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LINCOLN'S TOMB (Continued)



Lincoln's body lies in a sarcophagus surrounded by state flags and memorial wreaths.

money for a suitable tomb. They contracted for a plot of ground in downtown Springfield. On the morning of the funeral, word came from Mrs. Lincoln, who remained in Washington in a state of near-shock, forbidding even temporary interment there. She demanded that her husband be buried in nearby Oak Ridge Cemetery.

Instead of obeying the widow's wishes, the committee placed the body in a temporary vault while they deliberated. Finally, Mrs. Lincoln threatened that if her late husband were not buried in Oak Ridge she would petition Congress to place the remains in a vault prepared but never used for George Washington under the Capitol dome. After days of bitter debate, the committee finally gave in to the widow.

From 1865 to 1874, when the tomb in Oak Ridge was completed, Lincoln's body was moved four times from one temporary vault to another until it was made secure—everybody thought—in the permanent tomb.

Two years later, one of the most bizarre events in American history took place when three men from Chicago conspired to steal Lincoln's body. They planned to haul the body in a sack for reburial in the northern Indiana sand dunes!

Except for one hitch, the body snatchers apparently would have gotten away with it. The hitch was that one of the trio was an informer for the United States Secret Service.

As I have pieced it together, here is a summary of the weird tale:

AFTER the Civil War, counterfeiting of currency was a thriving business. One of the most talented engravers of counterfeit plates, Ben Boyd, was arrested in October, 1875, and sentenced to 10 years. One of his accomplices, Jack Hughes of Chicago, also was arrested and released on bond.

The head of the Secret Service in Chicago, Patrick D. Tyrrell, assigned one of his operatives, Lewis Swegles, to win the trust of Hughes in an attempt to trap other counterfeiters. Swegles befriended Hughes and got an introduction to the "boss," Terrence Mullins. Hughes and Mullins then offered Swegles a part in a fantastic scheme to steal the body of Abraham Lincoln and hold it for ransom of \$200,000 plus the release of their engraver, Ben Boyd. Secret Service-

man Tyrrell, astonished at the daring of the plot, instructed Swegles to join them.

As the plan evolved, Swegles' chief tasks were to act as a lookout and, after removal of the body, to drive a cart to the tomb. He prearranged with Tyrrell that he would strike a match outside the tomb at the best moment for catching them red-handed.

At the appointed hour on the dark, muggy night of Nov. 7, 1876, Tyrrell and his party were hiding in a room in the front of the seemingly deserted monument. They heard the thieves break in and watched for the flare of Swegles' match. No flare. They heard hammering against the marble sarcophagus. Still no flare.

MEANWHILE, in the burial chamber, Swegles had been foiled by a change in the plan. Instead of standing outside as lookout, he had been ordered by Mullins to stay in the rear of the burial chamber to hold a lantern. After great labor, Hughes and Mullins opened the sarcophagus, exposing the coffin. Mullins finally dispatched Swegles to bring up the cart.

Swegles circled the monument while Mullins and Hughes withdrew and hid near an oak tree about 100 feet away, awaiting the cart. When Swegles finally struck his match, Tyrrell and his men dashed to the burial chamber. They found it empty and the sarcophagus dismantled.

From their hiding place, Mullins and Hughes saw the lawmen close in. Assuming Swegles had been captured, Mullins and Hughes fled the cemetery. A few days later, however, Swegles tracked them down and they were arrested.

It is appalling to realize that the only serious mistake made by the culprits was their choice of a confederate. Today, Lincoln's body is in a hermetically sealed casket enclosed in a 27-ton steel-and-concrete vault 10 feet below the floor of the tomb.

Still, the most frequent question I am asked by visitors is "May we see him?" One couple, a few months ago, insisted that friends of theirs had been escorted to the basement to view the Great Emancipator. They insisted I accord them the same privilege.

But Mr. Lincoln's resting place is now totally secure—even from tourists.

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