The following statement was made by William Storke Jett on May 6, 1865. Jett’s statement was taken based upon his connection with John Wilkes Booth and his involvement in Booth’s efforts to evade capture following his assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. The original document is located at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Typescript produced by Eric J. Mink.

Statement
of
Willie S. Jett

May 6, 1865

Monday April 24, met Booth + Herold at Rappahannock wanting to cross river to Port Royal. Herold told him they were President’s assassinsators. Took Booth to Garrett house + left him there.

Willie S. Jett

Being duly sworn says:

I live in Westmoreland Co., Va. On Sunday April 23, I was at the house of my brother in law, William Wallace, in King George Co., Va. I was on my way from Fauquier Co., where I had been with Mosby’s command. I did not belong to that command, but to the 9th Va. Cavalry, Co. C. I had been on detached duty ever since November 25th, and when Richmond was evacuated I was on duty in Caroline Co. as Commissary Agent. When Richmond fell I concluded that it was my duty to return to my command if possible. A part of Mosby’s command was over in Westmoreland Co. + I determined to go over there + go up with my brother who was a member of Mosby’s command and stay up with them a while + see if I could not get to my command. After getting up in Loudon Co. + Fauquier together with some of Mosby’s command I heard that Mosby’s command was disbanded + Gen. Lee’s army surrendered, + I determined to go home, + then started home. I have been in the Confederate service since June 17 last, when I first entered it I was 18 years old on December 2nd last.

I stayed at my sister’s at Bloomsbury, King George Co., from Saturday evening (April 22) when I arrived there until Monday morning (24th) when I started to go to Bowling Green in Caroline Co. on a visit, and from there to Richmond or to the nearest provost marshal or paroling officer to get my parole. I was riding on my own horse. I was commissary agent in Caroline Co. to collect supplies + commissary stores for the Confederate service, collect the tax in kind, receive subsistence stores from all detailed, exempted, + bonded farmers. They were men who were detailed or exempted, + bonded to the Confederate government for 1500 pounds of beef,
1500 pounds of bacon +c. They had to pay that much to the Confederate government, receiving government price for these articles, + were exempt from going into service. They gave this bond to keep out of the Confederate service, but they had to pay those articles for that purpose + also to pay their tax in kind besides. The tax in kind was generally on tenth, I think.

On Monday morning (April 24) when I started from my sister’s, I was in company with two other young men, Lieut. Ruggles + a R. Bainbridge. I had been with them in Mosby’s command + we had been raised together. They necessarily came by my sister’s on their way to Port Royal, + they came for me according to a previous understanding. We were going over into Caroline Co. towards Bowling Green + of course had to cross the Rappahannock. We were from my sister’s to Dr. Ashton’s, about six miles, + stayed probably a quarter or half an hour, left there, + went down to Port Royal. As we got on the hill, about 50 yards from the river, we saw a wagon down on the wharf at a ferry, and we paid no attention to it. We rode down towards the wharf, + as we got within 20 yards of the wagon we saw apparently a young looking man jump out of the wagon + put his hand in the inside breast of his coat. I don’t know whether the others noticed it, but none of us said anything. We rode past, not stopping at the wagon, going right down to the wharf + hailed the ferry boat. As soon as we got to the wharf the young man walked down towards us + said “Gentlemen, what command do you belong to?” Lieut. Ruggles said “to Mosby’s command.” I did not say anything. Then he said “if I am not inquisitive, can I ask where you are going?” It is always a rule of mine never to tell any one where I am going, when travelling, + I spoke up and said “that is a secret, nobody knows where we are going because I never tell anybody.” I turned round then and looked towards Port Royal and did not say anymore. One of the boys said to him “What command do you belong to” and he said “We belong to AP Hill’s Corps; I have my wounded brother a Marylander who was wounded in a fight below Petersburg.” I asked where he was wounded and he replied “in the leg.” In the meantime his wounded brother had got out of the wagon and walked towards where we were on his crutches. I did not pay any particular attention to him. I was looking over towards Port Royal being anxious for the Ferry Boat to get over. The young man said “Come gentlemen I suppose you are all going to the Southern Army.” We made no reply. He said “We are also anxious to get there ourselves and wish you to take us along with you.” We made no reply still that I remember and he said “Come gentlemen get something to drink here, we will go and take a drink.” I said “thank you Sir I never drink anything,” and the other boys I think said the same thing.

I rode from the wharf towards the old house about 20 yards off, rode in the gate and tied my horse. When I came out they were all sitting there on the steps and on a ladder. This young man touched me on the shoulder and said he wanted to speak to me. I walked over to the wharf with him + when we got there he said “I take it for granted you are raising a command to go South to Mexico + I want you to let us go with you.” I was thrown aback that such an idea should have entered any man’s head and did not say anything but merely asked “Who are you?” He seemed to be very much excited and said “We are the assassinators of the President.” I was so much thrown aback that I did not say a word for I suppose two or three minutes. It was Herold that said that.
I should say that when they first asked us to take them under our protection I enquired their names and he said “our name is Boyd; his is James William Boyd, and mine is David E. Boyd.” When Herold said they were the assassinators he also said that if I noticed Booth’s left hand I would see the letters J.W.B. Lieut Ruggles then came up + I said to him “here is a strange thing,” and then either I repeated to him that they were the assassinators or Herold did, I am not certain which but I am sure that was said to Ruggles either by Herold or by me in Herold’s presence. Booth had not then got up to us. Booth then walked up and Herold enquired our names and introduced us all round, calling Booth by that name. Booth had a shawl thrown around him + he kept it over the left hand all the time and on his hand was marked J.W.B. Herold gave us his own name then + they said they wanted to throw themselves entirely on our protection.

All this talk occurred before we went on the Ferry Boat. Booth had very little to say. When I was in the house near the ferry I copied a parole from another parole I had seen with a young man named Wallace and signed it “A.J. Smith, Provost Marshal, 9th Army Corps.” I wanted to have it in the event of meeting any soldier before reaching Bowling Green but I tore it up and threw it away on crossing the river because I knew there were no soldiers there. Herold copied this parole and signed A.J. Smith’s name to it.

We crossed the river together. Herold sent the boy back with the wagon from there. Booth got on Ruggles’s horse near the wharf, rode down to the boat and crossed the river sitting on the horse all the time. Ruggles carried his crutches. As soon as we got over they said they wanted me to find out some where for them to stay. I wanted to see some friends at Port Royal, Wm. Peyton’s family and I rode up there before they got out of the boat and tied my horse and went into the house. Booth had requested that we should introduce him as a Confederate soldier under the name of Boyd. I went to Miss Sara Jane Peyton or Miss Lucy Peyton – I think Miss Sarah Jane – and told her that we had a wounded Marylander along by the name of Boyd + that I would be very much obliged to her if she would take care of him until the day after tomorrow. She at first consented and Booth got down off Ruggle’s horse, came into the house and sat down on a lounge. Presently she came to me again, took me into the parlor + said that her brother Mr. Randolph Peyton, the lawyer, was not at home but was his farm, that under the circumstances she hated very much to turn off a wounded soldier but did not like to take any one during her brother’s absence. I told her that it was left entirely to her pleasure whether she would take him or not and she then said she would rather not under the circumstances. I enquired if she thought Mr Catlett would take him. She said she did not know and I walked across the street + learned that Mr Catlett was not at home. She said in the mean time “you can get him in anywhere up the road – Mr Garrett’s or anywhere else.” He came out + I said “Boys ride on further up the road.” Booth got on Ruggles’ horse again + I got on mine. Herold got behind me and Ruggles behind Bainbridge. This was about one oClock on Monday April 24. We then rode up to Garrett’s which I supposed is about 2 miles from Port Royal. There was very little said. Booth remarked that he thought the Presidents assassination was “nothing to brag about” + I said “I do not either.” I had very little to say to him or he to me. He remarked that he did not intend to be taken alive; “if they don’t kill me I’ll kill myself.”
Going up to Garrett’s Herold rolled up his sleeves and showed me on his right arm a heart and an anchor I think, and on the left arm, above the elbow the letters D.E.H., the H partly rubbed out; he said he had been trying to rub it out. At Garrett’s gate Herold got down from behind me and remained at the gate while Booth, Ruggles, Bainbridge and I rode up to the House. There I introduced myself to Mr Garrett. I did not know him personally though I had seen him. I had been on duty at the Court House and seen him on Court day. He always passed as a Southern man; I never heard him say anything else, I told him my name + that I knew him by reputation but had never been introduced to him + said “Here is a wounded Confederate soldier that we want you to take care of for a day or so: will you do it?” He said “yes, certainly I will.” Booth then got down and we left him there, remarking as we rode off “we will see you again,” though I had no intention of seeing him again because I was going to Richmond, + did not expect to come that road again. That was the last I ever saw of him. Herold went on to Mrs Clark’s about three miles from Bowling Green remained there all night and next day returned to Garrett’s. Bainbridge remained with Herold and Ruggles and myself went on to Bowling Green.

I know Dr. Stuart personally; have known him 12 or 18 months. He is a Southern man. Booth + Herold remarked that they had been to Dr. Stuart’s but did not state how they were received there.

I did not see any of Garrett’s boys there. I saw a lady standing either at the door or in the porch I do not know which. I did not tell Garrett or any one else who Booth was. I had heard of the assassination but had seen none of the particulars. I heard on the day of the disorganization of Mosby’s command that the President had been assassinated – either on Wednesday or the Friday previous to seeing these men. I met no soldiers nor other persons looking after these men. Everything was perfectly quiet.

I remained at Bowling Green until Tuesday night April 25\textsuperscript{th}. Col Conger and Lieut Baker came there that night, arrested me, carried me into the parlor, and began to question me. I told them everything from beginning ti end + said I would pilot them to the house where Booth was. I took them to Garrett’s gate and directed them how to get into the House and they went in, leaving me at the gate.

I have tried to evade nothing. From the beginning I have told everything.