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Lincoln Assassination Testimony, Reported by
James Tanner (Tanner Manuscript),
Transcription

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[FRONT COVER]

LINCOLN ASSASSINATION TESTIMONY

REPORTED BY
JAMES TANNER
APRIL 14 – 15, 1865

James A. Tanner,
Attorney at Law,
803 Bailey Building,
Philadelphia

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LINCOLN ASSASSINATION TESTIMONY.

(April 14-15, 1865.)

ooooOoooo

I, James Tanner, of the City of Washington, District of Columbia, do
depose and say that the following newspaper article, appearing in the "Washington
Post" of date April 16, 1905 and found on the following page hereof, contains a
true and correct account of my participation in matters connected with the
assassination of President Abraham Lincoln; the original stenographic notes of the
assassination testimony with longhand transcriptions thereof, referred to in said
newspaper article, I attached to this document, immediately following said article.

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2/27/09

Interview with Harry Hawk.

Jas. A. Tanner

TANNER ALSO PRESENT

**Was in the Group Around the
Death Bed of Lincoln.**

**NIGHT OF INTENSE
DISTRESS**

**Stanton, the Man of Steel,
Once Near to Giving Away –
Mrs. Lincoln's Anguish.
Dr. Gurley's Prayer Lost to
the World by the Breaking of
a Pencil Point.**

**A Romantic Sequel to the
Night.**

"I have read with interest," said "Corporal" Tanner, "the statements made regarding the assassination of President Lincoln, the anniversary of which has just recurred. I notice the particular statement that all of those who were assembled in the death chamber when the great spirit of the President passed away, Secretary Hay is the only survivor.

"This I know to be a mistake, for the reason that I was there myself.

"I was living in Washington at the time. I had taken a clerkship in the ordnance bureau of the War Department on the first of the previous December. This was my one year as a government clerk. I held the position one year and resigned.

"I was boarding on Tenth street, opposite Ford's Theater, in a house immediately north of the Peterson house, in which the President died. I had some knowledge of shorthand and was employed evenings at the Capital taking dictation from the reporters of the Senate and transcribing my notes. I mention this because it was this knowledge of shorthand which resulted in my being a spectator at the death of Abraham Lincoln.

Night of Intense Excitement

"On the night of the assassination I was in Grover's Theater, where now stands the New National. I quote from a letter written to my mother the day after the President's death, which letter came back to me at her death:
Shortly after 10 o'clock, while in the midst of a scene, the entrance of Grover's was thrown open and a man shouted: "President Lincoln has been shot in his private box at Ford's. Turn out!" Instantly all was confusion. I cried out: "It is a ruse of the pickpockets. Sit down." Most of the audience agreed to this and took their seats. Very soon one of the actors, who had recited a patriotic poem on the stage, came from behind the scenes and announced that the terrible news was all too true, and the audience dispersed. My friend and myself went up to Willard's to learn what we could. We were still more horror-stricken on coming out of the theater to hear it said that Secretary Seward had had his throat cut in his bed at home. We could learn nothing at Willard's, so we got on the cards and went down to Tenth street and came up to my boarding-house. The President had been removed from his box at the theater to a house across the street, which adjoins this. The crowd was very quiet, and yet what excitement there was! A man whispering a work in justification of the deed in the least degree would have been torn to pieces in a moment.

"On my statement to the officer in command of the guard that I lived in the house next door, I

passed through the lines and went up to my rooms. The parlor and bedroom I occupied comprised the second story front. There was a balcony there and I found my rooms and the balcony crowded with the other residents of the house. Albert Daggert, the late postal card contractor, was at the time a clerk in the State Department and boarded in the same house.

A Call for a Stenographer
"Daggert was out on the balcony when Gen. C. C. Augur asked if there was any one present who could write shorthand. Daggert told him there was a young man inside (meaning myself) who could do it and Gen. Augur told him to ask me to come down, as they wanted me. I came down at once and entered the Peterson house.

"Gen. Augur conducted me into the rear parlor where I found Secretary Stanton sitting on one side of the small library table and Chief Justice Carter [*sic*] of the Supreme Court of the District at the end. They had started to take what testimony they could regarding the assassination, having some one write it out in long hand. This had proved unsatisfactory. I took a seat opposite the Secretary and commenced to take down the testimony. Somewhere, stowed away in my boxes, I have the original shorthand notes, which I made on that table, and the long-hand copy which I wrote out before leaving the Peterson house. We had Harry Hawk, who had been on the stage; Laura Keane, and various others before us. No one said positively that the assassin was John Wilkes Booth, but all thought it was he. It was evident that the horror of the crime held them back. They seemed to hate to think that one whom they had known at all could be guilty of such an awful crime.

"Many distinguished people came in during the night. Our work was often interrupted by reports coming in to Secretary Stanton and more often interrupted by him when he halted the testimony to give orders. Through all that awful night Stanton was the one man of steel.

Mrs. Lincoln's Distress

"Mrs. Lincoln was in the front parlor adjoining the room in which we sat. The folding doors were closed but her moans and cries were plainly audible and pitiful to the last degree. It was about midnight when I was called in. The President and Mrs. Lincoln had been accompanied to the theater by a niece of Senator Ira Harris, of New York, and by Maj. Rathbone, of the army. He had been slashed in the arm by Booth but in the great excitement did not notice it nor did any one else until he fainted away from loss of blood. He and the young lady afterward married.

"The door leading from our room into the hallway was open much of the time and twice during the night Mrs. Lincoln was escorted down the hallway to the room in the 'L' were [*sic*] her husband lay dying. Once they supported her back to the front parlor I heard her exclaim: "Oh, my God, and have I given my husband to die?"

Scene at the Deathbed

"I finished transcribing my notes at 6:45 a.m., and then passed back to the room in the 'L' where the President was dying. Many of the chief men of the nation were there, such as Secretaries Stanton, Wells, and Usher, Gens. Speed and Dennison, Assistant Secretaries Field and Otto, Gov. Oglesby, of Illinois, Senator Sumner and Secretary McCullough, Gens. Meigs and Augur, Private Secretary John Hay, the Surgeon General of the Army, and many other men of eminence.

"At the head of the bed stood Capt. Robert Lincoln, supported by Senator Sumner. Both were very much affected. I approached quite near the bed and stood a little to the left of Robert Lincoln. Gen. Halleck was just behind me and close to my right. I stood behind Gens. Halleck and Meigs and had a fair view of the dying President's features looking from behind and over him. He was entirely unconscious from the time he was shot until the end. He breathed very hard until a short time before he died, when he drew his

breath easier, and at twenty-two minutes past 7 a.m. he breathed his last.
"The bed had been pulled out of the corner of the room, where it usually stood, and the President's great length had made it necessary to place him cross-wise on it. The surgeon general sat on the edge of the bed, his finger on the edge of the bed, his finger on the President's pulse. Occasionally he stooped to place his ear at the heart of the dying man. Stanton had taken a seat by the side of the bed.
"I repeat, Stanton had been steel all through the night, but as I looked at his face across the corner of the bed and saw the twitching of the muscles, I knew it was only by a powerful effort that he restrained himself and that he was near a break.

"The first indication that he expected, but dreaded end had come was when the surgeon general gently held the pulseless hand of Lincoln across the motionless breast and rose to his feet.

Prayer Lost by Pencil's Breaking
"Rev. Dr. Gurley lifted his hands, and we knew without any announcement that the end had come. I snatched my pencil from my pocket, but my haste defeated my purpose. The point caught in my coat and broke, and the world lost the prayer—a prayer which was only interrupted by the sobs of Stanton as he buried his face in the bed clothes. As "Thy will be done, Amen" in subdued and tremulous tones floated through that little chamber, Stanton raised his face, the tears streaming down his cheeks, and ejaculated [exclaimed] while he looked on so lovingly, at the face of his beloved chief:
"He belongs to the ages now."

"Oh yes, I was there, and as long as sense remains to me I shall never forget the scenes accompanying that awful tragedy. Young as I was I wrote my old mother the next day that I didn't believe I could prove a false prophet, when I predicted that time would show that in the death of that man, the South had lost the one who would have been her best friend in the troublous times that were to come. The years have vindicated my prediction, and the testimony has been through the years unlimited that the leading veterans, writers, and statesmen of the South long since appreciated it.

Romantic Reminder of the Night

"There came to me only recently, while out in Indiana, a most unexpected postscript and a strange reminder of the scenes of the night. It was early in the evening of the Saturday previous to the election, and I was closing eight weeks of participating in the campaign. I was on the "Fairbanks Special," which had been touring Indiana, and we were to wind up the campaign that night at Indianapolis. At Rushville, where a night mass had assembled, Fairbanks made a ten-minute speech, and we passed on. There came aboard our train there a young lawyer from Chicago by the name of Rathbone. He had been speaking at Rushville, and was to leave the train at Muncie to make another speech that night. On the way from Rushville to Muncie I sat in the same section with him, and the committee from Muncie, which had gone to Rushville to meet us, was telling him about the arrangements for his meeting at Muncie. Something was said about Abraham Lincoln, and he casually made (to me) most interesting statement that he was the son of Maj. Rathbone, and the young lady, the niece of Senator Ira Harris, of New York, who were in the box with the President and Mrs. Lincoln at the time the foul shot was fired.

"A little later, when the committee had drifted to another part of the car, and he and I were in a measure alone and could have a little more private conversation, I told him that his statement of his parentage was intensely interesting to me, and then I told him why. I told him of seeing his mother, then a girl, as she twice suppo[r]ted Mrs. Lincoln down the hallway to [the] bed of her dying husband.

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Hon. B.A. ~~Hay~~ {Hill & Judge Carter [Cartter]}¹

{Question by Judge Carter [Cartter]}

What is your name Alfred Cloughly

Where do you reside -- [illegible]

State any & all facts About ~~1/2 past~~ 10 o clk

{walking with a lady in}

A man crying out gates should be lock[ed] at Lafyte [Lafayette] Square we imdtly [immediately] after I heard cry murderer stop Tf [thief] - several voices. We rushed out to the gate Before reaching it Saw a man start put spurs to his horse & start off[f] at a run pacer should judge & crowd called Stop Stop The horse was going up 15 1/2 St. North

[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

¹ {brackets} = penciled insertion

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[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

² Note: Many of the blank pages in the manuscript show leakage of ink from the preceding page.

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Reported by Mr. James Tanner, Ord[nance] Bureau, War Depart[ment].
Before Chief Justice Carter [Cartter]
Statement of Alfred Cloughley [Cloughly]

Q. Hon B.A. Hill

What is your name?

A. Alfred Cloughley

Q. Where to you reside?

A. I am a clerk in the Second Auditors Office in this City.

Q. State any and all facts in regard to the assassination of Mr. Seward.

A. About 10 o'clock this evening I was walking with a lady in Lafayette Square. I heard some one cry out that the gates should be shut immediately after the cry of murder & stop theif [thief]. Their [there] were several voices. We rushed to the gate. Before reaching it I saw a man on horse back bending forward & putting his spurs to his horse and start off. I think the horse was a pacer. The crowd called stop thief. The horse was going up 15 ½ Street North.

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He went up North, then I immediately went across the street & looked down to see what was the matter & cried help murder & stop theif [thief]. We then went down to Mr. Seward's house. When I got down there I saw two colored servants at the house. I enquired the difficulty. They told me that Mr. Seward was murdered. I demanded admittance & obtained it. When I got in I saw Mr. Fred Seward in the entry, bloody all over him. He was in his drawers and shirt. He didn't have any pants on but was blood all over. I enquired of him about Mr. Seward and I believe [believe] he said he thought he was dying.

Mr. Shurts of the Treasury Department and another gentleman who

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was there and myself concluded to go down and get the Presidents body guard. I ~~did not~~ had not heard of the attempt upon the President at that time. My idea was to get the Presidents body guard to pursue the murderer. I went down and knocked on the door of the officer of the guard. He came to the door and I asked him for the body guard immediately. He said he had but two or three men in. I related to him the circumstances of the murder of Mr. Seward and he said he would tend to it and I then left. I sent Mr. Shurts up to Colonel Ingrahams office to start them out. The gentleman that was with us along with Mr. Shurts suggested that the President

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should be informed of the murder. I said by all means inform the President of the assassination of Mr. Seward. After the gentlemen had left me and Mr. Shurts I asked Mr. Shurts if he had heard that the President was at Grovers [Theater]. He said he was not sure. I then suggested that he go to Col Ingrahams office and I would go to Fords Theatre to inform the President. I then rushed down F St. and when I reached 13th St. in crossing I met two gentlemen coming up on a run. Supposing that they had heard of the assassination of Mr. Seward & not supposing that the President had been assassinated I asked them if they had informed the President. I think they said

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– “The President is dying” or has been shot, or some thing of the kind. From the excitement of the moment I cannot recollect which. Not understanding them I ~~said~~ hailed them and then asked them if they had informed the President of the assassination of Mr. Seward. They then informed me that the President had been shot. Horror struck. I left them. Being there at the corner of 13th Streets and F I went down to Senator Conness of California. There I saw Senators Conness and Sumner and two or three other gentleman [gentlemen] I believe [believe] and informed them of it. It was the first they heard of it. I presume they was very much surprised and came out with me first asking me if I was sure.

Q. Who was the lady in your company when you heard the cry of murder.

A. She is a lady in the Treasury Department, Registers Office.

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Q. How many men were there pursuing this fleeing man with the cry of murder or thief?

A. I should judge there was about fifteen or twenty. They appeared to be soldiers the majority of them.

Q. Where is your residence out of the City?

A. I reside at No. 444 Broadway, N.Y. City; have resided there for the last ten years, in the county and City of New York. I was appointed here a year ago last February.

Q. How near did you approach to the man on horseback?

A. Well I had not time to approach him. I should judge I was

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about ten or thirteen steps from the gate and he was in the road.

Q. Did you observe what kind of horse it was?

A. I think I could recognize the horse. I think he was a kind of light brown with a light mane and the man was about the same build as I am.

Q. Where the gas lights burning?

A. Not very bright.

Q. Was that at the corner of the square?

A. It was at the corner of 15th and H streets.

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Q. Was the horse a large horse?

A. He was a moderate sized horse.

Q. Are you sure you could identify that horse.

A. I think I could.

End of testimony of Mr. Cloughley. [Cloughly]

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[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

130 Pen Ave.

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Testimony of Mr. A. M. S. Crawford.

Q. State if you please Mr. Crawford what you know of this matter.

A. I was sitting in the dress circle of Fords Theatre. Not on the upper ~~floor but~~ row of seats but on the upper floor. I suppose about five feet from the door of the box. My chair was close to the row of chairs in front. Captain McGowan who was with me was at my right and against the wall. This murderer came around the middle of the first scene in the 3rd act of the play of "Our American Cousin." To pass us he had to come around me and then to pass in front of the Captain. I looked up at him four or five times. He attracted my attention. I thought first that he was intoxicated. There was a glare in [his] eye and he was a little over middling height. He had on a dark slouch hat

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a dark coat, jet black hair, dark eyes, a heavy black moustache, no whiskers and no beard. It was just at the close of the third scene as all the attention was directed to the stage. He left very suddenly and stepped into the box where the President was. I turned to Capt. McGowan intending to say some thing to him in reference to this mans [man's] manner. The next instant the shot was fired. I said at once that it was in the Presidents box and jumped to the door. I passed through the door and into the box. A gentleman whom I afterwards ascertained to be Major Rathbone ~~who~~ asked me not to allow any one to enter the box and I sent for a surgeon.

Q. Can you describe the mans [man's] form that jumped from the box.

A. Yes sir. I saw him as he ran across the stage. I saw him as he passed

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across two thirds of the stage and out between the scenes. He had then a knife in his ~~hands~~ right hand. As he went through the scene he threw his ~~knife~~ hand behind him & the knife was up in sight. I think I could recognise [recognize] him. I think his face was familiar. The side of his face was towards me. It was the left side of his face. No immediate pursuit was made on the stage, not for a moment or two. He was dressed in ordinary business suit. He very strongly resembled the Booths. What attracted my attention particularly was the glare in his eye. He did not say a word that I heard. I think he shot the President with the left hand. There was a dispatch brought to the President about 20 minutes before this occurred. I think the name of the bearer was Hanscombe [Hanscom]. He asked me where the President was I showed him and he went in and gave it to him. He was a rather

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good looking, short necked fellow about five feet eight inches high with grayish pants I think. I could identify him among a thousand ~~+~~ if I could see him in the same position.

My residence is at No. 136 Penn. Ave. I am a Lieutenant in the V.R. Corps.³
End of the testimony of Mr. Crawford.

³ *The Veterans Reserve Corps, formerly called the Invalid Corps*

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[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

2/27/07 Interview with Mr. "Harry"(Wm Henry) Hawk⁴
Jam A. Tanner

Statement of ~~N~~-Wm Henry Hawk.

I was on the stage at the time of the firing & heard the report of the pistol. My back was towards the Presidents box at the time. I heard something tear & somebody fell & as I looked towards him he came in the direction in which I was standing & I beleive [believe] to the best of my knowledge that it was John Wilkes Booth. Still I am not positive that it was him. I only had one glance at him as he was rushing towards me with a dagger & I turned and run & after I run up a flight of stairs I turned and exclaimed "My God thats John Booth." I am acquainted with Booth. I met him the first time a year ago. I saw him to day about one o'clock . Said I "how do you do Mr. Booth" and he says "how are you Hawk." He was sitting on the steps

⁴ James Tanner or his son James interviewed Harry Hawk again in 1907; however, there is no known record of that interview beyond the above brief notation.

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of Fords Theatre reading a letter. He had the appearance of being sober at the time. I was never intimate with him. He had no hat on when I saw him on the stage. In my own mind I do not have any doubt but that it was Booth. He made some expression when he came on the stage but I did not understand what.

End of Mr. Hawk's testimony

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[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

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[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

Jas. C. Ferguson
Kept a saloon next to Ford's
Theatre

Statement of James C. Ferguson

Mr. Ford came to me today about 1 or 2 o'clock & told me that my favorite, Gen. Grant was going to be present at the theatre to night & had secured a box. I went in the theatre & engaged seats 58 & 59 on the opposite side from the Presidents box. When the President came in I saw that Gen. Grant was not with him but I still kept watch of the box expecting Gen. Grant to come in knowing that if he came in he would go in the same box with the President. After the curtain went up for the 3rd act I saw Mr. Booth go to the door leading to the passage of the private box which the President occupied & try the door. In a moment afterwards I was looking with an opera glass to see who the citizen was that was with the President. I then heard the report of the pistol and saw Mrs. Lincoln catch him around the neck. I saw him throw up his

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right arm at the same time I saw Booth run his hand in his side & pull a knife and run ~~before~~ between Mrs. Lincoln & a lady in the same box. He put his hands on the cushion of the box and threw his feet right over. As he jumped over he pulled part of a state flag off & had part of it under his feet when he fell on the stage. The very moment he struck he ~~said~~ exclaimed "Sic Semper Tyrannis."⁵ As he came across the stage facing me he looked me right up in the face and it alarmed me & I pulled the lady who was with me down behind the banister. I looked right down at him & he stopped as he said "I have done it." and shook the knife. All I know of Mr. Booth is this. I never saw him in my life untill about two or three months ago. I have often heard of Wilkes Booth. ~~but~~ He himself told me that he was born & raised in Baltimore. He is a theatrical

⁵ "*Sic Semper Tyrannis*" is Latin for "Thus Always to Tyrants." Many inaccurately attribute this quote to Marcus Junius Brutus during the assassination of Julius Caesar. According to Plutarch, Brutus either said nothing or no one heard what he said.

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man by profession. I heard him say a few weeks ago that he had an estate left him in the oil regions of Penn. He played here some five or six weeks ago at the benefit of Mr. John McCollum. He came today near one or two o'clock [o'clock] in front of my house on a little bay horse. I think the President was shot about 10 o'clock [o'clock], just as the curtain went up for the 3rd act. I do not know what became of Booth after he left the stage. There was a great excitement. I think there were many persons in the orchestra who might have caught him if they had immediately pursued him. I do not know the color of the horse. I think it was a ~~little~~ small bay horse. He told me where he bought the horse but I do not remember now. He says "He's a very nice horse, he can gallop & can almost kick me in the back." It was not a pacing horse. He started off on a lope.

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I went down to Mayor Wallach and stated these things to him. Mr. Harry Hawk was on the stage at this time. The same hat which Wilkes Booth had on when I saw him to day is now in charge of the police at the station house. They say they found it in the box which the President occupied.

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[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

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[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

H. B. Phillips.
Stage Manager at Fords
and an old Philadelphian

Statement of Mr. Henry B. Philips [Phillips].

I have heard Mr. Booth repeatedly speak in favor of the South. I have heard him regret the announcement of any Union victory. Last Monday I saw him on the ~~Cor~~ corner of 14th St & Penn. Ave. I was in company with some gentleman that I met at the Atty Gen's office & we were going to take a drink & Mr. Booth met us & {I} asked him to join us & he said "yes anything to drive away the blues." I said "What is giving you the blues?" He said this news is enough to give any body the blues" or words to that effect. I did not propose to converse with him because knowing that he had a strong southern feeling I did not want to enter into any argument with him. I was in company with three officers of the Atty Gen's [Attorney General's] office & I did not want him to commit himself as I have been a very dear friend of Mr Booth almost from infancy. As far as regards the cries I was in front of the house during

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a portion of the two first acts. Just before the third act commenced I went to my dressing room to dress to sing a patriotic song which I had written for the occasion & which we had intended to sing to night & I was partially dressed & washing my hands when I heard the report of the pistol and a scream. I rushed down stairs in my shirt sleeves & made enquiries of the first man I met & he told me that the President had been shot & that the man jumped from the private box rushed across the stage past him & went out of the back door, jumped on a horse & galloped off & I said "Why didn't you stop him?" He said "he had a knife drawn & I couldn[']t." Almost immediately after I heard somebody say it was Wilkes Booth. I did not see Booth in the theatre to night. When I saw him this afternoon he appeared to be perfectly sane and sober. He is of an excitable temper. I think him about 24 yrs of age. He has a slight black moustache. I saw Harry Hawk who was on the

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stage at the time I crossed it as I was trying to allay the excitement Hawk said to me "that was Wilkes Booth who rushed past me." Said I "are you ~~sure~~ certain it was Wilkes Booth?" He said "I could say it if I was on my death bed." A Mr. Bennet who was in the front of the house said to me "I have got the glove of the man who jumped over the box." And I said you bring it to me & he showed ~~it to~~ ~~me~~ me the glove.

Mr. Booth had his horse stabled in the rear of our theatre for some time. The man who has had charge of his horse for several days past is also missing since the shot was fired. He was seen in the theatre before the shot was fired.

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[STENOGRAPHIC NOTES]

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Statement of Col. G.[George]V. Rutherford.

About 7 o'clock this evening I was standing at the counter of the National Hotel & a man came in & threw a key upon the counter and Capt. Ferry nudged me with his elbow saying, there goes "J. Wilkes Booth." I turned and saw his back only. Capt Ferry knows him well and can identify him.

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James A. Tanner,
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803 Bailey Building
Philadelphia

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