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Ford's Theatre National Historic Site
Washington, DC

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site: An Administrative History



National Mall and Memorial Parks
National Capital Area, Region 1

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site: An Administrative History

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Front cover, from the top, clockwise: The House Where Lincoln Died on the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's death, 2015 (NPS); the House Where Lincoln Died, 1920 (LOC); Ford's Theatre and 517 Tenth Street, NW, 1909 (LOC).

Executive Summary

Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died (Petersen House) opened as museums in 1932 and 1893, respectively, and were transferred to National Park Service (NPS) administration in 1933. In 1968, the interior of Ford's Theatre was reconstructed to appear as it did on the night of Lincoln's assassination in 1865. The restored theater was capable of functioning as a working theater. The NPS partnered with Ford's Theatre Society (FTS) to offer live theater as part of the site's interpretation program.

In 1970, Congress combined both properties, along with 517 Tenth Street, NW, into a single NPS park designated as Ford's Theatre National Historic Site (FOTH). The site is currently administered as a unit of the National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA), in the National Capital Area (NCA) in Region 1 of the NPS. This report constitutes the first administrative history written for the site, and aims to serve as a valuable planning tool for current park management and staff. In this report, the authors identify and analyze the history of the following major administrative issues.

Public-Private Partnership with the Ford's Theatre Society

As the primary partner, FTS has been crucial to the success of the site, expanding its initial role of programming live theater and other events to becoming a full interpretive partner. Frequent turnover in site managers, as well as FTS President Frankie Hewitt's political connections to Secretary Udall and subsequent Interior secretaries, established an early precedent for FTS to consult with the regional director, NPS director, or secretary of the interior. Direct collaboration between FOTH and FTS staff has greatly improved in the last ten years since FTS established new Visitor Services and Education departments and a joint annual work plan was instituted.

Administration of FOTH in the National Capital Area

FOTH has undergone many changes in its reporting structure over the years as the NPS has refined the way it manages its Washington, DC, parks, monuments, and historic sites. Some of the challenges in managing the site stem from the organization of the National Capital Area parks, which differs from other NPS regions. In some ways, FOTH is too small to be administered as an independent unit, and yet too large and with too many distinct needs to fit seamlessly in the larger NAMA unit.

Evolution in Interpretive Themes and Approach to Lincoln's Assassination

Early NPS historians and museum staff during a time much closer to the living memory of Lincoln were careful in interpreting the national tragedy of Lincoln's assassination. Prior to the reconstruction of the Ford's Theatre interior, the museum housed inside the building displayed various exhibits on Lincoln's life and presidency, with Booth and the assassination purposefully de-emphasized. Certain artifacts, like the bullet that pierced Lincoln's skull, and even, initially, the Deringer, were considered inappropriate for public display. When the restored Ford's Theatre reopened in 1968, it necessarily required an interpretive focus on the events of the assassination, although the new Lincoln Museum on the lower level still relegated the assassination exhibit to a secluded alcove. Changing public sentiment, as well as language in the 1970 federal designation of FOTH that specified the park's purpose of preserving the site of Lincoln's assassination, influenced a new NPS perspective on this interpretive theme. In addition to Lincoln's presidency and assassination, and Washington, DC, during the Civil War, additional interpretive themes have evolved over time, reflecting shifts in historiography and the need to connect with visitors.

Operation and Historic Resource Management for a Small Site with High Visitation

Visitation peaked at approximately 1.2 million in 2001, although it has decreased significantly since then. This level of visitation, while reflecting the site's appeal to tourists, school groups, and theater patrons, created major challenges in interpretation, visitor experience, and historic resource management that have been alleviated to some degree by projects and programs provided by or funded in cooperation with FTS. In addition, because of the constraints of funding and of altering a historic site, Ford's Theatre and the

House Where Lincoln Died lacked suitable accessibility for visitors using wheelchairs until the rehabilitation projects of 2007–2009 and 2010–2011.

Improving Collection Management

Since 1933, over 3,000 Lincoln artifacts originally acquired by Osborn H. Oldroyd have made up the nucleus of the FOTH museum collection. For many years, management of the collection was hampered by Oldroyd's lack of records and the failure of the federal government to take full inventory of the collection upon its acquisition from Oldroyd in 1926. Management and stewardship of the collections suffered during periods when budget restrictions or organizational changes prevented the assignment of a dedicated professional curator. Current collection management goals include reconciling hard copy and Interior Collection Management System (ICMS) record data and reviewing FOTH historical management records and materials for accession into the museum collection.

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We must give special thanks to curators and archivists. In mid-March 2020, the coronavirus, or COVID-19, pandemic swept across the United States. Offices and archives closed, including NCR offices and repositories. Joanne Westbrook, former NAMA curator, and Nancy Russell, archivist for the NPS History Collection at Harpers Ferry Center, made much-appreciated efforts during this unprecedented time to search for, digitize, and send relevant items from their collections during their rare days in the office. The documents and photos they sent filled critical research gaps as we neared the end of the project. Finally, we are grateful to all other park staff who spared a few minutes of their time to share anecdotes and answer questions.

List of Common Abbreviations and Acronyms

ETIC: NPS Electronic Technical Information Center online document repository, <https://pubs.etic.nps.gov>

FOTH: National Park Service alpha code for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site

FTS: Abbreviation used in this report for Ford's Theatre Society

HFC: Harpers Ferry Center (National Park Service), Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

HWLD: House Where Lincoln Died

IRMA: NPS Integrated Resource Management Applications online document and data repository, <https://irma.nps.gov/Portal/>

LOC: Library of Congress

MRCE: National Capital Area Museum Resource Center, Landover, Maryland

NAMA: National Park Service alpha code for National Mall and Memorial Parks unit

NARA-CP: National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

NCA: National Capital Area

NCP: National Capital Parks

NCR: National Capital Region

NPS: National Park Service

NPSNCR: National Capital Area office, Washington, DC

Introduction

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site (FOTH) is historically significant as the site of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination and death on April 14–15, 1865. The site consists of Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died, also known as the Petersen House, as well as an 1878 building on the north side of Ford's Theatre. In 1863, established Baltimore theater proprietor John T. Ford constructed Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC, six blocks east of the White House (Figure 0.1). The grand, three-story building replaced his previous theater on the same site, which had been destroyed by fire soon after its conversion from an earlier Baptist church in 1862. Lincoln, who was fond of live theater, attended at least nine performances at Ford's Theatre. He was shot by actor John Wilkes Booth during the play, *Our American Cousin*, on the night of April 14, 1865. Mortally wounded, Lincoln was carried across the street to the boarding house of William and Anna Petersen, where he died the next morning. These events shocked the nation and immediately transformed Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House into sites of mourning.

Soon after Lincoln's death, the War Department ordered the closure of Ford's Theatre in order to conduct an investigation of the crime. Afterwards, the federal government purchased the property from Ford to gain control over what was perceived as hallowed ground. Almost every trace of the theater interior was demolished or removed in an effort to wipe the record of that tragic day and discourage relic hunters. The building was soon transformed from an empty shell into a three-story office building housing hundreds of government workers.

The Petersen family sold their house to Louis B. Schade in 1878. The house first became a museum in 1893 when Schade leased it to the Memorial Association of the District of Columbia, which arranged for noted Lincolniana collector Osborn H. Oldroyd to move his extensive collection into the house. Oldroyd opened the "House in Which Abraham Lincoln Died" and his collection to public tours, charging an admission fee and serving as a live-in caretaker. The United States government purchased the house in 1896 to preserve the site of Lincoln's death, and allowed Oldroyd to continue operating his museum.

The government ultimately purchased Oldroyd's entire collection, which was moved to the Ford's Theatre building. The new Lincoln Museum, in Ford's Theatre, and the House Where Lincoln Died, now a historic house museum outfitted with Civil War period antiques, opened in 1932. One year later, administration of these two historic sites was transferred to the National Park Service (NPS).

In 1940, an *Evening Star* article compared visitation between the extremely popular Lincoln Memorial and the less-trafficked Lincoln Museum, within Ford's Theatre, and the House Where Lincoln Died, suggesting that perhaps some people felt the memorial embodied the spirit of Lincoln more than the actual historic sites associated with him.¹ At the time, the NPS struggled with bringing these two separate parks, inherited from another government agency, up to NPS standards. The interior of the Ford's Theatre building, having suffered through two post-assassination renovations, resembled a warehouse.

Today, FOTH continues to exist in relationship to, and in competition with, the pantheon of memorials and monuments of the National Mall. However, a late 1960s reconstruction project restored the interior of Ford's Theatre to its 1865 appearance, enabling it to function as a working theater. The nonprofit Ford's Theatre Society (FTS), the site's primary partner for over fifty years, has helped ensure the continuing vitality of FOTH by supplementing NPS interpretation with live theater and nationally recognized interpretive and educational programs conveying the values of Lincoln and his presidency. The NPS faces the challenges of successfully managing interpretation and visitor experience amidst the daily onslaught of visitors to this popular destination for tourists and student groups.

Director's Order 28, *Cultural Resource Management Guidelines*, requires an administrative history for each park unit. This report constitutes the first administrative history written for FOTH, tracing changes in

¹ "Goal of 1,639,004 Visitors During 1940," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), January 20, 1941, GenealogyBank.

management, staff, planning, interpretation, visitation, historic resource management, and collections management from 1933 to the present. The authors aim for this administrative history to be a valuable planning tool that provides a way for current park management and staff to learn about past policies, decisions, and activities.

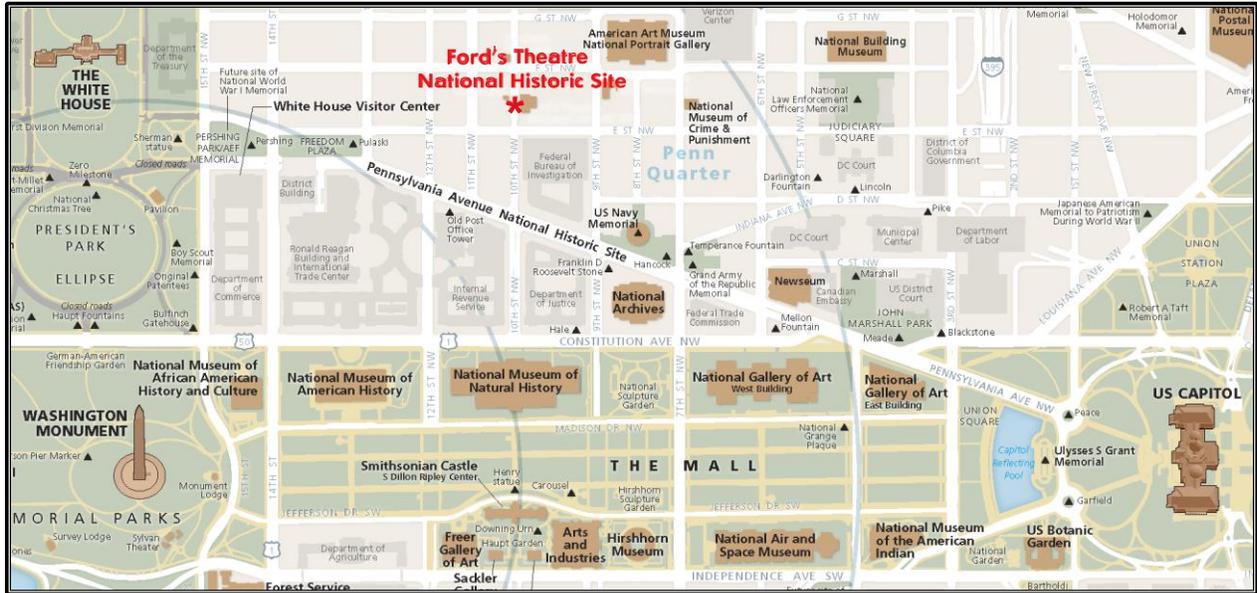


Figure 0.1. Detail of 2016 NPS Visitor Services Map of the National Mall and Memorial Parks, indicating the location of FOTH near the monumental core of the city. (Courtesy of the NPS.)

CHAPTER 1: A Theater in Mourning (1865–1932)

In 1833, Washington, DC, was a city organized along the wide boulevards of Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 city plan, but with the exception of the Capitol Building and the Executive Mansion, it lagged behind L'Enfant's grand vision of the nation's capital. The Executive Mansion, rebuilt and coated in crisp white paint after the burning of the nation's new capital by the British in 1814, had by that time earned its long-lasting moniker: the White House. The Capitol Building, completed in 1826 after a series of lead architects, featured three modest domes overlooking the city forming below (Figure 1.1). The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad built tracks through the city and added a depot to Second Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in the 1830s, providing enhanced passenger access to the Capitol. In the blocks between the White House and the Capitol Building, businesses and houses overtook former agricultural lands and, in some cases, portions of land designated for the National Mall. As the city slowly began to attain a level of permanence and attract more residents, churches, theaters, and schools added to the city's daily life.¹



Figure 1.1. *City of Washington From Beyond the Navy Yard*, ca. 1833. Note the Capitol in the right mid-ground and the White House to the left on the horizon. In 1833, many of the heavily-developed residential areas surrounding the federal buildings at the time of Ford's Theatre were still open land or marsh. (Engraving by G. Cooke and William J. Bennett. Prints and Photographs Division, LOC.)

¹ Lisa Benton-Short, *The National Mall: No Ordinary Public Space* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 52–55.

A Baptist congregation under the leadership of Reverend Obadiah Brown had worshiped at the intersection of Nineteenth and I/Eye Streets, NW, since the first decade of the 1800s, and the expansions of the 1830s demanded a new space. The congregation selected a lot on Tenth Street, neatly between the White House and Capitol Building, for construction of the new First Baptist Church. The building featured a tower and three story façade that was large enough to welcome the growing membership when completed in June 1834 (Figure 1.2).

Washington, DC, experienced a period of rapid development following the construction of First Baptist Church. Tensions continued to grow throughout the 1840s and 1850s as the country debated the future of slavery. Lawmakers agreed that the Capitol Building needed considerable expansion, most notably resulting in the addition of a substantial new dome. The government's growth fueled population increases and building development. First Baptist Church, in an effort to assist the Fourth Baptist Church congregation, merged its membership with the Fourth Baptist Church and moved to a building on Thirteenth Street, NW, in 1859. The merger resolved financial deficits resulting from the construction of the Thirteenth Street, NW, church. However, the Tenth Street church did not remain vacant for long. The former church hosted concerts for two years, until December 1861 when Baltimore-based theater manager John T. Ford leased the building during one of his trips exploring new business opportunities.²

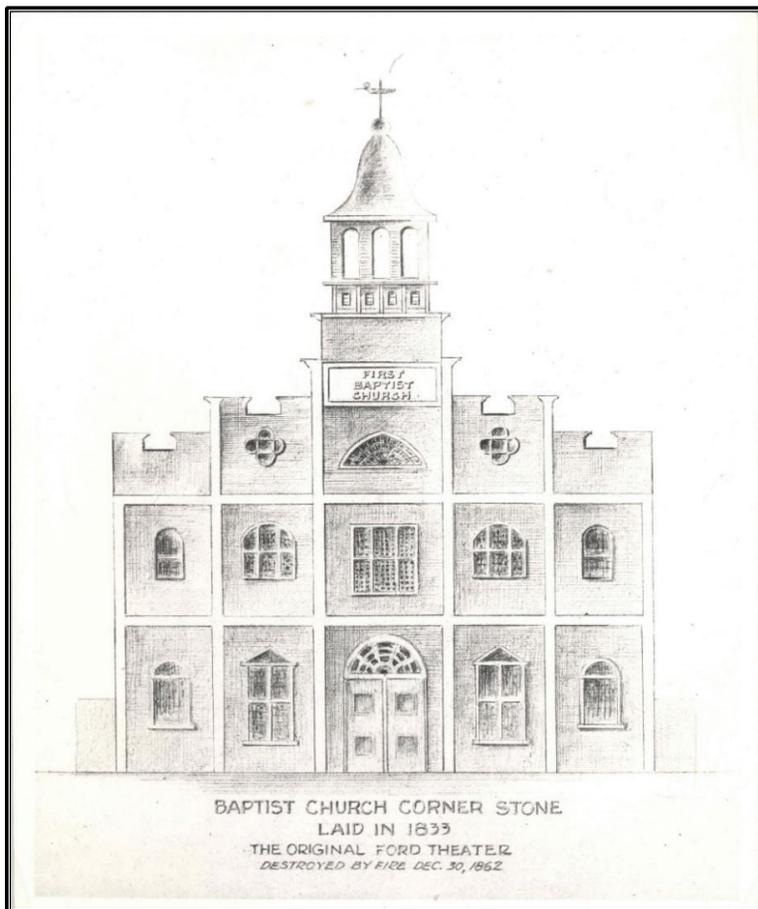


Figure 1.2. First Baptist Church. This drawing details the church's appearance. John Ford renovated the building for a theater in 1862 (FOFH 5008, FOFH Museum Collection. Courtesy of the NPS).

² George J. Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre Washington D.C.* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1963), ETIC, 5–17.

Ford, along with his brother Henry, were well known throughout the antebellum theater community, having served as agents to a traveling minstrel show, briefly managing the National Theatre in Washington, DC, and the Marshall Theatre in Richmond, Virginia, and building and operating the successful Holliday Street Theatre in Baltimore, Maryland.³

President Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated in March 1861, and the United States entered the Civil War with the bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, on April 12, 1861. Despite the reality of war and presence of hostile forces immediately across the Potomac River in Virginia, life in Washington, DC, continued. Audiences attended theater and musical performances as a respite from the dire realities facing the country, and Ford continued his plan to create a new theater despite the war. On February 20, 1862, a reporter from the *National Republican* excitedly published:

Mr. Ford's new Theatre, on Tenth Street, is rapidly approaching completion. The architect, Mr. James J. Gifford, whose reputation as a constructor of theatrical edifices stands par excellence, informs us that the improvements will be completed by the middle of March. When finished, it will be a credit to the city, and will fill a vacuum long lamented by the amusement seeking public. Its general appearance will be highly ornamental, and present an agreeable contrast to the detestable "Old Box" which has been so Blandly foisted upon the citizens of Washington.

The auditorium will contain two tiers and a parquette [sic] of ample dimensions. The boxes will be supported by iron columns of the Corinthian order of architecture. The stage will be thirty-five feet in depth, and present a front of thirty feet. Four private boxes (two on each side) are all that can be constructed, and these will be ornamented in the highest style of art. The Theatre altogether will accommodate about 1,500 persons.

We congratulate our citizens on the prospect of having a theatre worthy of their patronage, and hope they will give the worthy manager, John T. Ford, no cause to regret his enterprise.⁴

Despite some warnings that using a church for entertainment purposes garnered ill for the future, Ford welcomed the first guests to his newly renovated theater on March 19, 1862. Lucille Western, a popular actress at the time, performed in the *French Spy*, a military drama.⁵ Ford's Athenaeum, as it was then known, charged fifty cents for the parquette chairs and \$1.00 for new balcony seats. The family circle remained a more affordable twenty-five cents per seat.⁶

The theater achieved notable success throughout 1862, but the building was consumed by fire on December 30. By the time the theater was renovated, it had not operated for a full year. The interior, as well as costumes, scenery, and musical instruments were all a complete loss. The fire also damaged adjacent buildings. However, through both Ford's determination and the Lincoln administration's policy to continue

³ Kunkel's Nightingale Opera Troupe (sometimes advertised as Kunkel's Nightingale Ethiopian Opera Troupe) played in such cities as New Orleans, Charleston, Louisville, and Buffalo, and were advertised as "A New Era in Southern Minstrelsy [sic]...introducing new and pleasing phases of African life, portrayed in SONG, DANCE AND BURLESQUE." "Hibernian Hall," *Charleston Daily Courier*, October 11, 1852, Newspapers.com; "National Theatre," *Washington Union*, September 13, 1856, Newspapers.com; "Dramatic and Musical Matters," *New York Daily Herald*, February 11, 1856, Newspapers.com; "Amusements," *Daily Exchange* (Baltimore), January 12, 1859, Newspapers.com.

⁴ "The New Theatre," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), February 20, 1862, Newspapers.com. While Gifford was successfully employed as a builder and set carpenter, he also came into question during the assassination aftermath. The *Evening Star* noted on May 12, 1865, that he was disliked and known to profess Confederate sympathies. He was also in charge of building repair at Ford's Theatre and testified as part of the conspirators' trial. See "Trial of the Conspirators," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 12, 1865, Newspapers.com; also, "Extra: Trial of the Conspirators," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), May 16, 1865, Newspapers.com.

⁵ "Amusements Tonight—Ford's Atheneum," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), March 19, 1862, Newspapers.com.

⁶ Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 9.

construction projects in the city, Ford engaged James Gifford again to build a new, grander theater to replace the charred walls of the previous structure.⁷ On March 2, 1863, the *New York Herald* announced:

*The cornerstone of Ford's new theatre and Academy of Music was laid on the site of the edifice recently burned . . . The new theatre is to be completed in seventy-five days. It is to be seventy-two feet in width (twice that of the old building) by one hundred and ten in depth, and in order to secure this amount of space the adjacent buildings have been purchased, and will be removed.*⁸

Ford did, in fact, acquire additional land to fulfill his vision for a new theater. He leased land to the south, surveyed as Lot 9, for ninety-nine years. However, additional space was still necessary, and two weeks prior to the *New York Herald* article, on February 23, 1863, he purchased a section of Lot 11 immediately to the north. Combined with his option to purchase Lot 10, the former First Baptist Church lot that he had originally leased, Ford created the opportunity for not only a larger theater, but also investment support. He raised over \$75,000 for construction.⁹

Construction lasted over seventy-five days, and reports seemed to view the building progress positively. The *National Republican* reported that the project was “fast approaching completion” on August 1, 1863, and noted that the “stage is deep and broad.”¹⁰ Gifford encountered foundation challenges in dealing with the local sandy soil, but eventually found a base of blue clay to support the building. The New Ford's Theatre soon dominated the surrounding one- and two-story buildings lining Tenth Street at the time. Three stories in height with three large vents along the front-gable roof, the new theater appeared to be all that Ford had promised. However, important exterior details like statuary and cornice moldings were never installed (Figure 1.3).¹¹

Ford's New Theatre opened on August 26, 1863, and drew considerable attention in the midst of war and continued strife throughout Washington, DC. President Lincoln was among those drawn to the new theater by November 1863, visiting at least nine times during his presidency. He famously attended Ford's, Grover's, and other District of Columbia theaters often as a respite from the pressures of his office and as a diversion for his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln.¹²

Although war continued to change Washington, DC, and a system of fortifications now surrounded the city, progress continued on the expansion of the Capitol Building. By the dawn of 1865, the Capitol dome was completed. Lincoln was inaugurated for a second term on March 4. The end of the Civil War was all but inevitable following the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox Court House. It appeared that the nation was on the cusp of a new, uncertain phase that would require careful steps toward reunification. Intense debate raged over the treatment of soldiers, former Confederate states and sympathizers, and millions of newly emancipated persons.

⁷ The missing Gifford drawings from 1863 remain one of the great mysteries associated with Ford's Theatre. Significant efforts were made throughout the preparations for the interior reconstruction of the mid-1960s. Olszewski and others combed agency and local archives but were unable to locate the original plans. For a full discussion of those efforts, see Chapter 4.

⁸ “Theatrical,” *New York Herald*, March 2, 1863, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1863-03-02/ed-1/seq-8/>.

⁹ Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 11–13, 17–19.

¹⁰ “The Drama—A New Theatre in Washington” *National Republican* (Washington, DC) August 1, 1863, Newspapers.com.

¹¹ Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 23.

¹² See Roger Meersman and Robert Boyer, “The National Theatre in Washington: Buildings and Audiences, 1835-1972,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 71/72 (1971/1972): 227–229, JSTOR.



Figure 1.3. Ford's New Theatre, ca. 1865. This photograph was taken following the assassination and shows clearly the unfinished cornice and other details of the building. The Star Saloon is visible to the immediate right of the theater (Ford's Theatre, scene of the assassination. Prints and Photographs Division, LOC).

In the midst of this critical uncertainty, there was time for celebration in Washington. The war had all but ended, and President Lincoln decided to attend Ford's Theatre on April 14 for a performance of *Our American Cousin*. President and Mrs. Lincoln had hoped General Grant and his wife would accompany them to the theater that evening, but Grant declined the invitation. His wife had already planned for them to travel to New Jersey to visit their children.¹³ Lincoln arrived at the theater approximately thirty minutes into the night's performance (around 8:30 that evening) with his wife, Major Henry Rathbone, and Rathbone's fiancée, Clara Harris. Prior to his arrival, handbills had been reprinted to remove the notice of General Grant's attendance. The partition between dress circle boxes seven and eight was removed to create what John Ford called the "state box."¹⁴ Harry Ford, co-manager and John Ford's brother, draped the front of the box in two flags and outfitted it with furniture from staff and actors' rooms in the theater. John Wilkes Booth arrived at the theater on horseback by 9:00 p.m. and passed underneath the Ford's stage to the Star Saloon, stopping for a whiskey before re-entering the theater and proceeding to the state box. The Washington Metropolitan police officer assigned to guard the president that evening was nowhere to be found. Booth presented his card to Lincoln's valet, seated near the outer door of the box, and shortly thereafter went through the outer door, braced it shut behind him, and peered through a hole in the inner

¹³ Ron Chernow, *Grant* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 523; John Y. Simon, ed., *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant (Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant)* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 155–156.

¹⁴ "The Assassination: Statement of Mr. John T. Ford," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), second edition, April 25, 1865, Newspapers.com; "The Assassination Plot," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 17, 1865, Newspapers.com. Although today it is often known as the "president's box" or the "presidential box," the private double box where Lincoln was seated on the night of the assassination was never specifically reserved for presidential use. Numerous contemporary newspaper accounts of the assassination refer to President Lincoln's box as the "state box."

door. President Lincoln's love of the theater ended in tragedy when Booth entered the box and fired his concealed Deringer,¹⁵ inflicting a fatal wound.¹⁶

The Immediate Aftermath

In the chaos that followed Booth's actions, the theater immediately changed from a site of amusement to one of tragedy. A similar fate befell the Petersen House across Tenth Street, where Lincoln spent his last hours. While Booth succeeded in leaping from the box and escaping the theater and Washington, DC, the ensuing manhunt ended in Booth's death on April 26, 1865. The theater was in turmoil following Booth's exit and Lincoln's removal to the Petersen House. Soldiers secured the street. After visiting the seriously injured secretary of state, William Seward, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton arrived at Lincoln's bedside.¹⁷ By the time of Stanton's arrival, guards were monitoring the significant crowd that had gathered in Tenth Street. As people learned of the news, the crowd continued to grow. Stanton issued a formal report of the assassination that was published the following morning. The headline news instantly made Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House sites of national focus.¹⁸

Stanton's official account of the events that evening was issued in his capacity as secretary of war at 1:30 a.m. on April 15. The *New York Times* reprinting noted that "a military guard was placed in front of the private residence to which the president had been conveyed. An immense crowd was in front of it..."¹⁹ Stanton limited access to the guarded theater in the days that followed, permitting a few people to retrieve their belongings and permitting officials to gather evidence and documentation for the ongoing murder investigation. He also allowed photographer Alexander Gardner and an assistant to Gardner's rival, Mathew Brady, to document the interior.²⁰ Theaters throughout the city remained closed. Letters and reports from the period indicated that general grief and threats of retaliation echoed throughout the city as flags were lowered to half-staff and Vice President Andrew Johnson was inaugurated as president on April 15, 1865.²¹

Ford's Theatre remained closed throughout the trial of Booth's associates from May to July 1865. John Ford was visiting Richmond, Virginia, at the time of the assassination and was later detained on April 18 in Baltimore as a part of Stanton's efforts to determine the scope and depth of the conspiracy against Lincoln and his administration. The War Department exercised complete control of the building, much to the

¹⁵ A Deringer is a small percussion pistol manufactured by Henry Deringer in the 1850s and 1860s. The pistol was easily concealed in one's pocket and carried only a single shot. News coverage of Lincoln's assassination and Booth's Deringer pocket pistol caused the model to become so popular that it was copied by numerous other firearms manufacturers. The term used in this report, "Deringer," denotes a Henry Deringer pocket pistol, while the eponymous "deringer" or "derringer" can refer to a pocket pistol of the same era from any manufacturer. For more on Deringer pistols and Booth's Deringer, see Sally A. Schehl and Carlo J. Rosati, "The Booth Deringer—Genuine Artifact or Replica?" *Forensic Science Communications* 3, no. 1 (January 2001), <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/about-us/lab/forensic-science-communications/fsc/jan2001/schehl.htm>.

¹⁶ For additional resources detailing the events of April 14, 1865, see Edward Steers, Jr., *Blood on the Moon: The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), and Michael W. Kaufmann, *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies* (New York: Random House, 2004).

¹⁷ Seward had been attacked by Lewis Powell, alias Lewis Payne/Paine, as part of the Lincoln assassination plot.

¹⁸ "A Great National Calamity: President Lincoln Assassinated," *Sun* (Baltimore), April 15, 1865, Newspapers.com; "Awful Event: President Lincoln Shot by an Assassin," *New York Times*, April 15, 1865, Newspapers.com; Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson, Volume II*. ed. Edgar Thaddeus Welles. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 283–290.

¹⁹ "Awful Event," *New York Times*.

²⁰ Nicholas J. C. Pistor, *Shooting Lincoln: Mathew Brady, Alexander Gardner, and the Race to Photograph the Story of the Century* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2017), 88–92.

²¹ Thomas F. Schwartz, "Grief, Souvenirs, and Enterprise following Lincoln's Assassination," *Illinois Historical Journal* 83, no. 4 (1990): 259–264, JSTOR.

frustration of Ford upon his release on May 27. The Petersen House continued in the private ownership of the Petersen family.

The War Department's control of the theater was significant not just for limiting access to the crime scene during the spring and summer of that year, but also for marking the beginning of the site's federal management. Although the property seizure was temporary at that time and access could only be secured by permission from Secretary Stanton, officials, soldiers, and their guests were permitted access escorted by an officer stationed on site. Guests often quickly clipped bits of fabric from the drapes and flags, already torn from Booth's leap to the stage, which became souvenirs.²²

Debate regarding the fate of the theater began just as quickly as the desire for souvenirs developed. The *National Republican* published a note on April 21, 1865, relating:

I see that the Washington correspondent of the New York World states that Ford's Theatre is to remain closed as a place of amusement, and to be removed. Whether this be so or not, I cannot say; but if it is to be reopened...hereafter the double private box in which President Lincoln was assassinated shall remain unoccupied and unused, and as it stood at the time of the murder. Let its silent walls and vacant seats forevermore tell to our children and to strangers, in mute but eloquent language, where was perpetrated the foulest crime of all the ages; and let the room so consecrated by the blood of the Great Martyr to Liberty be henceforth closed to the devotee of pleasure.

*If the theatre is to be torn down, as stated, I beg to suggest that its present site with enough of the contiguous ground to make a handsome square, be secured as the spot whereon to build the proposed monument to Abraham the Good.*²³

Similar suggestions were published in *The Sun* encouraging both the demolition of the theater and establishment of a memorial in its place. The article notes that President Johnson had placed "the flag belonging to the Treasury Guards, being that which adorned the front of the box at Ford's theatre" on display at the Treasury Department.²⁴ A national debate was brewing over the treatment of the site. Demolition, memorialization, and continued use of Ford's Theatre were all considered; however, the Petersen House was largely excluded from those discussions. While there were visitors to the Petersen House, the visits do not appear to have been regulated and guarded in the same manner as Ford's. An account from April 30, 1865, describes visiting the house and viewing the room in which Lincoln died, noting that William Clark, who rented the room from the Petersens, "has slept in it since the President's death."²⁵ At that time, it appears that the bloodstained pillow, slippers, and the president's shoes were also displayed outside the room.

Military orders closing theaters and other businesses in Washington, DC, Baltimore, and other cities were gradually lifted by the end of April, but Ford's Theatre remained closed (Figure 1.4).²⁶ Threats to burn the theater remained active as the investigation continued.²⁷ As noted, John Ford was detained until the end of May under suspicion of involvement with the plot, and testified during the trials after his release.²⁸

²² Schwartz, 246.

²³ "Good Suggestions—Ford's Theatre and a Monument to Abraham Lincoln," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), April 21, 1865, Newspapers.com.

²⁴ "Departure of the Remains of the Late President," *Sun* (Baltimore), April 22, 1865, Newspapers.com.

²⁵ "The Room Where President Lincoln Died," *New York Herald*, April 30, 1865, Newspapers.com.

²⁶ Baltimore's ban was lifted on April 22, 1865 and Washington, DC's concert venues and theatres staggered openings. Many theaters near Ford's remained closed longer than others in the city. For an example, see "Ford's New Theatre. Tenth Street, above Pennsylvania Avenue," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 22, 1865, Newspapers.com.

²⁷ "Attempt to Burn Ford's Theatre," *New York Herald*, May 2, 1865, Newspapers.com.

²⁸ "Conspiracy Trials: Proceedings of Wednesday," *Sun* (Baltimore), June 1, 1865, Newspapers.com.

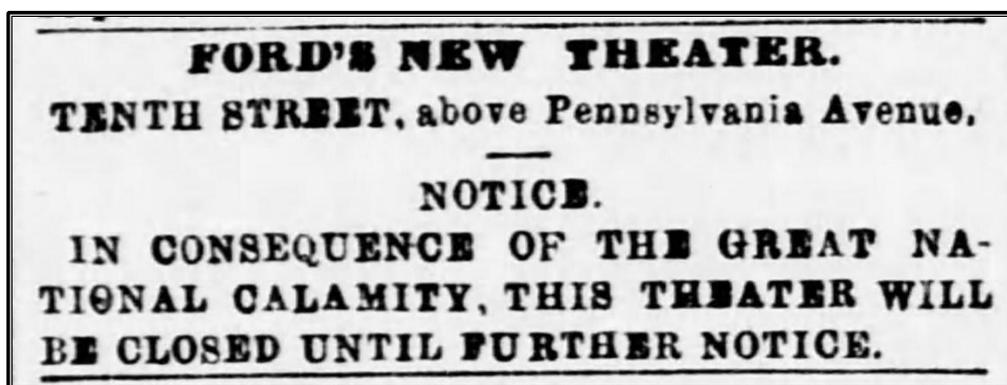


Figure 1.4. Closure announcement in *The Evening Star*, April 22, 1865 (Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Courtesy of the LOC).

In the month after Lincoln's assassination, citizens of all classes across the northern United States pledged donations for national and local monuments to Lincoln. In Washington, DC, popular discussion focused on the creation of a memorial at a to-be-determined site in the city, supported by the formation of the Lincoln National Monument Association.²⁹ The organization set a fundraising goal of \$100,000 initially with the intent of building a monument before the end of 1865. These ambitious goals received press and support. John Ford supported the organization after his release by hosting a fundraiser at his Holliday Street Theatre in Baltimore in June.³⁰ On June 13, the week following their national meeting in Philadelphia, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) announced their intent to purchase Ford's Theatre. The building's future seemed to be secured as an active space functioning as a memorial, boarding rooms, and a library.³¹ The guards were formally withdrawn from Ford's Theatre on June 22, and Gifford received the keys on behalf of Ford. However, the theater could not re-open for performances.³² The terms of the building's sale to the YMCA included \$100,000 for the building and furnishings as well as perpetual land-lease, pending the YMCA's ability to raise funds for the purchase by July 1.³³ In the weeks that followed, it became increasingly clear that the YMCA was struggling to raise sufficient funds. They decided to not make their first payment, essentially ending the negotiated terms. Ford turned his plans to reopening the theater.³⁴

Ford announced the re-opening of the theater on July 6, 1865, in Washington, DC, newspapers for a performance on Monday, July 10 as a benefit for the Lincoln National Monument Fund. He sold over 200 tickets. The play scheduled for that night was *The Octoroon*, originally to have been presented on April 15.³⁵ However, there was still strong opposition to the opening from Secretary Stanton and the War Department. An account published in *The Sun* summarized the turn of events of that evening:

...an order was issued from the War Department on Monday afternoon directing the building to be closed; and about half-past 5 o'clock in the evening Capt. Peabody, with a detachment of about thirty men, appeared on the ground, and took possession of the building, placing guards at all the entrances of the same, and

²⁹ "Monument to Abraham Lincoln in the City of Washington," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 15, 1865, Newspapers.com.

³⁰ "The Lincoln Monument Fund," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), June 7, 1865, Newspapers.com.

³¹ "Young Men's Christian Association," *Sun* (Baltimore), June 13, 1865, Newspapers.com; "Lincoln Memorial Temple in Washington, D.C.," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), June 23, 1865, Newspapers.com.

³² "Withdrawal of the Guard from Ford's Theatre," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), June 23, 1865, Newspapers.com.

³³ "Withdrawal of the Guard," *Evening Star*.

³⁴ "By Telegraph. From Washington," *Sun* (Baltimore), July 3, 1865, Newspapers.com.

³⁵ "Ford's New Theatre," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), July 6, 1865, Newspapers.com.

notifying the manager that he would not be allowed to open the theatre for the present. Shortly afterwards a large poster (bearing the words, "Washington, July 10 – Closed by order of the War Department") was placed upon the door of the theatre. At about 7 o'clock, the hour at which it was announced the doors would be opened, numbers began to flock towards the theatre, the majority of whom, after pausing a few moments on the pavement in front of the building, quietly took their departure. Parties continued to linger about the building as late as 9 o'clock, but there were no riotous demonstrations manifested. In anticipation that some disturbance might occur, General Augur, commanding this department, instructed Captain Hill, who has charge of the "provisional cavalry" stationed in the city, to hold himself in readiness for service at a moment's notice. All, however, passed off quietly, and at 10 o'clock the guard having charge of the theatre was greatly reduced.³⁶

Gideon Welles, secretary of the navy under both Lincoln and Johnson, recorded in his diary the impression that Secretary Stanton and Secretary Seward had been in discussion about Ford's Theatre, coming to the conclusion that it was inappropriate to have the site reopen to the public for performances. Ford, arguing for the theater to be reopened, met with Stanton briefly prior to the Cabinet meeting.³⁷ Welles noted that Stanton expressed significant disdain to the Cabinet for permitting Ford to continue his business, perceiving that additional profits would come from the association with Lincoln's death. *The New York Herald* echoed similar concerns on July 12th, reporting that it was "a violation of the public sense of propriety. . . . It was an attempt to coin the blood of a great man."³⁸ While Welles expressed his own reservations, he also acknowledged the problems of seizing an individual's income-earning property and "presume[d] he will pay Ford for depriving him of his property."³⁹

Ford threatened legal action as the War Department continued to prevent the operation of the theater and the War Department began leasing the building for \$1,500 per month in July 1865.⁴⁰ However, it appears that the payments may have been delayed based on Ford's letters. On August 3, he notes that he had been able to rent the theater to a minstrel band temporarily and was awaiting government payments.⁴¹ The rental agreement continued throughout 1865 until congressional appropriations were approved on April 7, 1866, "[for] the purchase of the property in Washington city, known as Ford's Theatre, for the deposit and safe-keeping of documentary papers relating to the soldiers of the army of the United States, and of the museum of the medical and surgical department of the army, one hundred thousand dollars."⁴² Ford had

³⁶ "The Closing of Ford's Washington Theatre," *Sun* (Baltimore), July 12, 1865, Newspapers.com; "Closing of Ford's Theatre," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), July 11, 1865, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1865-07-11/ed-1/seq-2/>. Some accounts of the evening's events state that General George Giles presented Ford with the order that the theater not be opened. See "Ford's Theatre Ordered By The War Department Not To Be Opened," *New York Herald*, July 11, 1865, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1865-07-11/ed-1/seq-1/>.

³⁷ "Ford's Theatre," *New York Herald*, July 12, 1865, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1865-07-12/ed-1/seq-1/>.

³⁸ "Miscellaneous News—Ford's Theatre," *New York Herald*, July 12, 1865, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1865-07-12/ed-1/seq-4/>.

³⁹ Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles*, 330–332. See also, Walter Stahr, *Stanton: Lincoln's War Secretary* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 456–460.

⁴⁰ "Mr. John T. Ford vs. The United States Government," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), July 20, 1865, Newspapers.com; "Ford's Theatre Rented by the Government," *Sun* (Baltimore), July 26, 1865, Newspapers.com; "Ford's Theatre," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), July 26, 1865, Newspapers.com.

⁴¹ Heritage Auction Galleries, *The Dr. John K. Lattimer Collection of Lincolniana* (Dallas: Heritage Capital Corporation, 2008), 91; Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 61.

⁴² "An Act making additional Appropriations, and to supply the Deficiencies in the Appropriations for sundry civil Expenses of the Government for the fiscal Year ending the Thirtieth of June, eighteen hundred and sixty-six, and for other Purposes." *U.S. Statutes at Large* 39 (1866): 23, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=014/llsl014.db&recNum=54>.

already received \$12,000 in rents and the Treasury Department paid the remaining \$88,000 in July 1866, ultimately the same amount that the YMCA had offered for the structure.⁴³

Remodeling, the War Department, and the Office of Records and Pensions

On August 4, 1865, the office of the chief quartermaster, D. H. Rucker, advertised for proposals to convert Ford's Theatre into a three-story office building (Figure 1.5).⁴⁴ Although awaiting the congressional appropriation to formally purchase the theater, the government proceeded with demolitions that would make the building's use for plays and other entertainment unsuitable. A few days after the quartermaster's notice, interior demolition had already begun and the state box was removed to an undisclosed location. Relic hunters continued to visit the site, scouring materials left on the sidewalk. The theater interior that had been a fixture of national focus for months was completely removed.⁴⁵ The contract for construction was awarded to Richard Dunbar of Brooklyn, New York, formerly a contractor on the Washington Aqueduct project, for \$28,500.⁴⁶ Dunbar continued the interior demolition down to the four exterior walls in order to retrofit the building for three floors supported by iron columns and other fireproofing materials.⁴⁷

The interior changes at Ford's Theatre quelled memorial discussions surrounding the site. Newspapers like *The New York Herald* provided updates on the progress at the former theater, now fully under government control, and observed that "[a] large number of strangers visit Ford's theatre every day, but the place has been so entirely changed that there is little gratification to be obtained."⁴⁸ The construction project, with Edwin Clarke serving as chief architect, had officially concluded by November 1865.⁴⁹ In the meantime, the War Department and the Army's Surgeon General's Office planned for their occupation of the newly remodeled building. Those plans, championed by Secretary Stanton, were included in the congressional appropriation language.

⁴³ Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 61.

⁴⁴ "Proposals for Converting Ford's Theatre into a Fire-Proof Building," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), August 4, 1865, Newspapers.com. Research has yet to determine the nature, if any, of famed engineer Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs' involvement with the construction planning for Ford's Theatre's new office interior. During this period, Meigs was focused on Civil War burials and designing a new War Department building, and it appears he delegated most of the Ford's Theatre responsibilities to Chief Quartermaster Rucker. There is, however, correspondence from Meigs in 1866 regarding the purchase price and transfer of title for the Ford's Theatre property from John T. Ford to the US government. Montgomery C. Meigs, letter to Hon. John Wilson, Treasury Department, July 17, 1866, FOTH Museum Collection, NPSNCR.

⁴⁵ "Ford's Theatre," *New York Herald*, August 16, 1865, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1865-08-16/ed-1/seq-5/>; "Judge Wayne—Ford's Theatre—Arrest of Moseby—Troops Mustered Out—From the South—Criminal Court—Prices of Marketing—Amusing Sale—Tournament—Photographs Seized—Requisition from Maryland—Georgetown Matters, &c.," *Sun* (Baltimore), August 11, 1865, Newspapers.com.

⁴⁶ "Ford's Theatre—Contract Awarded," *Daily Morning Chronicle* (Washington, DC), August 18, 1865, GenealogyBank; "Local News," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), Second Edition, December 27, 1865, GenealogyBank.

⁴⁷ "Ford's Theatre Building," *New York Herald*, August 19, 1865, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1865-08-19/ed-1/seq-5/>; "Opening of Bids," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), August 18, 1865, Newspapers.com.

⁴⁸ "Ford's Theatre Building," *New York Herald*, November 4, 1865, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1865-11-04/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁴⁹ "Ford's Theatre Remodeled," *New York Herald*, November 28, 1865, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1865-11-28/ed-1/seq-1/>; "The Work at Ford's Theatre," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), October 11, 1865, Newspapers.com.

**PROPOSALS FOR CONVERTING
FORD'S THEATRE
INTO A FIRE-PROOF BUILDING.**

CHIEF QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE,
DEPOT OF WASHINGTON,
WASHINGTON, D. C., August 4, 1865.

Scaled proposals will be received at this office until THURSDAY, August 17, 1865, at 12 o'clock, m., for converting Ford's Theatre, in this city, into a fire-proof building.

The building will be divided into three stories, with cast iron posts, wrought iron beams, of Phoenixville make, and brick arches and floors. The flooring to be laid in cement.

Plans and specifications can be seen, on and after August 6, 1865, at the office of Captain J. H. Crowell, A. Q. M., corner of Eighteenth and G streets, in this city.

The proposals should state the sum asked for making the required alterations, in accordance with the plans and specifications, and the time at which the work will be completed. Time of completion will be taken into consideration in awarding the contract.

A bond in the sum of ten thousand dollars, signed by the contractor and two sureties, will be required for the faithful performance of the contract, both as to the quality of the work and materials, and the time of its completion.

The responsibility of the sureties must be certified to by a United States District Attorney, to the effect that they are, individually, worth over and above their debts and liabilities, the amount of the required bond.

Proposals should be addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed, "PROPOSALS FOR CONVERTING FORD'S THEATRE INTO A FIRE-PROOF BUILDING."

D. H. RUCKER,
Brevet Major Gen. and Chief Quartermaster,
au4-12t Depot of Washington.

Figure 1.5. Public advertisement in the August 4, 1865, *National Republican* for Ford's Theatre conversion to a three-story office building (Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Courtesy of the LOC).

As it became clear that Congress would approve funds for the purchase of Ford's Theatre rather than continuing to lease from Ford, the chief quartermaster's office began advertising contracts for interior finishes and systems and planning for the relocation of government employees.⁵⁰ With the significant progress by the fall of 1866, the US Army Medical Museum began moving their collections from the Corcoran Building on H Street to the former theater's new third floor in October 1866.⁵¹ The building that had originally served as the Star Saloon was slated to become a medical laboratory on the first floor, surgeon general offices on the second floor, and offices for additional staff on the third floor. The first and second floors of the former theater were also assigned to the surgeon general as office space for clerks in the Division of Records and Pensions, working through the massive backlog of Civil War pension applications (Figure 1.6). The building to the north was reserved for photographers.⁵²

⁵⁰ The award for heating went to Tuomay and Elder, a New York-based steam heat and ventilation company, demonstrating the level of effort invested in the new office spaces. "Ford Theatre," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), June 14, 1865, Newspapers.com.

⁵¹ "The U.S. Medical Museum," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), October 25, 1865, Newspapers.com; "Ford's Theatre—The Surgeon General's Office," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), October 30, 1865, Newspapers.com.

⁵² "Ford's Theatre—The Surgeon General's Office," *Evening Star*.

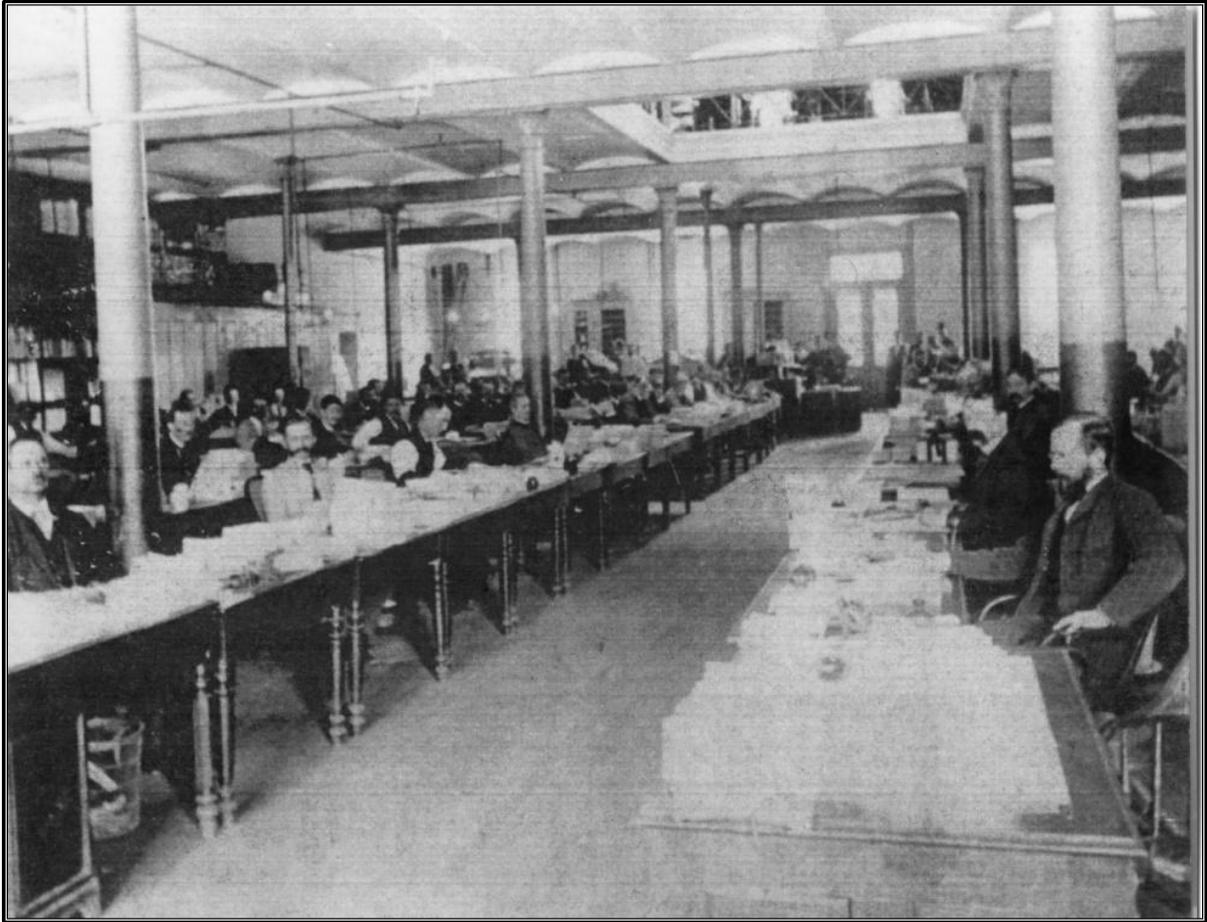


Figure 1.6. Office of Records and Pensions, New Ford's Building, ca. 1880s (Ford's Theatre Collapse, Box 1, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS).

The new offices and museum under the surgeon general demonstrated the rapid change army medical services had experienced during the Civil War. Recognizing the need for additional training and experience gleaned from tragedy on the battlefield, the Army Medical Museum was founded in 1862, featuring a collection of bones demonstrating the effects of bullet wounds. The work to create a medical reference book surrounding the museum's holdings began prior to the move to Tenth Street and continued in the new offices. From 1870 to 1880, the office published the *Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion* from the former Ford's Theatre, then known as the New Ford's Building, through the direction of Surgeon General J. K. Barnes and Dr. George Otis. Barnes had removed part of John Wilkes Booth's spine post-mortem as a medical specimen that was eventually displayed in the museum in the former theater.⁵³ In addition to medical specimens, the Surgeon General's Office's Division of Records and Pensions relocated over 16,000 bound document groups and an accompanying library in December 1866.⁵⁴

The museum gained notoriety in Washington when it opened on April 16, 1867, and the building became a hub of activity for both the public and government employees. The library grew from 2,200 volumes in 1865, prior to the move, to 10,000 books just five years later. Dr. J. J. Woodward ran the Division of Records and Pensions while Dr. Otis oversaw the Division of Surgical Records in addition to responsibilities at the museum. Although the matter of the theater's purchase appeared resolved in the press, occasional congressional debate revisited the circumstances of its purchase. In 1869, *The Congressional Globe*, summarizing the end of the 40th Congress, included the transcript of a debate between James Gillespie Blaine, a representative from Maine and eventual Speaker of the House during the 41st Congress, and Representative Charles Eldredge of Wisconsin regarding additional appropriations for the Army Medical Museum that diverged into the circumstances of the federal government's purchase of the theater.⁵⁵ Eldredge protested the purchase and the seizure of private property for government use, to which Blaine retorted that "the Secretary of War in the case alluded to acted in a way which the Congress of the United States clearly approved in rescuing that building which was the scene of the greatest sacrifice that has been made in modern times."⁵⁶ Blaine continued his rebuff, charging that Eldredge would prefer the building host "common amusement" rather than its current government function.⁵⁷ The heated debate ultimately summarized the common, opposing opinions of the time. Further diverging from appropriations, Eldredge emphasized that Lincoln attended the theater that night out of great admiration of the arts, and another senator interjected that Ford's Theatre should be given to Mrs. Lincoln with an additional pension as she continued to struggle in the years after her husband's death.⁵⁸ Clearly, the building remained a site of contention.

Despite the ongoing discussions surrounding the former Ford's Theatre, by 1874 there were 134 clerks working in the building along with an anatomist, an engineer, a messenger, and twenty-two employees serving as either laborers or guards.⁵⁹ The library continued to expand in the 1870s and 1880s, with Dr. John Shaw Billings driving that expansion from 1867 to 1895.⁶⁰ The museum, while a curiosity, took on its own gravity as visitors looked over the remains of both Union and Confederate soldiers in the years following the Civil War. In its first year, the exhibits drew 6,000 people, but it is hard to distinguish visitor

⁵³ "Grave of J. Wilkes Booth," *Sun* (Baltimore), May 23, 1867, Newspapers.com.

⁵⁴ Michael G. Rhode, "The Rise and Fall of the Army Medical Museum and Library," *Washington History* 18, no. 1/2 (2006): 78–97, JSTOR; "The Surgeon General's Office Now Open for Business," *New York Herald*, April 21, 1867, Newspapers.com.

⁵⁵ F. & J. Rives and George A. Bailey, *The Congressional Globe Containing the Debates and Proceedings of the Third Session Fortieth Congress* (Washington, DC: Office of the Congressional Globe, 1869), 947, Hathitrust. Representative Charles Eldredge's name is recorded as Eldridge in this document.

⁵⁶ Rives and Bailey, *The Congressional Globe*, 947.

⁵⁷ Rives and Bailey, 947.

⁵⁸ Rives and Bailey, 947–948.

⁵⁹ "War Department," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), July 23, 1874, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁰ Rhode, "Rise and Fall," 78–97.

motives. While many may have visited out of curiosity or for medical education, there were likely a few that wandered in knowing the building as the site of the Lincoln assassination. By 1874, yearly visitation had risen to over 31,000 people.⁶¹ Congress also approved the War Department's purchase of additional land surrounding the museum in former Lot 11 in 1878, appropriating \$6,974.81 for the transaction.⁶²

The 1880s brought additional changes to the Army Medical Museum. Dr. Billings assumed the leadership of the museum as it officially merged with the library in 1883. The final volume of *Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion* was underway at that point, and the newly merged offices required renewed purpose and direction. Billings pushed the acquisition of additional specimens beyond the Civil War collection and advocated for research in the fields of comparative anatomy and anthropology, with a later focus on pathology. These activities filled the former theater with books, exhibits, and study objects. Visitation leapt again to 40,000 in 1881, and arguments mounted that the collection had moved beyond military importance to general scientific and public health significance.⁶³ Some reports also noted that the exterior walls had begun to shift; as early as 1880 news articles shared that "attention is called to the overcrowded and unsafe condition of the building on 10th street."⁶⁴ A later inspection by the Architect of the Capitol announced that the rear wall was, in fact, safe.⁶⁵ However, the building was overcrowded regardless of structural integrity. After significant lobbying through both the Surgeon General's Office and the American Medical Association, Congress approved a new building located east of the Smithsonian Castle in 1885.⁶⁶ By August 1887, the museum and library staff began removing the collections from the third floor to the new building, drawing considerable attention by using a wooden chute to slide the books and collection boxes to the street curb. Billings worked out of the new building, ensuring the proper placement and tracking of the items as they arrived in the new building.⁶⁷ The move was entering its final stages in December 1887 when:

*the pavement outside [Ford's Theatre] has been littered with bones, and with jars and cases containing various parts of the human body...make a brief halt on the sidewalk in transit...to the new Army Medical Museum....In the past thousands of visitors have toiled up the iron stairs, attracted in part, perhaps, by the objects to be seen in the museum; but the chief interest of everyone upon his first visit to the building has been in seeing the spot where President Lincoln was shot by Booth.*⁶⁸

Although over twenty-five years had passed, tourists continued to visit to experience the site of Lincoln's assassination, even though the interior no longer remained.⁶⁹ Employees at the museum could readily point out the spot of the assassination to visitors and provide a summary of events to those that asked.⁷⁰

⁶¹ Rhode, "Rise and Fall."

⁶² "The District in Congress: Army Medical Museum," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 5, 1878, Newspapers.com.

⁶³ Rhode, "Rise and Fall."

⁶⁴ "Report of the Surgeon General. Erection of a New Army Medical Museum Recommended," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), November 15, 1880, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁵ "Army Medical Museum Safe. The Rear Wall Not In Danger Of Falling," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 5, 1887, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁶ Rhode, "Rise and Fall"; "New Army Medical Museum Building," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), March 26, 1885, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁷ The Hirshorn Museum is now located on the site of the Army Medical Museum and Library, built about 1887.

⁶⁸ "The History Of A Crime: Ford's Old Theatre and Its Tragic Associations," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), December 17, 1887, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁹ "The Great Medical Library. Cart Loads of Books on Their Way to the New Building," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), August 20, 1887, Newspapers.com.

⁷⁰ "History Of A Crime," *Evening Star*. At the time of the reporter's visit to the theatre, museum guides were relating a variety of stories. Some thought that Booth had jumped through a window to the exterior alley rather than onto the stage. Army Medical Museum Superintendent Flynn also shared that the museum never contained an

A Second Tragedy

After the Army Medical Museum and Library moved from Tenth Street, 160 clerks remained working for the Surgeon General's Office.⁷¹ The War Department and the Division of Records and Pensions took over the third floor previously occupied by the museum, and the building housed approximately 500 total employees. At the same time, Colonel Fred Ainsworth assumed leadership of the division and began soliciting contractors for interior improvements. His efforts to reorganize and update the building ended in disaster on June 9, 1893. Basement excavations destabilized the building causing forty feet of the third floor to collapse into the two floors below, killing twenty-two and injuring sixty-five people (Figure 1.7). Spectators gathered as others searched for survivors amidst the rubble. Once again, Ford's Theatre was surrounded by a large crowd witnessing tragic loss of life.⁷²

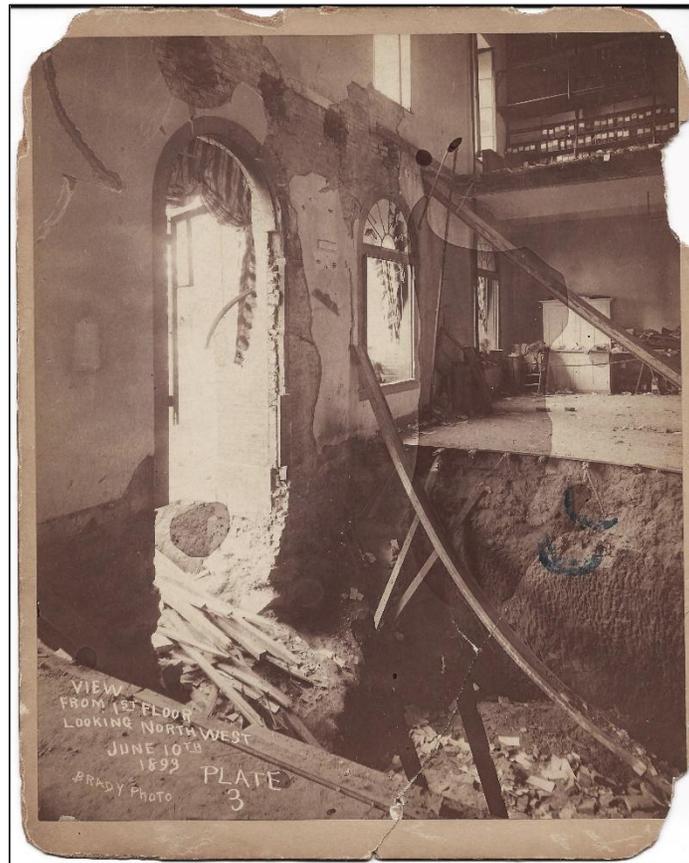


Figure 1.7. Collapse of New Ford's Building, June 10, 1893 (Photo by Matthew Brady. View from 1st floor looking north west, June 10th, 1893, Plate 3, FOTH 8879, FOTH Museum Collection. Courtesy of the NPS).

exhibit to Lincoln of any kind; the only items relating to the assassination in their collections were the three vertebrae that Dr. Barnes saved after conducting Booth's autopsy, which were in a small display in one of the room's corners. Flynn stated that people regularly asked why the president's box had not been preserved.

⁷¹ "The Post-Office Problem. A New Building Hard to Find and the Old One in a Wretched Condition," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), March 28, 1888, Newspapers.com.

⁷² "A Crash in Ford's Theatre: Many Government Clerks Killed Or Maimed," *New York Times*, June 10, 1893, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Public outcry over the building's collapse was immediate, as was a general fear that significant records relating to military service had been lost. By 1893, the Division of Records and Pensions had largely completed copying original Civil War medical records. The clerks were consumed in creating reference cards to facilitate pension claims and records of military service. The severe loss of life was now coupled with the loss of crucial records. In the following week, a coroner's jury charged Colonel Ainsworth, the excavation contractor, the project engineer, and the project superintendent with criminal negligence.⁷³ On July 13, 1893, furious protests against Colonel Ainsworth erupted during the inquest held following the building's collapse.⁷⁴ The charges were ultimately dismissed, with the indictment of Colonel Ainsworth dropped on May 31, 1894.⁷⁵

Despite the ongoing criminal proceedings and inquiries into the collapse, the government appropriated \$6,000 for repairs to the building, which were completed in December 1893. Suggestions that the Division of Records and Pensions return to the site were criticized; it seemed cruel to send clerks back to a building that had come to represent both past and recent tragedy. Again, public opinion was divided over the building's use, which varied widely from demolition to conversion to a public library.⁷⁶ At that time, publications for the Adjutant General were stored in the building and the upper stories repaired. Congress took up the issues of compensation for the injured and dependents of the deceased, as well as a review of the building's condition, during the second session of the 53rd Congress.⁷⁷ The building remained a publications warehouse until 1931.⁷⁸

The Petersen House

Although Ford's Theatre attracted significant federal attention in the years following the assassination, the Petersen House (Figure 1.8) directly across the street remained in private ownership. However, the difference in ownership did not dissuade people from regularly visiting, some prompted by guidebooks listing the address in accounts of the notable historical sites along Tenth Street.⁷⁹ William Petersen constructed the three-story house in 1849 and worked as a tailor. The house was large enough to run a boarding house, leasing rooms to the relatively transient population in Washington, DC, during the middle years of the century. William Clark, who worked in the Quartermaster General's Office as a clerk, rented the room on the first floor where Lincoln spent his final hours.⁸⁰

⁷³ "Ainsworth Held Responsible: The Verdict of the Coroner's Jury in the Ford's Theatre Disaster" *New York Times*, June 20, 1893, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁴ "Col. Ainsworth in Danger: Threatened by a Mob at the Ford's Theatre Inquest," *New York Times*, June 13, 1893, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁵ "Ainsworth a Free Man: An Indictment that Had No Justification Finally Quashed," *New York Times*, June 1, 1894, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁶ "The Government Has Repaired," *New York Times*, December 31, 1893, Newspapers.com.

⁷⁷ John H. Hickox, ed., *United States Government Publications: A Monthly Catalog, Volume 10* (Washington, DC: W.H. Lowdermilk & Co., 1894), 10,

https://books.google.com/books?id=pHXQAAAAMAAJ&ppis=_c&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false; Secretary of State, *The Statutes at Large of the United States of America from August 1893 to March 1895 and Recent Treaties, Conventions, and Executive Proclamations vol. 28, 1894* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1895), 392, 932–933.

⁷⁸ Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 63.

⁷⁹ "History of a Crime," *Evening Star*.

⁸⁰ Stanley William McClure, *Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died*, National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 3, rev. ed. (1953; repr., Washington, DC: US National Park Service, 1969), 39. The room Clark rented may have been Louise Petersen's room that was vacant while she attended school in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. See J. C. Hemphill, "Deathbed Relics Here Tell of Lincoln Tragedy," *New York Times*, February 9, 1913, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.



Figure 1.8. The Petersen House (center) in 1918 (*House Lincoln died in*. Prints and Photographs Division, LOC).

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination, the Petersens attempted to continue their boarding house business. People visiting the house in the following days tore carpets, sections of blood-stained fabric, and other materials for souvenirs, further damaging the house. Clark stayed in the first floor room in the days following Lincoln's death, but boarders soon left the house. Of the six people renting rooms in 1865, only one was left in 1870.⁸¹ Throughout April and May 1865, newspapers published detailed descriptions of the house including the exterior appearance, details of the bedroom, and furnishings throughout. Many of these accounts were reprints of the descriptions first published by the *New York Times*.⁸² Traveling exhibits with stereo photography focusing on Lincoln's death included views of the Petersen House.⁸³ The site's notoriety led to a constant stream of visitors and relic hunters and, in 1913, William Petersen's son, Frank, remembered that:

They came for days...to see the room in which he had died and stole everything that they could get their hands on. They snipped pieces out of the curtains, pulled paper off the walls, and even carried away the mustard plasters we used that night. When the President was carried over from the theatre to the house that night, some drops of his blood fell upon our doorstep, and the next day men and boys dipped little pieces of paper into this blood and carried them away as mementos.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Matthew Virta, *Archeology at the Petersen House: Unearthing an Alternate History, A Cultural Resource Management Project Undertaken by the Regional Archeology Program, National Park Service, National Capital Region* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), IRMA, 13.

⁸² "Last Hours of President Lincoln," *Charleston Daily Courier*, May 2, 1865, Newspapers.com.

⁸³ "Hope Chapel, No. 720 Broadway. American Stereoscopic," *New York Times*, May 24, 1865, Newspapers.com.

⁸⁴ J. C. Hemphill, "Deathbed Relics," *New York Times*.

Small, portable mementos had greater appeal at that time than any consideration of preserving either the Petersen House or Ford's Theatre. This fact was echoed in Secretary Stanton's choice to permit photographic documentation of the Ford's Theatre interior rather than full or partial retention of the interior after the conclusion of court proceedings and the federal purchase of that building.

William Petersen and his wife, Anna, both passed away in 1871, and their children auctioned the furnishings in an attempt to raise money for the family. The children sold the house in 1878 to Louis and Anne Schade, who already lived in the area.⁸⁵ An *Evening Star* reporter visited the house in December 1887 and Louis Schade served as the guide. At that time, the room Lincoln died in had become a family sitting room. Schade published his newspaper, *The Washington Sentinel*, from the basement. The reporter noted that the family received a constant stream of curious visitors. After Schade purchased the house, he permitted the installation of a marble slab in 1883 identifying the house as the site of Lincoln's death. Schade also used the article as an opportunity to refute various rumors that he had purchased the house as a means of profit or with the expectation of eventually capitalizing on the sale of the property. While the Joint Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds had authorized \$12,000 for the purchase of the house years prior, Schade emphasized that he would have not sold the house at that time.⁸⁶

Osborn Oldroyd and the Lincolniana Collection

By 1893, the Schade family was ready to pass the care of the Petersen House to someone else and leased the building to the Memorial Association of the District of Columbia. The association then, in turn, appealed to Osborn Oldroyd to manage the residence.⁸⁷ Oldroyd was already familiar with renting buildings significant in the former president's life; he had rented the Lincoln home in Springfield, Illinois, from Robert T. Lincoln, the president's son, from 1883 to 1888. When the president's son bequeathed the house to the state of Illinois, Oldroyd continued as caretaker. He operated the museum and maintained a visitor's book listing 83,000 names by the end of his tenure in Springfield.⁸⁸ However, his caretaker agreement had dissolved with the state by 1893, and the Petersen House offered both a new residence and site suitable for his extensive Lincolniana collection. Oldroyd paid \$100 per month in rent to the Memorial Association and charged a 25-cent admission fee for touring the Lincoln artifacts he had collected for nearly 30 years.⁸⁹

By October 17, 1893, the collection was on display with over 3,000 items and opened to the public. Members of the Memorial Association assisted in growing the collection and located both Lincoln's chair from the state box at Ford's Theatre as well as his top hat. The news of this "memorial to Mr. Lincoln" drew Vice President Stevenson, senators, justices, and the secretary of the Smithsonian Institute. It was clear that this opening marked a shift in the way in which Lincoln's death was memorialized on Tenth Street. Where a visit to Ford's Theatre featured a gutted space and the recent memory of the third floor collapse earlier that year on June 10, the Petersen House had transitioned from a private space to a public dialog about Lincoln's legacy.⁹⁰

Oldroyd worked with the Memorial Association to produce a compilation book of Lincoln's speeches and other written documents in 1895 with the intent of using proceeds from the sale to purchase the building from the Schade family.⁹¹ The Petersen House continued to attract visitors to the nearly floor-to-ceiling,

⁸⁵ Virta, *Archeology at the Petersen House*, 13.

⁸⁶ "History of a Crime," *Evening Star*; McClure, *Ford's Theatre*, 39.

⁸⁷ "In Memory of Lincoln," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), October 18, 1893, Newspapers.com.

⁸⁸ Dr. Thomas Calver, "The Lincoln Museum at Washington," *Home Magazine*, April 1899, 333-335. <https://archive.org/details/lincolnmuseumatw00calv/page/332/mode/2up>.

⁸⁹ "In Memory of Lincoln," *Evening Star*.

⁹⁰ "In Memory of Lincoln," *Evening Star*.

⁹¹ "For the House Lincoln Died In: Words of Lincoln, Compiled by Osborn Oldroyd," *New York Times*, July 24, 1895, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

salon-style display of objects.⁹² However, the War Department received a congressional appropriation in June 1896 “for purchase of the house on Tenth Street, northwest, between E and F Streets, in the city of Washington, where Abraham Lincoln died, thirty thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary; for repairs of said building, after purchase, one thousand dollars; in all thirty-one thousand dollars.”⁹³ A flurry of letters between Louis Schade and the War Department followed, with Schade agreeing to accept \$30,000 for the property on July 29, 1896, in a letter to Colonel John Wilson.⁹⁴ The purchase was completed on November 10 with Oldroyd, who continued as site custodian without pay but was permitted to continue charging the twenty-five cent admission fee to visit the Oldroyd Lincoln Memorial Collection.⁹⁵ Colonel Wilson directed \$3,383 in repairs to the building during 1898 in his role as superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds.⁹⁶

The War Department now controlled both Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House. While the theater was quietly used as a warehouse, Oldroyd continued to operate the museum without the support of the Memorial Association. He entertained offers from J. P. Morgan and Henry Ford to purchase the collection as museums grew across the country, but maintained that the government should purchase the collection. The offers did prove useful in valuing the collection when Henry Ford offered \$50,000 in 1923. Oldroyd believed “it is the duty of the nation to preserve the house where Lincoln breathed his last, and to have it equipped with articles with which he was surrounded during his lifetime.”⁹⁷ He also believed in the educational value of the collection, advocating that public school students and their teachers should have access to Lincoln’s documents.

By the mid-1920s, interest in memorializing Lincoln had gained increasing support, as indicated by the successful completion of the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall in 1922. During the unveiling of bronze plaques at Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House in 1924, Representative Henry Riggs Rathbone, the son of Major Rathbone who struggled with Booth in the state box immediately after Lincoln’s assassination, spoke at the dedication. Oldroyd’s wife unveiled the “House Where Lincoln Died” sign at the Petersen House.⁹⁸ In the years that followed, Rathbone worked directly with Oldroyd in the lobbying effort for the government to purchase the collection and was dedicated to recognizing the events of April 14, 1865, that had impacted both the nation and his family directly. Championed by Rathbone, Congress finally approved the purchase of the Oldroyd Lincoln Memorial Collection in 1926 for \$50,000.⁹⁹ Because of Oldroyd’s advanced age, and “reputation for honesty,” Congress did not require him to prepare an inventory, a decision that would result in many cataloging and documentation challenges for future curators.¹⁰⁰

⁹² Calver, “Lincoln Museum at Washington,” 333–334.

⁹³ An Act Making Appropriations for Sundry Civil Expenses of the Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1897, and for Other Purposes, 54th Cong., 29 Stat. 439 (1896).

⁹⁴ Louis Schade, letter to Col. John M. Wilson, July 29, 1896, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), NPSNCR; Col. John M. Wilson, letter to Brig. Genl. Wm. P. Craighill, Chief of Engineers, US Army, August 26, 1896, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), NPSNCR; John M. Wilson, memorandum from Colonel, Corps of Engineers, US Army, to Brig. Genl. Wm. P. Craighill, Chief of Engineers, US Army, November 10, 1896, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), NPSNCR.

⁹⁵ Wilson, memorandum to Craighill, November 10, 1896.

⁹⁶ Calver, “Lincoln Museum at Washington,” 333–335.

⁹⁷ “Holds Lincoln Relics: Captain Oldroyd Refuses Offer of J. P. Morgan,” *Washington Post*, June 30, 1908, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; “Ford Offers \$50,000 for Lincoln Relics: But Colonel Oldroyd Hopes to Sell His Collection to the Government,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1923, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁹⁸ “Tablets to Lincoln Commemorate Death,” *Washington Post*, April 30, 1924, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁹⁹ “Lincoln Mementoes Sold: Colonel Oldroyd’s Washington Collection Purchased by Government for \$50,000,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 1926, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁰⁰ Josephine D. Allen, “Documenting the Lincoln Museum Collection,” *American Archivist* 26 (Oct. 1963): 464, JSTOR.

Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital

During this relatively quiet period in the history of Ford's Theatre and renewed focus on the Petersen House through the Oldroyd collection acquisition, the War Department formally transferred the buildings to the director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, effective July 1, 1928.¹⁰¹ Ulysses S. Grant III, grandson of the Civil War general and former president, had assumed the role of director in 1925 shortly after its establishment as an independent office under the president of the United States in February of that year and managed the transfer of the properties.¹⁰² The Petersen House shifted to his office in 1926, prior to Ford's Theatre. The change in oversight of Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House was evidence of the ongoing organizational shifts taking place during the growth of the federal government and Washington, DC. The move also heralded the beginning of a slow shift from military to civil service management of the city's buildings and parks.

Congress created the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks through an act combining the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds with the office of the Superintendent of the State, War and Navy Building in February 1925. The responsibility for buildings in the city had bounced between commissions and the chief engineer of the US Army in the years following the 1790 congressionally authorized commission charged with finding a suitable location for federal government offices and formally establishing the District of Columbia. By 1816, a commissioner of public buildings managed the city's office buildings in part, with ongoing divisions and clarifications occurring in the latter half of the 1800s following the conclusion of the Civil War. Congress placed the parklands with the United States Army's chief of engineers in 1898.¹⁰³ The property under this new, considerably consolidated office included the Executive Mansion or White House; memorials along the National Mall; 3,427 acres of parkland along Rock Creek, the Potomac Parkway, and Anacostia River; and other pocket parks located throughout the city. The National Capital Park and Planning Commission fell under the administrative structure of the new Office of Public Buildings and Public Works. It continued efforts to implement the 1902 McMillan Plan for the National Mall and clear many of the nineteenth-century building and landscaping intrusions, along with other major city planning projects. As the first director of the Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, Grant introduced cost-saving measures, monitored the maintenance of the buildings under his jurisdiction, and implemented a \$100 raise by cutting the workforce because "more satisfactory results are accomplished by a smaller number of comparatively well-paid employees than by a larger number of poorly paid employees."¹⁰⁴

In the first year, Grant's office established an organizational structure with divisions related to administration, building maintenance, horticulture, and protection. He increased the maintenance fund for the Petersen House (listed as the House Where Abraham Lincoln Died) from \$200 to \$240. Similar raises in funding occurred across the office at that time.¹⁰⁵ Grant also assumed the role of executive and disbursing officer for the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Lincoln Memorial Commission, and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission, among others. The office included 2,320 employees

¹⁰¹ Act of May 29, 1928, 70th Cong., 45 Stat. 888 (1929).

¹⁰² Milton Rubincam, "Major General U. S. Grant, 3rd, 1881-1968," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 66/68 (1966): 391, JSTOR; Office of the Federal Register, *United States Statutes at Large: 1925-1926* (US Government Printing Office, 1926), 1287-1308; Cornelius W. Heine, *A History of National Capital Parks* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1953), 27, <http://npshistory.com/publications/nace/adhi.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Ulysses S. Grant III, *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, 1926* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1926), 6.

¹⁰⁴ Grant III, 1-3.

¹⁰⁵ Grant III, 5.

working at disparate sites throughout the nation's capital and managed concessions ranging from newsstands to lunch stands.

In his 1927 Annual Report, Grant lists the Lincoln Museum (the Oldroyd Collection at the Petersen House) as a concessions account and the House Where Lincoln Died in the Building Maintenance Division.¹⁰⁶ However, appropriations for the House Where Lincoln Died stopped in 1927 and 1928 as other significant projects, like the construction of Arlington Memorial Bridge, consumed the office. Without appropriations support, the private concessionaire, Welfare and Recreational Association of Public Buildings and Grounds, Inc., took over operations of the house. Paul Schneider took charge of the building on behalf of the association from July 1927 to January 1928 and was replaced by Lewis Gardner Reynolds in February 1928.¹⁰⁷ Visitation increased in that time from 9,970 in the 1927 fiscal year to 14,307 in the 1928 fiscal year.¹⁰⁸

Representative Henry Riggs Rathbone revived the movement to create a memorial at Ford's Theatre during this period of management transition. In 1927, Representative Rathbone presented H. R. 16656, *A Bill to Establish a National War Memorial Museum and Veteran's Headquarters in the Building Known as Ford's Theater* [*sic*], during the second session of the 69th Congress and continued to lobby for the museum idea into 1928.¹⁰⁹ The bill followed the transfer of the buildings to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks and outlined the creation of a museum—a repository for Oldroyd's collection at Ford's Theatre rather than the Petersen House—and offices for a veteran's headquarters with an accompanying appropriation of \$100,000. However, it did not gain enough votes to move forward. Rathbone died in 1928, temporarily halting the continued work towards reviving Ford's Theatre as a publically accessible space.

Rathbone's and Oldroyd's efforts did not go unfinished. In July 1928, Grant assumed control of Ford's Theatre (Figure 1.9) from the secretary of war and assigned the building to the Mall Division of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital.¹¹⁰ Congress continued to decline direct appropriations for the House Where Lincoln Died, but Grant authorized exterior painting on moldings and the roof in 1930. Reynolds remained in charge through 1931 on behalf of the concessionaire, maintaining operating hours from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. during the week and 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sundays. The House Where Lincoln Died and Oldroyd's collection of Lincolniana maintained a steady annual rate of approximately 12,000 visitors, increasing to 12,800 visitors in the 1931 fiscal year.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Ulysses S. Grant III, *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, 1927* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1927), 9, 24.

¹⁰⁷ Grant III, *Annual Report* [1927]; Ulysses S. Grant III, *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, 1928* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1928), 45. Reynolds knew Lincoln when he was a child. See James Waldo Fawcett, "Ford's Theater [*sic*] to Be Lincoln Museum" *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), December 6, 1931, Newspapers.com.

¹⁰⁸ Grant III, *Annual Report* [1928], 46.

¹⁰⁹ "Proposes Shrine at Ford's Theater [*sic*]," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), January 12, 1927, Newspapers.com.

¹¹⁰ Ulysses S. Grant III, *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, 1929* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1929), 12.

¹¹¹ Ulysses S. Grant III, *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, 1931* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931), 88.



Figure 1.9. Detail of a stereograph showing Ford's Theatre and the east side of Tenth Street, NW, in 1927. (Photo by Keystone View Company. *Ford Theater, in Which Lincoln Was Shot, Washington, D.C. Prints and Photographs Division, LOC.*)

Oldroyd, his famed collection finally in government hands, continued to work at his desk in the Petersen House until his death in 1930. Without a catalog or inventory by either Oldroyd or the federal government, knowledge of the provenance of individual artifacts died with Oldroyd. According to Josephine D. Allen, archivist for Ford's Theatre in the 1950s and 1960s, none of Oldroyd's likely correspondence concerning the artifacts was known to survive.¹¹² After Oldroyd's death, the government allowed his wife and brother to sort through the Petersen House and remove Oldroyd's personal effects. During this process, five truckloads of "rubbish" were removed. Allen posited that some of Oldroyd's records or correspondence from acquiring items in his collection may have been disposed of during this time.¹¹³

¹¹² Allen, "Documenting the Lincoln Museum Collection," 464.

¹¹³ Allen, "Documenting the Lincoln Museum Collection," 464. However, it is important to note that some of Oldroyd's correspondence did survive and is held today in various repositories. The University of Chicago Library maintains the Osborn H. Oldroyd Collection, including personal and professional correspondence from the 1860s through the 1920s. Indiana University's Lilly Library possesses the Papers of Osborn Hamiline Oldroyd collection, purchased in 1952. In addition, Alan E. Hunter, an Indianapolis columnist, local historian, and author of the recently published book, *The Petersen House, the Oldroyd Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died* (2020), also possesses a collection of Oldroyd correspondence. It is unclear if any historian has undertaken a thorough investigation of these collections for provenance of the artifacts in Oldroyd's collection.

Ford's Theatre Becomes a Museum and the Oldroyd Collection Moves

Although Rathbone's bill was tabled, the transfer of the building from the War Department to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks created an avenue for Ford's Theatre to become a museum. After long discussions surrounding the suitability of the Petersen House for displaying the collection, as well as general concern that the building was not fireproof, the office began preparing the first floor of Ford's Theatre as an exhibit space by 1931.¹¹⁴ Using the general maintenance budget, as he had for occasional work at the Petersen House, Grant ordered that the building's façade be sandblasted and repainted brick red with white mortar lines while the southern exterior wall was plastered with cement. He noted in an August 1931 letter that, "while the legislation for remodeling the Ford Theater [*sic*] building did not pass, I have arranged to clean it up and arrange it without material alterations to receive the collection of Lincoln Relics."¹¹⁵ Additionally, the survey office began planning the layout of the new exhibit space, even though the building remained unheated. Additional interior modifications included a men's and women's toilet, a "women's rest room," new floors, electric light fixtures, interior repainting, and the removal of an old rope elevator.¹¹⁶ The exterior painting, the most highly visible change to the building at that time, was questioned, but the office felt the bricks were too soft to remain uncoated.¹¹⁷

The Oldroyd collection remained in the Petersen House throughout the summer of 1931. Grant's assistant director, Lieutenant F. B. Butler, coordinated the collection's move to Ford's Theatre, complete with new exhibit cases, after the close of the tourist season that year.¹¹⁸ In addition, an admission fee would no longer be charged to view the objects.¹¹⁹ The office suggested that, once empty, the Petersen House would be restored to its appearance on the night of the assassination. Grant had discussed the possibility of restoring the building with the help of ladies' associations throughout the summer, which later translated to ongoing work at the Petersen House.¹²⁰ As a result of the move, the Welfare and Recreational Association of Public Buildings and Grounds, Inc., ended their stewardship of the collection and the Petersen House. However, Lewis Reynolds remained the custodian of the Lincoln Museum and remained involved in daily operations.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Grant III, *Annual Report* [1931], 6, 16, 22, 34.

¹¹⁵ Grant, U[lysses].S., III, letter from director, [Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital], to Miss Helen F. Downing, Washington, D.C., August 8, 1931, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹¹⁶ Grant III, *Annual Report* [1931], 16.

¹¹⁷ "Ford Theatre Front Seen in Need of Paint" *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 8, 1931, Newspapers.com.

¹¹⁸ "Old Ford Theatre to be Renovated," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), March 19, 1931, Newspapers.com.

¹¹⁹ Fawcett, "Ford's Theater [*sic*] to Be Lincoln Museum," *Evening Star*.

¹²⁰ Grant III, letter to Downing, August 8, 1931.

¹²¹ Reynolds' suggestions or requests weren't always accommodated. His recommendations for selling souvenirs on-site once Ford's Theatre opened to the public were thoroughly rejected by Assistant Director Butler. Lewis G. Reynolds, letter from custodian, Lincoln Museum, to Lieut. Col. U.S. Grant, III, director, [Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital], March 1, 1932, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; F. B. Butler "Sale of souvenirs [*sic*] in Lincoln Museum," memorandum from assistant director, Public Buildings and Public Parks, to [U.S. Grant, III], director, [Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital], March 3, 1932, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

Ford's Theatre reopened with a first-floor museum (Figure 1.10) dedicated to the exhibition of the Oldroyd collection on what would have been President Lincoln's 123rd birthday, February 12, 1932.¹²² Grant and Butler had given a media interview to drive newspaper coverage of the event, which was somewhat overshadowed by Lincoln's birthday services at the Lincoln Memorial. However, the opening of the new Lincoln Museum at Ford's Theatre was broadcast over local radio station WMAL with Reynolds narrating the scene.¹²³ In the days that followed, the exhibits received popular praise and as many as 500 visitors arrived daily.¹²⁴ Softened by the passage of time, public access to Ford's Theatre and the use of the building to tell the story of Lincoln's assassination no longer provoked public outcry.



Figure 1.10. Lincoln Museum exhibiting the Oldroyd collection on the first floor of the Ford's Theatre building, ca. 1930s. (Old Lincoln Museum folder, Box 4, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS.)

¹²² L. C. Speers, "Ford's Theatre Now a Museum," *New York Times*, February 7, 1932, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹²³ "Museum Opened in Ford Theater: Relics on Display Where Lincoln Was Shot," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 13, 1932, Newspapers.com.

¹²⁴ "Lincoln Relics Draw Throngs to New Home: Moving of Collection to Ford Theater Proves Wise Step to Increase Public Interest," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 17, 1932, Newspapers.com.

CHAPTER 2: The Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died in the National Park Service (1933–1945)

The early 1930s had a profound, far-reaching impact on the National Park Service (NPS). In just a few years, its role and mission to conserve America’s most important natural areas changed to include historic sites. The second director of the NPS, Horace M. Albright, led the effort to bring countless historic sites, buildings, battlefields, and monuments under the protection and stewardship of the NPS. This new era began with Executive Order No. 6166 in 1933, bringing federally owned historic sites like Ford’s Theatre under the administration of the NPS, followed by the Historic Sites Act of 1935, which created a new branch of the NPS for administration of these historic sites. For Ford’s Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died, these changes ensured a more stable legacy of stewardship and professional standards under the administration of the NPS. During this era, and until the restoration of the theater interior in the late 1960s, the official NPS name of the Ford’s Theatre property was the Lincoln Museum. Despite an overall stagnation in NPS development projects during World War II, staff in the National Capital Parks (NCP) and other branches continued to implement a pre-war plan of improvements for the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died.

Management: A New Era under the NPS

On June 10, 1933, Stephen T. Mather, Horace M. Albright, and Arno B. Cammerer, the first, second, and third directors of the NPS, respectively, achieved a “paramount objective.”¹ Under Executive Order 6166, President Franklin D. Roosevelt consolidated all federally owned parks, historic sites, and monuments—including those of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital—under the administration of the NPS.² The Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, now absorbed into the NPS, was renamed National Capital Parks. This action continued the legacy of the oldest park office in the NPS, pre-dating the NPS back to the establishment of the office of Federal Commissioners of the District of Columbia in 1791.³ The Public Buildings portion of the former office, however, was separated from National Capital Parks and moved to a new Branch of Buildings at the top level of the NPS, led by Assistant Director James F. Gill. This branch was responsible for oversight of both historic and non-historic federally owned buildings.⁴ Gill and his successors typically coordinated matters of the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died with the superintendent of the National Capital Parks and the History Division in the Branch of Research and Education.

Throughout most of this period, the Lincoln Museum and House Where Lincoln Died each had a dedicated custodian, somewhat equivalent to today’s site manager. Both custodians were initially hired

¹ Horace M. Albright, *Origins of National Park Service Administration of Historic Sites* (Philadelphia: Eastern National Park and Monument Association, 1971), https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/albright/origins.htm.

² Parks, monuments, and historic sites managed by the War Department, Department of Agriculture, Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission, Public Buildings Commission, National Memorial Commission, and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission were also moved within the NPS. Exec. Order No. 6166, 5 U.S.C. § 124-132 (1934); For more information on the growing focus of the NPS on historical sites in the 1930s, and the particular importance of the District of Columbia’s parks and monuments to the NPS, see Albright, *Origins of National Park Service Administration*, and Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1983), https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/unrau-williss/adhi5s.htm.

³ Heine, *History of National Capital Parks*, 1, 36.

⁴ Russell K. Olsen, *Administrative History: Organizational Structures of the National Park Service, 1917 to 1985* (Washington, DC: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1985), 52, 53, Chart 11.

during the administration of the Office of Public Parks and Public Buildings of the National Capital. The NPS continued their employment. In addition to managing day-to-day operations and maintenance issues, the custodians typically gave tours and answered visitors' questions. John T. Clemens served as the custodian of the Lincoln Museum until his retirement in 1942.⁵ Lewis G. Reynolds served as the live-in custodian of the House Where Lincoln Died until the NPS ended his employment in 1936.⁶ Jessie H. Pearce served as the next custodian for the House Where Lincoln Died throughout most of the 1940s; however, she did not live on site.⁷

After the Historic Sites Act was passed in 1935, administration of the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died was transferred to the new Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings. The branch was led by Acting Assistant Director Verne E. Chatelain, the first chief historian of the NPS.⁸ While the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings managed the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died, the Branch of Buildings continued to handle their maintenance, operation and security.⁹ For the most part, the two historic sites with different needs were managed separately, with the exception of an interconnected fire alarm system and a shared security guard.

The next significant development in management occurred in 1937. The NPS appointed Harper L. Garrett, a former assistant historian of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, as the first (acting) superintendent for the two sites, as well as for Arlington House—then referred to as the Lee Mansion—on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery.¹⁰ The following year, Randle B. Truett, who would go on to have a long association with Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died, became the sites' new superintendent. Presciently, Truett said he hoped to eventually see “the old Ford Theater [*sic*] restored to its original condition.”¹¹ This early Ford's Theatre superintendency, however, was short lived. One year later, the National Capital Parks office created a new National Memorials and Historic Sites Section, with Truett as its chief.¹²

The NPS then transferred administration of the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died, along with Arlington House, the Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial, to this new section of the National Capital Parks. In *A History of National Capital Parks*, Cornelius W. Heine describes this event as a reunification of sorts, when these monuments and historic sites were “returned after a brief absence”

⁵ “Custodians of Two Lincoln Shrines in Capital Retire Today,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 3, 1942, GenealogyBank.

⁶ S.W. Hawkins, memorandum from the superintendent, Civil Service – GAO Group, to Mr. Owen, Chief, Operating Division, NPS, October 19, 1936, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷ Harriet Griffiths, “Lincoln's Tragedy Still Touches the Heart,” *Sunday Star Magazine* (Washington, DC), February 9, 1947, GenealogyBank; L. Hubbard Shattuck, letter from director, Chicago Historical Society, to Mrs. Jessie H. Pearce, [custodian,] House Where Lincoln Died, December 5, 1942, in George J. Olszewski, *House Where Lincoln Died: Furnishing Study* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, April 15, 1967), 86, appendix C3, ETIC.

⁸ Albright, *Origins of National Park Service Administration*.

⁹ Charles A. Peters, Jr., memorandum from assistant director, Branch of Buildings, NPS, to superintendent, Potomac Park Group; superintendent, Mall Group; John T. Clemens, local representative in charge of the Lincoln Museum; Lewis G. Reynolds, local representative in charge of the House Where Lincoln Died; and Mr. Cunningham, local representative in charge of the Lee Mansion, October 26, 1935, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁰ Harper L. Garrett and John T. Clemens, memorandum from acting superintendent, Lee Mansion, Lincoln Museum, and House Where Lincoln Died, and custodian, Lincoln Museum, to Mr. [S.W.] Hawkins, superintendent, Civil Service-GAO Group, October 13, 1937, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹¹ “All Memorials Put Under One Park Official,” *Evening Star*, March 27, 1940, GenealogyBank.

¹² “All Memorials,” *Evening Star*.

to National Capital Parks, the heir and successor to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, and ultimately the 1791 Federal Commissioners.¹³

Throughout the 1940s, National Memorials and Historic Sites Section Chiefs Truett, T. Sutton Jett, and Stanley W. McClure, along with National Capital Parks Superintendent Irving C. Root, provided consistency in the management of the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died.¹⁴ Staff in the Branch of Historic Sites, which continued to manage NPS historic sites and buildings in other areas of the United States, continued to lead many discussions and decisions concerning the Lincoln Museum. These early stewards—Root, Truett, Jett, and McClure—would remain dedicated for a period of over twenty years to the care and eventual restoration of Ford’s Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died.

The Lincoln Museum: Dressing the “Front Window” of NPS Museums

In order to open the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died, despite the failure of a federal appropriation for renovation funds, Col. Ulysses S. Grant, III, used limited funds in his office’s budget and private funding from several local Civil War ladies’ associations.¹⁵ Clemens, the custodian, stood in for a professional curator and helped arrange the exhibits. After the two historic sites became part of the NPS in 1933, they benefitted from access to budgets and staff resources from several different branches. Chatelain, chief historian, immediately set his sights on bringing the Lincoln Museum up to NPS museum standards.

Staff in the History Division of the Branch of Research and Education examined the museum and provided suggestions for improvement. As perhaps one of the earliest NPS advocates for partial restoration to interpret the assassination, Historical Assistant J. Walter Coleman proposed reconstructing the state box and a corner of the stage. Coleman also suggested acquiring Lincoln artifacts from other government agencies, like the Booth items held by the War Department, and publishing what would be the first NPS booklet for the Lincoln Museum.¹⁶ While the History Division focused on planning, staff in the Branch of Buildings Management carried out painting and basic facilities work.¹⁷

Overall, people seemed to appreciate having free public access to Ford’s Theatre and the Lincoln Museum, but those expecting to see the theater setting where Lincoln was shot were necessarily disappointed. An *Evening Star* reporter described the interpretation problem and the “everything but the kitchen sink” nature of the exhibits:

“There are some who wish that the building might have been reconstructed as the theater of 1865, but the first shock of finding a ‘theater,’ which is not a theater at all, soon passes in the interest of the exhibits...Although the surroundings are completely changed, the events of that April night in 1865 become

¹³ Administration of non-historic public buildings was moved to the Federal Works Agency, while NPS historic sites and buildings in other areas of the United States remained under the Branch of Historic Sites. Heine, *History of National Capital Parks*, 57.

¹⁴ National Park Service, *Administrative History 1791-1983, Epilogue 1983-1997: The White House & President’s Park, Washington, D.C.* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997), 303.

¹⁵ Grant III, letter to Downing, August 8, 1931.

¹⁶ J. Walter Coleman, “Re: Suggestions for improvement of Lincoln Museum,” memorandum from historical assistant, Branch of Research and Education, Historical Division, NPS, to Mr. [Verne E.] Chatelain, [chief historian], NPS, January 11, 1935, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (NARA-CP).

¹⁷ Charles A. Peters, Jr., memorandum from assistant director, [Branch of Buildings Management], NPS, to Mr. [Ned J.] Burns, acting chief, Museum Division, August 27, 1936, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, NARA-CP.

vivid as the collection is examined...Whether the index gas meter 'used in this building on the night of the assassination' helps to reconstruct the picture may be a question, but there it is."¹⁸

As with its other historic parks and battlefields inherited from government agencies, the NPS faced particular challenges with the Lincoln Museum and the Oldroyd collection, discussed further in this chapter.

The Lincoln Museum possessed one museum guard, stationed at a front desk, who directed visitors, handed out the museum brochure, and periodically made rounds. The guard was employed by the federal Civil Service-GAO Group, and not the NPS. Because the House Where Lincoln Died contained no historic artifacts or furniture, only antiques or reproductions of little value, Garrett, the first superintendent, was less concerned with having a guard present there than in the Lincoln Museum, which contained the valuable Oldroyd collection.¹⁹

New Signage Installed

Since opening in 1932, both the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died were identified with signs made by the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital; these were black wooden signs with faded gold lettering displaying the names of the sites and the operating days and hours. The sign for the Lincoln Museum was rather small and was mounted over the front door.²⁰ Finally, in June of 1938, after a long campaign by NPS Associate Director Arthur E. Demaray, these signs were replaced with larger signs designed by the Branch of Plans and Designs. The new signs now clearly identified the two historic sites as administered by the National Park Service, and were painted in NPS colors of white with forest green lettering (Figure 2.1).²¹

Early Attempts at Collections Management

In a pattern that was to continue for the next forty years, newspaper and radio coverage of the new Lincoln Museum prompted donations of Lincoln artifacts—often with dubious or nonexistent provenance—from the general public. A man donated a vest he claimed Lincoln sent to his mother after she wrote the president that her baby boy looked just like him.²² The Dames of the Loyal Legion donated a miniature replica of Lincoln's Kentucky cabin.²³ A few significant donations during this period, like the torn Treasury Guard flag draped on the state box, filled gaps in the Oldroyd collection and helped interpret Ford's Theatre.²⁴ A heightened focus on the needs of NPS historic sites in the 1930s included collections management. A conference for NPS historical technicians in April 1940, led by Ronald F. Lee, chief of the Branch of Historic Sites, emphasized that "[o]bjects of historical and cultural value should be systematically sought for and collected with the specific needs of each historic area in mind."²⁵

¹⁸ Hortense Moore, "Relics at Lincoln Shrine Unfold Story of Death," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 12, 1936, GenealogyBank.

¹⁹ Garrett and Clemens, memorandum to Hawkins, October 13, 1937; S.W. Hawkins, memorandum from superintendent, Civil Service-GAO Group, to Mr. Gardner, chief, Administration and Protection Division, NPS, October 18, 1937, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

²⁰ H[arper].L. Garrett, memorandum [from acting superintendent, Lee Mansion, Lincoln Museum, and House Where Lincoln Died, NPS], to acting director, NPS, [June 1938], Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

²¹ Garrett, memorandum to acting director, NPS, [June 1938].

²² Moore, "Relics at Lincoln Shrine," *Evening Star*.

²³ "News of Local Clubs," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), April 14, 1935, GenealogyBank.

²⁴ Whitney T. Genns, "The Flag That Tripped Booth," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), June 3, 1934, GenealogyBank.

²⁵ Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History*.

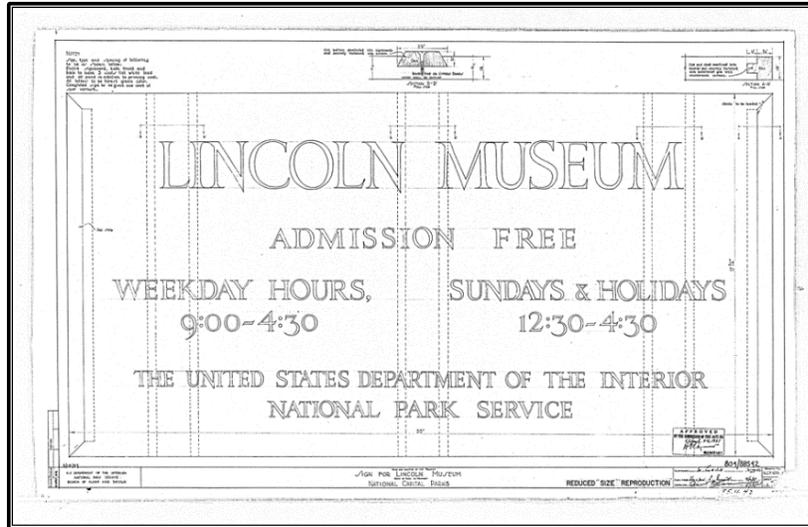


Figure 2.1. Drawing for new Lincoln Museum sign, 1937 (*Sign for Lincoln Museum, March 13, 1937, FOTH-88542, NPS Electronic Technical Information Center [ETIC]. Courtesy of the NPS.*)

At the beginning of NPS administration of the Lincoln Museum, staff were aware that some of the artifacts most crucial to telling the assassination story were under the jurisdiction of the Judge Advocate General's Office of the War Department.²⁶ Key items entered as evidence in the Lincoln conspirators' trial, like the Deringer pistol Booth used to kill Lincoln, the bullet with which Lincoln was shot, the dagger Booth used to attack Major Rathbone, a boot worn by Booth during the assassination, and Booth's diary, sat in the basement of the State Department building.²⁷ Arno B. Cammerer, director of the NPS, pushed to get custody of the artifacts.²⁸ In 1939, the War Department first sent to the Lincoln Museum pieces of lace and tassels from Lincoln's catafalque, a decorated platform that supported his coffin while lying in state.²⁹ Then in February 1940, the judge advocate general sent the artifacts from the conspirators' trial to the Lincoln Museum on indefinite loan, eager to have them put on public display.³⁰

This trove of assassination items triggered the first debate in the NPS around the ethics and propriety of interpreting the assassination, particularly the more morbid or gruesome aspects. Cammerer wanted to display the artifacts as part of a separate conspirators' trial exhibit, and not together with the rest of the Oldroyd collection. He noted, "Certainly the pieces of skull and the pistol or derringer had better be held unexhibited."³¹ J. R. White, NPS acting associate director, had "no objection to acquiring and exhibiting"

²⁶ Coleman, "Re: Suggestions for improvement," memorandum to Chatelain, January 11, 1935; E.K. Burlew, memorandum from acting secretary, Department of the Interior, to secretary, Department of War, November 22, 1939, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, NARA-CP.

²⁷ Randle B. Truett, list of artifacts turned over from the War Department to the Superintendent of the Lincoln Museum, February 5, 1940, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives.

²⁸ [Arnold B. Cammerer], memorandum [from director, NPS] to Col. [J.R.] White, [acting associate director], and Mr. [F.S.] Ronalds, [chief, Historic Sites Division, Branch of Historic Sites], NPS, September 16, 1939, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, NARA-CP.

²⁹ "Lace Bullion Transferred," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), January 12, 1939, GenealogyBank.

³⁰ Randle B. Truett, memorandum from superintendent, Lincoln Museum, to the director, NPS, February 16, 1940, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives.

³¹ He also suggested consulting the Advisory Board, a group of esteemed historians and museum administrators established with the 1935 Historic Sites Act, but it is unclear if anyone did so. [Cammerer], memorandum to White and Ronalds, September 16, 1939.

the assassination artifacts, but recommended “discrimination” in choosing what to put on display.³² Truett, at this time the superintendent of the Lincoln Museum, and Museum Division staff decided that the bullet, the doctor’s probe, and the pieces of skull were the most inappropriate items for public display. They deemed Booth’s gun and Payne’s knife as “borderline.”³³ The rest of the artifacts were considered “impersonal” enough to be appropriate for display.³⁴

The five artifacts considered inappropriate or borderline, including Booth’s Deringer, were withheld from the exhibit of conspirators’ trial items placed on display in the center of the museum on February 12, Lincoln’s birthday. Unfortunately, the NPS had already put out a press release touting the upcoming display of the Deringer and other items.³⁵ According to Truett, some who attended the exhibits proclaimed the items were “the most valuable Lincolniana now in existence.”³⁶ Afterwards, Truett wrote to the director requesting a policy guiding decisions on what types of artifacts to display, “to prevent future difficulties or misunderstandings.”³⁷ He likely felt the burden of making what were, perhaps, the most sensitive and potentially controversial decisions of his career.

After the special exhibit of the assassination items, Truett undertook the first effort to catalog the Lincoln Museum collection, the majority of which was still the Oldroyd collection. He conducted the project with the assistance of five teenage girls from the National Youth Administration, a New Deal youth employment program.³⁸ The cataloging team improved the state of the records, but the majority of the items in the Oldroyd collection still lacked provenance or complete information, stemming from the absence of an initial inventory by Oldroyd or the federal government. The early record-keeping failures continued to create serious challenges in collections management for the next few decades.

Hans Huth, a historical consultant hired by the Branch of Historic Sites to create a new exhibits plan for the Lincoln Museum, noted that the Oldroyd collection reflected the spirit and time of the collector. The “tokens” and “relics,” small pieces cut from historical artifacts as souvenirs, amassed by Oldroyd were at the time “meaningful reminders” and embodied “sentimental values.”³⁹ However, as relics were no longer venerable to the modern visitor, Huth recommended divorcing the exhibits from the collection. In a drastic rethinking of the approach to Lincoln Museum exhibit planning, he proposed that the purpose of the museum was not to show the Oldroyd collection, but to use its material to give an interpretation of Lincoln.⁴⁰ As a result of Huth’s proposal, the Museum Division resolved to fill the gaps in the collection and continue its efforts to secure more artifacts and ephemera related to Lincoln’s presidency.⁴¹

³² [J.R. White], memorandum from [acting associate director], NPS to [Arno B.] Cammerer, [director], NPS, September 15, 1939, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, NARA-CP.

³³ Truett, memorandum to the director, NPS, February 16, 1940.

³⁴ Truett, memorandum to the director, NPS, February 16, 1940.

³⁵ Truett, memorandum to the director, NPS, February 16, 1940; National Park Service, “For release Sunday, February 11,” press release, [February 1940], Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives.

³⁶ Truett, memorandum to the director, NPS, February 16, 1940.

³⁷ Truett, memorandum to the director, NPS, February 16, 1940.

³⁸ “Project to Catalog Lincoln Museum Relics,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), March 17, 1940, GenealogyBank.

³⁹ H[ans]. A. Huth, “Outline for the Display at the Lincoln Museum, Ford [*sic*] Theatre, Washington, D.C. (Draught),” December 1942, 1A, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum Plan Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁴⁰ Huth, “Outline for the Display,” 1A.

⁴¹ Ned J. Burns, memorandum from chief, Museum Division, NPS, to Dr. [Carl P.] Russell, [chief, Branch of Interpretation], NPS, May 23, 1944, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, NARA-CP.

Improvements Continue During WWII

Various branches of the NPS continued their work to upgrade the operation, facilities, and exhibits of the Lincoln Museum throughout the early 1940s. As Carl P. Russell, chief of interpretation, put it, the Lincoln Museum, being located in Washington, DC, half a mile from the White House, was essentially the “front window of NPS museums.”⁴² He was highly concerned that the state of the Lincoln Museum constituted a “major problem,” and that “nothing on our museum docket is more important than this one.”⁴³

Arthur E. Demaray, associate director of the NPS, took a particular interest in seeing the museum improved. In summer 1942, Herbert E. Kahler, the acting supervisor of the Historic Sites Division, under the Branch of Historic Sites, wrote to Demaray outlining the work being done for the Lincoln Museum by staff across various branches. Dr. Alvin P. Stauffer, supervisor of the Research and Survey Section of the Branch of Historic Sites, had developed the Lincoln Museum’s first interpretive statement.⁴⁴ T. Sutton Jett, then a curator, was planning a revision of the exhibits with the help of Huth, the historical consultant, Ned J. Burns, chief of the Museum Division, and Truett, chief of the National Memorials and Historic Sites Section of the National Capital Parks. Root, National Capital Parks superintendent, had promised \$1,000 funding from his budget for the Lincoln Museum improvements.⁴⁵

The team’s efforts—considered an interim solution until a more comprehensive project could be funded after the war—were largely complete by 1943. The interim project constituted the NPS’s first attempt to address the interpretive problems of the Lincoln Museum and Ford’s Theatre. Walls had been painted, exhibit cases upgraded, and the upper floor office and library space enlarged to better accommodate the cataloging system. Most importantly, exhibits were rearranged in chronological order, inaccurate labels revised, missing labels added, and a new “orientation display” created. The display stood just inside the cavernous museum room and served to fill the interpretive gap for telling the story of Lincoln’s assassination inside the drastically altered theater interior. A drawing of the original floor plan of Ford’s Theatre complemented contemporary photographs and sketches of the interior.⁴⁶ Meanwhile Huth, in consultation with the Museum Division and Historic Sites Division, continued research and work on a new plan for the museum exhibits. His proposal outlined each exhibit case and the artifacts and text to be displayed within (Figure 2.2). Huth designed the exhibits in an overall narrative focusing on Lincoln’s presidency and the Civil War (see Figure 2.2). Burns made it clear to Demaray and other NPS leaders that the recently completed interim revisions should be considered simply as the best sort of “house cleaning” that could be done under the current lack of funds. He emphasized the need for special funding to execute a complete overhaul of the Lincoln Museum, based on Huth’s plan, at some point after the war.⁴⁷

⁴² C[arl].P. R[ussell], “Memo for Mr. Kahler,” memorandum from chief, Branch of Interpretation, NPS, to [Herbert E.] Kahler, [acting supervisor, Historic Sites, NPS], February 27, 1943, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum Plan Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁴³ R[ussell], memorandum to [Herbert E.] Kahler, February 27, 1943.

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, this document has not been located. Herbert E. Kahler, memorandum from acting supervisor, Historic Sites, Branch of Historic Sites, NPS, to A[rthur].E. Demaray, [associate director], NPS, July 3, 1942, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, NARA-CP; Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History*.

⁴⁵ The fact that Kahler, and not Irving C. Root, superintendent of National Capital Parks, sent this memo, may indicate that Kahler served as the *de facto* head of the Lincoln Museum site, despite the fact that it had been part of the NCP system for two years. Kahler, memorandum to Demaray, July 3, 1942.

⁴⁶ A[rthur].E. Demaray, memorandum report from associate director to the director, National Park Service, Chicago, November 18, 1942, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum Plan Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁴⁷ Ned J. Burns, “Comments on Plan for Rearrangement of the Olroyd Collection in the Lincoln Museum, Ford’s Theatre,” statement by chief, Museum Division, February 19, 1943, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum Plan Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives; Burns, memorandum to Russell, May 23, 1944.

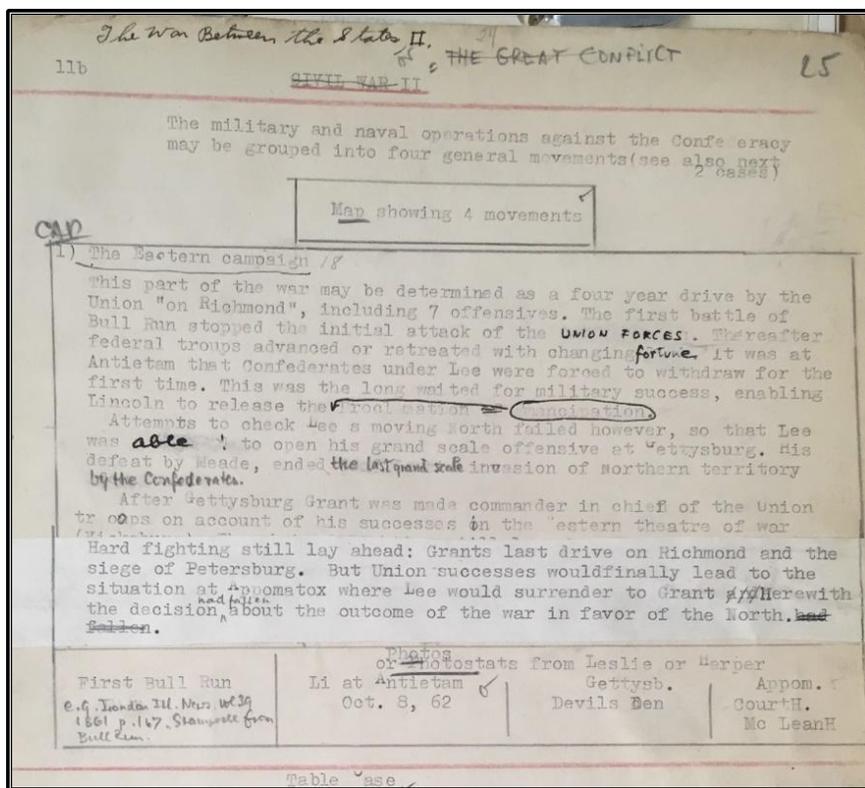


Figure 2.2. Detail of Hans Huth's draft museum plan, showing a schematic design for a proposed exhibit case, Dec. 1942. Note the revision in headline from "Civil War," to "The Great Conflict," to finally, "The War Between the States" (Hans A. Huth, "Outline for the Display at the Lincoln Museum, Ford [sic] Theatre, Washington, D.C. (Draught)," Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum Plan Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives. Courtesy of the NPS).

Burns warned that the Oldroyd collection was "rather spotty" and "lacks many items greatly needed."⁴⁸ The team's examination of the exhibits and artifacts during the revisions revealed severe deficiencies with the scope and record-keeping of the Oldroyd collection that would hinder interpretation and collections management for years to come.

Other Uses of Ford's Theatre

With only the first floor of Ford's Theatre occupied by the Lincoln Museum, the rest of the building was available for other uses. In 1936, the Museum Branch moved the Eastern Museum Laboratory, or exhibit-building workshop, from Morristown, New Jersey, to the second and third floors of Ford's Theatre.⁴⁹ Staff in the museum lab built dioramas, exhibits, topographic maps, and other three-dimensional exhibit elements for museums at NPS parks such as Fredericksburg, Morristown, Fort Frederick, and the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, as well as for the Department of the Interior Museum (Figure 2.3).⁵⁰ Starting in 1938, a few Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees from the camp at Fort Hunt in Alexandria began assisting in the Ford's Theatre museum laboratory.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Burns, "Comments on Plan for Rearrangement."

⁴⁹ Ralph H. Lewis, *Museum Curatorship in the National Park Service, 1904-1982* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993), 81.

⁵⁰ Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 87, 90, 91-92.

⁵¹ The NPS had another museum lab at Fort Hunt, also the location of a CCC camp. From 1933-1938, Emergency Conservation Work technicians, funded by the New Deal, trained CCC enrollees in topographic map and model-



Figure 2.3. Photo of an NPS luncheon inside the Ford's Theatre museum laboratory, showing dioramas created for the US Department of the Interior Museum, 1936. Pictured from left to right are Mrs. Reau Folk (Advisory Board member), Edmund H. Abrahams (Advisory Board member), Arthur Demaray (associate director), Isabelle F. Story (Park Service Bulletin editor-in-chief), Arthur Woodward (assistant chief, Museum Division), Arthur Jansson (chief preparator, Museum Division), A. B. Russell (museum equipment specialist), Dr. Fiske Kimball (Advisory Board member), Dr. Alfred Vincent Kidder (Advisory Board member), Archibald M. McCrea (Advisory Board member), General George de Benneville Keim (Advisory Board member), Branch Spalding (acting assistant director), Ned J. Burns (acting chief, Museum Division), Kenneth B. Disher (associate museum expert), Dr. Clark Wissler (Advisory Board member), Harold C. Bryant (assistant director, Branch of Research and Education), Dr. Hermon C. Bumpus (Advisory Board member) and Stuart Cuthbertson (museum curator). (Photo by Allan Rhinehart. *Luncheon of the National Park Advisory Board at Ford's Theatre*, 1936, Department of the Interior Administrative Files. Courtesy of the Interior Museum.)

making skills at the Fort Hunt museum lab. When the NPS closed the lab at Fort Hunt in 1938, some of these CCC workers then continued at the Ford's Theatre museum lab. Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 55, 96, 98; Lisa Pfueller Davidson and James A. Jacobs, *Civilian Conservation Corps Activities in the National Capital Region of the National Park Service*, HABS No. D.C.-858 (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2004), 20–21, 44.

Museum laboratory work sometimes spilled over to other areas of the building. In 1940, staff attempted to test-fire a rare eighteenth-century breechloading rifle across the width of the building, but had to move their tests to the basement after the ball penetrated deep into the far brick wall.⁵² Of the early 1940s additions to the Lincoln Museum, it is likely that the orientation display was assembled in the Ford's Theatre museum laboratory.

During World War II, the Office of Strategic Services, and then the Relief Map Division of the Army Map Service, took over the third-floor museum lab space.⁵³ The lab's large workbenches, tools, and available materials were ideal for creating the topographic maps needed by the US Army.⁵⁴ However, the NPS was concerned about the fire hazards, excessive structural loads, and leaks created during the army's use. The Army Map Service continued to use the space until late 1946, when another building was finally readied for their arrival.⁵⁵

Early Interpretation

When the Lincoln Museum first opened in the early 1930s, the term "interpretation" was not yet in use in the NPS or the wider museum field. Programs we would identify today as interpretation were deemed "education." A 1929 guideline asserted the importance of education in helping visitors develop "inspirational enthusiasm" for the fundamental themes represented by each particular park, and in communicating those themes through simple concepts and presentations.⁵⁶ A 1931 NPS organizational chart noted that the purpose of the Branch of Research and Education was to "make possible the maximum of understanding and appreciation of the park features by visitors."⁵⁷

The late 1930s brought improvements for the interpretive programs of historical parks. Park guides, then known as field historians, gave public lectures and radio addresses. A 1940 conference for historical technicians discussed objectives and standards of interpretive policy, park literature, historical markers, museum objects, and trailside exhibits.⁵⁸

In this early era of NPS administration, the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died did not have park guides or dedicated on-site field historians comparable to those at Gettysburg and other military and historic parks in the National Park System. Rather, the custodians—Reynolds and later, Pearce, for the House Where Lincoln Died, and Clemens for the Lincoln Museum—gave visitor tours and answered questions. A *Christian Science Monitor* reporter had this impression of Reynolds during a 1933 visit:

*"The custodian who shows visitors around is steeped in his task. He talks in a hushed voice, as though the tragedy had occurred not many days before, thus heightening the impression that, sentimentally and historically, this is the holiest spot in the National Capital."*⁵⁹

⁵² Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 93; Alfred F. Hopkins, "Testing the Ferguson Rifle: Modern Marksman Attains High Precision with Arm of 1776," *The Regional Review* 6, nos. 1 & 2 (Jan–Feb 1941): 32.

⁵³ Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 97.

⁵⁴ After the NPS returned to the space, they found many of their tools and materials missing. Ned J. Burns, memorandum from chief, Museum Division, [Branch of Interpretation], NPS, to [Arthur E.] Demaray, [associate director, NPS], November 20, 1946, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, NARA-CP.

⁵⁵ Ned J. Burns, memorandum from chief, Museum Division, [Branch of Interpretation], NPS, to the director, NPS, December 18, 1946, Folder 833.05 – Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-49, RG79, NARA-CP.

⁵⁶ Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986), 83.

⁵⁷ Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History*.

⁵⁸ Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History*.

⁵⁹ Collinson Owen in the *Christian Science Monitor*, quoted in Lewis Gardner Reynolds, "As It Appeared in Lincoln's Day," *Sunday Star Magazine* (Washington, DC), February 12, 1933, GenealogyBank.

A historian or junior historian in the Washington office of the Branch of Historic Sites would assist as needed to conduct research, write the museum brochures, and give talks on an intermittent basis. It was not until 1946 that an NPS historian would be stationed at the museum, and then only on weekends, to give talks to visitors.⁶⁰

Early Interpretive Themes

Huth's 1942 exhibit proposal is perhaps the first document suggesting a specific interpretive approach for the Lincoln Museum. In the proposal, Huth bemoans the "more or less incoherent Lincolniana" seen in other Lincoln museums he visited, which all centered their exhibits around their Lincolniana collections "without presenting a general point of view."⁶¹ Apparently, the NPS's Lincoln Museum was not the only offender. Huth posed the question, "Just which story, however, is to be told at the Ford Theater [*sic*] Museum?"⁶² He then concluded, somewhat vaguely, that the planned overhaul of the museum exhibits was an opportunity to present "Lincoln as a true symbol of American democracy."⁶³

Burns, chief of the Museum Division, later proposed that the main theme "should be Lincoln, the President, portrayed against the background of wartime Washington."⁶⁴ He also saw the potential of long-range planning to connect interpretation across the various Civil War sites of the NPS: "We should take advantage of the ideal location and associations of Ford's Theater [*sic*] to portray the life of the President and the City of Washington as it relates to the great panorama of war."⁶⁵ He regretted the Lincoln Museum's overemphasis on the early life of Lincoln, influenced by the artifacts available in the Oldroyd collection.

Programming and Commemorative Events

In the late 1930s, the Lincoln Group of Washington, DC, a historical club of Lincoln admirers and a general supporter of the Lincoln Museum, began holding annual observances of Lincoln's death. Lincoln historians, NPS historians, or members of Congress gave public lectures at the Lincoln Museum, followed by a brief commemoration in the House Where Lincoln Died.⁶⁶ During the World War II influx of defense workers to Washington, DC, the NPS participated in a citywide "Washington Welcomes You" program of special events for these new residents and servicemen. On Lincoln's birthday in February, the Lincoln Museum presented lectures and tours for the newcomers given by NPS historians Stanley W. McClure or T. Sutton Jett.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Griffiths, "Lincoln's Tragedy," *Sunday Star Magazine*.

⁶¹ Huth, "Outline for the Display," 1b.

⁶² Huth, 1a.

⁶³ Huth, 1b.

⁶⁴ Burns, "Comments on Plan for Rearrangement."

⁶⁵ Burns, "Comments on Plan for Rearrangement of the Olroyd Collection."

⁶⁶ "Memorial Rite Held in Room Lincoln Died In 75 Years Ago," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 15, 1940, GenealogyBank; "Lincoln Group to Mark Anniversary of Death," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 14, 1942, GenealogyBank.

⁶⁷ "Servicemen, War Workers to Visit Lincoln Museum," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 5, 1943, GenealogyBank; "Lincoln is Theme of Welcome Program," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 13, 1944, GenealogyBank.

The House Where Lincoln Died

When the NPS began administration of the House Where Lincoln Died, it had only recently become a historic house museum. With the house finally emptied of the Oldroyd collection and furnished approximately as it was on the night of Lincoln's assassination, it served as the only publicly accessible historic site connected to the assassination with an interior setting evoking the tragic event (Figures 2.4 and 2.5). Lincoln's death and the national grief that followed were still strong in the public's memory. Some people who were children at the time of Lincoln's assassination were still alive in the 1930s and early 1940s. Mrs. Jessie H. Pearce, custodian of the House Where Lincoln Died in the 1940s, noted that many people returned year after year, and some were overcome by emotion.

*"There is a man who comes to this house once a year and always kneels down and prays before he leaves...Sometimes people who visit the house go out weeping, as though what happened here were just yesterday."*⁶⁸

The property at that time included several post-1865 structures and additions that were later demolished during a 1958 restoration project, including an 1870 bathroom addition, an 1899 two-story rear addition, and a 1908 porch enclosure. The brick façade was painted red with white lines emphasizing the mortar joints.⁶⁹ A black "House in Which Abraham Lincoln Died" sign with gold lettering (Figure 2.6) hung on the railing until the NPS installed new white-and-green signage in 1938, branding the historic site as an NPS property.⁷⁰

Although the NPS was mainly focused on the Lincoln Museum in this period, it did carry out repairs and fire safety measures in the house. The agency had serious concerns about fire hazards to the building, particularly the various extension cords and hot plates observed in the custodian's living quarters on the upper floor.⁷¹ Reynolds and his wife vacated the building in 1936 so that the space could be used by the NPS for exhibition purposes.⁷² An automatic fire detection system was installed and connected to an alarm in the Lincoln Museum to alert the guard.⁷³

⁶⁸ Griffiths, "Lincoln's Tragedy," 2.

⁶⁹ National Park Service, *William A. Petersen House, House Where Lincoln Died: Historic Structure Report* (Washington, DC: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, 2002), IRMA, 1A:17–1A:20.

⁷⁰ National Park Service, *Sign for House Where Lincoln Died*, drawing, March 9, 1937, FOTH-82011, NPS Electronic Technical Information Center (ETIC).

⁷¹ R.P. Wilde, memorandum from acting chief electrician, Metropolitan Group, to superintendent, Metropolitan Group, April 18, 1936, 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; L.M. Endres, memorandum from Technical Division, NPS, to Mr. [B.C.] Gardner, April 24, 1936, 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷² Reynolds then retired from the position after he suffered a stroke. Charles A., Peters, Jr., memorandum from assistant director, Branch of Buildings, NPS, to director, NPS, June 30, 1936, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷³ Oliver G. Taylor, NPS contract approval form for \$1,580 to F.C. McGrady Company for installation of a fire-detection system, June 23, 1937, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Hawkins, memorandum to Gardner, October 18, 1937.



Figure 2.4. Room where Lincoln died, 1932 (Folder HWLD-RWLD, Box 2, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS).



Figure 2.5. Room where Lincoln died, 1932 (Folder HWLD-RWLD, Box 2, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS).



Figure 2.6. House Where Lincoln Died, showing pre-NPS sign, December 1937. (Photo by John Vachon. *Washington, D.C. House Where Lincoln Died*, Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, LOC.)

The original brownstone steps in front of the house, deteriorated from years of wear and a 1928 bus accident, were resurfaced and repaired.⁷⁴ Garrett, the superintendent for the House Where Lincoln Died, the Lincoln Museum, and the Lee Mansion in the late 1930s, worked with Helen Downing and the Branch of Plans and Designs to produce new wallpaper that more closely approximated what was shown in contemporary sketches and paintings of the house (Figure 2.7).⁷⁵ The NPS was able to install the new wallpaper free of cost under a type of licensing arrangement with the wallpaper company.⁷⁶

In the 1940s, the NPS replastered and painted many of the interior walls and woodwork and repaired the front steps, doors, interior stairway, and roof.⁷⁷ National Capital Parks staff continued research on the contents and furnishing details of the first floor. A restoration policy for historic sites issued by the NPS in 1937 required “reasonable efforts to exhaust...the documentary evidence” in advance of any restoration plans.⁷⁸ Mrs. Pearce, the custodian in the 1940s, made inquiries to the Chicago Historical Society concerning the furnishings from the room where Lincoln died that were in their possession: the bed, bureau, rocking chair, curtains, and gas lamp that were present on the night of Lincoln’s assassination.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ A sightseeing bus with no driver rolled down Tenth Street and crashed into the stoop of the House Where Lincoln Died, damaging the steps and the supporting columns, which were repaired shortly thereafter. Grant III, *Annual Report* [1928], 45–46; [Acting chief, Procurement Section, NPS], memorandum to Mr. Hawkins, September 17, 1938, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷⁵ Harper L. Garrett, memorandum from acting superintendent, Lee Mansion, Lincoln Museum, and House Where Lincoln Died, to Arno B. Cammerer, director, National Park Service, March 20, 1939, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum Plan Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁷⁶ Hillory A. Tolson, letter from acting associate director, National Park Service, to M.H. Birge & Sons Company, Buffalo, NY, July 13, 1938, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷⁷ National Park Service, *William A. Petersen House*, 1B:16.

⁷⁸ Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History*.

⁷⁹ Shattuck to Pearce, December 5, 1942, in Olszewski, *Furnishing Study*, 86, appendix C3. When William and Anna Petersen died intestate within a few months of each other in 1871, their furnishings were inventoried and sold



Figure 2.7. Room where Lincoln died, showing new wallpaper, 1944. (Photo by Abbie Rowe. *Petersen House, Room Where Lincoln Died*, March 15, 1944. HWLD-RWLD, Box 2, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS.)

However, few, if any, changes were made to the period antiques furnished for the room by the District of Columbia Society of the Dames of the Loyal Legion, which closely approximated the originals.

Visitation and Operating Hours

From 1933 until 1942, the NPS operated both the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays, and from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sundays and holidays. Opening hours were usually extended for special occasions when more people than usual were expected to visit the city, like Easter weekend or President Roosevelt's inauguration. Besides Saturdays, the only other day the historic sites were closed was Christmas Day.⁸⁰ In the early years of World War II, the NPS extended the regular opening hours of the Lincoln Museum until 5:30 p.m., and then extended them again to 9:00 p.m., likely in response to the dramatic wartime drop in tourist attendance coupled with an increase in the

at public auction. Colonel William H. Boyd purchased some furnishings from the room where Lincoln died, including the bed. His son later sold the furnishings to Charles F. Gunther, a Chicago collector, who sold them to the Chicago Historical Society in 1920. Vera B. Craig, *Furnishing Plan, House Where Lincoln Died (Petersen House)*, Washington, D.C. (Harpers Ferry, WV: National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, 1976), 31–32.

⁸⁰ National Park Service, [List of visiting hours for Washington National Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Lincoln House & Museum, and Lee Mansion], [1935], Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; James F. Gill, memorandum from acting chief, Buildings Division, Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, to director, National Park Service, January 24, 1933, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; National Park Service, *Sign for Lincoln Museum*, drawing, March 13, 1937, FOTH-88542, NPS Electronic Technical Information Center (ETIC); National Park Service, *Sign for House*, drawing, March 9, 1937; [James F. Gill], "Report on Easter visitors," memorandum from acting chief, Buildings Division, Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, to director, National Park Service, April 18, 1933, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

city's workforce population.⁸¹ But the extended hours had little impact on visitation, which did not recover until well after the war's end.

Visitation Increases Gradually

At the onset of NPS administration, people flocked to see the Lincoln Museum and the refurbished House Where Lincoln Died, particularly since there was no longer an entrance fee. In the early 1930s, the Lincoln Museum received about 75,000 visitors annually, and the House Where Lincoln Died received about 40,000, but visitation numbers soared to 130,000 and 90,000, respectively, in 1937.⁸² Attendance dropped by almost two-thirds between 1938 and 1940, perhaps in some part because of the institution of an admission fee, discussed below.⁸³

The two historic sites, located off the beaten tourist path around the National Mall, had more difficulties in drawing visitors than most other museums and memorials in the city. Most Washington, DC, visitors paid their respects at the Lincoln Memorial, constructed in 1922 at the western end of the National Mall. The memorial drew over 1,600,000 visitors in 1940 and to some "symbolized...the spirit of Abraham Lincoln even more than" the sites in Washington historically associated with him.⁸⁴ Visitation throughout the National Park System declined precipitously in the war years. Visitor attendance at the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died declined as well, and then slowly increased until the war's end. By 1945, attendance still had not returned to prewar levels.⁸⁵

Like most other NPS parks, as federal property belonging to all citizens, these two historic sites were integrated spaces. However, being located in the southern city of Washington, DC, they were surrounded by segregated restaurants, movie theaters, schools, playgrounds, and other spaces. The number of Black visitors during this period is unknown. The Lincoln Museum received coverage in the late 1930s in the Baltimore *Afro-American*, indicating a level of community awareness.⁸⁶ More research is needed to determine the impact of the opening of the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died on the Black community during this period, particularly with Lincoln's significance to Black history.

Admission Fee

After an initial period of about six years with free entrance to both sites, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes instituted admission fees in 1939 to many parks across the NPS system, including the Lincoln

⁸¹ "Visiting Times Changed," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), February 8, 1942, GenealogyBank; "Museum Open Longer," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 24, 1943, GenealogyBank.

⁸² "Lincoln Shrines Attract Many on Death Anniversary," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 14, 1936, GenealogyBank; National Park Service, *William A. Petersen House*, 1B:16; Harper L. Garrett, memorandum from acting superintendent, [Lee Mansion, Lincoln Museum, and House Where Lincoln Died], to the director, [NPS], June 25, 1938, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁸³ Irving C. Root, "DRAFT: Memorandum for the Director. Subject: Increase in admission fees at the Lincoln Museum, House Where Lincoln Died and Lee Mansion National Memorial," [January 1947], Correspondence Collection, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁸⁴ "The Inaugural: 14 Pages in Souvenir Pictures," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), January 20, 1941, GenealogyBank.

⁸⁵ In 1945, the Lincoln Museum received over 100,000 visitors and the House Where Lincoln Died received approximately 64,000. National Park Service, *Public Use of the National Parks; A Statistical Report, 1941-1953* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1954), 4-5, http://npshistory.com/publications/public_use_1941-1953.pdf.

⁸⁶ Edith Daniel, "A Visit to the Lincoln Museum," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), February 12, 1938, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "Boy Scouts," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), February 4, 1939, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died.⁸⁷ Earlier, some NPS staff argued that the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died already had quite a competition for visitors between the many free parks, monuments, and Smithsonian museums in the city.⁸⁸ But in the end, Garrett, the acting superintendent, supported admission fees for the two historic sites, along with Ickes and President Roosevelt, as a way to make the parks self-supporting.⁸⁹

The new NPS fee was controversial with visitors and congressmen alike. Some complained about “dime shrines” and the commercialization of public lands.⁹⁰ Some park superintendents blamed the admission fee for a drop in attendance. Root, NCP superintendent, complained about the significant drop in attendance at the Lincoln Museum and House Where Lincoln Died between 1938, when the admission fee was first instituted, and 1940.⁹¹ The fee made it more difficult for the two historic sites to compete with the Lincoln Memorial and other free museums and memorials in the city.

During this first period of NPS administration, the NPS faced particular challenges stemming from the inheritance of the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died from another government agency, competition for visitors and scarce resources, and changes in organizational structure. The war years brought a lull in visitor attendance, but also the attentive efforts of the Museum Division to improve the state of the Lincoln Museum exhibits. The House Where Lincoln Died, however, received scant assistance from NPS branch leaders. The NPS did not provide much guidance or support for the specific needs of historic house museums until the early 1940s.⁹² The House Where Lincoln Died would persist in its condition, furnished by ladies’ patriotic societies without the assistance of a curator, until a late 1950s restoration. By then, the struggle to attract visitors would be a distant memory.

⁸⁷ “New Fee Schedule Puts Parks on ‘Pay-as-You-Use’ Basis,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), March 27, 1939, GenealogyBank.

⁸⁸ Charles A. Peters, Jr., memorandum from assistant director, Branch of Buildings Management, NPS, to Mr. [Arthur E.] Demaray, [acting director], NPS, April 1, 1936, Folder 1100/428 Tenth Street, N.W. 516 (#2), Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁸⁹ Garrett, memorandum to the director, [NPS]. June 25, 1938.

⁹⁰ “A.A.A. Charges National Park Fees Reduce Attendance,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), October 5, 1939, GenealogyBank.

⁹¹ Root, “DRAFT: Memorandum for the Director,” [January 1947].

⁹² Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 230–231.

CHAPTER 3: Post-WWII Administration and Movement Toward Theater Restoration (1945–1964)

Creating an Audience for Ford's Theatre

The World War II years were a time of austerity for the NPS and the nation. With federal appropriations, positions, and park visitation drastically reduced during the war, embattled NPS Director Newton B. Drury had spent much of his time fielding attempts from mining and timber companies, federal agencies, the military, and other entities to use park resources.¹ In stark contrast, the postwar era brought renewed attention to the national parks from both Congress and eager visitors sightseeing across America in their new automobiles. The postwar domestic travel boom brought many visitors to Washington, DC, and its national parks and monuments overseen by the National Capital Parks office of the NPS.

Visitation Remains Low

Postwar visitor attendance at the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died, however, lagged in the shadow of other, more popular National Capital Parks sites, namely the Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, and Washington Monument. Irving C. Root, superintendent of National Capital Parks from 1941 to 1950, placed some of the blame on the NPS's decision to institute an admission fee for the Lincoln Museum when most of the other museums, monuments, and federal buildings in Washington, DC, offered free entry. In a January 1947 memo, Root argued against a proposed increase in the 10-cent admission fee, stating that attendance had dropped by almost two-thirds between 1938, when an admission fee was first instituted, and 1940.

*We would especially regret to see an increase in the fee at the Lincoln Museum and House Where Lincoln Died. These areas are not well-known as compared with other large and much publicized visitor attractions in Washington, and the National Park Service has endeavored over the past few years to increase public use of them through improvement in exhibits and more extensive publicity.*²

Despite the fee, which remained unchanged at 10 cents, visitor attendance slowly but surely returned to pre-World War II levels. In 1950, the Lincoln Museum received over 112,000 visitors and the House Where Lincoln Died saw over 52,000.³ By 1953, annual attendance for the Lincoln Museum had risen to over 152,000.⁴ However, this increase paled in comparison to the astonishing overall increase in visits to national parks, which was over five times the number before the war.⁵ Then, as now, National Capital Parks leadership strove to find ways for Ford's Theatre to compete with numerous local attractions for the attention of visitors to the nation's capital.

¹ Janet A. McDonnell, "World War II: Defending Park Values and Resources," *The Public Historian* 29, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 17; Barry Mackintosh and Janet McDonnell, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Harpers Ferry, WV: Harpers Ferry Center, National Park Service, 2005), 47.

² Root, "DRAFT: Memorandum for the Director," [January 1947].

³ Nelson M. Shepard, "D.C. and Virginia Draw Most As 32 Million Visit U.S. Parks," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), November 5, 1950, GenealogyBank.

⁴ Roger D. Greene, "Lincolnia: Ford's Theater [sic] Obscure Shrine," *San Diego Union*, February 6, 1955, GenealogyBank.

⁵ Mackintosh and McDonnell, *Shaping the System*, 47.

Visitor Experience in the Unrestored Theater

Prior to its 1968 restoration, the drastically altered interior of Ford's Theatre posed additional challenges to NPS staff as they attempted to effectively interpret Lincoln's assassination and attract visitors. They were not the only historical park in the NPS system facing those challenges. As Barry Mackintosh writes in *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective*:

*In historical park interpretation, the present resources were more often unspectacular; their value derived largely or solely from what had occurred in the past. The interpretive focus thus had to be on the past – on subjects that were not always fully understood, whose significance was not always closely tied to or illustrated by the sites in either their past or present state.*⁶

Many people, upon paying the admission fee, were disappointed to find that the interior of the theater now resembled a warehouse, albeit with glass cases of Lincoln images, relics, and a few important artifacts (Figure 3.1). Of Ford's Theatre, the anonymous *Evening Star* columnist, "The Rambler," remarked in 1957:

*It's a museum now and it contains a model of the theater, about the size of a packing case. A recorded voice tells the story. That's not much of a show for children in this TV age.*⁷

To help visitors envision the original theater interior, park historians relied heavily on the display of a few contemporary photographs, a large model or diorama, and heavy black lines on the floor marking the outlines of the stage and state box. Painted in 1945, the outlined stage area also included black footprints—made to match the size of John Wilkes Booth's boot—marking the path of Booth's escape.⁸ The detailed model of the theater's interior (Figure 3.2) was created in 1946 by NPS exhibit preparator Rudolf W. Bauss, with extensive assistance from NPS historian Stanley McClure.⁹ Bauss spent over 2,500 hours building the model, which included details like a miniature hand-painted silk Treasury Guard flag draped over the state box and displaying a tiny tear, replicating the original made by Booth's boot as he leapt from the box.¹⁰ The model, however, stopped short of depicting the assassination itself, and did not include any figurines. It was a conscious choice by NPS staff such as Ned J. Burns, chief of the Museum Division, who were highly concerned that visual presentation should "avoid sordid subjects which can too easily be overdone to the extent of bad taste," and further, have a "possible effect on the occasional paranoiac who may aspire to a fame similar to that of Booth."¹¹

⁶ Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 29

⁷ "The Rambler: The Biggest Story This City's Seen," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 15, 1957, GenealogyBank.

⁸ Lee McCardell, "Speeches, Speeches, Speeches—Lincoln's Day in D.C.," *Evening Sun* (Baltimore), February 12, 1946, Newspapers.com.

⁹ "Model to Reproduce Ford's Theater [sic] Scene at Lincoln's Slaying," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 11, 1946, GenealogyBank.

¹⁰ Bauss, Rudolf W., "Copy of Interview Used at Station WMAL, Washington, D.C., April 15, 1946, 7:13 P.M. to 7:15 P.M.," interviewed by Jack Purcell. Interview transcript, April 15, 1946, Folder 833-05 Museums, box 2843, Central Classified Files 1907-1949, RG79, NARA-CP.

¹¹ Burns, memorandum to Russell, May 23, 1944.



Figure 3.1. Interior of Lincoln Museum, first floor of Ford's Theatre, ca. 1955. (Photo by Bernard Locraft. In Locraft, *Structural Analysis and Report of the Ford's Theatre Building (Lincoln Museum), 511 Tenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.* [Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1955], FOTH On-Site Archives. Courtesy of the NPS.)



Figure 3.2. Model of Ford's Theatre stage and state box, created in 1946 by Rudolf W. Bauss. (Photo by Abbie Rowe, ca. 1946. In Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 108, fig. 61. Courtesy of the NPS.)

Other Uses of the Ford's Theatre Building

Upstairs and downstairs from the Lincoln Museum's warehouse-like exhibit floor, other areas of the Ford's Theatre building continued to be used by the NPS as office, laboratory, lecture, and storage space into the 1950s. During the war, historic cannons and other artillery from other locations were stored in the basement of Ford's Theatre, hidden away from the call of wartime scrap drives.¹² A 1956 audit of the museum found over 30 paintings, models, and statues belonging to the daughter of Washington-area sculptor Charles H. Niehaus, as well as 169 miscellaneous books from former NPS Director Arthur E. Demaray, all stored in various offices and hallways.¹³ National Capital Parks used the building for file storage as well as office space.¹⁴

On the third floor, the laboratory, or exhibit workshop, of the Museum Branch (Figure 3.3), which had been used by army topographic model builders during the war, was reopened for NPS use from 1946 until 1948.¹⁵ The third floor also housed a lecture hall used for school groups, meetings, and Lincoln Museum programs.¹⁶ The second floor of the building housed the National Capital Parks museum maintenance center, staffed by Rudolf Bauss, creator of the miniature Ford's Theatre model.¹⁷ After a 1954 Ford's Theatre structural report uncovered serious structural deficiencies, National Capital Parks removed files and some offices, and closed the lecture halls and meeting spaces on the upper floors of the building.¹⁸

Throughout the 1940s, NPS historian T. Sutton Jett, working under National Capital Parks Superintendent Irving C. Root, sought "the expansion of the assassination story" at what was then still known as the Lincoln Museum.¹⁹ During the war, he worked on several Ford's Theatre projects, including a Lincoln Museum booklet and a new Lincoln Museum exhibits plan developed by independent scholar Hans Huth.²⁰ In 1946, along with William M. Haussmann and Edward Kelly, he authored the first Ford's Theatre restoration report, "Studies for the Further Development of Ford's Theatre, Including Restoration and Other Alternatives," discussed later in this chapter.²¹

¹² "60 Guns of Civil War Collected for Placing in Capital's Old Forts," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), December 2, 1945, GenealogyBank; A few cannons remained in the basement into the 1960s. T. Sutton Jett, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Hon. Stuart Symington, United States Senate, September 10, 1963, Folder D66 Lincoln Museum 1-1-63 to 1-1-65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹³ James B. Robinson, *Report on Audit of the Operations of the Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died*, National Capital Parks (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, April 19, 1956), 16–18, Library Box, FOTH On-Site Archives.

¹⁴ "Files Stored at the Lincoln Museum," February 14, 1950, Folder 1460/698 House Where Lincoln Died, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; "Files Sent to the Lincoln Museum," October 27, 1950, Folder 1460/698 House Where Lincoln Died, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; NCP staff offices included the National Memorials and Historic Sites Section. Robinson, *Report on Audit*.

¹⁵ Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 120.

¹⁶ Bernard Locraft, *Structural Analysis and Report of the Ford's Theatre Building (Lincoln Museum), 511 Tenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.* (Washington DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1955), 3.

¹⁷ Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 120.

¹⁸ Robert C. Horne, letter from associate regional director, [National Capital Region, NPS], to Hon. Fred Schwengel, House of Representatives, October 13, 1963, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁹ T. Sutton Jett, letter from chief, National Memorials & Historic Sites Division, National Park Service, to Mr. Philip R. Hough, superintendent, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, February 27, 1947, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum (2) Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

²⁰ Herb[ert], [Kahler]. letter to [T.] "Sutton" [Jett], [historian, National Park Service]. February 13, [1943]. Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum Plan Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

²¹ Irving C. Root, memorandum from superintendent, National Capital Parks, to Mr. T. Sutton Jett, Mr. William M. Haussmann, and Mr. Edward Kelly, January 8, 1947, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum (2) Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.



Figure 3.3. Museum Laboratory at Ford's Theatre, 1946. Ralph Lewis and Albert McClure pour a mold for a topographic model for Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park (in Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 119. Courtesy of the NPS).

From 1942–1950, Jett served as chief of the National Memorials & Historic Sites Division, National Capital Parks, then as special assistant to the superintendent, National Capital Parks, before becoming chief of the Division of Public Use and Interpretation, National Capital Parks, and ultimately, superintendent of National Capital Parks in 1961.²² In all these positions, Jett played a direct role in elevating the quality of interpretation at Ford's Theatre and searching for ways to improve exposure, attendance, and the visitor experience.²³ As an NPS historian, he gave talks on Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theatre and various community group events. He screened artifact donation inquiries, looking to enhance the Lincoln Museum collection.²⁴

In May 1947, NPS Director Newton B. Drury ordered that recorded talks of approximately four-and-one-half minutes be created for the Lincoln Museum, Statue of Liberty, Great Smokies, Castillo de San Marcos, Shiloh, and Morristown national parks and memorials. This type of park orientation talk, recorded on a vinyl record and played on a turntable for a small group, had already been in use at the Washington Monument for at least one year. Drury emphasized that the recordings would only be used to supplement, and not replace, “the essential human relationships of interpretive personnel with the visitor.”²⁵ For the

²² “T. Sutton Jett Named Capital Parks Chief,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), March 10, 1961, GenealogyBank.

²³ For example, even after instituting guide talks every half hour in 1946, Jett asked Lincoln Museum guards to keep track of visitors asking about Lincoln's assassination. T. Sutton Jett, “Daily Account of Persons Receiving Interpretive Services Regarding the Assassination Story,” memorandum from chief, National Memorials & Historic Sites Division, National Park Service, to Mr. Simms, principal guard, Lincoln Museum, April 8, 1947.

²⁴ For example, T. Sutton Jett, letter from chief, National Memorials & Historic Sites Division, National Park Service, to Mr. Philip R. Hough, superintendent, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, February 27, 1947.

²⁵ Newton B. Drury, memorandum report from director, Washington Liaison Office, National Park Service, to the regional director, Region One, National Park Service, May 22, 1947, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum (2) Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

Lincoln Museum, Jett recorded a 19-minute lecture on Lincoln's assassination and Ford's Theatre to be played upon pushing a button, complete with a synchronized slideshow.²⁶ In 1954, Cornelius W. Heine, then a historian in the Public Use and Interpretation Branch of National Capital Parks, rewrote and shortened the lecture accompanying the slideshow. The recorded talk again focused on Lincoln's assassination, but included the desire that "the details of this tragic ending should not obscure the contribution of Lincoln to the nation."²⁷

The Donation of Lincoln's Boots

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, in 1940, the Lincoln Museum had received a group of important artifacts from Lincoln's assassination, including John Wilkes Booth's Deringer and boot, on indefinite loan from the US Army. During the post-World War II period, the museum acquired another significant artifact: the boots Lincoln wore on his deathbed. Schoolteacher Ruth Hatch of Lynn, Massachusetts, presented the size ten boots in April 1947 to Edward J. Kelly, special assistant to the superintendent of National Capital Parks.²⁸ Hatch was the granddaughter of Justin H. Hatch, with whom William Clark, roomer at the Petersen House where Lincoln died, left the boots as collateral. The emblematic boots were on display at the Lincoln Museum by September of that year, carefully oiled for preservation.²⁹ While Lincoln's boots were a key acquisition for the NPS, one coveted Ford's Theatre artifact continued to elude them. Despite the entreaties of A. E. Demaray, acting director of the NPS, the Henry Ford Museum board of trustees declined to loan or donate the rocking chair Lincoln had been sitting in at the moment of his assassination.³⁰

Concessions at the Lincoln Museum

As visitor attendance at the national parks increased dramatically after World War II, park administrators nationwide found themselves dealing with problems caused by inadequate concessions facilities, which typically provided essential services like lodging and dining. As a historical park in an urban setting, the Lincoln Museum had only one concessions operation: a souvenir stand. Because of limited space in the House Where Lincoln Died, there were no concessions there. First operated in the 1930s by Welfare and Recreational Association of Public Buildings and Grounds, Inc., the Lincoln Museum souvenir stand's lease was held in the late 1940s and 1950s by Government Services, Inc.³¹ The nonprofit concessionaire also operated stands at the Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial, and Arlington

²⁶ "Push Button Brings Lecture on Assassination of Lincoln," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), August 10, 1949, GenealogyBank.

²⁷ Cornelius W. Heine, "Assassination Talk," January 7, 1954, Cornelius Heine Papers, HFCA-01863, NPS History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center (National Park Service), Harpers Ferry, West Virginia (HFC).

²⁸ "Historic Footwear," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 1, 1947, Correspondence Collection, FOTH On-Site Archives; See also [National Park Service], "Boots Worn by Lincoln on Night of Assassination Presented to Lincoln Museum," Press release, April 30, 1947, Correspondence Collection, FOTH On-Site Archives; Irving C. Root, letter from superintendent, National Capital Parks, to Miss Ruth Hatch, May 12, 1947, Correspondence Collection, FOTH On-Site Archives.

²⁹ "Boots Worn By Lincoln at Death to be Exhibited at Museum Here," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), September 18, 1947, GenealogyBank.

³⁰ A.E. Demaray, letter from acting director, National Park Service, to Mr. Henry Ford, III, Ford Motor Company, August 4, 1948, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Folder Lincoln Museum (3), FOTH On-Site Archives; The Edison Institute, letter from secretary & treasurer [signature illegible], Edison Institute, to Mr. A.E. Demaray, acting director, National Park Service, August 12, 1948, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Folder Lincoln Museum (3), FOTH On-Site Archives.

³¹ James F. Gill, memorandum from assistant director, National Capital Parks, to V[erne]. E. Chatelain, [chief Historian, NPS], August 15, 1934, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

House.³² As was typical under NPS concessions policy at the time, all books and items for sale were first approved by National Capital Parks staff.

As at other national parks during the period, National Capital Parks requested upgrades to the concessions facilities from the concessionaire, most likely as a condition of their lease. In 1948, Government Services, Inc., installed a new Lincoln Museum souvenir stand built to National Capital Parks' standards, which even specified what type of wood to use.³³ Less than ten years later, National Capital Parks Superintendent Edward J. Kelly, likely based on recommendations from Chief Park Historian Randle B. Truett, requested new display cases and better quality merchandise for the souvenir stand.³⁴ A few years later, Truett sought additional improvements to the souvenir stand, operated at that time by Arnold Wesson in association with Government Services, Inc. Truett sought to relocate the stand closer to the museum entrance, since "Most visitors seem to want to visit the stand before starting on their tour."³⁵

Downtown Washington, DC, in the 1940s–1960s

Washington at mid-century was a city suffering from the growing pains of unprecedented population growth both during and after World War II. Temporary office buildings for government workers occupied the former greenspace of the National Mall long after the war ended. Housing shortages, racial segregation, urban redevelopment, the growth of the suburbs, and the transportation shift from streetcars to buses and automobiles all had an impact on the city. Washingtonians, mostly white, fled the city for the promise of bucolic—and segregated—suburban housing developments. The advent of suburban shopping centers in the late 1950s lured shoppers away from slowly deteriorating downtown shopping districts.

F Street Shopping District

In the vicinity of Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died, the F Street shopping district, one of the chief downtown retail areas in the 1950s, stretched from approximately Ninth Street, NW, to Fifteenth Street, NW.³⁶ Approximately 300 feet north of Ford's Theatre, on the northwest corner of F Street and Tenth Street, NW, stood one of the *grand dames* of the district: the eight-story Woodward & Lothrop department store. The block of Tenth Street, NW, surrounding Ford's Theatre displayed the makeup of a typical secondary commercial block, featuring late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century multi-story buildings containing retail on the ground floor and apartments above. In the 1950s, on the west side of Tenth Street, NW, the Petersen House was flanked by a television shop, an appliance and vacuum shop, a café, a jewelry shop, a narrow ten-story office building, and a Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO)

³² Irving C. Root, memorandum from superintendent, National Capital Parks, NPS, to the director, NPS, March 15, 1949, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Heine, *History of National Capital Parks*, 51–52.

³³ R. R. Ayers, letter from general manager, Government Services, Inc., to Irving C. Root, superintendent, National Capital Parks, NPS, January 14, 1948, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR. Includes schematic drawing for new souvenir counter; Irving C. Root, letter from superintendent, National Capital Parks, NPS, to R. R. Ayers, general manager, Government Services, Inc., January 19, 1948, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

³⁴ R. R. Ayers, letter from executive vice president, [Government Services, Inc.], to Edward J. Kelly, superintendent, National Capital Parks, NPS, December 12, 1956, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; R. R. Ayers, letter from executive vice president, [Government Services, Inc.], to Edward J. Kelly, superintendent, National Capital Parks, NPS, January 10, 1957, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

³⁵ Randle B. Truett, "Relocation of Concession Stand at Lincoln Museum," memorandum from chief park historian to T. Sutton Jett, chief, Division of Public Use and Interpretation, and W. Drew Chick, Jr., chief of interpretation, April 30, 1958, Folder 1150-70-22 Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

³⁶ "F Street Shopping Jam," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 23, 1953, GenealogyBank; "F Street Relights the Way to Christmas Shopping," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), November 25, 1965, GenealogyBank.

substation.³⁷ On the east side of Tenth Street, NW, a small optical shop, the Metropolitan movie theater, and a beauty shop sat to the north of Ford's Theatre. To the south, the nine-story PEPCO office building, built in 1930, towered over Ford's Theatre, separated only by the small vacant lot where the Star Saloon once stood.³⁸

Segregation in Washington, DC

Until the mid-1950s, downtown Washington, like most southern cities, was highly segregated. Most retail shops, restaurants, movie theaters, and other establishments either did not allow access to Black patrons or restricted them to separate entrances, separate areas of the building, and separate bathrooms. While department stores in the F Street shopping district like Woodward & Lothrop were open to Black shoppers, they were not allowed to dine at the stores' lunch counters or tea rooms, and typically not allowed to try on or return clothes, or use store credit.³⁹ The operators of whites-only National Theater, the city's premiere live performance theater, changed the famed venue into a whites-only movie house in 1948, rather than capitulate to the anti-segregation boycott led by the national actors' and playwrights' unions.⁴⁰

The city's schools were segregated according to a federal law passed in 1862. However, segregation of public establishments was *de facto*, or a matter of custom rather than law. By the time of Reconstruction, there were few Jim Crow laws in the city code. In fact, local laws passed in 1872 and 1873 prohibited racial discrimination by the city's restaurants, hotels, and other places of public accommodation. These laws were never repealed, but quietly disappeared from the District of Columbia Code, unenforced until civil rights activists discovered them in the late 1940s.⁴¹

Beginning in 1933, when the NPS inherited the parks formerly administered by the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, most Washington, DC, parks and monuments served as havens from local Jim Crow practices. Secretary of the Interior Ickes—a former president of the Chicago chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—was a strong supporter of the desegregation of NPS parks, and in particular, NCP parks.⁴² Ickes was adamant that parks

³⁷ Judith H. Robinson, Sophie Cantell, and Tim Kerr, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007), 7-28 to 7-29; A 1959 NPS photograph shows the House Where Lincoln Died flanked by a television repair shop and the Lincoln Café. National Park Service, *William A. Petersen House*, 1A-18.

³⁸ Robinson, Cantell, and Kerr, *Registration Form: Pennsylvania Avenue*, 7-35 to 7-37; A 1955 photograph shows the small Sterling Optical shop and side entrance of the Metropolitan Theater on the east side of the street, just north of Ford's Theatre. Locraft, *Structural Analysis and Report*, 21; A 1960 *Evening Star* photograph shows the optical shop had become a camera shop, with few changes on the block otherwise. Jerry O'Leary, Jr., "The Changing Scene," *Star Magazine* (Washington, DC), March 20, 1960, GenealogyBank.

³⁹ For an account of the 1951 boycott and sit-in at the Hecht's department store on F and Seventh Streets, NW, see Traci Parker, *Department Stores and the Black Freedom Movement: Workers, Consumers, and Civil Rights from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 148–161; Jill Connors, ed., *Growing Up in Washington, D.C.: An Oral History* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 8; Michael J. Lisicky, *Woodward & Lothrop: A Store Worthy of the Nation's Capital* (Charleston: The History Press, 2013), 95–98; For a discussion of segregation in Washington, DC, and the fight for integration, see Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove, *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 285–320.

⁴⁰ Robert K. Headley, *Motion Picture Exhibition in Washington, D.C.* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2015), 171–172; Richard L. Coe, "Helen Hayes is Indeed the Right Party," *Washington Post*, March 1, 1953, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Helen Hayes, "Letters to the Editor: Nonsegregated Theater," *Washington Post*, June 11, 1948, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁴¹ Wendell E. Pritchett, "A National Issue: Segregation in the District of Columbia and the Civil Rights Movement at Mid-Century," *The Georgetown Law Journal* 93, no. 4 (April 2005): 1327, 1331. https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/1226.

⁴² Patricia Kuhn Babin, *Links to the Past: A Historic Resource Study of National Park Service Golf Courses in the District of Columbia* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2017), 119–123.

in the nation's capital belonged to all of America's citizens, regardless of color. In 1939, Ickes's assistant secretary of the interior, Oscar L. Chapman, along with the NAACP and local civil rights advocates, lobbied Ickes to allow world-famous Black opera singer Marian Anderson to give a public concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Given Eleanor Roosevelt's support, President Roosevelt gave his approval for the concert location. A racially integrated crowd of almost 75,000 people was present at the historic event.⁴³ In marked contrast, at the Lincoln Memorial's opening seventeen years earlier, prior to NPS administration, the memorial commission established segregated seating areas for the crowd, with Black attendees restricted to a cordoned area in the rear.⁴⁴

Although the NPS operated with a nondiscrimination policy in northern states, the agency had to contend with, and often acquiesced to, Jim Crow laws in southern states. While NCP park lands and national monuments were open to all in the 1930s and 1940s, most NCP recreational facilities, like golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, and picnic areas, continued with the *de facto* segregated use that predated NPS administration. Ickes, and the subsequent secretary of the interior, Julius A. Krug, pushed to integrate these facilities, often battling with two local agencies, the District of Columbia Recreation Board and the National Capital Park & Planning Commission, that supported the entrenched local customs of segregated facilities.⁴⁵ In 1949, the Department of the Interior issued regulation 36 CFR 3.45 prohibiting operators of NCP facilities from discrimination "by segregation [or] otherwise...because of race, creed, color, or national origin."⁴⁶ Backed by the new policy, the NCP began implementing desegregation procedures for its recreational facilities in earnest in 1950, hoping to bring them up to the same standard of integrated use observed for the National Mall.⁴⁷ As sites operated and administered by the NPS, the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died were open to all visitors regardless of race.⁴⁸ While no mention is made in archival records, it is likely, however, that the sites' restroom facilities were segregated at some point prior to 1950.

Downtown Revitalization Begins

By the early 1960s, Washington's once-thriving downtown was exhibiting the impact of the shift to suburbia. A concerned President Kennedy, witnessing vacant shops and deteriorated office buildings as his inaugural parade traveled along Pennsylvania Avenue, just two blocks south of Ford's Theatre, formed a presidential commission in 1961 to address the problem.⁴⁹ As with the 1930s construction of the Federal Triangle government office buildings on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue, city leaders hoped new construction and the rehabilitation of older government-owned buildings would help spur a downtown revitalization. In the early 1960s, several major federal construction projects in the vicinity of Ford's

⁴³ Raymond Arsenault, *The Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, The Lincoln Memorial, and the Concert That Awakened America* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009), 148–150; Scott A. Sandage, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (June 1993): 143–145.

⁴⁴ Sandage, "A Marble House Divided," 141.

⁴⁵ Martha H. Verbrugge and Drew Yingling, "The Politics of Play: The Struggle over Racial Segregation and Public Recreation in Washington, D.C., 1945–1950," *Washington History* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 57–67. JSTOR.

⁴⁶ Babin, *Links to the Past*, 147.

⁴⁷ In 1945, an avid local tennis player noted that the tennis courts on the Mall at Fourth Street NW and Pennsylvania Avenue, near the National Gallery of Art, demonstrated "democracy in action" with "Jewish [players], Chinese, Filipinos, Negroes, Protestants, Catholics, male, female, lower class, middle class, and even a sprinkling of government officials." Verbrugge and Yingling, "The Politics of Play," 65.

⁴⁸ As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Baltimore *Afro-American* shows evidence of Black visitors to the Lincoln Museum as early as the 1930s. Further research in the local Black newspaper collection at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Library, closed for renovation since 2018, could reveal Black perspectives on and experiences of the Lincoln Museum from the early to mid-1900s. Daniel, "A Visit to the Lincoln Museum," *Afro-American*; "Boy Scouts," *Afro-American*.

⁴⁹ Robinson, Cantell, and Kerr, *Registration Form: Pennsylvania Avenue*, 7-3.

Theatre were being planned. In 1961, Congress approved plans to convert the “old Patent Office,” built about 1836 one block east of Ford’s Theatre at Ninth and F Streets, NW, for use as the new home of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery.⁵⁰ Planning for the massive new Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) headquarters, to be constructed on one full city block just south of Ford’s Theatre, started in 1962.⁵¹ City planners and small business owners in the F Street and Pennsylvania Avenue districts looked to these impending federal construction projects to increase foot traffic and improve the streetscape.

Senator Milton R. Young’s Legislative Campaign to Restore Ford’s Theatre

Almost from the moment the Lincoln Museum opened its doors inside the Ford’s Theatre building in 1932, the visiting public seemed to expect a full interior restoration to its appearance on the night of Lincoln’s assassination.⁵² However, it wasn’t until the 1950s that the restoration campaign began to finally gain support with Congress. Before that time, federal funding for museums was difficult to obtain from Congress.⁵³ The National Capital Area (NCA), then National Capital Parks, in particular had a complex funding process since its sources of funding flowed from both federal and local appropriation bills passed by Congress.⁵⁴ Additionally, National Capital Parks had expanded quickly between 1933 and 1951, adding 38,000 acres of parkland to its understaffed management.⁵⁵

Perhaps more significantly, there was no great desire on the part of the NPS to restore Ford’s Theatre. The NPS was reluctant to engage in any large-scale reconstruction projects. For many years, like the War Department before them, National Capital Parks staff were in general consensus that too much focus on the assassination and Booth’s actions would dishonor Lincoln’s memory and glorify Booth. Randle B. Truett, NPS historian and *de facto* site manager of the Lincoln Museum, would later say, “It isn’t that anybody [in the NPS] was against it, but just that not many were for it.”⁵⁶ Ultimately, a dedicated and persistent congressman led the drive to restore Ford’s Theatre and prodded National Capital Parks and Congress into action.

Shortly after arriving in Washington, DC, in 1945, newly elected Senator Milton R. Young, a Republican from North Dakota, met a fellow North Dakotan also residing in Washington—attorney and Democratic National Committee member Melvin D. Hildreth. It was a bipartisan friendship; in addition to belonging to different political parties, Young was an isolationist while Hildreth supported the League of Nations.⁵⁷ Known as a persuasive orator, Hildreth alerted the mild-mannered Young to the disappointing

⁵⁰ Anthony Garvan, “From Patent Office to Portrait Gallery,” *Star Magazine* (Washington, DC), October 15, 1961, GenealogyBank.

⁵¹ Demolition and construction began in 1967 just as Ford’s Theatre construction was wrapping up. David Braaten, “FBI Building—A Monument to Inflation,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), November 11, 1971, GenealogyBank.

⁵² A good example to this point is a letter from a visitor who felt “rather ill” upon seeing that “Nothing save the outside is original. No attempt has been made to restore this historic piece of Americana. The inside has been turned into a half-baked museum containing for the most part reproductions. It has been turned into a honky tonk.”

However, he acknowledged that the Petersen House was a “fine restoration job.” Paul Hanley, letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, [August 1963], Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁵³ Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 117.

⁵⁴ Heine, *History of National Capital Parks*, 50–51.

⁵⁵ Heine, 54.

⁵⁶ William L. MacDougall, “Restoration Set for Famed Ford’s Theater [sic],” *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 1963, Newspapers.com.

⁵⁷ Richard F. Grimmett, “Who Were the Senate Isolationists?” *Pacific Historical Review* 42, no. 4 (Nov. 1973): 489; Bernard Lemelin, “Congressman Usher Burdick of North Dakota and the ‘Ungodly Menace’: Anti-United Nations Rhetoric, 1950-1958,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 163; “Melvin Hildreth Dies; Democrat,

state of Ford's Theatre.⁵⁸ Young felt it was "a pity" that one of the most historic sites in Washington, DC, was "allowed to deteriorate and was not restored."⁵⁹ Thereafter, Young took up the mantle of congressional advocate for restoration of Ford's Theatre, while Hildreth worked behind the scenes to gain support from influential members of Congress.⁶⁰ At the time of his eventual retirement, Young had become the longest continuously serving Republican congressman, having held the office for over thirty-five years. His quiet tenacity stemmed from his North Dakota farming roots. Near the end of his long tenure, he went on local television to demonstrate his vitality to the voters, splitting a one-inch-thick board with a swift Tae Kwon Do chop.⁶¹

Initial Legislative Attempts and the First Restoration Study

Senator Young publicly and tirelessly advocated for the restoration of Ford's Theatre, introducing several bills to Congress over fifteen years. His first attempt came in February 1946, when he introduced Senate Joint Resolution 139 to direct the secretary of the interior to estimate the cost of reconstructing Ford's Theatre.⁶² Young proclaimed, "The restoration of the stage, the boxes, and the scenery in Ford's Theater [*sic*] is a duty which should be carried by us all."⁶³ The resolution was referred to the Senate Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, which requested a meeting with Department of the Interior representatives.⁶⁴

News of Young's bill likely expedited existing plans in the NPS to assess the Ford's Theatre building, in light of the steady improvements that had been made to the Lincoln Museum in the preceding years. In June 1946, NPS architect Stuart M. Barnette, accompanied by T. Sutton Jett and Stanley McClure, visited Ford's Theatre and subsequently reported his assessment that a restoration was "architecturally impractical" because of the building's historic interior having been completely destroyed. He further added that the NPS's National Advisory Board on historic architecture would likely also recommend against restoration of Ford's Theatre.⁶⁵ Despite Barnette's opinion, the NPS proceeded in the creation of a preliminary study outlining both full and partial restoration plans, emphasizing upgrades to the museum exhibits and

Circus Fan," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), December 23, 1959, GenealogyBank; "Former Sen. Milton Young, 85, Dies," *Washington Post*, June 1, 1983, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁵⁸ In almost every congressional hearing regarding Ford's Theatre, Young acknowledges Hildreth for sparking and supporting his interest in the project. E.g., 86 Cong. Rec. 10123 (1959) (statement of Senator Young); 89 Cong. Rec. 8118 (1965); Hildreth also spoke at at least one congressional hearing before his death in December 1959. *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate*, 86 Cong. Rec. 509 (1959) (statement of Melvin D. Hildreth, attorney).

⁵⁹ 86 Cong. Rec. 10123 (1959) (statement of Senator Young).

⁶⁰ In an early 1959 letter, Young asked Hildreth to "organize an influential group of people in Washington and perhaps elsewhere to support" an addition of \$500,000 for Ford's Theatre to the NPS appropriation. Milton R. Young, letter to Melvin D. Hildreth, February 16, 1959, reprinted in 89 Cong. Rec. 8118 (1965).

⁶¹ Young was the unlikely ringleader of a group of eight congressmen taking weekly lessons at the eponymous Washington, DC, Tae Kwon Do studio of Jhoon Rhee. Tom Seppy, "A Senator Says 'Yaaaah'," *Washington Post*, April 15, 1974, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Ward Sinclair, "A Workhorse Unyoked: Senator in the Harness for 35 Years Was a Thoroughbred for North Dakota," *Washington Post*, April 6, 1980, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁶² Joint Resolution Directing the Secretary of the Interior to Estimate the Cost of Reconstructing Ford's Theater [*sic*], S.J. Res. 139, 79th Congress (1946), <https://archive.org/details/jointresolutiond1946you>.

⁶³ 79 Cong. Rec. 950 (1946) (statement of Senator Young).

⁶⁴ Ronald L. Lee, "Senate Committee Hearing on S.J. Res. 139," memorandum from chief historian, NPS, to [Julius A.] Krug, secretary, Department of the Interior, July 24, 1946, Folder 833-05 Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1933-1949, RG 79, NARA-CP.

⁶⁵ Stuart M. Barnette, "The Ford Theatre and The House Where Lincoln Died," memorandum [from assistant architect, National Capital Office of Design and Construction, NPS] to Mr. [Thomas C.] Vint, [chief of development, National Capital Office of Design and Construction, NPS], August 13, 1946, Folder 833-05 Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1933-1949, RG 79, NARA-CP.

interpretive approach. During a July 1946 hearing, Department of the Interior representatives informed the Senate Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds that S.J. Res. 139 was unnecessary. A study was already underway under the NPS's existing authority, and would be submitted to the committee upon completion.⁶⁶

The 1946 report, titled "Studies for the Further Development of Ford's Theatre, Including Restoration and Other Alternatives," was authored by T. Sutton Jett, chief, National Memorials and Historic Sites Division; William M. Haussmann, chief architect, National Capital Parks; and Edward J. Kelly, National Capital Parks. Both NPS Associate Director Arthur E. Demaray and National Capital Parks Superintendent Irving C. Root gave the report high praise.⁶⁷ The study investigated the potential cost of new "fireproof construction" in the existing walls, able to support two balconies, as well as ornate interior finishing appropriate to the historic theater. A full reconstruction estimate of \$500,000 was based on contemporary average construction costs of one dollar per cubic foot, and the building's approximate volume of 435,000 cubic feet.⁶⁸ The overall recommendation of the report, however, was for partial restoration supplemented by upgraded museum facilities and a new library and auditorium, deemed both "feasible and necessary to preserve the structure, and to develop its highest uses."⁶⁹ The secretary of the interior submitted the Ford's Theatre restoration study to Senator Young and the committee; however, it was not followed by any specific appropriation request from the Department of the Interior. Young's dream of a Ford's Theatre restoration continued to languish.

Senator Young made another attempt on July 20, 1951, introducing a joint resolution, S.J. Res. 85, again directing the secretary of the interior to prepare an estimate of the cost of reconstructing the stage, boxes, and scenery of Ford's Theatre as they were on the night of April 14, 1865.⁷⁰ The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, where it died in committee.

A Legislative Victory, 1954

Senator Young's persistence on behalf of Ford's Theatre began to bear fruit just a few years later. In April of 1953, he introduced Senate Joint Resolution 69 directing the secretary of the interior to prepare an estimate of the cost of reconstructing Ford's Theatre. In May, Rep. George A. Dondero, of Michigan, introduced House Joint Resolution 261 with the same language. Both bills were referred to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Almost one year later, after consulting with the Department of the Interior, the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs submitted their report to accompany S.J. Res. 69, unanimously recommending that the joint resolution be passed with amendments.

The final resolution included the Department of the Interior's requests, changing "an estimate of the cost of reconstructing Ford's Theater [*sic*]" to "a study to be made to determine the most appropriate treatment in order to preserve and interpret Ford's Theater [*sic*]...including an estimate of the cost of

⁶⁶ Oscar L. Chapman, letter from acting secretary of the interior to Senator Charles O. Andrews, August 23, 1946, Folder 833-05 Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1933-1949, RG 79, NARA-CP; Lee, "Hearing on S.J. Res. 139," memorandum to Krug, July 24, 1946.

⁶⁷ Root, memorandum to Jett, Haussmann, and Kelly, January 8, 1947.

⁶⁸ Frank T. Gartside, letter from assistant superintendent, National Capital Parks, to John P. Cosgrove, November 21, 1947, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum (2) Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives; Irving C. Root, letter from superintendent, National Capital Parks, to John P. Cosgrove, December 23, 1947, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Lincoln Museum (2) Folder, FOTH On-Site Archives. Despite extensive research, the authors have been unable to locate the 1946 Ford's Theatre restoration study. Further research in the files of the Senate Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds at the Library of Congress may be fruitful.

⁶⁹ Arthur E. Demaray, memorandum from associate director, NPS, to director, NPS, January 2, 1947, Folder 833-05 Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1933-1949, RG 79, NARA-CP; Rogers W. Young, memorandum from historian, NPS, to R. F. Lee, NPS, December 16, 1946, Folder 833-05 Museums, Box 2843, Central Classified Files 1933-1949, RG 79, NARA-CP.

⁷⁰ 82 Cong. Rec. 8504 (1951) (statement of Senator Young).

reconstructing the stage, boxes, and scenic setting,” more appropriately reflecting the mission of the NPS and allowing for some flexibility in the scope of the study. The Department of the Interior also asked for the amended resolution to include requirements for an estimate of the cost of reinstalling the Oldroyd collection in either Ford’s Theatre or a new museum building to be built adjacent to Ford’s Theatre.⁷¹ Melvin D. Hildreth of the Democratic National Committee again spoke in support of the bill, noting derisively, “The place looks like a warehouse. It doesn’t look like a theater. It looks more like a dime museum.”⁷² On May 28, 1954, S.J. Res. 69 was passed by Congress as Public Law 372—the first signal of support from Congress for the potential restoration of Ford’s Theatre.⁷³

Mission 66 Buys Ford’s Theatre Restoration

Starting in 1956, the campaign to restore Ford’s Theatre rode the rising tide of a dramatic increase in congressional support and funding for the NPS. To combat the deteriorating conditions of the national parks, besieged by postwar visitors, NPS Director Conrad L. Wirth conceived of an ambitious 10-year program, called Mission 66, to upgrade public facilities, concessions and staffing throughout the system. Through strategic, well-designed public relations materials, relationship building, and congressional events, Wirth gained an unprecedented level of support for national parks from both Congress and President Eisenhower. Though the NPS still had to go through the annual appropriations process, Congress enthusiastically provided funding totaling over one billion dollars over the 10-year period.⁷⁴ Indeed, widespread support for the Mission 66 program likely contributed to the ultimate success of the Ford’s Theatre restoration campaign, which finally—after fifteen years—picked up steam in the same period.

Initial Funding, 1960

In July 1955, the Department of the Interior submitted to Congress their study “to determine the most appropriate treatment in order to preserve and interpret Ford’s Theater [*sic*],” as required by P.L. 372.⁷⁵ Authored by the architectural and engineering branches of National Capital Parks, the study included a surprising recommendation from NPS: that only the exterior of Ford’s Theatre be restored, and the interior used to house an expanded and improved Lincoln Museum. In the report, the NPS pointed to “considerable sentiment that the full-scale restoration would leave a morbid impression and overemphasize Booth and his accomplishment.”⁷⁶ The NPS also stated its restoration policy, which generally avoided large-scale restoration: “We believe that it is better to retain or preserve intact a vestige of that which is real and historic than to build new structures, the nature of which may be misunderstood by the general public.”⁷⁷

⁷¹ Requiring the Preparation of an Estimate of the Cost of Reconstructing Ford’s Theater [*sic*] in Washington, D.C., S. Rep. 83-1144 (1954).

⁷² “Bill to Restore Ford’s Theater [*sic*] Approved by House Group,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 1, 1954, GenealogyBank.

⁷³ Public L. No. 372, 68 Stat. 143 (1954).

⁷⁴ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst, Ma.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 110–119.

⁷⁵ The report consisted of “Notes on the Reconstruction of Ford’s Theatre, prepared by the Architectural Branch, N.C.P., for use in the report to be provided to the Congress as required by P.L. 372, 83rd Congress,” July 1955, as well as Locraft’s *Structural Analysis and Report*; See Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 13; Horne to Schwengel, October 13, 1963.

⁷⁶ Paul Sampson, “Park Service Files Ford Theater Plan,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, July 15, 1955, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁷ Sampson, “Park Service Files,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

Despite NPS's recommendation, Senator Young pressed forward with his long-held vision of a fully reconstructed Ford's Theatre interior. In June 1959, Young proposed a \$200,000 appropriation for the Department of the Interior as a first step towards funding the restoration.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, continuing discussions in the NPS of the merits of full restoration had led to a change in priorities. By 1960, the NPS planned to proceed with restoration under its Mission 66 program.⁷⁹ At the February 1960 hearings, Richard Hildreth, son of Young's longtime ally Melvin Hildreth, accompanied Senator Young in making remarks.⁸⁰ The younger Hildreth was continuing his deceased father's efforts in seeing the Ford's Theatre interior reconstructed, about which Young had once told him, "No one in the District has done more...than you."⁸¹ Approved in May 1960 for the Fiscal Year 1961 budget under P.L. 86-455, the \$200,000 appropriation was earmarked by National Capital Parks for construction drawings and additional research.⁸² In securing this initial funding, Senator Milton R. Young of North Dakota continued the momentum of the Ford's Theatre restoration project amidst the NPS's many other Mission 66 priorities.

Administrative Activities, Studies, and Publications

In the late 1940s and 1950s, management of the Lincoln Museum collections was still in its nascent state. A 1956 audit found that museum records and inventory of collections were in "deplorable condition," with only 1,400 inventory cards out of 39,000 objects.⁸³ The Lincoln Museum did not have a curator. It did not even have a specific person charged with the oversight of the museum and Ford's Theatre building, although Randle B. Truett, historian and chief of the National Memorials and Historic Sites Section, National Capital Parks, unofficially served that role.

FBI Testing of John Wilkes Booth's Boot

From time to time, the NPS, like the Smithsonian Institution, turned to the FBI Laboratory for assistance with authentication and other forensic testing of artifacts. In 1948, Truett personally delivered John Wilkes Booth's left boot to FBI offices. National Capital Parks was hoping the FBI Laboratory could identify writing on the inside of the boot. During Lincoln's assassination investigation, Dr. Samuel Mudd had claimed that the boot said "Henry Luz, 445 Broadway, J. Wilkes."⁸⁴ The maker of the boot was actually Henry Lux, with his boot shop at 745 Broadway, New York City, according to testimony gathered by the War Department after Lincoln's assassination.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ 86 Cong. Rec. 10123 (1959) (statement of Senator Young).

⁷⁹ *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, on H.R. 10401, Making Appropriations for the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1961 and for Other Purposes*, 86th Cong. 989 (1960) (statement of Hon. Milton R. Young, US Senate, and Richard Hildreth, Attorney).

⁸⁰ *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee*, 86th Cong. 989 (1960) (statement of Young and Hildreth); Jack Eisen, "Sen. Hayden Approves Suburban Park Money," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 20, 1960, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁸¹ Young to Hildreth, February 16, 1959, reprinted in 89 Cong. Rec. 8118 (1965).

⁸² "Starting Fund Approved to Restore Ford [sic] Theater [sic]," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 3, 1960, GenealogyBank.

⁸³ Robinson, *Report on Audit*.

⁸⁴ William C. Edwards and Edward Steers, Jr., eds., *The Lincoln Assassination: The Evidence* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 947.

⁸⁵ Edwards and Steers, Jr., eds., *The Lincoln Assassination*, 829.

Using ultraviolet and infrared photography, the laboratory was only able to discern some of the words: “HENRY,” “465,” and “BROADWAY.”⁸⁶ While the FBI’s analysis did not reveal any new information, National Capital Parks would utilize their services again in the future.

“Morbid” Artifacts Return to Army Medical Museum

Some of the most significant artifacts in the Lincoln Museum’s collection were never put on display. Received on indefinite loan from the US Army in 1940, the bullet that killed Lincoln, the doctor’s probe, and six pieces of Lincoln’s skull were considered too morbid and distasteful to exhibit.⁸⁷ In 1956, the Medical Museum of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, today known as the National Museum of Health and Medicine, requested the return of these artifacts. National Capital Parks staff were still of the opinion, at that time, that this set of artifacts should not be, and were unlikely to ever be, displayed.⁸⁸ Having “more medical than historical interest,” the artifacts’ transfer to the Army Medical Museum was approved.⁸⁹ The Medical Museum immediately put the assassin’s bullet on display, garnering widespread national media coverage.⁹⁰

Visitation and Public Use

From its inception, the NPS recorded data on visitor attendance for each national park and memorial in its system for use in planning and budgeting. NPS visitation statistics for Ford’s Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died show an overall upward trend from 1945 to 1964, almost tripling attendance during the postwar travel boom and population growth period (Table 3.1).

⁸⁶ John Edgar Hoover, *Report of the FBI Laboratory* (Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation, November 30, 1948), Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Folder Lincoln Museum (3), FOTH On-Site Archives; Irving C. Root, letter from superintendent, National Capital Parks, NPS, to Federal Bureau of Investigation, November 24, 1948, Correspondence Collection/Drawer, Folder Lincoln Museum (3), FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁸⁷ Randle B. Truett, memorandum from superintendent, Lincoln Museum, to the director, February 16, 1940, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁸⁸ Edward J. Kelly, “Transfer of certain articles from the Lincoln Museum to the Army Medical Museum,” memorandum from superintendent to director, NPS, April 30, 1956, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁸⁹ “New Setting for Lincoln Bullet,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, June 23, 1956, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives; [Eivind T. Scoyen], “Transfer of certain articles from the Lincoln Museum to the Army Medical Museum,” memorandum from associate director, NPS, to [Edward J. Kelly], superintendent, NPS, June 8, 1956, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives; Edward J. Kelly, letter from superintendent, NPS to Helen Purtle, Medical Museum, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, June 20, 1956, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives; Francis E. Council, letter from Colonel, MC, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, to Edward J. Kelly, superintendent, National Capital Parks, NPS, June 27, 1956, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁹⁰ For examples, see “New Setting for Lincoln Bullet,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*; “Lincoln Death Bullet on Exhibit,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), June 23, 1956, Curator Office Box 4 – Admin System Files, Folder Administrative History, FOTH On-Site Archives; “Lincoln Assassination Bullet in New Home,” *Evening Sentinel* (Carlisle, PA), August 9, 1956, Newspapers.com; “Lincoln Death Bullet Will Go On Display,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 23, 1956, Newspapers.com.

Table 3.1. Visitation data compiled from Public Use of the National Parks, A Statistical Report, 1941-1953 (NPS 1954); Public Use of the National Parks: A Statistical Report, 1954-1964 (NPS 1966); and Public Use of the National Parks: A Statistical Report, 1960-1970 (NPS 1971). Numbers are in the thousands.

	Ford's Theatre/ Lincoln Museum	The House Where Lincoln Died (HWLD)
1945	102.1	64.2
1946	111.5	69.3
1947	101.3	58
1948	97.1	52
1949	109.3	53.8
1950	113.6	52.4
1951	123.5	61.8
1952	146.3	76.5
1953	152.2	78.1
1954	154.6	82.8
1955	167.7	91.3
1956	208.2	128.6
1957	197.6	120.7
1958	187.2	108.6
1959	193.8	58.2
1960	221.9	135.6
1961	250.7	154.6
1962	261.5	163.9
1963	239.1	135
1964	281.6	168.9

Monthly public use reports for the House Where Lincoln Died, found in the National Capital Area archives, illustrate seasonal trends in visitation.⁹¹ In the mid-1960s, these reports were prepared by either William J. Hill, the park guide supervisor, or Stanley McClure, chief of the Branch of National Memorials and Historic Sites, National Capital Region. April, with its influx of school trips and visitors during the Easter holiday, had long been a busy time for the museums and memorials of Washington, DC. The number of monthly visitors for the House Where Lincoln Died tended to peak in April, as well as the summer months of June, July, and August.⁹² Visitors to the House Where Lincoln Died only spent, on average, about fifteen minutes during their visit.⁹³

Petersen House Restoration, 1958–1959

At about the same time Senator Young was pushing forward with his vision of a restored Ford's Theatre, the NPS was attempting the first major restoration of the Petersen House, or the House Where Lincoln Died, as part of its Mission 66 program. Measured drawings of the existing conditions were completed in July 1957 as preparations began. The restoration and rehabilitation work, executed by

⁹¹ For example, see William J. Hill, "Monthly Public Use Report, House Where Lincoln Died, January 1964," February 1, 1964, Folder A3219 House Where Lincoln Died – Public Use Reports 1/1/63-12/30/65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁹² William J. Hill, "Monthly Public Use Report, House Where Lincoln Died, April 1964," May 1, 1964, Folder A3219 House Where Lincoln Died – Public Use Reports 1/1/63-12/30/65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; [Illegible], "Monthly Public Use Report, House Where Lincoln Died, June 1964," July 1, 1964, Folder A3219 House Where Lincoln Died – Public Use Reports 1/1/63-12/30/65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; William J. Hill, "Monthly Public Use Report, House Where Lincoln Died, July 1964," August 1, 1964, Folder A3219 House Where Lincoln Died – Public Use Reports 1/1/63-12/30/65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; William J. Hill, "Monthly Public Use Report, House Where Lincoln Died, August 1964," September 1, 1964, Folder A3219 House Where Lincoln Died – Public Use Reports 1/1/63-12/30/65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁹³ For example, see "Monthly Public Use Report – Visitor Hour Appendix, House Where Lincoln Died Site, July 1965," memorandum from Superintendent, Central National Capital Parks, to Chief, Branch of Statistical Analysis, [NPS], December 7, 1965, Folder A3219 House Where Lincoln Died – Public Use Reports 1/1/63-12/30/65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

Washington contractor George C. Martin, commenced in late 1958 and continued for seven months until completion at the end of June 1959. Several of the improvements were upgrades to visitor facilities and circulation, faithful to the goals of Mission 66. A visitor bathroom was installed in the basement. The rear enclosed porch and stairs were rebuilt to assist visitor circulation through the house. A protective railing and baseboard heating were installed in the “Death Room.”⁹⁴

To bring the Petersen House back to its 1865 appearance, the 1872 bathroom addition and 1899–1900 rear addition were demolished. The extensively deteriorated brownstone stoop and curved stairs were replaced with an identical version, and the original iron railing reinstalled. The deteriorated red paint and white-painted joint lines covering the exterior brick were sandblasted, and the brick was repointed and waterproofed. All shutters and some doors were replaced. Many rooms were replastered.⁹⁵ The restored Petersen House, with a final cost around \$30,000, was reopened to the public with fanfare on July 4, 1959.⁹⁶

The Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died Booklet

One of the earliest publications by the NPS on Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House was a six-page booklet, *The Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died*, published in 1946 and reprinted in subsequent years.⁹⁷ National Capital Parks historian Stanley W. McClure researched and wrote a more substantial, forty-two-page version of the booklet, published in 1949.⁹⁸ Part of the NPS’s Historical Handbook Series, the booklet was offered for sale to visitors at the Lincoln Museum souvenir counter, or could be purchased directly from the Government Printing Office’s Superintendent of Documents for twenty cents.⁹⁹ McClure’s booklet offered a wide historical overview of the history of Ford’s Theatre, both before and after Lincoln’s assassination, the life and death of Lincoln, the assassination conspiracy and its aftermath, descriptions of the Lincoln Museum exhibits and collections, and the Petersen House. The booklet was reprinted in 1953, 1954, 1956, and 1960, displaying few changes from the original publication.¹⁰⁰

Structural Analysis Report, 1955

One of the first post-World War II studies of Ford’s Theatre was carried out by civil engineer Bernard F. Locraft. Locraft’s *Structural Analysis and Report of the Ford’s Theatre Building (Lincoln Museum), 511 Tenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.* prepared for the NPS in 1955, assessed the structural integrity and material conditions of the building. Robert C. Horne, chief of the Engineering Branch, National Capital Parks, and William M. Haussmann, chief of the Architectural Branch, National Capital Parks, supervised

⁹⁴ National Park Service, *William A. Petersen House*, 1B-17 to 1B-19.

⁹⁵ National Park Service, 1B-17 to 1B-19.

⁹⁶ John W. Stepp, “Lincoln Death House Fully Remodeled,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), July 3, 1959, GenealogyBank.

⁹⁷ National Park Service, *The Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died*, Washington, D.C., rev. ed. (1946; repr., Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1947), <https://archive.org/details/lincolnmuseumhouunit>.

⁹⁸ Stanley W. McClure, *The Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died*, Washington, D.C., National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 3 (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1949).

⁹⁹ McClure, *The Lincoln Museum* [1949], unnumbered cover page, https://archive.org/details/lincolnmuseumhou00mccl_0/page/n1.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley W. McClure, *The Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died*, Washington, D.C., National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 3 (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1953); Stanley W. McClure, *The Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died*, Washington, D.C., National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 3 (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1954); Stanley W. McClure, *The Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died*, Washington, D.C. National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 3, rev. ed. (1949; repr., Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1956); Stanley W. McClure, *The Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died*, Washington, D.C., National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 3, rev. ed. (1949; repr., Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1960).

the production of the report. Randle B. Truett and Stanley W. McClure, NPS historians, assisted on the historical content.¹⁰¹

The report was one of several authorized by Public Law 83-372, spearheaded by Senator Young and passed by Congress in 1954.¹⁰² The bill required the Department of the Interior to prepare studies estimating the cost of restoring Ford's Theatre to its state on the night of Lincoln's assassination. Along with a complete set of measured drawings, the report included photographs and calculations of load distribution under existing conditions. Locraft found serious structural defects as well as fire safety and egress issues. For example, the roof was found to be 252 percent overstressed, the columns supporting the floors were 65 percent overstressed, and the alley vault was 200 percent overstressed.¹⁰³ National Capital Parks leadership took immediate steps to reduce loads where they could, closing some offices and assembly rooms and removing file cabinets. But substantial efforts to stabilize the structure would not come until almost ten years later.

Historical and Architectural Features Report, 1956

Following Locraft's structural analysis report, Stanley McClure authored *Historical and Architectural Features Significant in the Restoration or Partial Restoration of Ford's Theatre* (US Department of the Interior, 1956).¹⁰⁴ In his report, McClure attempted to document and consolidate information about the plan and architectural features of all areas of Ford's Theatre on the night of Lincoln's assassination. Historical information in the report was collected from "many scattered sources," but primarily from the extensive research conducted prior to the 1944 installation of new Lincoln Museum exhibits.¹⁰⁵ McClure's report made several important contributions, primarily regarding the floor plan of the north wing.¹⁰⁶ The four-story wing contained the Green Room, actors' dressing rooms, manager's office, carpenters' shop, and a painting room on the top floor.¹⁰⁷ Other notable parts of the report include information about the dress circle lounge and the Star Saloon in the building on the south side of the theater.¹⁰⁸

New Archival Evidence

McClure and Truett were soon aided in their search for Ford's Theatre archival evidence by a somewhat eccentric polymath, George J. Olszewski. Initially hired on a one-year contract in 1960, Olszewski helped track down leads and investigate historical evidence, sometimes with unusual methods. He not only calculated the force at which Booth hit the stage after his leap from the state box, but also spent the night

¹⁰¹ Locraft, *Structural Analysis and Report*, 1.

¹⁰² Horne to Schwengel, October 13, 1963.

¹⁰³ Locraft, *Structural Analysis and Report*, 19.

¹⁰⁴ Stanley W. McClure, *Historical and Architectural Features Significant in the Restoration or Partial Restoration of Ford's Theatre* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, January 1956), FOTH On-Site Archives.

¹⁰⁵ McClure states "Information unearthed as a result of the [1943-44 exhibit] study...remains today the principal source in writing official publications and as the basis of most of our present knowledge of these subjects." McClure, *Historical and Architectural Features*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ Olszewski states "The arrangement of the first floor plan of the north wing is based on the report by Stanley W. McClure, entitled, *Historical and Architectural Features of Ford's Theatre*. This report has several authentic historical references to the north wing which appear to be significant and which check with other known factors." Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 79.

¹⁰⁷ McClure, *Historical and Architectural Features*, 38-39.

¹⁰⁸ McClure, *Historical and Architectural Features*, 6, 7, 10. Olszewski cites these portions of McClure's report in *Historic Structures Report*, 81, 89.

in the empty and “eerie” building, in order to get the feel of the place.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, the team of NPS historians identified several crucial items overlooked by previous researchers.

In the fall of 1960, the chief of the Library of Congress’ Manuscript Division found a draftsman’s sketch, created about 1865, of the Ford’s Theatre floor plan in the papers of Thomas Ewing, Jr. Ewing was a Washington, DC, attorney who served as Dr. Samuel Mudd’s defense lawyer at the assassination trial. The drawing was likely part of court evidence. It was a clearer and more precise version of a rough sketch by Ford’s Theatre owner John T. Ford, made from his jail cell in May 1865 and reproduced in McClure’s 1956 report.¹¹⁰ According to Randle B. Truett, the draftsman’s drawing gave “researchers the first clear idea of the details of the lobby” and also confirmed Booth’s escape route.¹¹¹ Both the draftsman’s copy and John T. Ford’s original sketch were later published in the 1963 historic structures report.¹¹²

In January 1961, Olszewski traced the location of two rarely seen photographs of the Ford’s Theatre, part of a set of 1865 photographs taken by famed Civil War photographer Matthew Brady. Confiscated from Brady by Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, they had been donated to the Illinois Historical Society by a Stanton descendant.¹¹³ Upon close examination, one photograph showed the appearance, previously unknown, of fluted columns supporting the first and second floor balconies; the other displayed a rare view of the theater exterior’s north side. According to Truett, the photos were an “important link” for the restoration planning.¹¹⁴

Evaluation of Ford’s Theatre and Interior Reconstruction

While the restoration feasibility studies were being conducted, the daily work of managing the Lincoln Museum continued unabated. After Bernard Locraft’s 1955 engineering report revealed structural deficiencies, some offices on the upper floors were closed but key staff like Randle B. Truett, chief historian and unofficial director of the Lincoln Museum; Cornelius W. Heine, assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation, and Use, National Capital Region; and Stanley McClure, assistant chief, National Memorials and Historic Sites Section, continued to work in the building.¹¹⁵ Lectures and public programming were held on a regular basis, unless there were more than four inches of snow on the roof.¹¹⁶ The Lincoln Museum continued hosting the annual Lincoln’s Birthday Anniversary program, as it had since

¹⁰⁹ Robert A. Erlandson, “Ford’s, Scene of Lincoln Slaying, Being Restored,” *Sunday Sun Magazine* (Baltimore), August 21, 1966, Newspapers.com; Martin Weil, “Brady Photos Aide [sic] Restoration: Whodunit at Ford’s Theater [sic],” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 13, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹¹⁰ McClure, *Historical and Architectural Features*, 12.

¹¹¹ Albon B. Hailey, “Plan Found in Library of Congress to Aid Restoration of Ford [sic] Theater,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, October 29, 1960, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹¹² Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, 36, 60.

¹¹³ Weil, “Brady Photos Aide [sic] Restoration,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

¹¹⁴ Albon B. Hailey, “NCP Gets Brady Photos of Ford [sic] Theater [sic] in 1865,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 26, 1961, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹¹⁵ James B. Robinson, *Report on Audit*; Conrad L. Wirth, “Supplemental Appropriations for Ford’s Theatre Project,” memorandum from director, National Park Service, to secretary of the interior, August 22, 1963, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹¹⁶ Wirth, “Supplemental Appropriations for Ford’s Theatre Project,” memorandum to secretary of the interior, August 22, 1963.

February 1942.¹¹⁷ The program, with music and guest speakers, was one of its most well attended, with the Lincoln Group of Washington, DC, as its loyal co-sponsor.¹¹⁸

Historic Structures Reports, 1960–1963

With the architectural and engineering studies of the 1950s serving as a basis, NPS historians produced the first Ford's Theatre historic structures report in 1960. Authored by Randle B. Truett, chief park historian, and Robert F. Fenton, park historian, *Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre, 511 – 10th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. (Part I)* was written to the NPS's newly established standards for historic structures reports, further codified in 1963 as the *Historic and Prehistoric Structures Handbook*.¹¹⁹ Per NPS standards, as a Part I report, the 1960 historic structures report was a “brief advance report recommending the general character of the proposed treatment of the structure” which “scratches the surface of the available documentary evidence and presents only the minimum amount necessary as a basis for administrative decision,” including a “well-considered preliminary cost estimate.”¹²⁰

The Architectural Data section of the 1960 historic structures report consisted of McClure's 1956 “Historical and Architectural Features Significant in the Restoration or Partial Restoration of Ford's Theatre,” and did not include any new findings. The report gave consideration to treatments for both full and partial restoration. A partial restoration plan included the exterior of both the theater and the south annex, or Star Saloon, with only a section of the interior reconstructed. However, the report recommended approval for full restoration as the only method in which to “adequately interpret the events which occurred in the theatre on that fatal night.” An estimate for the cost of full restoration was given as \$1.7 million.¹²¹

After part one of the 1960 historic structures report was approved, Randle B. Truett, chief of the History Branch, National Capital Region; Dr. George J. Olszewski, historian, National Capital Region; and William A. Dennin, supervisory architect, National Capital Office of Design and Construction, authored a Part II report, *Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre, 511 – 10th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. (Part II)*, published in 1962.¹²² Part II reports needed to constitute a “reasonable attempt to exhaust the documentary evidence,” containing “the basic information necessary to proceed with the final construction drawings, specifications, and proposed work.”¹²³

The 1962 historic structures report presented important new archival evidence informing the restoration, including the draftsman's sketch of the Ford's Theatre layout, found in October 1960, and the rare Matthew Brady photos obtained from the Illinois Historical Society in January 1961, previously

¹¹⁷ In a 1963 letter, Cornelius W. Heine states the Lincoln Birthday program has been held since 1944, but a 1953 report by Heine states the first such program was held on February 12, 1942. Cornelius W. Heine, letter from assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation, and Use, National Capital Region, NPS, to The Right Reverend Monsignor W. Joyce Russell, January 29, 1963, Folder D66 Lincoln Museum 1-1-63 to 1-1-65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Heine, *History of National Capital Parks*, 73.

¹¹⁸ Jessie Fant Evans, “Head of D.C. Lincoln Group has Private Collection,” *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), February 11, 1951, GenealogyBank.

¹¹⁹ Randall J. Biallas, “Evolution of Historic Structure Reports and Historic Structure Preservation Guides of the U.S. National Park Service,” *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 14, no. 4 (1982): 7.

¹²⁰ NPS, *Historic and Prehistoric Structures Handbook* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, April 1963), reproduced in Biallas, “Evolution of Historic Structure Reports,” 9.

¹²¹ Randle B. Truett and Robert F. Fenton, *Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre, 511 – 10th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. (Part I)* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1960), 1-1a, Folder D66 Lincoln Museum Supplemental 1-1-63 to 1-1-65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹²² Randle B. Truett, George J. Olszewski, and William A. Dennin, *Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre, 511 – 10th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. (Part II)* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1962).

¹²³ NPS, *Historic and Prehistoric Structures Handbook*, reproduced in Biallas, “Evolution of Historic Structure Reports,” 10.

discussed.¹²⁴ Despite a lengthy and thorough investigation, NPS historians failed to find the original 1863 plans by architect-builder James J. Gifford, as long hoped. However, the new documentation, along with reexamined assassination witness reports and interviews with descendants of the John T. Ford family and Ford's Theatre employees, allowed the Architectural Branch of National Capital Parks to "approximate within very close limits the basic design, plan and appearance of the original structure."¹²⁵

The report proposed to restore the entire structure, including the exterior, interior, and the north and south annex, to its 1865 appearance, with a new Lincoln Museum installed in the basement. The proposal also included public restrooms, space for the Lincoln Library, a guard room, site manager's office, assembly room, and storage, collection, and work space. The estimate for the complete restoration and proposed plan was \$2 million.¹²⁶

After the completion of the 1962 report, work continued on a version of that report suitable for publication, coordinated by the chief of the National Capital Office of Design and Construction, William M. Haussmann. Under the supervision of Chief Architect Charles W. Lessig, William A. Dennin, supervisory architect, and Laima J. Kalnins, architect, prepared seventeen architectural drawings for inclusion in the report and submission to the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), a New Deal program created to document historic buildings across the United States.¹²⁷ However, unlike most other HABS drawings, those prepared for Ford's Theatre depicted the architects' plans for interior reconstruction as well as the existing conditions of the building.

The final *Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre* was complete by August and printed and readied for distribution in early fall.¹²⁸ Written by Dr. George J. Olszewski, much of the report's historical content was contributed by Randle B. Truett, with the architectural data from Dennin. Thoroughly researched, resolving long-held myths and uncertainties about the theater's layout and architectural details with documentary evidence, the report served to guide the architectural plans and almost all crucial decisions in the restoration project.¹²⁹

Featuring extensive illustrations and photographs, the 1963 report made for compelling reading. Lincoln buffs across the country wrote to the NPS, requesting a copy.¹³⁰ Copies were distributed to senators and House representatives.¹³¹ The well-produced report played a crucial role in gaining support from members of Congress just before the 1964 vote approving over \$2 million to restore Ford's Theatre.

Design Review, 1963–1964

Soon after the completion of the 1962 Historic Structures Report, the report was sent to the Washington, DC, architectural firm of Macomber & Peter, with whom the NPS had contracted to do the design work for the restoration. By early January 1963 the firm had delivered the first set of plans, estimates, and

¹²⁴ Hailey, "Plan Found in Library of Congress," *Washington Post and Times Herald*; Hailey, "NCP Gets Brady Photos," *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

¹²⁵ Truett, Olszewski, and Dennin, *Historic Structures Report*, 18.

¹²⁶ Truett, Olszewski, and Dennin, 1–3.

¹²⁷ Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, ix, xiv, 67; William A. Dennin and Laima J. Kalnins, *Ford's Theatre, Washington, District of Columbia*, architectural drawings, HABS No. DC-82, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1962, ETIC.

¹²⁸ Wirth, "Supplemental Appropriations for Ford's Theatre Project," memorandum to secretary of the interior, August 22, 1963; Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*.

¹²⁹ Rep. Paul Findley referred to the 1963 historic structures report as "the bible of the restoration." 90 Cong. Rec. 9502 (1967).

¹³⁰ E.g., Arthur Scharf, letter to William A. Dennin, supervising architect, National Capital Region, NPS, September 21, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Carol J. Smith, letter from public information officer, National Capital Region, NPS, to Sandra Granquist, June 4, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹³¹ 90 Cong. Rec. 9502 (1967) (statement by Rep. Paul Findley).

specifications based on Dennin and Kalnins' preliminary drawings.¹³² The first set of plans were well received by Haussmann, chief of the National Capital Office of Design and Construction; however, inevitable modifications pushed delivery of the final set of architectural drawings until late fall 1963.¹³³ Throughout 1964, both minor and major design changes continued to be implemented, including the addition of an escalator from the auditorium down to the museum.¹³⁴ By this time, National Capital Region staff, including Truett, the designated regional coordinator of the restoration project, had realized that construction would not be completed by the centennial anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, as they had hoped.¹³⁵

Lincoln Place and Downtown Progress

Standing in the center of its Tenth Street, NW, block, Ford's Theatre dominates the space around it through its historic significance. Ford's Theatre defines this historic area of Tenth Street, NW, including the public space between it and the Petersen House, through which the two buildings communicate, telling two parts of the assassination story. Visitors and school groups often crossed the middle of the street from one site to the other as they sought to continue their visit and the historical narrative. National Capital Parks was cognizant of the impact the adjacent public spaces and streetscape could have on the perception of and access to the restored Ford's Theatre.

As restoration planning was underway, another organization recognized the potential of the space spanning Tenth Street, NW, between Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House. Downtown Progress, begun in 1959 as the National Capital Downtown Committee, had spent \$1 million on a plan to reverse deterioration of the city's retail core and the "exodus of shoppers to suburban stores."¹³⁶ A large portion of their proposal centered around accommodation for pedestrians, like wider sidewalks and landscaped pedestrian promenades and plazas. The group eagerly anticipated the restoration of Ford's Theatre as a boost to the area around the F Street shopping district, and incorporated it into their plans. Their vision for "Lincoln Place" featured a wide plaza along Tenth Street, NW, to be closed to traffic, with trees, benches,

¹³² The first set of Macomber & Peter's drawings is map file No. NCP 85.11-62-1 through 85.11-62-18. William M. Haussmann, "Review – Ford's Theatre Drawings," memorandum from chief, NCDC [National Capital Office Design and Construction], to regional director, National Capital Region, January 11, 1963, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; William M. Haussmann, "Review – Ford's Theatre Drawings," memorandum from chief, NCDC [National Capital Office Design and Construction], NPS to chief architect, Chief Landscape Architect, Chief Engineer, Chief Division of Construction, NPS, January 11, 1963, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; The 1963 historic structures report also notes that the HABS drawings "represent the final decisions of the [NPS] architects" and "form the basis of the construction drawings" for the restoration. Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, xii.

¹³³ Wirth, "Supplemental Appropriations for Ford's Theatre Project," memorandum to secretary of the interior, August 22, 1963.

¹³⁴ In an August 1964 meeting, Truett; Haussmann; Charles W. Lessig, chief, Division of Architecture, National Capital Office Design and Construction; and W. Drew Chick, Jr., regional chief, Division of Interpretation, discussed some of the changes. Randle B. Truett, "Meeting on Ford's Theatre Plans," memorandum from chief, History Branch, to asst. regional director, CIU [Conservation, Interpretation and Use], August 14, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹³⁵ Cornelius W. Heine, "Liaison with Division of Interpretation on major historical restoration projects," memorandum from assistant regional director, CIU [Conservation, Interpretation and Use], to Messrs. [Randle B.] Truett and Lewis, August 10, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; W.A. Bableman, "Ford's Theatre Reconstruction," memorandum from director, to regional director, National Capital Region, August 11, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹³⁶ Paul A. Schuette, "Urban Renewal Needs Renewing," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, October 11, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

and shade awnings. A central section connecting Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House would be paved with granite blocks and include historically appropriate street lamps and brick sidewalks.¹³⁷

The group published their urban renewal plan, including the Lincoln Place pedestrian plaza, in early 1963, titled *Downtown Streets and Places*.¹³⁸ Shortly afterward, T. Sutton Jett, director of the National Capital Region, wrote to Knox Banner, executive director of Downtown Progress, to express his pleasure at the Lincoln Place proposal, offering to share more details about the restoration plans.¹³⁹ The initial concept of a car-free pedestrian plaza never came to fruition; however, Downtown Progress' Lincoln Place proposal spurred the District of Columbia Highway Department, working closely with NPS, to carry out a \$110,000 upgrade to the Ford's Theatre block of Tenth Street, NW. Completed in 1967, the project included trees, brick sidewalks, historical street lights, and a wide pedestrian walkway paved with granite blocks crossing Tenth Street between Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House.¹⁴⁰ The following year, the NPS and Downtown Progress launched a joint effort encouraging adjacent property owners to upgrade their facades with new paint and signage.¹⁴¹

Campaign for Public Support

With the nation grieving after the November 22, 1963, assassination of President John F. Kennedy, media coverage in the days and weeks afterward sometimes discussed previous presidential assassinations, including that of President Lincoln. The Zanesville, *Ohio Times Recorder* ran an almost full-page piece, "Tragedies of Presidency," on various presidential assassination attempts throughout history beside pieces on the thousands of visitors visiting Kennedy's grave.¹⁴² The *Chicago Daily News* ran a "Presidents Under Fire" series of eight articles, one for each historical assassination attempt.¹⁴³ Some articles directly compared the Kennedy and Lincoln assassinations.¹⁴⁴ This revival of the historical memory of Lincoln's assassination came at a fortuitous time for the Ford's Theatre restoration funding campaign. Indeed, Rep. Paul Findley of Illinois claimed the Kennedy assassination was the "final impetus" for congressional approval of the restoration project.¹⁴⁵

The anniversary of Lincoln's assassination received widespread media coverage every April, but typically did not focus on the current state of Ford's Theatre. When National Capital Parks launched their exhaustive search for historical evidence in 1960, the quest to find Gifford's "missing" building plans made

¹³⁷ Schuette, "Urban Renewal Needs Renewing," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, E1; Paul A. Schuette, "New Day of Glory Seen for City," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 28, 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹³⁸ National Capital Downtown Committee, *Downtown Streets and Places* (Washington, DC: National Capital Downtown Committee, 1963).

¹³⁹ T. Sutton Jett, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Knox Banner, National Capital Downtown Committee, Inc., March 13, 1963, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁴⁰ Robert J. Lewis, "Downtown Progress Hailed by Sparkman," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), January 26, 1967, GenealogyBank; "American Security and Trust Company," advertisement, *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), October 30, 1967, GenealogyBank.

¹⁴¹ "Face-Lifting Planned for 'Lincoln Place'," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 26, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁴² "Tragedies of Presidency," *Sunday Times Recorder* (Zanesville, OH), December 1, 1963, Newspapers.com

¹⁴³ Christopher Arnold, "Presidents Under Fire: When the Laughter Was at its Peak, Booth Shot Lincoln," *Chicago Daily News*, December 28, 1963, GenealogyBank.

¹⁴⁴ An Associated Press story bemoaned the lack of federal jurisdiction over prosecuting Lee Harvey Oswald, with no violations of federal laws, as compared to federal involvement in the John Wilkes Booth arrest and assassination conspirators trial. "Soldiers Stalked Booth," *Miami News*, December 1, 1963, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁵ 90 Cong. Rec. 9502 (1967) (statement by Rep. Paul Findley).

national headlines.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, in fall 1963, a few weeks before Kennedy's assassination, media outlets covered the NPS's disclosure of plans for a Ford's Theatre restoration, not yet approved by Congress, that was hoped to be completed in time for the 1965 centennial of Lincoln's death.¹⁴⁷ An Associated Press story in April 1964 covered the upcoming congressional vote on restoration funding with anticipation.¹⁴⁸ Local newspaper coverage, perhaps more so than national coverage, was crucial to the Ford's Theatre restoration campaign given the high percentage of readership by members of Congress. Senator Young later gave a special acknowledgement of the "valuable support...[and] favorable publicity and encouragement" of *The Washington Post*, particularly its theater critic Richard L. Coe, *The Washington Times-Herald*, *The Evening Star*, and *The Washington Daily News*.¹⁴⁹

The NPS press release and events surrounding the November 29, 1964, closing of the Lincoln Museum and start of the restoration work garnered widespread newspaper and television coverage.¹⁵⁰ The National Capital Region arranged several public affairs events, including television interviews with Randle B. Truett, on *The Sunday Show*, Channel 4, WRC-NBC, and T. Sutton Jett on *The Mark Evans Show*.¹⁵¹ At least one viewer was moved to write to Truett, commending the restoration plans, requesting a copy of the "book [Historic Structures Report]...shown on the TV program," and urging that the restored theater offer a reenactment of Lincoln's assassination since "It is history. We are not so closely associated with it as we are with the tragedy of a year ago."¹⁵²

By the early 1960s, a decided shift in public opinion had become apparent since Senator Young first proposed the idea of restoration in 1946. The concern, especially in the NPS, of memorializing John Wilkes Booth and over-emphasizing the tragic and sensational circumstances of Lincoln's death had given way to a broader historical perspective enabled by temporal distance from the past.¹⁵³ National Capital Parks staff were now fully committed to Senator Young's dream and the historical importance of interpreting the events surrounding Lincoln's assassination. A grieving nation processing President Kennedy's assassination found in the story of Lincoln's assassination a reassuring connection to the past, demonstrating that America and its government could survive after the devastating loss of its leader.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Jerry Bennett, "Ford's Theater [sic] Plan Missing," *Brunswick News* (Georgia), March 28, 1961, GenealogyBank; Newspaper Enterprise Association, "Ford's Theater [sic] Plan Sought by Restorers," *Boston Traveler*, December 5, 1961, GenealogyBank.

¹⁴⁷ William L. MacDougall, "Restoration Set," *Los Angeles Times*; William L. MacDougall, "Ford's Theater [sic], 2nd Victim of Booth's Bullet, is Reviving," *Virginian-Pilot* (Norfolk), November 7, 1963, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁸ Randle B. Truett is lauded as a "dedicated and enthusiastic supporter of the restoration dream" after witnessing the disappointment of visitors, "children especially," for many years. J.W. Davis, "Bureau Hopes to Rebuild Historic Ford's Theater [sic]," *Oregonian* (Portland), April 13, 1964, Newspapers.com; J.W. Davis, "Where Lincoln Was Slain: The Rebirth of a Theater," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 14, 1964, Newspapers.com; "Sleeping Symbol of Tragedy," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 18, 1964, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁹ 90 Cong. Rec. 630 (1968) (statement by Senator Young).

¹⁵⁰ E.g., Herman Schaden, "1865 to Live Again in Ford's Theater [sic]," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), November 22, 1964, GenealogyBank.

¹⁵¹ [National Park Service], "Announcements Regarding Ford's Theatre and Lincoln Museum," November 19, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁵² Margarette S. Miller, letter to Mr. Randle B. Truett, Ford's Theatre, November 29, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁵³ In a 1967 congressional hearing, Rep. Paul Findley stated that "Time healed these differences" between those who disagreed over the appropriateness of restoring the site of Lincoln's assassination. 90 Cong. Rec. 9502 (1967).

A Landmark Appropriation

While the NPS and National Capital Region staff were preoccupied with completing the Historic Structures Report and architectural drawings, other supporters of the restoration continued applying political pressure for full congressional funding of the project. Richard Hildreth, the son of Senator Young's late ally Melvin D. Hildreth, wrote in 1961 to the new secretary of the Department of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall, reminding him of their discussion about Ford's Theatre at the Young Democrats Dinner and inquiring about the status of the restoration study.¹⁵⁴

In early 1963, the Department of the Interior submitted a \$2,073,000 request for the Ford's Theatre restoration as part of their annual appropriations bill. The bill was passed by the Senate but defeated in the House.¹⁵⁵ However, soon afterward, Rep. Fred Schwengel, of Iowa, and Rep. Michael J. Kirwan, of Ohio, worked with the National Capital Region to try again to push the bill through.¹⁵⁶ In August 1963, NPS Director Conrad L. Wirth asked the secretary of the interior to submit a supplemental appropriations request for the Ford's Theatre restoration funding, emphasizing the structural defects found in the 1955 engineering study by Bernard Locraft and calling it "an emergency project in the interest of public safety."¹⁵⁷ Representative Schwengel's and Representative Kirwan's efforts to gain more votes were successful, and the \$2,073,600 appropriation was passed by Congress on July 7, 1964.¹⁵⁸

Senator Young's persistent efforts since 1945 to gain congressional funding for a full restoration of Ford's Theatre had finally come to fruition. The following year he reflected on the fulfillment of his dream in a lengthy statement to Congress, acknowledging the contributions of other key players in his long campaign for restoration funding. He first thanked the late Melvin Hildreth, to whom "must go all of the credit" for the part Young had in the restoration. He made special mention of the members of Congress who had lent their support: Rep. Fred Schwengel; Rep. Ben Jensen; Rep. George Dondero; Rep. Michael Kirwan, chairman of the Subcommittee on House Interior Appropriations; and Sen. Carl Hayden, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.¹⁵⁹ In the 1963 Historic Structures Report, the NPS stated gratitude for the assistance of these congressmen, as well as Rep. Clement J. Zablocki, Rep. Chauncey W. Reed, and Rep. Clyde Doyle.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Richard Hildreth, letter to The Honorable Stewart L. Udall, secretary of the interior, December 14, 1961, Folder D66 Lincoln Museum 1-1-63 to 1-1-65, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁵⁵ John McKelway, "The Rambler...Asks About a Restoration," *Evening Star*, March 29, 1963, GenealogyBank; Elsie Carper, "Mount Vernon Scenic Funds Cut From Bill," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, July 13, 1963, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁵⁶ In August 1963, Representative Schwengel contacted the National Capital Region office to suggest they include the \$2 million in the next Deficiency Appropriation Bill, and that he and Representative Kirwan would give it their fullest support, saying it was "reasonable to assume it would pass this time." T. Sutton Jett, "Ford's Theatre Restoration Project," memorandum from regional director, National Capital Region, to director, National Park Service, August 13, 1963, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁵⁷ Wirth, "Supplemental Appropriations for Ford's Theatre Project," memorandum to secretary of the interior, August 22, 1963. Using the same language, Robert C. Horne, associate regional director, NCR, sent Representative Schwengel a summary argument for the urgent need of the funding. Horne to Schwengel, October 13, 1963.

¹⁵⁸ [National Park Service], "Chronological History of Ford's Theatre and Restoration Project," [1967], Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1/1/1969 Part 2, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; The appropriations bill was passed by the Senate in April 1964. See "Proposal to Restore Ford Theater Gains," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, April 14, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Floyd Haugh, "1965 Budget," memorandum from chief, Division of Budget and Finance, [National Capital Region], to Messrs. Jett, Horne, and Castro, [National Capital Region], April 6, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; "Restoration Backed: Ford's Theater [sic] Fund Voted," *Washington Evening Star*, June 26, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁵⁹ 89 Cong. Rec. 8114 (1965) (statement by Senator Young).

¹⁶⁰ Olszewski, *Historic Structures Report*, xiii.

For the NPS, Senator Young acknowledged the important roles of T. Sutton Jett, regional director, National Capital Region; Cornelius W. Heine, assistant regional director; Randle B. Truett, chief historian; Dr. George Olszewski, author of the Historic Structures Report; William Haussmann, chief of the Design and Construction Division, who directed the architectural studies of Ford's Theatre; and the former and current directors of NPS, Conrad Wirth and George B. Hartzog, Jr., respectively.¹⁶¹ While funding was secure, a long road of planning lay ahead, to be further complicated by a major change to the mission of the restoration.

¹⁶¹ 89 Cong. Rec. 8114 (1965) (statement by Senator Young).

CHAPTER 4: Ford's Theatre Restoration and the Formation of the Ford's Theatre Society (1964–1968)

Management and Planning

In early 1965, the National Capital Region underwent a restructuring that gave it the same management system as the other regions of the NPS. Unlike other NPS regions, staff in the National Capital Region office had always been responsible for both the operation and administration of their park units. With its incorporation into the regional structure, the National Capital Region office shifted to an advisory and review role, retaining its director, T. Sutton Jett. The parks in the region were split into five administrative units: National Capital Parks-Central, which included the National Mall, the White House, memorials and monuments, as well as Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died; National Capital Parks-North; National Capital Parks-East; George Washington Memorial Parkway and Prince William Forest; and Baltimore Washington Parkway and Catoclin Mountain.¹ Lawrence C. Hadley served as the first superintendent of National Capital Parks-Central, quickly succeeded by Monte E. Fitch, who served from 1966 to 1968, followed by William R. Failor, superintendent from 1968 to 1972. T. Sutton Jett and I. J. "Nash" Castro provided continuity in leadership throughout the Ford's Theatre restoration period, with Jett serving as regional director until his retirement in 1968, and Castro serving as assistant regional director until 1968, when he was promoted to regional director.²

The collection of parks, historic sites, monuments, and memorials in the National Capital Region had always been markedly different from that of the other NPS regions. In some ways, the region is a microcosm of the NPS, including a wide range of historic, natural, and recreational parks. The National Capital Region's management responsibilities included the White House, important civic spaces like the National Mall, nationally significant monuments, statues, urban parks and recreation centers, natural preserves in Maryland and Virginia, and historic sites like Ford's Theatre and Arlington House (formerly the Custis-Lee Mansion). Until 1972, the National Capital Region was the only urban park system in the NPS. The National Capital Region also had to contend with dozens of planning boards and commissions throughout the city—like the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts—providing oversight, advice, or regulatory control.³

The National Capital Region is also unique in having so many members of Congress and White House staff as park visitors. Political leaders, national luminaries, and Capitol Hill staff drive through or past the parks, attend park events, and often live in the vicinity. As a result, claimed Joseph M. Lawler, director of the National Capital Region in the 2000s, many take a strong interest in particular parks in the region, becoming what he jokingly called "volunteer park superintendents," and taking their ideas or complaints straight to the secretary of the interior.⁴

¹ Robinson & Associates, Inc., *National Park Service, National Capital Region Administrative History, 1952-2005* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2008), 19–20; Roberta Hornig, "U.S. to Reorganize Area Park System," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 3, 1965, GenealogyBank.

² "Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials," National Park Service (website), accessed January 31, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/tolson/histlist10.htm.

³ Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Administrative History, 1952-2005*, 12, 19.

⁴ Lawler worked for various park units in the National Capitol Region starting in 1972, becoming site manager of Ford's Theatre in 1978–1979, then serving in leadership positions at Wolf Trap Performing Arts Park, Rock Creek Park, and the Kennedy Center before joining the National Capital Region office. Joseph M. Lawler, Oral history interview by Tim Kerr and Gary Scott, November 3, 2006, transcript, Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Administrative History, 1952-2005*, Appendix E, E8.

The National Capital Region added another badge of distinction with the opening of three performing arts venues, out of only four in the entire National Park System, within a few short years in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The NPS had never before administered a performing arts venue. It turned to nonprofit partners to manage the operations, much as it relied on concessionaires to operate lodging and dining at national parks. With the opening of Ford's Theatre as a live theater venue, the new Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts in Virginia's outer suburbs, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the National Capital Region served as experimental ground for a new way in which the NPS could serve the public. With the new challenges of managing performing arts venues, the National Capital Region was truly, as some in the NPS central offices said, "a horse of a different color."⁵

The Restoration Team

Under T. Sutton Jett, the team that had worked together on the historic structures report for Ford's Theatre quickly transitioned to the planning and construction phase of the restoration by mid-1964, with additional staff focusing on the interpretation plan and museum design. The project was conducted wholly by NPS staff, without input from any advisory committees.⁶ Randle B. Truett, chief historian, served as the restoration coordinator, reporting back to Jett, regional director, and Robert C. Horne, associate regional director, National Capital Region.⁷ Truett worked alongside George J. Olszewski, the other primary Ford's Theatre historian; William M. Haussmann, chief, National Capital Office of Design and Construction; Charles W. Lessig, chief, Branch of Architecture, National Capital Office of Design and Construction; Cornelius W. Heine, assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation, and Use, National Capital Region; and W. Drew Chick, Jr., working under Heine as chief of the Division of Interpretation. In meetings held throughout 1964, the team discussed additional interpretation and operational needs, requiring minor modifications to the plans.⁸

Truett began his NPS service in the early 1930s, conducting historical research and fieldwork for the Natchez Trace Parkway. The soft-spoken historian became chief of the National Memorials and Historic Sites division of National Capital Parks in 1940, and over his many years in the National Capital Region he wrote or coordinated park histories and booklets for most of the national parks in the area and managed the care of almost one hundred historic statues. As the longtime *de facto* site manager for the Lincoln Museum and the House Where Lincoln Died, and the co-author of the Ford's Theatre historic structures reports, he was an apt choice for restoration coordinator. Truett was deeply invested in seeing the Ford's Theatre restoration come to fruition. However, his long career came to an end with his retirement at the end of 1965.⁹

Architect Charles W. Lessig joined the NPS in the 1930s as a member of one of the first HABS teams, creating measured drawings and photographs documenting important American buildings around the nation. By the 1950s, he worked in the Division of Design and Construction under Thomas C. Vint, and under later reorganizations, as chief architect in the National Capital Office of Design and Construction under William M. Haussmann.¹⁰ Lessig oversaw all HABS work in the Washington, DC, area in addition

⁵ Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Administrative History, 1952-2005*, 14, 134.

⁶ The son of Melvin Hildreth, Senator Milton Young's ally in the restoration campaign, wrote to Jett, asking to join a Ford's Theatre restoration committee, but Jett replied there was no committee on which to participate. T. Sutton Jett, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Hon. Milton R. Young, United States Senate, June 30, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷ Heine, "Liaison with Division of Interpretation," memorandum to Truett and Lewis, August 10, 1964.

⁸ E.g., the need for an escalator from the auditorium to the museum. Truett, "Meeting on Ford's Theatre Plans," memorandum to asst. regional director, CIU [Conservation, Interpretation and Use], August 14, 1964.

⁹ John McKelway, "The Rambler... Says Farewell," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), December 27, 1965, GenealogyBank.

¹⁰ Vernon L. Hammons, *A Brief Organizational History of the Office of Design and Construction, National Park Service, 1917-1962* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1963), 5, A6.

to creating plans and drawings for new buildings and structures.¹¹ Around the same time as the Ford's Theatre project, he was also working on a major restoration of Arlington House, in Arlington National Cemetery.¹² Lessig directed production and helped ensure the historical accuracy of the Ford's Theatre measured drawings created for the 1963 historic structures report, which served as the basis for the final working drawings produced by the Macomber and Peter architectural firm in 1964. Lessig and Hausmann continued to coordinate with Macomber and Peter and the restoration team throughout the project.

George J. Olszewski was a dedicated NPS historian with a polymath past, formerly working as a linguist, Russian affairs expert, counter-intelligence officer, archivist, photographer, singer and composer. He even wrote an overture to be performed on opening night at the restored Ford's Theatre.¹³ Initially hired on a one-year contract to research Ford's Theatre's history in 1960, Olszewski stayed on for over ten years in the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, writing several other history and historic structures reports for the National Capital Region.¹⁴ For Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, he wrote not only the *Historic Structures Report* (1963), but also *Furnishing Plan for the Restored Ford's Theatre and its Annexes* (1966), and *House Where Lincoln Died: Furnishing Study* (1967). Olszewski was able to determine many details of the original theater interior, tracking down an elusive scrap of wallpaper and identifying four distinct types of chairs for audience seating.¹⁵

W. Drew Chick, Jr., was initiated into the NPS at the age of nineteen, having just finished his freshman year of college. He received a fortuitous opportunity to accompany NPS senior naturalist and chief forester Ansel F. Hall on his summer duties at Yosemite, Craters of the Moon, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and Crater Lake.¹⁶ After starting his career in the West, he came to Washington, DC, after World War II to serve as National Capital Parks' chief naturalist, and he became known for the nature walks he led throughout Washington.¹⁷ He was eventually promoted to chief of the Division of Interpretation, National Capital Parks, working under Cornelius W. Heine, assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use. As Heine's right-hand man, he became a key member of the Ford's Theatre restoration team regarding interpretation and operational issues.¹⁸

In late 1964, an important letter was received from John Ford Sollers, the grandson of John T. Ford, original owner of Ford's Theatre. Sollers, a drama professor at the College of Idaho, sent a detailed critique of the Ford's Theatre historic structures report informed by his knowledge of family lore as well as his study of nineteenth-century theater history. Sollers pointed out several possible omissions or questions about the architectural drawings in the report, including a lobby ticket door, the sloped floor, footlight

¹¹ Charles E. Petersen, "Thirty Years of HABS," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 40 (November 1963): 85.

¹² "Charles W. Lessig Dies; Park Service Architect," *Washington Post*, January 13, 1994, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

¹³ Erlandson, "Scene of Lincoln Slaying," *Sunday Sun Magazine*.

¹⁴ Erlandson, "Scene of Lincoln Slaying," *Sunday Sun Magazine*.

¹⁵ Weil, "Brady Photos Aide [sic] Restoration," *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

¹⁶ W. Drew Chick, Jr., "Adventure and Discovery, 1931: A Personal Account," *Nature Notes from Crater Lake* 27 (1996): 6.

¹⁷ Barry Mackintosh, *C&O Canal: The Making of a Park* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), 138; "3 Parks Naturalists Promoted in National Capital System," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), May 6, 1951, GenealogyBank.

¹⁸ Heine, "Liaison with Division of Interpretation," memorandum to Truett and Lewis, August 10, 1964; W. Drew Chick, Jr. "Operation of restored Ford's Theatre," memorandum from regional chief, Interpretation Division, to chief, National Memorials Branch, August 12, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

sconces, the size of the orchestra pit and paint bridge, spacing of the roof ventilators, and “wing and groove” rigging.¹⁹

The response from I. J. “Nash” Castro, acting director of National Capital Region, reveals the restoration team’s process of finalizing the architectural plans. The final working drawings by the firm of Macomber & Peter, created from the HABS drawings by Lessig’s team, had been approved. However, the team anticipated finding new evidence during the interior demolition and excavation phase and planned to make any necessary modifications prior to construction in order to achieve the most accurate restoration possible. They also allowed for the possibility of change orders based on any crucial historical information that might be forthcoming. Castro promised to thoroughly investigate Sollers’ points, some of which had already been addressed in the final working drawings completed after the historic structures report.²⁰

Ford’s Theatre Closes to the Public

On November 29, 1964, after the end of operating hours at 9:00 p.m., Ford’s Theatre shut its doors to the public in order to prepare for construction.²¹ Television coverage about the closing included interviews with Truett and Jett. On the evening of the closing, a panel including Truett and some members of the restoration team was held at the Lincoln Museum to explain the goals and process of the restoration to the public.²² At that time, the re-opening of Ford’s Theatre was projected for late 1966.

During the closure, the House Where Lincoln Died continued operations, opening daily from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., and the NPS provided some groups with construction tours of Ford’s Theatre.²³ On April 15, 1965, with Ford’s Theatre closed, the centennial anniversary of Lincoln’s assassination was commemorated with a small ceremony in the House Where Lincoln Died. Buglers played “Taps” outside as Department of Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall led the program, attended by Senator Milton R. Young, Senator Ralph W. Yarborough, Dr. Richard D. Mudd, descendant of Dr. Samuel Mudd, and other officials and scholars.²⁴

Immediately after closure, Truett and museum staff set about emptying the building of its contents. All items were packed, and most were sent for storage at a local warehouse. In addition to the Lincoln Museum collection, staff packed the contents of the third floor “Picture Room”: maps, paintings, and photographs belonging to the Washington Sesquicentennial Commission.²⁵ Almost fifty key artifacts planned for exhibit were separately sent to the NPS Eastern Museum Laboratory for storage until technicians could incorporate them into new displays.²⁶

¹⁹ John Ford Sollers, letter to Mr. Randle B. Truett, chief historian, National Capital Region, [NPS], November 20, 1964, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; John Ford Sollers, letter to Senator Frank Church, United States Senate, November 26, 1964, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

²⁰ At this time, the restoration project was expected to be completed in approximately two years, by late 1966. I. J. Castro, letter from acting regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Hon. Frank Church, United States Senate, December 18, 1964. Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

²¹ US Department of the Interior, “United States Department of the Interior News Release: Ford’s Theatre Closing November 30 for Two Years to Permit Restoration,” November 16, 1964, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

²² National Park Service, “Announcements Regarding Ford’s Theatre,” November 19, 1964.

²³ “Lincoln Group to Meet Here Wednesday,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 11, 1965, GenealogyBank.

²⁴ Associated Press, “100 Years Later, Taps for a President,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 15, 1965, GenealogyBank.

²⁵ Randle B. Truett, “Inventory: Lincoln Museum Packing Record, Material Sent to Smith Transfer & Storage,” December 7–9, 1964, Folder D66 Lincoln Museum 1-1-63 to 1-1-65, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

²⁶ Ralph H. Lewis, “Museum Exhibit Specimens, Lincoln Museum,” memorandum from chief, Branch of Museum Operations, to regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, January 8, 1965, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s

The First Master Plan

Since the 1930s, the NPS required each park in the system to have a master plan to serve as the primary tool for planning and development. However, National Capital Parks, with its somewhat atypical treatment in the NPS organizational structure, long lagged in this requirement. With the formation of the NCR, T. Sutton Jett, the new regional director, developed the process and staff support for NCR parks to create master plans. Work began on a regional master plan in 1965.²⁷

Around the same time, Franklin R. Mullaly, NPS historian, and William R. Failor in the Washington Service Center's Office of Resource Planning, working in concert with the restoration team and regional staff, developed a master plan for the new Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died. Under the accepted NPS format, the master plan included basic information about the property, visitors, purpose, and objectives. The "Purpose" of Ford's Theatre was stated as:

*Ford's Theatre is a historic structure that memorializes one of the darkest moments in American history, the assassination of President Lincoln. Since history is a blend of glory, triumph, failure, and tragedy, the restoration of Ford's Theatre as a memorial within the National Park System is appropriate. Although the primary purpose of the restoration is to show the theatre as it was on the night of April 14, 1865, there is an effort made to portray facets of the life of Lincoln by means of artifacts and interpretive devices.*²⁸

For the first time in the history of NPS administration of Ford's Theatre and the Lincoln Museum, the primary interpretive theme was defined as "the events surrounding the assassination of President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre," a dramatic change from past attempts to emphasize Lincoln's life and presidency instead of the assassination.²⁹ The plan stated a commitment to cooperate with government agencies and private organizations sharing the desire to preserve and protect the park, including Downtown Progress, Inc., and the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia. Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died were to be overseen by a park historian assisted by a park guide supervisor, and staffed by eleven park guides, three guards, four housekeeping staff, and six seasonal staff.³⁰ The final master plan was accompanied by architectural drawings for the House Where Lincoln Died and the planned Ford's Theatre restoration and Star Saloon reconstruction.³¹

A Shift to Live Theater

In late 1964, just a few weeks before construction was slated to begin, several persuasive or powerful figures independently began campaigns to ensure that the restored Ford's Theatre included the capability for live theater performances. They encountered a receptive audience in Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, but had to overcome resistance from NPS leadership and staff. Their efforts were supplemented by demand from the public and theater groups, and support from local news outlets.³² The public enthusiasm

Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; [National Park Service], "Specimens Transferred to Eastern Museum Laboratory," January 8, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

²⁷ Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Administrative History, 1952-2005*, 24–25.

²⁸ F[ranklin].R. Mullaly and W[illiam]. R. Failor, *Master Plan for Ford's Theatre and House Where Lincoln Died* (Washington, DC: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1966), 2-1, DTIC document, ETIC.

²⁹ Mullaly and Failor, *Master Plan for Ford's Theatre*, 2-2.

³⁰ Mullaly and Failor, 3-6 to 3-8A.

³¹ National Park Service, *The Master Plan for Ford's Theatre and House Where Lincoln Died* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1966), 8–10, ETIC drawing, ETIC.

³² *Evening Star* published an editorial in favor of live theater at Ford's. "Ford's Theater [sic]," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 19, 1965, GenealogyBank; Miller to Truett, November 29, 1964; William L. Soule, Jr., letter to National Capital Office Design and Construction, [October 6, 1964], Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Hugh Fuller, letter to The Honorable Stewart Udall, secretary of the interior, May 6, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

for the possibility of live theater at Ford's was a drastic change from the public outcry one hundred years earlier when Ford attempted to resume performances after Lincoln's assassination, as discussed in Chapter 1. Although the NPS did not initially give any consideration to the inclusion of live theater in the restored Ford's Theatre "out of deference to this early public sentiment," enough time had passed to create a marked shift in public opinion.³³ As with the restoration itself, the shift in sentiment can be attributed to the American public attaining the emotional distance and historical perspective needed to envision Ford's Theatre as both a contemplative shrine and a vibrant cultural site.

Senator Claiborne Pell

Senator Claiborne Pell, a Democrat from Rhode Island, first contacted Udall in October 1964, suggesting that perhaps only slight modifications were needed to reconstruct Ford's Theatre as a working theater of educational and cultural value. The assistant secretary of the interior initially replied that it was neither feasible at that late hour nor in accord with the restoration policy to incur the expensive changes needed for live theater. However, a few weeks later an update was sent to Senator Pell indicating that Secretary Udall would indeed consider the possibility of live theater.³⁴

Actors' Equity Association

Frederick O'Neal, president of the Actors' Equity Association of New York and Los Angeles, wrote to Udall at almost the same time as Pell, expressing deep concern that, unless action was taken soon, Ford's Theatre would be nothing more than a "static museum piece," and a valuable opportunity to allow for live theater would be lost.³⁵ O'Neal later suggested that live theater was preferable to the planned sound and light program narrating the assassination, which was "morbidly preoccupied with Lincoln's tragic death," comparing it to the idea of a similar reenactment on "that street in Dallas," referencing President Kennedy's assassination.³⁶ Udall was very interested in Pell's and O'Neal's ideas about accommodating live theater without sacrificing too much historical integrity, but NPS Director George Hartzog was not receptive.³⁷ Taking the existing plans and safety codes into consideration, Hartzog and most NPS staff initially viewed the cost, scope of needed changes, and potential loss of historical accuracy as prohibitive.³⁸

In December, Udall and Jett met with O'Neal and other Actors' Equity representatives. Melvin Levine of Downtown Progress, the urban renewal committee proposing the Lincoln Place pedestrian plaza, and Senator Pell's aide were also in attendance. The Actors' Equity Association apparently made a good

³³ T. Sutton Jett, "Briefing Memo on Ford's Theatre Restoration," memorandum from regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Orren Beatty, Jr., assistant to the secretary [of the Interior], October 26, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

³⁴ Claiborne Pell, letter from U.S. Senator to Hon. Stewart L. Udall, secretary of the interior, October 22, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; John A. Carver, Jr., letter from assistant secretary of the interior to Hon. Claiborne Pell, United States Senate, November 16, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; John A. Carver, Jr., letter from assistant secretary of the interior to Hon. Claiborne Pell, United States Senate, December 2, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

³⁵ Frederick O'Neal, letter from president, Actors' Equity Association, to Stewart L. Udall, secretary of the interior, November 6, [1964], Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

³⁶ "Live Plays at Ford's Proposed," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, November 29, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

³⁷ Walter Pozen, former aide to Udall, claims that Hartzog was not in favor of the idea, but cooperated after Udall made the decision to approve live theater. Don Shirley, "Ford's Theater [sic] in Her Image," *Washington Post*, March 14, 1976, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

³⁸ Stewart Udall, letter from secretary of the interior to Frederick O'Neal, president, Actors Equity Association, November 28, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; "Live Plays at Ford's Proposed," *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

impression. They had retained a consulting architect to prepare a proposal for the National Park Service to help make their case.³⁹

Frankie C. Hewitt

At some point in late 1964 or perhaps early 1965, Udall encountered another powerful force in favor of live theater at Ford's. Frankie Childers Hewitt and her husband, *60 Minutes* producer Don Hewitt, ran into Udall and his assistant Walter Pozen one night in June 1965 after a show in New York City. Hewitt had originally met Udall in the mid-1950s when she worked as a Washington lobbyist and Capitol Hill staffer. They began discussing Ford's Theatre, and she suggested it would be a perfect venue for live theater.⁴⁰ Hewitt could be highly persuasive, a passionate supporter for her causes. With friends in the right places, and skill at making connections, she was adept at fundraising. She considered herself a supporter of the arts, but, as she later admitted, "didn't know a tiddly damn about theatre."⁴¹ While her initial involvement was limited to advocating the idea of live theater at Ford's, Hewitt would eventually take on a bigger role as the founder and president of Ford's Theatre Society (FTS).

The Feasibility Study

The Actors' Equity Association was so invested in the potential of live performances at the restored Ford's Theatre that they hired New York architect Hugh Hardy and Macomber and Peter, the same Washington architecture firm that produced the restoration working drawings, to develop a proposal to submit to the Department of the Interior and the NPS. Macomber and Peter, in turn, hired William M. Haussmann, who by this time had left the NPS, as a consulting architect.⁴² Robert W. Andrews replaced Haussmann as the new chief of the National Capital Office of Design and Construction. Submitted by early February, the feasibility study included drawings for adapting the entire building, including the balcony seating, for live theater.

Heine, Truett, and Lessig strenuously objected to the changes proposed in the feasibility study, particularly the redesign of the two staircases leading from the lobby and the loss of the full box office. They argued these changes would result in a loss of historical accuracy and would not fulfill the mandate from Congress to restore the building as it was on the night of April 14, 1865. They suggested that perhaps the changes could be confined to the first floor only.⁴³ A subsequent chart submitted by Haussmann compared the necessary work for the full conversion, which required more egress and building code

³⁹ Leroy F. Aarons, "Live Ford Theatre Performances Discussed With Equity Officials," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, December 11, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Frederick O'Neal, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, March 22, 1988, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Jackson E. Price, "Live Theatre in the restored Fords Theatre," memorandum from acting director to Mr. Orren Beaty, Jr., assistant to the secretary, December 9, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁴⁰ It was not until a few years later, when Hewitt was fundraising for the National Repertory Theater (NRT), that she established the Ford's Theatre Society to serve as a go-between for the NRT and NPS. Shirley, "Ford's Theater [sic] in Her Image," *Washington Post*; Judith Weinraub, "In the Driver's Seat at Ford's: 25 Years Ago, Frankie Hewitt Had a Better Idea for the Historic Theater," *Washington Post*, February 2, 1993, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁴¹ Shirley, "Ford's Theater [sic] in Her Image," *Washington Post*.

⁴² "Architects Believe Ford's Theater [sic] Can Handle Live Performances Again," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, April 12, 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁴³ Cornelius W. Heine, "Feasibility Study, revisions to Ford's Theatre required for its use as a live theatre," memorandum from assistant regional director, CIU [Conservation, Interpretation and Use, National Capital Region, NPS], to regional director, February 10, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

changes, and a partial conversion, which used only the first floor for audience seating. The full conversion had a cost estimate of \$250,000, and the partial conversion had a cost estimate of \$75,000.⁴⁴

By mid-February, with such a significant change in plans looming uncertainly over the project, Robert W. Andrews, new chief of the National Capital Office of Design and Construction, was getting anxious. The shop drawings for the steel work were already being prepared, and a change to live theater would require a redesign of the structural floor system.⁴⁵

Udall Approves Live Theater

In the end, Secretary Udall cast the deciding vote. His interest in the concept of live theater at Ford's was clear from the beginning.⁴⁶ The restoration team knew the foregone conclusion by mid-May, and were already working on modifications to the architectural plans.⁴⁷ *Evening Star* announced Udall's approval on May 18, 1965, and his memorandum to the effect was issued two days later. Modifications to the architectural plans to allow for live theater and the accommodation of about 600 patrons would cost \$75,000.⁴⁸ Udall preferred the idea of "occasional productions confined to Lincoln's historical time in Washington," as suggested earlier by Actors' Equity, but gave approval without a fixed plan for the type or extent of live theater.⁴⁹

Certainly, there were still those inside and outside of the NPS hesitant or opposed to the idea of live performances at Ford's Theatre. Some of the early concerns that live theater would interfere with the building's prime purpose as a national memorial were still valid.⁵⁰ Ralph Lewis, chief of Museum Operations at the time, put his disappointment plainly in *Museum Curatorship in the National Park Service, 1904-1982* (1993), stating that "an impresario persuaded higher authority" to allow live theater, and that this decision "proved the proverbial camel's nose."⁵¹ In his letter to the editor of *The Evening Star*, concerned citizen Rufus Webb questioned if financial issues would ever pressure the theater company to put on musical comedies or murder mysteries, and if so, would that "do violence to those sentiments most Americans hold for that place where was played the last dramatic and tragic act in the life of President

⁴⁴ William M. Haussmann, "Comparative Chart: Complete and Partial Conversion to Use for Live Theatre," Planning and budget document by Haussmann, Macomber & Peter Architects, Washington, DC, [Feb/Mar 1965], Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁴⁵ Robert W. Andrews, "Feasibility study of Ford's Theatre for use as a live theatre," memorandum from chief, NCDC [National Capital Office of Design and Construction, NPS], to regional director, NCR [National Capital Region], February 18, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁴⁶ According to Walter Pozen, Udall succinctly told NPS director George Hartzog, who was opposed to the idea, "I want live theater." Shirley, "Ford's Theater [*sic*] in Her Image," *Washington Post*.

⁴⁷ Cornelius W. Heine, letter from assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use, National Capital Region, NPS, to Milton Lyon, Actors Equity Foundation, Inc., May 18, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁴⁸ Helen Dewar, "Udall Approves Changes to Return Live Productions at Ford's Theater [*sic*]," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, May 18, 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁴⁹ Cornelius W. Heine, "Restoration of Ford's Theater [*sic*] and approval to make preliminary changes in the construction which would permit live theater in the structure," memorandum of Record to the Files from assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use, National Capital Region, NPS, May 12, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁵⁰ Cornelius W. Heine, letter from assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use, NPS, to William L. Soule, Jr., October 27, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁵¹ Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 177.

Lincoln?”⁵² Senator Milton Young himself supported having only the occasional stage performance.⁵³ Even Richard Coe, *Washington Post* drama critic, who desperately wanted more theater venues in Washington, was not in full support of live performances at Ford’s Theatre. He thought it would lead to dissatisfactory compromises of both the historical authenticity of the building and of the performances themselves.⁵⁴ The impact of the decision to allow live theater was not yet evident, but it would be felt for years to come by National Capital Region and National Capital Parks-Central staff. It would require astute leadership, delicately balancing the needs of theater production with the needs of a historic site, to fully realize the potential benefit of the change.

New Opportunities for Interpretation

Preparations for the new Lincoln Museum and Ford’s Theatre interpretive program came at a time of profound change in NPS exhibit design and interpretation. In the Mission 66 era, the NPS moved away from text-heavy exhibits, and toward audiovisual displays. William C. Everhart, the new chief of the Interpretation and Visitor Services Division, and Russell Hendrickson, the new chief of the Museum Branch, led the call for a new approach which incorporated audio, film, bold design, and nonlinear exhibits intended to create a new kind of educational experience for visitors, enhanced by emotional response.⁵⁵

Planning for the Sound-and-Light Program

Everhart was very interested in the work of innovative filmmakers, entertainment visionaries, designers, and architects, and encouraged Heine and Jett to contact Charles Eames and Walt Disney for potential partnerships or recommendations for Ford’s Theatre.⁵⁶ Disney had recently opened an awe-inducing “Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln” show in the Illinois Pavilion of the 1964 New York World’s Fair. Driven by a lifelong fascination with Abraham Lincoln, Disney and his team had created an animatronic figure of Lincoln, with a face sculpted from Lincoln’s life mask, that stood up and recited excerpts from famous speeches, animated by forty-eight different body and face movements.⁵⁷ Jett asked Disney for recommendations of firms that might be able to produce “a presentation with sound and lighting to dramatize that fateful night.”⁵⁸ Unfortunately, his inquiry was not fruitful. Disney replied that his business was “motion pictures, amusement parks and world’s fairs,” and he was unable to offer any recommendations or technical assistance for the Ford’s Theatre program.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the interpretation team continued to pursue plans for an engaging “sound and light program,” a “10-12 minute dramatic narration of the events leading up to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln...heightened by the use of certain lighting effects...mechanically coordinated, perhaps [by] some

⁵² Rufus Webb, “Letter to the Editor: Must the Show Go On?” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 27, 1965, GenealogyBank.

⁵³ Heine, “Restoration of Ford’s Theater [*sic*],” memorandum to the Files from assistant regional director, May 12, 1965.

⁵⁴ Richard L. Coe, “Ford’s to Get Sound & Light,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, May 6, 1967, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 174–177.

⁵⁶ Everhart also worked with architect Eero Saarinen and filmmaker Charles Guggenheim for the Museum of Westward Expansion at the St. Louis Gateway Arch. Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 174.

⁵⁷ J.P. Telotte, “Disney and ‘This World’s Fair Thing’,” in *Meet Me at the Fair: A World’s Fair Reader*, eds. Laura Hollengreen, Celia Pearce, Rebecca Rouse, and Bobby Schwiezer (Pittsburgh: ETC Press, Carnegie Mellon University, 2014), 415–416.

⁵⁸ T. Sutton Jett, letter from regional director, NPS, to Walt Disney, Walt Disney Studios, July 24, 1964, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁵⁹ Walt Disney, letter to T. Luther [*sic*] Jett, regional director, NPS, Department of the Interior, August 10, 1964, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

kind of computer system.”⁶⁰ As with many other attractions and museums of the late 1960s, NPS leadership was eager to take advantage of new technologies to improve their ability to connect with and educate visitors. At that time, NPS’s Interpretation and Visitor Services Division was also planning a synchronized sound-and-light program for the Cyclorama at Gettysburg National Military Park. The first in the park system, it launched in the mid-1960s.⁶¹

Starting in March 1965, Cornelius W. Heine, assistant regional director of Conservation, Interpretation and Use for the National Capital Region, sent requests to various audiovisual companies and producers, inviting them to submit proposals for an “automatic audiovisual program” for Ford’s Theatre.⁶² An evaluation committee, including Everhart, Heine, Chick, and Truett,⁶³ established basic criteria:

The presentation must be dramatic and in good taste in recounting the events which occurred there on April 14, 1865, and interpreting their significance. The total duration of the program should not exceed 15 minutes. In this time, we should introduce the story to the visitor, recount the sequence of President Lincoln’s arrival, the progress of the play, Booth’s arrival, the fatal shot, and perhaps the dying President’s removal from the building. The interpretive conclusion of the program should be brief and forceful.

*As we see it, the automatic program should include a narration...There must also be realistic sound effects to heighten the drama, and coordinated lighting effects to direct the attention of the audience to the proper areas of action in the theatre.*⁶⁴

After receiving several proposals, the committee selected Guggenheim Productions, Inc., headed by New York producer Charles W. Guggenheim, in December 1965.⁶⁵ However, with the technical and programming changes necessitated by the decision to accommodate live theater, and the process of obtaining additional federal appropriations to cover the cost of production, the sound-and-light program was not completed until more than two years after Ford’s Theatre re-opened.⁶⁶

Planning the New Lincoln Museum

In 1965, the NPS hired a new chief of museums, Russell J. Hendrickson, as part of a newly restructured Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, Operations, headed by William C. Everhart. At the time, NPS museums had a reputation for consistent but staid exhibit design. Hendrickson, an accomplished artist,

⁶⁰ Cornelius W. Heine, letter from assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use, [National Capital Region, NPS], to Julius Ochs Adler, Jr., Thomas J. Deegan Company, Inc. December 9, 1964, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁶¹ Adele Gutman Nathan, letter to Herbert E. Kahler, chief historian, National Park Service, [August 22, 1963], Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁶² For example: Cornelius W. Heine, letter from acting regional director, [Conservation, Interpretation and Use, NPS], to Jacques Babion, Sonolux, March 24, 1965, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁶³ The committee also included National Capital Region staff Chet Harris and Leroy Marcroft. William C. Everhart, “Selection of Guggenheim Productions, Inc.,” memorandum from chairman to Members of Evaluation Committee, Ford’s Theatre, December 15, 1965, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁶⁴ T. Sutton Jett, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Thomas R. Ottenstein, December 3, 1965, Folder D66 Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁶⁵ Everhart, “Selection of Guggenheim Productions, Inc.,” memorandum to members of Evaluation Committee, December 15, 1965.

⁶⁶ Richard Halloran, “Lincoln’s Death Portrayed at Scene,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1970, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Russell E. Dickenson, memorandum from acting regional director, National Capital Region, to director, NPS, October 15, 1969, Folder H30 NCR Ford’s Theatre 1/1/68, Box 1455, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

was given the task of modernizing and upgrading design, and largely succeeded.⁶⁷ Anticipating the new Lincoln Museum to be a showcase for the NPS's new direction in exhibit design, Hendrickson hired Design, Inc., to create a modern, innovative museum based on his vision. Nino C. Belfiore and Peter E. Rhoads of Design, Inc., proposed the artifacts to be displayed, and developed designs for the overall space and exhibits, including graphics, audio, and lighting.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Ralph H. Lewis, chief of the Museum Operations Branch, and Marilyn B. Wandrus, exhibits specialist at the Eastern Museum Laboratory, conducted a diligent search for additional photographs, prints, paintings, music, and reproductions to supplement the artifacts in the engaging new exhibits.⁶⁹

Lincoln's story was to be told in three parts, each occupying a crescent-shaped area or alcove of the museum: "Lincoln the Man," "Lincoln the Politician," and "Lincoln the President." The design featured a circular sunken area in the center of the museum space, reminiscent of a mid-century-style "conversation pit." A tall case would stand prominently in the sunken area, displaying the life mask and hand casts of Abraham Lincoln, created by artist Leonard Volk in 1860. The museum plans also included a "speech lounge" featuring audio of actors reading Lincoln's most important speeches, and an assassination section deemphasized and tucked discreetly into a corner.⁷⁰

Plans for the Reconstructed Star Saloon

Along with the restored Ford's Theatre and new Lincoln Museum, NPS staff anticipated the use of space in the reconstructed south annex, or Star Saloon building. The first floor was designed to include a historically correct ticket box, which the main Ford's Theatre lobby had no room to accommodate, a mural on the north wall, and exhibits on the south wall. The second floor of the Star Saloon, with access from the dress circle of Ford's Theatre, was to serve as a meeting room for school groups and non-commercial organizations. The third floor was reserved for the Lincoln Library and study collection.⁷¹

Historic Recognition

With the advent of the national historic preservation movement in the mid-1960s, Washington preservationists were quick to place Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died on the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites in 1964.⁷² Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places soon followed in 1966, with individual listings for both buildings. In addition, the Pennsylvania Avenue

⁶⁷ William C. Everhart, "The Origins of the Interpretive Design Center, with Comments on the Progress of Interpretation, 1964-1970," National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, n.d., 2, accessed February 3, 2020, <http://npshistory.com/publications/interpretation/hfc/origins.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Herman Schaden, "New Lincoln Museum Recreated Spirit of His Life and Times," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), February 12, 1968, GenealogyBank; "Peter Rhoads Helps Design Lincoln Museum," *News-Palladium* (Benton Harbor, MI), April 12, 1968, 4, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Ralph H. Lewis, letter from chief, Branch of Museum Operations, to Dr. Donald F. Hoffmeister, director, Museum of Natural History, University of Illinois, November 14, 1967, Folder D6215 Pt. 1 NCR Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre) 1/1/66 to Dec 31 1967, Box 1191, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP; Charles J. Newcomb, letter to Marilyn Wandrus, [exhibits specialist], Eastern Museum Lab, NPS, June 20, 1966, Folder D6215 Pt. 1 NCR Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre) 1/1/66 to Dec 31 1967, Box 1191, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

⁷⁰ Billy C. Newbold, letter from chief, Branch of Special Events, NPS, to Harry Kursh, February 7, 1968, Folder H30 NCR Ford's Theatre 1/1/68, Box 1455, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP; Brian Anderson, *Ford's Theatre* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 90–91; [National Park Service], "Fact Sheet Ford's Theatre," [1968]; McClure, *Ford's Theatre*, 22–24.

⁷¹ [National Park Service], "Fact Sheet Ford's Theatre," [1968]; Ralph H. Lewis, "Needs for Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre," memorandum from acting chief, Division of Museums, NPS, to regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, February 14, 1968, Folder D6215 Pt.1 NCR Lincoln Museum 1-1-68, Box 1191, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

⁷² At that time, designations were made by the city's Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital.

National Historic Site was designated in 1965, and listed as a historic district on the newly formed National Register of Historic Places in 1966.⁷³ The boundaries between the NPS-administered Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site and the related National Register historic district are slightly different, with Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died in the historic district, but not the National Historic Site.⁷⁴ At the time, neither the D.C. Inventory nor the National Register carried any legal protections against alteration or demolition.⁷⁵ However, the listings were important for local and national recognition of historic significance, for informing planning decisions by the NPS and the city, and for protection under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which requires federal agencies to identify and assess the effects its actions may have on historic buildings.

Active Construction (1965–1968)

Coe Construction, Inc., was selected in November 1964 as the restoration contractor with a bid of \$1.39 million.⁷⁶ As a Washington-area general contractor, the company had experience with large projects, but not necessarily retrofitting historic buildings. The company had constructed at least two high-rise office buildings and two large suburban shopping centers, and regularly bid on government construction projects.⁷⁷ Coe Construction's major tasks—working from Macomber and Peter's architectural plans—were to excavate and underpin the footings of the building, excavate and construct a new basement level for the Lincoln Museum, offices, and restrooms; repoint the exterior brick masonry walls; reconstruct the historic theater interior; reinforce the historic roof framing; replace the roof; renovate the historic north annex at the northeast corner; and reconstruct the historic three-story south annex, or Star Saloon building, with a lecture room and research room on the upper floors. But with the first rumblings of possibility of live theater at Ford's happening around the same time Coe Construction's bid was accepted, both the construction company and the restoration team were unaware of the significant change orders that lay ahead.

At the time of construction, the building on the north side of Ford's Theatre, 517 Tenth Street, NW, formerly a camera shop, had become Allen's Souvenir Shop. Upon learning of Ford's Theatre's impending

⁷³ Robinson, Cantell, and Kerr, *Registration Form: Pennsylvania Avenue*, 1, 29, 35, 180; District of Columbia Government, "District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites: Alphabetical Version," September 30, 2009, <https://planning.dc.gov>.

⁷⁴ See Historic Districts map in Karina Bishop et al., *Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW-White House to the Capitol* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2016), Map Appendix. Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died are included as contributing buildings in the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site historic district.

⁷⁵ The original D.C. Inventory, created by the Joint Committee of Historic Landmarks of the District of Columbia in 1964, was intended as a definitive, ranked list of historic sites worthy of preservation. Wolf Von Eckardt, "Our Landmarks are Vanishing," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, November 8, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Wolf Von Eckardt, "Group Asks Saving of Landmarks," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, November 8, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁶ Coe Construction's winning bid was just under the NPS's publicized construction estimate of \$1.2 to \$1.4 million; however, internal documents show an estimate of \$1.6 million. W.S. Bahlman, "Ford's Theatre Reconstruction," memorandum from acting assistant director, [Administration], to regional director, National Capital Region, August 11, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; The contract was awarded under NPS project contract no. 14-10-0028-2849. T. Sutton Jett, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Lloyd E. Turner, December 16, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Schaden, "1865 to Live Again," *Evening Star*.

⁷⁷ S. Oliver Goodman, "K Street Will Get New Office Building," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, March 9, 1963, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "Rosslyn Building Topped Out," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, August 8, 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; [Advertisement for Wheaton Plaza Shopping Center and Coe Construction, Inc.], *Washington Post and Times Herald*, March 30, 1960, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "Shopping Plaza Being Built at Laurel," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, April 7, 1962, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

restoration, the shop proprietor became concerned with the possibility of construction work affecting the structural integrity of his building and his day-to-day business.⁷⁸ Although the abutting walls of the souvenir shop and Ford's Theatre were separate, rather than forming a common wall, the NPS needed to extend the footings under the shop's wall in order to stabilize the structurally compromised north wall. Henry G. Wheeden, the acting assistant regional manager of resource planning, conducted an extensive but successful effort to identify and contact the five heirs of the property owner for permission to conduct the work.⁷⁹ Plans for the restoration also affected the PEPCO building to the south of Ford's Theatre. Wheeden contacted the company to notify them that the reconstruction of the Star Saloon, on the empty lot between the two buildings, would inevitably cover some of their windows.⁸⁰

Construction began on January 5, 1965, starting with foundation excavation, underpinning, and interior demolition. Despite not receiving replies from all the heirs of the adjoining property to the north, the Campbell building at 517 Tenth Street, NW, the NPS was able to conduct excavation and underpinning on the Campbell lot under DC Building Code, Article 22, Sec. 3-786.⁸¹ In the process, original foundation walls were uncovered exactly where expected, confirming elements of the working drawings.⁸² By the end of the month, the Ford's Theatre building was mostly stripped to its shell, with the walls supported by temporary steel bracing.⁸³ The shop drawings for the permanent structural steelwork were being prepared, but they were based on the existing, soon-to-be-outdated, plans. William M. Haussmann, on behalf of Macomber and Peter, had submitted the Feasibility Report for live theater, and the new chief of the National Capital Office of Design and Construction anxiously awaited the decision that would not arrive for several more months.⁸⁴

After Interior Secretary Udall announced the final decision to allow live performances at Ford's Theatre, the restoration and interpretation team then worked with Actors' Equity and others throughout the summer of 1965 to determine the implications for the architectural plans. The lighting installation plan was modified to allow for a concealed lighting system for live performances in addition to historical stage lights for the interpretive program.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Robert C. Horne, "Restoration of Ford's Theatre," memorandum from chief, NCDC, to associate regional director, October 6, 1964, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Raymond L. Freeman, "Structure at 517 10th Street, NW. Washington, D.C.," memorandum from assistant regional director, Cooperative Activities, [National Capital Region], to regional director, [National Capital Region], July 19, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷⁹ See Henry G. Wheeden, letter from acting assistant regional manager, Resource Planning, [NPS], to Rose P. Boyd, April 2, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; and Henry G. Wheeden, letter from assistant to the regional director-development, National Capital Region, to Marguerite C. Furlow, August 12, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁸⁰ Henry G. Wheeden, letter from acting assistant regional director, Resource Planning, [NPS], to L.R. Humbert, Potomac Electric Power Company, March 2, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁸¹ Jett to Turner, December 16, 1964.

⁸² George B. Hartzog, Jr., letter from director, NPS, to Hon. Milton R. Young, Unites States Senate, January 29, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁸³ "Restoration Work at Historic Ford's Theater [*sic*]," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 2, 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁸⁴ Andrews, "Feasibility study of Ford's Theatre," memorandum to regional director, NCR [National Capital Region], February 18, 1965.

⁸⁵ Milton Lyon, letter from director, Actors Equity Foundation, Inc., to Cornelius W. Heine, assistant regional director, Conservation, Interpretation and Use, National Capital Region, NPS, May 12, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Jack Golodner, letter from legislative representative, Actors Equity Association, to Colonel Randle B. Truett, chief historian, National Capital Region, NPS, June 7, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR;

By August, the revised construction drawings were still not complete. However, the construction crew had still been able to accomplish a significant amount of work in the first seven months. Bricklayers repointed and filled in gaps in the exterior brick walls with Portland cement. Foundation walls were underpinned with forty-feet-deep, fourteen-inch-wide cement-filled steel pipe. Ninety-five percent of roof work was completed, with the addition of steel tie-rods and fire-resistant beams. Seventy-five percent of interior demolition was completed.⁸⁶

Architects completed final revisions to the working drawings by the end of 1965. Work then began on the structural steel frame in early 1966.⁸⁷ That same year, the basement was excavated and the stage and orchestra pit constructed.⁸⁸ By fall 1967, the theater interior was almost complete. The stage, boxes, and balcony seating areas were finished and ceilings were plastered. The stage was set with carefully-reproduced scenery from *Our American Cousin*, the play Lincoln watched on the night of his assassination.⁸⁹ In the basement, NPS carpenters installed exhibits for the new museum.⁹⁰ Outside, new brick sidewalks complemented the historic theater.⁹¹

During the Ford's Theatre construction, the property located two lots to the north—the old Metropolitan Theater—was sold for conversion to a Lane Bryant women's wear shop. The building had a large footprint, and with its boxy, solid mass, had always been an aesthetically odd neighbor. The owner and the architect fortunately agreed to attempt a modicum of compatibility with Ford's Theatre. The modern new exterior design included “colonial-faced” brick and a first-floor arcade echoing the arches on Ford's Theatre's façade.⁹² A 1967 drawing (Figure 4.1) by Cecil J. Doty, noted NPS landscape architect, shows the Lane Bryant building, a modified building on the site of the souvenir shop at 517 Tenth Street, the restored Ford's

Raymond L. Freeman, letter from assistant regional director, Cooperative Activities, National Capital Region, NPS, to Jack Golodner, Actors' Equity Association, August 12, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁸⁶ [National Park Service], “Mr. Jett's Staff [Meeting],” August 17, [1965], Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Erlandson, “Scene of Lincoln Slaying,” *Sunday Sun Magazine*.

⁸⁷ T. Sutton Jett, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Douglas B. Krantzor, New York, December 28, 1965, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁸⁸ Erlandson, “Scene of Lincoln Slaying,” *Sunday Sun Magazine*.

⁸⁹ The scenery was designed by New York stage designer Sointu “Serge” Syrjala, after extensive research. See Ralph H. Lewis, “Ford's Theatre Stage Scenery Contract,” memorandum from chief, Branch of Museum Operations, to chief architect, Historic Structures and HABS, December 23, 1966, Folder H30 Pt. 1 NCR Ford's Theatre and Lincoln Place 1/1/66 to Dec 31, 1967, Box 1454, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP; Ralph H. Lewis, letter to Richard Leacroft, November 8, 1966, Folder H30 Pt. 1 NCR Ford's Theatre and Lincoln Place 1/1/66 to Dec 31, 1967, Box 1454, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP; Charles W. Lessig, letter from chief architect, Historic Structures and HABS, National Capital Office of Design & Construction, NPS, to S[ointu] Syrjala, November 1, 1966, Folder H30 Fords Theatre 1-1-65 to 12-31-66, Box 0109, General Correspondence of the Assistant Director for Design & Construction 1965-1968, RG 79, NARA-CP.

⁹⁰ Andrew D. Summers, “Assistance with Ford's Theatre exhibit installation,” memorandum from programs and project control assistant, Division of Museums, NPS, to [Beagle], chief, Budget and Finance, National Capital Region, December 26, 1967, Folder D6215 Pt. 1 NCR Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre) 1/1/66 to Dec 31 1967, Box 1191, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

⁹¹ Claudia Levy, “Rebuilt Ford's Theater [sic] May Open in Summer,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 7, 1967, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Phil Casey, “Scene is Being Set at Ford's Theater [sic],” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, October 5, 1967, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; “Partisan Sidewalk,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, August 21, 1967, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁹² Charles E. Krueger, letter from assistant director, Washington Service Center, NPS, to Jordan S. Himelfarb, October 11, 1967, Folder D18 Ford's Theatre 1-1-67 to 12-31-68, Box 029, General Correspondence of the Assistant Director for Design & Construction 1965-1968, RG 79, NARA-CP.

Theatre and Star Saloon, and, most remarkably, a vision of the Lincoln Place pedestrian plaza, dotted with trees.⁹³

The contractor delivered the building as complete to the NPS; however, new problems emerged as the grand reopening date loomed ahead. The Office of Design and Construction worked with the contractor into early January 1968 to ensure the repair of a faulty heating system, basement sewage backups, and water infiltration in the basement vault. At the same time, the NPS Washington Service Center and Museum Laboratory worked on plans for the box office design, security and fire detection systems, and museum exhibits.⁹⁴ The restoration team, as well as Downtown Progress and the entire city of Washington, looked forward to the January 1968 opening of the restored Ford's Theatre with great anticipation.

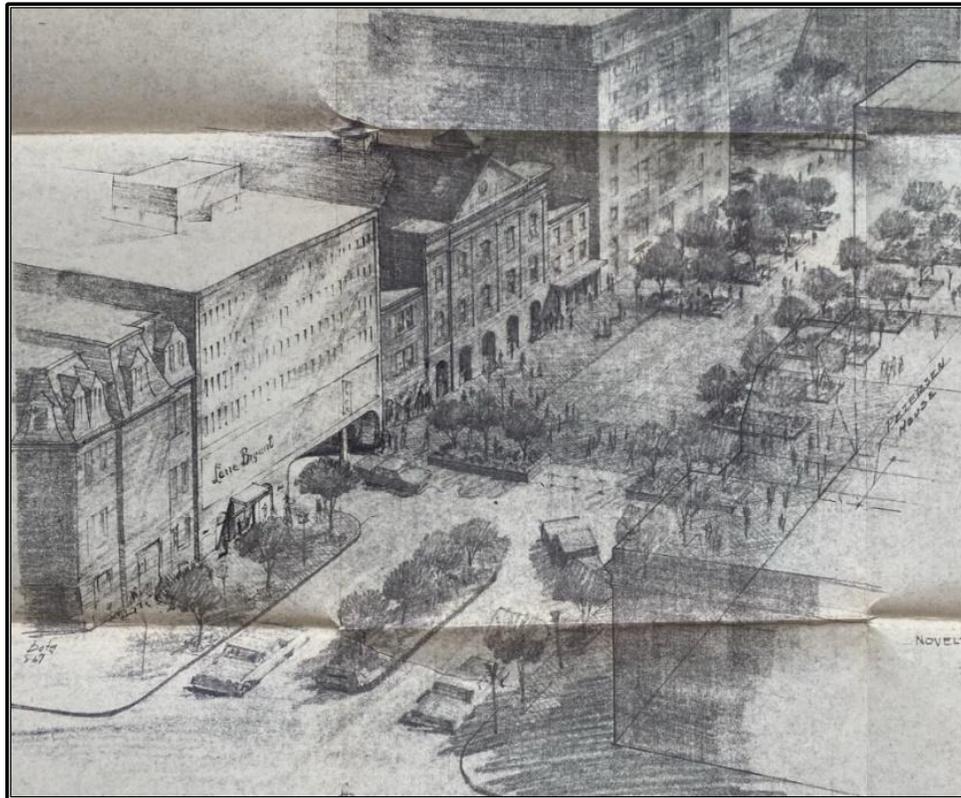


Figure 4.1. *Study for Lincoln Place*, August 1967. (Drawing by Cecil J. Doty. Folder D18 Ford's Theatre 1-1-67 to 12-31-68, Box 029, General Correspondence of the Assistant Director for Design & Construction 1965-1968, RG 79, NARA-CP. Courtesy of the NPS.)

⁹³ [Cecil J.] Doty, "Study for Lincoln Place," architectural drawing, August 1967, Folder D18 Ford's Theatre 1-1-67 to 12-31-68, Box 029, General Correspondence of the Assistant Director for Design & Construction 1965-1968, RG 79, NARA-CP.

⁹⁴ Monte E. Fitch, "Ford's Theatre," memorandum from superintendent, Central National Capital Parks, to regional director, National Capital Region, December 29, 1967, Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1-1-67 to 12-31-68, Box 0111, General Correspondence of the Assistant Director for Design & Construction 1965-1968, RG 79, NARA-CP.

The House Where Lincoln Died

Throughout the closure and construction phase of Ford's Theatre, the House Where Lincoln Died continued to operate during its normal hours. Its visitation, however, suffered a significant drop, as the site was lacking its usual visitor spillover from the now-closed Lincoln Museum.⁹⁵ The small space was unable to host large school groups, meetings, and events as the Ford's Theatre building did previously. During the three years of restoration, events commemorating Lincoln's birthday and death were primarily held at the Lincoln Memorial. In 1965, the NPS published an informational brochure solely for the House Where Lincoln Died, reworking material originally written by NPS historian Stanley McClure for previous *Ford's Theatre and The House Where Lincoln Died* brochures.⁹⁶ Having finished with the bulk of his historical research for Ford's Theatre, Olszewski turned his attentions to the House Where Lincoln Died, completing a furnishing study in 1967.⁹⁷

Creation of the Ford's Theatre Society

Almost as soon as Secretary Udall started considering allowing live performances at the restored Ford's Theatre, NPS leaders likely realized they could not operate the commercial venture themselves. There was a long-established precedent of partnerships and leases with concessionaires operating necessary, for-profit lodgings, dining halls, and stores in NPS-owned buildings in national parks. In the National Capital Region, the NPS leased the outdoor Carter Barron Amphitheater to operators who produced the events and sold the tickets.⁹⁸ The NPS needed an outside organization to run the theater, hire the theater company, and help raise additional funds.

National Repertory Theater

A New York-based traveling theater company, National Repertory Theater (NRT) had performed in Washington once before at the National Theater.⁹⁹ Its founder Michael Dewell was enthusiastic about the restoration of Ford's Theatre as a live venue, hoping the nationwide press coverage would help bring about a revival in American interest in arts and performance. Dewell envisioned developing a resident company for Ford's Theatre to perform historic plays and new plays about the Civil War period.¹⁰⁰

Dewell happened to be friends with Frankie Hewitt, the previously discussed New York socialite who urged Udall to allow live theater at Ford's. In 1965, Hewitt was busy helping Dewell raise funds for NRT. She encouraged him to get in touch with Udall, as several other theater companies had, and vie for a chance to put on the first season of plays at the historic theater.

Ultimately, only one other theater company submitted a serious proposal to the NPS, likely because Ford's Theatre's limited seating capacity of 600 seats curtailed the ability to break even financially.¹⁰¹ With NRT's role all but guaranteed, Dewell set about determining appropriate plays for the first season, which would begin with a performance on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1968.

⁹⁵ Monte E. Fitch, "Superintendents' Monthly Narrative Report for February," memorandum report from superintendent, Central National Capital Parks, to Director, NPS, March 30, 1966, Folder A2615 Pt. 1 Cent 1/1/66, Box 0080, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

⁹⁶ [National Park Service], *The House Where Lincoln Died*, brochure, (Washington, DC: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1965), FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁹⁷ Olszewski, *Furnishing Study*.

⁹⁸ Richard L. Coe, "Government and the Arts," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 21, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁹⁹ Harry MacArthur, "Repertory Theater Heralds a National Movement," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), November 28, 1965, GenealogyBank.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Dewell, "Repertory and Revolution," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), August 7, 1966, GenealogyBank.

¹⁰¹ Richard L. Coe, "Ford Friends Have No Plan," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, June 4, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

In the meantime, Udall, who was highly vested in the Ford's Theatre project, was in discussions with Don Hewitt, Frankie's husband and CBS producer, about creating a televised opening night dedication. In early 1967, the idea of a "Ford's Theatre Society" was suggested to Udall, possibly by Don Hewitt, or by Udall's secretary, Walter Pozen. Dewell immediately saw the need for someone to coordinate between the Department of the Interior, NRT, CBS, the press, and a possible corporate sponsor. He recommended Udall hire Frankie Hewitt for the job, initially as a consultant to plan the dedication ceremony and opening night.¹⁰²

Ford's Theatre Society Established

Hewitt had prior experience as a political staffer during the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations. Born in California, she worked for the California Institute of Social Welfare, writing speeches and radio broadcasts, before coming to Washington in 1956 to work for the National Institute of Social Welfare. There she worked as a legislative aide, speaking at the 1956 Housing Amendments hearings on the lack of affordable housing for senior citizens. Next, she worked as staff director of a Senate subcommittee on juvenile delinquency. When President John F. Kennedy appointed her as public affairs advisor under Adlai Stevenson, ambassador to the United Nations, she moved to New York City.¹⁰³

She was known for her charismatic personality and her ability to form connections and astutely use those connections to get things done. She was later described admiringly by Pozen as a "loose cannon" whose restless energy created "something out of nothing," referring to the founding of FTS; critics, however, would later claim she was an adversarial figure and dilettante, lacking any experience in theater.¹⁰⁴ These contradicting qualities would ultimately help Hewitt succeed in raising the profile of Ford's Theatre and raising significant funds to ensure its survival. However, they would also create challenges in the ongoing cooperative partnership between Ford's Theatre Society and the NPS.

Hewitt established FTS in June 1967.¹⁰⁵ The new nonprofit organization adopted a set of amended bylaws in December.¹⁰⁶ The initial Board of Directors consisted of Hewitt as president, Pozen as secretary, and Kenneth M. Crosby as treasurer. Fourteen Board of Trustees members included Theodore C. Sorenson, former political advisor and speechwriter for President Kennedy, Sointu Syrjala, the set designer, and Senator Milton Young. FTS aimed to raise \$1.1 million to meet organizational costs and operational costs

¹⁰² Dewell mentions "the suggested Ford's Theatre Society program" and says Hewitt has received other job offers. Michael Dewell, letter to Stewart L. Udall, February 27, 1967, Folder H30 Pt. 1 NCR Ford's Theatre and Lincoln Place 1/1/66 to Dec 31, 1967, Box 1454, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP; Frankie Hewitt said Udall called her and urged her to create Ford's Theatre Society to "bridge the gap" between the federal landlord and the NRT, formally hire NRT, and fundraise. Shirley, "Ford's Theater [sic] in Her Image," *Washington Post*.

¹⁰³ Claudia Levy, "Frankie Hewitt Dies at 71," *Washington Post*, March 1, 2003, ProQuest: The Washington Post; Judith Weinraub, "In the Driver's Seat," *Washington Post*; Kenneth Jones, "Frankie Hewitt, Instrumental in Relighting Ford's Theatre for Shows, Dead at 71," *Playbill*, March 3, 2003, <http://www.playbill.com/article/frankie-hewitt-instrumental-in-relighting-fords-theatre-for-shows-dead-at-71-com-111841>; *Housing Amendments of 1956: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Banking and Currency, United States Senate, 84th Cong., 2nd sess., on Various Bills to Amend the Federal Housing Laws; and Other Bills, March 20, 21, 26, 27, 28 and 29, 1956* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1956), 494-498.

¹⁰⁴ Pozen eventually became a Ford's Theatre Society lawyer. Shirley, "Ford's Theater [sic] in Her Image," *Washington Post*; Richard L. Coe, "Whither Ford's Theater [sic]? Future's Not Too Bright," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, July 7, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Richard L. Coe, "That Ford's Theatre Mess," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, November 14, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Richard L. Coe, "The Dramatic Rift at Ford's Theater [sic]," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, December 19, 1972, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁰⁵ Jones, "Frankie Hewitt, Instrumental in Relighting Ford's," *Playbill*.

¹⁰⁶ Ford's Theatre Society, "Ford's Theatre Society (A District of Columbia Not-for-Profit Corporation): Amended By-Laws," December 19, 1967, Folder D66 Ford's Theatre 1/1/69, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

of the first season, organize a second season, and establish a sustaining gifts program.¹⁰⁷ Sorenson, whom Hewitt had met during the Kennedy administration, drew up the first agreement between the Ford's Theatre Society and the Department of the Interior, executed on January 1, 1968.¹⁰⁸ The two-season cooperative agreement, amended in January 1968, gave FTS exclusive use of Ford's Theatre for live theater purposes during a fall-to-spring period.¹⁰⁹ The programming lineup for each season had to be approved in advance by the NPS, after a review of scripts. FTS agreed to bear all costs "to produce and present . . . to the public . . . live theatre and/or other programs or presentations which have a relationship to Abraham Lincoln, to theatre presentations of his period, or to the ideals which he represents."¹¹⁰ A few months later, FTS and the NPS amended the contract to include a goal to "promote the theatrical arts" as part of the mission of presenting live theater with a relationship to Lincoln and his values. This change set the stage, so to speak, for the introduction of broader themes for FTS programming and a movement away from the historically focused drama the secretary of the interior originally envisioned.¹¹¹

Planning the Opening Night Gala

Frankie Hewitt's connections almost immediately paid off when she secured the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company as a corporate sponsor for the opening night television program. The company was initially hesitant to make the commitment. Hewitt arranged for a meeting and endorsement by First Lady Lady Bird Johnson, for whom she had once worked as an assistant.¹¹² With White House support, the company then agreed to donate \$250,000 to Ford's Theatre Society programming.¹¹³ Hewitt enlisted a star-studded lineup for the show, with Lady Bird Johnson as host, and Helen Hayes, Henry Fonda, Harry Belafonte, Odetta, and Andy Williams performing.¹¹⁴

Ford's Theatre Reopens

As the reopening of the restored Ford's Theatre drew near, Richard L. Coe, theater critic for *The Washington Post*, reflected on the topic of government and the arts. He noted that the past few years had brought a watershed in new governmental arts programs nationwide. Besides Ford's Theatre, Washington had also recently seen the introduction of the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife and the construction of the new John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Coe attributed this revolution in the relationship between arts and the government to the Johnson administration.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, many social, cultural, political, and economic factors converged in the mid- to late 1960s to revive American arts and performance.

¹⁰⁷ Friends of Ford's Theatre, *The Opening Night of SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER, NRT-at-Ford's-Theatre* (Washington, DC: Friends of Ford's Theatre, March 1968), 4, <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.20808300/>.

¹⁰⁸ Anderson, *Ford's Theatre*, 94; "United States Department of the Interior and Ford's Theatre Society, Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., Cooperative Agreement No. 14-10-9-900-86, January 1, 1968 to April 30, 1978," signed January 1, 1968, Folder H30 NCR Ford's Theatre 1/1/68, Box 1455, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

¹⁰⁹ Dickenson, memorandum to director, NPS, October 15, 1969; Walter J. Hickel, letter from secretary of the interior to Mrs. Don Hewitt, August 7, 1969, Folder K1815 Pt. 1 NCR 1-1-68, Box 1494, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

¹¹⁰ "United States Department of the Interior and Ford's Theatre Society, Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., Cooperative Agreement No. 14-10-9-900-86."

¹¹¹ "Amendatory Agreement," signed [September 1968], Folder H30 NCR Ford's Theatre 1/1/68, Box 1455, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

¹¹² Anderson, *Ford's Theatre*, 94; Dewell notes Hewitt worked for Mrs. Johnson's staff "during the President's Asian trip last Fall." Dewell to Udall, February 27, 1967.

¹¹³ Louise Durbin, "Footlights to Glitter Again at Historic Ford's Theater [*sic*]," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 31, 1967, GenealogyBank.

¹¹⁴ Anderson, *Ford's Theatre*, 97.

¹¹⁵ Coe, "Government and the Arts," *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

Dedication Ceremony

On January 21, 1968, at two o'clock in the afternoon, an invitation-only audience of 550 guests sat on the reproduction wood, cane-bottomed chairs in Ford's Theatre. The reconstructed theater interior gleamed white with a stunning decorative plaster ceiling. The construction and finishing work that began in 1965 had continued up until that day. The theater was ready for its first audience. The dedication ceremony featured Secretary of the Interior Udall, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, Senator Milton Young, and Republican Senator Charles H. Percy of Illinois. Senator Young spoke of the long effort to achieve the restoration, and Vice President Humphrey quoted Lincoln saying he came to the theater to "refresh his spirit." After the ceremony, attendees previewed the new Lincoln Museum (Figure 4.2).¹¹⁶

The impending reopening of Ford's Theatre generated national media coverage. A few days after the dedication ceremony, Senator Young, Rep. Fred Schwengel, and Washington, DC, Mayor Walter Washington, among others, appeared live on the television program, "Panorama," hosted by Maury Povich and Pat Collins. The special three-hour episode, which aired on WTTG Channel 5, was dedicated entirely to Ford's Theatre.¹¹⁷



Figure 4.2. Lincoln Museum, 1968 (in Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 176. Courtesy of the NPS).

¹¹⁶ Martin Weil, "Ford Theater Lights Go Up Once More," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 22, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Anderson, *Ford's Theatre*, 96.

¹¹⁷ "TV Critic's Choice for Friday," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 26, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

The Opening Night Gala

A VIP audience of Hollywood stars and dignitaries arrived at Ford's Theatre on the evening of January 30, 1968. Distinguished guests included Vice President and Mrs. Hubert Humphrey, as well as Alice Roosevelt Longworth. The adjacent PEPCO building, outfitted in Lincoln-era decorations, hosted a pre-show buffet reception.¹¹⁸ The guests' excitement was only temporarily dampened by the Vietnam War protestors picketing outside the theater, shouting "Hell no! We won't go!" President Johnson and some members of his cabinet were unexpectedly absent from the festivities, conferring about the Viet Cong invasion of the American Embassy in Saigon that occurred that very day.¹¹⁹

The televised gala, "Inaugural Evening at Ford's Theatre," was broadcast live on CBS, hosted by CBS commentator Roger Mudd. Secretary Udall opened the evening with a welcome statement, demonstrating, in a sense, a desire to wipe away the black stain of history:

From this moment on, let this place be known more for its superb living performances than for history. Hereafter, let us not recall the "moment of high fate" which occurred here; rather, let us relive the many treasured moments when—here—President Lincoln found human warmth and laughter.¹²⁰

Helen Hayes kicked off the show with a moving reading of part of *Our American Cousin* while a spotlight shone on the state box.¹²¹ Hayes was a fitting choice for the first performance on the Ford's Theatre stage since Lincoln's assassination 103 years before. Considered the "First Lady of American Theater," the Washington, DC, native helped push for the desegregation of Washington's theaters in the 1950s with her boycott of the whites-only National Theater and subsequent performances at the integrated Olney Theater.¹²²

The show featured musical performances, such as a spiritual sung by Harry Belafonte and an Italian opera by Patricia Brooks, theatrical pieces, and the words of Lincoln himself.¹²³ The show finale was followed by a moment of solemn silence, with all performers gazing up at the state box.¹²⁴ The success of that televised inaugural evening established a tradition of benefit galas and events in the coming years, crucial to FTS's ability to fundraise.

The First Season of Performances

For the very first season of performances at Ford's Theatre since Lincoln's assassination, NRT-at-Ford's-Theatre—the National Repertory Theater's resident company—chose three plays befitting the historic venue. *John Brown's Body* was a modern interpretation of Stephen Vincent Benet's epic poem about the Civil War. Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors* had been performed on the Ford's Theatre stage in Lincoln's time. *She Stoops to Conquer* was written in the 1860s and also performed at the Lincoln-era Ford's Theatre.¹²⁵ As the NPS had hoped, these performances aimed to "maximize the interpretive value" of having live theater in the restored Ford's Theatre.

¹¹⁸ "Events at Ford's Theater [sic]," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 27, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹¹⁹ "Ford Opening Shot With War Specter," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 1, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹²⁰ Stewart L. Udall, "Welcome," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 11, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹²¹ Anderson, *Ford's Theatre*, 97.

¹²² Coe, "Helen Hayes," *Washington Post*; Hayes, "Nonsegregated Theater," *Washington Post*.

¹²³ Richard L. Coe, "Ford's Theatre is Reopened," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 1, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹²⁴ "Ford Opening Shot With War Specter," *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

¹²⁵ Friends of Ford's Theatre, *Opening Night of SHE STOOPS*, 4.

The first play at Ford's Theatre since 1865 took place on February 5, with a special preview performance of *John Brown's Body* for the League of Republican Women of the District of Columbia. Another preview performance followed on February 10 for the National Urban League.¹²⁶ Finally, the play opened to general audiences on February 12, Lincoln's birthday. Enthusiasm was so great, NRT sold 12,000 subscriptions for the season, at twelve dollars each.¹²⁷ The troupe maintained a full schedule, performing almost every night of the week, with matinee shows as well. A volunteer organization, Friends of Ford's Theatre, was formed to lend additional support. Mrs. Smyth Beauregard and Kenneth M. Crosby served as co-chairmen. The Friends organization produced playbills and helped raise funds for each performance.¹²⁸

Richard Coe, the *Washington Post* critic, heralded the historic theater interior, saying, "Ford's stage is a charmer, extending past the boxes into the small, airy house. A floor carpet enhances the stage's slight rake. It also is easy to imagine the nineteenth-century players edging as close to the audience as possible." However, he had mixed reviews for the performances. Coe liked *John Brown's Body's* "stylized staging." The play was "satisfying without being dazzling" and "moving for its uniqueness to the occasion." But "The Comedy of Errors" was "proper and regrettably dull."¹²⁹

By June of that year, Ford's Theatre and the Lincoln Museum had received 225,000 visitors in just the four months since the reopening. Museum hours were 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and the entrance fee had been waived. Attendees for all of NRT's performances totaled 73,000.¹³⁰ Ninety-three percent of performances were sold out, although many of those were half-price student tickets. Coe was impressed by the success of the first season and the appreciation of the audiences, so he was surprised when Hewitt and the FTS executive committee turned down NRT's proposal for the following season. In Coe's view, FTS had "renege" on their original understanding to give NRT three seasons to get established.¹³¹ Hewitt claimed NRT's production and administrative costs were too high. FTS announced that they wanted to have several theater companies perform during the second season in order to "give the theater a broader focus."¹³²

Behind the scenes, there seemed to be misunderstandings about whether NRT or FTS would pay for certain expenses. Coe was highly critical of their financial arrangements, and argued that "no resident professional theaters seating a trifle more than 600 can be expected to pay its way."¹³³ The operations and financial management issues present at the outset took several years to be fully resolved and created significant challenges in the NPS-FTS partnership.

¹²⁶ "Events at Ford's Theater [sic]," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 27, 1968; "Theater Benefit for League," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 21, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "Benefit Aids Inner City," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 8, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹²⁷ "'The Incident' Too Expanded," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 1, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Michael Dewell, "Repertory Lighting Up Ford's Theatre," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 11, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹²⁸ Friends of Ford's Theatre, *The Opening Night of SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER, NRT-at-Ford's-Theatre* (Washington, DC: Friends of Ford's Theatre, March 1968), 4, <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.20808300/>.

¹²⁹ Richard L. Coe, "NRT-at-Ford's Presents Shakespeare," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 28, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹³⁰ "City Life," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, June 6, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹³¹ Coe, "Ford Friends Have No Plan," *Washington Post and Times Herald*; Coe, "Whither Ford's Theater [sic]?" *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

¹³² Carol Honsa, "3 Troupes Invited to Ford's," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, June 14, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹³³ Coe, "Whither Ford's Theater [sic]?" *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

CHAPTER 5: Growth and Challenges (1969–1988)

The Vietnam War protest outside Ford’s Theatre on the night of its grand reopening represented only a small part of the wider unrest stirring the country. Shortly thereafter in April 1968, the tragic assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., triggered protests and rioting in major cities across America, including Washington, DC. The riots spread along Fourteenth Street, NW, H Street NE, and Seventh Street, NW, a block or two away from Ford’s Theatre. Nearby, the Woodward & Lothrop department store on F Street experienced minor looting.¹ Rioters largely targeted businesses and stores with a history of unfairness to Black customers and employees. Ford’s Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died were spared from any damage. However, the riots left a long legacy in the city, including a substantial drop in tourists and shoppers in the downtown core.² Remarkably, Ford’s Theatre was still able to succeed in drawing people to the historical site and performance venue, thanks to its significance and FTS publicity strategies.

Management and Planning

Acquisition of 517 Tenth Street, NW, and Establishment of FOTH

During the restoration planning process in the mid-1960s, the NPS recognized the potential of a small, privately owned property adjacent to Ford’s Theatre to provide a much needed means of alternative egress for the theater and basement museum.³ Further, the existing building posed a fire hazard to Ford’s Theatre. Known as Allan’s Souvenir Shop, the three-story brick building at 517 Tenth Street, NW, sat on the north side of Ford’s Theatre. It was constructed in 1878 as a store, designed by W. M. Poindexter, on the site of an earlier building (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).⁴

Before the NPS could acquire the building, the owner unexpectedly sold the property to an investor.⁵ Fearing redevelopment, the NPS asked Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., a Rockefeller philanthropic organization, to purchase and hold the property until the NPS was able to obtain a federal appropriation for its purchase.⁶ The Rockefellers and Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., had a long-standing relationship with the NPS, assisting in the conservation of thousands of acres of parkland.⁷

¹ Lisicky, *Woodward & Lothrop*, 98–99.

² In the two years after the riots, Woodward and Lothrop experienced an almost 10 percent decline in sales. Lisicky, *Woodward & Lothrop*, 100; Asch and Musgrove, *Chocolate City*, 355–359.

³ E.V. Buschman, “Addition to Ford’s Theatre,” memorandum from acting chief, Division of Legislation and Regulations, NPS, to chief, Office of Resource Planning, WSC [Washington Service Center], June 30, 1966, Folder H30 Pt. 1 NCR Ford’s Theatre and Lincoln Place 1/1/66 to Dec 31, 1967, Box 1454, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

⁴ Robinson, Cantell, and Kerr, *Registration Form: Pennsylvania Avenue*, Section 7, 35.

⁵ George J. Olszewski, “Sale of the premises known as 517 10th Street NW., next door to Ford’s Theatre,” memorandum from historian, NPS, to chief, Resource Planning, WSC [Washington Service Center], June 20, 1966, Folder H30 Pt. 1 NCR Ford’s Theatre and Lincoln Place 1/1/66 to Dec 31, 1967, Box 1454, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

⁶ [National Park Service], “Statement of Witness for the Department of the Interior Before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, in Support of H.R. 12860, A Bill to Establish the Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site,” [November 1969], Folder D3415 Ford’s Theatre Addition 1/1/69, FOTH Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷ Conservation advocates John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Laurance S. Rockefeller formed the nonprofit Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., in 1940 in order to preserve and donate thousands of acres in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to the federal government to become part of Grand Teton National Park. Both directly and through Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., the Rockefellers made significant contributions of land and resources to the National Park system during the twentieth century, including land for Big Bend, Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Virgin Islands National Parks, and



Figure 5.1. Detail of Ford's Theatre photograph, showing 517 Tenth Street, NW, then a two-and-one-half-story frame building housing Kimmell's Dye House, ca. 1872 (*Ford's Theatre, Wash. D.C.*, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, LOC).



Figure 5.2. Detail of Ford's Theatre photograph, showing 517 Tenth Street, NW, then the ca.-1878 three-story brick building housing Yale Laundry, 1909. (Photo by Keystone View Company. *Ford Theatre, in which Lincoln was shot, Washington, D.C.*, Prints and Photographs Division, LOC.)

had close relationships with NPS Directors Horace Albright, Conrad Wirth, and George Hartzog. Robin W. Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller: Catalyst for Conservation* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997), 61, 64, 114–115.

In the mid-1960s, Jackson Hole Preserve president Laurance S. Rockefeller was also an active member of and one of the largest financial contributors to Lady Bird Johnson's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, which improved parks and civic spaces across Washington, DC.⁸ Jackson Hole Preserve paid the owner of the Tenth Street property approximately \$94,000 in 1967—a substantial increase from the 1966 sale price of \$52,000.⁹ The Washington Service Center's Office of Resource Planning began work on the cost estimates and support data required for approval, but encountered bureaucratic delays, as well as the need to confirm whether or not the building was present at the time of Lincoln's assassination.¹⁰

After the reopening of the theater, the need to acquire the souvenir shop property became much more pressing. With the front doors used for both entrance and exit, the theater suffered from visitor circulation problems and the lack of an emergency exit.¹¹ The NPS finally obtained the authority to purchase the property on June 23, 1970, when Congress passed Pub. L. No. 91-288, *An Act to Establish the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site and for Other Purposes*. The act provided the secretary of the interior with the authority to acquire the souvenir shop property. The act also authorized the appropriation of \$94,000 for the purchase and \$176,000 for the rehabilitation of the property for the needs of the NPS. The NPS now had the legal mandate to administer Ford's Theatre, the House Where Lincoln Died, and the 517 Tenth Street property collectively under the new designation of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.¹² The NPS took over administration of Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died prior to the Historic Sites Act of 1935, which created the NPS process and "National Historic Site" nomenclature for acquiring new historic parks. Perhaps for this reason, the NPS somehow neglected to bestow the "National Historic Site" designation on these two historic sites until thirty-five years after the law was passed.

The US government did not actually purchase 517 Tenth Street, NW, until 1974 after clear title was confirmed.¹³ Initially, NCR staff had hoped to demolish the existing building and construct a new building in a Federal style more faithful to the building on the property at the time of Lincoln's assassination (Figure 5.3). However, to lower costs, they instead retained the exterior of the existing building and demolished the interior. The reworked interior contained a museum egress on the basement level, storage space, restrooms, and office space that was later used by both NPS and FTS staff.¹⁴ NPS architects modified the ground-level entrance to echo the arched doorways of Ford's Theatre to the right, and the Lane Bryant building to the left (Figure 5.4). The NPS managed 517 Tenth Street, NW, a non-historic building, as a developed zone.¹⁵

⁸ Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller*, 146–151.

⁹ "Ford's Theater [sic] Setting Protected," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, February 17, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Olszewski, "Sale of the Premises."

¹⁰ John W. Bright, "Support data needed, Ford's Theatre addition," memorandum from acting chief, Division of New Area Studies and Master Planning, to chief, Office of Resource Planning, WSC, March 27, 1968, Folder H30 Pt. 1 NCR Ford's Theatre and Lincoln Place 1/1/66 to Dec 31, 1967, Box 1454, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP; Russell E. Dickenson, "Proposed legislation, Ford's Theatre," memorandum from chief, Division of New Area Studies and Master Planning, to chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, January 11, 1968, Folder H30 Pt. 1 NCR Ford's Theatre and Lincoln Place 1/1/66 to Dec 31, 1967, Box 1454, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

¹¹ Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Establishing the Ford's Theatre National Historical Site and for Other Purposes*, H.R. Rep. 91-1099, at 2 (1970), Curatorial Box, Folder Planning Doc., FOTH On-Site Archives.

¹² *An Act to Establish the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site*, Pub. L. No. 91-288, 84 Stat. 322 (1970).

¹³ National Park Service, *Statement for Management, National Capital Parks—Central* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, April 1986), 17, Folder Planning Doc., Curatorial Box, FOTH On-Site Archives.

¹⁴ George Olin, "Projected plans for Use of North Annex to Ford's Theatre," memorandum from chief, Interpretation & Resources Management, NCP-C [National Capital Parks—Central], to superintendent, National Capital Parks—Central, June 24, 1970, Folder D3415 Ford's Theatre Addition 1/1/69, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

¹⁵ National Park Service, *Statement for Management*, 18.



Figure 5.3. Detail of NPS architect Cecil J. Doty's 1968 conception of new Federal-style building to replace the 1878 building at 517 Tenth Street, NW (*Structure Adjacent Ford's Theatre*, January 30, 1968. Drawing No. 960-41000, Folder D3415 Ford's Theatre Addition [Supplemental], FOTH Collection, NPSNCR. Courtesy of the NPS).



Figure 5.4. Detail of Ford's Theatre photograph, showing 517 Tenth Street, NW, ca. 1990. (Photo by Carol M. Highsmith. *Ford's Theatre is a historic theatre in Washington, D.C.*, Highsmith Archive, Prints and Photographs Division, LOC.)

Site Managers and Staffing

One of the biggest changes at Ford's Theatre after the reopening, in light of its new importance to the park system and increased management and coordination needs, was the introduction of the position of site manager. Joseph Lawler, who served as the Ford's Theatre site manager from 1978–1979, referred to the role as being a kind of “mini-superintendent,” with responsibilities including overall management, the interpretive and visitor's services program, maintenance activities, and cultural resource preservation.¹⁶ The site manager was also on the front lines of managing the relationship with FTS. While many needs of FTS eventually landed on the desk of the superintendent of Central National Capital Parks, the regional director, or even the secretary of the interior, the site manager did his or her best to deal with any issues when they initially arose. When Lawler was first appointed site manager, Manus “Jack” Fish, the regional director said, “I want to tell you one thing,” then pointed to his phone and said, “When that phone rings, I don't want it to be Frankie Hewitt.”¹⁷ Site managers at Ford's did relatively short stints, often working in the position for just a few years before moving on to higher positions in the National Capital Region or other regions.¹⁸ The turnover in this position and frequent decision-overruling by more senior leaders may have discouraged Hewitt from building relationships with site managers, setting a precedent that would be difficult to change.

In addition to the site manager, staff at Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died included park guides, janitors, an equipment engineer, and carpenters (Figure 5.5). Lawler spoke highly of the limited but hardworking staff there during his time as site manager and, later, regional director: “...for such a highly visited site that took a lot of punishment, lots of abuse, I never felt we had the wherewithal to keep it up—and these people worked really, really hard to do the best they could, considering the use and the traffic.”¹⁹ In addition to the limited but dedicated on-site staff, those in other divisions of the NPS and NCR conducted extensive work for FOTH, particularly in the Museum and History Branches. Vera Craig, curator in Museum Services at Harpers Ferry Center, spent over six years researching and producing a furnishing plan for the House Where Lincoln Died.²⁰ Gary Scott, NCR regional historian, subsequently led the multi-year restoration project.

In the mid-1980s, the NPS faced budget cuts and hiring freezes as a result of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act to reduce the federal deficit. Staffing levels were drastically reduced from those in the 1960s under Mission 66 program funding. Just prior to the restoration of the theater, FOTH had two park guide supervisors, eleven park guides, and six seasonal guides.²¹ By 1986, however, the NPS employed only five full-time and three seasonal park guides at FOTH.

¹⁶ Lawler later worked at the National Capital Region's two other performing arts venues, Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and served as director of the National Capital Region, 2005–2008. Joseph Lawler, interview by Laura Purvis, September 19, 2019, transcript, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site (FOTH) Oral Histories, 1.

¹⁷ Lawler, interview by Purvis; Lawler, interview by Kerr and Scott, Appendix E.

¹⁸ See appendix C for a chronological list of FOTH Site Managers.

¹⁹ Lawler, interview by Purvis.

²⁰ To be discussed later in this chapter. Craig, *Furnishing Plan*.

²¹ Mullaly and Failor, *Master Plan for Ford's Theatre*, 8A.



Figure 5.5. Unidentified Ford's Theatre park rangers, ca. 1972. (Photo by Jack Rottier. [Unidentified park rangers, FOTH], [ca. 1972], Ford's Theatre Staff Folder, Box 1, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS.)

Additionally, a “Volunteers in the Parks” (VIP) program averaged about ten members who assisted with interpretation, security, and curatorial tasks.²² In the 1980s, the hours of park visitation lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., compared to 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the 1960s. But with less than half as many staff members than in the 1960s, the 1980s staff were serving more than twice as many visitors. And with the security and maintenance needs of FTS evening performances, NPS staff were often on site until midnight.²³

Ford's Theatre Society: Management and Funding

With the national news coverage and televised reopening gala, the newly restored Ford's Theatre had such a high profile that the secretary of the interior, then Walter J. Hickel, was invested in seeing FTS succeed. When, in its early days, FTS suffered some management and financial fumbles, the Department of the Interior intervened in various ways to improve the organization's procedures, policies, and funding. During the 1969–1988 period, NPS and NCR staff worked closely with FTS to ensure smooth operation of the theater amidst their often conflicting needs.

Many of the conflicts centered around performers' or audiences' needs that required compromises to historical authenticity, which the NPS was extremely reluctant to make. Other challenges included a near-constant push-and-pull over scheduling. Performance rehearsals, benefit receptions, and set-up time needed by FTS required the theater to be closed to the public on an intermittent basis. In 1986, for example, of the 2,904 hours the theater was supposed to be open for public visitation, it was unavailable for 650 of them, or twenty-two percent of the time.²⁴

²² In the 1986 *Statements for Interpretation and Visitor Services*, several elements of the program were prefaced with “When there is adequate staff . . .” Joseph Geary, *Annual Statements for Interpretation and Visitor Services, Ford's Theatre, National Capital Parks – Central* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1986), 16, 20, Folder Planning Doc., Curatorial Box, FOTH On-Site Archives.

²³ Visitation rose from almost 282,000 in 1964, just before FOTH closed for renovation, to almost 787,000 in 1986. National Park Service, *Public Use of the National Parks; A Statistical Report, 1960-1970*, (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971), 6; National Park Service, *National Park Statistical Abstract, 1987* (Fort Collins, CO: National Park Service, 1987), 14; National Park Service, *Statement for Management*, 21.

²⁴ Geary, *Annual Statements for Interpretation*, 16.

Since the first performance, patrons complained about the extremely uncomfortable reproduction wood chairs. The NPS initially rejected even adding cushions, but were later forced to relent. Additionally, the bare wood floors in the aisles combined with audience members' dress shoes were quite noisy, often disrupting performances. Hewitt and the FTS theater companies pleaded for carpet to solve the problem. Sometimes disputes arose over the content of the plays, further complicated by delays in either FTS delivering scripts for approval per the cooperative agreement, or delays by the NPS in responding. When FTS proposed *An Unpleasant Evening With H.L. Mencken* in 1972, the NPS wanted to revise the script to eliminate instances of foul language. Instead, Hewitt appealed to Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton, who then had the NPS-FTS cooperative agreement revised to remove the NPS's right to approve scripts.²⁵

Each site manager and regional director brought a different approach to working with FTS and Frankie Hewitt. Hewitt, first the president and later the executive producer of FTS, served as the face of FTS throughout her 1968 to 2003 tenure. For many of FTS's conflicts with the NPS, whom she deemed "uncooperative," she managed to move the issue up the chain to the secretary of the interior, where she usually received support in her favor.²⁶ The ability of the site manager to deal with front line FTS issues was often hampered by the tendency of higher-ups to override their decisions. According to Gary Scott, NCR regional historian for over thirty years, "some of them [NPS managers] would let Frankie take over and some of them would try to stand up to Frankie."²⁷ As former Site Manager Lawler emphasized in a recent oral history interview, Ford's Theatre needed someone "to still support and defend the National Park Service values and—but also find a way to let the private partner [Ford's Theatre Society] be engaged and be able to provide what their mission calls for, which is the presentation of live art."²⁸

After the 1968 agreement expired, the Department of the Interior drew up a new eight-year cooperative agreement with FTS, executed on January 26, 1970.²⁹ In the 1970 NPS-FTS cooperative agreement, provision was made for federal funding assistance up to \$100,000 for "public services" carried out by FTS, with the submission of a current audit report and a projected season budget.³⁰ This supplemental funding was in addition to federal funding of \$26,000 to cover the cost of ushers. Shortly after the agreement was signed, Hewitt successfully lobbied for the funding to be used for FTS administrative costs. However, the Department of the Interior delayed payments until FTS submitted a satisfactory financial audit report, as required in the agreement. As a nascent organization, it took FTS several years to fully establish rigorous accounting procedures.³¹ A subsequent supplement to the 1970 agreement established \$75,000 for FTS front-of-house costs for 1970–1971, designated an NPS staff member to work closely with FTS on a day-to-day basis, and obligated FTS to pay all other expenses to "provide and present appropriate attractions

²⁵ Judy Flander, "Frankie Hewitt: The Woman Who Made Ford's Theater [*sic*] a Vital, Living Memorial," *Washington Star-News*, January 5, 1975, GenealogyBank.

²⁶ Hewitt once claimed, "We actually had Wally Hickel down on his knees here working out the carpet problem." Barbara Gamarekian, "Ford's Theatre Thrives on Politics," *New York Times*, February 19, 1988, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Flander, "Frankie Hewitt," *Washington Star-News*.

²⁷ Gary Scott, interview by Laura Purvis, September 13, 2019, transcript, 5, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site (FOTH) Oral Histories.

²⁸ Lawler, interview by Purvis, 2.

²⁹ "United States Department of the Interior and Ford's Theatre Society, Cooperative Agreement No. 14-10-9-900-222, January 26, 1970 – April 30, 1978," signed January 26, 1970, FOTH On-Site Archives.

³⁰ C.P. Montgomery, letter from assistant director, Administration, NPS, to Mrs. [Frankie] Don Hewitt, [president, FTS], April 21, 1970, Folder H30 NCP Ford's Theatre 1-1-70, Box 2710, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP; George B. Hartzog, Jr., letter from director, NPS, to Mrs. [Frankie] Don Hewitt, [president, FTS], August 18, 1971, Folder H30 NCP Ford's Theatre 1-1-70, Box 2710, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

³¹ Montgomery to Hewitt, April 21, 1970; Mrs. [Frankie] Don Hewitt, [president, FTS], letter to George B. Hartzog, Jr., director, NPS, July 9, 1970, Folder H30 NCP Ford's Theatre 1-1-70, Box 2710, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

for performances at Ford's."³² Another contract supplement allowed FTS to stage evening performances in the summer of 1971.³³

By 1980, the annual funding for FTS programs in the congressional appropriation for the NPS amounted to over \$200,000, in a time when the park unit itself received \$300,000.³⁴ Manus "Jack" Fish, Jr., NCR regional director, and Hewitt signed a new cooperative agreement in 1980, expanding FTS's purview to provide "lectures, and other programs....and facilities for other civic activity" in addition to live theater performances, and reiterating a desire by the NPS to keep ticket prices lower than commercial theaters. FTS was allowed daily use of the orchestra, dress circle, and family circle levels from 5:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m., as well as Thursdays from noon until 4:00 p.m., and Sundays from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; however the dress circle would remain open to the public during those periods.³⁵

Benefits and Televised Galas

After the success of the first televised gala, "An Inaugural Evening at Ford's," broadcast on CBS on the reopening night of Ford's Theatre on January 30, 1968, Hewitt continued the tradition in order to raise much-needed funds for FTS. Starting in 1970, but not consistently planned until 1978, "Festival at Ford's" aired about every one or two years, first on NBC, then on CBS, and finally on ABC after 1986.³⁶ The galas were star-studded variety show productions, usually with the president and first lady in attendance. Former Site Manager Lawson said these galas were "a big deal for that little space... We had a lot of work to do to get ready for that."³⁷

For example, the 1982 "Festival at Ford's" featured President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, who sat in the center front row and also gave opening remarks. Tickets for the evening, which included a White House cocktail reception and a midnight dinner dance, sold from \$250 to \$5,000. Performers included Ben Vereen, Liza Minelli, David Copperfield, and Lou Rawls. The audience consisted of celebrities, a who's-who of Washington society, and political leaders, like Speaker of the House Thomas "Tip" O'Neill. The evening raised \$250,000 for FTS and its programs, and also raised the profile of FOTH.³⁸ In those days of broadcast television, approximately thirty to forty million viewers watched the Ford's Theatre galas.³⁹

Belt-Tightening Triggers the Planning Process

In 1986, new NPS Director William Penn Mott launched a major planning initiative, the "12-Point Plan," which called for management plans at the national, regional, and park levels to assist in determining

³² [Theodor R. Swem], letter from director, National Capital and Urban Park Affairs, NPS to Mrs. [Frankie] Don Hewitt, [president, FTS], Ford's Theatre Society, [August 1970], Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1/1/1969 Part 2, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

³³ National Park Service, "Supplement Number 2 to Cooperative Agreement No. 14-10-9-900-222, January 26, 1970 – April 30, 1978, United States Department of the Interior and Ford's Theatre Society," signed June 30, 1971, Folder H30 NCP Ford's Theatre 1-1-70, Box 2710, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP.

³⁴ Ruth Dean, "Park Service Again Pares Arts Funding," *Washington Star*, January 28, 1980, GenealogyBank; *Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1984: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 98th Cong. 814-837 (1984).*

³⁵ This contract covered the period July 25, 1980, to September 30, 1983. "Agreement Between Ford's Theatre Society and the United States of America, Department of the Interior, National Park Service," signed July 25, 1980, in *Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1984: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 98th Cong. 814 (1984).*

³⁶ "Past Productions," Ford's Theatre Society (website), accessed July 19, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/performances/past-productions/>.

³⁷ Lawler, interview by Purvis, 10.

³⁸ Steve Hammons, "Ford's Gala: This Joint Was Jumpin'," *Washington Times*, September 29, 1982, GenealogyBank.

³⁹ Mary Ann Dolan and Donnie Radcliffe, "Red-White-and-Blue Apple Pie," *Evening Star*, November 17, 1971, GenealogyBank.

the budget cuts required by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act.⁴⁰ As a result, the National Capital Region produced a set of planning documents for FOTH for the first time since the 1966 master plan. The reports included a *Statement for Management*, a *Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services*, and a *Collection Management Plan*.⁴¹ Much of this work was done by, or with the guidance of, Joseph Geary, site manager. The 1986 *Statement for Management* set forth that the purpose of FOTH was “to preserve Ford’s Theatre and The House Where Lincoln Died as memorials to Abraham Lincoln.”⁴² In a section discussing legislative influences, a brief statement summarized the benefits and challenges of the NPS-FTS partnership:

“The site presently administers a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the Ford’s Theatre Society. The service entered into this agreement in order to promote the use of Ford’s Theatre as a living memorial, an objective served well by the society’s role. The effect of the agreement, however, is to allow the society essentially full use of the theatre. As a result, continuing and effective cooperation must be strongly promoted by the site manager in order to insure [sic] maximum availability of the high interest theatre area to the general public.”⁴³

The report then listed several steps taken to achieve cooperation, including centralizing NPS and FTS administrative offices in the 517 Tenth Street, NW, building, making alternate space available for show rehearsals, and working closely with FTS to ensure public access to the theater space while providing sufficient time for rehearsals.⁴⁴

The construction of a new convention center near FOTH was stated as a cause of the recent uptick in visitation. However, the site was suffering from the heavy traffic of both visitors and vehicles. The report noted serious traffic safety issues. Tour buses frequently double-parked in front of the theater, compounding traffic problems on Tenth Street. Without the benefit of a marked pedestrian crosswalk, Ford’s Theatre visitors usually jaywalked across Tenth Street to reach the House Where Lincoln Died, dodging traffic. FOTH suffered from air pollution caused by the “noise, smell, and particulate matter” of idling vehicles.⁴⁵

Under “Status of Planning,” the *Statement for Management* report noted that FOTH was in a state of “satisfactory equilibrium,” but that a major plan had recently been approved to narrow the focus of the Lincoln Museum from Lincoln’s entire life span to several important themes. Among several other major issues, Ford’s Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died were suffering from the wear and tear of heavy visitation. Almost twenty years after the 1968 restoration, some of the building systems had reached the end of their life expectancy. Also of particular concern was the state of the FOTH collection. On a copy of this report found in the FOTH office files, an unknown reader had highlighted Management Objective 6: “To monitor, update and maintain an effective system of control required to preserve the irreplaceable historic collection at Ford’s Theatre.”⁴⁶ With its major needs prioritized during these mid-1980s planning efforts, FOTH entered a modern era defined by budget cuts and belt-tightening.

Interpretation and Visitor Services

Visitation in the 1970s and 1980s

Public interest soared after the 1968 reopening. Whereas Ford’s Theatre was receiving between 240,000 and 280,000 visitors per year in the early 1960s, in the three years after its reopening, visitation climbed

⁴⁰ “Director Mott Testifies,” *Courier: The National Park Service Newsletter* 31, no. 4 (April 1986), 1–3.

⁴¹ National Park Service, *Statement for Management*, 1986; Geary, *Annual Statements for Interpretation*, 1986; Suzanne B. Schell, *Collection Management Plan, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site, Washington, D.C.* (Reston, VA: Historic Site Museum Consultants, January 1986).

⁴² National Park Service, *Statement for Management*, 16.

⁴³ National Park Service, 18.

⁴⁴ National Park Service, 18.

⁴⁵ National Park Service, 19, 22–23.

⁴⁶ National Park Service, *Statement for Management*, 24.

from approximately 434,000 to 460,000.⁴⁷ After 1970, visitation continued to rise steadily. The years 1974 and 1975 were an exception, as there was a significant decrease in visitors to Ford's Theatre and parks nationwide.⁴⁸ The energy shortage and skyrocketing price of fuel curtailed many Americans' visits to national parks and historic sites in those years. Visitation for Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died then increased dramatically in 1976 during the bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution.⁴⁹ Visitation returned to normal levels in 1977, and slowly rose to approximately 883,000 visitors by 1988.⁵⁰

Each year, April through June were the busiest months because of the influx of visiting school groups. By the late 1970s, the number of visitors in the spring was so high that they would often have to wait in line outside the theater for much of the day, as ranger tours could not be rushed to accommodate the increased visitation.⁵¹ By the mid-1980s, the spring months often brought over 7,000 visitors per day.⁵² As previously discussed, however, sometimes visitors arrived to unexpectedly find the theater space closed to the public during certain hours for FTS rehearsals and performances. Lawler recalls, "Some people were not real happy. It might be their only time in Washington, and they happen to come one afternoon, and guess what, the theater's closed. And that still goes on today, unfortunately. There's no resolution to that in sight."⁵³

Architectural Barriers to Accessibility

The National Park Service first began focusing on accessibility issues in the 1970s, issuing the *National Park Guide for the Handicapped* in 1971.⁵⁴ In the book, each national park was briefly described with special mention of any access problems or services provided to visitors with disabilities, including those who were deaf, were blind, were using wheelchairs, or had health problems. The listing for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site gave a strong impression of a site generally inaccessible to visitors with disabilities. Those using wheelchairs could not visit either the Lincoln Museum, which included the site's restrooms, or the House Where Lincoln Died. Both lacked elevators.⁵⁵ No special services or resources for visitors with disabilities were mentioned.

⁴⁷ National Park Service, *A Statistical Report, 1960-1970*, 6; Manus J. Fish, Jr., letter from acting director, National Capital Parks, NPS, to Senator Charles H. Percy, December 3, 1971, Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1/1/1969, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁴⁸ National Park Service, *Public Use of the National Park System: Fiscal Year Report – 1973* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, July 1973), 28; National Park Service, *Public Use of the National Park System: Fiscal Year Report – 1975* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, October 1975), 30.

⁴⁹ The higher rate of visitation in 1976 was caused by an overall increase of visitors to Washington, DC. As a historic site of the Civil War period, Ford's Theatre did not offer bicentennial programming, with the exception of an American Enterprise Institute Bicentennial lecture by Dean Rusk, former secretary of state under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. FTS's bicentennial programming included the 1974 play, *American Revolution*, and a 1976 musical about Valley Forge, *Forge of Freedom*. American Enterprise Institute, "From the Archives: The Fourth of July," *AEIdeas* (blog), July 4, 2020, <https://www.aei.org/society-and-culture/from-the-archives-the-fourth-of-july/>; Dean Rusk, *The American Revolution and the Future*, *American Enterprise Institute's Distinguished Lecture Series* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975); Geary, *Annual Statements for Interpretation*, 10.

⁵⁰ National Park Service, *National Park Service Statistical Abstract, 1988* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1988), 10.

⁵¹ Lawler, interview by Purvis, Appendix G, 7.

⁵² Geary, *Annual Statements for Interpretation*, 8–9.

⁵³ Lawler, interview by Kerr and Scott, Appendix E.

⁵⁴ National Park Service, *National Park Guide for the Handicapped* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971).

⁵⁵ National Park Service, *Guide for the Handicapped*, 25.

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities could not be excluded from, or denied the benefits of, any program or activity receiving federal funding. By 1978, the NPS provided a few services that increased access to FOTH. Visitors with visual disabilities received special tours of the state box, with the ability to touch the furniture and objects. Visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing could make an appointment to receive an American Sign Language tour.⁵⁶ FOTH was still largely inaccessible, however, to people using wheelchairs.

In 1985, Jill Robinson of Arlington, Virginia, filed the first FOTH discrimination complaint under Section 504 concerning wheelchair inaccessibility. The Department of the Interior's Office for Equal Opportunity bore the responsibility for investigating and resolving accessibility complaints. The NPS subsequently installed an entrance ramp and a level wheelchair seating area inside the theater, and created an album containing photographs of the Lincoln Museum exhibits and the House Where Lincoln Died. The Office for Equal Opportunity continued discussions with NCR staff about the best way to provide accessible restrooms in Ford's Theatre, given the limitations of the historic structure.⁵⁷

By 1987, FOTH offered printed handouts for visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing, explaining the museum's audiovisual exhibits. Sign language tours were dependent on the availability of a particular FOTH staff member fluent in American Sign Language. The NPS provided TTY (teletype) machines for visitors with hearing loss to make phone calls. In addition to receiving special access to the state box and the House Where Lincoln Died, visitors with vision impairments could touch reproductions of Booth's Deringer and Lincoln's life mask and hands casting.⁵⁸

Another complaint in 1987 about the lack of accessible restrooms expedited progress on the issue.⁵⁹ The Office for Equal Opportunity ultimately determined that Section 504 legally compelled the NPS to provide access to restrooms and the Lincoln Museum for wheelchair users, which required the installation of an elevator. While that development process was underway, the NPS installed an interim wheelchair-accessible restroom in the adjacent 517 Tenth Street building in January 1988. However, access involved an awkward process of exiting Ford's Theatre via a ramp onto the sidewalk, then up another ramp into the adjacent building.⁶⁰

A chair lift to the basement was installed as an interim solution for access to the museum, but it would prove to be frequently problematic.⁶¹ Once the NPS Denver Service Center completed structural studies to determine a feasible location for an elevator, the regional director worked with the State Historic Preservation Officer for Washington, DC, in 1989 to obtain a finding of "no adverse affect" on the historic

⁵⁶ National Park Service, *Access National Parks: A Guide for Handicapped Visitors* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1978), 37.

⁵⁷ Alfred R. Gordon, "Discrimination Complaint on the Basis of Handicap Filed Concerning Ford's Theatre National Historic Site," memorandum from acting director, Office of Equal Opportunity, to director, NCR, September 18, 1985, FOTH On-Site Archives; Alfred R. Gordon, letter [from Acting Director, Office of Equal Opportunity] to Jill Robinson, Esq., September 18, 1985, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁵⁸ National Park Service, *Statement for Management*, 22–23; Geary, *Annual Statements for Interpretation*, 6, 11; [National Park Service], "Services Available to Visually Impaired Visitors to Ford's Theatre National Historic Site (National Park Service)," January 30, 1987, Curatorial box, Access Policy folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁵⁹ Bernice Ulmer, letter to Ms. Carmen Maymi, director, Department of Interior O.E.O. [Office of Equal Opportunity], May 30, 1987, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁶⁰ William Penn Mott, Jr., "Report of Investigation of Handicapped Accessibility Discrimination Complaint of Ford's Theatre," memorandum from director, National Park Service, to director, Office of Equal Opportunity, February 17, 1988, FOTH On-Site Archives; John G. Parsons, "Ford's Theatre National Historic Site – Compliance with the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, Section 504," memorandum from acting regional director, National Capital Region, to Director, National Park Service, November 23, 1988, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁶¹ National Park Service, "Project Statement: FOTH – Elevator for Accessibility," [1996], FOTH On-Site Archives.

Ford's Theatre building under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.⁶² However, it would take another seventeen years to obtain the significant funding needed for construction.

Collections Management

Since the 1964 removal of the Lincoln Museum collection in preparation for Ford's Theatre construction work, most of the artifacts, with the exception of those placed in the new museum exhibits and those on display in the Petersen House, sat in storage at the NCR property office warehouse. In the 1970s and 1980s, they were moved to a new NCR museum storage facility in Alexandria, Virginia, then into the regional museum vault at Union Station in Washington, DC, and finally to a new NCR facility, Museum and Archeological Regional Storage (MARS), now called the Museum Resource Center (MRCE), constructed in Lanham, Maryland, in 1982.⁶³ The books and ephemera of the Lincoln Library had long been housed on the upper floor of the pre-restoration Ford's Theatre. When space in the new Star Saloon building was given over to FTS for rehearsals, the library contents were moved to an upper floor of the Petersen House, then finally to the new MARS facility. However, the Lincoln Library collection of approximately 2,000 volumes was not catalogued as part of the museum collection.⁶⁴

After Ford's Theatre and the new Lincoln Museum reopened in 1968, curators made several attempts to cull the collection. Staff Curator Vera Craig, along with the chief of the Museum Operations Branch, Ralph Lewis, and Chief Curator Harold Peterson, examined the collection and ultimately recommended 80 objects for destruction and 60 objects for transferal to more appropriate parks or institutions.⁶⁵ Shortly thereafter, Regional Curator Elizabeth Albro examined and reappraised the value of the most important artifacts, like Lincoln's death pillow, in the process noting many inconsistencies between the catalog, report, and inventory numbers.⁶⁶

The first Scope of Collections for FOTH was created in 1969, likely by the same collections committee of Albro, Lewis, Craig, and Peterson. The document defined the purpose of the Lincoln Museum collection as aiding an understanding and appreciation of Abraham Lincoln as president. Similarly, it defined an acquisition policy that focused on important objects relating to Lincoln's presidency, with a few exceptions, including Lincoln's assassination. The collection was noted to contain approximately 4,900 artifacts that, on the whole, possessed a "miscellaneous character and an extreme range of quality" leading from a "rather uncritical accession policy."⁶⁷

⁶² Donald A. Falvey, "Progress Report on [Handicap Accessibility] Feasibility Study," memorandum from assistant manager, Eastern Team, Denver Service Center, to regional director, National Capital Region, November 6, 1989, FOTH On-Site Archives; Robert Stanton, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, to Carol Thompson, state historic preservation officer, D.C. Preservation Office, May 8, 1989, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁶³ The historic Union Station building also served as the NPS-administered National Visitor Center from 1974 to 1981.

⁶⁴ Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Administrative History 1952-2005*, 32; Bertrand L. Richter, "United States Department of the Interior Report of Survey, Report No. 500-69-S-10," March 1969, Folder D66 Signs, Markers, Memorials, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Joe Brown, "Storage—House Where Lincoln Died," memorandum from assistant regional director, Operations, to Superintendent, National Capital Parks-Central, May 26, 1969, Folder D66 Signs, Markers, Memorials, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; Suzanne B. Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, 3, 7.

⁶⁵ Ralph H. Lewis, "Elimination of Surplus Artifacts from the Lincoln Collection, CNCP," memorandum from chief, Branch of Museum Operations, to regional director, National Capital Region, August 26, 1968, Folder D66 Signs, Markers, Memorials, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR; [National Park Service], "Items to be Surveyed Off and Destroyed," [1969], Folder D66 Signs, Markers, Memorials, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Albro, "United States Department of the Interior Inventory of Property," March 31, 1969, Folder D66 Signs, Markers, Memorials, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁶⁷ [National Park Service], "Scope of Collections – Lincoln Museum," April 25, 1969, Folder D66 Signs, Markers, Memorials, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

A 1979 *Scope of Collections* shifted focus from Lincoln's presidency to the events surrounding his assassination, in accordance with the 1970 establishment of FOTH for the purpose of preserving the site of Lincoln's assassination and death. The major interpretive themes were defined as 1) the shooting of Lincoln; 2) the death of Lincoln in the Petersen House; and 3) the investigation and trial of Booth and his conspirators.⁶⁸ This surprising about-face for the focus of interpretation from Lincoln's life to Lincoln's death, was perhaps the natural outcome of restoring the theater interior, which provided a setting that demanded sufficient interpretation during visitors' limited time.

In 1983, a complete inventory of every item in the collection was conducted by the FOTH museum technician and volunteers, identifying over 5,710 objects.⁶⁹ A few years later, museum consultant Suzanne Schell produced a comprehensive *Collections Management Plan*.⁷⁰ She detailed the frustrating provenance issues with the Oldroyd Collection, which, at the time of acquisition, was estimated to consist of more than 3,000 items, not 10,000 items as claimed in various sources, including the 1986 *Statement for Management: National Capital Parks—Central*.⁷¹ Schell noted inconsistencies between FOTH's stated purpose, the existing scope of collections, and a recent museum proposal shifting emphasis to the assassination, and recommended clarifying the site's purpose and revising the scope of collections accordingly.⁷²

Schell identified alarmingly severe deficiencies in almost every category of collections management, from record keeping to on-site security, cleaning, and environmental conditions. File cabinets containing museum records had been sitting in an exterior basement corridor at the Petersen House for over six months, and some records suffered from mold or water damage. Collections in the Petersen House, which lacked air conditioning, were subjected to large fluctuations in temperature and humidity. A high degree of dust and particulates from air pollution stemming from Tenth Street traffic posed a threat to many on-site artifacts. The FOTH collection had "one of the highest value-per-item averages in the system, but was not receiving" a corresponding level of care.⁷³

Schell also highlighted the lack of a professionally trained museum curator, which led to inconsistent or below-standard curatorial practices. In 1968, FOTH had an on-site museum curator overseeing its collection. When the study collection was transferred to the Regional Museum Vault in 1975, the curator position was moved under the NCR Division of Interpretation, responsible for the collections both on site and in the Regional Museum Vault. This dual role continued when the collection moved to MARS in 1982, but the position itself was moved back under FOTH and was changed to a museum technician position, supervised by the site manager.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ This brief, two-page document does not state the number of artifacts in the collection. Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, 8–9; National Park Service, *Scope of Collection Statement, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site and House Where Lincoln Died* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, National Capital Region, 1979), in Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, Appendix 1.

⁶⁹ This number did not include "an undetermined number of uncatalogued historical photographs and postcards" or approximately 2,000 volumes from Ford's Theatre's Lincoln Library, housed at MARS. Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, 7.

⁷⁰ Schell, *Collection Management Plan*.

⁷¹ Even allowing for past deaccessioning, disposal, and loss of some items in the Oldroyd Collection, the total number of items in the FOTH collection is far less than 10,000. Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, 6; National Park Service, *Statement for Management*, 23; Allen, "Documenting the Lincoln Museum Collection," 464.

⁷² Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, 9–11.

⁷³ Schell, 50.

⁷⁴ Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, 50.

Interpretation

At the 1968 reopening of the restored Ford's Theatre, interpretation was limited to hourly ranger talks. Some rangers, particularly the women, dressed in period clothing (Figure 5.6). After significant delay, a much-anticipated "Sound & Light Program" premiered to visitors on the Ford's Theatre stage on July 21, 1970.⁷⁵ At a cost of more than \$300,000, Guggenheim Productions created a 30-minute audiovisual program narrated by James Earl Jones, who told the story of Lincoln's assassination while actors voiced the main historical figures and automated spotlights shone on parts of the stage and state box at particular moments. The Sound & Light Program, while innovative at the time, was beset by technical problems and could not be presented as often as hoped because of conflicts with the FTS rehearsal schedule. The program ceased operation in 1974.⁷⁶

Following the demise of the Sound & Light Program, the NPS launched another interpretive program intended as a new kind of living history performance. Presented on the Ford's Theatre stage in the summer of 1975, University of Maryland drama students presented fifteen-minute "Informances" skits, alternating with the hourly ranger talks. The skits covered various Lincoln-era topics like music of the day, reactions of everyday citizens to the assassination, and recollections of John Wilkes Booth.⁷⁷

In the 1970s and 1980s, the focus of interpretive themes narrowed to Lincoln's assassination, but then later broadened again. As discussed in the Collections section of this chapter, the language in the 1970 designation of FOTH, defining its main purpose as preserving the site of Lincoln's assassination, may have helped create a shift in sentiment in the NPS. The change in interpretation seen in the 1979 *Scope of Collections*, which limited the focus of the collection policy to Lincoln's assassination, was also evident in a 1981 museum plan. That plan proposed a "total rehab of exhibits to shift emphasis from Lincoln's career to the events surrounding the assassination." The proposal was a radical departure from the approach of the 1968 museum planners who deliberately deemphasized the assassination. However, the final version of the museum plan approved in 1985 included a broader list of themes: "1) Assassination and Aftermath; 2) Temper of the Times; 3) The Legacy of Lincoln; and 4) The History and Restoration of Ford's Theatre."⁷⁸ The 1985 *Statements for Interpretation and Visitor Services* expanded on previous interpretation themes by including Civil War-era Washington, DC. The three themes were listed as 1) the Lincoln assassination and surrounding events; 2) President Lincoln and the memorial concept; and 3) Washington, DC, 1865: the city and its environment in relation to the assassination.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Halloran, "Lincoln's Death Portrayed," *New York Times*; The original 35 mm film reel, "Ford's Theater [sic] Sound and Light Show," is held at the NARA-CP.

⁷⁶ "Contract for Sound and Light Program, Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., Contract No. 14-10-6-960-134, April 16, 1968," signed May 2, 1968, Folder K1815 Pt. 1 NCR 1-1-68, Box 1494, Administrative Files 1949-1971, RG79, NARA-CP; Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service*, 43; Lewis, *Museum Curatorship*, 177; William R. Failor, "Meeting with Mrs. Frankie Hewitt, Ford's Theatre Society, July 28," memorandum for the Record from superintendent, National Capital Region, August 2, 1971, Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1/1/1969, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁷⁷ Mary Bradford, "Rap Up: Dramatic Interpretation," *In Touch* 1, no. 9 (September 1975): 14.

⁷⁸ Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, 9.

⁷⁹ Geary, *Annual Statements for Interpretation*.



Figure 5.6. Park ranger in period clothing, ca. 1970. (Photo by Cecil W. Stoughton. *Ford's Theatre Visitor to Sound & Light Program*, Ford's Theatre Interpretation folder, Box 1, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS.)

Petersen House Restoration and Archeological Excavation

In the 1970s, Curator Vera B. Craig and Regional Historian Gary Scott planned and implemented a major restoration and furnishings project for the House Where Lincoln Died. Craig began to develop a furnishings and renovation plan as early as 1970, hoping to restore the interior of the first floor to a more accurate representation of its appearance on the day of Lincoln's death. That year, she presented her plans to the volunteer committee and put on an opera on the life of Mary Todd Lincoln, *Wing of Expectation*, at Ford's Theatre to fund a \$10,000 restoration of the Petersen House.⁸⁰ Craig completed her furnishing plan in 1976, but it was not implemented until 1978, when severe water damage to the room where Lincoln died, also known as the "death room," compelled the NPS to close the Petersen House to the public for repairs.⁸¹

Scott, NCR Chief Historical Architect Dr. Paul Goeldner, and NPS Furniture Conservator John Brucksch carried out paint analysis and studied drawings and photographs to return the exterior and the first floor rooms to their 1865 appearance. While the interior finishes and furnishings of the death room (Figures 5.7 and 5.8) were based on archival and material evidence, the rest of the historic interior was recreated based on what would likely have been found in a Civil War-era house of an average working-class family similar to the Petersens. The restoration team installed period-appropriate reproduction wallpaper and carpet, an antique gasolier light fixture, and antique furniture in the hall and two parlors.⁸²

⁸⁰ M.M. Flatley, "Where Lincoln Died: Renovation Project," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 29, 1970, GenealogyBank.

⁸¹ Craig, *Furnishing Plan*; National Park Service., *William A. Petersen House*, 23.

⁸² National Park Service, *William A. Petersen House*, 23; Schell, *Collection Management Plan*, 14.



Figure 5.7. Room where Lincoln died, 1984 ([Room where Lincoln died, Petersen House], Box 2, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS).



Figure 5.8. Room where Lincoln died, 1959 ([Room where Lincoln died, Petersen House], Box 2, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS).

When the House Where Lincoln Died reopened in July 1980, park rangers, dressed in period attire and acting in the role of Petersen House boarders, were able to more faithfully present and interpret the events of Lincoln's death.⁸³ With new Petersen House data in hand as a result of the restoration project, Gary Scott submitted updated documentation in 1981 for the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for both the House Where Lincoln Died and Ford's Theatre.⁸⁴

In one of the most significant events in the history of FOTH as a national park, workers in November 1985 excavating an area under the floorboards of the rear ell addition of the House Where Lincoln Died unexpectedly encountered pottery sherds and fragments of glass and bone. Archeologists with NCR's Regional Archeology Program, led by NCR Chief Archeologist Stephen Potter, arrived to conduct initial emergency salvage excavations that then continued during various periods in 1986. The site, later given the number 51NW65, turned out to be a mid-nineteenth-century refuse and fire debris deposit that eventually yielded over 6,000 artifacts (Figure 5.9). The investigation also revealed earlier architectural features indicating a previous ell addition—used as a kitchen—likely destroyed by fire in 1863 and then rebuilt before Lincoln's death in 1865.⁸⁵

Potter remarked on the relative rarity of finding intact archeological layers in the downtown core of Washington, DC. The site was also significant for revealing the lives of antebellum working-class residents of the city, and for yielding a rare instance of artifacts from scientific equipment—glass slides likely belonging to two Petersen House boarders.⁸⁶ From the excavated artifacts, archeologists uncovered a trove of new information on the Petersen House inhabitants that provided new stories to interpret the site.

Educational Programming

In the 1970s and 1980s, almost half of FOTH visitors were under the age of eighteen. School groups from around the United States visited primarily in the spring.⁸⁷ Interpreters gave talks to school groups that were “tailored to the children's level of interest and preparation by the interpreter giving the talk.”⁸⁸ (Figure 5.10) Students were then ushered through the museum, sometimes with rangers stationed to answer questions.

⁸³ Nick Adde, “Lincoln's Death Site Reopens,” *Washington Star*, July 25, 1980, GenealogyBank; “Historic House Reopens,” *Washington Star*, July 25, 1980, GenealogyBank.

⁸⁴ Gary Scott, *Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House where Lincoln Died*, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1982).

⁸⁵ Virta, *Archeology at the Petersen House*, 3, 17–35.

⁸⁶ Virginia Mansfield, “Finding History in Trash: Archeologists Sift Through Tidbits in House Where Lincoln Died,” *Washington Post*, February 20, 1986, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁸⁷ Geary, *Annual Statements for Interpretation*, 7, 9.

⁸⁸ Geary, 11.

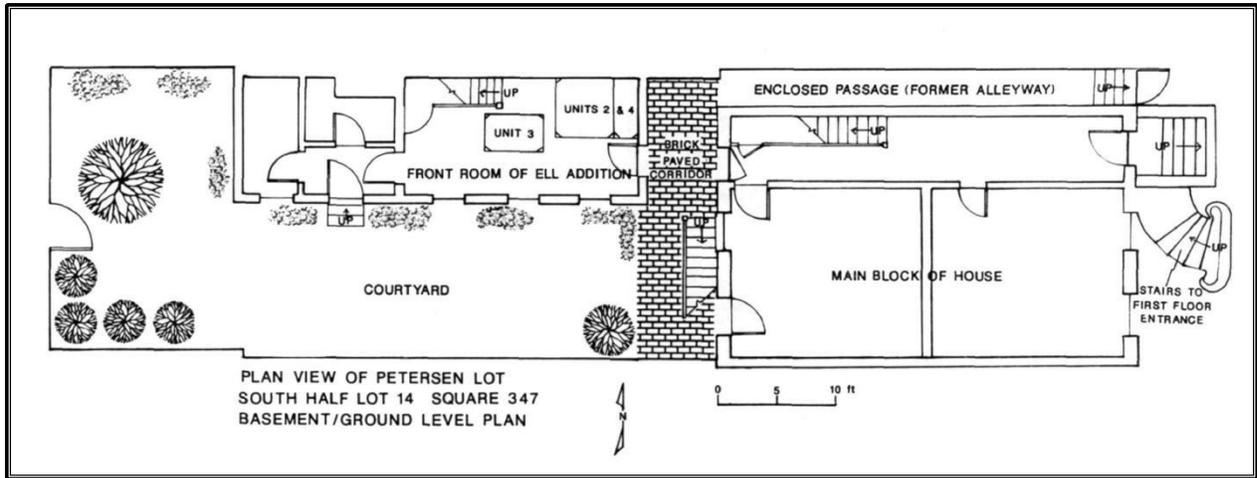


Figure 5.9. Ground floor plan of Petersen House and lot, showing locations of excavation units. (Drawing by Robert Sonderman. *Plan View of Petersen Lot, South Half Lot 14, Square 347, Basement/Ground Level Plan*, in Virta, *Archeology at the Petersen House*, A9. Courtesy of the NPS.)



Figure 5.10. NPS interpreter giving a talk to students, ca. 1970. (Photo by Jack Rottier. [Interpreter talking to students], Box 1, FOTH Photograph Reference Collection. Courtesy of the NPS.)

From the organization's inception, FTS included students as part of their target audience. An early fundraising pamphlet indicates a goal of providing half-price tickets to students and free tickets to "inner city youths."⁸⁹ The NPS also utilized the Ford's Theatre stage for the benefit of local school groups. The NPS-FTS Cooperative Agreement specified the option for the NPS to give away blocks of tickets for no charge, which they typically sent to area schools.⁹⁰ The NPS also started creating lesson plans for teachers in the early 1970s to supplement these free Ford's Theatre shows. Performances of the kid-friendly production, *Young Abe Lincoln*, were shown to hundreds of area fifth and sixth graders in the mornings and afternoons each February in 1970, 1972, and 1973. A teacher's guide for the performance began with an introduction briefly describing the state of Washington, DC, just after the Civil War, setting a scene of Ford's Theatre as a "luxurious" respite for theatergoers, in contrast to the "oppressive environment" outside, with open sewers, streets of mud, and unfinished government buildings. A "Suggested Approach" listed three discussion topics, the third asking, "Why does the nation as a whole pay homage to Abraham Lincoln? Why was the assassination such a tragic event?"⁹¹ Another version of the teacher's guide begins with two pages of promotional language for the play and its ability to help "children 'live' history."⁹² These early NPS teacher's guides are simplistic compared to those produced today, but at the time, they represented a step forward in providing teachers with specific resources to supplement field trips.

FTS Performances

As stated in the NPS-FTS cooperative agreement, live theater performed on the Ford's Theatre stage was intended to enhance interpretation of the site. Under Hewitt's leadership of FTS, Ford's Theatre became known for uplifting plays and musicals with broad American themes. Performances did not always follow the NPS's 1968 vision of presenting Lincoln's life, times, or values. Some critics derided Ford's Theatre programming as mainstream or middle-brow, but Hewitt boasted of attracting diverse audiences: "In the Spring, we get a lot of young people and visitors to Washington. We have a black audience, which we reach through the black church groups. Our audience is more popular-oriented, then [*sic*], say, Arena [Theater]; we are consciously reaching out to a new audience and to the young with shows like *Godspell* and *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat*."⁹³

For the second season of Ford's Theatre, Hewitt contracted with on- and off-Broadway theater company Circle-in-the-Square, headed by Artistic Director Theodore Mann. Circle-in-the-Square aimed for a broader repertoire of American drama, rather than NPS's preference for productions connected to Lincoln or the Civil War period.⁹⁴ Productions included serious drama such as Eugene O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten* and *Trumpets of the Lord*, an experimental fusion of Black sermons and gospel songs. Plays in the 1969 to 1971 seasons were praised by critics, but did not fill enough seats.⁹⁵ As with the National Repertory Theater, disputes over unpaid expenses, and subsequent lawsuits, ended the relationship prematurely.⁹⁶ In the hopes of eliminating middleman expenses and achieving more variety across a season, Hewitt and FTS decided to book shows from independent sources and mount their own works. Over the

⁸⁹ Ford's Theatre Society, "Ford's Theatre: A Center for American Drama," fundraising solicitation report, [1969], D66 Ford's Theatre 1/1/69, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁹⁰ Russell H. Dickenson, letter from general superintendent, [NCR], to [school principal], May 8, 1970, Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1/1/1969, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁹¹ National Park Service, "Teachers' Guide – Lesson Plan for Ford's Theatre," [1970], Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1/1/1969 Part 2, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁹² National Park Service, "Teachers' Guide – Lesson Plan for Young Abe Lincoln," [1970], Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1/1/1969 Part 2, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁹³ Boris Weintraub, "Audiences: The Bad and the Beautiful," *Washington Star*, January 4, 1981, GenealogyBank.

⁹⁴ Emerson Beauchamp, "The Man at the Helm As Ford's Tries Again," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), January 26, 1969, Folder K1815 Ford's Theatre 1/1/1969, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site Collection, NPSNCR.

⁹⁵ Flander, "Frankie Hewitt," *Washington Star-News*.

⁹⁶ David Richards, "A New Ford's Season With a New Independence," *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), August 29, 1971, GenealogyBank.

next twenty years, these shows often included popular American musicals, like *Godspell*, *Elmer Gantry*, and *A Christmas Carol*, as well as original plays and musicals.⁹⁷ In 1975, President Gerald Ford became the first president to step inside Ford's Theatre since President Lincoln, attending the premiere of *Give 'Em Hell, Harry*, a play about Harry Truman.⁹⁸

FTS also brought in many all-Black productions, riding the wave of Black theater appearing in American cities in the 1970s. Hewitt wanted Ford's Theatre, as a National Historic Site carrying forward Lincoln's values, to be a theater for all Americans. However, she and other urban theater owners of the time were also aware of the financial success of Black shows. After the 1968 riots, suburban whites became reluctant to venture into the city at night. However, the increasingly Black urban population provided a ready audience, particularly for plays and performances that reflected their own lives. In 1976, Hewitt observed that, of the top four financially successful shows during her tenure, two were the "Black revues," *Don't Bother Me*, *I Can't Cope* and *Your Arms too Short to Box With God*. FTS staff regularly conducted outreach to the Black community, inviting church and community leaders to premieres, and hoping for word-of-mouth publicity.⁹⁹ In cultivating a diverse program and diverse audiences, apart from the daily throngs of tourists and school groups, Hewitt helped incorporate Ford's Theatre into the cultural fabric of the city.

⁹⁷ A list of all past productions at Ford's Theatre can be found at "Past Productions," Ford's Theatre Society (website), accessed July 19, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/performances/past-productions/>.

⁹⁸ Betty Beale, "Ford Going to Ford's for Premiere," *Washington Star*, April 9, 1975, GenealogyBank.

⁹⁹ David Richards, "Black is Beautiful at the Box Office," *Washington Star*, June 13, 1976, GenealogyBank.

CHAPTER 6: Expanding Visitation and Increasing Outreach (1989–2008)

Management and Planning

A new decade ushered in a period of change and growth for FOTH and FTS. In the structure of the NPS, the site manager role functioned as a stepping stone position and in the 1990s and early 2000s, the site manager position at Ford's Theatre experienced a high rate of turnover. Site managers, on average, typically only stayed two to three years at FOTH, resulting in a lack of consistent leadership and creative direction in the site's administration. From the early 1990s until 2003, when Rae Emerson was hired into the position, at least five different site managers oversaw the NPS administration and interpretive programming at Ford's Theatre. Frankie Hewitt remained in her position as executive producer of FTS until her death in 2003. After an exhaustive search, Paul R. Tetreault was selected to step into the role of production director for the organization in 2004. The developmental director for FTS, Marilyn Powel, left the organization in 1992 and was quickly replaced by Michael Gennaro. The end of the twentieth century and the start of the new millennium were transitional periods at the historic site and the interpretive, educational, and theatrical efforts at Ford's Theatre underwent a transformation.

NPS Grant Funding

In 1988, the NPS began a renovation of the Lincoln Museum in the basement of the historic theater. The renovation shifted the focus of the exhibits beyond Lincoln's life and presidency to include a greater emphasis on his assassination, displaying artifacts, such as the coat Lincoln wore to the theater and Booth's derringer.¹ Amid the ongoing revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood and completion of the Lincoln Museum renovation in 1990, visitation to Ford's Theatre steadily increased. The site drew tourists, school groups, and theatergoers alike. In response, FTS continued to expand its programming throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, increasing the cultural diversity and variety of its shows in order to connect with a broader audience. In addition to its standard line up of plays, musicals, comedy acts, and other fine arts productions, FTS added workshops and community outreach to its roster, engaging with students through a series of Opening Act Workshops and providing discounted tickets to students, senior citizens, and service organizations through Operation Discovery and the Matinee Club. FTS also hired new staff members to support the development of its theatrical productions and programming, and began the search for additional office space to accommodate its growing operation, which was eventually secured in the office building adjacent to the Petersen House.² The evolution of FTS during this period is documented in the grant applications and correspondence between the society and the NPS. FTS received their primary funding from the NPS in the form of grants to "assist in supporting and stimulating innovative live theater programming at Ford's Theatre."³ Although the society received program funding from a variety of sources, including external grants, corporate sponsors, and private donors, these NPS grants were a consistent source of support and financed salaries and benefits for stagehands and house staff working on FTS productions (Figure 6.1).

¹ Anderson, *Ford's Theatre*, 105.

² Frankie Hewitt, letter from producing artistic director, Ford's Theatre Society, to Toni Braxton, National Capital Region, National Park Service, December 15, 1994, FOTH On-Site Archives.

³ Jack [Manus] Fish, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, to Mrs. Frankie Hewitt, [Executive Producer], Ford's Theatre Society, February 4, 1988. FOTH On-Site Archives.

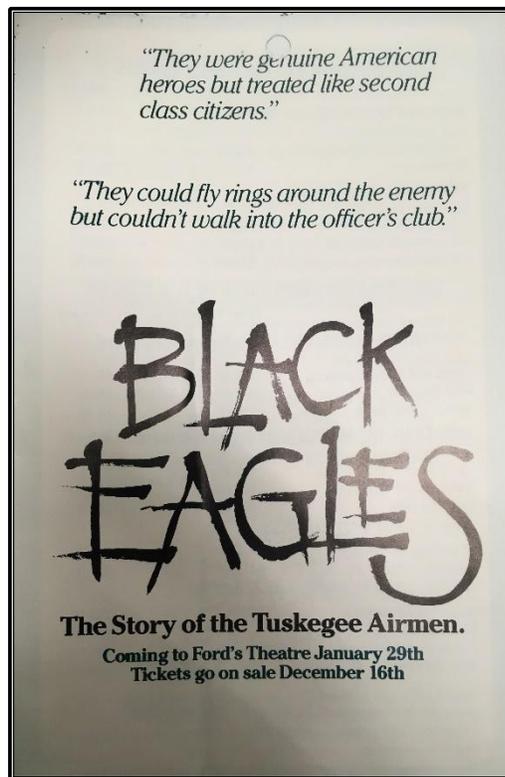


Figure 6.1. Program for the FTS production of *Black Eagles*, a play about the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II, which was produced in the 1990–1991 season (*Black Eagles*, advertising flyer, December 1990, FTS. Courtesy of FTS).

Grant amounts varied depending on the yearly congressional appropriations, but between 1984 and 1987, FTS received a total of \$673,055 in NPS grants. The grant funding increased from \$239,200 in 1989 to \$307,800 in 1994, reflecting the growing needs of FTS as they expanded their programming and their role in the community.⁴

The NPS required regular financial audits as a condition of continued grant funding. Conducted every three years, these audits reviewed FTS’s use of grant money and ensured that the society properly allocated the funds to approved expenditures, namely salaries and benefits for stagehands and house staff. Any unused grant money had to be returned to the NPS along with any interest earned over the course of the fiscal year.⁵ The audits also reviewed FTS accounting policies, revenue sources, and overall expenditures to identify weaknesses or inaccuracies in the society’s financial management structure.⁶ Two of these audits, conducted in 1991 and 1994, resulted in changes to FTS operations. In response to the 1991 audit, the NPS

⁴ Robert J. Williams, “Review of Costs Claimed by the Ford’s Theatre Society,” memorandum from regional audit manager, Office of Inspector General, Department of the Interior, to regional director, National Capital Region, National Park Service, May 10, 1989, FOTH On-Site Archives; [Carolyn Betts], letter from associate regional director, Administration, National Capital Region to Deloitte, Haskins & Sells, December 1989, FOTH On-Site Archives; Richard E. Powers, letter from associate regional director for Administration, National Park Service, to Mrs. Frankie Hewitt, executive producer, Ford’s Theatre Society, January 13, 1994, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁵ [National Park Service], letter to Mrs. Frankie Hewitt, [executive producer], Ford’s Theatre Society, September 12, 1991, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁶ Deloitte & Touche, LLP, *Ford’s Theatre Society: Financial Statements and Schedule of Federal Awards for the Year Ended September 30, 1994, and Independent Auditors’ Reports in Accordance with Government Auditing Standards and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133* (Washington, DC: Deloitte & Touche, LLP, November 23, 1994), 21–24, Ford’s Theatre Society Grant FY 1994 folder, FOTH On-Site Archives.

informed FTS of a new policy pursuant of the 1988 Drug-Free Workplace Act. Under the act, FTS was required to maintain a drug-free workplace, inform their employees of the drug abuse policy, the consequences of violations, and available treatment options, and report any employee drug violations to the NPS.⁷ FTS added the Drug-Free Workplace policy statement to their entry meeting form, which was signed by all new employees.⁸ As a result of the 1994 audit, FTS developed a procurement policy regarding the construction of production sets as required by the NPS Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The policy outlined the procedure for choosing a set construction company and designated National Scenery as the society's preferred vendor.⁹ The new policy brought FTS in compliance with the "strict procurement regulations" set forth by the OMB and streamlined the set construction process.¹⁰

In addition to underwriting stagehands and house staff, the NPS grants during this period also financed two important FTS developments. On January 31, 1992, the cooperative agreement between FTS and the NPS expired, and during the renewal process Hewitt broached the subject of expanding the NPS grant to include funding for the society's administrative costs. FTS had long since outgrown its original office space in the north annex and in the late 1980s expanded to offices in a building across the street from the theater. Hewitt requested an \$18,000 increase to the NPS grant, in addition to the \$234,902 already allocated for stagehands and house staff, to cover the yearly rent for the secondary offices. According to correspondence between Hewitt and Robert Stanton, director of the National Capital Region, FTS was in the process of securing further office space in the building next door, and the grant adjustment would presumably provide flexibility in the budget to cover the rent once the space was leased.¹¹ However, the NPS was unable to fulfill this request due to the nature of the existing grant. An alternative agreement was soon reached, with the NPS providing an additional \$12,000 earmarked for "program support," which offset the administrative expenses by providing the society with additional funding to expand its productions and programming.¹² The following year, FTS coordinated with Richard Powers, the associate regional director for administration for the National Capital Region, to increase their NPS grant in order to improve the accessibility of Ford's Theatre. The accessibility of the theater had been a topic of concern since the 1980s and the NPS received multiple complaints regarding the lack of accommodations for visitors with disabilities. This resulted in the installation of new ramps and accessible seating areas and restrooms in the theater, as well as an automatic stair lift.¹³ Touchable exhibits, audio-visual displays, large print and Braille materials, and an album with photographs of exhibits in inaccessible portions of the theater were made available to patrons with disabilities, vision loss, or hearing loss.¹⁴ In 1993, FTS received a \$10,000 supplement to their NPS grant to fund the installation of a new "infrared hearing impaired system similar

⁷ Ronald N. Wrye, letter from acting regional director, National Capital Region, to Mrs. Frankie Hewitt, Executive Producer, Ford's Theatre Society, January 31, 1991, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁸ Roger LaRouche, "Audits of National Park Service Grants to Accokeek Foundation, Inc., Ford's Theatre Society, and the Women's Party Corporation," memorandum from director of external audits to associate director, budget and administration, National Park Service, February 6, 1991, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁹ Wrye to Hewitt, January 31, 1991.

¹⁰ Wrye to Hewitt, January 31, 1991.

¹¹ Robert Stanton, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, National Park Service, to Mrs. Frankie Hewitt, executive producer, Ford's Theatre Society, June 5, 1992, FOTH On-Site Archives; Marilyn Powel, letter from development director, Ford's Theatre Society, to Toni Braxton, Office of Management Consulting, National Park Service, May 29, 1992, FOTH On-Site Archives.

¹² Stanton to Hewitt, June 5, 1992; Powel to Braxton, May 29, 1992; Adrienne [Coleman], memorandum to Mr. [Richard E.] Powers and Mr. [Robert] Stanton, National Park Service, May 26, 1992, FOTH On-Site Archives.

¹³ Robert Stanton, letter from regional director, National Capital Region, NPS, to Honorable Stephen L. Neal, House of Representatives, August 31, 1994, FOTH On-Site Archives.

¹⁴ [National Park Service], "Services Available," January 30, 1987.

to the system presently in use in the Kennedy Center.”¹⁵ The new technology replaced an outdated system installed in the 1980s and made FTS programming and productions accessible to a broader audience.

Technology and Interpretation

The introduction of new technology improved collection and exhibit maintenance and management at Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House. Previously, all of the theater’s artifacts were inventoried in a physical card catalog and any alterations or corrections had to be made by hand. During Frank Hebblethwaite’s tenure as museum curator (1979–1989), a new Automated National Catalog System (ANCS) was installed, which allowed the curatorial staff to create a digital record of all the objects and artifacts in the Ford’s Theatre collection, including those in the museum, in the Petersen House, and in storage at the MARS facility. Staff could also easily input new accessions and modify the descriptions or current locations of existing artifacts. The conversion to the ANCS system was a mammoth task and took several years. Hebblethwaite and his staff completed the initial step of entering all of the artifacts into the system. Later, Danny Butcher, who served as curator from 1989 to 1993, and Timothy Good, who replaced Butcher in 1993, continued to enter descriptions and locations for the artifacts in the collection. When Good left Ford’s Theatre in 1993, he noted “overall, ANCS has been of great assistance in the handling of the artifacts.”¹⁶ In addition to new inventory software, a computerized climate monitoring system was also installed at the Petersen House in 1993. The Hypertek system monitored the temperature and humidity in the Room Where Lincoln Died, the first floor hallway, and the second and third floors. Managing the temperature and humidity of the Petersen House was important for the preservation of the building’s historic fabric and the artifacts displayed inside. Previously, hydrothermographs were used to track the temperature and humidity in the building. Since it was automated, the new system eliminated the regular maintenance and upkeep associated with these devices. It also enabled the curation staff to monitor the humidity and temperature of the entire building from one workstation, making the preservation of the Petersen House and its exhibits efficient and effective.¹⁷

A New Partnership

In 1995, the NPS entered into a cooperative agreement with a new nonprofit organization, the Friends of Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site, Inc. (Friends of FOTH). Formed in 1995, the Friends of FOTH was founded as an “independent grassroots organization dedicated to preserving and interpreting sites related to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.”¹⁸ Although FTS had managed Ford’s Theatre’s dramatic productions since 1968, the NPS remained solely responsible for the interpretive programming and exhibits at the historic theater and the Petersen House. In their foundational document, the Friends of FOTH proposed a partnership with the NPS to support their educational and historical mission at Ford’s Theatre. Many of the organization’s founding principles and goals were based on initiatives put forth in the Vail Agenda, a document resulting from the NPS Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Symposium in Vail, Colorado. Primarily a self-reflective examination of the NPS’s role, or lack thereof, in the conservation of environmental resources and ecosystem management, the Vail Agenda also acknowledged that the NPS would be required to address the complex issue of how to interpret the past. Through fundraising and the procurement of other necessary resources, the Friends of FOTH proposed to support the NPS as they diversified their interpretive and educational programming at Ford’s Theatre. The organization’s foundational document cites several goals they intended to achieve through their partnership with the NPS, including the creation and installation of new exhibits in underutilized parts of the theater, the production

¹⁵ Michael Gennaro, letter from Ford’s Theatre Society to Richard Powers, associate regional director for Administration, NPS, July 28, 1993, FOTH On-Site Archives.

¹⁶ Good, Tim[othy S.]. “Closeout Report,” memorandum from acting museum curator, Ford’s Theatre NHS, to Regional Curator, National Capital Region, August 14, 1993, FOTH On-Site Archives, 2.

¹⁷ Good, “Closeout Report,” memorandum to region curator, August 14, 1993, 2.

¹⁸ Gary Crawford and Jared D. Cohen, *Friends of Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site, Inc.: Preserving and Interpreting the Sites Related to the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, [January 1995], FOTH On-Site Archives, 1.

of American Sign Language (ASL) and Braille exhibits and interpretive materials, the modernization of the existing technological infrastructure, and the creation of a grant fund to finance training for NPS and volunteer staff members. Through research, the organization proposed to help the NPS identify new avenues for training, scholarship, and exhibition and provide additional means for public engagement. The Friends of FOTH also proposed to establish a learning center at the site for students and to develop educational and outreach programming to further support student learning, including an oral essay contest, a debate forum, and a scholarship program. The Friends of FOTH emphasized the importance of resource preservation and planned to assist the NPS with the preservation of Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House through training, an internship program, and an architectural survey of both buildings. The foundational document outlines a financial structure based on grant funding, public donations, a membership program, and corporate sponsorships to fund its initiatives and support the NPS in their management of the site's interpretive and educational programming.¹⁹

Gary Crawford, who previously served as a volunteer at Ford's Theatre, Jared D. Cohen, former park ranger at Ford's Theatre, and Phillip Lavezzo established the organization and served on the first board of directors.²⁰ Ford's Theatre Site Manager Chris Jones and the president of the Friends of FOTH, Gary Crawford, entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the NPS and the newly formed nonprofit organization soon after its incorporation. The agreement allowed the Friends of FOTH to fundraise on behalf of the NPS and collaborate on educational and interpretive projects and programs. The MOA also laid out the terms of the partnership, requiring the Friends of FOTH to submit all plans for fundraising, activities, events, and press releases to the NPS for approval, prepare yearly status and financial reports, and maintain records of all donations and volunteer hours. The site manager at Ford's Theatre oversaw the day-to-day communication and administration of the NPS Cooperative Agreement.²¹

The Friends of FOTH and the Ford's Theatre Model Collaboration Project

In early 1995, the Friends of FOTH initiated their inaugural project in partnership with Ford's Theatre. Through their NPS Cooperative Agreement, the Friends of FOTH applied for and received a grant from the George Washington University (GWU) National Park Research Coordinating Committee to fund a model project between the Museum Education Program (MEP) at GWU and Ford's Theatre. The project served as a collaborative model between a university, an NPS site, and a community organization. The two-year project aimed to update the exhibits and interpretive programming at Ford's Theatre and "improve present and future visitor use and enjoyment of an important [NPS] site."²² President Crawford, who served as the primary liaison for the Friends of FOTH throughout the project, gathered a multi-disciplinary team to collaborate on the GWU project, including Site Manager Chris Jones and six academic specialists with expertise in historic interpretation, museum audiences, visitor research, communication skills, social studies curriculum development, and material culture. Two professors with GWU's Graduate School of Education and Human Development, Dr. Carol B. Stapp and Dr. Joanne S. Hirsch, served as the project's principal investigator and director, respectively. Working in conjunction with GWU, the Friends of FOTH integrated the model project into three MEP courses, providing eighteen of the department's students with the opportunity to combine classroom learning with real-world experience. Graduate students involved in the project also received a scholarship covering fifty percent of tuition. The project took place between June 1, 1995, and August 31, 1996, with the courses offered during the 1995–1996 academic year and the 1996

¹⁹ [National Park Service, National Capital Parks-Central], "Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region, National Capital Parks-Central, and The Friends of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, Inc.," signed [1995], FOTH On-Site Archives, 1–4.

²⁰ Gary Crawford, Jared D. Cohen and Phillip Lavezzo, "Articles of Incorporation of Friends of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, Inc." (n.p.: 1995), FOTH On-Site Archives, 2.

²¹ [National Park Service, National Capital Parks-Central], "Memorandum of Agreement," signed [1995], 1–8.

²² Carol B. Stapp, "The George Washington University National Park Research Coordinating Committee Request for Funds, Ford's Theatre Model Collaboration Project: Updating Interpretive Practices and Staff Training," (n.p.: 1995), FOTH On-Site Archives, 2.

summer session.²³ In the program, participants would “develop, implement, and evaluate innovative interpretive offerings and staff training that exemplify good practice in museum education.”²⁴ In addition to improving interpretive programming and expanding staff training at Ford’s Theatre, the project organizers intended the Ford’s Theatre Model Collaboration (FTMC) project, as it was termed, to serve as an example for future partnerships between museums and public institutions.²⁵

Phase One of the FTMC project consisted of an analysis of the current visitor programming and educational opportunities at the historic theater. This evaluation was integrated into an MEP course focusing on museum audiences. The six graduate students enrolled in the course worked with theater staff to identify the site’s core audience, as well as gaps in existing interpretive and educational programming that limited engagement with certain demographics. The students developed individual proposals designed to help museum staff connect with underserved audiences. Two of the proposals were chosen for implementation during the remainder of the project. The Ford’s Youth Interpreters (FYI) Program, which extended the site’s outreach and interpretive initiatives, was the focus of Phase Two during the 1996 spring semester. The proposal for Project Perspectives for Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site, which was chosen for Phase Three during the 1996 summer session, evaluated the overall visitor experience at Ford’s Theatre.²⁶

During the 1996 spring semester, one graduate student was assigned as an intern to Ford’s Theatre. Working with Site Manager Chris Jones and Dr. Stapp, the student began to develop the site’s new FYI program. However, as the intern explored possible outreach opportunities, including training middle and high school students as volunteer interpreters and establishing a high school debate competition, it became clear that resource and staff limitations at Ford’s Theatre made the original youth interpretation program impractical. Instead, a short-term project with a more refined scope was chosen to achieve the goals of the FTMC project.²⁷ “Memories Take Root: Planting Trees and Preserving the Memory of Two Historic Figures at Bunker Hill Elementary” offered outreach to local school children and provided NPS staff with experience in “lesson planning, inquiry, and object-based teaching techniques.”²⁸ Working in conjunction with Park Ranger Jeff Leary, the intern designed a program that combined science and history curricula with audio-visual lessons and hands-on learning. The project also facilitated the first collaboration between two local NPS sites by engaging educators from the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site.²⁹ In addition to the expansion of outreach programs, Phase Two of the FTMC project included research on the development of the site’s Board and volunteer corps and the creation of a new mission statement to “reflect site-specific goals.”³⁰ The project collaborators also identified goals for the visitor study conducted during the 1996 summer session. The final component of Phase Two was the development of a grant proposal to expand the accessibility of the museum’s exhibits and interpretive programs. The proposal sought funding to purchase audio equipment, produce audio description narrative tapes for the museum’s exhibits, and create a touch cart with reproduction objects from the museum’s collection in order to enhance the visitor experience for individuals who are blind or have experienced vision loss.³¹

The focus on improving the visitor experience at Ford’s Theatre continued into Phase Three of the project during the 1996 summer session. Students and staff conducted a visitor study, which included

²³ Stapp, “Coordinating Committee Request for Funds,” 2.

²⁴ Stapp, 2.

²⁵ Stapp, 6.

²⁶ Carol B. Stapp, Joanne S. Hirsch, and Selena Connealy, *Ford’s Theatre Model Collaboration: Updating Interpretive Practices and Staff Training*, Vols. I and II (Washington, DC: George Washington University, 1996), 2–3.

²⁷ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, *Ford’s Theatre Model Collaboration*, 4–5.

²⁸ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 5.

²⁹ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 5.

³⁰ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 5.

³¹ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 5–6.

administrating a survey to over 300 individuals. They conducted in-depth interviews with eleven visitors and observed twenty-three families as they engaged in hands-on activities. The results were published in a report titled *Understanding FTNHS Visitors: Demographics, Behaviors, and Preferences*. The visitor study provided insight into the primary audience of the museum and the ways in which that audience engaged with the site. It also laid the groundwork for future surveys that would influence the interpretive programming and exhibits at Ford's Theatre and help the site to broaden its audience.³² In Phase Four of the FTMC project, which occurred during the 1996 summer session, 18 graduate students, two park rangers from Ford's Theatre, and education staff from the National Building Museum participated in a two-day, object-based learning workshop. The workshop served as a "model for developing a museum experience for visitors."³³ Participants were asked to apply an inquiry-based approach to describing, analyzing, and interpreting a Coca-Cola can and were then invited to apply the same process in a museum context.³⁴ The exercise provided museum staff and the MEP graduate students with new, creative strategies for engaging with visitors and emphasized the value of an interactive, interpretive experience. As a result of the workshop, Site Manager Chris Jones incorporated object-based learning and inquiry strategies into the park ranger training, which led to the overall improvement of the visitor experience at Ford's Theatre.³⁵

The FTMC project proved to be a successful collaboration between the NPS, a university, and a nonprofit organization. Through the project, the Friends of FOTH was able to achieve many of its organizational goals and "several recommendations set forth in the *Vail Agenda* materialized in programs for public diversity, integration of research and resource management, and training."³⁶ The project expanded Ford's Theatre's outreach programs; improved the NPS's interpretive efforts through training, workshops, and a visitor survey, and laid the groundwork for accessible exhibits for patrons who are blind or have vision loss in compliance with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Friends of FOTH also solidified their responsibilities in their continuing partnership with NPS, which included the development of potential programming, outreach, and fundraising, the promotion of research and resource management, and the expansion of its role in public and media relations. Furthermore, the GWU graduate students were able to work with experts in their field and apply classroom knowledge in the context of a museum setting. They also observed the daily operations of a historic site and experienced the impacts of time, budgetary, and staffing constraints on the administration of a public museum.

In the FTMC project's final report, *Ford's Theatre Model Collaboration: Updating Interpretive Practices and Staff Training*, authors Dr. Stapp and Dr. Hirsh outline several recommendations to continue the work begun over the course of the partnership. For Ford's Theatre, these included additional visitor studies, community engagement through outreach, an increase in the accessibility of the site and its programming, and the integration of the interactive interpretation strategies developed over the course of the project. Additional training and workshops for NPS staff and partnerships with other university museum programs were also recommended. Similarly, Stapp and Hirsh encouraged the Friends of FOTH to identify new partnerships with NPS sites, outside organizations, and academic institutions in order to promote research and resource management. They also recommended that the Friends extend public outreach and accessible programming at Ford's Theatre, expand the volunteer corps, and broaden the organization's role in media and public relations.³⁷ Although a successful collaboration, the FTMC project was not without its difficulties. The government furlough during the 1995–1996 academic year created problems for the Ford's Theatre staff, and coordinating schedules among the three collaborative partners proved challenging. The site manager at Ford's Theatre, Chris Jones, transferred halfway through the project and Friends of FOTH president Gary Crawford was often unavailable due to the demands of his full-time job. However, despite

³² Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 6.

³³ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 6.

³⁴ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 6–7.

³⁵ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 12.

³⁶ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, i.

³⁷ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 15–17.

these obstacles, the project succeeded in establishing a framework for future collaborations, and demonstrated the impact of these partnerships on community outreach, visitor engagement, and interpretive programming.³⁸

In 1998, the Friends of FOTH changed their name to the Ford's Theatre Historical Association (FTHA).³⁹ The organization quickly established a new MOA with the NPS and began planning future projects in collaboration with Ford's Theatre. In addition to soliciting memberships and establishing a donation box for the newly renamed nonprofit, the FTHA planned to develop an ASL monitor project for interpretive programming, a monograph series for the historic site, and new volunteer and fundraising programs.⁴⁰ The association also embarked on a second project with GWU's Museum Education program. At the conclusion of the FTMC project in 1996, the FTHA worked in collaboration with GWU to design a project to inventory and catalog Ford's Theatre's 5,000 historic photograph and two-dimensional artifact collection. Under the supervision of the FTHA, an intern from the GWU's MEP would digitize the collection and update it to current archival storage standards. The photographs and artifacts in the collection would then be available to the public on CD-ROM, expanding research opportunities without risking the further deterioration of fragile materials. In October 1999, president Crawford submitted a proposal to the Kerr Foundation for \$7,500 to fund the project, which included the costs of planning, design, and implementation of the project, as well as the purchase of necessary computer equipment.⁴¹

Improving Safety, Security, and Accessibility at Ford's Theatre

After decades of intensive use and visitation, Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House were in need of repairs and upgrades. The NPS staff developed an extensive list of projects to be completed during the renovations. In the historic theater, they decided to replace the chairs and the carpet and create a sound equipment station at the rear of the theater. Other proposed improvements included lighting and electrical upgrades, new curtains, repairs to the walls and ceilings, and refinishing the theater's doors and woodwork. Staff also planned to renovate the theater's bathrooms, which were a subject of continued accessibility complaints. The theater museum was slated for new carpeting and a fresh coat of paint. Plans were also underway to install a new lighting system in the Ford's Theatre museum as the old lighting had begun to impact the integrity of the artifacts.⁴² The Petersen House required repairs to the exterior and interior of the building. Proposed projects ranged from stripping and repainting the woodwork throughout the building to HVAC and electrical upgrades. Staff also planned to refinish the floors and replace the carpeting, repair the plaster walls, shore up the windows, and install intrusion alarms and a fire protection system.⁴³ Additionally, both Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House needed a new roof. The repairs and improvements to Ford's Theatre alone were estimated to cost \$646,009 and, ultimately, staff scaled back the renovations. The chairs in the theater were refurbished instead of replaced and the bathroom renovations were put on hold. However, some of the site's more urgent projects were completed, including the installation of new carpet in the theater and museum, the upgrading of the lighting system in the museum, and the installation of a new roof at the theater and the Petersen House.⁴⁴

³⁸ Stapp, Hirsch, and Connealy, 7–15.

³⁹ "People," *Lincoln Lore 1858* (Fall 1999): 12.

⁴⁰ Ford's Theatre Historical Association, "Ford's Theatre Historical Association Meeting," meeting minutes, November 24, 1998, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁴¹ Gary Crawford, letter from president, Ford's Theatre Historical Association, to Mr. Robert S. Kerr, Jr., The Kerr Foundation, Inc., October 30, 1999, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁴² Stephen Ziegenfuss. "Cost Estimate for Projects at Ford's Theatre," (Washington, DC, National Capital Parks-Central, National Park Service, 1996), FOTH On-Site Archives, 6–20.

⁴³ [National Park Service], "Ford's Theatre National Historic Sites Project List." (n.p.: 1995), FOTH On-Site Archives, 1–3.

⁴⁴ Ziegenfuss, "Cost Estimate for Projects," Appendices A–C.

The fire and security systems in Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House were one of the staff's primary concerns, as the systems were not subject to regular maintenance or improvements. In December 1990, a fire heavily damaged four buildings in the 1000 block of E Street, NW, in downtown Washington, DC, only three buildings south of the Petersen House.⁴⁵ The fire highlighted the need for effective fire safety and prevention systems at Ford's Theatre. In August 1993, Danny McDaniel, the director of Security, Safety, and Transportation Services for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, conducted an evaluation of the safety and security systems in both buildings. McDaniel's report, *Evaluation of Museum Collection Security and Fire Safety, Ford's Theater [sic] National Historic Site*, identified several deficiencies and provided recommendations to improve the existing systems and protocols. At the time of the investigation, the theater's fire protection system consisted of smoke detectors, manual pull stations, and a sprinkler system, which were monitored onsite by staff in the guard station and off-site by the Park Police. The theater also employed an asbestos fire curtain on the stage, a fire wall between the first and second floors, automatic smoke vents, and fire doors. However, McDaniel's investigation revealed that theater staff were unfamiliar with the operation of the building's fire protection systems and that the sprinklers, smoke detectors, and other components were not regularly maintained or tested. Fire doors were found propped open. The fire wall between the first and second floors was not intact. Wiring and cords for the production lighting snaked through smoke vents and doorways in the attic and across the rear of the stage where flammable materials were stored. The report indicated a high probability of fire at Ford's Theatre if these issues were not addressed. McDaniel determined that the Petersen House was also at risk. The building had a fire detection system but no sprinkler system, and the positioning of an exhaust fan on the exterior of the restaurant next door would allow a fire to spread quickly to the Petersen House from the neighboring building.⁴⁶

A review of the security system in both the theater and the Petersen House identified additional problems. At the time, the theater was equipped with a four-part intrusion system covering the perimeter of the building, the interior, the museum in the basement, and the individual exhibits. The system employed magnetic contacts and local alarms on exterior doors, interior motion detectors, intrusion wiring, glass break sensors, magnetic contact devices, and proximity alarms on the museum exhibits. Close circuit cameras monitored the exhibits in the basement, the theater's rear doors, and the box office. Panic devices were located in critical locations and the entire system was monitored by onsite and off-site security. In his report, McDaniel noted that the local alarms on the exterior doors were frequently disabled by theater staff and that none were functional at the time of the investigation. Further, security footage was not recorded and the cameras were sometimes left unmonitored. Security personnel who were unfamiliar with or unable to access the entire building were often assigned to the theater. Only one ranger was allocated to the Petersen House during the day and in his 1993 *Closeout Report*, Acting Museum Curator Timothy Good stated that he did not "believe that one ranger can adequately safeguard the first floor rooms."⁴⁷ The Petersen House also had an intrusion system that included a panic alarm on the first floor and pressure mats in the sitting room and death chamber to prevent unauthorized access. However, the pressure mat in the death chamber was not operational and the mat in the sitting room was turned off at the time of the evaluation.⁴⁸ There were also no alarm systems in the Room Where Lincoln Died and the back garden was not well lit, which had led to trespassing at night.⁴⁹

In response to the recommendations in McDaniel's report, as well as the results of a subsequent 1994 inspection, both the security and fire safety systems at Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House were upgraded. In a 1994 memorandum, superintendent of the National Capital Region Arnold Goldstein listed

⁴⁵ "Fire Burns Vacant Buildings in NW: [FINAL Edition]," *Washington Post*, December 8, 1990, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁴⁶ Danny L. McDaniel, "Evaluation of Museum Collection Security and Fire Safety: Ford's Theatre National Historic Site," (n.p. 1993), FOTH On-Site Archives, 1-6, 7.

⁴⁷ Good, "Closeout Report," memorandum to region curator, August 14, 1993, 4.

⁴⁸ McDaniel, "Evaluation of Museum Collection Security," 6-7.

⁴⁹ Good, "Closeout Report," memorandum to region curator, August 14, 1993, 4.

the current and future improvements to the safety and security systems. At Ford's Theatre, regular testing of the fire protection system was instituted. Individual components of the fire detection and suppression systems noted in McDaniel's report were tested or scheduled for future testing. The smoke vents on the stage were made operable and the stagehands and building engineer were instructed on how to use them in the event of a fire. The fire curtain on the stage was also replaced and all wires and cables running through the doorways and smoke dampeners in the attic were removed. The emergency plan was also revised to ensure that all artifacts in the museum would be removed in the case of a fire. Staff implemented a system to record perimeter checks completed by the onsite security and plans were made to create a regular inspection loop. Cameras were repaired and an assessment of intrusion alarm deficiencies was undertaken. The 1994 inspection resulted in the removal of paint cans from a hazardous area, the creation of clear egress pathways backstage, the completion of staff fire extinguisher training, and the creation of a scope of work to extend sprinkler coverage and connect the fire pump to an emergency power supply. At the Petersen House, a scope of work was undertaken for the installation of a fire protection system, and the administration was evaluating the use of fire shutters on the building's windows to prevent the spread of fire from an adjacent building.⁵⁰

However, despite these improvements, there were several safety and security issues that remained unaddressed. An article in *The Washington Post* published on May 28, 2000, declared that many of the fire hazards enumerated in McDaniel's 1993 report had yet to be resolved and that a recent inspection in April 2000 by the Washington, DC, fire department identified over fifty safety violations.⁵¹ Furthermore, in his close out report, most likely completed in 1996, Site Manager Chris Jones lists several unresolved problems with the fire and alarm systems in the Ford's Theatre museum and the Petersen House. He notes that three display case alarms were defective. Several of the exterior doors were not connected to the security system and the rear alley doors still used sliding bolts, which were less effective than security doors or deadbolts. The automatic closers on the smoke control doors were never fully installed and the Park Police watch clock system to monitor patrols was not implemented. In addition to remedying these problems, Jones also recommended the installation of Knox Boxes to allow the fire department to secure the buildings after the resolution of an emergency situation. Jones also expressed concern about the air quality in the theater and indicated that high carbon dioxide levels were found in the box office during a recent inspection. Although the fire potential at the Petersen House had decreased significantly, Jones noted that the tin ceiling in the ell should be removed to further improve fire safety.⁵²

At the turn of the millennium, Ford's Theatre began a period of renovation that spanned the better part of a decade. The renovations addressed the site's many deferred maintenance and improvement projects and lingering safety and accessibility concerns. The first phase of the renovations tackled the electrical and mechanical systems at Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House. Ford's Theatre is comprised of multiple buildings and, at the time, a variety of independent HVAC systems serviced each building. This system was inefficient, leading to increased costs, and most of the heating and cooling components were outdated and in need of replacement. The Petersen House lacked heat on the second and third floors, and the entire building lacked air conditioning. The building also lacked emergency lighting and code-compliant wiring. Much of the existing electrical work at Ford's Theatre was installed during the renovation in the 1960s, although the lighting in the museum was updated in the 1988 renovation. While improvements were made to the fire and safety systems in both buildings in the 1990s, as previously noted, several problems remained, specifically in regards to the sprinkler and fire suppression systems. Although plans were made, a fire

⁵⁰ Arnold Goldstein, "Status of Safety Related Deficiencies," memorandum from superintendent, National Capital Parks-Central, to regional director, National Capital Region, January 12, 1995, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁵¹ Seth Borenstein, "National Park Buildings Beset by Fire Hazards; Known Problems Go Unfixed, GAO Says," *Washington Post*, May 28, 2000, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁵² Good, "Closeout Report," memorandum to region curator, August 14, 1993, 3, 6.

protection system had not yet been installed in the House Where Lincoln Died, and the fire and intrusion alarms at the Petersen House were also not connected to the guard station at Ford's Theatre.⁵³

In 2000, under their Indefinite Quantities contract, the NPS issued a task order to the H.F. Lenz Company and its consultants to design the rehabilitation of the mechanical and electrical systems at Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House to address these problems. In the theater, the project included the replacement of deteriorated ductwork, ductwork cleaning to improve air quality, and the installation of a digital climate control system, which allowed staff to monitor and adjust the temperature in various parts of the theater from a central location. After careful consideration, it was decided that air conditioning would not be installed at the Petersen House, although the problems with the existing heating system would be addressed. All of the theater's life safety systems were connected to the emergency generator and new exit signs, electrical panels, and switchgear were installed. The Petersen House also received new exit signage and emergency lighting, and new wiring was installed to bring the building up to code. The H.F. Lenz Company also proposed to replace the stage light and sound system and the public address system in the theater and to upgrade the lighting scheme in the museum. The project also included the installation of new fire and intrusion alarms, which connected the two buildings, and minor repairs and improvements to the theater's sprinklers. A few architectural changes were also included in the project's parameters. A production booth was constructed on the third floor of the theater. The windows at the Petersen House were rehabilitated to improve weather resistance, and the rear porch was enclosed. Although not in the scope of the 2000 project, the H.F. Lenz Company also prepared plans for a fire protection system for the Petersen House.⁵⁴ The total cost of the renovations was estimated at \$1,321,556.⁵⁵ The NPS contracted with Grunley-Walsh Joint Venture, LLC to complete the renovation between June and November 2002.⁵⁶

The second phase of renovations at Ford's Theatre prioritized further enhancing security and improving the accessibility of the historic site for people with disabilities. In the 1980s and 1990s, several upgrades increased the accessibility of the site, including the installation of a stair lift and the construction of an interim accessible bathroom on the first floor of the building next to the theater.⁵⁷ Despite these improvements, accessibility issues remained for the staff, actors, and visitors. The three different buildings that comprised the site all had different flooring levels. Although they were connected on the interior, moving from one building to another required a person to navigate a series of stairs. The theater still had no elevator, which restricted visitors in wheelchairs and with limited mobility to certain parts of the park.⁵⁸ The bathroom renovation planned in the 1990s was never completed, leaving the theater without a permanent accessible bathroom.

In 2003, Rae Emerson became the site manager at Ford's Theatre. At the time, the theater was in the midst of ongoing renovations and was closed to the public. Staff were crammed into the third floor of the Star Saloon and there was only one working computer in the entire park. Emerson's primary goal in her role as site manager was increasing accessibility at Ford's Theatre, and a month into her tenure a congressional committee approached her about the continued accessibility complaints at the site.⁵⁹ All NPS

⁵³ H.F. Lenz Company et al., *Schematic Design for National Park Service: Ford's Theatre and Petersen House* (Johnstown: H.F. Lenz Company, 2000), FOTH On-Site Archives, 2.1–2.10.

⁵⁴ H.F. Lenz Company et al., *Schematic Design for National Park Service*, 3.1–3.7.

⁵⁵ H.F. Lenz Company, *Construction Cost Estimate* (Johnstown: H.F. Lenz Company, 2000), FOTH On-Site Archives, 5.

⁵⁶ "Federal Contracts," *Washington Post*, May 13, 2002, ProQuest: The Washington Post; "Metro: in Brief," *Washington Post*, February 3, 2002, ProQuest: The Washington Post.

⁵⁷ Gordon to Robinson, September 18, 1985; Richard G. Austin, letter from administrator, General Services Administration to The Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr., secretary of the interior, August 12, 1992, FOTH On-Site Archives; United States Department of the Interior, letter to Ms. Bernice Ulmer. October 3, 1989, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁵⁸ Rae Emerson, telephone interview by Laura Purvis, September 17, 2019.

⁵⁹ Emerson, interview.

sites were required to comply with ADA accessibility regulations. This included making programs and services accessible to patrons with disabilities and the elimination of physical and architectural barriers that limited access to the site. Emerson quickly initiated a project to establish universal accessibility at the historic theater and further improve the efficiency of the building's security systems. The project was broken into two phases. The first phase created ADA-compliant bathrooms on the first floor of the Star Saloon building to the rear of the existing FTS box office. The second phase relocated the fire alarm panel, security camera monitoring system, the Building Automation System (BAS) workstation, and all other building systems monitoring equipment from the guard's station on the first floor of the 517 Building to the existing ranger station on the first floor of the theater.⁶⁰ In 2004, the NPS contracted with Coakley and Williams Construction, Inc. to design and execute the renovation. The six-week project, executed in January and February 2005, was funded by \$300,000 allocated from FTS's capital campaign account.⁶¹ This was the first of several accessibility projects overseen by Emerson at Ford's Theatre, most of which were completed during the extensive renovations completed for the Civil War sesquicentennial between 2007 and 2009.

Organizational Changes: Restructuring the NPS

In the mid-1990s, the NPS underwent a complete reorganization of its managerial structure as a result of national initiatives intended to streamline the federal government. In 1993, the Clinton-Gore administration developed the National Performance Review (NPR) to identify inefficiencies in government agencies and reduce operational costs. The review, which was spearheaded by Vice President Al Gore, examined the government's twenty-four largest agencies, including the Department of the Interior, and evaluated government-wide systems, fiscal policies, and internal staff dynamics and communication. The NPR's first report, published in September 1993, included 384 recommendations for improving the efficiency of the federal government. If enacted, the recommendations stood to reduce the federal workforce by twelve percent and cut government spending by \$108 billion over the next five years. Several major themes emerged from the report, including decentralization, downsizing, the removal of bureaucratic red tape, and the improvement of customer service.⁶² It also included targeted recommendations for specific federal departments. In addition to other recommendations, the report proposed that the Department of the Interior institute new resource and environmental regulations and management systems; improve revenue collection and identify appropriate sources of additional income to enhance park infrastructure; consolidate administrative and programmatic functions to increase efficiency and reduce costs; and streamline management support systems, including telecommunications and procurement, for example, in order to create a positive management culture.⁶³

In response to the NPR report, the NPS released its own study in 1994 entitled *Restructuring Plan of the National Park Service*. The restructuring plan replaced the existing regional organization of the NPS with a new field director-based system. The country's parks and historic sites were divided into sixteen ecologically, culturally, and geographically based clusters consisting of ten to thirty-five park units each.

⁶⁰ "Ford's Theatre National Historic Site: Universal Accessibility at Ford's Theatre," November 17, 2004, FOTH On-Site Archives; Vikki Keys, draft of letter from superintendent, National Park Service, to Mr. Paul R. Tetreault, producing director, Ford's Theatre Society, [2004], FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁶¹ "AIA DOCUMENT A-111: Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Contractor" (n.p.: 2004), FOTH On-Site Archives; Keys to Tetreault, 2004, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

⁶² National Performance Review, "A Brief History of the National Performance Review," February 1997, <https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/papers/bkgrd/brief.html>; Albert Gore, *From Red Tape to Results: Creating A Government that Works Better and Costs Less* (Washington, DC: National Performance Review, 1993), Introduction, <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/stis1993/npr93a/npr93a.txt>.

⁶³ Gore, *From Red Tape to Results*, Appendix A.

The clusters were administered by one of seven field directors, who oversaw an average of fifty park units.⁶⁴ In the spirit of decentralization and downsizing, the NPS headquarters in Washington and existing regional offices were “significantly flattened organizationally” and experienced a reduction in staffing.⁶⁵ Although the headquarters and regional offices retained policy, leadership, and communications responsibilities, programmatic functions were delegated to the individual park units and other NPS offices. Field directors still reported to the deputy director of the NPS, but were given additional authority in decision-making processes, and many of the reporting and review requirements were eliminated. In some instances, however, centralization remained necessary.⁶⁶ Additional program centers were proposed to administer “house services,” including grants, historic preservation programs, and tax credit certifications, and to provide program support to clusters in the form of technical and professional expertise.⁶⁷ Sixteen system support offices were organized to consolidate administrative services and provide administrative and professional support for field units and partnership programs.⁶⁸ In independent park units, the new superintendent position replaced the site manager role. Superintendents reported to one of the seven field directors and oversaw all elements of park management. However, it appears that the site manager position remained in place at individual park units grouped underneath a single administrative umbrella; such was the case at Ford’s Theatre, which was administered by the National Capital Region. Although the Region contained several independent parks with individual superintendents, most sites located in the nation’s capital were divided into two divisions, central and east, each with its own superintendent.⁶⁹ At Ford’s Theatre, located in the central division along with several other park units, the site manager continued to oversee day-to-day operations and remained under the supervision of the division superintendent.⁷⁰ Since the restructure primarily focused on downsizing the Washington and regional offices and reducing administrative staff, the managerial structure at the theater remained relatively unchanged as a result of the NPS reorganization.

Ford’s Theatre Becomes an Independent Site

In 2008, Ford’s Theatre separated from the National Capital Parks-Central division, which had become National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA) in the early 2000s. Since it was incorporated into the division in the 1960s, the theater had developed into a well-known historic site and popular tourist destination. The site’s small size, successful partnership with FTS, and the broad support provided by its hundreds of thousands of yearly visitors placed Ford’s Theatre in a prime position to operate as an independent park unit. Funding was also available to facilitate the move and hire the necessary staff. In the summer of 2008, Kym Elder was hired as the theater’s first superintendent, and Rae Emerson, formerly the site manager at Ford’s Theatre, was appointed deputy superintendent.⁷¹ The separation from NAMA not only increased the site’s autonomy but also resulted in additional funding for building improvements and interpretive programming. Previously, the theater contended with the other sites in NAMA, which were larger and more recognized, for a portion of the NPS funds allocated to NAMA.⁷² Once out from underneath the NAMA umbrella, the staff at Ford’s Theatre were able to “compete independently for project money on a national level,” providing them with the necessary funds to complete major projects, including those which

⁶⁴ United States Department of the Interior, *Restructuring Plan for the National Park Service* (Washington, DC: 1994), iii–iv.

⁶⁵ United States Department of the Interior, *Restructuring Plan*, iii.

⁶⁶ United States Department of the Interior, *Restructuring Plan*, iv.

⁶⁷ United States Department of the Interior, *Restructuring Plan*.

⁶⁸ United States Department of the Interior, *Restructuring Plan*, 22–23.

⁶⁹ The C & O Canal National Historical Park (CHOH) and Rock Creek Park (ROCR), also within the District of Columbia, remained separate administrative units. See the 1995 organizational chart in Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Administrative History, 1952-2005*, 40.

⁷⁰ Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Administrative History, 1952-2005*, 23–24, 41.

⁷¹ Emerson, interview; Kym Elder, telephone interview by Laura Purvis, June 19, 2019.

⁷² Emerson, interview.

increased the accessibility of the site.⁷³ Although this period of independence, which ended in 2012, was short-lived, it marked a major change in the administration of the historic theater.

Interpretation and Use

In 1988, Ford's Theatre museum underwent an extensive renovation. The museum had opened in 1968, just five years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In an effort to respond to the current social climate, the NPS designed the museum to focus on Lincoln's life and presidency rather than the tragic circumstances of his death. For several decades, artifacts associated with the assassination were exhibited and interpreted at the Petersen House across the street. However, in response to visitor interest and public comments, the NPS began to reconsider their curatorial approach in the late 1980s.⁷⁴ The renovations, which lasted two years, shifted the emphasis of the museum to include "the story of the assassination, the events that led up to it, and the events which came after."⁷⁵ Items associated with Lincoln's death, including Lincoln's coat and Booth's pistol, were displayed prominently in the museum for the first time (Figure 6.2). New exhibits also addressed Lincoln's funeral and the prosecution of Booth and his co-conspirators. The NPS contracted with G & F Associates to design the new exhibit area, which featured clear glass cases and open pathways between exhibits to facilitate movement throughout the museum.⁷⁶ When the museum reopened in 1990, it garnered both public attention and critical praise, with one newspaper article proclaiming "no other single exhibition in town tells so much about 19th-century America in a comparable area."⁷⁷

A few years after the completion of the 1988 renovations, the curation staff at Ford's Theatre museum began a reevaluation of the museum's collections and artifacts. The 1996 assessment of the collections determined that over half of the artifacts in the museum's possession were of "questionable relevance to the purpose and usefulness of the collection."⁷⁸ Storing, maintaining, and displaying objects of questionable significance wasted staff resources and storage and exhibit space which would otherwise be allocated to stabilizing and interpreting the relevant artifacts in the museum collection. In order to address these issues, staff began a reevaluation of the museum's Scope of Collections Statement, which guides the acquisition and management of museum artifacts. The new statement not only determined which objects were appropriate for the collection and the purpose of the museum, but also provided justification for the deaccessioning of inappropriate artifacts. Although this project reduced the overall size of the collection, it also improved the quality and integrity of the museum's artifacts and allowed staff to devote their time and efforts to the preservation and interpretation of those objects most associated with Lincoln's life, presidency, and assassination.⁷⁹ One such object was Booth's diary, which was reexamined using modern technology in 1998. The diary's missing pages had long been a topic of interest, and in 1998, the diary was subjected to an indentation analysis to determine if any indented writing impressions could be discerned on the remaining pages. The analysis also investigated the number of removed pages and the method of removal, as well as the possibility of concealed writings in the diary. The examination was conducted by the Questionable Document Branch of the Forensic Services Division of the United States Secret Service.

⁷³ Emerson, interview.

⁷⁴ Sarah Booth Conroy, "The Ghosts of Mr. Lincoln: Ford's Revamped Museum Focuses on Assassination," *Washington Post*, June 17, 1990, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁵ Conroy, "The Ghosts of Mr. Lincoln," *Washington Post*.

⁷⁶ Conroy, "The Ghosts of Mr. Lincoln," *Washington Post*; "Contracts," *Washington Post*, October 2, 1989, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Hank Burchard, "Ford's Theatre Reopens Museum," *Washington Post*, June 15, 1990, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁷ Burchard, "Ford's Theatre Museum Reopens," *Washington Post*.

⁷⁸ [National Park Service], "Project Statement: Review of Lincoln Collection," [1996], FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁷⁹ [National Park Service], "Project Statement: Review of Lincoln Collection."



Figure 6.2. Exhibits in the Ford's Theatre museum after the completion of the 1988 renovation (Carol M. Highsmith, exhibit showing the coat Abraham Lincoln wore the night he was assassinated, [1980–2006], digital image of a film transparency, Highsmith Archive, Prints and Photographs Division. Courtesy of LOC).

Through the use of incident lighting sources and Electro-Static Detection Apparatus, the analysis identified indented writing impressions on the pages dated “Tuesday, July 5, 1864” and “Monday, July 11, 1864,” both of which were attributed to the original writing. No other significant examples were found on the remaining pages of the diary. The examination also determined that a total of eighty-six pages had been removed. Sixty-two pages were cut out with an instrument, while twenty-four pages had been torn from the diary. No evidence of tool marks was identified, and the analysis did not reveal any hidden or concealed writings.⁸⁰

In 2004, a portion of the public alleyway along the north side of Ford's Theatre was closed to accommodate a ten-story multi-use building. As a result of the project, ownership of part of the alley reverted to the owners of the neighboring lot targeted for construction, Jemal's Ford, LLC, Jemal's Lane Bryant, LLC, and 930 Atlantic, LLC, and the section adjacent to Ford's Theatre reverted to the NPS. Since the project maintained access to the public alley and preserved the portion of the alley associated with Booth's escape after the Lincoln assassination, the proposal received approval from the NPS, District of Columbia Historic Preservation Board, and the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission. The closure allowed 942 square feet to be incorporated into the new building while preserving the historic integrity of the alley associated with Ford's Theatre.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Richard A. Dusak, “John Wilkes Booth's Diary: Indentation Analysis,” (Washington, DC: United States Secret Service, Office of Investigations, 1998), FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁸¹ Joseph A. Cook, letter to Mr. Roland F. Driest, Jr., L.S., D.C. surveyor, Office of the Surveyor, February 24, 2003, FOTH, Ford's Theatre, Washington, DC; Norman M. Glasgow, Jr., letter from law offices of Holland & Knight, LLP, to Sally Blumenthal, National Park Service, January 31, 2003, FOTH On-Site Archives; Patricia E.

In addition to its significance in relation to Lincoln's assassination, the alley also held potential archeological importance. Some research indicates that free Blacks lived in the back alley at the time of Lincoln's attendance at the theater. Additional research and archeological investigations in the alleyway may yield new information about the surrounding community during the period and the lives of Black people in Washington, DC, after the Civil War.⁸²

A New Renovation Project

In the summer of 2007, Ford's Theatre closed to begin an extensive eighteen-month renovation project, although the Petersen House remained open to tourists. Most of the artifacts were moved into off-site storage, and with the exception of *A Christmas Carol*, a staple of the holiday season, FTS cleared their production schedule. However, due to a lack of acceptable construction bids, the theater reopened, postponing the renovation until suitable contractors were hired in August.⁸³ Ford's Theatre closed for the second time on August 28, 2007, and work began soon after. The renovation project was divided between FTS and the NPS, with FTS responsible for the improvements to the basement museum and the NPS in charge of renovating the theater to ADA and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Despite this division of labor, the two parties continued to collaborate throughout the process, consulting with each other on major decisions that would impact the renovations and the resulting visitor experience.⁸⁴

Gallagher, "NCPC File No. 6326: Proposed Closing of a Portion of a Public Alley in Square 377, Delegated Action of the Executive Director," January 30, 2003, FOTH On-Site Archives.

⁸² Emerson, interview.

⁸³ Michael E. Ruane, "Ford's Theatre to Close for Renovations," *Washington Post*, June 1, 2007, ProQuest: The Washington Post; Michael E Ruane, "Repairs Delayed, Ford's Theatre Will Reopen: Park Service Receives Inadequate Bids for 18-Month Renovation Project," *Washington Post*, June 30, 2007, ProQuest: The Washington Post; "Regional Briefing," *Washington Post*, Aug 29, 2007, ProQuest: The Washington Post.

⁸⁴ Elder, interview.

CHAPTER 7: An Independent Unit (2008–2012)

From 2008 to 2012, Ford’s Theatre operated as an independent park unit. Although spanning only four years, this period was one of great activity and administrative change. Serving as the first Black, female superintendent, Kym Elder, along with Deputy Superintendent Rae Emerson and the production director for FTS, Paul Tetreault, oversaw the extensive \$25 million renovation of the historic site (Figure 7.1). Funded by the NPS, the Washington, DC, government, and private donations, the project was completed in conjunction with FTS in preparation for the Ford’s Theatre sesquicentennial. In addition to navigating a new organizational structure and the intricacies of partnering with FTS on a major project, the staff at Ford’s Theatre were in the midst of planning the grand reopening of the site as well as commemorative sesquicentennial events and programming. The doors of the historic theater swung open in February 2009, and over the next several weeks, thousands of visitors poured in to see the improvements to the theater and the new exhibits in the basement museum. The unprecedented public attention and visitation to the site, fueled by the renovations, the highly publicized reopening, and the 150th anniversary of the Civil War precipitated further improvements to interpretive programming and the management and operation of the site during this period of independence.

Renovation of Ford’s Theatre (2007–2009)

When Superintendent Elder arrived at Ford’s Theatre in the fall of 2008, the theater was closed to the public and the renovation project was underway.¹ The renovations, completed between 2007 and 2009, represented the first phase of a larger development plan intended to create a “Lincoln campus” in downtown Washington, DC. Funding for the project came from multiple sources, including the NPS, private and corporate donations, and the city of Washington, DC. The city allocated \$10 million of its \$13.5 million nonprofit budget for 2008 for a one-time grant to the Ford’s Theatre project, causing controversy among local nonprofit organizations who felt as though the money could have been put to better use.² The first stage of the project focused on increasing the accessibility of the historic theater, improving the HVAC systems, and upgrading the lighting and sound systems. Plans also included a new lobby and gift shop, a café, a refurbished museum, and the replacement of the theater’s chairs, which were “generally considered the most uncomfortable in town.”³ The straight-back, armless chairs, added in 1968 to replicate the original seating in the historic theater, were the source of numerous complaints over the years. Not only were they uncomfortable, but many had obstructed views of the stage due to their height and arrangement. The 658 new, theater-style seats installed during the renovations featured armrests and cushions upholstered in reproduction nineteenth-century fabric (Figure 7.2). Although the theater’s new seating arrangement decreased the overall capacity from 682 to 658 patrons, it eliminated the majority of the issues with obstructed views, and provided visitors with clearer sightlines to the stage. Productions also benefited from new lighting and sound technology backstage, new overhead rigging and support structures, expanded dressing rooms and cast bathrooms, and a new, quieter HVAC system, which removed background noise and improved the acoustics of the historic theater.⁴

¹ Elder, interview.

² Jacqueline Trescott, “Ford’s Upgrade Puts Lincoln at Center Stage: Theater Expansion to Add Buildings, Historical Focus,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 2007, ProQuest: The Washington Post; Nikita Stewart, “D.C. Hearing on Budget Packs Drama and Emotion,” *Washington Post*, April 26, 2008, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

³ Trescott, “Ford’s Upgrade,” *Washington Post*.

⁴ Michael E. Ruane, “The History Will Linger at Remade Ford’s Theatre,” *Washington Post*, August 15, 2008, ProQuest Recent Newspapers; Jane Horwitz, “A Chance to Get Back to Normal,” *Washington Post*, August 20, 2008, ProQuest Recent Newspapers; Michael O’Sullivan, “Creating a Living Theater,” *Washington Post*, February 6, 2009, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.



Figure 7.1. Former superintendent of Ford's Theatre Kym Elder (right) and her mother, Tina Short (left), who was one of the first Black women to serve as a park ranger in the National Capital Region (in "Tina Short: Listening to the Community." Courtesy of the NPS).



Figure 7.2. Interior of the theater after the completion of renovations ([Interior of Ford's Theatre, FOTH], [ca. 2009], FOTH Files. Courtesy of the NPS).

For many years, Ford's Theatre lacked modern conveniences due to spatial constraints and the need to preserve the building's historic character. However, in 2007, FTS leased 5,000 square feet on the first floor of the Atlantic Building north of the historic theater.⁵ The integration of the neighboring building provided the NPS and FTS with the necessary space to expand existing facilities and provide new services to patrons. With this additional space, the NPS was finally able to install elevators, an improvement first proposed in the 1990s, to provide visitors with disabilities access to every level of the building. The renovation also expanded the first floor and balcony restrooms to comply with ADA standards, bringing to fruition the long-held goal of creating accessible facilities in the historic theater. The extension into the Atlantic Building next door also resulted in the creation of a new main entrance and lobby, with the original entrance to the theater becoming an exit. A pass-through led from the new lobby to the historic theater, and the creation of a designated exit allowed for a better flow of movement throughout the first floor of the building. The new lobby contained a larger box office, a concessions café selling beverages and snacks, and a second gift shop.⁶ The evolution of Ford's Theatre's two gift shops is another example of the collaborative nature of the renovation project. The basement museum at Ford's Theatre included a small gift shop primarily containing books and other educational materials about Lincoln. When a new gift store was proposed for the first floor lobby, Superintendent Elder insisted on maintaining the basement store as well. Rather than competing against one another, it was agreed that the FTS gift shop on the first floor would sell commemorative items and souvenirs, while the NPS shop in the museum, which was operated through a cooperative agreement with Eastern National, would continue to offer books about Lincoln's life and presidency.⁷

In addition to their contributions to the ground floor renovations, FTS also designed the board room on the upper level of the theater, consulted on changes to the Family Circle, and was responsible for remodeling the Ford's Theatre museum. Although a major redesign was completed in 1990, the museum was in need of further updates in order to meet the expectations of a contemporary audience and more effectively communicate the Lincoln story to visitors. In 2008, FTS contracted with Split Rock Studios to develop new text, graphics, and design for the exhibits in the basement museum (Figure 7.3). The new concept focused on layered interpretation, visitor comprehension, and a chronological progression through the museum. Visitors entering from the main lobby stairwell passed through a reproduction railcar similar to the one in which Lincoln secretly traveled en route to Washington, DC, for his inauguration. The interpretive panels in the railcar traced Lincoln's journey from his legal career to his presidency. In the museum, exhibits and interpretive panels educated visitors about Lincoln's presidency, life in Washington, DC, during the 1860s, the Civil War, and the Booth conspiracy. From the museum, visitors progressed into the theater through a hallway containing a timeline of events on the night of Lincoln's assassination. The new layout and exhibits increased visitor engagement and comprehension, and brought the museum up to contemporary visitor standards through dynamic spatial design, three-dimensional and interactive interpretive materials and exhibits, and multimedia presentations.⁸

⁵ Trescott, "Ford's Upgrade," *Washington Post*.

⁶ Ruane, "The History Will Linger," *Washington Post*; Horwitz, "A Chance to Get Back," *Washington Post*; O'Sullivan, "Creating a Living Theater," *Washington Post*.

⁷ Elder, interview.

⁸ Split Rock Studios, *Ford's Theatre—Basement Lincoln Exhibits Draft Text, Graphics, and Artifacts* (Arden Hills: Split Rock Studios, 2008), 2–120; Anderson, *Ford's Theatre*, 118.



Figure 7.3. The renovated Ford's Theatre museum combined multimedia displays with interpretive panels and artifact exhibits ([Exhibits in the renovated Ford's Theatre museum, FOTH], December 7, 2014, FOTH Files. Courtesy of the NPS).

Although Ford's Theatre was closed during the renovation, staff continued to offer public programming, engage in research, and prepare for the grand reopening and the theater's sesquicentennial. In addition to reviewing construction documents and drawings, meeting with contractors, and coordinating with FTS, Superintendent Elder engaged the theater's limited staff in a variety of research projects in order to ensure that "we had new, fresh programming available when we opened back up to the public."⁹ Their work also informed the development of the new exhibits and interpretive panels in the renovated basement museum and, to a lesser extent, educational programming at the historic theater.¹⁰ Despite the cancellation of the majority of the 2007–2008 season, FTS continued to sponsor public programming in conjunction with other theaters and venues in the DC area. The annual production of *A Christmas Carol*, a staple of the holiday season since 1979, was presented at the Lansburgh Theatre in December of 2007 and 2008. In October 2007 and the spring of 2008, Production Director Tetreault organized a series of four readings titled *Portraits of Lincoln* at the National Portrait Gallery. Combining academic research and historical reenactment, each reading featured an actor paired with an author or scholar and focused on a different aspect of Lincoln's life, presidency, or assassination. FTS also held a benefit performance of *A Cabaret Evening with Scott Bakula and Friends* at the Shakespeare Theatre's Harman Center for the Arts in January 2008. However, perhaps Tetreault's most important project was the commissioning of *The Heavens Are Hung in Black*, a dramatic production focusing on the five months between the death of Lincoln's son Willie and the Emancipation Proclamation set to premiere alongside Ford's Theatre's grand reopening.¹¹

⁹ Elder, interview.

¹⁰ Elder, interview.

¹¹ Jane Horwitz, "Still Counting on 'Christmas': Ford's Will Move Dickens Tale to Lansburgh During Renovations," *Washington Post*, August 15, 2007, ProQuest: The Washington Post; "Ford's Theatre Grand Reopening Season," *Washington Post*, November 5, 2008, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

Working in conjunction with FTS, the staff at Ford's Theatre also instituted a timed ticketing system to improve visitor management at the site. Previously, the site had an open door policy. Rangers would fill the theater to capacity, upwards of 650 people, and upon the conclusion of the interpretive programming, visitors were free to explore upstairs, or, when it was open, to move downstairs to the museum. According to former Deputy Superintendent Emerson, "it was chaos . . . and there were many more people than the building could actually hold."¹² Outside, the line of visitors waiting to go inside the building snaked around the block, inhibiting pedestrian access and leading to noise complaints from neighboring tenants. In some instances, the line extended as far as the FBI building, and tourists would set off the FBI's security alarms while playing with the plants outside the office.¹³ The timed ticketing system, which required visitors to sign up in advance for tours at designated times, allowed staff to limit the size of tour groups and create a more structured flow of movement through the site. Visitors could choose from tours of varying lengths, including a longer tour that included the theater and the museum and a shorter tour which only included access to the theater. Afterwards, tourists were free to move across the street to the Petersen House. Tickets could be acquired for free at the Ford's Theatre box office or purchased online for a \$1.25 convenience fee.¹⁴ FTS managed the timed ticketing infrastructure and expanded the Ford's Theatre website to include online purchases. When Ford's Theatre reopened to the public in February 2009, the timed ticketing system debuted with great success. Although visitors continued to line up outside the theater, the timed tours reduced the length of the line and allowed the rangers to move tour groups through the site more efficiently. The new system also allowed the NPS to schedule tours around and during FTS productions, and the convenience fee for online ticket reservations provided a new source of revenue. The system was not without its faults, though. Although more efficient, the timed system reduced personal engagement, and the Petersen House, which was not regulated by timed ticketing, quickly became a bottleneck for visitors as they exited the theater. Overall, however, the timed ticketing system was a vast improvement over the previous strategy and represented an important development in the administration of the site.¹⁵

The renovations at Ford's Theatre were completed in early 2009, and the site reopened to the public on February 11, 2009, the eve of Lincoln's 200th birthday. The occasion was marked by a star-studded gala attended by theater patrons, celebrities, politicians, and President and First Lady Barack and Michelle Obama. The theater had a long history of presidential visits. Presidents including Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton attended the theater's galas, fundraisers, and other events. However, President Obama's association with Lincoln and his values during the presidential campaign and the timing of the reopening, with the Ford's Theatre sesquicentennial and the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth on the horizon, made the Obamas' attendance all the more significant. Racism and an increasingly antagonistic political climate made violent threats an unfortunate reality for the United States' first Black president. As such, security measures for the 2009 gala were particularly strict.¹⁶ As a result of this careful planning, opening night at Ford's Theatre progressed smoothly. The evening included a ninety-minute production, hosted by actor Richard Thomas, featuring musical performances and readings of Lincoln's most notable speeches. The cast included opera singer Jessye Norman and actors Kelsey Grammer, Ben Vereen, James Earl Jones, Jeffrey Wright, and Audra McDonald. Violinist Joshua Bell played "My Lord, What a Morning" on a violin used by an orchestra member on the night of Lincoln's assassination. George Lucas, an award-winning film director, and Sidney Poitier, the first Black actor to win the Oscar for Best Actor, were awarded the Lincoln Medal.¹⁷ The medal is presented by FTS to those "who, through their body of work, accomplishments, or personal

¹² Emerson, interview.

¹³ Emerson, interview.

¹⁴ Emerson, interview; "Ford's Theatre Weighs New Ticketing," *Washington Post*, October 28, 2008, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

¹⁵ Emerson, interview.

¹⁶ Elder, interview; Anderson, *Ford's Theatre*, 106–109.

¹⁷ Peter Marks, "Ford's Gala Does Justice to 16's Legacy," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2009, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

attributes, exemplify the lasting legacy and mettle of character embodied by Abraham Lincoln.”¹⁸ The gala closed with a speech from President Obama, who remarked upon Lincoln’s legacy and Ford’s Theatre’s role in preserving his history and values. David Selby, who played Lincoln in the FTS production of *The Heavens Are Hung in Black*, which premiered alongside the reopening, presented the president and first lady with an illuminated copy of the Gettysburg Address.¹⁹

Organizational Changes and the Partnership with FTS

The partnership between the NPS and FTS remained central to the management of Ford’s Theatre during the independent period. FTS continued to provide funding support for site programming, oversee dramatic productions, and assist with building management and operation. FTS also collaborated with the NPS on public programming, the theater renovations, and later, the development of the Ford’s Theatre Center for Education and Leadership. However, the alterations to the organizational structure and the introduction of a site superintendent presented new challenges. Historically, FTS had a more significant role in the interpretation, planning, and administration of the site than other partners in the NPS system. Their management of the theater’s dramatic productions, social and political connections, and ability to access resources and funding outside the federal structure empowered the Society to take on a more active role in the operation and administration of the site. Furthermore, Ford’s Theatre functioned as a historic park for over forty years without an on-site administrator while under the umbrella of the National Mall and the purview of the National Capital Region. Although the site manager oversaw day-to-day operations and worked with the partner on various projects and programs, the position lacked the authority and decision-making power given to superintendents under the new NPS structure. As discussed in Chapter 5, the first director of FTS, Frankie Hewitt, communicated directly with the director of the National Capital Region and other senior members of the NPS. This continued after Tetreault took over the position in 2004.²⁰

The reorganization of the NPS in the 1990s shifted executive responsibilities and site authority from upper management to park superintendents. The new structure did not impact the administration of Ford’s Theatre until it became an independent park unit in 2008. The Society was accustomed to exercising a certain level of autonomy and authority at Ford’s Theatre, and even after Superintendent Elder arrived at the site, FTS experienced a transition period in accommodating the new administrative structure. Communication regarding certain issues still occurred directly between FTS and the secretary of the interior, leaving Elder out of the loop.²¹

As the first superintendent of FOTH, Elder encountered many challenges but ultimately formed a productive working relationship with Director Tetreault. They successfully collaborated on the renovations to Ford’s Theatre and FTS allowed Elder’s staff to attend dress rehearsals, private FTS performances, and donor receptions.²² The new timed ticketing system helped the NPS and FTS coordinate programming schedules, which allowed the NPS to hold tours at the historic theater during rehearsals and performances for FTS productions. Elder and her staff also worked with FTS to create a series of short, one-act plays known as “History on Stage.” With a run-time of approximately thirty minutes, the plays gave “visitors the experience of the theater without having a whole theater production.” The production of *One Destiny*, which centers on whether or not John Wilkes Booth could have been stopped, remains a consistent part of the

¹⁸ “The Lincoln Medal,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed June 15, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/about/the-lincoln-medal/>.

¹⁹ Marks, “Ford’s Gala Does Justice,” *Washington Post*.

²⁰ Elder, interview.

²¹ One such issue was the presidential portrait that is customarily placed in a prominent position in the lobby of all government buildings. In 2009, the portrait of then-President Obama was removed from Ford’s Theatre to help ensure FTS’s politically neutral image as a nonprofit. Elder, interview.

²² Elder, interview.

interpretive programming at the park.²³ One of the other “History on Stage” plays, *The Road to Appomattox*, was later incorporated into the programming at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park.²⁴

The Ford’s Theatre Center for Education and Leadership

The development of the Ford’s Theatre Center for Education and Leadership was one of the highlights of the partnership between the NPS and FTS during the independent period. As previously noted, the renovations to Ford’s Theatre represented the first phase of a project intended to establish a “Lincoln Campus” in downtown Washington, DC.²⁵ The second phase focused on the creation of a new museum and exhibit space across the street from the historic theatre. Although initially hesitant to undertake such an ambitious project, Director Tetreault eventually saw the center as an opportunity for FTS to improve the visitor experience, expand educational programming, and redefine Ford’s Theatre by expanding the focus beyond a singular event to include Lincoln’s life and presidency. The Center for Education and Leadership, located at 514 Tenth Street, NW, occupies a ten-story office building adjacent to the Petersen House. FTS purchased the building, which already housed FTS offices, for \$9 million in 2007. The renovation of the 1923 office building began in July 2010.²⁶ One of the most controversial aspects in the project was the creation of a doorway between the Petersen House and the new center. To facilitate visitor traffic between the two buildings and to provide an accessible route, FTS proposed to cut a doorway, allowing a connection between the Petersen House and the office building next door via a non-historic porch.²⁷ Superintendent Elder was not in favor since it “jeopardized the historic fabric and integrity” of the historic structure.²⁸ Gary Scott, the regional historian for the National Capital Region, was asked to consult on the proposed doorway and ultimately did not favor the creation of an entryway because of the loss of historic fabric. However, the doorway proposal underwent a Section 106 review process with a finding of no adverse effect.²⁹ The new doorway is located on the rear porch of the Petersen House, which previously served as the public tour exit, and leads to an elevator vestibule in the Center for Education and Leadership. FTS was responsible for cutting the new doorway, but the NPS consulted with the Society about the entryway’s final appearance and the new circulation pattern between the two buildings. To make the passageway accessible, the NPS reconstructed the Petersen House’s non-historic rear porch. The floors were leveled to match the height of the elevator vestibule and the room where Lincoln died, and an interior stairwell was relocated to the exterior of the building. The continuous pathway created by the new doorway improved circulation and allowed visitors to flow from one interpretive space to another with minimal interruption. Improvements to the rear porch also increased the accessibility of the Petersen House. Despite Deputy Superintendent Emerson’s best efforts, the room where Lincoln died remained inaccessible to patrons in wheelchairs or with limited mobility prior to the doorway project. The new doorway now allowed all visitors to experience the most significant portion of the Petersen House tour.³⁰

As the renovations progressed, FTS turned its attention to the exhibits for the museum that would occupy the third and fourth floors of the Center for Education and Leadership. During the development

²³ Emerson, interview; “One Destiny,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed June 15, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/visit/one-destiny/>.

²⁴ Emerson, interview.

²⁵ Trescott, “Ford’s Upgrade,” *Washington Post*.

²⁶ Michael E. Ruane, “Center to Help Bring Lincoln’s Last Days to Life,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 2010, ProQuest Recent Newspapers; Nelson Pressley, “Ford’s Redefines Itself,” *Washington Post*, February 5, 2012, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

²⁷ Elder, interview.

²⁸ Elder, interview.

²⁹ Scott Hill, telephone interview with Laura Purvis, June 10, 2019.

³⁰ Emerson, interview; National Park Service, *Finding of No Significant Impact: Repair and Rehabilitate the Petersen House, Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site, Washington, D.C.* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2010), 3–4.

process, FTS worked closely with the NPS staff at Ford's Theatre to ensure a consistent visitor experience between the site's three buildings. Tetreault contracted with Split Rock Studios, which redesigned the theater's basement museum in 2008, to design interpretive panels, multimedia and interactive exhibits, and touch-screen displays to accompany the historic artifacts under glass, which included Booth's keys and saddle and the tassels that adorned Lincoln's coffin. The museum presents the third act in the story of Lincoln's assassination, focusing on the aftermath of his tragic death. The exhibits explore the national and global impact of Lincoln's assassination, the twelve-day manhunt for Booth, and the capture, trial, and conviction of Booth and his co-conspirators. The museum also contains a re-creation of the street outside the theater the morning after the assassination and a reproduction of Lincoln's funeral train car. Interpretive panels discuss Lincoln's evolution as a pop culture icon and the impact of his ideas and policies on American politicians on both sides of the political spectrum. In the lobby of the Center for Education and Leadership, a thirty-four-foot tower of books about Lincoln extends through the center of the museum's central stairwell. In addition to the exhibits, the center contains a gift shop on the first floor, an event space on the second floor, and education studios, distance learning labs, and the production and administrative offices on the upper floors. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on February 8, 2012, to celebrate the completion of the new center, and the first visitors christened the new "Lincoln campus" on February 21.³¹

Interpretive and Educational Programming

In addition to the new offerings at the Ford's Theatre museum and the Center for Education and Leadership, two new interpretive programs were added to the site's roster during the independent period. As noted above, the staff at Ford's Theatre implemented a timed ticketing system when the theater reopened to the public in 2009. Although the timed system reduced the length of the line, visitors continued to queue up outside the theater in anticipation of their tour. Seeing this as an opportunity to expand the site's interpretive efforts, Elder and her staff developed line tours to keep the waiting crowds occupied. Throughout the day a ranger was stationed outside the building to answer general questions and provide historic information about the theater and the surrounding neighborhood.³² The line tours were intended to "engage the visitors beyond Ford's Theatre in more of a [Washington] D.C. sort of talk" and provide historical context for the interpretive programming inside the theater and the Petersen House.³³ However, staffing shortages made assigning a ranger to conduct the tours difficult, and, ultimately, the line tours were an intermittent, rather than consistent, program offering.³⁴

While the theater was closed for renovations, FTS developed a walking tour of the area surrounding the theater. Introduced in 2008, the "History on Foot" tours are a hybrid between an interpretive program and a theatrical production. During the spring and summer season, a historical reenactor in period attire guided visitors to various historic locations near the theater. One of the site's long-standing tours centers on Detective James McDevitt, a policeman on duty the night of Lincoln's assassination and one of the first to arrive at the crime scene. Visitors follow McDevitt as he revisits sites related to the Lincoln assassination and investigates clues in order to unravel the Booth conspiracy.³⁵ Another tour features Elizabeth Keckly, a free Black woman and Mary Todd Lincoln's seamstress and confidante, who lived around the corner from Ford's Theatre. During the ninety-minute program, tourists visit Keckly's home on Twelfth Street, NW,

³¹ Ruane, "Center to Help," *Washington Post*; Pressley, "Ford's Redefines Itself," *Washington Post*.

³² Elder, interview.

³³ Elder, interview.

³⁴ Emerson, interview.

³⁵ Lauren Beyea, "Detective McDevitt: Ford's Celebrates Its 1000th Tour," accessed June 18, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/detective-mcdevitt-ford-s-celebrates-its-1000th-tour/>; "A Walking Tour that Brings History to Life," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 18, 2020, https://www.fords.org/visit/virtual-events-and-special-tours/history-on-foot/#jump_link_3.

and learn about her journey from enslavement to freedom.³⁶ The “History on Foot” series expanded the interpretive programming at Ford’s Theatre beyond the footprint of the theater and the Petersen House, providing additional context and nuance to the Lincoln story. In 2011, Ford’s Theatre received the Washington Post Award for Innovative Leadership in the Theatre Community for its “History on Foot” and “History on Stage” programming.³⁷ The award was given as part of the Helen Hayes Awards, which recognizes actors and theater companies who exemplify “a standard of artistry” that has elevated Washington, DC, to the internationally known theater community it is today.³⁸ Ford’s Theatre continues to offer the “History on Foot” walking tours as part of the site’s spring and summer programming and in September 2019, the program celebrated its 1,000th tour.³⁹

Ford’s Theatre’s Teaching Fellows Programs

Despite the hundreds of thousands of school children who visited the site each year, Ford’s Theatre’s curriculum-based programming was fairly limited. Since time and staff were often in short supply, the NPS devoted available resources to the development of the site’s public and interpretive programming.⁴⁰ When he arrived at the site in 2004, FTS Director Tetreault created the Society’s education department to remedy the gaps in Ford’s Theatre’s educational programming.⁴¹ During her tenure as superintendent, Elder, who had experience developing curriculum-based programming, worked closely with the FTS education team. This collaboration became an important component of the NPS-FTS partnership during the period.⁴² Through their work on the site’s curriculum-based initiatives, Elder and FTS were able to develop “a true partnership” despite early missteps.⁴³ One of the most notable accomplishments of the collaboration was the formation of the Civil War Institute for Teachers and Learning. Held in the summer, the institute consisted of two sessions, one for local teachers and one for teachers from across the country. The week-long workshop provides teachers with tools for educating students about the Civil War and its modern legacy. Participants learn to interpret complex and difficult topics surrounding one of the most turbulent and violent periods in American history while networking with educators in their field. Through their visits to other park sites in the Washington, DC, area, attendees are exposed to different perspectives and interpretive strategies that they can implement in their classrooms. The Civil War Institute remains a valuable resource to teachers across the country and also represents an ongoing partnership between Ford’s Theatre and other NPS parks. The institute is now known as the Catherine B. Reynolds Civil War Washington Teacher Fellows program and includes visits to Ford’s Theatre, Tudor Place, President Lincoln’s Cottage, and the Frederick Douglass House.⁴⁴ Ford’s Theatre later introduced a second summer teaching program, “Set in Stone: Civil War Monuments, Memory, and Myths,” which explores the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction through an examination of the monuments and memorials of Washington, DC.⁴⁵

³⁶ Peter Marks, “History Channeled: All the City’s Their Stage as Actors Bring Historical Figures to Life,” *Washington Post*, May 30, 2010, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

³⁷ “Congratulations to Ford’s Theatre Society,” *Washington Post*, May 1, 2011, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

³⁸ “The Helen Hayes Awards,” theatreWashington, accessed June 19, 2020, <http://theatrewashington.org/content/helen-hayes-awards-0#:~:text=Named%20for%20the%20legendary%20First,thriving%2C%20internationally%20recognized%20theatre%20town.>

³⁹ Beyea, “Ford’s Celebrates Its 1000th Tour.”

⁴⁰ Elder, interview.

⁴¹ Pressley, “Ford’s Redefines Itself,” *Washington Post*.

⁴² Elder, interview.

⁴³ Elder, interview.

⁴⁴ Elder, interview; “Civil War Washington,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/civil-war-washington/>.

⁴⁵ “Set in Stone: Civil War Memory, Monuments, and Myths,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/set-in-stone/>.

In 2011, FTS, in partnership with the NPS, launched the Ford's Theatre National Oratory Fellows program in honor of Lincoln's oratory legacy. The program, which originated as a collaboration with the Frederick Douglass House, works with history and English/Language Arts teachers across the country to "bring public speaking and performance to grades 5–8."⁴⁶ Through distance learning, teachers gain practical skills to teach textual analysis, public speaking, performance, and speech writing to their students. Fellows meet twice a year in Washington, DC, to plan and share ideas and experiences with their colleagues. Student delegates are also given the opportunity to attend workshops with their teachers and perform original and historic speeches on stage at Ford's Theatre.⁴⁷ The opening of the Center for Education and Leadership in 2012 further expanded educational programming at the Ford's Theatre. The center features educational studios for workshops and other events, as well as distance learning labs.⁴⁸ Through the distance learning program, teachers, students, and the public are able to engage with the historic theater's extensive collection of Lincoln artifacts and the Ford's Theatre education staff via virtual field trips.⁴⁹ The education team also developed free lesson plans about Lincoln's assassination and the Civil War for elementary, middle, and high school classrooms, which are available on the Ford's Theatre website.⁵⁰

The Civil War Sesquicentennial

April 12, 2011, marked the 150th anniversary of the outbreak of the American Civil War. Over the next four years, theaters, museums, and other historical institutions across the country held commemorative sesquicentennial events and programs in recognition of the Civil War and its impact on America's social, economic, and political landscape. In the nation's capital, museums from the Smithsonian to the National Portrait Gallery presented Civil War-themed exhibits and local theaters produced plays and musicals about one of the most turbulent periods in American history. The Library of Congress placed the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation on display as part of their "The Civil War in America" exhibit, and the final version of the document was displayed at the National Archives.⁵¹ The International Spy Museum sponsored a series of seminars entitled "Civil War Spies: A Three-Part Exploration of Union and Confederate Intelligence Operations."⁵² The National Portrait Gallery presented a variety of programming, including "Bound for Freedom's Light: African Americans and the Civil War," an exhibit about Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, Sojourner Truth and other American abolitionists.⁵³ Productions like *Our War*, *Rebels Yell*, and *A Civil War Christmas: An American Musical Celebration* commemorated the Civil War on stage.⁵⁴ At Ford's Theatre, the NPS and FTS were busy preparing for the launch of the Ford's Theatre Center for Education and Leadership, which opened its doors during the sesquicentennial period. FTS Director Tetreault commissioned *Necessary Sacrifices*, a dramatic production centered on two encounters between Lincoln and Frederick Douglass during the Civil War, to mark the occasion.⁵⁵ In addition to its regular Lincoln-based programming, the center also premiered two exhibits, "Torn in Two: 150th Anniversary of the Civil War" and "Abraham Lincoln and the Technology of War," in honor of the

⁴⁶ "National Oratory Fellowship," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/oratory/national-oratory-fellowship/>.

⁴⁷ "National Oratory Fellowship," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society.

⁴⁸ Pressley, "Ford's Redefines Itself," *Washington Post*.

⁴⁹ "Distance Learning," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/distance-learning/>.

⁵⁰ "Teaching Lincoln's Assassination and Legacy," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/for-teachers/teaching-lincolns-assassination-legacy/>.

⁵¹ "Museum Openings," *Washington Post*, December 28, 2012, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

⁵² "Calendar of Events," *Washington Post*, July 17, 2011, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

⁵³ "Calendar of Events," *Washington Post*, June 2, 2013, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

⁵⁴ "Also Playing," *Washington Post*, October 17, 2014, ProQuest Recent Newspapers; "Also Playing," *Washington Post*, November 16, 2012, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

⁵⁵ Pressley, "Ford's Redefines Itself," *Washington Post*.

sesquicentennial.⁵⁶ The majority of Ford's Theatre's sesquicentennial programming focused on the anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Management and Planning

In addition to overseeing program development and the completion of the renovations at Ford's Theatre, Superintendent Elder also administered the routine maintenance and operation of the park site. Between meetings with FTS, Elder, along with Deputy Superintendent Emerson and the rest of the NPS staff, developed work plans for the site, created safety plans, and executed safety drills. Elder was also responsible for administering the first visitor survey at Ford's Theatre. The NPS completed the survey annually and the feedback provided by the public helped to shape future programming and improvements at NPS parks. As part of NAMA, Ford's Theatre was unable to fully participate in past visitor surveys, but in 2010, Elder administered Ford's Theatre's first survey as an independent park. The site was issued a full set of survey cards, which were distributed to visitors by the park rangers. The survey also provided the rangers with an opportunity to engage with the public and receive comments about the visitor experience. Once completed, the surveys were submitted to one of several drop stations located throughout the park. The results of the survey were available the following year and, based on the feedback, the staff at Ford's Theatre began to implement changes. One of the most common issues raised by respondents was the length of the tours.⁵⁷ Visitors indicated that "they often felt like they were rushed or that the tours were much too long."⁵⁸ As a result, Elder and her staff began piloting various tour lengths and tours that covered only a portion of the site. The new tours allowed the public to customize their visitor experience based on their interests and their schedule. The tours were easily incorporated into the new timed ticketing system and made interpretive programming at Ford's Theatre more flexible and efficient. When the theater reopened in 2009, FTS assumed management of the timed ticketing program.⁵⁹

However, the implementation of the timed ticketing system and the new tours created additional challenges at the Petersen House. Due to its size and cramped quarters, the Petersen House was only able to accommodate a limited number of people at a time. As such, the house became a bottleneck as visitors exited the theater and headed across the street to tour the House Where Lincoln Died. In order to increase visitation and improve circulation through the building, Elder worked with the curatorial staff and the resource management team to allow visitor circulation through the rooms in the Petersen House. According to Scott Hill, former FOTH ranger, previously visitors could enter the parlors on the first floor but were restricted to a stanchioned area and had to turn around and exit from the same door.⁶⁰ This led to crowding in the front parlor and traffic jams at doorways. The new circulation pattern allowed visitors to walk through the front parlor and exit through the rear parlor, preventing bottlenecks in the front room and around doorways. In order to protect the integrity of the historic fabric, the park rangers limited the number of visitors in the house at one time and walking carpet and stanchions were used to create a designated path. Elder and her staff also shifted the discussion of the assassination and Lincoln's death from the interpretive programming at the theater to the Petersen House. These changes increased visitation at the House Where Lincoln Died, which previously only received a fraction of the visitors who came to Ford's Theatre, and enhanced the overall visitor experience.⁶¹ As discussed earlier in the chapter, the addition of the doorway between the Petersen House and the Center for Education and Leadership further improved circulation in the Petersen House. The connection also increased the building's accessibility and created a "whole

⁵⁶ "Museum Openings," *Washington Post*; "Events and Commemorations," *Washington Post*, April 27, 2014, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

⁵⁷ Elder, interview.

⁵⁸ Elder, interview.

⁵⁹ Elder, interview.

⁶⁰ Scott Hill, chief of interpretation and education, George Washington Birthplace National Monument and Thomas Stone National Historic Site, email message to Jennifer Sale Crane, CRA, Inc., April 22, 2021.

⁶¹ Elder, interview.

comprehensive experience” by allowing visitors to move seamlessly between the interpretive spaces in the two buildings.⁶²

During Ford’s Theatre’s period as an independent park unit, Elder and her staff improved interpretive and educational programming and successfully collaborated with FTS on the theater renovations and reopening, the Center for Education and Leadership, and the sesquicentennial celebration. However, despite their accomplishments, the site’s autonomy was short-lived, lasting only four years. The “Great Recession,” which occurred between 2007 and 2009, impacted the American economy and restricted government spending. Normally, the NPS periodically invited park administrators to submit Operation Formulation System (OFS) requests, which allowed superintendents to apply for additional funding and staff to facilitate the operation of their site.⁶³ However, due to the economic downturn, the period from 2008 to 2011 “was a very tight time for the Park Service” and, as a result, the NPS did not send out requests for OFS increases.⁶⁴ Without an augment to the site’s operational budget, Elder was unable to hire the permanent and seasonal staff necessary to support Ford’s Theatre’s operation as an independent park. With over one million visitors every year and no additional park rangers or administrative staff to distribute the workload, the lack of funding put a strain on the site’s already limited resources. Although FTS was able to provide alternative funding for certain projects, the money for maintenance, utilities, staff training, and other routine costs were the responsibility of the NPS.⁶⁵ Ultimately, this lack of funding led to the site’s “demise as an independent unit” and in 2012, Ford’s Theatre returned under the NAMA administrative umbrella.⁶⁶ The number of FOTH staff was drastically reduced from twenty-one down to five, and some positions were then shared across NAMA sites.⁶⁷

⁶² Elder, interview; Emerson, interview.

⁶³ Elder, interview.

⁶⁴ Elder, interview.

⁶⁵ Elder, interview.

⁶⁶ Elder, interview.

⁶⁷ Emerson, interview.

CHAPTER 8: Return to the National Capital Region Administration (2012–Present)

Management and Planning

Ford's Theatre's four-year period of independence came to a close in 2012. Although this chapter was marked by significant improvements to the park and its interpretive programming, overall, the historic theater's status as an independent unit was not sustainable. In early 2012, Kym Elder left her position as superintendent of Ford's Theatre to become program manager for the Civil War Defenses of Washington. Deputy Superintendent Rae Emerson stepped in as acting superintendent, but within a few months, the site was reintegrated into NAMA and the superintendent office was abolished. Emerson, however, remained involved with Ford's Theatre until 2019 as NAMA's partnership program specialist and developed and oversaw the financial assistance and partnership agreements for the park, as well as the outreach and volunteer programs. The partnership division was in its infancy when Emerson assumed the role, and one of her first tasks was to renegotiate the general agreement between the NPS and FTS. Although renewed multiple times, the agreement remained mostly unaltered for over twenty years and did not account for the operational changes that arose as Ford's Theatre continued to evolve.¹ The agreement, which took effect in October 2014, reaffirmed the existing responsibilities of the NPS and FTS, including building maintenance, site access, and coordination between the NPS and the partner. The agreement also outlined FTS's management of the lobby, box office, and timed ticketing system, which was addressed in a 2009 addendum to the previous agreement. Under the new agreement, management of the site's custodial work shifted from the NPS to FTS.² With access to additional funding and staff, FTS was able to establish a more regular cleaning schedule for the public restrooms, theater, museum, and lobby.³ The agreement also negotiated the use of the theater for events and activities, like fundraisers and private functions, outside the site's standard interpretive programs and dramatic productions.⁴ Most importantly, it established an annual work plan, which consisted of all of the NPS and FTS's scheduled productions, special events, and maintenance and improvement projects for a given fiscal year. The plan's programming schedule allowed the two parties to better coordinate their programming and anticipate closures and changes to tour offerings in advance. The new system also allowed park rangers to conduct "walk through tours" of the balcony level of the theater during FTS show preparations and clean up, although the theater remained closed to the production rehearsals and lighting tests.⁵

Interpretation and Use

The Civil War Sesquicentennial and *Ford's 150*

Although Ford's Theatre developed programming and exhibits in recognition of the Civil War sesquicentennial, the majority of the site's sesquicentennial offerings centered on the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's assassination. The commemoration of Lincoln's death was one of the culminating events of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, and the Ford's Theatre staff began planning the tribute five years in advance. Despite concerns about the availability of funding, the site received \$250,000 from the NPS to finance a series of programs and exhibits known as *Ford's 150* in honor of the anniversary.⁶ The *Ford's 150*

¹ Emerson, interview.

² "General Agreement Between the National Park Service and the Ford's Theatre Society," signed June 1, 2015, FOTH On-Site Archives, 6–7.

³ "General Agreement," 7, C1.

⁴ "General Agreement," 4–5.

⁵ "General Agreement," 8; Emerson, interview.

⁶ Emerson, interview.

programming extended from February until late May 2015 and included social media campaigns, new virtual offerings, exhibits, and dramatic productions leading up to a 36-hour tribute to Lincoln on April 14 and 15.⁷ FTS unveiled several collaborative projects as part of *Ford's 150*, including the launch of *Remembering Lincoln: A Digital Collection of Responses to His Assassination*. The website was developed in partnership with the Newseum, the Library of Congress, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and libraries and historical associations across the country, and it captures the national reaction to Lincoln's assassination through digitized letters, diaries, newspapers, and other artifacts.⁸ On March 26, Ford's Theatre collaborated with Discovery Education to offer a virtual field trip to the historic theater via a live webcast, which was then made available on the Ford's Theatre website in April.⁹ FTS and the NPS also partnered with the Google Cultural Institute to present interactive online exhibits about Lincoln's assassination and the history of Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House.¹⁰ The site's hallmark exhibit, *Silent Witnesses: Artifacts of the Lincoln Assassination*, debuted in April at the Center for Education and Leadership. The exhibit reunited a collection of artifacts from Ford's Theatre and the night of the assassination from eight institutions, including the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. Artifacts included Mary Todd Lincoln's cloak, which had not been displayed for fifty years, Lincoln's top hat and coat, and Laura Keene's bloody cuff. Lincoln's carriage, on loan from the Studebaker National Museum, was displayed at the National Museum of American History in conjunction with the *Silent Witnesses* exhibit.¹¹ Dramatic productions were another highlight of *Ford's 150*. FTS commissioned two productions, *Freedom Song: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War* and *The Widow Lincoln*, in honor of the anniversary of Lincoln's death, which premiered in February and March 2015, respectively.¹²

The Lincoln Tribute was the crowning event of the sesquicentennial festivities. Beginning on April 14, 2015, the tribute included thirty-six hours of programming. During the day, visitors were invited to tour the Ford's Theatre campus, view the sesquicentennial exhibits, or watch a performance of *One Destiny*.¹³ In the evening, the theater premiered an original production entitled *Now He Belongs to the Ages: A Lincoln Commemoration*. The production, which combined readings of Lincoln's works, Civil War-era music, and excerpts from Lincoln's favorite operas, provided a multi-faceted view of the sixteenth president as a politician, friend, husband, and father. The sold-out show, which featured remarks from former Secretary of State Colin Powell, civil rights leaders, and notable Lincoln authors, and performances from folk singer Judy Collins, was also livestreamed online and available for viewing at the National Portrait Gallery. At 10:15 p.m., the approximate time of Lincoln's assassination, the lights in the theater dimmed and all eyes turned to the state box, which was outfitted to resemble its appearance on the night of the tragic event. Outside the theater, around 150 Civil War reenactors and living historians recreated the candlelight vigil

⁷ Sara Cohan, "Eight Ways You Can Honor Lincoln, 150 Years After His Death," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 20, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/eight-ways-you-can-honor-lincoln-150-years-after-his-death/>.

⁸ "Remembering Lincoln: A Digital Collection of Responses to His Assassination," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 20, 2020, <https://rememberinglincoln.fords.org/>.

⁹ Cohan, "Eight Ways."

¹⁰ "Ford's 150: Remembering the Lincoln Assassination," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/fords-150-remembering-the-lincoln-assassination/>.

¹¹ Heather Hoagland, "Behind the Scenes with 'Silent Witnesses,'" Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/behind-the-scenes-with-silent-witnesses/>.

¹² Jane Horwitz, "Good Cast Makes the Best of Entertaining 'Freedom Song,'" *Washington Post*, March 20, 2015, ProQuest Recent Newspapers; Gareth Moore, "8 Things to do in the D.C. Area on the Weekend of Jan. 23-25," *Washington Post*, January 22, 2015, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

¹³ Fritz Hahn, "Remembrance and Reflection," *Washington Post*, April 10, 2015, ProQuest Recent Newspapers; "A Looking Inside Ford's 150: An Interview with Patrick Pearson," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/a-look-inside-fords-150-an-interview-with-patrick-pearson/>; "One Destiny." Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society.

held the night of Lincoln's assassination (Figure 8.1).¹⁴ The public response to the event was overwhelming and far beyond the expectations of the Ford's Theatre staff. Over 4,000 visitors flooded the street outside Ford's Theatre to participate in the vigil, hear first-hand accounts from the living historians, and tour the *Silent Witnesses* exhibit at the Center for Education and Leadership, which was open all night. Kristin Fox-Siegmund, the deputy director of programming at the historic theater, remembers that when "the doors to the theater opened...you literally couldn't move on 10th Street."¹⁵ The vigil was simulcasted online and broadcasted on C-SPAN.¹⁶ The second part of the tribute began on the morning of April 15, the day after the assassination. FTS and the NPS hosted a wreath-laying ceremony on the steps of the Petersen House (Figure 8.2). The Federal City Brass Band played "Taps" at 7:22 a.m. to mark the time of Lincoln's death, followed by remarks from the secretary of the interior, Sally Jewell, and James L. Swanson, a Lincoln scholar and author. Church bells tolled across Washington, DC, at 8:00 a.m., just as they did the morning after Lincoln's assassination in 1865.¹⁷ The *Ford's 150* commemorative programming was one of the largest events organized by the Ford's Theatre staff. It required years of planning and collaboration among the NPS and FTS, speakers, performers, and museums and other historical institutions. Although developed to commemorate a pivotal event in American history, the *Ford's 150* programming also represents a defining moment in the administration of Ford's Theatre as a historic site.

The Lincoln Legacy Project

Since its inception, FTS has expanded its responsibilities at Ford's Theatre beyond the management of the theater's dramatic productions. Over the past five decades, FTS gradually assumed a more active role in the outreach, educational, and interpretive programming at the historic site through their student workshops, distance learning and teaching fellows programs, and the development of the Center for Education and Leadership. Their management of the new lobby, box office, gift shop, and timed ticketing program in the Atlantic Building next door increased FTS's involvement in daily visitation at Ford's Theatre, and in 2009 FTS created a Visitor Services branch to administer its new role.¹⁸ In 2011, FTS announced its Lincoln Legacy Project, a five-year project intended to start a dialogue about tolerance, equality, and acceptance. The project was a partnership with several nonprofit and advocacy organizations, including the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, and the DC Chapter of the NAACP.¹⁹ Developed in response to the political unrest leading up to the 2012 presidential election and rising national awareness of racism, homophobia, and religious discrimination, the project aimed to produce programming that "not only honors [Lincoln's] life, but seeks to contribute to the fulfillment of his vision of a more perfect Union."²⁰

¹⁴ Hahn, "Remembrance and Reflection," *Washington Post*; "A Looking Inside Ford's 150." Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society; Michael E. Ruane, "Early Morning Risers Gather to Mark the Time of Lincoln's Death," *Washington Post*, April 15, 2015, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

¹⁵ Kristen Fox-Siegmund, telephone interview with Laura Purvis, September 16, 2019.

¹⁶ Fox-Siegmund, interview.

¹⁷ Hahn, "Remembrance and Reflection," *Washington Post*; "A Looking Inside Ford's 150." Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society; Ruane, "Early Morning Risers," *Washington Post*.

¹⁸ Jeffrey M. Jones, site manager, FOTH, email message to Jennifer Sale Crane and Lauren Poole, CRA, Inc., July 9, 2020.

¹⁹ Paul Tetreault, "The Arts: A Venue for Bipartisanship," accessed June 23, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/story/2011/09/the-arts-a-venue-for-bipartisanship-064875>.

²⁰ Tetreault, "The Arts: A Venue."



Figure 8.1. Visitors and historical reenactors gathered on Tenth Street for the candlelight vigil in commemoration of Lincoln's death ([Candlelight vigil outside Ford's Theatre], April 14, 2015, FOTH Files. Courtesy of the NPS).



Figure 8.2. Crowds awaiting the wreath-laying ceremony outside the Petersen House the morning of April 15, 2015 ([Wreath-laying ceremony outside the Petersen House], April 15, 2015, FOTH Files. Courtesy of the NPS).

The Legacy Project paired dramatic productions with town hall discussions and other programming throughout the month of October centered around the topics of racial and religious intolerance, social justice, and civil rights. The panels featured guest speakers, activists, historians, journalists, and congressional leaders and discussed issues and current events related to the themes in each of the plays.²¹ The project's premiere play, *Parade*, told the story of Leo Frank, a Jewish factory manager accused of murdering a thirteen-year-old girl in early 1900s Atlanta.²² Two additional productions rounded out the project's roster: *Fly* (2012), a production about the Tuskegee Airmen, and *The Laramie Project* (2013), which explores the aftermath of the murder of Matthew Shepard, a young gay man, in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1998.²³ Although scheduled to extend through 2015, the government shutdown in 2013 prematurely ended the project. During previous shutdowns, Ford's Theatre remained open for dramatic productions due to private funding from FTS. When the site closed in October 2013, FTS was informed that they would be unable to maintain their theatrical programming, including the premiere of the highly anticipated *The Laramie Project*.²⁴ FTS quickly shifted their production to alternative venues and began negotiating with the NPS to temporarily reopen the site.²⁵ In mid-October, the NPS and FTS reached an agreement to reopen Ford's Theatre and the stage in two four-day increments provided FTS could raise the necessary funds. After receiving a \$25,000 donation, the theater opened in mid-October and performances of *The Laramie Project*, as well as the associated Lincoln Legacy Project programming, resumed.²⁶ However, it was the last production in the series. Although FTS continues to produce theatrical programming that confronts the issues of racial injustice and social inequality, *The Laramie Project* was the last play produced as part of the Lincoln Legacy Project.

Going Digital

In 2014, FTS created a digital strategic plan to update Ford's Theatre's existing digital resources and implement new digital tools to enhance interpretation and increase visitor engagement at the historic theater. The first part of the plan consisted of a new customer relationship management (CRM) system to track online resource usage and attendance for the site's educational programming. The data from the CRM system helped FTS to develop targeted marketing campaigns and test communication strategies with teachers. The search engine, scroll depth, download, and email analytics for the site's various online platforms informed the development of future online resources, including news articles and lesson plans.²⁷ This data also influenced the content and format for the redesign of the Ford's Theatre website in 2016,

²¹ Tetreault, "The Arts: A Venue."

²² "Parade," Ford's Theatre, access June 23, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/performances/past-productions/parade/>.

²³ "Fly," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 23, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/performances/past-productions/fly/>; "The Laramie Project," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed June 23, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/performances/past-productions/the-laramie-project/>.

²⁴ Celia Wren, "Despite Hurdles Put Up by Government Shutdown, Ford's Stages Fine 'Laramie Project,'" *Washington Post*, October 3, 2013, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

²⁵ "The Washington Post Sponsors the Lincoln Legacy Project production of The Laramie Project," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2013, ProQuest Recent Newspapers; Stephanie Merry, Fritz Hahn, and Maura Judkis, "The Shutdown's Unexpected Closures," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2013, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

²⁶ Linda Wheeler, "Ford's Theatre Will Reopen Tomorrow," *Washington Post*, October 15, 2013, ProQuest Recent Newspapers.

²⁷ Liza Lorenz, "Engaging the 21-Century Visitor: Digital Strategy at Ford's Theatre," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/engaging-the-21st-century-visitor-digital-strategy-at-fords-theatre/>; Sarah Jencks, "Improving Museum Education Programs Using Analytics (Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Data)," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/improving-museum-education-programs-using-analytics-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-love-data/>.

which had not been updated since 2008.²⁸ In February 2018, Ford’s Theatre launched a collaboration with TimeLooper, an app that “brings historic events to present-day spaces through virtual and augmented reality,” to create a virtual tour of the Petersen House. In December 2017, the Petersen House closed for a six-month renovation. The project replaced the fire suppression system, which was no longer up to code, and addressed lingering preservation and maintenance concerns. While the Petersen House was closed to the public, the NPS and FTS worked with TimeLooper to develop a virtual tour, entitled *Voices of the Petersen House*, in order to continue interpretive programming around the House Where Lincoln Died. The immersive experience allowed visitors to explore the entire building, including the front and back parlors and the bedroom where Lincoln died, and also featured first-hand accounts of the night Lincoln was assassinated as an added layer of interpretation. Although initially imagined as a stop-gap measure during the Petersen House renovations, the partnership with TimeLooper revealed the ways in which technology could be used to expand interpretation at Ford’s Theatre beyond the physical site.²⁹

Revisiting the Ford’s Theatre Museum

In 2015, FTS turned their attention to the redevelopment of the Ford’s Theatre museum as part of their Design Research at Ford’s Theatre (DRAFT) project. The first phase of the DRAFT project extended interpretive programming onto Tenth Street through life-sized silhouettes and panels presenting historic and modern views of the same location. It also incorporated additional first-hand accounts of the history of Ford’s Theatre into the site’s interpretive programming through audio-visual displays throughout the site. Phase two and three of the project focused on the theater’s museum.³⁰ The 2008 redesign vastly improved the museum’s interpretive panels and artifact exhibits and improved circulation through the space. However, the new museum took a scholarly approach to the Lincoln narrative with lengthy blocks of text and multimedia displays. This approach, while informative, proved less engaging to visitors, and the museum staff noted that visitors spent less time in the museum than in other portions of the Ford’s Theatre campus. This lack of visitor engagement was particularly evident among student groups. A time-and-tracking study also indicated that students did not understand the purpose of the museum in the context of the other programming at Ford’s Theatre, suggesting a need to “scaffold the experience” to better integrate the museum into the site’s interpretive narrative. As a result, FTS applied for and received a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services to create an interactive, digital experience to accompany the museum’s physical exhibits and interpretive panels. However, research into similar mobile offerings at other museums and historic sites revealed that these proprietary digital applications are underutilized by visitors and often do not have the desired impact on visitor engagement. The NPS had also recently applied for government funding to redesign the Ford’s Theatre museum and revise its many text-heavy exhibits. As such, the project team shifted away from digital programming to focus on improving the existing site experience through low-cost, short-term solutions that could be used to inform the development of future permanent exhibits.³¹

²⁸ David McKenzie, “Storytelling, the Web, and the Ford’s Theatre Historic Site,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed June 15, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/storytelling-the-web-and-the-ford-s-theatre-historic-site/>.

²⁹ Aislinn Rubinic, “TimeLooper: Using Virtual Reality to Explore the History of the Petersen House,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/timelooper-using-virtual-reality-to-explore-the-history-of-the-petersen-house/>.

³⁰ David McKenzie and Kate Haley Goldman, “Taking It to the Streets: Prototyping Sprint 1, Round 1,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/taking-it-to-the-streets-prototyping-sprint-1-round-1/>; David McKenzie and Kate Haley Goldman, “Adding Historic Voices to the Ford’s Theatre Site, Prototyping Sprint 1, Round 2,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/adding-historical-voices-to-the-ford-s-theatre-site-prototyping-sprint-1-round-2/>.

³¹ David McKenzie, “Learning What Visitors Want: A Shifted Plan and Prototyping in the Museum,” Ford’s Theatre, Ford’s Theatre Society, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/learning-what-visitors-want-a-shifted-plan-and-prototyping-in-the-museum/>.

In 2018, the project team began testing various ideas to improve the relevance and utilization of the Ford's Theatre museum as part of phases two and three of the DRAFT project. In March 2018, the project team introduced prototypes of flip doors, a type of interactive exhibit element where the visitor typically lifts up a small door or flap to reveal a photograph or a short and engaging piece of information underneath. The flip doors featured information about Lincoln's 1864 political platform, his presidency, and the Civil War. Students moved through five stations located throughout the museum. Each display provided students with Lincoln's perspective on a contemporary political issue, creating a connective thread between past and present. Although the team determined that the prototype program required additional clarification and refinement, the feedback from student groups indicated that the program successfully framed modern political issues in a historic context and increased visitor engagement in the museum.³² Phases two and three of the DRAFT project also included the introduction of character cards to the museum experience. The character cards, which resembled trading cards, featured the name and image of a historical figure associated with Lincoln and Ford's Theatre. Students were given a character card upon entering the museum, and, like the previous exercise, moved through a series of interactive displays related to the person on their card. After the initial test in April 2018, the team refined the concept, adding additional stations for each character card and incorporating more women and younger historical figures into the activity. The final version of the program, which was retested during the third phase of the DRAFT project in May 2018, featured cards for five historic figures, including both well-known and less recognizable persons, and five stations for each person. The character card program successfully encouraged students to explore the entirety of the museum and engaged them in active learning as they searched for the displays associated with their historical figure. The introduction of more young and female figures also increased engagement between the first and second trials, and the DRAFT team later expanded program to include ten historical figures, with additional information about each person provided either on site or online.³³ These Story Cards, as they are now known, have become a regular part of the museum's programming.³⁴ Although the flip door activity developed during the project was not permanently implemented in the Ford's Theatre museum, overall, the DRAFT project allowed the project team to address existing problems with the museum exhibits and to explore various means of improving engagement and the visitor experience.

A New Interpretive Plan

Over the course of 2017 and 2018, the NPS and FTS contracted with Kate Haley Goldman of Haley Goldman Consulting to revise Ford's Theatre's interpretive plan. An interpretive plan identifies the management needs and the principal interpretive goals and themes for a museum or historic site in order to determine the most effective means of communicating the site's message to their target audience. Previously, staff at Ford's Theatre defined interpretive themes for each of the site's individual components rather than the site as a whole. As a result, the exhibits and interpretive programming in the Petersen House, theater museum, and the Center for Education and Leadership were disconnected from each other. The new

³² David McKenzie and Kate Haley Goldman, "How Relevant is Too Relevant? Connecting Past and Present at the Ford's Theatre: Prototyping Spring 2, Round 1 (part 1)," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/how-relevant-is-too-relevant-connecting-past-present-at-the-ford-s-museum-prototyping-sprint-2-round-1-part-1/>; David McKenzie and Kate Haley Goldman, "Take-Aways While Connecting Past and Present at the Ford's Theatre Museum: Prototyping Spring, Round 1 (part 2)," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/take-aways-while-connecting-past-present-in-the-ford-s-museum-prototyping-sprint-2-round-1-part-2/>.

³³ David McKenzie and Kate Haley Goldman, "Prototyping Historical Figure Cards at Ford's Theatre: Prototyping Sprint 2, Round 2," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/prototyping-historical-figure-cards-at-ford-s-theatre-sprint-2-round-2/>; David McKenzie and Kate Haley Goldman, "Following A Historical Figure, Again: Prototyping Sprint 3," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/following-a-historical-figure-again-prototyping-sprint-3/>.

³⁴ "Museum," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/visit/historic-site/museum/>.

interpretive plan was designed to address the entire campus, including the site’s digital platforms, and create a cohesive, contemporary interpretive narrative for the historic theater. The team held a staff workshop and performed a gap analysis to identify weaknesses in the existing programming and areas for improvement. The gap analysis examined twenty-nine planning and strategy documents from the last decade, which allowed the team to track the evolution of the theater’s operation and interpretive efforts as it grew and expanded its reach. Several recommendations emerged from this review. First, the team needed to resolve the issues and conflicts in the site’s interpretive themes in order to create a unified message. Second, they needed to articulate the site’s primary values separately from its exhibits and activities, which became intertwined over the years as the staff, out of necessity, generated the site’s interpretive themes based on existing exhibits and programming. The third recommendation addressed the need to keep Ford’s Theatre relevant to a modern audience and relate Lincoln’s legacy to contemporary society.³⁵

With these recommendations in mind, the team began the interpretive planning process by defining Ford’s Theatre’s primary audience and the site’s fundamental values. The team identified “four key visitor segments”: student groups, out-of-town tourists, theater-goers, and local residents.³⁶ The first three groups represent the site’s primary visitor base, and the team hoped to attract more Washington, DC, residents to Ford’s Theatre over the next several years. The site’s three “foundational truths” were based on the primary themes and values discussed in Ford’s Theatre’s 2013 *Foundation Document*, which provides guidance for planning and management decisions at the site, and FTS’s 2018 *Vision Statement* document, which defined FTS’s vision for the site as “inspiring tomorrow’s leaders through Lincoln’s legacy.”³⁷ These primary values not only reflect Ford’s Theatre’s historic associations, but also its role as a historic site, an active theater, a space of civic engagement, and a provider of public programming.³⁸ The first “truth” acknowledges that the Civil War and the Lincoln assassination were motivated by the desire to perpetuate an “economic, political, and social system of white racial superiority, of which slavery was an integral part.”³⁹ The second addresses Ford’s Theatre as a site of political violence and the immediate and long-term impact of such acts on all aspects of society. The third “truth” focuses on Lincoln and his continuing legacy as an “extraordinary leader” and a “fallible, complex human being.”⁴⁰ These truths formed the basis for future planning efforts and serve as a guide for the interpretation of the Lincoln narrative at Ford’s Theatre.

The final step in the planning process was the determination of the site’s primary interpretive themes. The team held multiple staff meetings to review and revise past themes, discarding any that seemed vague or incongruous with the “core historical ideas” related to Ford’s Theatre and Lincoln’s legacy.⁴¹ Five interpretive themes emerged from this process: the historic and contemporary social and political implications of the Booth conspiracy; the impact of Lincoln’s presidency and assassination on the development of the nation; Lincoln’s appreciation for the performing arts and the ability of theater to “move people, build empathy, and to expand our understanding of ourselves and our society”; Ford’s Theatre as a window into Civil War Washington, DC; and the power of memorialization and its effect on our perception of historic figures and events.⁴² These five themes embody the primary historical narratives of Ford’s Theatre while expanding interpretation beyond Lincoln’s presidency and assassination. Together, these themes create a comparative experience that contextualizes contemporary social and political issues in the

³⁵ Haley Goldman Consulting, *Interpretive Plan, November 2018* (Silver Spring, MD: Haley Goldman Consulting, 2018), FOTH Files, FOTH Collections, FOTH On-Site Archives, 2–5.

³⁶ Haley Goldman Consulting, *Interpretive Plan*, 5.

³⁷ National Park Service, *Foundation Document: Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site, Washington, D.C.* (Washington, DC: National Park Service., 2013), FOTH On-Site Archives, 3; Haley Goldman Consulting, *Interpretive Plan*, 5.

³⁸ Haley Goldman Consulting, *Interpretive Plan*, 6.

³⁹ Haley Goldman Consulting, 7–8.

⁴⁰ Haley Goldman Consulting, 7–8.

⁴¹ Haley Goldman Consulting, 9.

⁴² Haley Goldman Consulting, 10–14.

framework of Ford's Theatre and Lincoln's legacy. In the planning document, each of five topics is paired with potential "outcomes" that represent possible "gains in knowledge or changes in attitudes or behavior Ford's hopes to achieve."⁴³ For instance, the outcomes for the first theme, centered on the Booth conspiracy, include connecting the Lincoln assassination with contemporary acts of political violence, examining how white supremacy continues to shape American society and politics, and advocating for the participation in the democratic process.⁴⁴ In addition to potential outcomes, the planning document also suggests points of possible dialogue. Based on an approach from the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the team sought to include questions or topics in the future exhibition that would encourage personal or collective learning.⁴⁵ For example, the dialogue moment for the fifth theme about memorialization asks visitors to consider why we preserve, or do not preserve, certain places and "who decides what is preserved and how it will be used."⁴⁶ This approach is demonstrated in the new signage associated with the Booth derringer exhibit. The signage, installed in March 2020, includes an excerpt of a 1931 letter from the adjutant general of the United States Army refusing permission to display the weapon at Ford's Theatre. The signage asks visitors to consider whether weapons of violence should be exhibited in museums and directs visitors to a digital poll through an embedded Quick Response (QR) code.⁴⁷ While the outcomes and dialogue points will continue to evolve as the NPS and FTS develop new exhibits and programming, the incorporation of these elements into the interpretive plan effectively expands interpretation at Ford's Theatre beyond the presentation of historical facts and imbues the site with new meaning for a contemporary audience.

Ford's in the Future

As Ford's Theatre enters a new decade, another expansion is on the horizon. In 2018, FTS announced plans to expand and renovate two buildings adjacent to the Center for Education and Leadership. The current proposal includes combining the interior of the building located at 512 Tenth Street, NW, with the existing center next door. The new building would contain retail space on the first floor with studios, administrative offices, and multi-purpose event spaces on the floors above.⁴⁸ Changes are also coming to the Ford's Theatre museum. After the completion of the new interpretive plan in 2018, FTS and the NPS worked with the Smithsonian Institute to develop an interpretive master plan in anticipation of redesigning the basement museum in the near future.⁴⁹ However, due to the unavailability of funding, the museum redesign has been postponed.⁵⁰ FTS recently received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund a new permanent exhibit for the Center for Education and Leadership. The exhibit will explore the "aftermath and public memory of Abraham Lincoln's assassination" through the lens of the history of Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House. The planned exhibit will encourage visitors to examine monuments and historic sites as cultural artifacts and consider how their historical and societal context influences the memorialization of the American narrative.⁵¹

⁴³ Haley Goldman Consulting, 9.

⁴⁴ Haley Goldman Consulting, 10.

⁴⁵ Haley Goldman Consulting, 9.

⁴⁶ Haley Goldman Consulting, 14.

⁴⁷ David McKenzie, "Should Ford's Display a Murder Weapon?" Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed September 1, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/should-ford-s-display-a-murder-weapon/>.

⁴⁸ Nena Perry-Brown, "Ford's Theatre Proposed to Add Space Across the Street," UrbanTurf, December 11, 2018, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://dc.urbanturf.com/articles/blog/fords-theatre-proposes-to-add-space-across-the-street/14794>.

⁴⁹ David McKenzie, associate director for interpretive resources, FTS, telephone correspondence with Lauren Poole, CRA, Inc., September 1, 2020.

⁵⁰ Jeffery Jones in Paul J. Zwirecki, director of public history programs, Organization of American Historians, email message to Elizabeth Heavrin, CRA, Inc., November 9, 2020.

⁵¹ "Ford's Theatre Society Exhibition on Changing Historical Memory," National Endowment for the Humanities, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://securegrants.neh.gov/publicquery/main.aspx?f=1&gn=GE-254026-17>.

Conclusion

Over the past six decades, Ford's Theatre has transformed from a warehouse-like museum space into a thriving theater and museum. The House Where Lincoln Died has also changed from a historic house museum furnished by various groups of well-meaning volunteers to one outfitted according to NPS furnishing plan standards and thorough research, with a much-improved circulation pattern.¹ Since it reopened to the public in January 1968, the historic theater's footprint, programming, and role in the community have continued to evolve. The addition of educational and outreach programs broadened Ford's Theatre's mission and allowed the site to better serve teachers, students, and underserved audiences.

Over time, the site's exhibits and interpretive programming have evolved from a disjointed narrative about Lincoln's life, presidency, and, to a lesser degree, his assassination, to a highly strategic interpretive plan focusing on his presidency and legacy, his assassination and the impacts of political violence, his connection to the theater, Washington, DC, during the Civil War, and the memorialization of leaders and tragic events. These new interpretive themes add nuance and complexity to the Lincoln narrative while making FOTH more relevant to today's visitors. Early NPS management and interpretation staff carefully avoided placing too much emphasis on Booth and the assassination so as not to glorify the assassin or offend visitors' sensibilities. However, the enabling legislation of 1970, which created FOTH, essentially dictated the purpose of the site and thus, the main interpretive theme: "to preserve the setting and interpret the assassination and death of President Abraham Lincoln in April 1865."²

Similar to many other national parks, collaborative partnership with a nonprofit organization has been crucial to the continuing vitality and relevance of FOTH. Despite the early misgivings of some NPS staff, it is difficult to imagine what Ford's Theatre would be today if Secretary Udall had not pushed to accommodate live theater. During the past few decades of decreased NPS budgets and staffing levels, FTS has used its fundraising and grant writing capabilities to help solve major longstanding issues with projects like creating an accessible entrance to the House Where Lincoln Died, upgrading HVAC systems and theater seating, instituting a timed-entry ticket system to manage the daily crush of visitors, and developing a comprehensive educational program for teachers. Over the last ten years or so, with the creation of new Visitor Services and Education Departments, FTS has expanded its role in interpreting the site and increased its collaboration with the NPS. FTS's opening of the Ford's Theatre Center for Education and Leadership in 2012 realized a shared dream of creating a Lincoln campus on Tenth Street and enabled Ford's Theatre to offer a broader array of educational and interpretive programming. Construction of the new lobby and box office in the Atlantic Building has led to daily interaction between NPS and FTS staff.³ Weekly meetings between the NPS site manager and FTS visitor services manager have improved communication and coordination between the partners.⁴

As FOTH expanded its interpretive footprint and visitation through the partnership with FTS, it became a catalyst for change in the surrounding neighborhood. The historic theater opened its doors in 1968, just two months before the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The subsequent uprising in Washington, DC, left damaged buildings and closed businesses stretching down Seventh Street, NW, near Ford's Theatre. As the capital city recovered and Ford's Theatre developed into a popular tourist destination, the neighborhood began to change. The influx of tourists to the area brought renewed interest in the Tenth Street corridor, bringing new development to the area, but also displacing some of its previous residents

¹ Since 2018, however, much of the house's furnishings have been in storage while the NPS conducts maintenance work on the interior and finalizes interpretation and furnishing decisions. Caridad de la Vega, cultural resource program manager, NAMA, email message to Jennifer Sale Crane, CRA, Inc., April 23, 2021.

² National Park Service, *Foundation Document*, 6.

³ Jones, email to Crane and Poole, July 9, 2020.

⁴ Jeffrey M. Jones, site manager, FOTH, email message to Jennifer Sale Crane, Lauren Poole, and Elizabeth Heavrin, CRA, Inc., July 10, 2020.

and small businesses. Bars, restaurants, retail stores, and entertainment venues sprung up throughout the Penn Quarter area, filling vacant storefronts and breathing new life into the Ford's Theatre vicinity.⁵

Under continued budget shortfalls, FOTH is dependent on the strong partnership and thoughtful stewardship of the NPS and FTS. Scott Hill, former FOTH ranger, paraphrased Shakespeare when summing up the past relationship between the two organizations. For FTS, "The play's the thing," while "for the Park Service staff, the history was the thing."⁶ But with FTS's expansion into interpretive and educational programming over the last ten years, its mission has broadened to be more compatible with that of the NPS. Shared spaces and shared goals have led to stronger and more effective collaboration. With current issues of memorialization and politicized violence at the cultural forefront, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site is as relevant and important as ever to the American public.

⁵ Jake Flack, "Fifty Years of Ford's Theatre: 1968 Neighborhood Riots and Renewal," Ford's Theatre, Ford's Theatre Society, accessed July 29, 2020, <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/fifty-years-of-fords-theatre-1968-neighborhood-riots-and-renewal/>.

⁶ Hill, interview.

Research Recommendations

The research methodology for this report has primarily focused on park management records at FOTH, the NCA archives, Harper's Ferry Center, and Record Group 79 at the National Archives and Records Administration; primary source documents and photographs from the FOTH museum collection; and oral history interviews with NPS staff, which included interviews we conducted recently and older interviews found in the NPS Oral History Collection at the Harper's Ferry Center. The authors also used NPS online document repositories IRMA and E-TIC, as well as online historical newspaper databases. While our research was fairly exhaustive, future efforts might attempt, if possible, to track down NPS email correspondence, referred to as "CC Mail," from park staff in the 1990s and early 2000s. Future research could also seek to identify records and correspondence relating to FOTH from the Museum and History Branches, if preserved, during the 1940s to 1960s period. Research of the correspondence collections of past Regional Directors and Directors may also provide insight into management decisions concerning FOTH.

The research phase of this report unfortunately coincided with the temporary closure of two vital archives for District of Columbia history. The city's Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Library, containing the Washingtoniana collection, closed in September 2018 for a three-year rehabilitation project. The Washingtoniana collection moved to a temporary location but suffered from unpredictable closures and limited access. The Kiplinger Research Library of the Historical Society of Washington, DC, closed its doors from late 2018 to September 2019 for extensive renovations, and again closed in March 2020 (having not reopened at the time of writing) as a precaution for the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research should make use of the extensive resources of both archives.

While this administrative history covered the topics deemed most pertinent to park management and staff, a few items deserve further investigation. A future report could examine public-private partnerships in the NCA, comparing the history of processes and collaboration between the various partner organizations and their parks. A partnership analysis could also focus on national parks, system-wide, with performing arts programs, or national parks with substantial interpretive partners, similar to FOTH. *National Capital Region Administrative History* (2008) of Robinson & Associates, Inc., provides a useful summary of partnerships across the region.

The history of the Black experience at FOTH deserves further study. With Lincoln as a key figure in Black history, how has this community experienced the site? Research could begin with Baptist Alley and its diverse group of residents, including Mary Ann Turner and Mary Jane Anderson, two of twenty-seven Black witnesses who gave crucial testimony at the conspirators' trial.¹ Research could examine how Black people experienced Lincoln's assassination and contributed to the initial funds for a memorial to Lincoln. When the DC Public Library's Martin Luther King, Jr., branch reopens, examination of local Black newspapers in the Washingtoniana collection may provide accounts of how the Black community first experienced the House Where Lincoln Died and the early Lincoln Museum in Ford's Theatre. A study could extend into the success of Black performances at Ford's Theatre in the 1970s under the leadership of Frankie Hewitt as the city was recovering from the 1968 riots. Ultimately, research could demonstrate a continuum of the Black community's connection with Ford's Theatre from Lincoln's assassination to the present.

¹ Benn Pitman, ed., *The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach & Baldwin, 1865), 75.

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Abbreviations

ETIC	NPS Electronic Technical Information Center online document repository, https://pubs.etic.nps.gov
FOTH	NPS alpha code for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site
HFC	NPS Harpers Ferry Center, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia
IRMA	NPS Integrated Resource Management Applications online document and data repository, https://irma.nps.gov/Portal/
MRCE	National Capital Area Museum Resource Center, Landover, Maryland
NARA-CP	National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland
NPSNCR	National Capital Area office, Washington, DC

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APPENDIX A. CHRONOLOGY OF PARK DEVELOPMENT

1849	Construction of main block of House Where Lincoln Died, owned by tailor William Petersen.
February 28, 1863	Cornerstone laid for “New Ford’s Theatre,” shell of current structure.
April 14, 1865	President Abraham Lincoln mortally wounded by John Wilkes Booth during performance of <i>Our American Cousin</i> .
April 15, 1865	President Abraham Lincoln dies in first floor bedroom of the Petersens’ boarding house.
August–November 1865	Federal government rents Ford’s Theatre, demolishes interior, and constructs three floors of open office space.
April 7, 1866	Congressional authorization for purchase of Ford’s Theatre from John T. Ford for \$100,000 (14 Stat. 23).
1878	Construction of 517 Tenth Street, NW, purchased and incorporated into FOTH as office space in 1974.
1883	First memorialization of the Petersen House with marble plaque noting the house in which Abraham Lincoln died.
June 9, 1893	Interior of Ford’s Theatre collapses during excavation work, twenty-two government clerks killed.
October 17, 1893	The House Where Lincoln Died (Petersen House) first opens as a museum displaying Osborn H. Oldroyd’s collection of Lincolniana; House leased by Memorial Association of the District of Columbia from then-owner Louis Schade.
1894	Ford’s Theatre used as government publications warehouse.
June 11, 1896	Congressional authorization for purchase of Petersen House for \$30,000, sale occurs on November 10, 1896 (20 Stat. 439).
May 11, 1926	Congressional authorization to purchase the Oldroyd collection for \$50,000 (P.L. 69-531).
May 29, 1928	Administration of Ford’s Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died transferred from the War Department to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital (P.L. 70-888).
February 12, 1932	Lincoln Museum opens on first floor of Ford’s Theatre building, displaying Oldroyd collection moved from the House Where Lincoln Died; House Where Lincoln Died reopens to public as a historic house museum, first time house is furnished almost as it appeared on night of Lincoln’s death.

June 10, 1933	Administration of Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre) and the House Where Lincoln Died transferred to the National Park Service (Executive Order 6166).
September 1933	Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre) and the House Where Lincoln Died assigned to NPS Branch of Buildings under Assistant Director James F. Gill.
October 1935	Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre) and the House Where Lincoln Died transferred to new Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, led by Acting Assistant Director Verne E. Chatelain.
1936	NPS museum laboratory established on third floor of Ford's Theatre, museum preparators construct exhibits, models, and topographic maps.
1937	Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre), the House Where Lincoln Died, and Arlington House, still under the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, share a Superintendent until 1940.
1938	Ten-cent admission fee instituted for the Lincoln Museum in Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died.
March 1940	Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre) and the House Where Lincoln Died brought into the fold of the NCP, under administration of the chief of new National Memorials and Historic Sites Section.
November 1946	First Ford's Theatre restoration study, <i>Studies for the Further Development of Ford's Theatre, Including Restoration and Other Alternatives</i> , written by T. Sutton Jett, William M. Haussmann, and Edward Kelly; Recommends partial restoration.
1946–1948	NPS museum laboratory reopens on the third floor of Ford's Theatre.
May 28, 1954	Congressional authorization for study to “preserve and interpret” Ford's Theatre, including reconstruction of interior and museum space for Oldroyd collection (P.L. 83-372).
July 1955	<i>Notes on the Reconstruction of Ford's Theatre</i> , written by the Architectural Branch, NCP, recommends only restoring the Ford's Theatre exterior and installing an upgraded Lincoln Museum.
1955	<i>Structural Analysis and Report of the Ford's Theatre Building (Lincoln Museum)</i> , written by civil engineer Bernard F. Locraft, reveals severe structural deficiencies.
January 1956	<i>Historical and Architectural Features Significant in the Restoration or Partial Restoration of Ford's Theatre</i> written by Stanley W. McClure.
April 19, 1956	<i>Report on Audit of the Operations of the Lincoln Museum and The House Where Lincoln Died</i> written by James B. Robinson.

1958	NCP reorganized, administration of Lincoln Museum (Ford's Theatre) and the House Where Lincoln Died moves under NCP Superintendent Harry T. Thompson
Late 1958–June 1959	First major restoration project for the House Where Lincoln Died; Later additions demolished, rear enclosed porch and stairs rebuilt, brownstone stairs replaced.
1960	First <i>Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre (Part I)</i> written by Randle B. Truett and Robert F. Fenton.
May 13, 1960	Congressional authorization for Department of Interior appropriation, including \$200,000 for Historic Structures Report and architectural plans for Ford's Theatre (P.L. 86-455).
1962	National Capital Parks renamed National Capital Region.
1962	<i>Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre (Part II)</i> written by Randle B. Truett, George J. Olszewski, and William A. Dennin.
1963	<i>Historic Structures Report: Restoration of Ford's Theatre</i> written by George J. Olszewski.
November 22, 1963	President John F. Kennedy assassinated in Dallas, Texas.
July 7, 1964	Congressional authorization for Department of Interior appropriation, including \$2,073,600 for restoration of Ford's Theatre, reconstruction of Star Saloon, and construction of new museum in the basement of Ford's Theatre (P.L. 88-356).
November 8, 1964	Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died added to the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites.
November 29, 1964	Ford's Theatre closed for renovation.
1965	National Capital Region divided into five administrative units; Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died made part of National Capital Parks-Central unit.
January 5, 1965	Construction begins on Ford's Theatre restoration.
April 14, 1965	Centennial of Lincoln's assassination.
May 18, 1965	Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall approves use of Ford's Theatre for live theater.
1966	<i>Furnishing Plan for the Restored Ford's Theatre and its Annexes</i> written by George J. Olszewski.
1966	First master plan for Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died written by Franklin R. Mullaly and William R. Failor.

October 15, 1966	Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
1967	<i>House Where Lincoln Died: Furnishing Study</i> written by George J. Olszewski.
1967	District of Columbia Highway Department installs upgrades to the Ford's Theatre block of Tenth Street, NW, including brick sidewalks, historical street lights, and a wide pedestrian walkway of granite blocks connecting Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died.
June 1967	Frankie Hewitt establishes Ford's Theatre Society.
January 1, 1968	NPS and FTS execute first cooperative agreement, covering two seasons.
January 21, 1968	Official dedication of the restored Ford's Theatre and new Lincoln Museum on the lower level.
January 30, 1968	Opening night gala for the restored Ford's Theatre; Helen Hayes gives first public performance on Ford's Theatre stage since Lincoln's assassination.
February 5, 1968	Preview performance of <i>John Brown's Body</i> by the National Repertory Theater; First play performed on Ford's Theatre stage since Lincoln's assassination.
April 4–8, 1968	Civil unrest in Washington, DC, follows the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
1969	First Scope of Collections document created for the combined collections of Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died.
1970	First site manager, Donald F. Gillespie, assigned to Ford's Theatre.
January 26, 1970	NPS and FTS sign new eight-year cooperative agreement.
June 23, 1970	Establishment of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, combining Ford's Theatre, the House Where Lincoln Died, and 517 Tenth Street, NW, into one park; Authorized purchase of 517 Tenth Street, NW (P.L. 91-288).
1974	Federal government finally purchases 517 Tenth Street, NW, after clear title is assured.
1976	<i>Furnishing Plan, House Where Lincoln Died (Petersen House)</i> written by curator Vera B. Craig.
1978–July 1980	Restoration of exterior and first floor rooms of the House Where Lincoln Died, based on thorough research and historical evidence.
1979	<i>Scope of Collection Statement, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site</i> written by NPS.
July 25, 1980	NPS and FTS sign a new three-year cooperative agreement.

1980s	Museum curator Frank Hebblethwaite and curatorial staff input collection records from card catalog into NPS's first digital system, Automated National Catalog System (ANCS).
1982	NPS approves updated National Register of Historic Places historical documentation for Ford's Theatre and the House Where Lincoln Died, submitted by Gary Scott.
1982	FOTH museum collection and Lincoln Library collection moved from Regional Museum Vault in Union Station, Washington, DC, to new Museum and Archeological Regional Storage (MARS) facility in Lanham, Maryland.
1985–1986	Archeological investigation under the floor of the rear ell addition of the House Where Lincoln Died, led by Stephen Potter, uncovers more than 6,000 artifacts.
1986	<i>Annual Statements for Interpretation and Visitor Services, Ford's Theatre</i> written by Site Manager Joseph Geary.
April 1986	<i>Statement for Management, National Capital Parks-Central</i> written by NPS staff.
January 1986	<i>Collection Management Plan, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site</i> written by consultant Suzanne B. Schell.
1990	Lincoln Museum reopens with new design and exhibits that place more emphasis on Lincoln's assassination as well as Booth and the conspirators.
1991	<i>Archeology at the Petersen House</i> , discussing the 1985–1986 archeological investigation, written by Matthew Virta.
1995–1996	Model Collaboration Project with George Washington University and Friends of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, Inc., to update interpretive practices and staff training.
2001	FOTH reaches all-time peak annual visitation of 1,224,540.
February 28, 2003	Frankie Hewitt dies of cancer, age 71.
2004	Paul R. Tetreault takes the helm of FTS as production director.
August 11, 2004	NPS and FTS enter into a new general agreement.
2005	National Capital Parks-Central administrative unit renamed National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA).
August 28, 2007	Ford's Theatre closes for multi-year renovation including accessibility improvements and installation of new museum.
2008	FOTH separates from NAMA to become an independent unit, assigns first dedicated superintendent, Kym Elder.

February 12, 2009	Ford's Theatre reopens, featuring elevators and accessible bathrooms, new HVAC system, new theater-style seating, new lobby in adjacent Atlantic Building, and its first timed-ticketing system.
July 15, 2009	Lincoln Museum reopens, designed to modern standards with interactive and multimedia exhibits.
2010	First time FOTH receives NPS annual visitor survey cards, participates in annual NPS visitor survey.
July 2010	<i>Environmental Assessment: Repair and Rehabilitate the Petersen House</i> written by NPS to satisfy Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
September 27, 2010	House Where Lincoln Died closes for one-year construction of a doorway from the enclosed porch to Ford's Theatre Society's new Center for Education and Leadership (CEL) next door.
October 2011	House Where Lincoln Died reopens.
February 21, 2012	Ford's Theatre Society's CEL opens, including a doorway between the House Where Lincoln Died and CEL elevators.
2012	FOTH returns to NAMA administrative unit after four years of independence.
2013	FOTH <i>Foundation Document</i> published.
February–May 2015	Series of "Ford's 150" programming in honor of the 150 th anniversary of Lincoln's assassination; Collaboration between NPS, FTS, and other major partners.
April 14–15, 2015	"Lincoln Tribute" sesquicentennial event: thirty-six hours of continuous programming to commemorate the night of Lincoln's assassination and death.
June 1, 2015	NPS and FTS enter into a new five-year general agreement effective retroactively to October 1, 2014.
December 2017	House Where Lincoln Died closes for six-month renovation to update historic furnishings and wallpaper, install new fire suppression system, and address maintenance and preservation issues.
November 2018	<i>Ford's Theatre 2018 Interpretive Plan</i> completed by consultant Kate Haley Goldman. A collaboration between the NPS and FTS, the plan defines "foundational truths" and interpretive themes.

APPENDIX B. SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION AND EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

Table B-1. Summary of Legislation and Executive Actions.

Date	Title of Act	Summary
April 7, 1866	Act of April 7, 1866 (14 Stat. 23)	Authorized the purchase of Ford's Theatre "for the deposit and safe-keeping of documentary papers relating to the soldiers of the Army of the United States, and of the museum of the medical and surgical department of the Army, \$100,000."
June 11, 1896	An Act Making Appropriations for Sundry Civil Expenses of the Government (20 Stat. 439)	Appropriation for the War Department to purchase the "house on Tenth Street...where Abraham Lincoln died," for \$30,000 and an additional \$1,000 for repairs.
May 11, 1926	An Act for the Purchase of the Oldroyd Collection of Lincoln Relics (P.L. 69-531)	Authorized Secretary of State, Secretary of War, and Attorney General to pay up to \$50,000 to purchase the Oldroyd collection.
May 29, 1928	An Act Making Appropriations to Supply Deficiencies in Certain Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1928 (P.L. 70-888)	"Responsibility for the care, maintenance and protection" of Ford's Theatre transferred from the War Department to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital.
June 10, 1933	Executive Action 6166	Properties administered by the Office of Public Parks and Public Buildings of the Nation's Capital transferred to the National Park Service (NPS).
May 28, 1954	Joint Resolution Requiring the Preparation of an Estimate of the Cost of Reconstructing Ford's Theater[sic] (P.L. 83-372, 68 Stat. 143)	Authorized Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study "to determine the most appropriate treatment in order to preserve and interpret" Ford's Theatre, "as it was on April 14, 1865," including a cost estimate to reconstruct the interior and a cost estimate to create a museum for the Oldroyd collection.
May 13, 1960	An Act Making Appropriations for the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1961 (P.L. 86-455)	Authorized NPS appropriation, including \$200,000 for a Historic Structures Report and architectural plans for Ford's Theatre.
July 7, 1964	An Act Making Appropriations for the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1965 (P.L. 88-356)	NPS construction budget for FY 1964–1965 included \$2,073,600 for the restoration of Ford's Theatre, reconstruction of Star Saloon, and construction of new museum in the basement.
June 23, 1970	An Act to Establish the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site (P.L. 91-288, 84 Stat. 322)	Authorized the Secretary of the Interior to purchase 517 Tenth Street NW; Combined Ford's Theatre, the House Where Lincoln Died, and 517 Tenth Street NW into one park designated as Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

**APPENDIX C. LIST OF SUPERINTENDENTS, CHIEFS,
AND SITE MANAGERS**

Table C-1. List of Superintendents, Chiefs, and Site Managers.

	<u>Superintendents and Chiefs</u>	<u>Custodians and Site Managers¹</u>
<u>1930</u>		Lewis G. Reynolds custodian, ² House Where Lincoln Died (1928–1936) ³
	Harper L. Garrett superintendent, Arlington House, Lincoln Museum, and House Where Lincoln Died (1937–1939)	John T. Clemens custodian, Lincoln Museum (1932–1942) ⁴
	Randle B. Truett superintendent, Arlington House, Lincoln Museum, and House Where Lincoln Died (1939–1940)	
<u>1940</u>	Randle B. Truett chief, Memorials and Historic Sites Section, National Capital Parks (NCP) (1940–1941)	
	Florence McGuire Bankhead chief, Memorials and Historic Sites Section, NCP (1941–1942)	
	Randle B. Truett chief, Memorials and Historic Sites Section, NCP (1942–1943)	Jessie H. Pearce custodian, House Where Lincoln Died (circa 1942–1950) ⁵

¹ The names of twentieth-century site managers were compiled from archival records and correspondence, historical newspapers, and online research. Despite extensive research, there are some chronological gaps, particularly for 1976–1984, and a period during the late 1980s and early 1990s. These were likely periods of high turnover of acting site managers, with many site managers occupying the position for one year or less, as indicated by Rae Emerson, former FOTH site manager and deputy superintendent. Emerson, interview.

² During this period, the role of a custodian was similar to that of a site manager.

³ Lewis G. Reynolds was first hired in 1928 by the Office of Public Parks and Public Buildings of the National Capital, before its properties were transferred to the NPS in 1933.

⁴ John T. Clemens was first hired in 1932 by the Office of Public Parks and Public Buildings of the National Capital.

⁵ Pearce's exact tenure could not be confirmed; however, she was mentioned in Shattuck to Pearce, December 5, 1942; in Olszewski, *Furnishing Study*, 86, appendix C3; and in Griffiths, "Lincoln's Tragedy," *Sunday Star Magazine*. After Lewis G. Reynolds left his position as custodian of the House Where Lincoln Died in 1936, John T. Clemens was mentioned in several memos involving matters at the House Where Lincoln Died, and likely took over as custodian of both properties until he retired in 1942.

Superintendents and Chiefs

Custodians and Site Managers¹

T. Sutton Jett
chief, Memorials and Historic Sites
Section, NCP
(1943–1943)

Stanley W. McClure
chief, Memorials and Historic Sites
Section, NCP
(1943–1946)

T. Sutton Jett
chief, Memorials and Historic Sites
Section, NCP
(1946–1948)

1950

Randle B. Truett
chief, Memorials and Historic Sites
Section, NCP
(1949–1958)

1960

Harry T. Thompson
superintendent, NCP
(1958–1961)

T. Sutton Jett
superintendent, NCP
(1961–1962)

T. Sutton Jett
director, NCR (briefly Region VI)
(1962–1968)⁶

Lawrence C. Hadley
superintendent, NCP-Central⁷
(1965–1966)

Monte E. Fitch
superintendent, NCP-Central
(1966–1968)

Eugene J. Colbert
site manager,
Ford's Theatre National Historic
Site (FOTH)
(1968)

⁶ T. Sutton Jett was responsible for administration of FOTH until the National Capital Parks-Central administrative unit was created in 1965.

⁷ The National Capital Parks-Central administrative unit, including FOTH, was created in 1965.

Superintendents and Chiefs

Custodians and Site Managers¹

William R. Failor
superintendent, NCP-Central
(1968–1972)

Olof Anderson
acting site manager, FOTH
(1969)

1970

Luther C. Burnett
superintendent, NCP-Central
(1972–1977)

Donald F. Gillespie
site manager, FOTH
(1970–1972)

Roger Sulcer
superintendent, NCP-Central
(1977–1980)

Skip Larson
site manager, FOTH
(1975)

1980

William F. Ruback
superintendent, NCP-Central
(1980–1989)

Joseph T. Geary
site manager, FOTH
(1985–1986)

1990

Arnold M. Goldstein
superintendent, NCP-Central
(1989–2002)

Tom Peyton
site manager, FOTH
(1990)

Robert Fudge
site manager, FOTH
(1994)

Christopher Jones
site manager, FOTH
(1995)

2000

Suzanne Kelley
site manager, FOTH
(1996–2002)

Vikki Keys
acting superintendent, NCP-Central
(2003–2004)

Rae Emerson
site manager, FOTH
(2003–2008)

Vikki Keys
superintendent, National Mall and
Memorial Parks
(formerly NCP-Central)
(2005–2006)

Margaret O'Dell
superintendent, National Mall and
Memorial Parks
(2007–2008)

Superintendents and Chiefs

Custodians and Site Managers¹

2010

Kym M. Elder⁸
superintendent, Ford's Theatre
National Historic Site
(2008–2012)

Robert A. Vogel
superintendent, National Mall and
Memorial Parks
(2011–2014)

Gay E. Vietzke
superintendent, National Mall and
Memorial Parks
(2015–2017)

William Cheek
site manager, FOTH⁹
(2013–2016)

Jeffrey M. Jones
site manager, FOTH
(2016–2021)

2020

Jeffrey Reinbold
superintendent, National Mall and
Memorial Parks
(2019–present)

⁸ Kym M. Elder was the first superintendent dedicated solely to FOTH. The park was administered as an independent unit during her superintendency. In 2013, the park moved back under the National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA) administrative unit and the NAMA superintendent.

⁹ When FOTH returned to the NAMA umbrella in 2013, the park superintendent position was replaced by a site manager position.

APPENDIX D. LIST OF PERTINENT AGREEMENTS

Table D-1. List of Pertinent Agreements.

Date	Type of Agreement	Agreement Made With	Summary
1999	Artifact Loan Agreement	US Supreme Court	Long-term loan of artifacts to the Supreme Court
2011	Artifact Loan Agreement	Ford's Theatre Society	For the display and stewardship of artifacts from the FOTH Museum Collection at Ford's Theatre Society's Center for Education and Leadership
2014*	Partnership Agreement	Ford's Theatre Society	Provides overall guidance on the relationship and responsibilities shared between the NPS and the FTS, includes Annual Work Plan
2020	Cooperating Association Agreement	Eastern National	Provides management and operations for the Ford's Theatre bookstore and gift shop

**Expired 2019; negotiations for renewal underway at the time of this report.*

APPENDIX E. FOUNDATION DOCUMENT, 2013

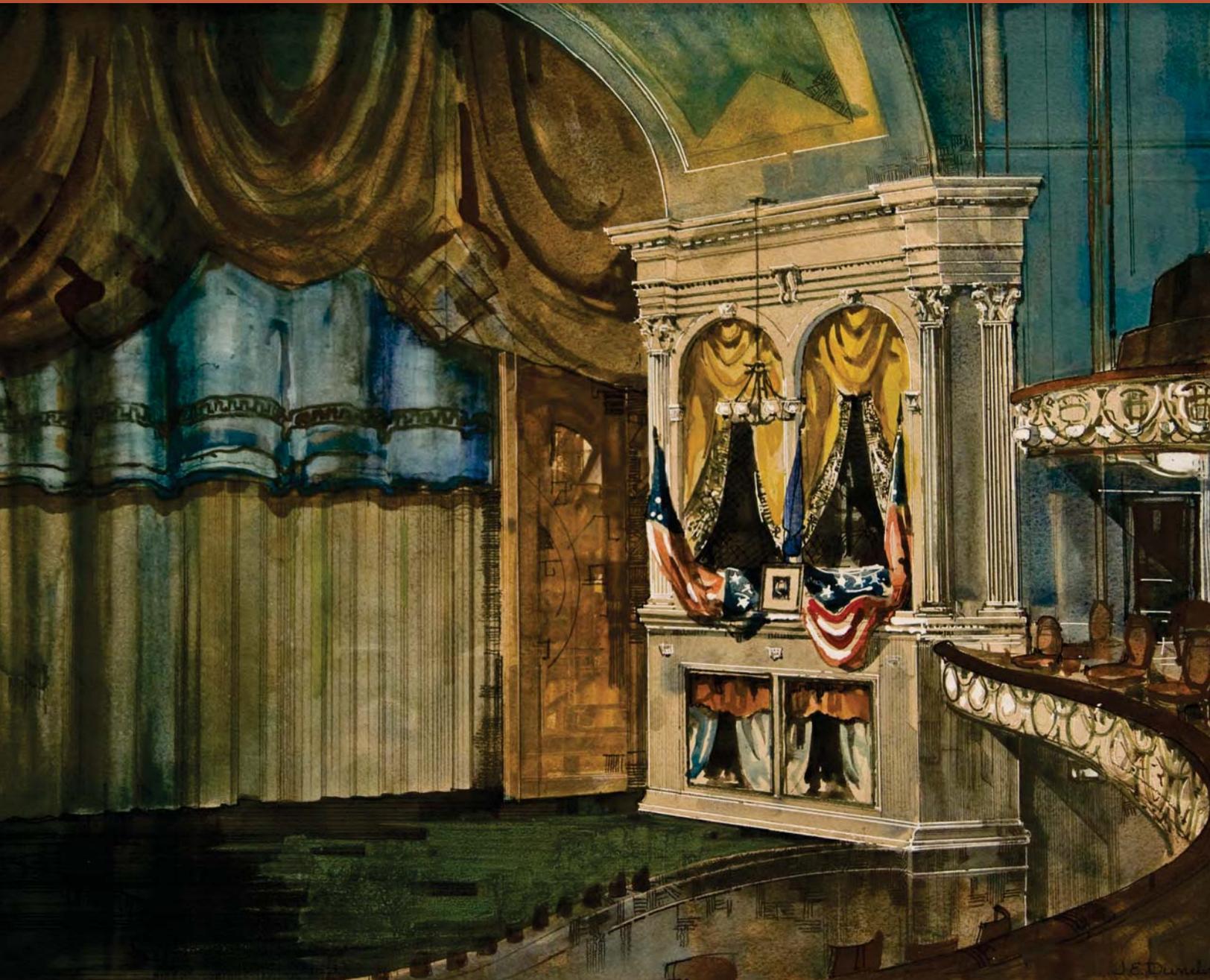


Foundation Document

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site

Washington, D.C.

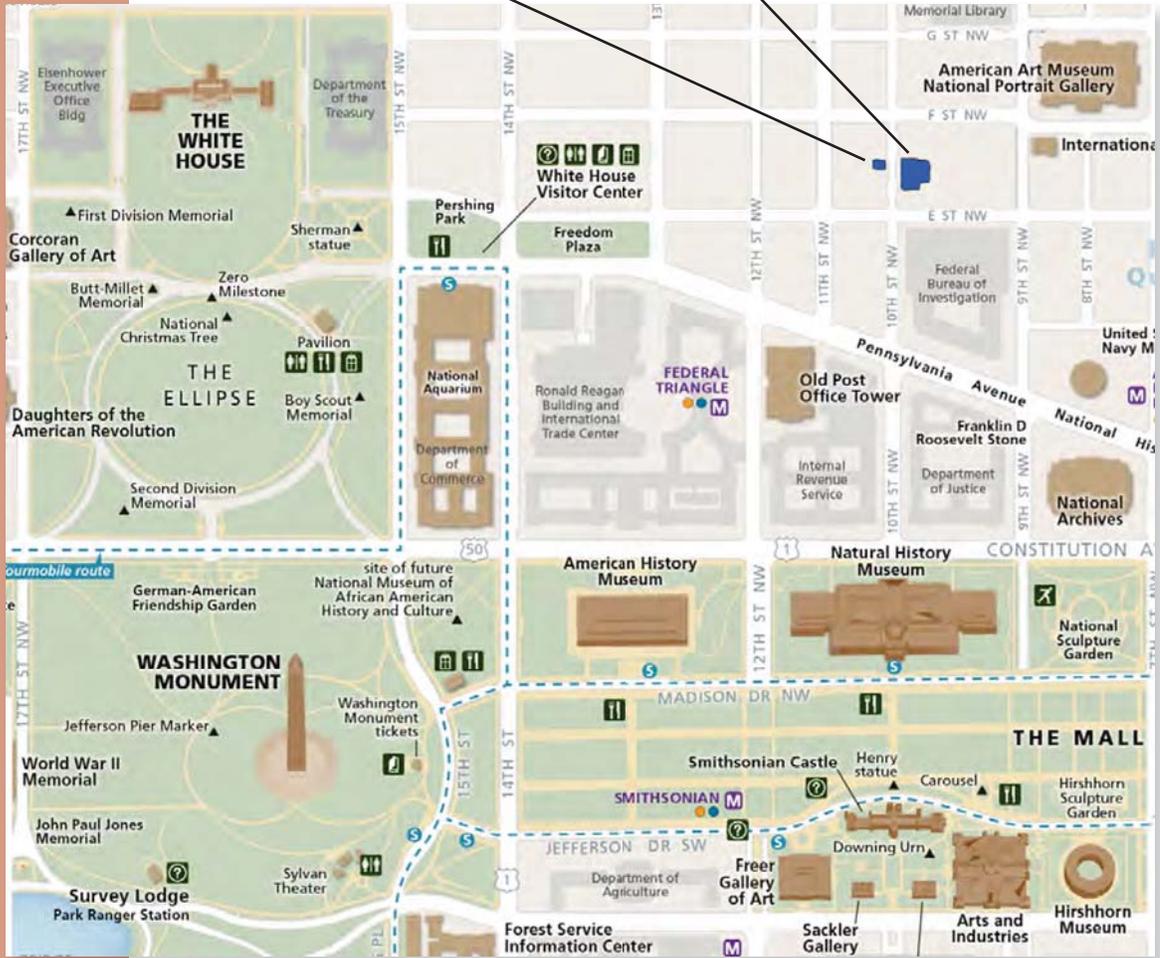
July 2013



Permission To Print
07/23/2013

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site

Petersen House



Washington, D.C. Vicinity

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Mission of the National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The NPS core values are a frame work in which the National Park Service accomplishes its mission. They express the manner in which, both individually and collectively, the National Park Service pursues its mission. The NPS core values are:

- **Shared stewardship:** We share a commitment to resource stewardship with the global preservation community.
- **Excellence:** We strive continually to learn and improve so that we may achieve the highest ideals of public service.
- **Integrity:** We deal honestly and fairly with the public and one another.
- **Tradition:** We are proud of it; we learn from it; we are not bound by it.
- **Respect:** We embrace each other's differences so that we may enrich the well-being of everyone.

The National Park Service is a bureau within the Department of the Interior. While numerous national park system units were created prior to 1916, it was not until August 25, 1916, that President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Organic Act formally establishing the National Park Service.

The national park system continues to grow and comprises over 401 park units covering more than 84 million acres in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These units include, but are not limited to, national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House. The variety and diversity of park units throughout the nation require a strong commitment to resource stewardship and management in order to ensure both the protection and enjoyment of these resources for future generations.



The arrowhead was authorized as the official National Park Service emblem by the Secretary of the Interior on July 20, 1951. The Sequoia tree and bison represent vegetation and wildlife, the mountains and water represent scenic and recreational values, and the arrowhead represents historical and archeological values.

Introduction

Every unit of the national park system is to have a foundational document that will provide basic guidance for planning and management decisions—a foundation for planning and management, or foundation document. The core components of a foundation document include the park's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, interpretive themes, and special mandates and administrative commitments. The foundation document also includes an assessment of planning and data needs that identifies planning issues, planning products to be developed, and the associated studies and data required for park planning. Along with the core components, the assessment provides a focus for park planning activities and establishes a baseline from which planning documents are developed.

A primary benefit of developing a foundation document is the opportunity to integrate and coordinate all kinds and levels of planning from a single, shared understanding of what is most important about the park. The process of developing a foundation document begins with gathering and integrating information about the park. Next, this information is refined and focused to determine what the most important attributes of the park are. The process of preparing a foundation document aids park managers, staff, and the public in identifying and clearly stating in one document the essential information that is necessary for park management to consider when determining future planning efforts, outlining key planning issues, and protecting resources and values that are integral to park purpose and identity.

While not included in this document, a park atlas is also part of a foundation project. The atlas is a series of maps compiled from available geographic information system (GIS) data on natural and cultural resources, visitor use patterns, facilities, and other topics. It serves as a GIS-based support tool for planning and park operations. The atlas is published as a (hard copy) paper product and as geospatial data for use in a web mapping environment. The park atlas for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site can be accessed online at: <http://insideparkatlas.nps.gov/>.



1931 exterior of Ford's Theatre. Note: To the right of the theatre the Star Saloon building has been removed and the area used for parking. See picture on page 4 for comparison. (NPS collection)

Part 1: Core Components

The core components of a foundation document include a brief description of the park, park purpose, significance statements, fundamental resources and values, other important resources and values, and interpretive themes. These components are core because they typically do not change over time. Core components are expected to be used in future planning and management efforts.

Brief Description of the Park

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site includes the Ford's Theatre restored to its 1865 appearance, the Petersen House (also known as The House Where Lincoln Died), and the Lincoln Museum collection (exhibited in the basement of Ford's Theatre) and other associated artifacts.

The First Baptist Church of Washington, D.C., was the first structure built on the current site of Ford's Theatre, in 1834. As the city of Washington grew, the congregation merged with the Fourth Street Baptist Church, and the building remained vacant for a number of years.

Despite the outbreak of the Civil War on April 12, 1861, John T. Ford purchased the First Baptist Church building and renovated the former church into a theatre. The theatre opened with the performance of the Christy's Minstrels on December 13, 1861, and the site became a commercial success. In December 1862 a devastating fire gutted the building, but the entrepreneurial Ford rebuilt, and the theatre was reopened on August 1863 as Ford's New Theatre. The theatre's central location on 10th Street in Washington, D.C., roughly between the Capitol building and the White House, made Ford's Theatre a popular entertainment venue for those seeking reprieve from the events of the Civil War. An avid theatre goer, President Abraham Lincoln attended shows at least a dozen times at Ford's Theatre between 1863 and April 14, 1865.

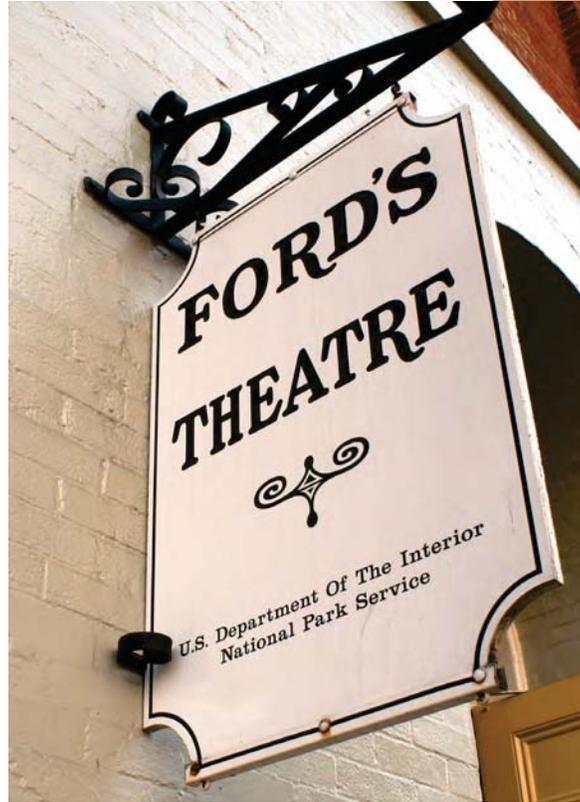
While attending a performance of "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theatre, President Lincoln became the first American president to be assassinated. On April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth, southern sympathizer, shot President Lincoln in the presidential theatre box. President Lincoln was carried across the street to the Petersen House where every effort was made to comfort him during his final hours. Members of the president's cabinet, family, and friends rallied around his side. The Petersen House became a focal point for the federal government during this national catastrophe. Meanwhile, having fled through Baptist Alley at the back

of the theatre, Booth was on the run, and the manhunt for the president's assassin and his conspirators began. On April 15, 1865, President Lincoln died at the Petersen House and the mood of the nation shifted from celebrating the end of the war to one of national mourning. Booth was captured 12 days later.



April 1865 exterior of Ford's Theatre after the assassination of President Lincoln. Mourning bands hang from the windows and guards are posted at the doors. Photographed by Alexander Gardner. (NPS Collection)

After Lincoln's assassination, Ford tried to reopen the theatre in July 1865 but public outcry and federal pressure forced him to close the theatre for good. The property was eventually purchased by the federal government in 1866. The theatre was quickly converted to an office building and used for records storage by the War Department until June 9, 1893, when the upper floors collapsed, killing 22 people and injuring another 68. Following the collapse, the building was again rebuilt and continued to function as a War Department office building until July 1, 1928. Meanwhile, across the street the Petersen House had become a place of pilgrimage for many Americans hoping to honor President Lincoln as a martyr to the cause of liberty and unity. The influx of overwhelming public interest forced the owners to rent the house to the Memorial Association of the District of Columbia. The association invited Osborn H.I. Oldroyd, a well known Lincoln memorabilia collector, to live in and curate the house for public access. Oldroyd brought his renowned collection of Lincoln memorabilia and artifacts to the site. Recognizing the importance of the house as a civic shrine for the nation, the federal government purchased the Petersen House in 1896.



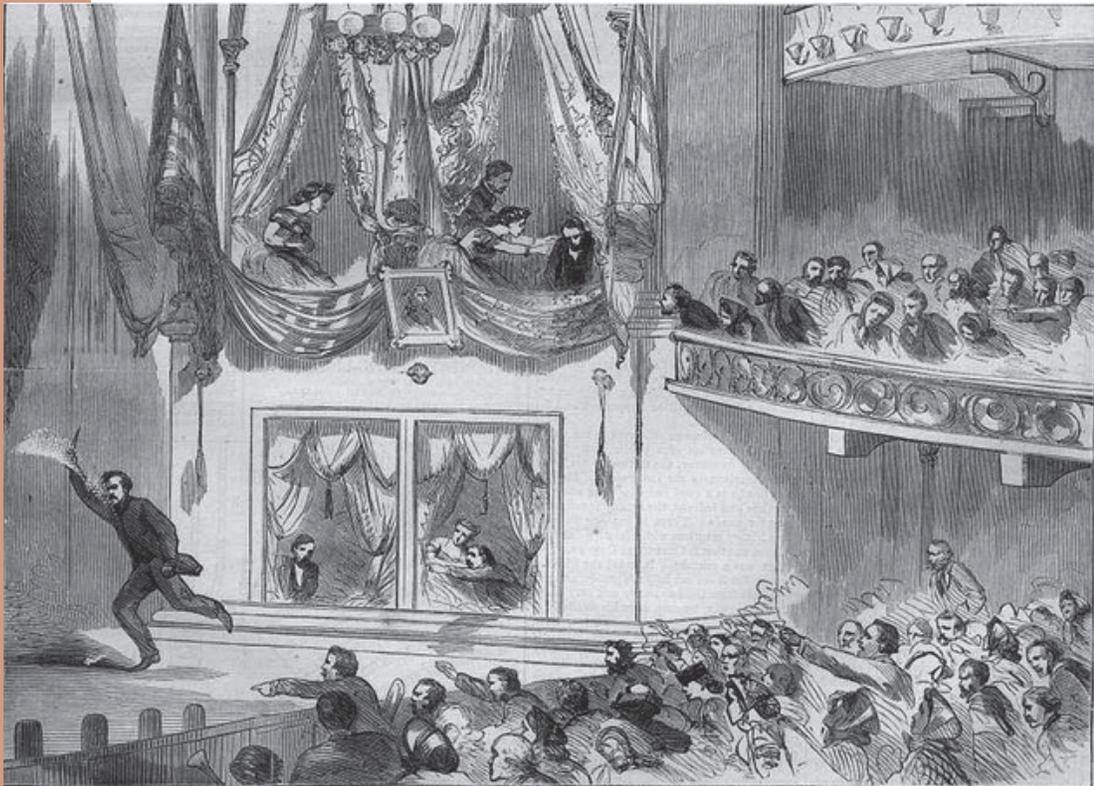
In 1926, the federal government decided to purchase the entire Oldroyd Lincoln collection. In order to consolidate the management of Ford's Theatre, the Petersen House, and the Lincoln Museum Collection, the federal government transferred both properties along with the Lincoln collection, to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital in 1928. Ford's Theatre was then repurposed as the Lincoln Museum and the collections put on display in this location. Following Executive Order 6228 in 1933, both sites and the museum collection were transferred permanently to the National Park Service, which manages these sites today as the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

As early as 1946, public and congressional efforts to restore Ford's Theatre to its appearance on April 14, 1865, began to emerge. As support grew, funding for the project was secured and Ford's Theatre closed its doors on November 29, 1964, as a full restoration project began. Over the next three years, extensive historic research and documentation were used to painstakingly restore Ford's Theatre, its interior, and the presidential theatre box to the condition during President Lincoln's time. In partnership with the Ford's Theatre Society, founded in 1967 by Frankie Hewitt, Ford's Theatre reopened its doors as a working theatre and historic site on January 30, 1968. The Ford's Theatre Society is the primary partner of the National Park Service at the site. Over the years, the Ford's Theatre Society has brought live theatre and performances to Ford's Theatre through their partnership with the National Park Service. With the support of this partnership, further renovations were undertaken in 2007, including the addition of new exhibit and display space in the basement of the theatre and improved accessibility and educational opportunities. The theatre reopened on February 12, 2009, the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

Park Purpose

The purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a particular park. The purpose statement for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site was drafted through a careful analysis of its enabling legislation and the legislative history that influenced its development. The park was established when the initial enabling legislation adopted by Congress was signed into law on June 23, 1970 (see appendix A for enabling legislation and subsequent amendments). The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about the park.

The purpose of FORD'S THEATRE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to preserve the setting and interpret the assassination and death of President Abraham Lincoln in April 1865.



Line drawing showing Booth's exit after shooting Lincoln at Ford's Theatre. (NPS Collection)

Park Significance

Significance statements express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system. These statements are linked to the purpose of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Statements of significance describe the distinctive nature of the park and why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. They focus on the most important resources and values that will assist in park planning and management.

The following significance statements have been identified for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site. (Please note that the sequence of the statements do not reflect the level of significance.)

1. **First Presidential Assassination.** Ford's Theatre is the site of the first assassination of an American president.
2. **Key Event of the Civil War.** The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln was a key event in the Civil War era.
3. **The Petersen House.** The federal government purchased the Petersen House in 1896 to commemorate and preserve the site where President Lincoln died. It is the first home bought by the federal government to be operated as a museum and interpretive site.
4. **A Working Theatre.** After the restoration to its 1865 appearance, Ford's Theatre was reestablished as a working theatre in 1968 in recognition of President Lincoln's love of the performing arts.
5. **Presidential Line of Succession.** The events at the Petersen House surrounding President Lincoln's assassination led to the development of the presidential line of succession and continuity of office.
6. **Artifacts and Evidence of the Assassination.** Ford's Theatre National Historic Site manages and interprets the most extensive collection of artifacts associated with the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.



Lincoln was attended to by his cabinet and many others at the Petersen House. (NPS Collection)

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values (FRVs) are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. Fundamental resources and values are closely related to a park’s legislative purpose and are more specific than significance statements.

Fundamental resources and values help focus planning and management efforts on what is truly significant about the park. One of the most important responsibilities of NPS managers is to ensure the conservation and public enjoyment of those qualities that are essential (fundamental) to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. If fundamental resources and values are allowed to deteriorate, the park purpose and/or significance could be jeopardized.

The following fundamental resources and values have been identified for Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site:

- **Authenticity and sense of place.** Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House provide an opportunity to experience the setting where the assassination and death of President Abraham Lincoln took place in April 1865. An authentic sense of place creates a unique personal experience for visitors by placing them in the context of the historic events leading up to and including President Lincoln’s assassination.
- **The Recreated 1865 Theatre Interior.** The reconstructed Ford’s Theatre interior with the presidential theatre box allows visitors to experience the theatre setting as President Lincoln would have in 1865.
- **Museum Collections and Archives.** Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site museum collections and archives are the largest collection of President Lincoln artifacts related to the assassination. The museum collection includes part of the Oldroyd Collection of Lincoln artifacts, which is the original Lincoln Museum collection of Osborn Oldroyd. The collection includes artifacts related to the conspirators, the federal investigation, and evidence related to the assassination of President Lincoln.



Our American Cousin stage set, the box where President Lincoln and guests were sitting while watching the play. (NPS Collection)



Currier and Ives rendering of The Assassination of President Lincoln. (NPS Collection)

- Commemoration of President Lincoln.** Following the events of April 14–15, 1865, both Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House became sites of national pilgrimage as civic shrines to the assassination and death of President Lincoln. Ford's Theatre National Historic Site informs and inspires more than half a million visitors annually about the life and legacy of President Abraham Lincoln.
- Survival of our Democracy.** Ford's Theatre National Historic Site serves as a symbolic representation of the survival of democracy and the continuation of the federal government in the face of the violent act of assassination. Despite the attempts of the conspirators, the democratic ideals of the United States survived the assassination and death of President Lincoln. Although this event had a profound effect on American history, the federal government successfully transitioned through this tragedy.
- Ford's Theatre Society Partnership.** Ford's Theatre National Historic Site partners extensively with the Ford's Theatre Society to improve the visitors' experience at the park. The partnership allows for the production of live theatre performances and other events in Ford's Theatre. The partnership also enhances the daytime experience through programming and dedicated front-line staff. Across 10th Street, the Ford's Theatre Society's Center for Education and Leadership occupies the building next to the Petersen House. Access to the center's exhibit space was made available through an extensive rehabilitation of the building that connects this facility to the Petersen House. Visitors seamlessly enter this building through an accessible elevator and continue their experience by learning about the aftermath of the assassination, the impact on Lincoln's family, and his legacy to the nation. Artifacts from the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site are also on display at the center.
- Live Performance.** Performances at Ford's Theatre connect visitors to the historic use of the building. Watching a performance at Ford's Theatre as President Lincoln did creates a unique experience and allows for deeper visitor engagement at the park.

Other Important Resources and Values

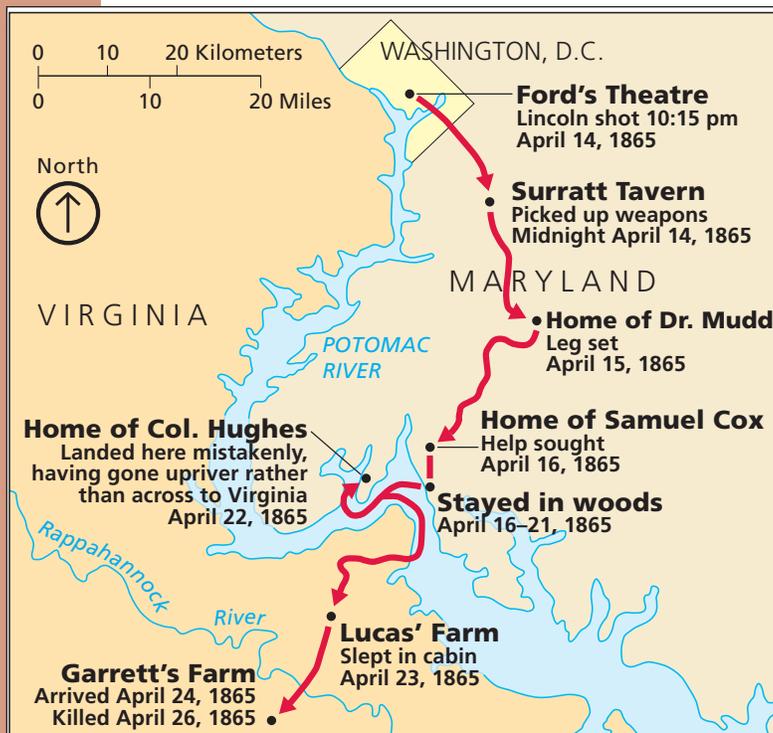
Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site contains other resources and values that are not fundamental to the purpose of the park, and may be unrelated to its significance, but are important to consider in planning processes. These are referred to as “other important resources and values” (OIRV). These resources and values have been selected because they are important in the operation and management of the park, and warrant special consideration in park planning.

The following other important resources and values have been identified for Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site:

- **10th Street Landscape and Viewshed.** The physical location of Ford’s Theatre and Petersen House on 10th Street in Washington, D.C., played a significant role in their place in history. Roughly located between the White House and Capitol building, the theatre became a popular entertainment venue. The Petersen House’s location across the street from the theatre was the closest place to take the mortally wounded president. The 10th Street streetscape supports an immersive visitor experience and connects these two buildings physically.

The 10th Street viewshed also contributes to the L’Enfant Plan of Washington, D.C. The National Park Service is dedicated to improving and perpetuating these historic planned viewsheds, as outlined in the 2010 National Mall Plan.

- **Baptist Alley and Booth’s Escape Route.** After shooting President Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth leapt from the presidential box onto the stage and ran out the back door into Baptist Alley. Booth’s escape and the subsequent manhunt for the assassination conspirators is a significant part of the Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site story. Beginning in Baptist Alley and ending 12 days later in Virginia, the chase for America’s first presidential assassin gripped the nation.
- **Archeology.** William Petersen ran a tailor shop in the storefront of what we now call the Petersen House and his family took in boarders in the rooms above. Archeological resources at the Petersen House allow us to learn about the diet, consumer habits, entertainment, and social life of the Petersen household.



This map shows the route of Booth's escape after he shot President Lincoln. (NPS Image)

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from, and should reflect, park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significance statements and fundamental and other important resources and values.

Interpretive themes are an organizational tool that reveal and clarify meaning, concepts, contexts, and values represented by park resources. Sound themes are accurate and reflect current scholarship and science. They encourage exploration of the context in which events or natural processes occurred and the effects of those events and processes. They go beyond a mere description of the event or process to foster multiple opportunities to experience and consider the park and its resources. Themes help to explain why a park story is relevant to people who may otherwise be unaware of connections they have to an event, time, or place associated with the park.

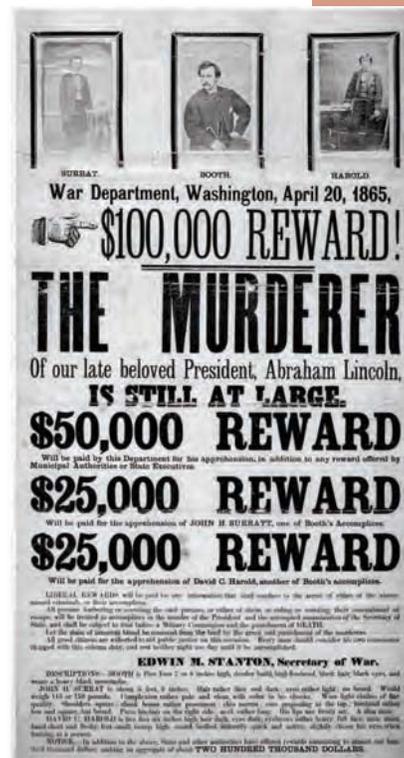
The following interpretive themes have been identified for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site (each of these has several subthemes, which appear in appendix D):

- The causes behind the assassination of Abraham Lincoln were many and varied, and are still meaningful today.
- Lincoln's assassination and death had far-reaching and profound consequences.
- Lincoln's love for the performing arts provides insight as to why Ford's Theatre became the backdrop for the assassination, and why the physical site is still relevant today.
- The Lincoln assassination created political, social, and personal crises that found their geographical focal point at the Petersen House.
- During the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the time of the Civil War, the city of Washington and the nation underwent profound changes.

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site also works with partners and others to tell the extended story of Abraham Lincoln's life, the Civil War, and the assassination conspiracy at other sites across the United States.



The conspirators.
(NPS Collection)



Reward poster.
(NPS Collection)

Part 2: Dynamic Components

The dynamic components of a foundation document include special mandates and administrative commitments and an assessment of planning and data needs. These components are dynamic because they will change over time. New special mandates can be established and new administrative commitments made. As conditions and trends of fundamental and other important resources and values change over time, the analysis of planning and data needs will need to be revisited and revised, along with key issues. Therefore, this part of the foundation document will be updated accordingly.

Special Mandates and Administrative Commitments

Many of the management decisions for a park unit are directed or influenced by special mandates and administrative commitments with other federal agencies, state and local governments, utility companies, partnering organizations, and other entities. Special mandates are requirements specific to a park that must be fulfilled. Mandates can be expressed in enabling legislation, in separate legislation following the establishment of the park, or through a judicial process. They may expand on park purpose or introduce elements unrelated to the purpose of the park. Administrative commitments are, in general, agreements that have been reached through formal, documented processes, often through memoranda of agreement. Examples include easements, rights-of-way, arrangements for emergency service responses, etc. Special mandates and administrative commitments can support, in many cases, a network of partnerships that help fulfill the objectives of the park and facilitate working relationships with other organizations. They are an essential component of managing and planning for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

Key special mandates and administrative commitments identified by the park include:

- Partnership agreement with the Ford's Theatre Society
- Museum artifact loan agreements
- Cooperating association agreement for the NPS bookstore with Eastern National
- United States Park Police security contract

For more information about these existing commitments for the park, please see appendix C.

Assessment of Planning and Data Needs

Once the core components of part 1 of the foundation document have been identified, it is important to gather and evaluate existing information about the park's fundamental and other important resources and values, and develop a full assessment of the park's planning and data needs. The assessment of planning and data needs section presents planning issues, the planning projects that will address these issues, and the associated information requirements for planning, such as resource inventories and data collection, including GIS data.

There are three sections in the assessment of planning and data needs:

1. analysis of fundamental and other important resources and values
2. identification of key issues and associated planning and data needs
3. identification of planning and data needs (including spatial mapping activities or GIS maps)

The analysis of fundamental and other important resources and values and identification of key issues leads up to and supports the identification of planning and data collection needs.

Analysis of Fundamental Resources and Values

The fundamental resource and value analysis table includes current condition, potential threats and opportunities, planning and data needs, and selected laws and NPS policies related to management of the identified resource or value.

Fundamental Resource or Value	Authenticity and Sense of Place
Importance of the Resource or Value	Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House provide an opportunity to experience the setting where the assassination and death of President Abraham Lincoln took place in April 1865. An authentic sense of place creates a unique personal experience for visitors by placing them in the context of the historic events leading up to and including President Lincoln's assassination.
Related Significance Statements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Presidential Assassination. 3. The Petersen House. 4. A Working Theatre.
Current Conditions and Trends	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House receive a high volume of visitation in rather small spaces. • Ford's Theatre also hosts numerous live theatrical performances and special events throughout the year. • Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House are subject to frequent maintenance needs and demands. • Both Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House are listed as being in good condition on the List of Classified Structures (LCS). • Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places and are contributing buildings in the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District, which is also listed. • The streetscape between Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House also receives a heavy volume of use and is not under NPS management. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some demand to increase the number of visitors entering the Petersen House at one time. Fifteen visitors is the current number established for resource protection and visitor experience. • Increasing demands for theatre use by third parties, mostly not related to the park's purpose.

Fundamental Resource or Value	Authenticity and Sense of Place
<p>Threats and Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High volume of visitation in the spring affects the quality of educational and interpretive opportunities. • Illegal and legal street vendors, panhandlers, idling buses, and other traffic-related issues can seriously impact visitor safety and experience, as well as interpretive opportunities between Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House. • Continual limitations on funding and personnel needed to maintain the facilities. • Increasing needs for access will have a direct correlation to increasing maintenance demands and preservation issues. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a joint annual work plan reflecting both NPS and the Ford’s Theatre Society activities. • Collaborate with the Ford’s Theatre Society to expand walking tours to augment services related to high visitation. • Explore possible closure of 10th Street block to vehicular traffic. This could improve visitor experience dramatically by increasing safety and providing a more pedestrian friendly environment that would improve the quality of interpretation. It would also potentially improve the cultural landscape. • Continue partnership fundraising efforts and explore additional opportunities.
<p>Data Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update historic structures report for Ford’s Theatre. • Historic furnishings report for all components of the park. • Viewshed analysis of the 10th Street streetscape. • Cultural landscape inventory/report. • Facility energy usage. • Administrative history.
<p>Planning Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor use management plan. • Comprehensive interpretive plan update. • Sign/exhibit plan. • Soundscape assessment and management plan. • Energy use and efficiency evaluation and assessment. • Position management plan. • Resource stewardship strategy.
<p>Laws and Policies that Apply to the FRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance</p>	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Development Document of Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House 2001 • Historic Structure Report for Petersen House, 2006 <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors Order’s 6: <i>Interpretation and Education</i> • Directors Order’s 28: <i>Cultural Resource Management</i> • Directors Order’s 32: <i>Cooperating Associations</i> • Directors Order’s 42: <i>Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs and Services</i> • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 5.3, “Stewardship” • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 9.3.1.7, “Facilities for Arts and Culture”

Fundamental Resource or Value	The Recreated 1865 Theatre Interior
Importance of the Resource or Value	The reconstructed Ford's Theatre interior with the presidential theatre box allows visitors to experience the theatre setting as President Lincoln would have in 1865.
Related Significance Statements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Presidential Assassination. 2. Key Event of the Civil War. 6. Artifacts and Evidence of the Assassination.
Current Conditions and Trends	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High volume of visitor traffic in the spring affects the visitor experience and interpretative programming at the park. • Being a working theatre limits visitor access to the park. • Constantly changing stage sets can occasionally affect authenticity of the theatre. • Ford's Theatre is subject to frequent maintenance needs. • Ford's Theatre is listed as being in good condition on the List of Classified Structures. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for visitor comfort affects authenticity as in, for example, contemporary seating.
Threats and Opportunities	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the presidential box impacts historic artifacts. • The presidential box is very small and visitors have to enter and exit through the same door, making it difficult to manage large crowds viewing this area. • If visitation continues to increase, the opportunity for the visitor to view the box could become even more restricted. It is also currently difficult to provide an exact schedule for viewing the box to visitors. • Continual limitations on funding and personnel needed to maintain the facility. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace original artifacts with replicas to preserve original artifacts. • Restage original artifacts in a climate-controlled setting in the collections. • Seeing the interior of the theatre, even though it is recreated, imparts an emotional connection with the visitor that cannot be duplicated by other forms of researching the assassination. • Develop a use plan for the presidential box access. • Collaborate with the Ford's Theatre Society in the preparation of future exhibit management plans to ensure consistent communication with the public regarding artifacts collections and exhibit displays.
Data Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic furnishings report for all components of the park.
Planning Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive interpretive plan update. • Museum collections management plan and exhibit plan. • Integrated pest management plan. • Resource stewardship strategy.
Laws and Policies that Apply to the FRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Development Documents of the Ford's Theatre and Petersen House 2001 • NPS <i>Museum Handbook</i> <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director's Orders 28: <i>Cultural Resource Management</i> • Director's Orders 42: <i>Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs and Services</i> • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 5.3, "Stewardship" • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 9.3.1.7, "Facilities for Arts and Culture"

Fundamental Resource or Value	Museum Collections and Archives
<p>Importance of the Resource or Value</p>	<p>Ford's Theatre National Historic Site museum collections and archives are the largest collection of President Lincoln artifacts related to the assassination. The museum collection includes part of the Oldroyd Collection of Lincoln artifacts, which is the original Lincoln Museum collection of Osborn Oldroyd. The collection includes artifacts related to the conspirators, the federal investigation, and evidence related to the assassination of President Lincoln.</p>
<p>Related Significance Statements</p>	<p>1. First Presidential Assassination. 6. Artifacts and Evidence of the Assassination.</p>
<p>Current Conditions and Trends</p>	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the collection is not on display and is located at the NPS Museum Resource Center in Landover, Maryland. This includes an archeology collection. • A majority of the significant items directly related to the assassination are currently being displayed at Ford's Theatre National Historic Site. • The resources on display are highly appreciated by visitors and experience high demand for access and viewings each year. • The museum is closed to the general public while Ford's Theatre Society is hosting live theatrical performances throughout the year, but open to theatre patrons during performances. The closure can be unexpected to visitors, especially during matinee productions. • Collection at the NPS Museum Resource Center has been entered into the NPS museum database. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently there are no plans for additional exhibits from the collection because there is very little additional space at the park. • Artifact conservation is a continual need of the collection. • The museum checklist and inventory is completed annually.



Carol Highsmith photograph of overcoat worn by President Lincoln on the night he was shot by John Wilkes Booth. Quilted inscription reads: One Country, One Destiny. (NPS Collection)



Carol Highsmith photograph of derringer used by Booth to assassinate President Lincoln. (NPS Collection)

Fundamental Resource or Value	Museum Collections and Archives
<p>Threats and Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idling buses on 10th Street produce a volume of soot that infiltrates the Petersen House and Ford's Theatre. They also produce vibrations that could have long-term impacts on the fragile architecture of the Petersen House. • Most of the collection at the NPS Museum Resource Center has not been entered into the NPS museum database. • Lack of funding for curatorial staff to work with the collection, including artifact conservation. • Large crowds in the museum in the spring can affect the visitors' ability to view and experience the museum collection. • Objects in the museum are exposed to light levels that require a period of "resting," in particular textiles and paper documents. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A better understanding of the collection could yield tremendous opportunities to improve interpretation and scholarly research at the park. • Continue to collaborate with the Ford's Theatre Society to consider displaying the museum collections at the Center for Education and Leadership. • Establish new museum exhibits and a rotation plan for museum objects at the existing location. • Explore additional funding opportunities for conservation of museum collections. • Work with the Ford's Theatre Society on opportunities to digitize museum collections so they may be publicly accessed. • With the Ford's Theatre Society, improve communication with the public on where collection pieces are located, and when and where they are on display. • Increase collaboration with the Ford's Theatre Society and others hosting collections on exhibit development and scheduling.
<p>Data Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic furnishings report for all components of the park.
<p>Planning Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive interpretive plan update. • Sign/exhibit plan. • Integrated pest management plan. • Museum housekeeping plan. • Resource stewardship strategy. • Scope of collection statement. • Fire protection survey. • Collections security survey. • Collections conservation survey.
<p>Laws and Policies that Apply to the FRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance</p>	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2013 museum collections management plan • Partnership agreement with Ford's Theatre Society <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director's Order 24: <i>NPS Museum Collections Management</i> • Director's Orders 28: <i>Cultural Resource Management</i> • <i>NPS Management Policies 2006</i>, section 5.3.5.5, "Museum Collections" • <i>NPS Museum Handbook</i>

Fundamental Resource or Value	Commemoration of President Lincoln
<p>Importance of the Resource or Value</p>	<p>Following the events of April 14–15, 1865, both Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House became sites of national pilgrimage as civic shrines to the assassination and death of President Lincoln. Ford’s Theatre National Historic Site informs and inspires nearly a million visitors annually about the life and legacy of President Abraham Lincoln.</p>
<p>Related Significance Statements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Presidential Assassination. 2. Key Event of the Civil War. 3. The Petersen House.
<p>Current Conditions and Trends</p>	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House are heavily used with a high volume of visitation. • Ford’s Theatre also hosts live theatrical performances and special events throughout the year. • Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House are subject to frequent maintenance needs • Both Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House are listed as being in good condition on the List of Classified Structures. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some demand to increase the number of visitors entering the Petersen House at one time. Fifteen visitors is the number established for resource protection and visitor experience. • Increasing demands for theatre use by third parties, mostly not related to park purpose. • Interpretive/educational park ranger staff and Ford’s Theatre Society staff are conducting visitor programming on the street.
<p>Threats and Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High volume of visitation in the spring can affect educational opportunities on the street as well as at the Petersen House. • Illegal and legal vendors, idling buses, and other traffic-related issues can seriously impact visitor safety and experience, as well as interpretive opportunities. • Continual limitations on funding and personnel needed to maintain the facilities. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a joint annual work plan reflecting both NPS and the Ford’s Theatre Society’s activities. • Improving communication between interpretive/educational park ranger staff and Ford’s Theatre Society staff could increase programming opportunities for visitors. • Additional interpretation about the Petersen House and Lincoln’s legacy. • Walking tours and waysides could be expanded to augment services related to high visitation. • Explore possible closure of 10th Street block to vehicular traffic. This could improve visitor experience dramatically by increasing safety and providing a more pedestrian-friendly environment that would improve the quality of interpretation. • Expand park’s volunteer program to assist management and maintenance of the Petersen House. • Work collaboratively with the Ford’s Theatre Society on special programming for both sides of 10th Street to address periods of high visitation.

Fundamental Resource or Value	Commemoration of President Lincoln
Data Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative history. • Viewshed analysis of the 10th Street streetscape.
Planning Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petersen House maintenance and housekeeping plan. • Soundscape assessment and management plan. • Comprehensive interpretive plan update. • Resource stewardship strategy.
Laws and Policies that Apply to the FRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership agreement between the Ford's Theatre Society and the National Park Service <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director's Order 64: <i>Commemorative Works and Plaques</i> • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 5.3, "Stewardship"



The Petersen House receives hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. (NPS Photo)

Fundamental Resource or Value	Survival of Our Democracy
Importance of the Resource or Value	Ford's Theatre National Historic Site serves as a symbolic representation of the survival of democracy and the continuation of the federal government in the face of the violent act of assassination. Despite the attempts of the conspirators, the democratic ideals of the United States survived the assassination and death of President Lincoln. Although this event had a profound effect on American history, the federal government successfully transitioned through this tragedy.
Related Significance Statements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Presidential Assassination. 2. Key Event of the Civil War. 3. The Petersen House. 5. Presidential Line of Succession.
Current Conditions and Trends	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These resources are heavily used with a high volume of visitation. • Ford's Theatre also hosts live theatrical performances and special events throughout the year. • Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House are subject to frequent maintenance needs. • Both Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House are listed as being in good condition on the List of Classified Structures. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some demand to increase the number of visitors entering the Petersen House at one time. Fifteen visitors is the number established for resource protection and visitor experience. • Increasing demands for theatre use by third parties, mostly not related to park purpose. • Continued interest into President Lincoln's assassination and ongoing debate about the many outcomes this event had on the history of the United States.
Threats and Opportunities	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High volume of visitation in the spring can affect educational and interpretive opportunities on the street. • Illegal and legal vendors, idling buses, and other traffic-related issues can seriously impact visitor safety and experience, as well as interpretive opportunities. • Continual limitations on funding and personnel needed to maintain the facilities. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a joint annual work plan reflecting both NPS and the Ford's Theatre Society's activities. • Walking tours could be expanded to help expand services related to problems with high visitation. • Develop additional interpretive themes that deal with the political issues that spawned from Lincoln's assassination. • Ongoing scholarly research and understanding into the effects and outcomes of the historic events that took place at this site. • Develop additional interpretive and educational programs related to the Civil War's 150th anniversary and other future anniversaries.
Data Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional scholarly research into the aftermath of President Lincoln's assassination and its numerous impacts on the nation.
Planning Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive interpretive plan update. • Sign/exhibit plan.

Fundamental Resource or Value	Survival of Our Democracy
Laws and Policies that Apply to the FRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• None identified <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director's Order 6: <i>Interpretation and Education</i>• <i>NPS Management Policies 2006</i>, section 5.3, "Stewardship"• <i>NPS Management Policies 2006</i>, section 7, "Interpretation and Education"



Chris Hunt photograph showing recreated 1865 presidential box under theatrical lighting. (NPS Collection)

Fundamental Resource or Value	Ford's Theatre Society Partnership
Importance of the Resource or Value	<p>Ford's Theatre National Historic Site partners extensively with the Ford's Theatre Society to improve the visitor's experience at the park. The partnership allows for the production of live theatre performances and other events in Ford's Theatre. The partnership also enhances the daytime experience through programming and dedicated front-line staff. Across 10th Street, the Ford's Theatre Society's Center for Education and Leadership occupies the building next to the Petersen House. Access to the center's exhibit space was made available through an extensive rehabilitation of the building that connects this facility to the Petersen House. Visitors seamlessly enter this building through an accessible elevator and continue their experience by learning about the aftermath of the assassination, the impact on Lincoln's family, and his legacy to the nation. Artifacts from the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site are also on display at the center.</p>
Related Significance Statements	<p>3. The Petersen House. 4. A Working Theatre. 6. Artifacts and Evidence of the Assassination.</p>
Current Conditions and Trends	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ford's Theatre Society provides extensive staffing and infrastructure to enable daytime visits to the park. • The Ford's Theatre Society provides complementary programming using the dynamic intersection of theatre and history to educate patrons about the Civil War and President Lincoln's legacy. • The addition of the Center for Education and Leadership has broadened the story the National Park Service is able to tell. • The Ford's Theatre Society's distance-learning technology and rich online content has enabled audiences who cannot visit the historic site to experience the story. • The Ford's Theatre Society's educational programs enable local students to connect with the Ford's Theatre story on a deeper level for free or reduced costs. • The Ford's Theatre Society staff handles and resolves the majority of customer service complaints on-site and via phone/email/mail. • The Ford's Theatre Society's dedicated front-line staff ensures a smooth process for daytime visitors, enabling rangers to focus on interpretation. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ford's Theatre Society will be using its second floor gallery for rotating exhibits. • The Ford's Theatre Society will deepen the level of training for front-line staff in order to improve customer service and the visitor experience. • The Ford's Theatre Society will continue to look for opportunities to further engage on-site visitors to enhance their experience.

Fundamental Resource or Value	Ford's Theatre Society Partnership
<p>Threats and Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited federal resources to maintain park in desired condition strains partnership donations and funding potential. • Previous lack of leadership continuity at the park inhibited long-term planning. • Duplicative communication efforts and lack of a cohesive communication strategy between the National Park Service and the Ford's Theatre Society create a confusing story for patrons. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a joint annual work plan reflecting both NPS and the Ford's Theatre Society's activities. • The society's independence as a nonprofit 501(c)3 enables it to be nimble in the face of new trends and sudden changes. • The Ford's Theatre Society is open and willing to explore new theatrical programming to engage patrons in other stories related to the park. • The Ford's Theatre Society will continue to explore ways of expanding its online presence. • The Ford's Theatre Society will continue to develop programming dedicated to showing how Lincoln's legacy lives on today.
<p>Data Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified.
<p>Planning Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ford's Theatre Society is in the process of developing a strategic plan. NPS staff will be involved in the development of the plan.
<p>Laws and Policies that Apply to the FRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance</p>	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership agreement with Ford's Theatre Society <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 1.10, "Partnerships" • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 9.3.1.7, "Facilities for Arts and Culture" • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 7.6.2, "Cooperating Associations" • Director's Order 20: <i>Agreements</i> • Director's Order 21: <i>Donations and Fundraising</i>

Fundamental Resource or Value	Live Performance
<p>Importance of the Resource or Value</p>	<p>Performances at Ford’s Theatre connect visitors to the historic use of the building. Watching a performance at Ford’s Theatre as President Lincoln did creates a unique experience and allows for deeper visitor engagement at the park.</p>
<p>Related Significance Statements</p>	<p>4. A Working Theatre.</p>
<p>Current Conditions and Trends</p>	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching a play in the theater where President Abraham Lincoln visited creates a unique interpretive experience. • High volume of visitor traffic in the spring affects the theatre experience and interpretative programming at the park. • The museum is closed to the general public while the Ford’s Theatre Society is hosting live theatrical performances throughout the year, but the theatre area is open to theatre patrons during performances. • At times, design of the stage sets can affect the theatre appearance. • Ford’s Theatre is subject to frequent maintenance needs. • The Ford’s Theatre Society actively promotes live theatre and provides needed technical support for the performing arts. • Modern lighting needed for performances detracts from the historical scene. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations of the facility for theatrical productions sometimes leads to inappropriate use of the facility during productions and potential safety hazards. • Short plays related to the history of Ford’s Theatre (“One Destiny,” and occasionally others) produced by the Ford’s Theatre Society typically occur in the busy times of the year. • The successful partnership with the Ford’s Theatre Society enables the continued presence of live performances at the park.
<p>Threats and Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of an updated agreement with the Ford’s Theatre Society. • Overall size and capacity of the facility to meet visitation and production demands can be overwhelming and creates conflicting interests. • Continual limitations on funding and personnel needed to maintain the facility. • Increasing needs for access will have a direct correlation to increasing maintenance demands and preservation issues. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing the interior of the theater, even though it is recreated, imparts an emotional connection with the visitor that cannot be duplicated. • Patron surveys show that the theatre has a unique power to educate our audience about history in a dynamic, memorable, and engaging way. • Continue to work collaboratively with the Ford’s Theatre Society to address safety concerns and facility limitations related to theatrical productions while protecting resources. • Continue to improve orientation for production companies to assure resource protection and visitor experience goals.
<p>Data Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update historic structures report for Ford’s Theatre. • Energy use and efficiency evaluation and assessment.

Fundamental Resource or Value	Live Performance
<p>Planning Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor use management plan. • Emergency operations response plan updated. • Volunteer management plan. • Soundscape assessment and management plan. • Partnership management plan with the Ford's Theatre Society. • Resource stewardship strategy.
<p>Laws and Policies that Apply to the FRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance</p>	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Design Development Documents of the Ford's Theatre and Petersen House, Washington, D.C., 2001</i> <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NPS Management Policies 2006</i>, section 9.3.1.7, "Facilities for Arts and Culture"



1863 plan view of Ford's Theatre seating areas. The presidential box is labeled as Private Box No 1. (NPS Collection)

Analysis of Other Important Resources and Values

Other Important Resource or Value	10th Street Landscape and Viewshed
<p>Importance of the Resource or Value</p>	<p>The physical location of Ford’s Theatre and Petersen House on 10th Street in Washington, D.C., played a significant role in their place in history. Roughly located between the White House and Capitol building, the theatre became a popular entertainment venue. The Petersen House’s location across the street from the theatre was the closest place to take the mortally wounded president. The 10th Street streetscape supports an immersive visitor experience and connects these two buildings physically.</p> <p>The 10th Street viewshed also contributes to the L’Enfant Plan of Washington, D.C. The National Park Service is dedicated to improving and perpetuating these historic planned viewsheds, as outlined in the 2010 National Mall Plan.</p>
<p>Related Significance Statements</p>	<p>1. First Presidential Assassination. 3. The Petersen House.</p>
<p>Current Conditions and Trends</p>	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The streetscape between Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House receives a heavy volume of use and is not managed by the National Park Service. • Numerous restaurants and souvenir shops operate along the 10th Street block. • 10th Street is a stopping point for numerous tour groups and buses. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is demand to increase the number of visitors entering the Petersen House at one time. Fifteen visitors is the current number established for resource protection and visitor experience. • Other attractions and restaurants are increasing in the area, bringing more visitors and competing for visual attention.
<p>Threats and Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy visitation is impacting the historic fabric and visitor experiences, including heavy tour bus traffic. • Illegal and legal vendor street vendors, idling buses, and other traffic-related issues can seriously impact visitor safety and experience, as well as interpretive opportunities between Ford’s Theatre and the Petersen House. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking tours could be expanded to augment services related to high visitation. • Explore possible closure of 10th Street block to vehicular traffic. This could improve visitor experience by dramatically increasing safety and providing a more pedestrian-friendly environment that would improve the quality of interpretation. • Opportunity to expand the context and interpretation of the Petersen House streetscape and back alley of Ford’s Theatre.
<p>Data Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update historic structures report for Ford’s Theatre. • Viewshed analysis of the 10th street streetscape. • Boundary survey. • Cultural landscape inventory.
<p>Planning Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor use management plan. • Comprehensive interpretive plan update. • Sign/exhibit plan. • Resource stewardship strategy.

Other Important Resource or Value	10th Street Landscape and Viewshed
<p>Laws and Policies that Apply to the OIRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance</p>	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Development Documents of the Ford's Theatre and Petersen House, Washington, D.C., 2001 • Historic Structure Report for Petersen House, 2006 <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director's Order 28: Cultural Resource Management • NPS Management Policies 2006, section 5.3, "Stewardship"



1865 advertising for play after the assassination of President Lincoln. Public threats and outcry forced the federal government to close Ford's Theatre. One hundred and three years would pass before Ford's Theatre would reopen again as a working theatre in 1968 under the auspices of the Ford's Theatre Society. (NPS Collection)

Other Important Resource or Value	Baptist Alley and Booth's escape route
Importance of the Resource or Value	After shooting President Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth leapt from the presidential box onto the stage and ran out the back door into Baptist Alley. Booth's escape and the subsequent manhunt for the assassination conspirators is a significant part of the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site story. Beginning in Baptist Alley and ending 12 days later in Virginia, the chase for America's first presidential assassin gripped the nation.
Related Significance Statements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Presidential Assassination. 2. Key event of the Civil War. 6. Artifacts and Evidence of the Assassination.
Current Conditions and Trends	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ford's Theatre Society hosts live theatrical performances throughout the year that require the use of Baptist Alley to accommodate these performances and their equipment. • Ford's Theatre is subject to frequent maintenance needs that rely on the access through the alley. • Ford's Theatre is listed as being in good condition on the List of Classified Structures. • The alley is actively used by other neighboring businesses. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing use for theatrical productions and events by the Ford's Theatre Society within Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House. • Increased use of the alley by other neighboring businesses. • Increasing interest in John Wilkes Booth and the assassination story with the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.
Threats and Opportunities	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High volume of visitation in the spring can affect educational opportunities on the street. • Illegal and legal vendors, idling buses, and other traffic-related issues can seriously impact visitor safety and experience, as well as interpretive opportunities. • Due to the increased number of restaurants on the theatre block, pest management is becoming more of an issue. • Traffic flow, parking, and truck deliveries in the alley are a threat to visitor safety and access. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the Ford's Theatre Society to explore expanded programs, such as walking tours during high visitation. • Discussions have occurred related to closing the theatre block of 10th Street. Visitor experience could improve dramatically by increasing safety and making the area more pedestrian friendly. • Develop a working relationship with other entities interpreting the conspiracy story. • Explore additional opportunities to interpret the story of John Wilkes Booth's escape.
Data Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewshed analysis of the 10th Street streetscape. • Boundary survey. • Cultural landscape inventory.
Planning Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign/exhibit plan. • Resource stewardship strategy.
Laws and Policies that Apply to the OIRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director's Order 6: <i>Interpretation and Education</i> • Director's Order 28: <i>Cultural Resource Management</i> • NPS <i>Management Policies 2006</i>, section 5.3, "Stewardship"

Other Important Resource or Value	Archeology
Importance of the Resource or Value	William Petersen ran a tailor shop in the store front of what we now call the Petersen House and his family took in boarders in the rooms above. The archeological excavations and resulting collections represent a tightly dated slice of life of a middle-class, German-immigrant tailor and his family and their boarders, from approximately 1850 to 1864. Archeological resources at the Petersen House allow us to learn about the diet, consumer habits, entertainment, and social life of the Petersen household.
Related Significance Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None Identified.
Current Conditions and Trends	<p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Petersen House archeological site is recorded in the Archeological Sites Management Information System and is listed in good condition. • The archeological collections are cataloged in the Interior Collection Management System and curated for long-term preservation at the Museum Resource Center in Landover, Maryland. • Storage conditions meet all requirements as stated in 36 CFR Part 79, <i>NPS Museum Handbook</i> and supplements, and Director's Order 28: <i>Cultural Resource Management</i>. <p>Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified.
Threats and Opportunities	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The greatest threat to the remaining intact archeological deposits in the courtyard is the potential for any form of ground disturbance. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The archeological reports and collections present a wonderful database to provide for the public interpretation of the lives of a middle-class, immigrant family in Civil War Washington, D.C.
Data Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None Identified.
Planning Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None Identified.
Laws and Policies that Apply to the OIRV, and NPS Policy-level Guidance	<p>Park-specific Laws, Policies, and Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified. <p>NPS Policy-level Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation</i> • <i>NPS Management Policies 2006</i> • Director's Order 28: <i>Cultural Resource Management</i> • Director's Order 28A: <i>Archeology</i>

Identification of Key Issues and Associated Planning and Data Needs

This section considers key issues to be addressed in planning and management, and therefore takes a broader view over the primary focus of part 1. A key issue focuses on a question that is important for a park. Key issues often raise questions regarding park purpose and significance, and fundamental and other important resources and values. For example, a key issue may pertain to the potential for a fundamental or other important resource or value in a park to be detrimentally affected by discretionary management decisions. A key issue may also address crucial questions not directly related to purpose and significance, but still indirectly affects them. Usually a key issue is one that a future planning effort or data collection needs to address and requires a decision by NPS managers.

The following are key issues for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site and the associated planning and data needs to address them:

- **Site management within the National Mall and Memorial Parks.** At one time under the management of the National Mall and Memorial Parks, Ford's Theatre National Historic Site was made an independent park unit in 2008. Following five years of growth and development it was announced that the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site would once again be managed as part of the National Mall and Memorial Parks.
- **Role and relationship with the Ford's Theatre Society.** The historic partnership between the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site and their nonprofit partner, the Ford's Theatre Society, is an important part of the future planning of the park and the management of live performances at the theatre. Clearly understanding this relationship and defining each other's roles and responsibilities is crucial for the future of the park.
- **Signage and the streetscape.** Signage and the streetscape between Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House were identified as areas of concern. Signage on 10th Street, the branding and signage of the Ford's Theatre Society's Center for Education and Leadership, and the theatre's new box office can present a confusing streetscape for visitors. Waysides would provide additional information to visitors about Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House. Outside commercial interests such as street vendors and mobile kiosks create additional challenges for the park. Another major concern is managing the streetscape outside park boundaries.
- **Heavy seasonal visitation and visitor experience.** Ford's Theatre National Historic Site remains one of the most popular destinations within Washington, D.C. Numerous groups visit the park and it is a prominent stop on many tour bus routes. Heavy seasonal visitation during the spring and fall months, bus and other vehicular traffic, and the distribution of visitors at the park put pressure on the park resources, negatively impact visitor experience, and present visitor safety issues.
- **Partnering with related sites.** Many sites across the country tell stories related to Lincoln's life and death, the conspiracy, and the Civil War. There may be possibilities for augmenting the visitor experience or better connecting other sites to the resources at Ford's Theatre National Historic Site and the Ford's Theatre Society.
- **Financial sustainability.** All national parks need to protect resources, serve visitors, and operate in a way that allows them to function in a variety of economic conditions.

Planning and Data Needs

To maintain connection to the core elements of the foundation, and the importance of these core foundation elements, the planning and data needs listed here are directly related to protecting fundamental resources and values, park significance, and park purpose, as well as addressing key issues. To successfully undertake a planning effort, information from sources such as inventories, studies, research activities, and analyses may be required to provide adequate knowledge of park resources and visitor information. Such information sources have been identified as data needs. Geospatial mapping tasks and products are included in data needs.

Items considered of the utmost importance were identified as high priority, and other items identified, but not rising to the level of high priority, were listed as either medium- or low-priority needs. These priorities inform park management's efforts to secure funding and support for planning projects.

Data Needs

Related to an FRV?	Data Needs	Priority (H, M, L)	Notes
X	Energy use and efficiency evaluation and assessment	H	In order to better achieve NPS systemwide goals for energy efficiency, an evaluation and assessment of energy use at the park would provide valuable data that could influence management and planning.
X	Historic furnishings report for all components of the park unit	H	Both Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House use historic furnishings to help with interpretation and visitor understanding of the park. A historic furnishings report was recognized as important to managing these assets at the park.
X	Fire protection survey for museum collections	H	The survey would determine fire risk for collections.
X	Security survey	H	The survey would determine risks to the collections.
X	Historic resource study	M	This is needed to address all cultural resources (archeology, structures, cultural landscapes, museum collections, ethnography, and history) related to the park.
X	Scope of collection statement	M	This would define the extent of the collections that are protected by the park.
X	Conservation survey for museum collections	M	The survey would evaluate the status of current conditions of the collection.
X	Update historic structures report for Ford's Theatre for all components of the park unit	M	The Petersen House historic structure report was updated in 2006. An updated historic structure report for Ford's Theatre would provide better direction for resource management at the site.
X	Viewshed analysis of the 10th Street streetscape	M	A viewshed analysis would provide data on the streetscape and help in the development of future planning needs.

Related to an FRV?	Data Needs	Priority (H, M, L)	Notes
Parkwide Issue	Boundary survey	M	Due to new facilities and building access points that have come online, clearly defined park boundaries are needed. A boundary survey would also help define Baptist Alley, John Wilkes Booth's escape route.
X	Cultural landscape inventory/report	M	A cultural landscape inventory would provide data to help make informed management decisions regarding the park's streetscape and surrounding buildings.
X	Additional scholarly research into the aftermath of President Lincoln's assassination and its numerous impacts on the nation	L	This research would assist in developing future interpretive materials and keep the park's messaging up to date.
Parkwide Issue	Administrative history	L	An administrative history for the historic site would help provide continuity and create a record of park management for the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site properties.

Planning Needs

Related to an FRV?	Planning Needs	Priority (H, M, L)	Notes
X	Visitor use management plan	H	Because of the park's heavy seasonal visitation and new vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns, a visitor use management plan was identified as an immediate planning need. It would address the distribution of visitors, elimination of choke points, improvement of circulation patterns, identification of safety issues, and improvement of the ticketing process.
X	Emergency operations response plan update	H	Due to new facilities and building access points that have come online since this was completed, updating the emergency operations response plan is needed.
X	Comprehensive interpretive plan update	H	Updating the interpretive plan based on the outcome of the foundation workshop was identified as a planning need. This would also allow interpretive training to be updated.
X	Integrated pest management plan	H	Due to the park's urban location, an integrated pest management plan was identified as an important need for the park and for the management of museum collections on display at the theatre.
X	Museum housekeeping plan	H	A long-term housekeeping plan for the museum on the lower level of Ford's Theatre is needed.

Related to an FRV?	Planning Needs	Priority (H, M, L)	Notes
X	Partnership management plan with the Ford's Theatre Society	H	Most aspects of the partnership between Ford's Theatre National Historic Site and the Ford's Theatre Society are addressed in a partnership agreement, which is currently expired. If the partnership agreement with the Ford's Theatre Society is not renewed, a separate plan may be needed to address shared collections, exhibits, and use of the theatre.
X	Petersen House maintenance plan and housekeeping plan	H	Although the Petersen House recently went through an extensive restoration process, a long-term housekeeping plan for the house is needed.
Parkwide Issue	Financial sustainability plan	M	This plan would help prepare the park for changing economic conditions by examining the appropriateness of all existing and potential fees and exploring additional revenue sources.
X	Sign/exhibit plan	M	Because of new facilities and building access points that have come online, an integrated sign and exhibit plan is needed to help provide consistency and clarity to the visitor experience. It would also help visitors determine where certain collections are located and help direct circulation through the related sites.
Parkwide Issue	Position management plan / transitional management assessment program (TMAP)	M	This plan would address organizational efficiencies and how contracting/ maintenance activities can be integrated within the National Mall and Memorial Parks.
X	Volunteer management plan	M	This plan will address the volunteer program that operates at the park and will help better integrate the park and partner organization's volunteer efforts.
X	Soundscape assessment and management plan	L	Because Ford's Theatre is a working theater that hosts numerous live performances, an integrated soundscape assessment and management plan was identified as a planning need.
X	Resource stewardship strategy	L	A resource stewardship strategy would establish a 10-year plan consisting of comprehensive strategies to better meet long-term goals for cultural resource management.
Parkwide Issue	Ethnographic overview and assessment	L	The park has ethnographic elements that could be investigated and which might be helpful for future planning and interpretation.

Part 3: Contributors

National Park Service

National Mall and Memorial Parks

- Bob Vogel, Superintendent
- Karen Cucurullo, Deputy Superintendent
- Rae Emerson, Deputy Superintendent of Ford's Theatre National Historic Park
- William Cheek, Supervisory Park Ranger
- Carolyn Richard, Chief of Interpretation
- Rosanna Weltzin, Deputy Chief of Interpretation
- Roger Powell, Park Ranger
- Eric Martin, Park Ranger
- Susan Spain, Project Executive, The National Mall Plan
- Darryl Mcleod, Facilities Manager

National Capital Region

- Sue Hansen, Chief of Interpretation
- Wendy O'Sullivan, Assistant Regional Director for Partnerships
- David Hayes, Regional Planner
- Gary Scott, Regional Historian (retired)

Washington Office

- Patrick Gregerson, Chief of Planning

Ford's Theatre Society

- Allison Alonzy, Associate Director of Visitor Services
- Kristin Fox-Siegmund, Director of Programming
- Sarah Jencks, Director of Education Programming
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Consultants

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Legislation Leading to the Establishment of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site

Thirty- Ninth Congress. Sess. I. Ch. 26, 27, 28. 1866.
Purchase of Ford's Theatre by the U.S. Army for document storage.

April 7, 1866. CHAP. XXVIII. — *An Act making additional Appropriations, and to supply the Deficiencies in the Appropriations for sundry civil Expenses of the Government for the fiscal Year ending the thirtieth of June, eighteen hundred and sixty-six, and for other Purposes.*

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following sums be, and the same are hereby, appropriated, and to supply deficiencies in the appropriations, for the service of the fiscal year ending the thirtieth of June, eighteen hundred and sixty-six, out of any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, namely :

For the purchase of the property in Washington city, known as Ford's theatre, for the deposit and safe-keeping of documentary papers relating to the soldiers of the army of the United States, and of the museum of the medical and surgical department of the army, one hundred thousand dollars.

Sixty-Ninth Congress. Sess. I. Ch. 286-289. 1926.
Purchase of the Oldroyd Collection, later to be added to the Lincoln Museum.

CHAP. 287.—An Act For the purchase of the Oldroyd collection of Lincoln relics.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, and the Attorney General are hereby designated as a commission with authority, in their discretion, to purchase the Oldroyd collection of Lincoln relics, and that the sum of \$50,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby authorized to be appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, to enable the commission to consummate such purchase.

Approved, May 11, 1926.

70TH CONGRESS } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES } REPORT
 1st Session } } No. 299

ESTABLISHMENT OF A LINCOLN MEMORIAL MUSEUM
 IN BUILDING KNOWN AS FORD'S THEATER

JANUARY 17, 1928.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the
 state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. BEERS, from the Committee on the District of Columbia, sub-
 mitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 7206]

The dwelling in which President Lincoln died houses the Oldroyd collection of Lincoln relics which the Government has acquired. The building is not fireproof, and with its valuable contents it may at any time be destroyed. It is not safe for any large crowd of visitors and it is not large enough for the present collection, to say nothing of any additions. Across the street is Ford's Theater, where the President was shot. This was acquired by the Government soon after the tragedy in order that it might never again be used as a theater or put to commercial use. It has of late been used as a Government storehouse, which is not compatible with its tragic associations.

It seems eminently fitting that the Oldroyd collection shall be transferred to the Ford building after that has been suitably remodeled. Your committee therefore advises the passage of H. R. 7206.

The cost of repairing and remodeling Ford's Theater has been carefully estimated by the Director of Public Buildings and Grounds for the District of Columbia and other responsible persons who state that the total amount required to be expended would not exceed \$100,000. It should be borne in mind that in any event considerable repairs would have to be made to the building in the very near future.

Carefully prepared charts and diagrams of the interior of Ford's Theater have also been made, which show the arrangements of the three floors of the building as it would be when remodeled.

Besides the Oldroyd collection of Lincoln relics, numbering several thousand pieces, and now the property of the United States, other Lincoln collections of value and of interest are promised which could

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ESTABLISHMENT OF A LINCOLN MEMORIAL MUSEUM

be suitably exhibited when Ford's Theater is converted into a national museum.

It seems to the committee that another use, to which Ford's Theater could well be put to the greatest advantage, would be to establish there a headquarters for the veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic. These old soldiers now are with only a very small and unsatisfactory rented space in a building, which is soon to be torn down. Surely in the Nation's Capital some provision should be made for a headquarters for these veterans.

This bill has been indorsed by a large number of organizations of the highest standing, not only of veterans, but of other civic and patriotic bodies.

Your committee therefore unanimously recommends that the bill H. R. 7206 do pass.



Ninety-first Congress. Sess. 2. CH. 288. 1970.
 Legislation establishing Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

Public Law 91-288

AN ACT

June 23, 1970
 [H. R. 12860]

To establish the Ford's Theatre National Historical Site, and for other purposes.

Ford's Theatre
 National Historical
 Site.
 Establishment.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, the properties administered by the Secretary of the Interior in the District of Columbia known as the House Where Lincoln Died, the Lincoln Museum, Ford's Theatre, and the property authorized to be acquired in section 2 of this Act are hereby established as the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, which shall be administered in accordance with the Act of August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535), as amended and supplemented, and the Act of August 21, 1935 (49 Stat. 666), as amended and supplemented.

16 USC 1 et
 seq.

16 USC 461-467.

Property ac-
 quisition.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to acquire by donation or by purchase with donated or appropriated funds the property and the improvements thereon located at 517 Tenth Street, Northwest, in the District of Columbia, adjacent to the historic Ford's Theatre and consisting of approximately eight hundred and twelve square feet of land.

Appropriation.

SEC. 3. There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act, of which not more than \$94,000 shall be used for the acquisition of the property referred to in section 2 of this Act, and not more than \$176,000 shall be used for the development of said property.

Approved June 23, 1970.

Ninety-first Congress, Sess. 2, Report No. 91-1099, 1970.
 House Report on the establishment of the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site
 includes language about live performances.

91ST CONGRESS } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES } REPORT
 2d Session } } No. 91-1099

ESTABLISHING THE FORD'S THEATRE NATIONAL
 HISTORICAL SITE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

MAY 18, 1970.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of
 the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. TAYLOR, from the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs,
 submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 12860]

The Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, to which was referred the bill (H.R. 12860) To establish the Ford's Theatre National Historical Site, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE

The purpose of H.R. 12860, by Representatives John Saylor and Joe Skubitz, is to designate Ford's Theatre, the Lincoln Museum, and the House Where Lincoln Died as the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, and to add to that complex the property and building adjacent to the theater known as 517 10th Street, NW.

BACKGROUND AND NEED

Ford's Theatre is one of the famous, historic structures in Washington, D.C. Constructed in 1863, it was considered one of the finest theaters of its day; however, its fame today evolves not from its contributions to the performing arts, but from the tragedy which occurred there on April 14, 1865. It was there—on that day—that Abraham Lincoln was shot, and it was from there that he was carried to the Peterson House where he died.

Both the theater and the House Where Lincoln Died have been Government properties for many years—in fact Ford's Theatre was acquired in 1866. In more recent times, they have been administered by the National Park Service as a part of the National Capital Park System. The theater has now been restored to its appearance on the

night of the assassination and it is a major visitor attraction in the city. It serves a dual function :

First, it houses the Lincoln Museum containing many priceless artifacts and memorabilia associated with his era ; and

Second, it has been converted into a living history exhibit which accommodates live theater performances.

The historical importance of the events which took place in this area, the authenticity of the restoration effort and the demonstrated attractiveness of the buildings to the visiting public merit its designation as a national historic site. Few places in the Nation have set the scene for events which so dramatically affected the course of the history of this country.

Since the restoration of the theater a few years ago, visitations have increased rapidly. In 1969, the committee was told, visitations totaled 424,000, but tours of the building during periods of heavy use are made difficult because of restricted access. There are three front doors to the theater which must serve both as points of ingress and egress so that an efficient traffic pattern cannot be developed.

This problem can be resolved if the property adjacent to the theater on the north is purchased and used to help accommodate the flow of visitors. In addition, the installation of emergency exits through that building will make the theater safer for the visiting public.

But for the fact that the property and the building can help to assure the safety of the visiting public, to protect the Federal investment in the restored theater, and to provide needed space for administrative offices and theater-related support facilities, the desirability of the acquisition of the property might be arguable. However, all of these factors argue most persuasively for the purchase of the property.

Title to the property involved is presently held by the Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc. It was purchased in December 1967, at the request of the National Park Service because it viewed the property to be essential to the effective use of the theater. The Park Service recognized that the structure is a potential fire hazard to the restored theater and it was also concerned that the property might be converted into an enterprise adverse to the historic preservation effort. Since the National Park Service was not in position to acquire the property, the present owner purchased it as a "holding action" to halt the rapid price escalation of the property in order to preserve the opportunity for the Government to buy it. Because of this willingness on the part of Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc. to invest in the property, the Government may still acquire the property at the December 1967 price, but congressional authorization is required before the National Park Service can formalize its agreement with the owner and take title to the property at the price agreed upon.

COST

The property to be acquired if H.R. 12860 is enacted, is adjacent to the north side of the theater. The purchase price agreed upon is approximately \$94,000—including \$90,000 for the land and improvements and approximately \$3,910 for incidental expenses incurred by Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc. Construction on the property will include the demolition of the interior of the building and its reconstruction to adapt it to the needs for the theater as described above. It is anticipated that the reno-

vation program will require the appropriation of approximately \$176,000. Accordingly, the bill, as recommended, limits appropriations for acquisition and development to the amounts estimated to be necessary.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs recommends the enactment of H.R. 12860.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION

On July 8, 1969, a communication from the Secretary of the Interior was directed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives recommending the enactment of legislation authorizing the acquisition of the property described. While the executive communication is silent with respect to the designation of the area as Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, the Director of the National Park Service recognized the merits of the innovation suggested by the sponsors of the bill and recommended its approval in testimony before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation. The executive communication follows:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D.C., July 8, 1969.

* The Lincoln Memorial Museum—consisting of Ford's Theatre, the House Where Lincoln Died (the Petersen House), and the Oldroyd collection—were officially transferred from the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital to the National Park Service in 1933 through Executive Order 6166.

Appendix B: Related Federal Legislation, Regulations, and Executive Orders

Legislation and Acts

- Archaeological and Historical Preservation Act – 1974
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act – 1979
- Historic Sites Act – 1935
- Museum Properties Management Act – 1955
- National Environmental Policy Act – 1969
- National Historic Preservation Act – 1966, as amended
- National Parks Omnibus Management Act – 1998
- National Park Service Organic Act – 1916
- Redwood Act, Amending the NPS Organic Act – 1978

Code of Federal Regulations

- Title 36, Chapter 1, Part 1, General Provisions
- Title 36, Chapter 800, Protection of Historic Properties

Executive Orders

- Executive Order 11593, “Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment”
- Executive Order 12003, “Energy Policy and Conservation”
- Executive Order 13423, “Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management”

NPS Management Policies 2006

NPS Director's Orders

- Order 6: *Interpretation and Education*
- Order 24: *NPS Museum Collections Management*
- Order 28: *Cultural Resource Management*
- Order 47: *Soundscape Preservation and Noise Management*
- Order 64: *Commemorative Works and Plaques*
- Order 75: *Civic Engagement and Public Involvement*

Appendix C: Inventory of Special Mandates and Administrative Commitments

Name	Agreement Type	Start Date	Expiration Date	Stakeholders	Purpose
Ford's Theatre Society	Partnership agreement	2003	Expired as of 2012	Ford's Theatre Society and NPS	Provides overall guidance on the relationship and responsibilities shared between the National Park Service and the Ford's Theatre Society.
Center for Education and Leadership	Artifact loan agreement (L.2011.03)	12/12/2011	12/3/2012	Ford's Theatre Society and NPS	Provides legal record on the loan agreement between the Ford's Theatre Society and the National Park Service for the display and stewardship of museum artifacts at the Center for Education and Leadership.
U.S. Supreme Court	Artifact Loan Agreement (L.1999.01)	1999	Expired, needs to be updated	Supreme Court and NPS	Provides for long-term loan of artifacts to the Supreme Court.
National Constitution Center	Artifact Loan Agreement (L.2009.03, L.2010.04)	12/3/2012	12/15/2013	National Constitution Center and NPS	Provides for loan of artifacts to the National Constitution Center.
Reagan Presidential Library	Artifact Loan Agreement (L.2013.01)	6/1/2013	9/30/2013	Reagan Presidential Library and NPS	Provides for loan of artifacts to the Reagan Presidential Library.
Eastern National	Cooperating association agreement			Eastern National and NPS; Servicewide	Provides management and operations for the Ford's Theatre bookstore and gift shop.



Bust of Abraham Lincoln sculpted by Carl Tolpo. (NPS Collection)

Appendix D: Interpretive Themes and Supporting Content

The following interpretive themes and supporting content were developed for the 2010 long-range interpretive plan for Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

- I. The causes behind the assassination of Abraham Lincoln were many and varied, and are still meaningful today.
 - a. Temper of the times
 - b. Lincoln's speeches and actions—example of Lincoln April 11, 1865, speech
 - c. Choices and actions
 - i. Lincoln's enemies including the conspiracy and conspiracy theories
 - ii. Common people
 - iii. Other people (e.g. Lincoln's Cabinet, Thomas Eckert, etc.)
 - d. Presidential powers and limitation in times of war
 - e. Was the Civil War over? Why kill Lincoln now?
 - f. Race relations and emancipation
 - g. Presidential security
 - h. Lincoln as Commander in Chief
 - i. Conspiracy and manhunt
 - j. John Wilkes Booth's life and times—who he was as a person
- II. Lincoln's assassination and death had far-reaching and profound consequences.
 - a. The passionate response to Lincoln's death
 - b. Lincoln's legacy and mythology as a national and international icon
 - c. Reconstruction
 - d. Ford's Theatre and Petersen House as national treasures
 - e. Presidential security
- III. Lincoln's love for the performing arts provides insight as to why Ford's Theatre became the backdrop for the assassination, and why the physical site is still relevant today.
 - a. Booth as an actor
 - b. 19th Century theatre experience
 - c. Theatre as a respite for Lincoln
 - d. History of Ford's Theatre
- IV. The Lincoln assassination created political, social, and personal crises that found their geographical focal point at the Petersen House.
 - a. Petersen House as a boarding house—architectural and cultural significance
 - b. Medical treatment and death/mourning rituals
 - c. Origins of an investigation

- V. During the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, the city of Washington and the nation underwent profound changes.
 - a. Emancipation Act of 1862
 - b. Conflict between Union and Confederate loyalists
 - c. Influx of contrabands to “Free” Washington City
 - d. Influx of war workers and resident soldiers
 - e. Lincoln’s use and support of technology
 - f. The impact of Lincoln’s legacy on present-day leaders



1893 photograph showing crowds gathered outside Ford’s Theatre after collapse of building interior – 22 federal employees were killed and more than 60 were injured. (NPS Collection)

National Capital Region Foundation Document Recommendation Ford's Theatre National Historic Site

July 2013

This Foundation Document has been prepared as a collaborative effort between park and regional staff and is recommended for approval by the National Capital Regional Director.

RECOMMENDED

Date

Robert Vogel, Superintendent
National Mall and Memorial Parks

APPROVED

Date

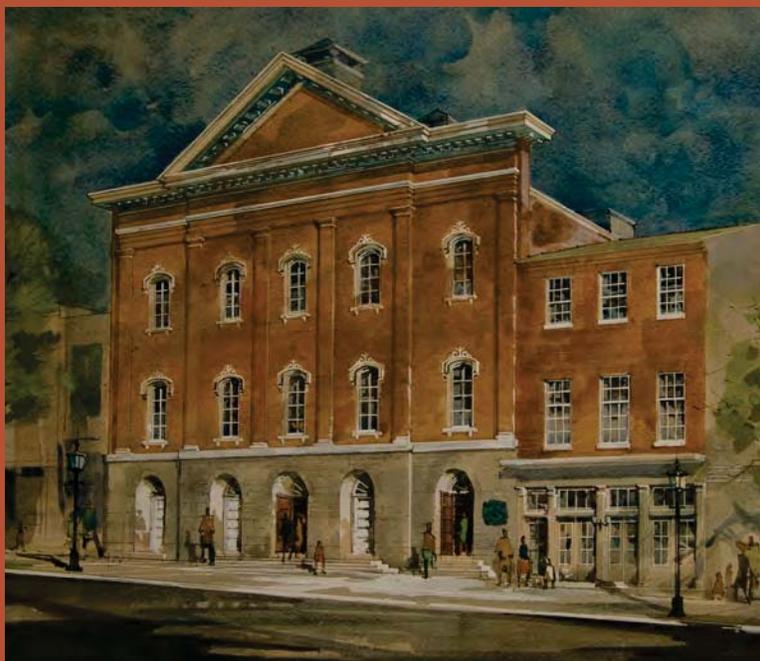
Stephen E. Whitesell
National Capital Region, Regional Director



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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**APPENDIX F. MAP OF FORD'S THEATRE NATIONAL
HISTORIC SITE AND FORD'S THEATRE SOCIETY
PROPERTIES**

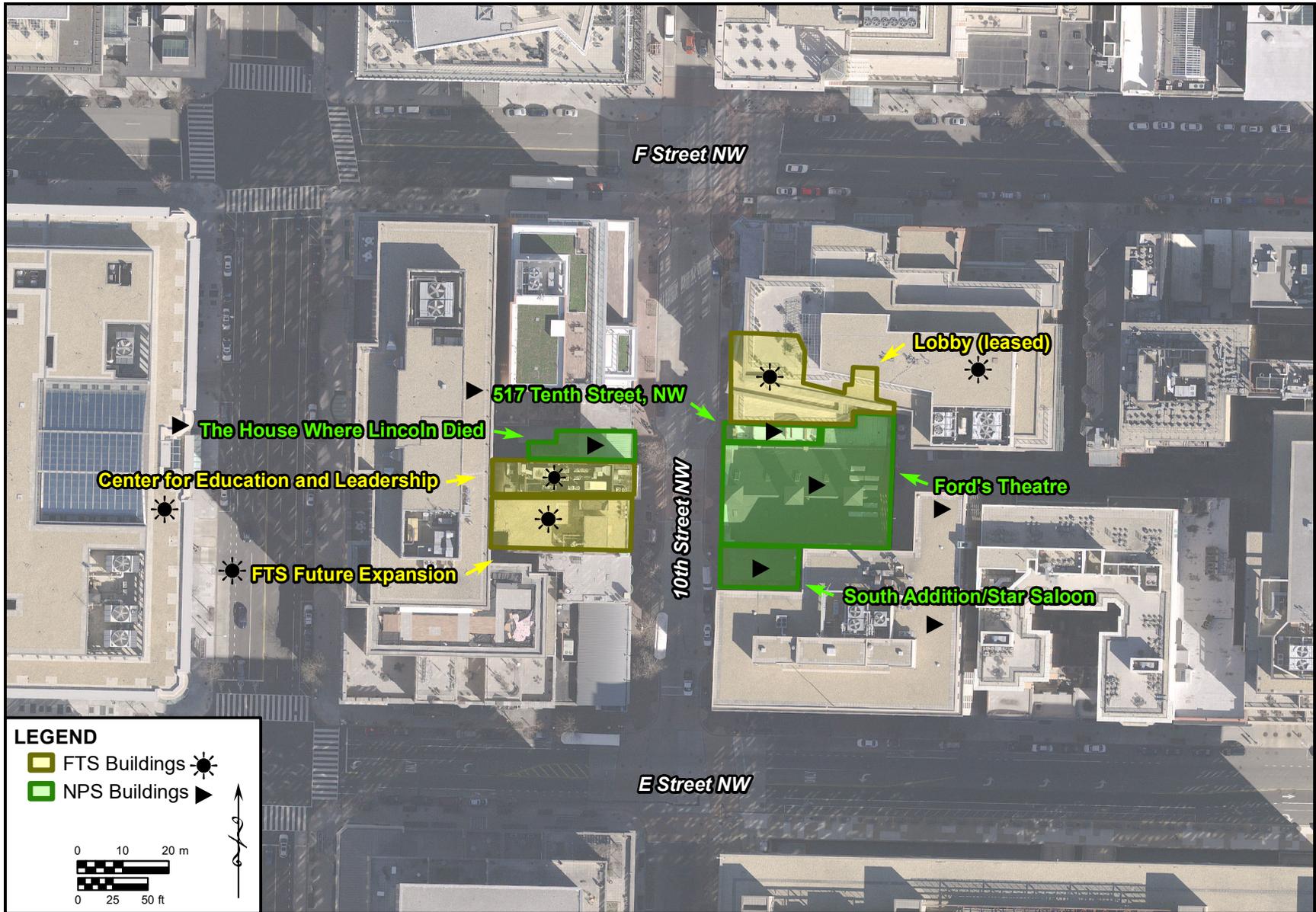


Figure F-1. Ford's Theatre National Historic Site and Ford's Theatre Society Buildings.

