

Michael W. Kauffman

'The Final Act: John Wilkes Booth and the Staging of History'
'Reversing the Tide: The Legacy of the Lincoln Assassination'

As historian William C. Davis once wrote, "no one has studied [John Wilkes] Booth longer or more in depth than Michael W. Kauffman, a well-known figure and voice of reason in the field of Lincoln assassination studies."

For more than forty years, Kauffman has taken an innovative approach to the study of history, combining new technologies with a healthy respect for traditional methodologies. A strong believer in the value of personal experience, he has rowed across the Potomac, leaped to the stage in Ford's Theatre, and spent more than four hundred nights in John Wilkes Booth's own boyhood home. Along the way he has written numerous articles on the subject and is regularly featured on several major television networks. He has lectured throughout the United States, and has written for *Civil War Times*, the *Washington Post*, *American Heritage*, *Blue and Gray*, and the *Lincoln Herald*, among others. His bus tours of the John Wilkes Booth Escape Route, a favorite topic of feature stories, have made him "legendary" in this field, according to *The Washington Post*.

He is the author of *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies*, which was named by the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other major media outlets as one of the best non-fiction books of 2004. This all-encompassing account of the Lincoln conspiracy is based entirely on primary sources, and was named by *The Wall Street Journal* as one of the five best books ever written about political violence. As the late historian David Herbert Donald said, "There are many books on [the assassination] but this is by all means the best." Its companion documentary, *The Hunt for John Wilkes Booth*, appears regularly on the History Channel, and has spawned a cottage industry in assassination-related tours.

He will speak, first, on the development of Booth's conspiracy -- the political ideas that inspired it; the overlooked peculiarities of Booth's own situation as a Marylander and a Shakespearean scholar; and the final buildup, in the Confederacy's waning days, that led to one of history's most dramatic episodes.

His second talk will examine the prospects for a peaceful reconstruction in the aftermath of Appomattox, and the realities of life after Booth's "One Mad Act" changed the course of history.