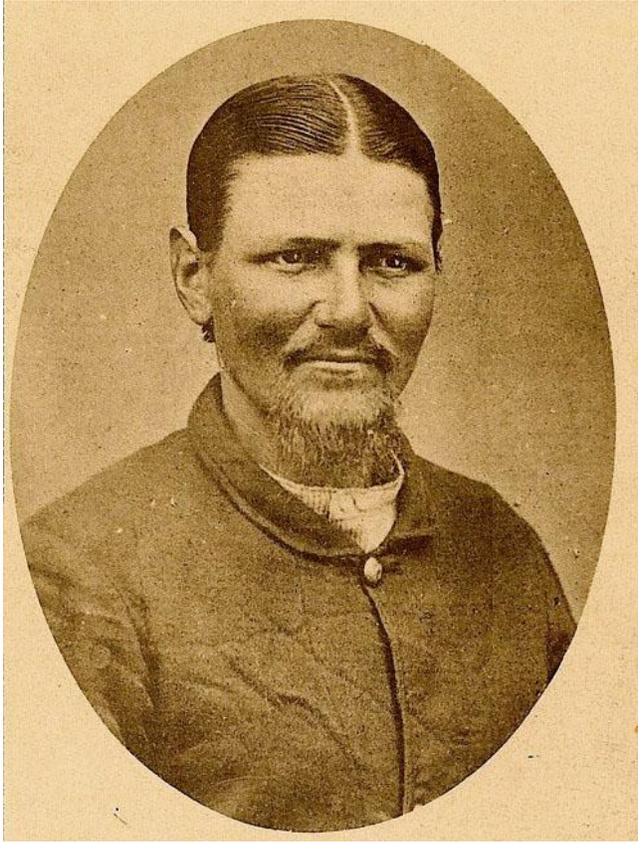


# Thomas P. "Boston" Corbett



**Killer of John Wilkes Booth. Born: 1832 London, England. Died: date and place unknown.**

Known by most Americans as the "Avenger of Lincoln," Thomas P. Corbett was born in England in 1832 and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of seven. Living in Troy, New York, he pursued a business as a hatter. Corbett later moved to Danbury, Connecticut. He married, but his wife died in childbirth.

Corbett was in Boston when he happened upon a church revival and experienced a deep religious conversion. It was there that he changed his first name to Boston in acknowledging of his rebirth.

With the onset of the Civil War, Corbett volunteered for the Union Army. On the

morning of April 15, 1865, news that President Abraham Lincoln had been shot the night before reached Corbett and his fellow soldiers in Virginia. The president was still alive at the time, but not expected to recover. Corbett volunteered to help hunt down the perpetrators.

"We advanced down to the Potomac River," he later recalled, "when near the river we saw the flag at half mast on one of the forts and we knew our president was dead." On April 26, 1865, Corbett's detachment reached Garrett Farm near Bowling Green, Virginia. The assassin, John Wilkes Booth, and an accomplice were said to be hiding in a tobacco barn. "A surrender was demanded and refused," Corbett wrote, "Booth declaring he would not be taken alive."

Orders were given to drive the men out with fire and take them alive. Accomplice David Herold surrendered, but Booth remained in the barn. Corbett approached a gap in the wall, saw Booth, and shot him. He wrote that it "was the day on which God avenged Abraham Lincoln's death."

Corbett expected to be hailed as a hero, but was arrested for disobeying orders. He was released and returned to Boston, but was never able to go back to his pre-war way of life. Corbett came to Kansas in 1878. Living in a dugout near Concordia, neighbors said he kept to himself and greeted visitors with a rifle in hand. He avoided talking about the events that took place at Garrett Farm.

In 1887 Corbett was given the position of assistant doorkeeper for the Kansas House of Representatives in Topeka. He was proud of his position and took it seriously, wearing his army holster and pistol on the job. During a session of the legislature, Corbett overheard a comment he considered blasphemous. Outraged, he brandished his pistol, clearing the room.

Corbett was arrested, declared insane, and committed to the state hospital in Topeka. In May 1888, while taking a walk on the grounds with other patients, Corbett saw a horse hitched near the entrance and used it to make his escape. He rode south to Neodesha, stayed with a friend for a couple days, then said he was leaving for Mexico.

A few years later a man claiming to be Corbett surfaced, trying to collect his pension. He was found to be an impostor. No further official record of Corbett exists.

**Entry:** Corbett, Thomas P. Boston

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