

Manhunt



John Wilkes Booth's escape from Ford's Theater after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln prompted one of the largest manhunts in American history.

After leaping from the balcony to the stage, breaking his leg in the process, he managed to hobble into the back alley where he was joined by accomplice David Herrold who was standing by with the getaway horse. Together, they rode off into southern Maryland eventually arriving at the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd who agreed to splint Booth's leg and allow them to rest the night.

They continued moving south on horseback, hiding from view in swamps and a dense pine thicket. Eventually they reached the shores of the Potomac River and managed to cross it to enter Virginia, a state they believed to be more sympathetic to the Confederacy.

For twelve days, they evaded capture even though there were a thousand Union soldiers tasked with tracking and apprehending them. One of these soldiers was Eustace Tower, a distant uncle of my brother-in-law. In a letter he wrote to his cousin, Eustace, a private in the 13th Independent Battery of the Michigan Artillery, stated that he was "out two weeks with

the detectives going night & day on the track of Booth. We captured one of his boots (which was cut off his injured leg) and the razor that he shaved his mustache off with. And we arrested the Doctor who set his leg and two or three other men that will swing at the gibbit."

Booth and Herrold were cornered by Union soldiers as they took refuge in a tobacco barn on the Virginia farm of Richard Garrett. Herrold surrendered immediately but Booth indicated that he would fight his way out. In the confusion that followed as Union troops set the barn on fire, Booth was shot in the neck by sergeant Boston Corbett. He died around five hours later.

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