

# 100 Years Ago Tonight: The Tragedy at Ford's Theater

## Parallels Are Noted in Lincoln's Death and Kennedy's

By HOMER BIGART

In the warm hazy dusk of an early spring day 100 years ago, boys ran through the downtown streets of Washington passing out freshly printed handbills.

### FORD'S THEATER

Friday Evening, April 14, 1865

This Evening The Performance will be honored by the presence of

**PRESIDENT LINCOLN**

Benefit and Last Night of

**MISS LAURA KEENE**

in Tom Taylor's Celebrated Eccentric Comedy, as originally produced in America by Miss Keene, and performed by her upwards of one thousand nights

### OUR AMERICAN COUSIN

The day happened to be Good Friday, traditionally the worst night of the year for a theater box office. Few pedestrians were on the streets. The city was exhausted after celebrating the fall of Richmond on April 3 and the surrender of Lee's Army at Appomattox on Palm Sunday, April 9.

But the news that President Lincoln, and perhaps General Grant, would attend the theater promised to lure a big crowd. There were 1,675 per-



A news artist's contemporary portrayal of Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theater. John Wilkes Booth aims his derringer at Mrs. Lincoln, next to her husband, Maj. Henry F. Rathbone and fiancée, Miss Clara Harris, watch play.

sons—a near capacity house—led the applause. The entire leading the country through the civil war. He was struck up "Hail to the Chief" only 56, but he looked old and

The show had already started. Patrons in the dress circle rose and applauded when "Our American Cousin" was an adequate farce and final act. "Our American Cousin" reaches a climactic theater party down the side. Shakespeare, would not have wheeze. The comedy is set in an English country house, then the State Box. On stage, Miss Keene interrupted her scepje and underweight, bone-weary from Trenchard, the rich American, trying to marry off her daughter, Augusta, to Trenchard. But the American, having fallen in love with a cousin, Mary Meredith, had lighted his cigar with the family will, thereby destroying the document and

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