North Central Texas Civil War Round Table

http://www.ncentexcwrt.com/

Granbury, Texas

Volume 5, Issue 11 Nov 2025

Meeting Schedule

2025

Oct 13 Lorien Foote, PhD

Nov 10 Michael Moore and Melinda Jo Ray

Dec 8 Jay May

2026

Jan 12 Julie Holcomb, PhD

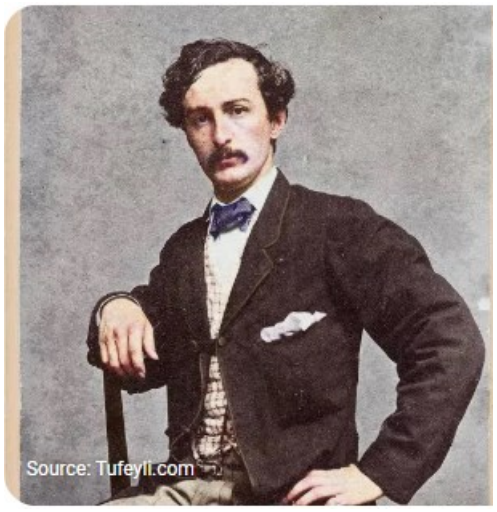
Feb 9 Edward Cotham

Mar 9 TBD

Apr 13 Pat Falci

May 11 Dr. Curt Fields (Gen Grant)

Next Meeting: 10 November at Spring Creek BBQ **Program starts at 6:30**
<Mike Moore and Melinda Jo Ray will speak about:
"John Wilkes Boothe and John St. Helen Myth."



The Granbury myth is that John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, did not die in the burning barn as history records, but instead escaped to Texas, lived under the alias "John St. Helen," and worked as a bar-tender in Granbury. This popular legend has been fueled by a deathbed confession to a lawyer, local hauntings, and a building on the Granbury square where murals depict the supposed story. While historical consensus is that Booth died in Virginia, the myth persists in Granbury folklore.

Mike Moore, CWRT member and Melinda Jo Ray will discuss the myth, its origins and their take on the validity of the claim.

Mike Moore is a sixth generation Texan with roots in Johnson County. He has a Criminal Justice degree from the University of north Texas with an emphasis in Texas history and Civil War research. Mike's 3rd great-grandfather, William Everett Kennard was at the Battle of San Jacinto and an early settler of Johnson County. His third great-uncle, Major John H. Kennard served in General Granbury's Brigade.

Melinda Jo Ray is a seventh generation Texan and retired librarian and educator who has long enjoyed sharing her life long love of history and the real people who inhabit it. She has now added free lance writer, local historian, and volunteer to her list of occupations. She frequently writes for local publications, visits various groups as a speaker on local history and its connection to the American story and our present-day lives, and volunteers as a docent at the Hood County Museum and the Granbury Depot Hood County Archives Collection. For fourteen years she was also the owner and operator of the Historic Nutt House Hotel on the downtown Granbury Square, a business founded by the families whose story is found in the page of her Nutt/Landers Family Chronicles series of novels. Vol 1: Safe in the Arms of God; Vol 2: A Legacy Cast in Limestone; Vol 3: A Tale of Four Brothers.

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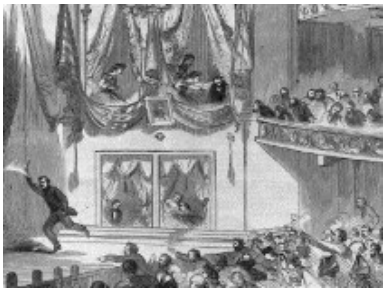

Our purpose is education and information. From our inception we have kept a calculated balance mixing subjects, people, events and battles so as to appeal to all interests. If you examine our schedule of past speakers which is available on this website you will find this to be true. Speakers have included authors, professors, lecturers, dramatists, curators, and others who have some expertise in the subject of the Civil War.

Conspirators and their fate

John Wilkes Booth: killed in Va or died in Granbury?

Hung: David Herold and Lewis Powell attempt on William H. Seward's life ; **George Atzerodt**: Tasked with killing Vice President Andrew Johnson, but fled; **Mary Surratt**: Owned a boardinghouse where the conspirators met.

Life in Prison: **Dr. Samuel Mudd**: Treated John Wilkes Booth's broken leg after the assassination. ; **Samuel Arnold and Michael O'Laughlen**: involved in an earlier plot against Lincoln.

Prison sentence: **Edmund Spangler**: A stagehand at Ford's Theatre who assisted Booth.

John Wilkes Booth

https://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/lincolnconspiracy/booth.html#Biographic

Biographic Sketch of John Wilkes Booth

John Wilkes Booth was the ninth of ten children born to the famous, eccentric, and hard-drinking actor, Junius Booth. The Booth family--along with their slaves--lived on a farm near Bel Air, Maryland.

Booth made his own stage debut at age seventeen in Baltimore, appearing in Richard III. His highly successful acting career for a Shakespearean company based in Richmond took him all over the United States. (On November 9, 1863, Abraham Lincoln watched Booth play Raphael in the play Marble Heart in the same box at Ford's Theatre that he would later be assassinated.)

Booth became politically active in the 1850s, joining the Know-Nothing Party, an organization devoted to reducing the stream of immigrants into the United States. Booth ardently supported the institution of slavery and in 1859 joined a Virginia company that aided in the capture of John Brown after his raid at Harper's Ferry. Booth was an eyewitness to Brown's execution.

During the Civil War, Booth worked as a Confederate secret agent. He met frequently with the heads of the Secret Service, Jacob Thompson and Clement Clay, in Montreal.

John Wilkes Booth
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John Wilkes Booth's Role in the Conspiracy

In the summer of 1864, Booth began formulating plans to kidnap Abraham Lincoln. The plan called for Lincoln to be taken south to Richmond, where he would be held until exchanged for Confederate prisoners-of-war. Booth recruited friends and known southern-sympathizers for his mission, including the eight persons tried before the 1865 military commission. Some who resisted his persuasive efforts, such as actor Samuel Chester, became key government witnesses in the trial.

On March 15, Booth and his most of his fellow conspirators met at a Restaurant three blocks from Ford's Theatre to plan their abduction of the President. Soon thereafter, Booth heard that the President would be attending a matinee performance of Still Waters Run Deep on March 17 at the Campbell Hospital on the outskirts of Washington. This, he decided, would the perfect opportunity for a kidnapping and--according to John Surratt--Booth developed a plan to intercept Lincoln's carriage enroute to the play. Booth's plans were foiled, however, when the President changed his plans and decided instead to speak to the 140th Indiana Regiment and present a captured flag. Booth then turned to plan to kidnap the President at a future performance at Ford's Theatre, where the actor had several friends, but the plan failed to win the support of some of his co-conspirators, who dismissed it as infeasible.

On April 14, 1865, after the fall of Richmond rendered moot his kidnap scheme, Booth set in motion his final plan--one of assassination. Booth may have made the decision to kill the President after hearing Lincoln deliver a speech urging Negro suffrage, according to Booth's former friend, Louis Weichmann. Weichmann spoke of his viewing of the President's speech with Booth:

"I had never seen Mr. Lincoln up close and I knew he was a tall man, however nothing could have prepared me for the sight of him. A long shadow did he have. And his arms, when at his sides, touched near his knees. Very professionally he said that there would never be any suffrage based on differences in the way people look. Upon this, Booth turned to the two of us and said, “That means nigger citizenship. Now by God I’ll put him through!”

Booth tried to convince several of his co-conspirators to participate in his plot to kill several high government officials (including the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and probably General Grant), but found few willing.

Around 10:15, as the President and the First Lady watched a performance of Our American Cousin at Ford's Theatre, Booth, showed a card to a presidential aide and was allowed entry through a lobby door leading to the presidential box. Reaching the box, Booth pushed open the door. The President sat in his armchair, one hand on the railing and the other holding to the side a flag that decorated the box, in order to gain a better view of a person in the orchestra. From a distance of about four feet behind Lincoln, Booth fired a bullet into the President's brain as he shouted "Revenge for the South!" (according to one witness) or "Freedom!" (according to another). Major Rathbone, seated with the President in the State Box, sprang up to grab the assassin, but Booth wrested himself away after slashing the general with a large knife. Booth rushed to the front of the box as Rathbone reached for him again, catching some of his clothes as Booth leapt over the railing. Rathbone's grab was enough to cause Booth to fall roughly on the stage below, where he badly fractured his leg.

Rising from the stage, Booth shouted "Sic semper tyrannus!" and ran across the stage and toward the back of the theatre. Booth rushed out the back door of the theatre to a horse being held for him by Joseph Burroughs (better known as "Peanuts"). Booth mounted the horse and swept rapidly down an alley, then to the left toward F Street--and disappeared into the Washington darkness.