as more villainous than Mrs. Lincoln was insane.

The benefit was sponsored by the Kentucky Society of Washington, the University of Kentucky, the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia, the National Park Service and the Interior Department.

Cochairmen of the program were Ralph Becker, Mrs. Stuart Charlesworth and Lewis Moss.



## Opera about Mary Lincoln too episodic

The musical drama, "Wings of Expectation," by Kenneth Wright, member of Kentucky University's music faculty, had its first presentation outside of Kentucky at Ford's Theater last night under the patronage of Mrs. Richard M. Nixon and Mrs. Spiro T. Agnew.

Mrs. Nixon did not attend, and the Vice President's wife was forced, by a severe headache, to leave before the curtain went up.

The opera is a long (three acts) and involved work with a creditable score but with no sustained dramatic line.

For reasons not quite clear, the composer, who also authored the libretto, has told his story of the unstable Mary Todd Lincoln in episodes that skip about in time.

Opening scene, for example is a saloon in the 1880's where Billy Herndon, Lincoln's old law partner, sings about how he spent 30 years making notes for a biography of Lincoln, and he wonders out loud, "How do you capture greatness?"

Next comes an interlude — Herndon in his study — that takes place in 1867, and then scene 2, in which witnesses at

Mary Lincoln's insanity trial

in 1875 in Chicago sing their testimony about their troubles with her. To which she replies at length.

Acts 2 and 3 are similarly jumbled in chronology. As a

result the opera makes no dramatic impact tho some of the individual scenes are effective, largely due to the melody score.

John Stewart made a sympathetic Lincoln, and the rest of the cast, as well as chorus and orchestra, all members of

Kentucky University's fine arts schools, furnished strong support, under Dr. Wright's baton.

The performance, which will benefit restoration of the Peabody House where Lincoln died, will be repeated tonight at 8:30.  
M.B.

Washington Daily News, Friday, May 15, 1970





# Lincoln's Death Portrayed at Scene

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 21 — A shot like the one that killed President Abraham Lincoln echoed again tonight in Ford's Theater here.

The historic crack of a pistol was heard in the premiere of Charles Guggenheim's "Sound and Light at Ford's Theater," a 35-minute recreation of the time of the Civil War, the obsession of John Wilkes Booth with the cause of the Confederacy, and the events surrounding the death of President Lincoln.

Werner Schuman, the event's executive producer, said:

"We are not simply dramatizing a Presidential assassination but exploring the meaning of the events leading up to the assassination. The entire program is not so much entertainment as an interpretation of American history. We utilize this theater to help recreate the time, the place, and the events."

## Notables Are Present

Secretary of the Interior Walter C. Hickel was host to an opening night audience of more than 700 cabinet officers, Senators and Representatives, justices of the Supreme Court, Washington notables and patrons of the arts.

They packed Ford's Theater, which was restored in 1968. To their right, at the second level, was the Presidential box lined with patterned red wall-cloth and draped with flags and bunting. Hanging on the front edge of the box was the original picture of George Washington, on which Booth caught his spur as he leaped to the stage after shooting the President.

The sound and light technique of the presentation was modeled on the "Son et Lumiere" originated in France at Chambord Castle in 1952. It has been used to depict historical events at Versailles, the Acropolis, the Pyramids, and the Tower of London. "Sound and Light at Ford's Theater" is the first use of the technique indoors.

The emphasis is on sound—the crash of guns in the Battle of Gettysburg and the siege of Richmond, the rattle of carriages in the streets of Washington, the conversation of Booth and his fellow conspirators who plotted to kidnap Lincoln, the voice of Lincoln during the Gettysburg and Second Inaugural addresses, the footsteps of Booth in the empty theater on Good Friday afternoon as he prepared to murder Lincoln, the music of "Hail to the Chief" as President and Mrs. Lincoln arrived in their box, the shot itself, the gallop of Booth's horse as he escaped.

## Lighting Effects Subtle

The lighting effects are mostly subdued and subtle, intended to stimulate the viewer's imagination to see for himself the people and the action in the drama—Lincoln in the window of the White House, fireworks and celebration in Washington with the news of the fall of Richmond, Booth having a drink



The New York Times (by Mike Lien)

Werner Schumann, executive producer, and William Eggleton, technician, at the control panel in Ford's Theater.

in the bar next door to Ford's Theater and scampering, his leg broken in his jump from the Presidential box, across and out the back of the stage.

The first part of the production focuses on Ford's Theater, which was built during the Civil War and enjoyed brilliant seasons despite the war.

The second looks at the character of Booth, the egotistic but much admired actor. He is portrayed alternately as a Southern patriot who says that "My soul, my life, and my possessions are for the South," and as the fanatic perpetrator of "a tragedy conceived in madness."

The third portion is focused on Lincoln himself, and the legacy that he left for the nation.

The three main voices are those of Lee J. Cobb, who starred in "Death of a Salesman," as Lincoln; Stacy Keach, who played Buffalo Bill in "Indians" on Broadway, as Booth; and James Earl Jones, who played in "The Great White Hope" on Broadway, as the Narrator.

## Music from the Period

Mr. Guggenheim, winner of two Academy Awards for documentary films, and Harry Muheim, a freelance writer, wrote the script after a year and a half of research. Robert Wykes, professor of music at Washington University in St. Louis, composed the music, weaving in music of the Civil War period. C. Robert Fine, who has a recording studio in New York, and Michael Ritter, a film editor with Guggenheim Productions, recorded the authentic sounds of the period.

The entire production, which cost \$300,000 was put onto a tape that is geared to a computer controlling 26 high-fidelity speakers, 153 lights, and four remote control motors to run the curtains with split-second timing. The production is started by the push of a single button on the computer.

The production is scheduled to be shown to the public four times a day beginning tomorrow. More showings may be scheduled in the spring and fall, when school children and tour-

ists flood into Washington.

"Light and Sound at Ford's Theater" was commissioned by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. The admission fee for adults will be 50 cents. Children under 16 will be admitted free.





# Historic Rerun at Ford's Theater



By  
Horace  
Sutton

WASHINGTON — In Paris Napoleon's voice echoes across the Court of Honor of the Invalides. Outside Cairo the commands of the pharaohs float across the sands as lights play on the pyramids and the Sphinx.

In Washington in the theater where Lincoln was shot, the drama of the assassination is recreated in sound and in light. It is a dazzling performance and one of the cheapest theater tickets in the country: 50 cents for adults and free for children.

Ford's Theater, which was restored and reopened in 1968, has evening performances of anything from Shakespeare to musical comedy. By day, under the auspices of the National Parks Service, it is both an historical site and a museum. The state box is decorated exactly as it was on the night of the assassination, with flags and bunting and a picture of Washington.

During the day, Ford's Theater presents performances of sound and light at 10 a. m., noon, 2 and 4 p. m., the only spectacle of its kind played indoors. It unfolds its own drama in the very setting in which the event took place. One hears the whisper of the plotters who, before the surrender at Appomattox, had planned to kidnap Lincoln and hold him for ransom for the release of 30,000 Confederate prisoners. As they scheme in Mr. Tallavul's tavern next door, a light plays on the wall of the theater. Sitting in the audience, one seems to be hearing the whispering thru the wall.

Washington was a fortress city and the booming of the cannon could be heard across the Potomac. Only in Ford's Theater, newly refurnished by Mr. Ford, is there any cheer. On George Washington's birthday there was a grand ball and promenade with two troupes of acrobats and a hundred singing canaries. Sitting in the darkness of the theater today, visitors are transported back more than a hundred years. Soft music plays and glittering lights flash thru the theater.

When Lee finally surrenders, one hears John Wilkes Booth exclaim, "My God! I have no country left." On Good Friday, April 14, 1865, the day Lincoln was to attend Ford's Theater, one hears the footsteps of John Wilkes Booth in the back of the theater. He is going thru a rehearsal of the act he expects to commit that night.

Lincoln is late, and the curtain is not held. On stage one can see the setting for "An American Cousin" and hear the actors performing their parts. As the Presidential party arrives, the play is stopped and strains of "Hail to the Chief" resound thru the hall as it did that fateful night.

This entire performance, which makes history live again, is a creation of Charles Guggenheim, a young and highly successful film maker who has won several Academy Awards for his documentaries. He produced the project for the National Parks Service and cosponsored the scenario with Harry Muheim. To play Lincoln, the producer chose Lee J. Cobb, perhaps most famous for his stage role as Willy Loman in "Death of a Salesman." Narrator is James Earl Jones, who won the Tony Award as Best Actor of the Year for his



This is the state box at Ford's Theater in Washington as it looks today. A sound and light spectacle dramatizing the night President Lincoln was assassinated is shown several times a day.

your life. Changed the life of people who sat a century ago where you sit now. . . . Thirty-four minutes later the narrator is saying, "It had been done, and there was no way to recall it, the great person, the great man was dead. . . . Then comes the voice of Lincoln, "To his care commending you as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."



Poster for "Our American Cousin" which was playing at Ford's Theater the night that Lincoln was shot.

Broadway appearance in "The Great White Hope." As the archconspirator and assassin, Guggenheim signed Stacy Keach, a young new talent who manages to transmit in his voice just the right pitch of high, tense, mad frustration that seemed to drive Booth.

For the sound and light performances at the theater, the audience sits in the orchestra as did the ticket holders who saw "Our American Cousin" on the night of the assassination. The only concession to strict restoration are the cushions that have been added to the cane chairs that were in use at the time. Altho the sound and light show only runs for 34 minutes, the regular evening theater performances are two hours long, and the Spartan seats were turning away customers.

In the theater's basement the National Park Service has created a Lincoln Museum which includes relics of

the times and of the assassinated President.

Up in the balcony sits a silent computer which commands the entire spectacle—all the sound effects, the voices, the music and the maze of light cues. At the touch of a button it begins, and the voice of James Earl Jones says, "Be very still. Perhaps if you listen with your memory you can hear the sounds of history. A place where events changed the life of all humanity. Changed



# A new life for theatre where Lincoln was shot

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The restorers of historic Ford's Theatre were so intent on authenticity they made their patrons squirm — literally.

In bringing back to life the theatre in which Abraham Lincoln was shot, they furnished it with the same kind of cane-bottom chairs that were used in 1865.

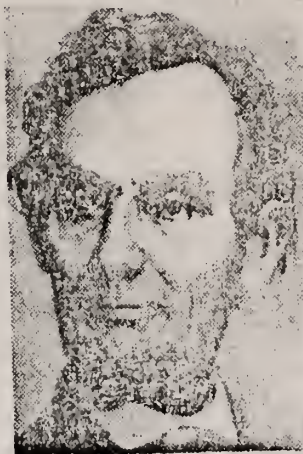
Fortunately for the patrons' comfort, someone came across an ancient photograph which revealed that the audiences of Lincoln's day interposed cushions between themselves and the scratchy cane of the chairs.

Similar cushions are now in place and audience squirming has ceased in the handsomely-refurbished building on 10th St. Northwest in Washington where John Wilkes Booth fired a fatal bullet into Lincoln's brain as the civil war president watched a performance of *Our American Cousin* on April 14, 1865.

## PROBLEMS OVERCOME

Protecting modern audiences from overly-spartan seating arrangements is only one of the problems encountered and overcome by a group called Circle in the Square, which produces plays for Ford's Theatre under the direction of Theodore Mann and Paul Libin.

The tiny theatre boasts only 640 good seats (plus 70 more with partially obstructed views of the stage). This is about half the capacity of the usual Broadway theatre. The production group operates under a re-



ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
Shot on April 14, 1865

quirement that all plays presented in Ford's must be somehow related to America or its history.

Despite these limitations, Mann and Libin feel that their two-and-a-half year effort to restore live entertainment to the museum-theatre has been an artistic and economic success.

Man and Libin took over after the now-defunct National Repertory Theatre had presented three plays in the reopened theatre without generating much enthusiasm from critics or patrons.

Circle in the Square, which had operated on Bleecker St. in New York's Greenwich Village under Mann's direction for 20 years, was invited to produce plays at Ford's because of its reputation for what Libin calls "important theatre." They accepted, even though it meant operating two organizations, one in New York and the other in Washington.

"We wanted to do plays we thought were important," Libin said. "We wanted to produce serious theatre. At

Ford our emphasis is on American plays. After all, this is the only theatre the U.S. government owns and it should be a showcase for the works of the American playwright."

The current play, *John and Abigail*, is an example. William Gibson put the play together solely from lines chosen from letters exchanged by John Adams, the second president of the United States, and his remarkable wife, Abigail.

"A lot of people were trying to get the play and we were fortunate," Libin said. He said the fact they could produce the play at Ford's was a factor that attracted Gibson to them.

John and Abigail—which will move to New York after it finishes here Feb. 21—is the first strictly historical drama presented at Ford's by Circle in the Square.

## MORE GLAMOROUS

Another thing Mann and Libin like about Ford's is that it gives "our theatre organization an opportunity to be exposed to a nationwide audience," Libin said.

"The surroundings here are even more glamorous than an opening night in New York, because there are more important people here. You're playing to the most important people in the country."

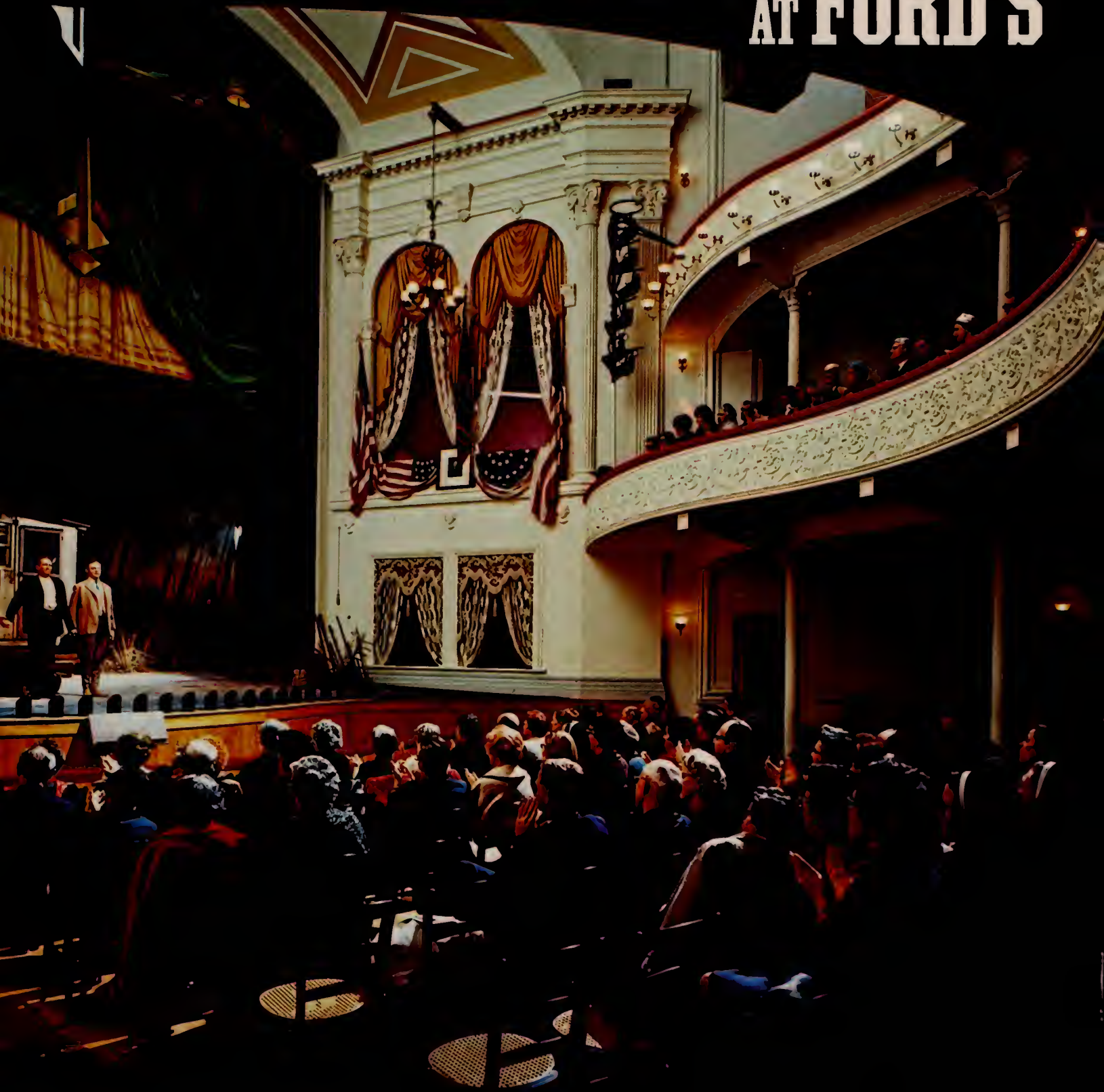
Libin is proud that the restored Ford's has become one of the capital's main tourist attractions.

"During the day when a play is being directed we allow the public to come through and watch rehearsal," he said. "Most of them are more interested in that than they are in dwelling on morbid details of Lincoln's assassination. People want to see life, not death."





# THEATRE AT FORD'S



\$1.00

**The theatrical season  
at Ford's Theatre  
is presented in  
Cooperation with the  
Department of Interior  
and the National  
Park Service, which  
administers the  
building as a National  
Historical site.**



**Rogers C. B. Morton**  
Secretary of Interior



**George B. Hartzog, Jr.**  
Director National Park Service



# A THEATRE WITH A HISTORY

"Some think I do wrong to go to the opera and the theater; but it rests me." Abraham Lincoln once confessed. "I love to be alone, and yet to be with the people. A hearty laugh relieves me; and I seem better able after it to bear my cross."

At Ford's Theatre — perhaps the most famous theatre in the nation — Abraham Lincoln found that solitude among people, a respite from the pressures of the Presidency, and the hearty laugh that allowed him to forge ahead afterwards in his task of preserving a war torn nation.

Lincoln attended Ford's Theatre ten times during his Presidency. The tenth, April 14, 1865, while he was watching "Our American Cousin," Tom Taylor's comedy about social eccentrics, he was assassinated by actor John Wilkes Booth. Almost immediately, Ford's Theatre was closed by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and for over a century it remained shuttered, a silent testimony to a nation's legacy of hate.

That fateful night was a tragic one for the country; it was also tragic for the elegant theatre, which scarcely 18 months before had opened to the chirping of canaries suspended in cages from the gas fixtures and the carefree chatter of Washington theatergoers.

Originally a Baptist church, the building was purchased in 1861 by John T. Ford, a theatrical entrepreneur from Baltimore, who converted it into a theatre over the strong objections of several church trustees. A year later, fire leveled it to the ground. Undaunted, the Baltimore showman rebuilt a "New Ford's Theatre" on the site and booked in the finest entertainment on the East Coast — minstrel shows, the ever-popular melodramas, and Shakesperian revivals, which Lincoln especially appreciated. For a brief period, Ford's reigned as one of the Capital's most festive gathering places. Then came Booth...

After the assassination, Ford tried to reopen the theatre, but public sentiment was against him. Reluctantly, he sold the theatre to the government and for over 100 years it served ignominiously as an office building, a medical museum, even a warehouse.

The rebirth of Ford's as a living showplace was sparked in 1954, when President Eisenhower signed a Congressional act allocating funds for the restoration of the building. Ten years later, the National Park Service began the actual reconstruction, working largely from detailed photographs taken of the theatre after the assassination by famed Civil War photographer, Mathew Brady.

The painstaking task required three years and close to three million dollars, but on February 12, 1968 — the 158th anniversary of Lincoln's birth — the stage at Ford reverberated with the excitement of actors meeting audiences. Once again, Ford's had become a working theatre. What had been a grim reminder of violence was now a living tribute to the spirit of a man who had found within its walls joy, laughter, and courage.



**BENEFIT!**  
AND—  
**LAST NIGHT**  
OF MISS  
**LAURA KEENE**  
MR. JOHN DYOTT  
AND  
MR. HARRY HAWK  
TOM TAYLOR'S CELEBRATED ECCENTRIC COMEDY  
ONE THOUSAND NIGHTS,  
OUR AMERICAN  
**COUSIN**





The sassy, snappy rhythms of ragtime made "Max Morath at the Turn of the Century" a two-time winner.



Pamela Simpson and Cynthia Latham are the two sisters who wean lonely men away from the tribulations of this life with their home-made Elderberry wine in "Arsenic and Old Lace."



Two disgruntled fathers and a mute (who also serves as wall) are part of the lasting delight of the musical comedy, "The Fantastics."

Salome Jens comforts a tormented Mitchell Ryan in Eugene O'Neill's stark "Moon for the Misbegotten." (RIGHT)



# A THEATRE FOR THE AMERICAN DRAMA . . .

Because it is so intimately bound into the history of the country, Ford's Theatre is dedicated to the presentation of American theatre works, both classical and modern.

Over the past four seasons, it has offered a wide range of theatre fare -- from the gentle nostalgia of "Ah, Wilderness!," Eugene O'Neill's comedy about small-town Connecticut, to the folksy patter of the great Oklahoma humorist, Will Rogers, reincarnated by actor James Whitmore in a one-man show, "Will Rogers' U.S.A."

Playwright William Gibson's "John and Abigail" premiered at Ford's, perhaps the most fitting home for this dramatization of the letters between John Adams and his wife, Abigail, when he was away in Philadelphia, thrashing out the Declaration of Independence. Enthusiasm also ran high for "Trumpets of the Lord," a rousing evening of Negro spirituals and folk sermons by James Weldon Johnson that literally rocked the venerable theatre with joy.

In keeping with the belief that Ford's Theatre is above all a family theatre, "The Fantasticks," America's favorite pocket musical, played for a full summer, as did "You're a Good Man, Charlie

Brown," the musical that brought the Peanuts comic strip to the stage.

Such productions as these -- plus "Moon for the Misbegotten," "Arsenic and Old Lace," "John Brown's Body," and "Max Morath at the Turn of the Century" -- illustrate the flexible theatre policy at Ford's, which aims solely at providing meaningful American entertainment for all ages.

Financial assistance has been advanced by a Board of Governors, made up of representatives of national corporations, each of which has generously subscribed to a production fund. The fund is used to mount significant American works, book in appropriate attractions, as well as commission new plays on timely American themes.

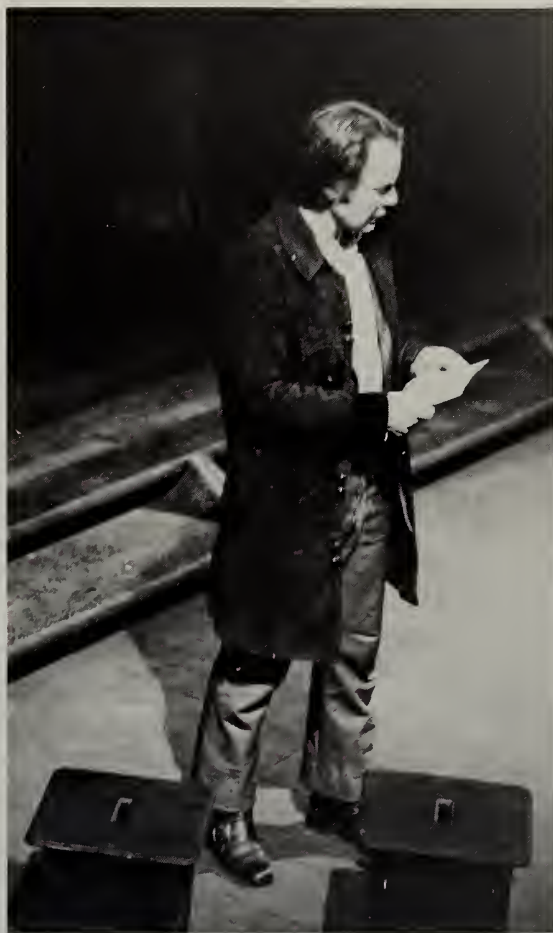
The many theatre personalities who have worked at Ford's have unanimously applauded its graceful stage, its intimate auditorium, and its 19th century elegance, all of which make for a special relationship between audience and performer. Although over a century old, John T. Ford's building has proved highly adaptable to the present day, Ford's hums with activity around the clock.







"Trumpets of the Lord" brought folk sermons and foot-stomping Gospel singing to the stage at Ford's.



Michael Higgins, as John Adams, peruses a letter from his wife Abigail in William Gibson's "John and Abigail."



"All I know is what I read in the newspapers," drawls actor James Whitmore, as the American humorist, Will Rogers, in "Will Rogers' U.S.A."



Baseball's most unsuccessful manager, Charlie Brown (Trip Plymale, right) and his comic strip friends romped for a summer at Ford's.



# A THEATRE FOR THE NATION . . .

Hundreds of thousands of Americans visit Ford's Theatre yearly and attend performances there. But millions more have come to know this vital part of their national heritage through the medium of television, which has thrown open the doors at Ford's to viewers from Albuquerque, New Mexico to Bangor, Maine.

The first live performance at Ford's since its restoration, in fact, was telecast as a national news special on CBS, January 30, 1968. Sponsored by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, the hour-long program saluted Lincoln and his unflagging love of the arts, and featured a galaxy of performers — Helen Hayes, Harry Belafonte, Henry Fonda, Andy Williams, Odetta, Robert Ryan, Richard Crenna, Fredric March, and Carmen de Lavallade, among others.

That initial telecast met with unprecedented success and in turn gave birth to the idea of a yearly "Festival at Ford's," which would allow some of America's best-loved entertainers to appear before the nation on the historic stage. The first "Festival" paid tribute to the wealth of American music — from folk-rock to Broadway musical comedy to soul. Sponsored by the American Gas Association and shown as an NBC special on Thanksgiving Day, 1970, the much-applauded program spotlighted the talents of Andy Williams, James Stewart, Pearl Bailey, Henry Mancini, Bobbie Gentry, The Supremes, Tennessee Ernie Ford, and Dionne Warwick.

This 1971-72 season's "Festival at Ford's", again under the sponsorship of the American Gas Association, is slated for viewing November 15 on NBC. It will honor those performers who have contributed 'special moments' to the world of American entertainment, and bring the excitement of Ford's into living-rooms across the country.

Washington Evening Star Photo





On stage before the nation: Dionne Warwick, Henry Mancini, Bobbie Gentry, James Stewart, Pearl Bailey, Andy Williams, Cindy Birdsong of The Supremes and Tennessee Ernie Ford, take a curtain call after the first annual "Festival at Ford's" on NBC-TV. (See page 7).

Below:

The First Lady of the American Theatre, Helen Hayes, pays homage to Lincoln in "An Inaugural Evening at Ford's" on CBS-TV.

Below right:

Pearl Bailey and Dionne Warwick take a break from "Festival" rehearsals.

Right:

The driving beat of Motown echoes from the stage as Andy Williams joins The Supremes for a medley of songs.





Below:  
Bobbie Gentry prepares to sing her popular folk ballad, "Ode to Billy Joe."

Below center  
Pictured here with his wife is Senator Milton R. Young, whose persistent efforts in Congress finally won approval of needed appropriations for the restoration of Ford's.

Right:  
Emmy-winning producer Bob Henry (Festival at Ford's), "The Flip Wilson Show" irons out a few production details with Mrs. Frankie Hewitt, President of Ford's Theatre Society, and singer-host, Andy Williams.

Below far right  
Actor James Stewart as narrator for "Festival at Ford's."





# A THEATRE FOR AUDIENCES . . .

Audiences at Ford's come from every state in the Union, as well as numerous foreign countries...from every age group...from every walk of life. Senators, secretaries, grandparents, grandchildren, housewives, socialites, plumbers, politicians, tourists, and students (who benefit from privately-subsidized low-cost tickets) — all testify to the broad-based, nation-wide interest in Ford's Theatre as a living playhouse.



Far left: Mayor Walter Washington greets an old friend at the post—"Festival" party: Pearl Bailey.

Top: Theatre-goers celebrate the opening of Ford's Third season.

Right: A glittering audience for "Festival at Ford's": (first row, left to right) Secretary of State William Rogers; Mrs. Rogers; Mrs. Frankie Hewitt, President of Ford's Theatre Society; CBS Producer Don Hewitt ("Sixty Minutes"); Mrs. Walter Hickel; former Secretary of Interior Walter Hickel; First Lady, Mrs. Richard M. Nixon; former First Lady, Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower; Julie Nixon Eisenhower; Mr. and Mrs. George A. Horkan, Jr.; (second row) Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird; Mrs. Laird; Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy; Mrs. Kennedy; NBC Newscaster David Brinkley; Mrs. Ethel Kennedy; Mrs. Benita Washington; Mayor of Washington, D.C., Walter Washington; Mrs. August Hiebert; Rev. Gilbert V. Hartke.

Facing page

Top left: Leonard Garment, Special Consultant to President Nixon visits with James Stewart at the gala party in the Lincoln Gallery, National Collection of Fine Arts following the Festival at Ford's.

Middle right: Senator Jacob Javits of New York chats with "Festival" stars, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Andy Williams and Henry Mancini, on Capitol Hill.







Tennessee Ernie Ford chats with Secretary of the Interior and Mrs. Rogers C. B. Morton (far right) at the "Festival" Celebration at the National Portrait Gallery.



Above: Will Rogers, Jr., son of the Oklahoma humorist, reminisces with Oklahoma Congressman Carl Albert who is Speaker of the House of Representatives and his son, David, after the opening of "Will Rogers' U.S.A."





# A THEATRE BUSY DAY AND NIGHT...

Responsible for the exacting task of reconstructing Ford's Theatre, the National Park Service, under the direction of George B. Hartzog, Jr., provides a variety of services for the daytime visitor, in addition to managing the building as an historical landmark.

In the theatre basement, a contemporary museum displays memorabilia of President Lincoln -- the cradle, chair, and wooden bench from his Springfield, Illinois home; his law books and campaign materials; pieces of the Lincoln's White House china; even the shawl he wore on cold night walks between the Executive Mansion and the War Department. The items are part of the rotating Oldroyd collection, containing over 3,000 pieces of Lincolniana. Taped commentary explains the exhibits in detail, while acoustical booths permit the visitor to listen to excerpts from Lincoln's most celebrated speeches.

Historical tours of both the museum and the theatre are conducted daily by Park Service guides. During the spring and summer months, visitors may attend "Sound and Light at Ford's Theatre," a computerized presentation utilizing music, projections, tape voices, sound and light effects to relate the drama that unfurled in and about Ford's Theatre a century ago. The Sound and Light format has brought to life such monuments as the Pyramids, Versailles, and the Acropolis. To date, Ford's Theatre is the home of the only indoor spectacle of this nature.

Under the banner of its "Parks for All Seasons" Program, the Park Service sponsors a spring musical for schoolchildren in the metropolitan Washington area. In the past two years, over 34,000 youngsters have seen either "Young Abe Lincoln" or "Young Mark Twain," light-hearted shows relating the boyhoods of those two American heroes before they found their way to greatness.

The red-brick town house to which Lincoln was carried the night of the assassination (across the street from Ford's) is also open to the public, under the jurisdiction of the Park Service.

With performances during the evenings and a steady flow of sightseers from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the day, Ford's hums with activity around the clock.

## Top right

Objects from the boyhood of Lincoln are on display in the modern museum in the basement of Ford's.

## Bottom right:

The stage at Ford's with a replica of the set for "Our American Cousin" and the flag-draped Presidential box as seen from the dress circle.

## Below:

Park Service guides give frequent talks about the theatre and its history to visitors and school groups.







"Young Abe Lincoln" tells the story of the President's boyhood in Illinois and his romance with Anne Rutledge.

A youthful cast sings about life along the Mississippi in "Young Mark Twain," a musical presented under the auspices of the National Park Service for Washington school children.





## Ford's Theatre Society

**Mrs. Don Hewitt**  
Executive Producer

**Ed Yoe**  
General Manager/Company  
Manager

**Jan Du Plain**  
Public Relations Director

**Jil Carlson**  
Group Sales Director

**Linda Lachowicz**  
Bookkeeper and Educational  
Services

**Maury Sutter**  
Office Manager

**Tom Sands**  
House Manager

**Chanteuse Brown**  
Box Office Assistant

**Mary Anne Goeke**  
Box Office Assistant

**Tom Berra**  
Production Electrician

**George Berra**  
Master Electrician

**Elizabeth Carlson**  
Theatre Assistant

## FORD'S THEATRE SOCIETY

Ford's Theatre Society, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, was founded in 1967 with the aim of relighting the stage at Ford's. It operates under a ten-year mandate from the Department of Interior and serves as producing agent for the theatre — raising the money, booking the attractions, and commissioning new works.

Theatrical performances at Ford's have been the long-time goal of Frankie Hewitt, who founded the Society and who was instrumental in working out the original proposals that brought Ford's to life. For the past four years, she has used her dynamic personality and unstinting energies to enlist the cooperation and support of government officials, businessmen, and entertainers throughout the country.

The mother of four children, as well as a successful career woman, Mrs. Hewitt is married to Don Hewitt, producer of the CBS television series, "Sixty Minutes."

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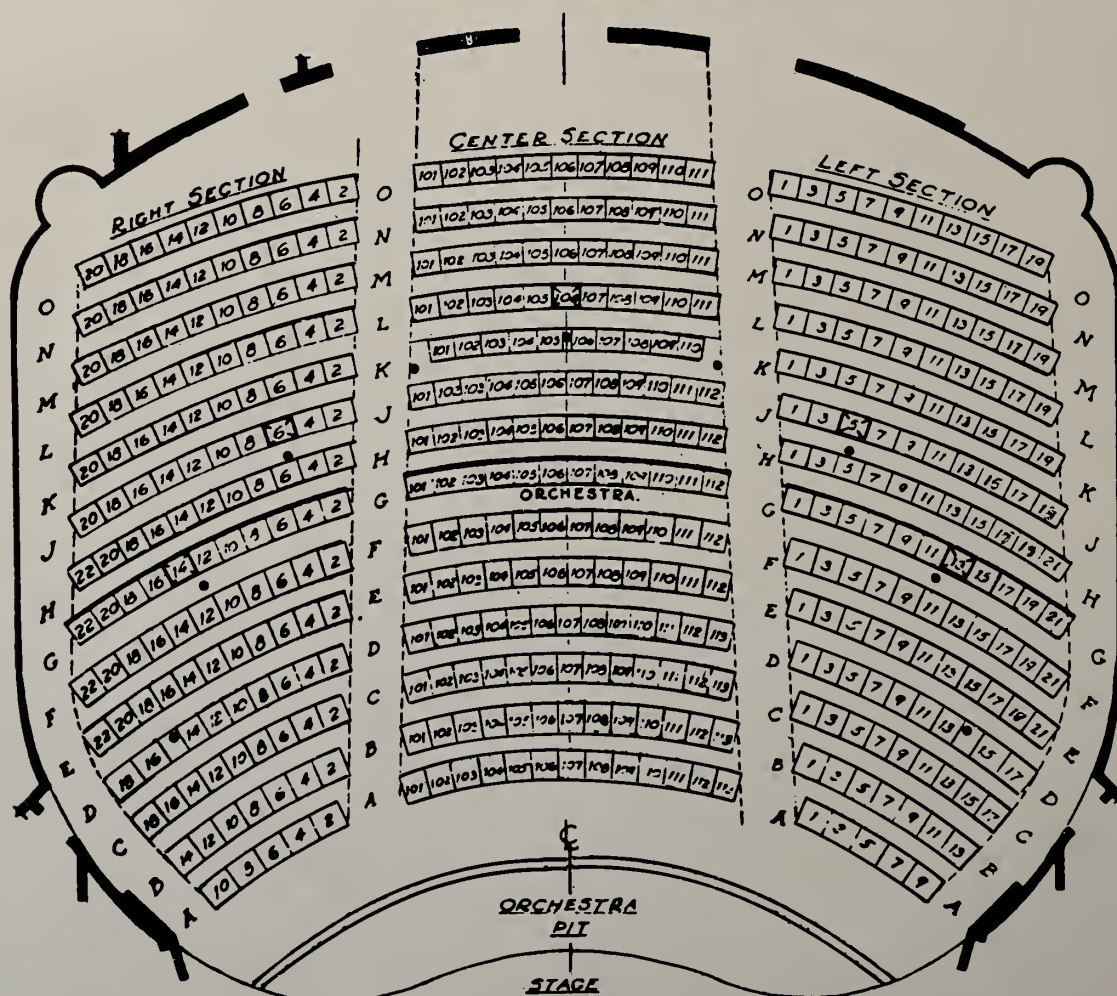
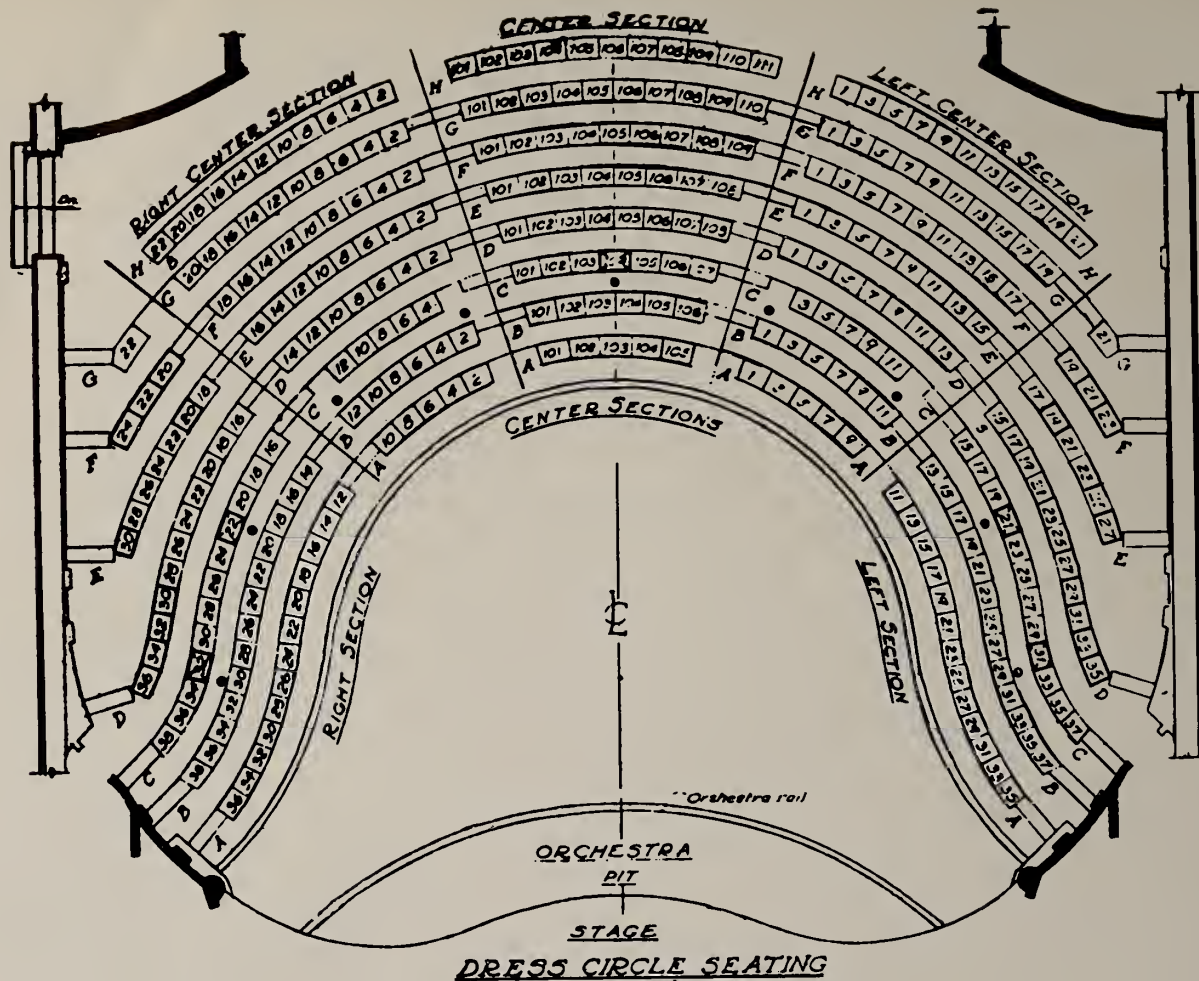
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"Jingles"—emerged. He was attending an event where several clowns were performing. "I decided I could do a better job, so I began to develop the red-nosed, baggy pants character."

"Jingles" soon was in demand for performances around the country. He has performed in such farflung places as Latin America, Hong Kong and Taipei. Future bookings will take him to children's hospitals in Spain, Portugal, Canada, Mexico, South America, New Zealand and Argentina.

"This year is the 100th anniversary of the Shrine and the 50th anniversary of the first Shriners Hospital," Tischler said, "so 'Jingles' is especially busy."

"I look forward to performing and it is personally rewarding. I remember one boy who was paralyzed and could move nothing but his eyes. I knocked myself out for him but seemed to get no response. Then suddenly I noticed a tear in the corner of his eye. Another boy was in a trauma and hadn't spoken a word since he'd entered the hospital. I pretended to check his knee reflexes with a doctor's hammer and when he kicked I rebounded, fell down, rolled under the bed, got tangled in the sheets—the whole bit. When I got untangled, he was laughing. The hospital said it was a 'near miracle'."

Besides "Jingles," airlines and United figure regularly in the Shrine's efforts to help children. Young burn victims are frequently flown to Shrine burn treatment centers. The annual Shrine East-West football game, which has raised \$5 million for the hospitals, brings thousands of fans to San Francisco. The squads themselves, which fly on United, have logged more than a million passenger miles. And the Imperial Potentate travels 250,000 miles a year.

"Jingles" himself recently gave a 'performance' aboard a United jet. Scheduled to do a show for children at a Shrine Hospital in Chicago, he didn't have time to get into costume and makeup after he arrived. So he invited the children aboard the flight to watch the process. Before their delighted eyes he made the transformation from William Tischler, veteran airline captain, to "Jingles," the Shrine clown who has brought joy to thousands of the world's less fortunate children. ☐

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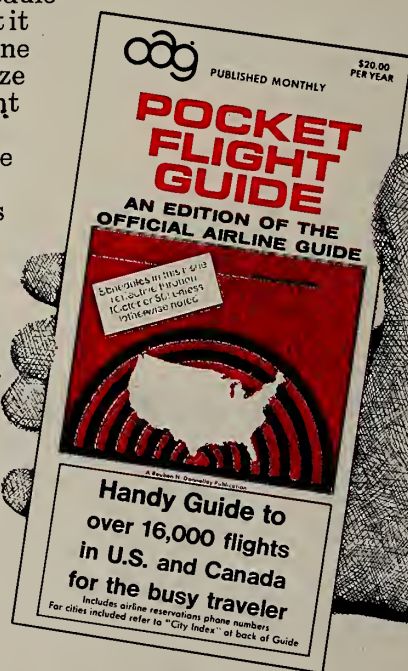
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# Ford's Theatre... a living memorial to Abraham Lincoln

by B. B. Polk

The dark-haired young actor, only 26, drinking a last whiskey in the Star Saloon, tossed his head and said, "When I leave the stage, I'll be the most famous man in America."

Instead history has only a harsh memory of John Wilkes Booth. But the stage he left darkened by death that April night in 1865 has become, by his deed, the most famous in the nation.

Silent for more than a century since Booth's assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, Ford's Theatre in Washington has reopened to echo today with the word and tread of actors as a living memorial to the man who died there.

It is one of the most impressive, most moving monuments in the nation's capital, yet it is also one of the least visited. Behind the red brick facade of the building, tucked on a side street about seven blocks from the White House hides a theatre elegant in its red-carpeted, ivory interior and alive with its performances.





In the four years since the footlights of the theatre came up again in January of 1968 before an audience of millions on nationwide television, the restored Ford's Theatre has already had a much longer modern run than the short original period before tragedy closed it a century ago.


At first the idea behind revitalizing Ford's was to bring back plays which would portray the life and times of Lincoln. But the tastes of modern playgoers have brought change. Broadway hits, rock musicals and original shows all have moved across the stage in recent months.

Recent playbills have ranged from "Mother Earth," a caustic rock protest against all forms of pollution, to "Bob and Ray—The Two and Only," and actor James Whitmore's one-man reminiscence, "Will Rogers U.S.A." Coming up in March and April of 1972 are "An Unpleasant Evening with H. L. Mencken" and a new religious rock musical, "Godspell."

Unfortunately live theatre has been limited to the winter months, not the summer season when Washington throbs with thousands of tourists from throughout the country. But the National Park Service, which researched and restored the old theatre, has created a computerized sound-and-light show which dramatizes that night at Ford's. Four times a day, an audience can sit with the stage set as it was that same night a century ago, hear Booth's solitary footsteps in the deserted theatre as he rehearsed his crime earlier in the day, hear the words of the play, the crowd's laughter, the sudden muffled shot. Actor Lee J. Cobb is the voice of Lincoln talking about the Civil War for the presentation, and James Earl Jones is narrator.

Playgoers can reserve their seats at the theatre box office located next door in the former Star Saloon. In 1865 tickets cost half a dollar. Now prices range up to \$7.50 for the winter season plays. Your seat will actually be a cane-bottom chair, a careful replica of the originals at Ford's—except for being a bit bigger to hold today's larger people.

No matter what is being performed



The tastes of modern playgoers have changed. Today, Broadway hits, rock musicals and original shows play on Ford's stage. Flag-draped box where the President sat is now open to visitors. A small museum downstairs displays Lincoln memorabilia.

Photos by James E. McWayne





on stage, eyes often stray to the President's Box to the right of the stage in the intimate little theatre. Two flags of the United States (with only 34 stars) guard these windows, while two more are draped over the railing. A purple Treasury flag hangs between the windows of Boxes 7 and 8. The original of this Treasury flag, now on display in the downstairs museum, caught the spur of Booth's boot after he shot the President and leaped to the stage, breaking his leg. Booth, his escape crippled, was caught and killed in a burning barn in Virginia a dozen days later.

The theatre, in an effort that took years of painstaking research, has been restored to its exact appearance as Lincoln last saw it. Photographs by Matthew Brady, who became famous in that new profession in the Civil War, were uncovered among the evidence used at the trial of Booth's fellow conspirators and were invaluable in reproducing the draperies, chairs, even the decorative detail on the wallpaper.

"The new appearance of the building is deceiving," said Jim Lissimore, historian for the Park Service at Ford's, "but it is virtually the same as it would have been in April 1865."

Lincoln had attended Ford's Theatre, opened only two years earlier, eight times previously and once had even applauded Booth's performance in "The Marble Heart" there.

With the President's Box opened at last to the public, visitors can now take the same route as both Lincoln, and later Booth, took up a curved stairway to what was then called the Dress Circle (now the balcony). Here the President waved to the audience and the orchestra interrupted the play—a second-rate comedy titled "Our American Cousin" to strike up "Hail to the Chief." Lincoln's high-backed rocker sits in the box, facing the stage, empty.

Downstairs, beneath the theatre, a small museum exhibits a limited collection of highly interesting Lincoln memorabilia with a creative mixture of sound and lighting display techniques. Eight individual sound booths invite the museum visitor to hear short recordings that retell



famous Lincoln speeches, jokes and personal writings. One can also hear a recording of Carl Sandburg reading his tribute to "a man of steel and velvet" before Congress on the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

A colorful recorded narrative reviews Lincoln's life as spotlights point out various personal items and souvenirs—the lanky youth's first law books, contemporary political cartoons, an enlargement of the letter from the little girl who urged him to grow his famous beard, and the tall top hat and long frock coat. The narrative ends as the Lincolns plan to attend

Ford's Theatre on the night of April 14, 1865.

In a small alcove, crammed with history but almost hidden from the public, a single spotlight stabs down on the ornate, one-shot brass derringer that Booth used. Pages from Booth's personal diary outlining his plot, along with the riding boot slit by a doctor to treat his broken leg, contrast the demented fantasy and cruel reality of his fateful deed.

Across the street from Ford's the Park Service has also preserved the Petersen House in which Lincoln died

early the morning after. The wounded President was carried to a small back bedroom and laid crosswise on a bed obviously too short for his 6' 4" height.

Because the theatre itself was an "exhibit" that figured in the conspirators' trial, no further public performances were allowed there. Later, owner John Ford was given permission to resume his theatrical season. But threats to burn the building if public entertainment was offered in the place where Lincoln had been martyred closed the theatre permanently. A company of cavalry stood on the outskirts of Washington in case of riot.

Passing the next decades as a place for government offices and even used as a warehouse, the building was finally turned into a traditional Lincoln museum in the 1930s. But by that time there was little left of the original theatre except its name.

Succeeding superbly in the historical restoration of the theatre, the Park Service now has a problem preserving historical integrity while giving freedom to the live plays that again brighten the stage. The sets for several plays have partly hidden the Presidential Box. And the portrait of George Washington, which John Ford had hung in front of the box especially to decorate it for Lincoln's attendance, has to be removed frequently.

However, it is the live theatre which makes Ford's so much more than just another restored building. Because Lincoln himself was an enthusiastic patron of the theatre, it is the actors on stage, as much as the painstaking historical researchers, who have made Ford's Theatre into the kind of living memorial to Lincoln that he himself might like to visit. □

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# Ford's Theater Haunted?

By JOAN ZYDA

Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON — More than a century after Abe Lincoln's assassination, the sounds of heavy footsteps and other ghostlike happenings still scare the living daylights out of those who work at the Ford's Theater.

They said the ghost of John Wilkes Booth stalks the old building, the scene of his crime, which was restored as a theater museum in 1968.

No one has seen Booth's ghost, but some say his presence can be heard and felt. There are several confirmed stories of actors forgetting their lines while standing on the stage along Booth's escape route. After Booth fatally shot Lincoln, he jumped 12 feet from the presidential box and limped

across the stage and out the back door. He had broken his leg in the jump.

What happened last April 14, the anniversary of the assassination, was another in a series of strange occurrences.

Actor Billy Dee Williams was playing the late Martin Luther King Jr. that night in the narrative tribute called "I Have a Dream." In the first act, Williams as King was intoning his reverence for Lincoln as a civil rights leader when it sounded as if someone were noisily running across the stage and out the back door.

Everyone in the audience heard it, including those in the last rows. Theater officials were perplexed because there was no one backstage. Only

after the final curtain did they solve the riddle: Someone had dragged a live microphone across the stage, out the back door, and into the alley.

"No one working at Ford's did that," said Frankie Hewitt, executive director of the theater.

Actor Hal Holbrook was spooked when he played at Ford's in his one-man show called "Mark Twain Tonight." Holbrook's lines and timing occasionally went amiss.

"Although it was almost imperceptible to the audience, I noticed that Hal would sometimes falter in the middle of one of his monologs. After one show, he explained he felt a presence — a nameless something coming from the Lincoln box," Hewitt said.

At Ford's Theater, Lincoln's ghost

comes and goes, mostly as a burst of sunlight from where he sat. An actress in a black gospel musical walked off the stage at intermission complaining she was distracted by a light flashing on and off in the President's box. Impossible, the actress was told, because the President's box is permanently closed to the public.

In his book "Ghosts," author John Alexander said Lincoln's ghost actually seems to prefer the White House, where there are dozens of stories about his presence being felt or seen. He is said to pace the floors just before a national emergency.

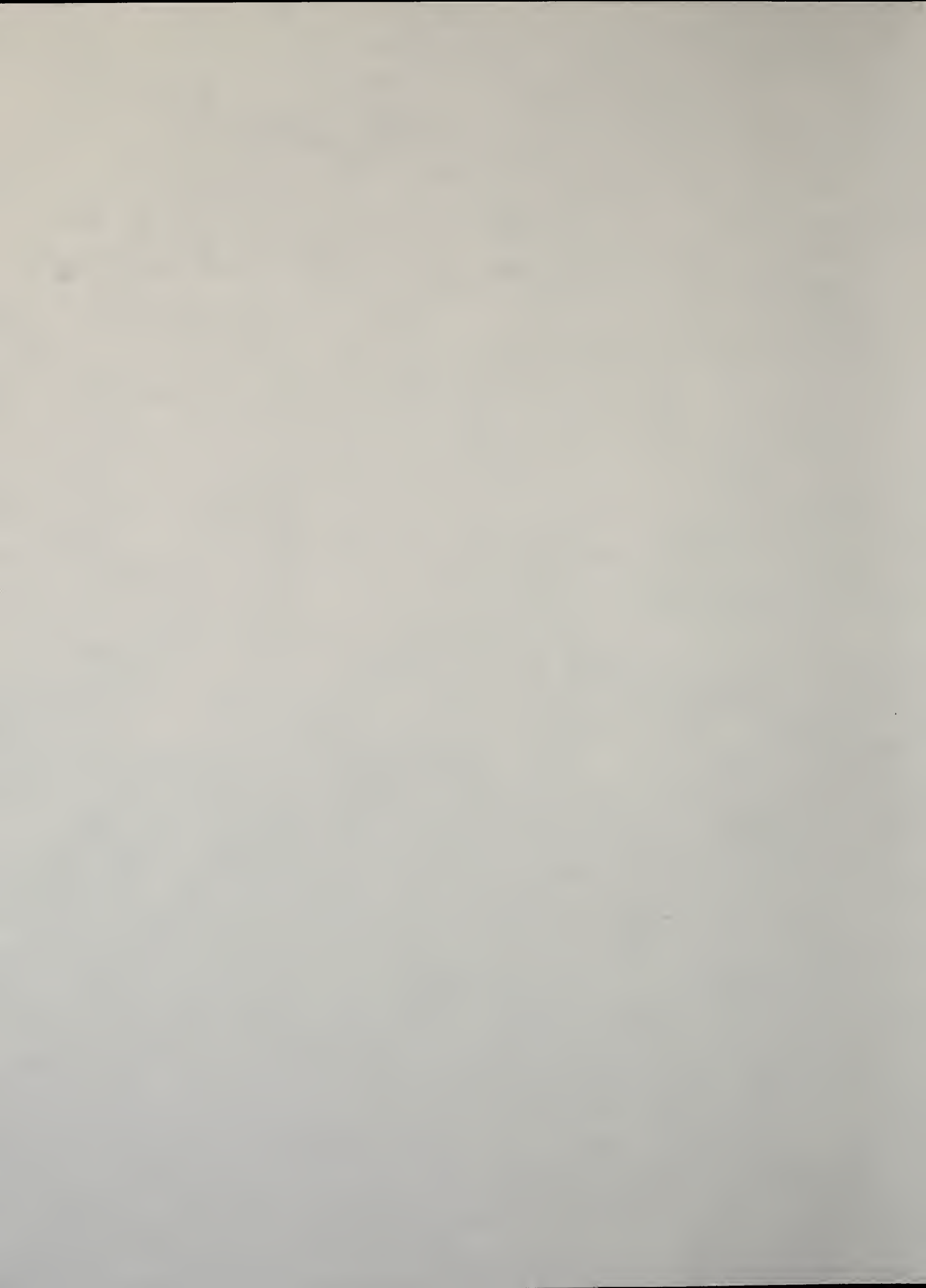
For years, U.S. Presidents after Lincoln wouldn't go to the Ford's Theater because they were superstitious about the place.

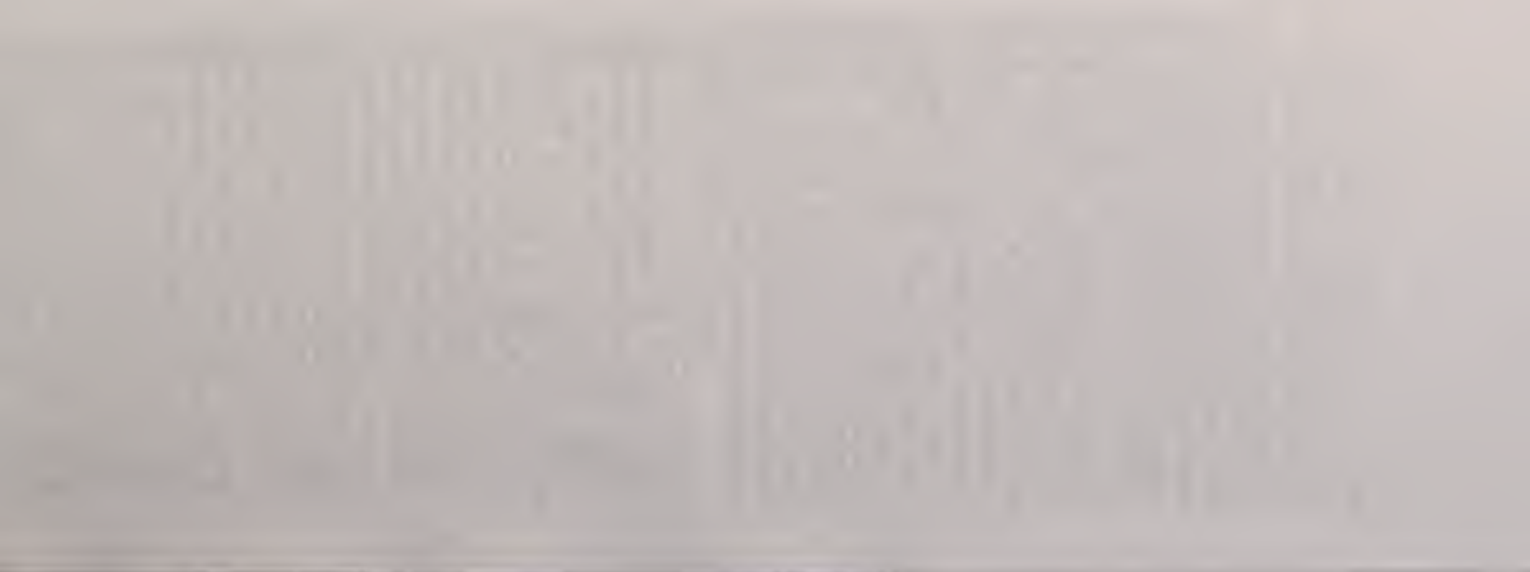
"Presidents Johnson and Nixon, for example, received four invitations a year from us. They accepted all the invitations but at the last minute, they'd cancel, saying something had come up," said Alma Viator, publicist for the playhouse.

Last year, finally, President Ford went there to see James Whitmore in "Give 'Em Hell, Harry." Nothing weird happened, though.

Theater officials inadvertently scheduled President Ford's evening on the anniversary of Lincoln's assassination. Later, when they realized what they had done and Ford had accepted the invitation, they talked to the White House personnel about moving it up two days.











## A LINCOLN JOURNEY



Dieckmann, Walter

The interior of the theater has been restored to its appearance on the night of the assassination.

# Ford's Theater: the Final Act

By STEPHEN B. OATES

**A**pproaching Ford's Theater today is like stepping abruptly back into another Washington 117 years ago.

Situated on 10th between E and F streets NW, the old red brick theater has been so thoroughly restored that both the interior and exterior look like new. Furnishings and flag, even the state seal, look now just as they did that Good Friday of 1865, when the Lincolns came here with Clara Harris and her fiancée, Major Henry Rathbone, to enjoy a performance of the English actor John Wilkes Booth's last play, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Visitors find a meticulously restored three-story building that is both a museum and a functioning theater. Reproductions of the 1865 wicker chairs fill the main floor and the two balconies. The ornate, gilded interior of the presidential box, which is viewed through a window at the rear, contains the original sofa, as well as a replica of Lincoln's robes. Plays and other entertainments are still given at the theater, "The Orphan's Revenge," described as a new American play, is being performed as a new production.

Visitors enter through Mch 28, Desi

Friday and is to run through March 2. Visitors are not admitted to the theater during performances or rehearsals, although the downstairs museum, which features a 20-minute taped presentation on Lincoln, remains open.

The museum in the basement of the building not only features Lincoln memorabilia and the diary, dagger and derring of John Wilkes Booth, but also offers a shelf of excellent books about Lincoln and the assassination. With the help of George S. Bryan's "The Great American Myth," Dorothy Meserve and Philip B. Kunhardt's richly illustrated "Twenty Days," and other modern studies of Lincoln, we can easily imagine what it was

It was a foggy evening, and gaslights on the street corners glimmered eerily in the drifting mist. Because of last-minute visitors, the Lincolns did not leave the White House until 8:15, and the play had already begun by the time the Presidential carriage came churning up muddy 10th Street and stopped at a box on the curb where the ladies could climb down to

Although in high spirits that morning (the last major Confederate force was expected to surrender in North Carolina at any time), Lincoln looked tired now, worn down by the awesome task of reconstructing his war-torn land. Contrary to what the myth-makers have claimed, Lincoln was not going to restore the South with a tender and forgiving heart. In fact, he was seriously considering an army of occupation for Dixie and was prepared to see the rebellious Southerners do things his rebels would certainly despise and resist. He said over and over that Reconstruction was going to be a painful ordeal for his country and the most difficult problem of his second administration.

In truth, it was to get his mind off Reconstruction and "have a laugh over the country cousin" that Lincoln had come to the theater. We follow the two couples — Mary on Lincoln's arm, pretty young Clara on Rathbone's — up a winding stairway and across the dress circle at the back of the first balcony. We gaze over rows of wooden chairs at a deep stage fronted by an orchestra pit. Two other balconies loom overhead, and gas lamps bathe the auditorium in a golden light.

A thousand people packed the theater that night — among them, Army brass and assorted Washington socialites. When they spotted Lincoln, the audience gave the President a standing ovation and the orchestra struck up "Hail to the Chief." The Presidential party swept 'round the back row of chairs, passed through a door and down a gloomy hallway to the State Box, which directly overlooked the stage. Had we been there, we would have seen the nation's president sink into a rocking chair provided by the management, with Mary seated beside him and Rathbone, an ebullient fellow with a walrus mustache, and Miss Harris to their right. Then, as it is today, the front of the box was adorned with drapes, a framed engraving of George

Washington, and brilliant regimental and Union flags. On stage, Harry Hawk, the male lead, ad-libbed a line, "This reminds me of a story as Mr. Lincoln would say."

As the play progressed, Mary, wearing a gray silk dress and a bonnet to match, rested her hand on Lincoln's knee and called his attention to the situation on stage, and he laughed heartily from time to time. At one point, as if a cold wind had blown over him, he got up long enough to put on his overcoat.

Had we left during the third act and gone out to the lobby, we would have noticed a man talking with the doorkeeper, a nervous man in a black felt hat and high boots with spurs. It was John Wilkes Booth, a prominent Shakespearean actor with militant Confederate sympathies. Booth seriously believed that most Americans hated Lincoln so adamantly that they would hail his assassin as a national hero. "You'll not want a ticket from me," Booth told the doorkeeper and then asked the time. The doorkeeper pointed to a clock in the lobby. It was 10 past 10.

**W**he can reconstruct almost exactly what happened next. Booth opened the door to the main floor of the theater and surveyed the audience and the State Box. He could see Lincoln's face when he leaned forward and glanced around at the audience, as though he had recognized somebody. Booth watched the play with more than professional curiosity: He knew every line and scene by memory and had calculated the best moment to strike, when the two actresses *acted* and Hawk was on stage alone.

had exited and a crowd of people had gathered outside. He climbed the stairs humming a tune, crossed the dress circle, and entered the narrow hall to the State Box, closing and barring the door. The hallway was dark and empty. John Parker, Lincoln's guard that night, a layoff who served on the Metropolitan Police Force, had left his post in the hallway and had either seen or smelled the gallery to Washington's box. He had been waiting in the Booth behind through a peephole in the door to the State Box (the actor was well known to Ford's and nobody there had paid attention when he had entered the empty theater earlier that day; he had examined the State Box and drilled a hole in its door). There was the narrow beam of light that could see the back of Lincoln's head. Mary was still sitting.

—Tom Kelloway, *Pore*

close to him and Major Rathbone and Miss Harris were staring rapturously at Hawk, who was, now by himself on stage. "Don't know the manner of good society, eh?" the factor called out. "Wal, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal — you sockdolozing old mantrap."

At exactly that moment, Booth entered the box and fired his derringer point-blank at Lincoln's head. Had we been back in the audience, we would have heard a muffled report from the President's box and seen a scuffle there, as Booth slashed Rathbone's arm with a dagger. Then he leaped from the box, only to catch his spur in the Treasury flag and crash to the stage, breaking his left shinbone just above the ankle. The audience was astonished. Why, it was the actor John Wilkes Booth. Was this part of the play? An improvised scene? Crying "Si semper tyrannus!" — "Thus be it ever to tyrants!" — Booth lunged at Harry Hawk, then limped out the back door and sauntered away into the night.

Inside was pandemonium. We can almost hear Miss Harris screaming, "The President is shot!" and Mary Lincoln shrieking from the box in terror, "Help! Help! Help!" People were yelling, shoving one another into the aisles, and rushing for the exits. In all the commotion, two doctors fought their way to the State Box and once resuscitated Lincoln with mouth-to-mouth respiration. But he never regained consciousness, for Booth's bullet had destroyed his brain and lodged behind his right eye.

A throng of 21 men carried Lincoln out of the theater, and we can retrace their path across 10th Street to a boardinghouse owned by William Petersen, a German tailor. Like Ford's Theater, the interior of the Petersen house has been historically renovated, enabling us to relive the shattering final hours of "What Walt Whitman called "O Moody, Terrible Night." As if civil war had not been intense enough, for the first time in the history of the Republic a President had been assassinated, a calamity that demolished forever William H. Seward's contention that "assassination is not an American practice or habit" and one so vicious and desperate cannot be transferred into our political system."

By candlelight in the Petersen house, the group of men bore Lincoln down a narrow hallway to a room where a group of men, including clerk named William T. Clark, were they laid out the President's dignity against a short table. The men, dressed in red, white and blue uniforms with three eagles each on their corners. On the way over, Lincoln had lost blood and brain matter, and his eyes were closed. He was lying on a discolored. Another boarder lit a gaslamp and that lit the bed and cast the little room in a dim, yellowish light. The man in the white uniform, who was the surgeon, who was almost as the doctors laborer, said to Lincoln's side, one Senator Charles Sumner, who called men to the room. Lincoln's warm personal friend — taking his hand and bowing his head in tears. We were told that of War Secretary, who was the only testimony from witnesses in the second of two portions in the front. It has been formerly known that Sumner was the only man to have thought, that he had conspired with the "evil radicals" to remove Lincoln from office. He was the only man to have been in the program that Lincoln planned. Moreover, Sumner's scholarship has exposed this as a lie. Sumner was Lincoln's closest friend and trusted advisor, and he strongly supported the President's military appointments.

As Stanton came and went in the Petersen house, putting Washington under martial law and organizing dragnets to round up Booth and all other suspects, Mary Lincoln went hysterically in the front parlor, while outside men and women, black people and white, rallied in the rain as the President died. At last, at 7:22 A.M., April 15, the Surgeon General pulled a sheet over Lincoln's face and Stanton muttered that she now belonged to the ages. The news went out to a shocked and grieving nation that Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States, had been shot and killed in Washington, one of the casualties of a war that had broken his heart and had now claimed his life, gone to join the other Union dead he himself had so immortalized.

We leave the Petersen house by a side door and emerge into modern Washington, whose busy streets and congested sidewalks strike us like a physical blow. Yet the scenes evoked by Ford's Theater and the Petersen house linger in our minds, reminding us anew that Lincoln's era was really only yesterday, a tragic and cataclysmic era whose convulsions are still being felt in our own time.

Continued on Following Page

**STEPHEN B. OATES**, a professor of history at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, is the author of "With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln" and other books on Lincoln and the Civil War era. His biography of Martin Luther King Jr., "Let the Trumpets Sound," will be published by Harner & Row in August.



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## Lincoln

To the Editor: Stephen B. Oates is one of our best young historians and his account of the events surrounding the death of Abraham Lincoln, "Ford's Theater: the Final Act" (Travel, Feb. 14), will no doubt attract many visitors to this historic site.

But what a disappointment it was to find Professor Oates repeating the assertion that John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin, had, earlier on the day of the murder, examined the state box "and drilled a hole in its door" through which to view the Presidential party.

In actual fact, though Booth may have used the peephole (a matter of conjecture), it was not bored by Booth but by workmen acting at the direction of the theater's owner, Harry Clay Ford, a fact attested to by Ford's son. Ironically, Ford's intention in having the hole drilled was to insure Lincoln's safety by allowing his guard to look in on the President without disturbing him.

The facts about the peephole can be found in a National Park Service publication, "Restoration of Ford's Theater, An Historic Structures Report," published in 1963.

DANIEL A. KING  
Holden, Mass.

Mr. Oates replies: David-M. DeWitt's "The Assassination of Presi-

*Continued on Following Page*

*Continued From Preceding Page*

dent Lincoln" (1909), based on contemporary testimony and official records and reports, maintains that Booth carved the hole in the state box door and that he peered through it just before he shot the President. Most modern authorities accept DeWitt's version, as I do. The chief Government witness against Booth's accomplices, Louis J. Weichmann, whose "True History of the Assassination of President Lincoln" was only recently published by Alfred A. Knopf, also asserted that Booth looked through the peephole at Lincoln. Weichmann contended that the facts indicate that somebody involved in the assassination plot was in the state box earlier that day, boring the hole in question and making the other preparations for Booth's final act.

To disprove the claim that it was Booth, the National Park Service pamphlet quotes Frank Ford, who in 1962 wrote that his father had ordered the peephole bored in the state box door that Good Friday of 1865. As a historian, I am suspicious of hearsay evidence offered almost a century after the event. Therefore, I am inclined not to accept Frank Ford's statement until it can be substantiated by contemporary evidence.

Letters to the Editor  
NY Times 3/14/82





## WASHINGTON TALK

# Briefing

### Lincoln and Life

A sun-warmed busker fiddles some Vivaldi near the subway exit north of the White House, lingering to touch the ear, perchance the pocket, of the passing bureaucrat. Spring commerce is in the air. The tourist industry's worshipful cherry-

blossom vigil has gone forward with enough fervor to placate a pantheon. Record spring crowds of up to 6,000 school children a day already are visiting Ford's Theater and the house across 10th Street where Lincoln died and left a blood-stained pillow that still fascinates tourists.

The pillow waits as a reminder that it was April when throngs waited amid the spring buds and wept for Lincoln, and then again for Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Washington April had seemed set forever by Whitman as the dolorous time "when lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd."

"It's an interesting dichotomy," says Julie Shorter, a National Park Service technician at Ford's Theater; "the cherry blossoms and all that life coming forth, and the history of that time."

It is difficult, she says, to measure how deeply the passing crowd senses the sad reality of Lincoln. Her always reliable theme for modern times is the fact of assassination. "It ties in with what they seem to know," she says.

But the scraps of old mourning are overlaid with commerce. A local Government official proposed the other day that the idea for a Franklin D. Roosevelt memorial, an unfulfilled proposal long adrift here, could be handled by naming the new convention and visitors' center after the man. For some Roosevelt buffs, the notion of adding his name to a sprawling gray building of ramps and boxlike spaces was an afterthought with its own peculiar sadness in the city of Whitman's "ever-returning Spring."





*The National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
and  
Brown University  
Providence, Rhode Island  
cordially invite you to  
Lincoln and the American  
Political Tradition*

*A special exhibit of  
Lincoln archival material from the  
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*Opening at Noon  
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*Ford's Theatre  
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*and celebrated  
1 p.m. until 4 p.m.*

*in a theatre presentation by  
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Frank J. Williams, Jr.*

*President, Lincoln Group of Boston  
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Coauthors, "John Wilkes Booth, Himself"*

*Jennifer B. Lee  
Curator, Mc Lellan Lincoln Collection*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FORD'S THEATRE OFFERS CHAIRS TO LINCOLN ENTHUSIASTS

Washington, D.C. -- A once in a lifetime opportunity from the nation's capital is being offered to memorabilia collectors. Frankie Hewitt, Executive Producer of Ford's Theatre, has announced a major campaign to replace the historic theatre's chairs. The existing chairs, replicas of the original seatings from Lincoln's time, are being offered to Lincoln enthusiasts, history buffs and theatre lovers for a tax-deductible contribution of \$500.00. Proceeds from the campaign will be used to beautify the theatre with chair replacements.

As part of the "Best Seat in the House" campaign, undertaken by the Ford's Theatre Society, all 738 chairs are being replaced by new, historically correct, and more comfortable ones. With a tax-deductible donation of \$500.00, the contributor will receive one of the current chairs, with a plaque on the backside denoting its historical authenticity and importance. Proceeds from the campaign will go towards underwriting the cost of purchasing the chairs and beautifying the theatre.

There are three styles of chairs now being used in the theatre, each modeled after photographs of the theatre taken by Matthew Brady the day following

-more-





## Ford's Chairs/2-2-2-2

President Lincoln's assassination. The orchestra level of Ford's Theatre is filled with round backed, cane-bottomed chairs made out of either light or dark wood, while the chairs in the balcony of the theatre are light wood, cane-bottomed and square-backed. The new chairs, set to be installed in the theatre in March, have been chosen by historical architects, Society and National Park Service representatives.

Closed after the fateful assassination of President Lincoln in 1865, the theatre was restored to its 19th century grandeur in 1968. The theatre is one of the oldest working theatres in the country, and still remains faithful to Abraham Lincoln's love for fine, wholesome entertainment. For further information regarding purchase of one of the chairs call the Development Office of Ford's Theatre Society at 202-638-2941. Contributions to the Society can be sent to "Best Seat In the House", The Ford's Theatre Society, 511 Tenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004.

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CC: MARK NEEDY

About

**Washington****Ford's Theatre  
doesn't sit well;  
'chairmen' rise up**

By Lea Donosky  
and Glen Elsasser  
Chicago Tribune

"This is not a media event," comedian Mark Russell announced from the stage of historic Ford's Theatre. "This is hard news . . . the government is answering to the needs of those in pain."

Russell joined a small cast of celebrities this week to announce a major renovation project for the landmark where President Abraham Lincoln was shot. All 738 chairs, the epitome of Victorian style and discomfort, will be replaced after 18 years with a broader-bottomed, higher-backed model.

Russell couldn't help reminiscing about "the on-site chiropractor" who would run up and down the aisles during performances, passing out his business cards. He urged that the old chairs be installed in the House and Senate "so no one would sleep there again."

The Ford's Theatre Society and the National Park Service have initiated "The Best Seat in the House Campaign" to raise money for the renovation—an old chair is available for each \$500 donation. Already business is brisk.

Former Sen. Howard Baker [R., Tenn.] has purchased a chair and placed it by his telephone to keep from talking too long. Sen. Mark Hatfield [R., Ore.], a Lincoln buff, has acquired one for his personal collection. And TV talk show host Merv Griffin picked up 10 chairs "for his 10 worst enemies."

The installation of the new chairs will begin on Feb. 24 and be completed in time for the premiere of the musical, "Hot Mikado," on March 18.

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# Ford's Theater Thrives on Politics

By BARBARA GAMAREKIAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18 — The cultural institutions of the capital city, from the National Symphony and Washington Opera to the art museums and the Kennedy Center, assiduously court the Washington establishment, sprinkling their guest lists with Congressional heavies, studding their boards with corporate and political celebrities.

When it comes to massaging the egos of the influential, few people are more adept than Frankie Childers Hewitt who has been executive producer of Ford's Theater since 1971.

A former Capitol Hill staffer who worked on John F. Kennedy's Presidential campaign and as special adviser to Adlai E. Stevenson at the United Nations, Mrs. Hewitt came out of the political world, not the theater.

## No Longer In Debt

But her political background has served her well over the years as she has turned the once debt-ridden theater where Lincoln was assassinated into a \$12 million-a-year venture that operates in the black. She knows whom to charm, whom to bully, whom to ignore. She also knows how to produce a celebrity-spangled audience.

This evening, about 70 Congressional and Administration figures and an equal number of corporate officials gathered in the candy box setting of Ford's Theater to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its restoration and the 125th anniversary of its original opening with the premiere of a new musical, "Elmer Gantry," adapted from the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Sinclair Lewis.

The theater reopened in January 1968 with a gala that starred Helen Hayes, Henry Fonda and a glittering ensemble. President Johnson's entire Cabinet attended. Mrs. Hewitt, who was fund-raiser and president of the nonprofit Ford's Theater Society, had sold CBS-TV on producing the show as a news special and had talked the Lincoln Life Insurance Company into giving Ford's a quarter of a million dollars to underwrite the theater's first production season.

"We had no money, no desks, and not one actor signed up at the time," recalled Mrs. Hewitt, whose organization had been set up to operate the house under contract from the Department of Interior.

Since those days it has become a tradition that a White House reception precedes the theater's annual gala and President and Mrs. Reagan have been guests each year. The theater's board of trustees boasts such names as Robert S. Strauss, Mrs. Paul Laxalt and Secretary of Commerce C. William Verity Jr.

It was Mr. Verity who, 20 years ago, as chairman of Armco, helped Mrs. Hewitt put together the theater's first board of governors, 10 corporate executives whose companies support the theater with annual donations of \$5,000 or more. Today that board numbers 63.

In the early 1960's, Mrs. Hewitt was one of a group of Washingtonians who persuaded Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall that Government plans to restore the theater as a museum should include the backstage areas as well so that Ford's could again be used as a living theater.

The result has been a privately run



The New York Times/George James

Frankie Childers Hewitt in Ford's Theater.

theater operating out of a Government-owned historic site. The Interior Department allocates about \$2 million each year toward its maintenance and the National Park Service oversees a small museum of Lincoln memorabilia on the theater's bottom floor. Upstairs in the 600-seat theater, the draped Presidential box is a focal point. Here, more than 120 dramas, revues and one-man shows have been produced over the last 20 years by the Ford's Theater Society.

## 'The Name of the Game'

"There wasn't a lot of corporate or governmental support of the arts when we got started 20 years ago," Mrs. Hewitt said. "We were the first to recognize that those two worlds, the political and corporate, could benefit from an arts institution that would mix them up socially. That is the name of the game in Washington."

Mrs. Hewitt learned early how to attack problems by reaching out to friends in the White House, on the Hill and at the Interior Department.

"There was a great deal of resistance to the concept of a theater at Interior the first five years — from the top down," she said.

There was the matter of negotiating "historically correct" but comfortable chairs, the question of carpeting versus what the National Park Service

maintained should be bare and noisy wood floors. "We actually had Wally Hickel down on his knees here working out the carpet problem," said Mrs. Hewitt, referring to Secretary Walter J. Hickel, a Nixon appointee.

More important, there was the problem of censorship. All scripts had to be submitted to the Interior Department for approval and, when some bureaucratic soul tried to censor a production of "An Unpleasant Evening with H. L. Mencken," the news "somehow leaked" to the press, Mrs. Hewitt said.

"They were basically little scared bureaucrats and I told them they were doing exactly what Mencken railed about," she said.

Rogers C. B. Morton, who was then Interior Secretary, "was so outraged that he took away their power and we haven't had to get approval since."

In the main, however, she said, Ford's plays it pretty safe on programming.

"We don't do experimental works," she said. "Our philosophy is to do the kind of programming that is based on the American experience, with characters and events out of history. This theater, for example, is the perfect place for jazz, gospel, folk music."

"I never want to turn the theater into something that it is not true to," she said.





## After 125-year wait, baton will drop for march

Washington Post

WASHINGTON — It was to have been the evening's finale.

The orchestra director had composed a march — a tribute to Abraham Lincoln.

But the play the march was to follow never ended. The Ford's Theatre performance 125 years ago came to an abrupt end when John Wilkes Booth fired the shot that killed Lincoln.

Monday night, in a concert marking the 125th anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, the march will finally be played at the theatre.

The 13-member Federal City Silver Cornet Band will don blue Civil War Union caps, heft saxhorns over their shoulders and puff their way into history.

Ensemble founder Mark Elrod, of Gaithersburg, Md., said even the band members don't know what the song sounds like. They will hear it for the first time at a rehearsal just before the show.

The concert was planned by the National Park Service, which owns the theater.

The performers will play an arrangement of the original piano score, which has been collecting dust in a museum storage room for decades.

The music's composer, William

Withers Jr., originally wanted his new composition to be played between the second and third acts, because he thought the play, *Our American Cousin*, was so awful that nobody, including the president, would stay beyond that.

But after the second act, as he was lifting his baton to lead the orchestra, the stage manager shouted to him — via a speaking tube from backstage — to wait until after the final act.

Lincoln was shot as the third act began. Booth then jumped to the stage and ran for a rear door, reportedly knocking Withers down in the process.

Years later, Withers told friends that just before the overture he shared a drink with Booth, who was a popular actor.

"He was an erratic, spasmodic sort of chap," Withers was reported to have said shortly before his death in 1906. "I noticed that night he seemed more than usually fidgety and excitable."

*Honor to Our Soldiers* was never published.

Withers later scrawled on his original score that the failure of his song was due to its link with the great sadness that descended over the country that evening.







