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WASH DAILY NEWS

Another Case of Myths, Too

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Renewed claims that the full truth has not yet been told about the assassination of President Kennedy, three years ago today, recall the flowering of many myths after President Lincoln was shot here April 14, 1865.

So widespread were these rumors that Lloyd Lewis wrote a book about them. The book, titled "Myths After Lincoln," was published in 1929.

The most persistent of these myths was that actor John Wilkes Booth, who shot Lincoln and, with a broken leg, fled across the Potomac River into Virginia, was not in fact killed in that burning barn near Bowling Green, Va.

'NO MYSTERY'

Mr. Lewis wrote:

"The Union soldiers had killed a man certainly, in Caroline County, Va., on the night of April 26, 1865."

"No mystery about that.

"The war department had told the breathless nation that the man was J. Wilkes Booth. It had buried a corpse, sure enough, but was it Booth's?

"From the day that the corpse had been brought down the Potomac to Washington, with people on the streets of the Capital denying that it was the assassin, millions of Americans believed that the real Booth was out and gone, sulking across the land in romantic wanderings, hiding under this or that alias, undisturbed by the law.

"Had the U. S. Secret Service palmed off an innocent corpse on the nation, so that it might providentially collect the \$50,000 reward that had been hung up to quicken Booth's pursuers?" asked author Lewis, adding:

"For two generations, many Americans answered 'yes.'

"Not all the believers in this folk tale have been simple folk. Some shrewd minds have been convinced that it is true.

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"Most American cities have had at least one capable citizen, usually an aged lawyer, whose hobby it was or is to prove that Booth evaded his pursuers.

"For 63 years, Booth's ghost, a will-'o-the-wisp, has stalked the republic. No witness sufficiently impartial or free from suspicion has been found to swear that he looked upon the disputed corpse and knew it either to be or not to be J. Wilkes Booth.

"No other mystery has lived so long nor strongly in the republic.