

capture of john wilkes booth

capture of john wilkes booth marked a pivotal moment in American history, bringing closure to one of the most dramatic and tragic events of the 19th century. John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, was relentlessly pursued by Union forces following the assassination at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865. The capture of John Wilkes Booth not only ended his flight but also symbolized the determination of the nation to bring justice and restore order after the Civil War. This article explores the intricate details of Booth's escape, the manhunt that ensued, the eventual capture, and its historical significance. It also provides insight into the people involved in the manhunt and the aftermath of Booth's death. Understanding the capture of John Wilkes Booth helps contextualize the turbulent period of post-Civil War America and the lasting impact of Lincoln's assassination.

- Background and Assassination of Abraham Lincoln
- John Wilkes Booth's Escape
- The Manhunt for John Wilkes Booth
- The Capture and Death of John Wilkes Booth
- Aftermath and Historical Impact

Background and Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

The capture of John Wilkes Booth cannot be fully understood without exploring the background of the assassination itself. On the evening of April 14, 1865, Booth, a well-known actor and Confederate sympathizer, entered Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. He fatally shot President Abraham Lincoln in the head during a performance of the play "Our American Cousin." Booth's motive stemmed from his vehement opposition to the abolition of slavery and the defeat of the Confederacy. The assassination plunged the nation into shock and mourning, setting off a widespread manhunt for the assassin and his co-conspirators.

John Wilkes Booth's Escape

Immediately following the assassination, John Wilkes Booth fled Ford's Theatre and began a desperate escape from the law. His escape route was planned with assistance from several Confederate sympathizers who provided shelter and aid along the way. Booth crossed the Navy Yard Bridge into Maryland and then traveled southward, evading Union troops and authorities.

Initial Flight and Assistance

Booth was aided by his co-conspirator David Herold, who remained loyal throughout the escape. The pair sought refuge in southern Maryland, relying on a network of sympathizers who provided food, shelter, and horses. Booth's knowledge of the local terrain and connections allowed him to move with relative speed despite the nationwide pursuit.

Challenges During the Escape

Despite the support, Booth faced numerous challenges, including difficult terrain, inclement weather, and the constant threat of capture. He suffered a broken leg after jumping from a barn, which slowed his progress significantly. This injury played a crucial role in the eventual capture of John Wilkes Booth, as it limited his mobility and forced him to rely heavily on David Herold's assistance.

The Manhunt for John Wilkes Booth

The capture of John Wilkes Booth was the result of an extensive and intense manhunt conducted by Union soldiers, detectives, and federal agents. The manhunt began immediately after the assassination, with authorities mobilizing to track down Booth and his accomplices.

Federal Response and Coordination

President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordered an extensive search, deploying thousands of soldiers and detectives throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. The manhunt was characterized by the use of informants, roadblocks, and patrols aimed at intercepting Booth's escape route. The government also placed a substantial reward on Booth's head to incentivize citizens to assist in his capture.

Key Figures in the Manhunt

Several individuals played critical roles in the manhunt, including:

- Lieutenant Edward P. Doherty - Commander of the detachment that ultimately captured Booth.
- Detective Luther Baker - Instrumental in tracking Booth's movements.
- David Herold - Booth's companion who was captured alongside him.

Their coordinated efforts narrowed down Booth's location as he moved through Virginia's rural areas.

The Capture and Death of John Wilkes Booth

The climax of the capture of John Wilkes Booth occurred on April 26, 1865, nearly two weeks after the assassination. Booth and Herold were located at the Garrett farm, a tobacco plantation near Port Royal, Virginia.

Siege at the Garrett Farm

Union soldiers surrounded the barn where Booth and Herold had taken refuge. After Herold surrendered, Booth refused to come out. The soldiers set fire to the barn in an attempt to force Booth's surrender. During the standoff, Booth was shot by Sergeant Boston Corbett, who fired despite orders to capture him alive. Booth was severely wounded and was dragged from the burning barn.

Booth's Final Hours

John Wilkes Booth died a few hours later from his gunshot wound. Before his death, he reportedly refused to provide information about any wider conspiracy, maintaining his loyalty to the Confederate cause. The capture and death of Booth marked the end of a manhunt that captivated the nation and brought some measure of justice for the assassination of President Lincoln.

Aftermath and Historical Impact

The capture of John Wilkes Booth had immediate and long-lasting consequences for the United States during a fragile moment in its history. The manhunt and capture demonstrated the federal government's resolve to enforce law and order after the Civil War and the assassination of its leader.

Trials and Punishments of Conspirators

Following Booth's death, other conspirators involved in the assassination plot were arrested and brought to trial. Several were convicted and executed, while others received prison sentences. These trials reinforced the message that those responsible for the attack on the government would face severe penalties.

Legacy of the Capture

The capture of John Wilkes Booth remains a significant event in American history, symbolizing the pursuit of justice during a period of national trauma. The incident has been extensively studied and depicted in literature, film, and historical discourse as a defining moment of the Reconstruction era. It also underscores the challenges faced by a nation healing from civil war and the impact of political violence.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was John Wilkes Booth?

John Wilkes Booth was an American actor and Confederate sympathizer who assassinated President Abraham Lincoln in 1865.

When was John Wilkes Booth captured?

John Wilkes Booth was captured on April 26, 1865, twelve days after assassinating President Lincoln.

Where was John Wilkes Booth captured?

John Wilkes Booth was captured at a farm called Garrett's Farm in Virginia.

How was John Wilkes Booth found and captured?

Booth was tracked down by Union soldiers who surrounded the barn where he was hiding. After refusing to surrender, the barn was set on fire, and Booth was shot and captured.

Was John Wilkes Booth killed upon capture?

John Wilkes Booth was shot during the capture and died a few hours later from his wounds.

Who led the operation to capture John Wilkes Booth?

Lieutenant Edward P. Doherty led the Union troops that captured John Wilkes Booth.

What happened to John Wilkes Booth's accomplices after his capture?

Several of Booth's accomplices were arrested, tried, and some were executed for their roles in the conspiracy to assassinate President Lincoln.

Additional Resources

1. *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer*

This gripping book by James L. Swanson details the intense pursuit of John Wilkes Booth following the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. It chronicles the manhunt across southern Maryland and northern Virginia, highlighting the determination of the Union soldiers and detectives involved. Swanson combines historical facts with dramatic storytelling to bring the tense events to life.

2. *The Capture of John Wilkes Booth*

Author Roy Z. Chamlee offers a comprehensive account of the final days and eventual capture of

John Wilkes Booth. The book delves into the strategies used by Union forces and the role of informants that led to Booth's discovery. It provides a nuanced look at the historical context and the aftermath of the assassination.

3. *Blood on the Moon: The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*

Edward Steers Jr. presents a detailed narrative of Lincoln's assassination and the subsequent hunt for Booth. The book covers Booth's escape route, the efforts of the manhunt, and the dramatic confrontation at Garrett's farm. It also explores the broader implications of the assassination on American history.

4. *Lincoln's Assassin: The Capture of John Wilkes Booth*

This book by Michael W. Kauffman focuses specifically on the pursuit and arrest of Booth. Kauffman uses primary sources to reconstruct the sequence of events leading to Booth's capture and death. The work highlights the key figures involved and the challenges they faced during the manhunt.

5. *The Last Days of John Wilkes Booth*

Authored by Thomas Reid, this book provides an in-depth look at the final moments of Booth's life on the run. Reid examines Booth's motivations, his companions, and the military operations that culminated in his capture. The narrative is both informative and suspenseful, offering insight into this critical period.

6. *Chasing Lincoln's Killer*

James L. Swanson's engaging book is aimed at younger readers but is rich in historical detail about the pursuit of Booth. It tells the story of the 12-day manhunt in a clear and accessible way, emphasizing the urgency and importance of capturing the assassin. The book includes illustrations and maps to aid understanding.

7. *Booth: The Life and Times of John Wilkes Booth*

This biography by Terry Alford explores Booth's life, personality, and eventual role in the assassination and escape attempt. While focusing on Booth's background, it also covers the aftermath, including his capture. Alford paints a complex portrait of a man driven by conviction and desperation.

8. *The Assassin's Trail: The Pursuit and Capture of John Wilkes Booth*

Michael W. Kauffman delves into the detailed operations of the Union forces hunting Booth. The book covers the tactics, intelligence, and logistics behind the manhunt, providing a military perspective on the capture. It also discusses the legal and political ramifications of the event.

9. *April 1865: The Month That Saved America*

Jay Winik's book provides a broad overview of the critical events in April 1865, including Lincoln's assassination and Booth's capture. It places the manhunt within the larger context of the end of the Civil War and the nation's recovery process. The narrative is rich with historical detail and human interest stories.

Capture Of John Wilkes Booth

Capture Of John Wilkes Booth

Related Articles

- [career advice for college students](#)
- [catherine of siena the dialogue](#)
- [catherine ponder the dynamic laws of prosperity](#)

[Back to Home](#)