

# Booth Shot Lincoln

3 A D A E7 D

A D A 1.

2. B A D A

D A D A

D A D A

D A D A

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"Booth Shot Lincoln", also known as "Booth" is an American reel in cut time and A Major. It is played in AEae, GDgd or standard fiddle tunings. The parts are played AAB (Phillips) or AABB (Johnson).

The title commemorates the April 14th, 1865, assassination of President Abraham Lincoln by the actor and Southern sympathizer John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater, Washington, D.C., during a performance of the British playwright Tom Taylor's comedy *Our American Cousin*. The Booth name was instantly recognizable to patrons of the Civil War era stage, chiefly because of John's brother Edwin Booth, one of the foremost thespians of his day.

The tune was in the repertoires of western North Carolina fiddlers Osey Helton and Marcus Martin (from the Black Mountain region). It was also in the repertoire of fiddler Tommy Magness (1911-1972), born in north Georgia near the southeastern Tennessee border. Bascom Lamar Lunsford (Buncombe County, N.C.) learned his version ("Booth Killed Lincoln") from Martin and both sang the song and played the same tune on the fiddle on his recording. On his 1949 Library of Congress recording.

Lunsford introduces the seven-verse song:

"The title of this ballad is 'Booth,' or 'Booth Killed Lincoln.' It's an old fiddle tune and there are a few variants of the song. I heard my father hum it and sing a few of the stanzas when I was just a boy about six or ten years old".

Scott DeLancey maintains that the "Booth" melody is a breakdown setting of the Irish jig "The Market Town".

The banjo tablature is by John Letscher. His comment:

Mostly from Jim Taylor (Civil War CDs)

The banjo tablature is in G. If the fiddler is going to play in A, capo the banjo 2 frets.

It was printed in Johnson's **The Kitchen Musician No. 2: Occasional Collection of Old-Timey Fiddle Tunes for Hammer Dulcimer, Fiddle, etc.** (1982) (revised 1988 & 2003), Lamancusa's **The Gettysburg Collection of Old-Time Fiddle Tunes** (2021) and Phillips' **Traditional American Fiddle Tunes, vol. 1** (1994).

It was recorded by Malcolm Daghish & Grey Larsen on **Thunderhead** (1982), Bascomb Lamar Lunsford (originally recorded 1949), Dan Gellert and Shoofly on **Forked Deer** (1986), Bascom Lamar Lunsford on **Songs and Ballads of American History and of the Assassination of Presidents** (originally issued in the early 1950's by the Library of Congress from the Archive of American Folksong), Jim Taylor on **The Civil War Collection** (1996) and The Rough Deal Stringband on **The Rough Deal Stringband**.