



Through  
THE  
Looking  
Glass

The NEW BERN

# MIRROR

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Christmas eve found us walking by the lodging house in Washington where mortally wounded Abraham Lincoln breathed his last on April 15, 1865. With no idea the place was open, we tried the door knob and gained entrance.

A young lady, employed by the National Park Service, was seated at a desk midway the narrow hall. Without being asked, she said pleasantly but somewhat matter of factly, "He died in the back room." So there we went.

Forty years of newspapering have seasoned us to death and violence, but standing by the too short bed that Honest Abe died in was no routine experience. It project us instantly into the grim past.

The spotless white bedspread may or may not have been authentic. After all, two families, hard pinched for money, continued to use the structure as a lodging house until the Federal Government bought it in 1893.

There was no doubt about the the pillow on the bed. Stripped down to the ticking, it was in a clear plastic case. If there were blood stains, and surely there must have been at one time, they were obscured on the under side.

Much too tall to be placed on the bed straight up and down, Lincoln, from shortly after 10 p. m. until 7:22 a. m., was in a cater-cornered position. Unconscious from a bullet in his brain, he had little need for comfort.

The room, rather small, was drably wall papered and simply furnished. A bureau, with a bowl and pitcher on it, stood near the foot of the bed. A china, portable commode stood near the center of the room, and except for a rocking chair without upholstery, that was it.

To the left of the hall, at the front of the lodging house, was a very plainly furnished parlor. It had a leather sofa, some chairs, and a round, marble topped table. This is where the President's wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, spent those last agonizing hours.

In the next room, Cabinet members kept the vigil, stunned by the enormity of what had occurred across a narrow street at the Ford Theatre, as Lincoln attended a performance of Our American Cousin.

Only in fairly recent years has the show house been restored. Plays are presented there regularly, as of old. That Christmas eve afternoon, less than a month ago, a matinee for children was transpiring, and the laughter was shrill and loud.

There was no laughter in the Ford Theatre's museum, right next door, connected to the show house. In a glass case you can see only inches away the pistol used by John Wilkes Booth.

It is a small weapon, but it seemed to us that the hole in the barrel is rather large for a gun of that size. Admittedly, we're no authority on firearms ancient or modern.

Considering the dimensions

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New Bern-Crawford County Public Library



ONCE UPON A TIME—Your bones are too brittle for sauntering on snow covered sidewalks, if you recall when O. Marks & Son kept shop in this unsightly building on the southwest corner at Middle and Pollock Streets. Later, bewhiskered Jesse Basnight, a staunch Republican at a time when the very word was considered a worse label than any four-letter vulgarity you could dream up, had his hardware store there. D. L. Latta, a courtly gent if we ever saw one, succeeded Basnight in the same business. The corner was a great hang out on

Sundays, and of a night, for guys with nothing much to do but talk and watch an occasional automobile make a U-turn at the none too busy intersection. Joe Watson, who could eject marvelous music from a tin horn or a rolled-up piece of cardboard, helped to make the hours move faster. You young whipper snappers may snicker at the thought of such carrying on, but never since has life been as sweet for a fellow with empty pickets—Photo from the Albert D. Brooks Collection.

