



Who Was Samuel Mudd?

Samuel Mudd was a doctor in Southern Maryland who went to jail for allegedly having a role in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. It has never become clear to history whether or not Mudd was actually involved in the murder, but a few facts are well known.

Mudd kept slaves on his tobacco farm, and he believed in slavery. His business suffered a lot during the Civil War, and even more when

Maryland abolished slavery in 1864. It was around this time that Mudd met John Wilkes Booth, and people saw them together, along with others who are now known to have had a role in the conspiracy.

Booth's original plan was to kidnap Lincoln. But after he shot him, instead, on April 14, 1865, Booth and his fellow conspirator David Herold rode out to Mudd's home in the middle of the night. Booth had broken his leg while escaping from Ford's Theatre, where Lincoln was killed. Mudd treated Booth's leg, and let the men continue on. At some point the following day it is assumed that Mudd heard about the assassination, but he didn't report having seen and treated Booth for another 24 hours later. This made him seem suspicious, and about two weeks later he was arrested. He was found guilty of plotting and helping to commit murder, and sentenced to life in prison. He only served four years, however, before being pardoned by President Andrew Jackson, however his conviction has never been overturned.

1. Given Samuel Mudd's beliefs and John Wilkes Booth's apparent feelings about Lincoln, why do you think Mudd and Booth were friendly?

2. What are the two main reasons that Mudd was arrested?