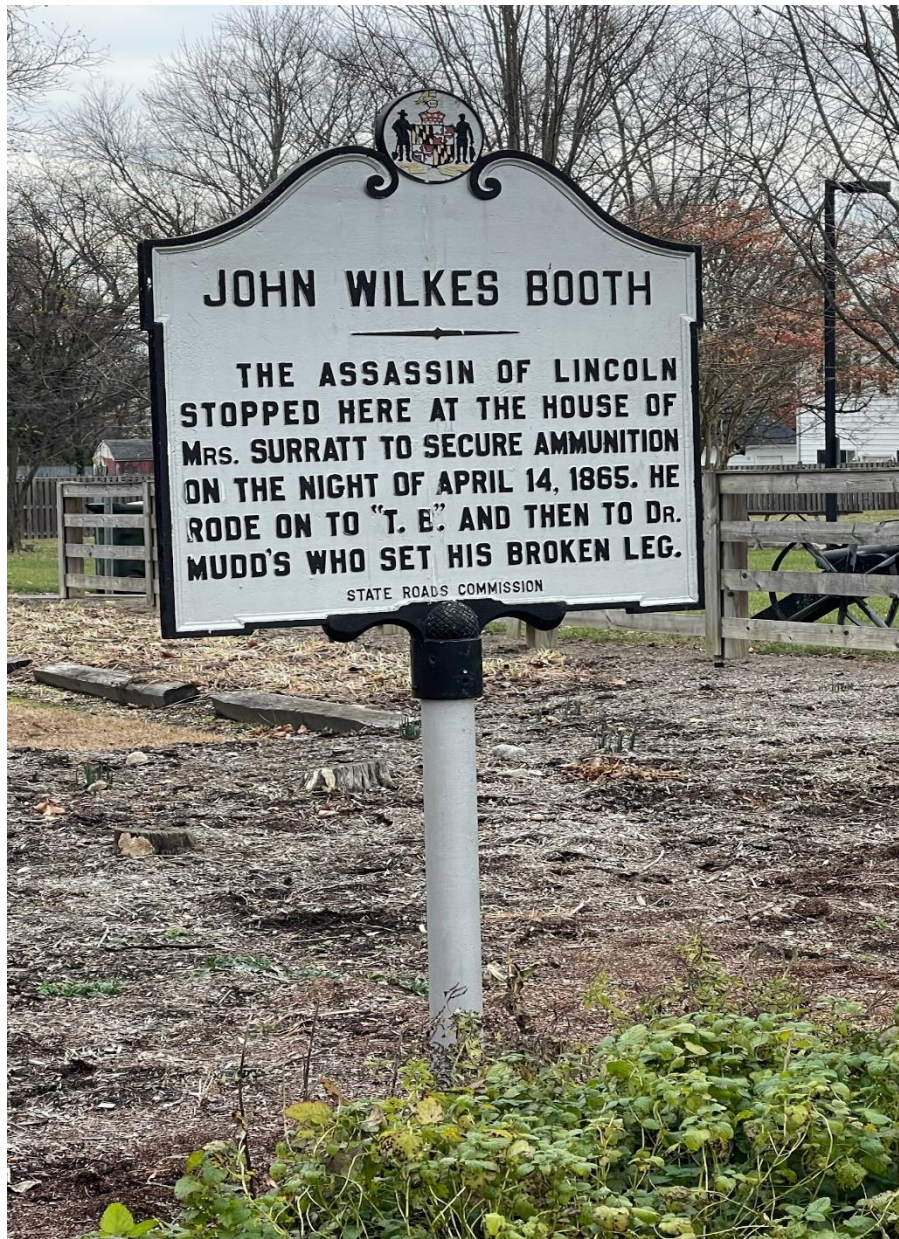


241128 BRA SURRAT HOUSE MARYLAND



The Surrat house is located at 9110 Brandywine Road in [Clinton](#) (formerly Surrattsville), [Prince George's County, Maryland, United States](#). This is an in descriptive intersection in rural Maryland. Amazingly we learned from the Tour Guide, Mathew, that this intersection has in fact been well traveled for thousands of years. It was the intersection of two Indian trails that led the colonist to establish themselves here and fittingly for a tavern to be built on site.



The rest house, of course, is famous for being involved in the overall plot which assassinated president Lincoln six weeks after the end of the Civil War. As shown in the placard, this tavern is famous because it is the location where John Wilkes Booth stopped on his flight away from his infamous crime at the Ford theater in Washington DC. Amazingly enough, we learned, once on the Tavern tour, that John Wilkes Booth never really entered. He remained on his horse and weapons and supplies were provided, their horses were refreshed, and he continued on his journey where he was later caught.



The house is named for John and [Mary Surratt](#), who built it in 1852. Mary Surratt was hanged in 1865 for being a co-conspirator in the [Abraham Lincoln assassination](#). It was acquired by the [Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission](#)(M-NCPPC) in 1965, restored, and opened to the public as a museum in 1976. Mary.Surrat was the first woman executed by the federal government in US history. She was tried by a military court, but executed by the federal government following the trial. Interestingly, her case was posthumously argued in front of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court held that the execution was unconstitutional. Oddly, it did not reverse the verdict, nor did it clear and release 4 other persons being held in

jail as participants in the assassination plot. But significantly the ruling in this trial would set a precedence. Henceforth military courts would never again be allowed to be used in crimes were civilians were involved. The benefactor of this was the family son who also fled justice, was returned from Egypt to the US by marshals, but faced a civilian, not military court. He had a hung jury, was released, had a successful touring career as a speaker, and eventually retired, passing away of old age.



The entire family stopped for this tour. The house is indiscript and Small. Amazingly, I can report that we easily spent 90 minutes on the tour and were impressed and entertained throughout. The Tour Guide was professional, and had an excellent knowledge of the tavern, local area, and history.



Although small in size, the facilities are exceptionally well maintained. It's not often that you visit a small attraction such as this, which played an ancillary role in an important event, and find it in such superb state of restoration.





The tavern is furnished with artifacts, many of which date to the original structure. The door hardware, plates and ceramics, floor, coverings, and accessories are excellently maintained and displayed. Unlike at a large museum you can get up close and personal to these items. The feeling is authentic, and the proximity of the Tour Guide makes the whole visit organic.

The tavern has only two rooms. Amazingly, we learned that if a husband and wife were traveling together, the wife would not sleep with her husband. She would sleep in the third room, which was where the Surrat family's daughter stayed. Such were the norms of the day.

It's the little things that make this attraction so authentic. There are period artifacts that are seldom seen. One of them I noticed were clothes pins. These would've been fashion by hand locally, but their shape is similar to those that are machine made in our modern times. There were also clothes irons of different sizes. Some of them tiny others large. Each of them were made of a different metal that held heat at different rates and were used for different purposes, different types of cloth and applications. So it seems even though these facilities were used hundreds of years ago, the people that lived at that time had a reason for doing things the way that they did.





You can imagine this being a tavern on a dusty, well traveled but remote rural Road in Maryland. In the 1860s many a traveler would've stopped here. We were asked by the guide why they would have stopped. We rattled off reasons such as rest, refreshing of horses, purchase of provisions, to keep warm, or to have a drink. In fact, the tavern was only two rooms within the two-story building.



You could imagine the rooms filled with tobacco smoke, and loud banter. There were of course, the expectations that gambling and card playing would be part of the passage of time. Men would rest, their horses would be refurbished and then they would proceed to their next location.



One thing that amazes us was how far from Washington DC by car the Surratt house is. We were very surprised that John Wilkes Booth could even reach this location on horseback in one day. Even by car today, it would take 45 minutes to an hour. Maybe traffic impedes the modern car as much as a horse would allow for quick travel in the 19th century. But John Wilkes Booth was in fact able to reach the Surratt house well before the end of the daylight on the afternoon in which he assassinated the president.



But the guide will tell you a lot about the local history. He describes how rural Maryland was organized. He does state that Maryland was truly a transitional location for slavery. Marilyn had

an extensive population of freed black men. It was an easy place for runaway slaves to blend in. He did mention that the great Negro hero Frederick Douglas hid in plain sight during his flight from slavery. He dressed as a sailor and that provided him the disguise needed to avoid arrest. In Maryland, this was possible. In southern states not so much.



John Wilkes Booth chose to go south in his escape. Mary Surrat's son, also involved in the plot, chose to go north. The Surrat family was sympathetic to the southern cause during the Civil War. They organized smuggling routes during the war into Canada where they would trade for and bring down supplies. Their son used these routes in his escape to Europe and later Egypt, where he was arrested by marshals and brought back to the United States.

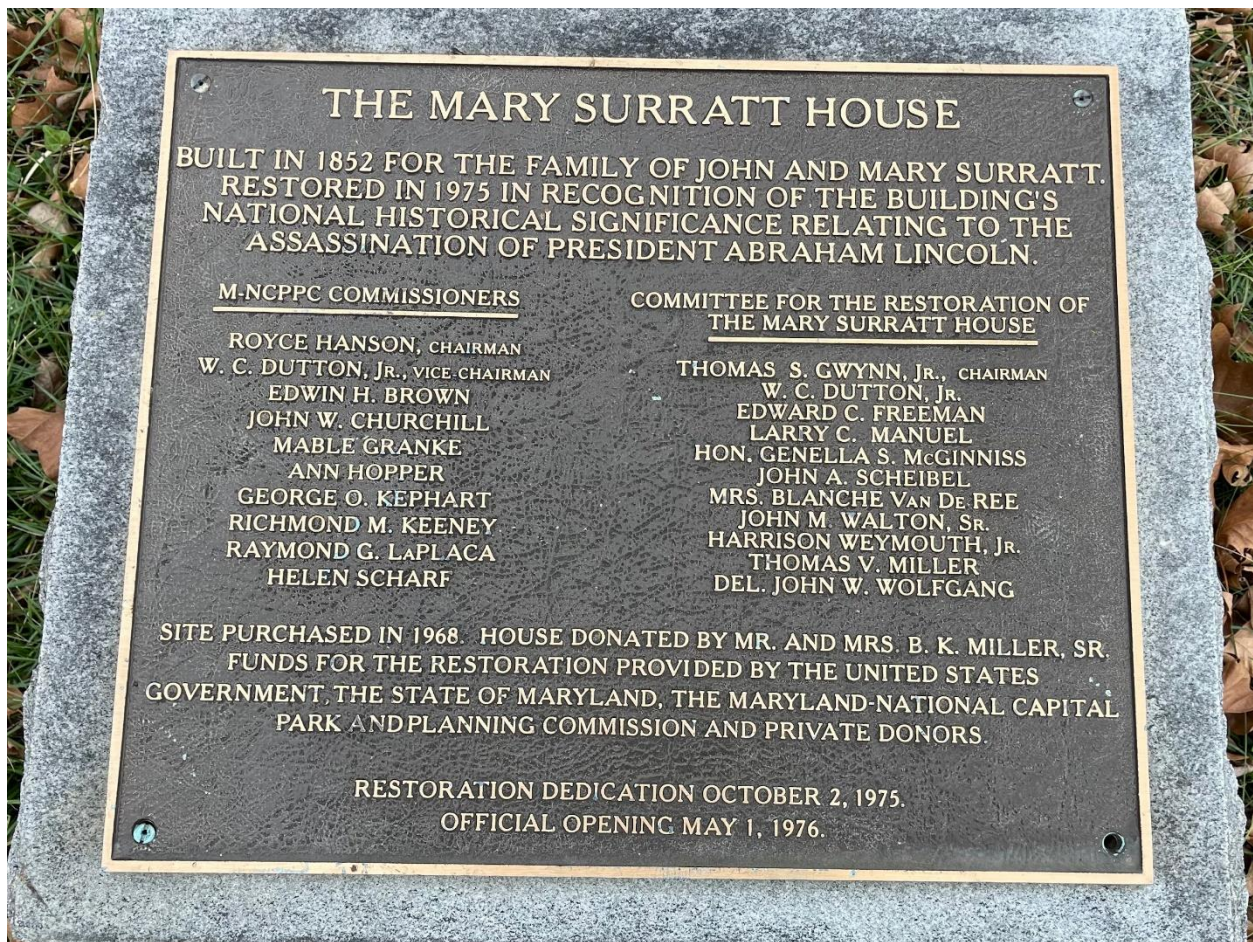


It was also helpful that each of us had read history and understood the background behind the assassination of President Lincoln. Many in the visiting party had gone to the Ford theater in Washington DC. There is also a Surrat house in Washington DC as well. The family connection therefore links this remote tavern to Washington, the scene of the crime.



Definitely if you're in this part of rural Maryland stop and visit the Surrat house Tavern. It's worth a couple of hours of your time. If you can visit the attractions in Washington DC before you go, you can then mentally and physically follow the path of John Wilkes Booth in his illicit escape

from justice. It's a part of our history that deserves to be remembered, as a contemporary podcaster states.



THE END