



THE LINCOLNIAN

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THE LINCOLN GROUP OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

REQUESTS YOUR PRESENCE

AT OUR MAY DINNER MEETING

SPEAKER: PROFESSOR PAUL J. BEAVER
EDITOR OF THE LINCOLN NEWSLETTER
AND CURATOR OF THE MUSEUM OF
LINCOLN COLLEGE, LINCOLN, ILLINOIS

TOPIC: LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS

DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 17, 1983

TIME: COCKTAILS 6:00 PM
DINNER 7:00 PM
SPEAKER: 8:00 PM

PLACE: FORT LESLEY J. McNAIR
OFFICERS CLUB
P STREET BETWEEN 3RD AND 4TH STREETS, SW
WASHINGTON, D.C.

COST: \$9.50 PER PERSON. PLEASE MAKE YOUR
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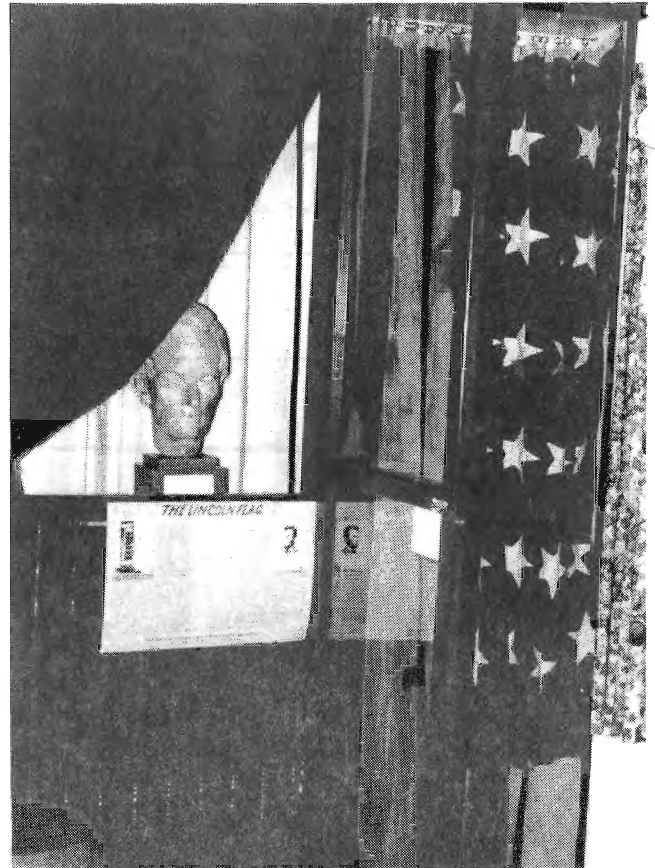
THE FLAG THAT CRADLED THE DYING PRESIDENT'S HEAD

by EDWARD STEERS, JR.

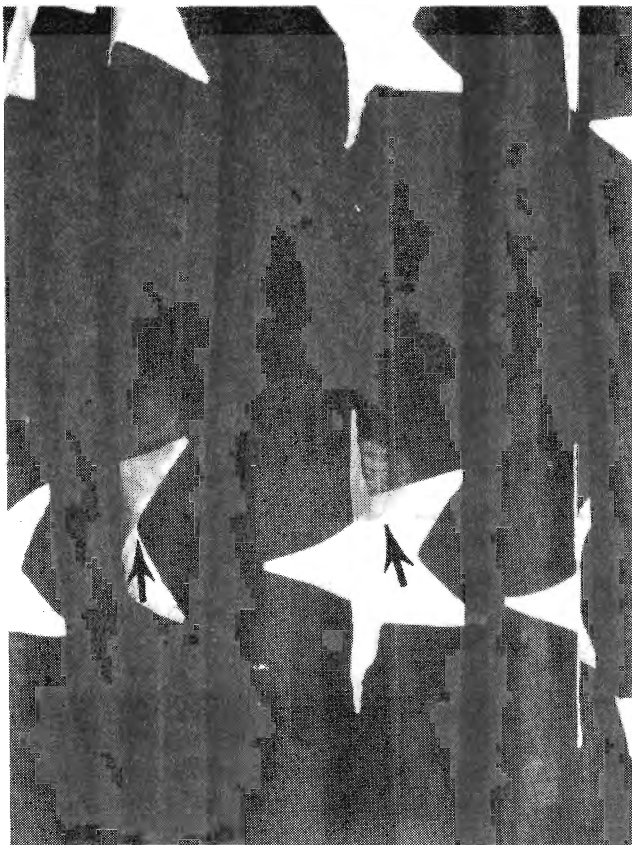
Nestled between the rolling foothills of the Pocono Mountains and the Delaware River, lies the little town of Milford, county seat of Pike County, Pennsylvania and home of the Pike County Historical Society. A quaint village of small white houses with wrap-around porches, Milford has found itself to be a retreat over the years for the few who have discovered its' peaceful serenity. In decades past it served as a

summer vacation spot for hundreds who sought to wile away the lazy summer months. To one young couple it eventually became home, following a strenuous life of travel and adventure on the American stage. Jennie and Robert Struthers had come to live in Milford in 1888, following Jennie's retirement from the theatre. In 1927, 39 years later, Jennie died and found her final rest in the Milford cemetery, located along a pine ridge just west of town. Jennie's life and her passing would have little interest to anyone today if it were not for her close association with the great tragedy at Ford Theatre on the night of April 14, 1865, and the story Jennie came to tell. Jennie Struthers was born Jennie Gourlay and on the night of April 14, was appearing with the famous stars Laura Keene and Harry Hawk in Tom Taylor's rousing comedy "Our American Cousin".

Jennie was not the only member of her family present at Ford Theatre that terrible evening. In addition to herself, Jennie's father, Thomas C. Gourlay, appeared in the part of Sir Edward Trenchard. Jennie's younger sister Maggie played the part of Skillet, the maid, and two of Jennie's brothers, Robert and Thomas, were seated in the audience. Jennie's father also doubled as a stage manager for John Ford's company and, following Booth's fatal shot, escorted the star of the play, Laura Keene,



The Lincoln flag on display in the Pike County Historical Society Museum located in Milford, Pennsylvania.



Arrows indicate blood stains claimed to be Lincoln's.

to the President's box. The famous actress had quickly responded to a call from one of doctors attending Lincoln for some water.

Because of the excitement and general confusion caused by the theatre crowd, Thomas Gourlay had to lead Laura Keene to the box by way of a rear stairway.¹ This statement has caused considerable debate over the years and has been discredited by some - there being no rear stairs up to the box. But assassination scholar and Lincoln Group member Art Loux of Millington, New Jersey, offers an explanation of the mystery by tracing Gourlay and Keene's possible route:

" I think I know how Laura Keene got to the Presidential box. It would have been impossible for her to make her way through the mass of people in the lobby of the theatre and up the stairs, through the dress circle, to the box. There was mass confusion at the time. I obtained the old plans for Ford's Theatre and went to the theatre to check out my theory. There was, and is, a door from the stage that leads to an alley

"... on the south side of the theatre. The door is almost under the box. Walking down the alley or walkway, one gets to the stairs of an adjoining building in which John T. Ford had his living quarters. Laura climbed up two floors where there was a door from the living quarters to the dress circle. This door still exists today. It is very close to the box. It was in this manner that T.C. Gourlay led Laura to the box "

On reaching the box, Laura Keene gently held Lincoln's head in her lap while the doctors worked to locate the wound and administer first aid. It soon became apparent that the wound was fatal and a decision was made to move Lincoln to a more comfortable site. Whether the Petersen House was chosen before or after Lincoln was carried from the box is unclear, but he was soon lifted by several persons and taken from the box and out of the theatre.

FORD'S THEATRE
TENTH STREET, ABOVE E.

SEASON II WEEK XXXI NIGHT 196
WHOLE NUMBER OF NIGHTS, 406.

JOHN T. FORD PROPRIETOR AND MANAGER
(also of Edifice St. Theatre, Baltimore, and Academy of Music, Phila.)
Stage Manager J. R. WRIGHT
Treasurer R. CLAY FORD

Friday Evening, April 14th, 1865

BENEFIT!
—AND—
LAST NIGHT
OF MISS
LAURA KEENE

THE DISTINGUISHED MANAGERS, AUTHORS AND ACTRESS,
Supported by
MR. JOHN DYOTT
AND
MR. HARRY HAWK.

TOM TAYLOR'S CELEBRATED ECCENTRIC COMEDY,
As originally produced in America by Miss Keene, and performed by her upwards of
ONE THOUSAND NIGHTS,
ENTITLED
OUR AMERICAN
COUSIN

FLORENCE TRENCHARD..... MISS LAURA KEENE
(Her original character)

Abel Marcott, Clerk to Abigail..... John Dyott
Ase Trenchard..... Harry Hawk
Sir Edward Trenchard..... T. C. GOURLAY
Lord Dundreary..... E. A. EMERSON
Mr. Coyle, Attorney..... J. MATTHEWS
Lieutenant Vernon, R. N..... W. J. FERGUSON
Captain De Boots..... C. BYRNES
Blissy..... G. G. SPEAR
Boddicomb, a valet..... J. H. EVANS
John Whicker, a groom..... J. L. PERONAY
Kasper, a groom.....
Ballins..... G. A. PARKHURST and L. JOHNSON
Mary Trenchard..... Miss J. GOURLAY
Mrs. Moonchasington..... Mrs. F. MUZZY
Augusta..... Miss H. TRUMAN
Georgiana..... Miss M. HART
Sharpe..... Mrs. J. H. EVANS
Skillet..... Miss M. GOURLAY

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 15.
BENEFIT of Miss JENNIE GOURLAY
When will be presented BOUICHAULT'S Great Sensation Drama
THE OCTOROOM
Easter Monday, April 17, Engagement of the YOUNG AMERICAN TRAGEDIAN,
EDWIN ADAMS
FOR TWELVE NIGHTS ONLY.

In the years that followed Lincoln's assassination, hundreds of people came forward and claimed the honor of carrying his body that night. Near the top of the list is Thomas Gourlay. According to his daughter Jennie, Gourlay took a folded flag from within the box and used it to carefully cushion Lincoln's head. On reaching the Petersen House, Lincoln was placed on a bed in a rear room which was occupied by a young Union soldier, William T. Clark. Gourlay's job done, he quietly left the house, taking the flag with him. That evening, the senior Gourlay, together with his family and orchestra leader William Withers, were at the Gourlay home recovering from the night's tragedy, when a knock was heard at the door. When Gourlay opened the door, he found his co-worker, Edman Spangler, who asked Gourlay to put him up for the night. Gourlay declined and sent Spangler away, telling him to go to his own room and sleep.

As the years passed, Thomas Gourlay kept the flag a family secret, and, on his death, passed it to his daughter Jennie. Jennie kept the flag as much a secret as her father had, and, upon her own death, passed it on to her son, Vivian Paul Struthers. In 1951, Paul Struthers turned the flag over to the Pike County Historical Society in Milford, along with the story of its' alledged role on that fatal night of April 14, 1865.

Today, the flag and its' story reside under the personal care of Mr. George Perry, a retired New York Insurance executive, who, like Jennie Gourlay, found a retreat in Milford. Prominently displayed in a large glass case, the flag is suspended from a drapery rod by several brass rings. The flag hangs in carefully placed folds which reveal several brown stains which appear to be blood stains. A large display flag, measuring six feet by nine feet, it has 36 stars arranged in rows on a Union field of blue wool bunting.² A close examination of both the fabric and construction techniques, show the flag to be consistent with its' claimed age.³

Whether or not the flag actually played the important role it is claimed to have played remains an obscure mystery. Unlike so many of the assassination claims which continue to emerge every decade and prove apocryphal, the Gourlay's story is not easily dismissed as romantic fable. The flag is a genuine specimen of the period and its' provenance is sound. The fact that it descended in the family of one who was prominently present and shared in the events of that historic night, lend a certain credibility to the claim. Thomas Gourlay was present in the theatre that evening and he did escort Laura Keene to the Presidential box. His two daughters and two sons were also present and witnessed the events as they happened. Later that evening, they were all together at Thomas Gourlay's home and years later Jennie and her brother Thomas published their own accounts of that evening, agreeing in most all details.

When Lincoln's body was finally moved across the street to the Petersen House, it seems assured that his head with its' mortal wound would be carefully cradled and not allowed to hang freely during the portage from the theatre. What would have been used to hold Lincoln's head? Bare hands? Some article of clothing, a coat, a shirt, or perhaps a towel? Did Dr. Leale use a flag found in the box that night as a pillow under the President's head as he administered to him? We have only conflicting accounts of how and by whom the President was carried to Mr. Petersen's house. Did Thomas Gourlay help carry Lincoln as he claimed to have done in later life, and did he use a flag he had found in the box as a cushion?⁴ Or, is his story just one more fable retold by an old man in the twilight of his life, who was close to a great event in history? What actually happened will perhaps remain a mystery forever, but Thomas Gourlay's story has a ring of plausibility about it. Perhaps, in the little village of Milford, tucked away in the foothills of the Poconos, George Perry proudly guards a national treasure - the flag that cradled the dying President's head. We may never know for sure.

FOOTNOTES

1. "He unlocked the door of a private passageway and took her to President Lincoln's side." Jennie Gourlay to Norman Hartsell. Los Angeles Times, February 11, 1923.
2. The 36th state, Nevada, was admitted in October of 1864, but 36 star flags were not officially authorized for display until the following July 4, 1865. This is misleading however, as 36 star flags were produced for public sale as soon as Nevada was admitted.
3. Curator George Perry displays a letter from St. Francis Hospital in Port Jervis, New York, which testifies to the stains being made by human blood. An analysis of several wool fibers taken from the red bunting of the flag contained a natural red dye obtained from the roots of the madder plant, a common source of red dye during the period prior to 1867.
4. Two other accounts of how Lincoln's body was carried from the theatre that night exist. Dr. Charles Leale, who cared for Lincoln in the box, has left an account describing how he, himself, helped carry Lincoln from the theatre, holding his head. A second account comes from a soldier in Thompson's Battery C., Independent Pennsylvania Light Artillery, who, with three comrades, carried Lincoln from the box. Jacob Soles, Jake Griffiths, John Cory and William Sample were seated together in the Dress Circle when the attempt took place. They were joined by two unidentified soldiers at the head of the stairs as they carried Lincoln from the Dress Circle. Washington Daily News. February 11, 1933.



SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABED-NEGO
- Lincoln's Biblical Knowledge

by George Landes

In his 1920 monograph entitled Abraham Lincoln and His Books, William E. Barton shows us how Lincoln's youthful knowledge of the Bible carried over into his adult life and his Presidency. Certainly a portion of this biblical knowledge can be attributed to the use of the Bible as a textbook in the "backwoods" schools such as Lincoln attended.

Barton cites the following story to emphasize Lincoln's familiarity with the Bible. It is said to have occurred some months prior to the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Senator Henderson of Missouri had visited Lincoln in his office in the White House and found him in a mood of depression. The President told him that he was greatly troubled by the question of freedom of the slaves and was under great pressure from radical proponents of abolition, especially Charles Sumner, Henry Wilson, and Thaddeus Stevens.

"Sumner and Stevens and Wilson simply haunt me", declared Lincoln. "They haunt me with their importunities for a proclamation of emancipation. Wherever I go, and whatever way I turn, they are on my trail..."

As Lincoln thought about his problem, gazing out of the White House window upon Pennsylvania Avenue, his sadness changed to a smile as he recalled to Henderson something which had occurred in school when he was a boy.

"The only schooling I ever had... was in a log schoolhouse when reading books and grammars were unknown. All our reading was done from the Scriptures, and we stood up in a long line and read in turn from the Bible. Our lesson one day was the story of the faithful Israelites who were thrown into the fiery furnace and delivered by the hand of the Lord without so much as the smell of fire upon their garments. It fell to one little fellow to read the verse in which occurred for the first time, the names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

Little Bud stumbled on Shadrach, floundered on Meshach, and went all to pieces on Abed-nego. Instantly the hand of the master dealt him a cuff on the side of the head and left him wailing and blubbering, as the next boy in line took up the reading. But before the girl at the end of the line had done reading, he had subsided into sniffles, and finally became quiet. His blunder and disgrace were forgotten...until his turn was approaching to read again. Then, like a thunder-clap out of a clean sky, he set up a wail that alarmed the master, who with rather unusual gentleness inquired, 'What's the matter now?'

The little boy pointed with shaking finger to the verse which in a few moments he would be expected to read, and to the three proper names which it contained, - 'Look marster', he cried, 'there comes them same three fellers again!'"

Lincoln's face lighted up with a smile as he told this story, and he beckoned Senator Henderson to his side and silently pointed his finger at three men at that moment crossing from Pennsylvania Avenue over the White House lawn to the door of the Executive mansion. They were Charles Sumner, Henry Wilson, and Thaddeus Stevens.

-Barton, pp.9-11

DID JOHN WILKES BOOTH OWN A LITTLE WHITE POODLE ?

by Edward Steers

*Maggie Mitchell*

In a letter postmarked Richmond, September 10, 1858, John Wilkes Booth wrote to his older brother Edwin - "Give Mother my love. For I may not be able to write her this week, as they are casting Miss Mitchell's pieces, and I will have much to study."

Booth was in the early stages of his acting career and found himself being taken under the careful wing of America's top musical actress of the day, Maggie Mitchell. Maggie was clearly the most popular star on the American stage at this time, and her elfin-like qualities charmed a nation of theatre-goers.

An ardent confederate sympathizer during the war, Maggie and Booth became close friends, appearing together many times during Booth's early career. It was Maggie who had arranged Booth's first benefit performance when he finally went out on his own as an actor. It was natural for Maggie to be strongly attracted to the handsome and charming Booth.

Maggie was no stranger to Ford's Theatre or to its theatrical family. Her exceptional career on the stage found her in close association with both Booth and the Fords. During Lincoln's four years in office Maggie starred in over fifty performances at John Ford's theatre and, in October of 1863, delighted the President on one of his many visits to the theatre. On the night of April 14, 1865, Maggie was starring in St. Louis. In later years she told a strange tale which was published in the Cincinnati Courier Journal of July 1, 1882. Maggie claimed that on the night of April 14 she had a dream which proved to be remarkable. In her dream that terrible night she "... saw John Wilkes Booth leap from the private box of the President to the stage. He was dressed, as usual, with inimitable taste and neatness. He wore a short Spanish cloak, lined with crimson satin. As he leaped on the stage from the box, hurriedly and excitedly, his cloak flew open and disclosed a little white poodle held under his arm. He ran right past me and made his exit by the identical door through which he did escape after committing the horrid deed."

A few years later in 1869 when Booth was disinterred for removal to the family plot in Greenmount Cemetery, Miss Anna Ford, an intimate friend of the Booth family, was present and clipped a lock of Booth's hair which she gave to Maggie as a remembrance. Maggie said "It was his hair beyond a doubt. No one ever had more beautiful hair than he. It was the loveliest hair in the world."

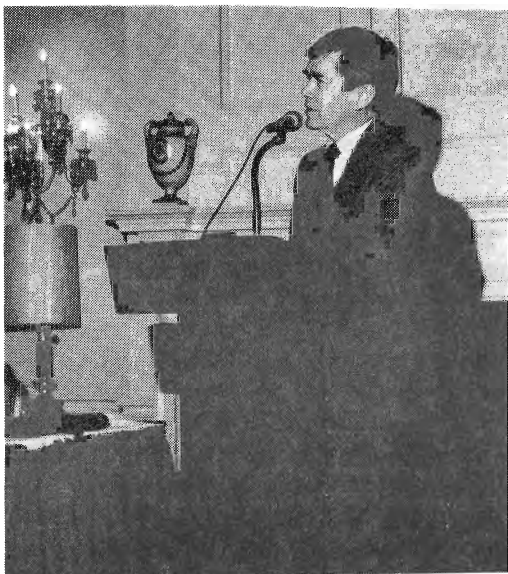
MONTGOMERY THEATRE.W. CANNING,
see and Manager.J. W. ALBAUGH,
Stage Manager.**THIRD APPEARANCE**THE POPULAR AND CHARMING COMEDienne,
MISS MAGGIE MITCHELL.and Complimentary Benefit,
THE CITIZENS OF MONTGOMERY, TO
R. J. WILKES BOOTH.

see Maggie Mitchell as Katy O'Sheal.

J. Wilkes Booth as Count Raffelle, and
in the Last Act of Richard III.**TURDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 1,**
performance will commence with the elegant
two act Drama entitled**R A F A E L L E.**
COUNT RAFFELLE, MR. J. WILKES BOOTH.to be followed by the Comic Drama in two acts,
entitled**KATY O'SHEAL.**
KATY O'SHEAL... MISS MAGGIE MITCHELL.To conclude with the fifth act of
RICHARD III.office open daily from 10 a. m. until 1, and
3 until 5 p. m., when seats may be secured

◀ ANNUAL LINCOLN DAY DINNER ▶

On Wednesday, February 16 the Lincoln Group held its Annual Lincoln Day Dinner at Fort Lesley J. McNair in the District of Columbia. The special program and all of the arrangements were under the flawless care of Joan Chaconas and Velma Cherwek making this years banquet one of our finest. As a special attraction, Joan also put up an excellent photographic exhibit entitled "Mr. Lincoln's Washington." The photographs which appear below were taken by Lincoln Group member Dr. J. Norman Reid who has our special thanks for his fine work. A total of 82 members and guests attended this years dinner.



Ambassador L. Bruce Laingen, who as American Charge d'Affair in Iran was the ranking U.S. diplomat held hostage, remarks on Lincoln and freedom.



Paul Corneilson, accompanied by Mr. Richard Mumford, both of the Music Department of Gettysburg College, sang a medley of civil war songs.



Lincoln Group treasurer and program Chairman, Elden E. "Josh" Billings, introduces the evenings main speaker, Dr. Mark E. Neely, Jr.



Our featured guest speaker, Dr. Mark E. Neely, Jr. spoke on Lincoln and arbitrary arrests.

CALENDER OF EVENTS

- May 4 American Revolutionary War Round Table Meeting. Fort Lesley J. McNair.
- May 5-7 Company of Military Historians 33rd Annual Meeting. Baltimore, Md.
- May 5-10 Vassar Book Sale. Washington Convention Center. 900 Ninth Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. Rooms 31 and 33. Open 10-8.
- May 7 Second International Military and Arms Book, Paper and Image Show. Elks Lodge, Fairfax, Virginia. 9-5.
- May 10 D.C. Civil War Round Table Meeting. Fort Lesley J. McNair. Dinner 7PM Speaker 8PM.
- May 12 Montgomery County Civil War Round Table Annual Banquet. Holiday Inn, Gaithersburg, Md. Guest Speaker: James I. "Bud" Robertson. Dinner 7PM.
- May 14 Lincoln Group and Montgomery County Civil War Round Table Tour: Escape Route of John Wilkes Booth. From Ford's Theatre to Bowling Green, Virginia.
- May 17 LINCOLN GROUP MEETING. DR. PAUL J. BEAVER, LINCOLN COLLEGE, LINCOLN, ILLINOIS WILL SPEAK. COCKTAILS 6PM. DINNER 7PM. SPEAKER 8PM.
- May 21-22 Military Americana Show. Lee-Jackson Motor Inn. Winchester, Virginia. Pre-civil war through Spanish-American War. 9-7:30, 8-3.
- May 24 Annual Surratt Society Banquet. Old Club Restaurant in Alexandria, Virginia.
- June 9 Montgomery County Civil War Round Table Meeting. Holiday Inn, Gaithersburg, Md. Dinner 7PM. Speaker 8PM.
- June 14 D.C. Civil War Round Table Meeting. Fort Lesley J. McNair. Dinner 7PM. Speaker 8PM.
- June 21 NO LINCOLN GROUP MEETING. NEXT MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 20. JOAN CHACONAS WILL SPEAK ON MR. LINCOLN'S WASHINGTON.
- June 13 Surratt Society Monthly Meeting. Clinton-Surratt Library. Clinton, Md. Meeting at 7:30 PM.
- June 26 Surratt Society Victorian Wedding. Surratt Tavern. Clinton, Md. 12-4 PM.

Lincoln Group member Dr. Richard D. Mudd of Saginaw, Michigan still has copies of his book: Dr. Samuel Alexander Mudd and His Descendents available. Cost is \$5.00 which includes postage and handling. Those interested should write to: Dr. Richard D. Mudd, 1001 Hoyt Avenue, Saginaw, Michigan 48607.

