

## **Acquainted with Sorrow: Honora Fitzpatrick, Mary Surratt's First Boarder**

by Susan Higginbotham

Described by W. P. Wood as a "plain unassuming girl," and more gallantly but generically by Louis Weichmann as "a very good and excellent woman,"<sup>1</sup> Honora Fitzpatrick, the first young lady boarder to join Mary Surratt's establishment, vanished from the public eye after the 1860's and seemed destined to live her life in quiet obscurity. But while her later years were indeed obscure, they were also, like those of so many others caught up in the assassination of the President, tragic.

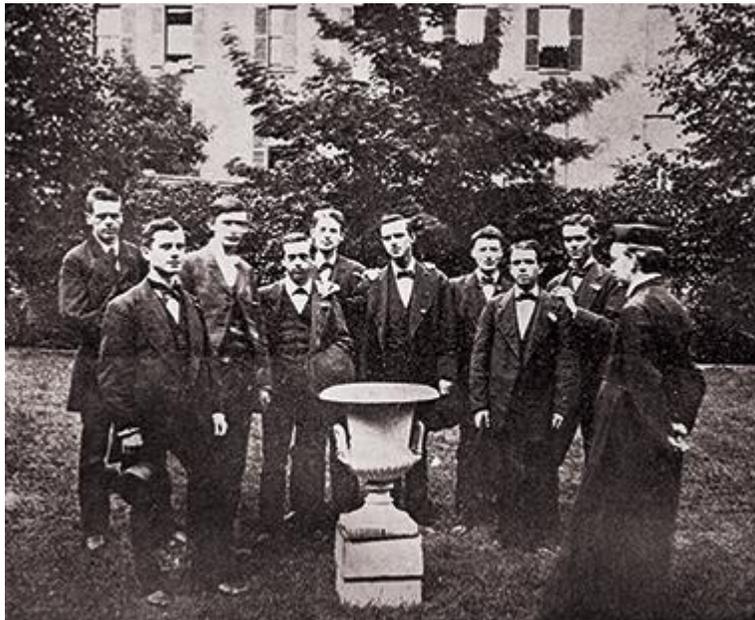
Honora (who spelled her name in a legal document in 1876 as "Hannora" but was generally known as "Nora"),<sup>2</sup> was the youngest daughter of James Fitzpatrick and Margaret Hierlehy, both immigrants from Ireland. Born around 1800, James moved to the United States in 1827 and soon thereafter came to Washington, where he was employed first in a store and then in the National Hotel before being hired as a messenger by the Bank of the Metropolis (later the National Metropolitan Bank).<sup>3</sup> The nineteen-year-old Margaret Herlihy who arrived in Philadelphia on the ship *Gulnare* on May 14, 1832, bound for Washington, may be Nora's mother. She and her companion, twenty-three-year-old Jane Herlihy, who had embarked from Liverpool, were fortunate enough to travel in a cabin instead of steerage. Immigration officials described the young women, probably sisters, as dark-complexioned, and noted that they were born in Cork County, although Margaret's obituary states that she was a native of Dingle in Kerry County.<sup>4</sup>

James and Margaret were married in Washington on June 1, 1836. They had six children: Hannah Marie ("Anna") Fitzpatrick, born on October 24, 1837; Peter Paul Fitzpatrick, born on June 29, 1839; Jane Victoria, who died in August 1842 at the age of twelve months; Margaret Theresa, who died in September 1844 at the age of eighteen months; Honora, born on October 10, 1844, and an unnamed infant who died in 1847. Anna, Peter, and Nora were each baptized at St. Patrick's in Washington, the city of their birth. Nora's godparents at her baptism on February 22, 1845, were Timothy O'Neill and Ann O'Leary. The man who served as godfather was probably the Timothy O'Neale who married Jane Herlihy on December 30, 1835.<sup>5</sup>

Nora's mother died on June 19, 1847, along with the unnamed infant mentioned above, leaving James Fitzpatrick with three young children to raise, including Nora, not yet three years of age.<sup>6</sup> Many men in his situation would have solved their child-care problems by remarrying, but James never took this option. The 1850 census for Washington shows that Ellenora McNamee, a twenty-two-year-old Irish immigrant, was living with the Fitzpatrick family that year; perhaps

she took care of young Nora. Patrick Fitzpatrick, age twenty-seven, also was staying with James and his children in 1850.

James provided good educations for his three surviving children, all of whom proved able pupils. Peter studied at Mount St. Mary's in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and at Gonzaga College (then known as Washington Seminary). In 1854, he was one of Gonzaga's star pupils, carrying away medals in the classics, French, bookkeeping, arithmetic, and writing.<sup>7</sup> He later returned to Gonzaga as a teacher of Greek, Latin, French, and mathematics, and for a time taught at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, but in 1864-65, the period of his sister's stay at Mrs. Surratt's house, he was teaching at the fledgling Boston College. In 1869, he entered Woodstock College in Maryland as a student of theology and was ordained a priest in 1872. After this, Peter continued to teach in Boston and Baltimore; he spent the last years of his life as pastor at St. Ignatius in Baltimore and as a faculty member at Loyola College there.<sup>8</sup> The picture below shows Peter on the far right with the 1877 graduating class of Boston College, where he taught at the time.



Anna Fitzpatrick graduated in July 1855 from St. Mary's Institute in Bryantown, Maryland. Her attendance there briefly overlapped with that of Anna Surratt, who testified that she was enrolled there from 1854 to 1861. At her graduation, Anna Fitzpatrick received the silver medal for music and the school's highest honor of a gold medal; her farewell speech, the *Evening Star* reported, "brought tears to the eyes of the greater number of those who were present."<sup>9</sup> On October 4, 1856, she was received into the Carmelite convent at Baltimore; on October 14, 1857, she professed herself as a nun there, at which time she took the name Sister Michael.<sup>10</sup>

Nora attended St. Joseph's at Emmitsburg, the Visitation Academy at Frederick, and the Visitation Academy of Georgetown, the last two still in existence.<sup>11</sup> Georgetown Visitation's records show that she was a student there for the terms of 1861-62, 1862-63, and 1863-64.<sup>12</sup> There, according to the prospectus for 1861-62, she could have taken courses on orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, ancient and modern geography, the use of the globes, prose and poetical composition, sacred and profane history, mythology, rhetoric, logic, moral and natural philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, mineralogy, botany, geometry, algebra, bookkeeping, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Latin, music on the pianoforte, harp, and guitar, vocal music, drawing, painting in water colors, in oil, and on velvet, plain and ornamental needlework, tapestry, embroidery, and lacework.<sup>13</sup> Nora's classmates would have included young ladies of good standing. Some notable alumnae of the past were Harriet Lane, President Buchanan's niece, and Dolley Madison's niece Adele Cutts, who would later marry Stephen Douglas. Adele would attempt to intervene for the life of Mary Surratt in 1865.

During Nora's stay at Georgetown Visitation, the pupils were expected to wear a uniform in the winter on Sundays, which they were to procure in Georgetown so that there would be "no variety of shade." Boarders were required to bring with them two knives and two forks (silver forks were preferred), two silver spoons, a silver tumbler, four table napkins, and six towels. Board and tuition ran to \$200 per year, with extra charges for foreign languages, music, dancing, and drawing. "Use of philosophical apparatus" cost an extra five dollars.

Although Peter Fitzpatrick would later claim doingly that Nora "never profited from her studies," she too was a bright student.<sup>14</sup> The Georgetown Visitation catalogue for 1861-62 indicates that she won a second premium in Sacred and Profane History, Geography and Mythology, a second premium in Reading and Orthography, a first premium in Christian Doctrine, and a first premium in Grammar and Composition.

Described by her brother as indulged and self-willed,<sup>15</sup> Nora evidently had no desire to follow her siblings into the church. Instead, in the fall of 1864, shortly before her twentieth birthday, she came to board at Mary Surratt's H Street house. Nora claimed that she was Mrs. Surratt's first boarder, although Louis Weichmann also claimed pride of place.<sup>16</sup> As Nora's father was also living in Washington, her reasons for living apart from him have prompted some speculation, and even the suggestion that she was a spy, but the most likely explanation is that given by Virginia Lomax, who recorded Nora as saying, "I had just come from school, and father, not keeping house himself, wished to place me in some nice quiet family. A friend recommended Mrs. Surratt."<sup>17</sup> The 1860 census, city directories, and federal tax records show that James Fitzpatrick lived at 479 11th Street West throughout the 1860's, apparently as a boarder; the address hosted multiple businesses and residents throughout the decade. As his job as a messenger would have kept him away from home during the day, and possibly necessitated travel out of town, perhaps he fretted about leaving his daughter unsupervised in wartime

Washington, a city that had experienced a population explosion and a resulting influx of shady characters.

Which friend brought Nora to Mrs. Surratt's attention is unknown, but it seems most likely that Father Bernardine Wiget, who had employed Peter Fitzpatrick at Gonzaga and who had taught Mary's sons at St. Thomas Manor, was responsible.<sup>18</sup> Another possibility is that school acquaintances of Anna Fitzpatrick and Anna Surratt brought boarder and landlady together. Whatever its origins, Nora's living situation must have seemed ideal to James Fitzpatrick: his willful daughter would be under the watchful eye of a respectable Catholic widow, and the presence of Anna Surratt meant that Nora would also have the company of a well-educated young lady close to her own age. She would have had the opportunity to get to know both mother and daughter intimately, as she shared a bed with Mrs. Surratt and usually with Anna as well.<sup>19</sup>

Nora, of course, would make new acquaintances at the boardinghouse that her father had not bargained for. Like Anna Surratt, she enjoyed the visits of the most prominent caller, John Wilkes Booth, and purchased his photograph, which she tucked into her album. On March 15, 1865, John Surratt and Lewis Powell (known to Nora and the other boarders as "Mr. Wood") escorted her and young Mary Apollonia Dean to Ford's Theatre, where the party watched a double bill of tragedy and comedy: Nicholas Rowe's *Jane Shore* and James Sheridan Knowles' *The Love Chase*.<sup>20</sup> Booth paid the quartet a visit in their box and spoke to the men privately. Unbeknownst to Nora and Miss Dean, the real drama that evening was occurring not onstage but off: the men were plotting the kidnapping of the President, a conspiracy which would take a murderous turn the next month.

Two letters in the evidence collected after the Lincoln assassination are associated with Nora: one supposedly written by Nora to her grandmother and another addressed to Nora from an anonymous correspondent. The first letter reads:

Easter Sunday morning

5 o'clock AM

Dear Grandma:

As we have been anxious to hear from you for some time, and unable to do so, I have asked my friend Miss Triplet to call on you as I know she would write and let me know how you were. The only news we could ever get from you has been through Father H. and as the letters were truce letters, the news of course had to be condensed. Mother, Ell & Ben were well last week, when I last heard from them. A. is here with me. We expect to get home this week.

I do not know where the other boys are or whether they still live or not. Wherever they are a good God is with them. I have not heard one word from them since the

evacuation. I hope they are at home as I expect they were included in the number who surrendered one week ago today. Tommy Finn was mortally wounded on last Sunday week, before Petersburg, and died on Monday night. Tom Kenny was also wounded after the army left P., at what place or time I have not heard. We heard his wound was serious if not mortal. I do not know of any others of our little flock who have fallen. Mr. Cutler was better when last I heard from him. The other members of the family were quite well. Mrs. Moran was very low when I heard from her. She has been suffering with an ulcer on the neck. Ell. M. was well. All other friends that I know of were as well as the times permit. All at home would, I know, join me in love to you. As Miss Triplet will write to me if you all still fear to write yourselves, tell her any news that may interest us and she will send it to

Your affectionate friend  
Nora<sup>21</sup>

This letter is docketed less than confidently as "Supposed to be from Nora Fitzpatrick to her grandma," and there is no notation of where it was seized. If it was seized from the H Street boarding house, it must have been written by the Nora who lived with Mary Surratt, but if it was seized elsewhere (such as from the outgoing mail in the post office), there are several good reasons to suspect that the letter is from another Nora. (Census records do show another Nora Fitzpatrick, a married woman, living in Washington at the time.) The writer refers to "Mother, Ell & Ben," but Nora's own mother was long dead, and Nora had no stepmother. There is no mention of her father or either of her siblings, though one would expect that Nora's grandmother would be interested in hearing about their welfare. Nora's reference to going "home" is also suspect, as her father does not seem to have kept his own house, and where else would "home" be besides Washington, the city of her birth? As for the "A" who was staying with her and who was to accompany her home, this very informal reference suggests a family member or intimate friend well known to Grandma, and thus is unlikely to refer to Anna Surratt, the only "A" in the H Street house on Easter Sunday 1865. Moreover, the implication seems to be that "home" was home for both Nora and "A," which would hardly be the case for Anna Surratt. The reference to truce letters indicates that Grandma was living in the Confederacy, and nothing else suggests that our Nora had relations south of Washington, D.C. And finally, Nora Fitzpatrick signed a receipt in June 1865 for letters sent to her that were seized from the Surratt boarding house. Her signature of "Nora" on the receipt differs from the signature in the letter to Grandma; the tail of the "a" in the letter goes down, whereas the tail in the receipt goes up, and the capital "N" on the receipt is much larger in proportion to the rest of the name than is the "N" in the letter.

It is clear from the address that the second letter, by an unidentified (probably female) correspondent from Baltimore, refers to our Nora. It is as follows:

Miss Nora Fitzpatrick, No. 541 H St. between 5th and 7th  
Washington City DC  
Baltimore, April 17th 1865

My dear Nora, As a proof of my good nature, I seat myself to have a little chat with you today. Really! I think you treated me shamefully! But I cannot believe that my dear kind little Nora did it of her own free will. I am sure some malicious person must have instigated her to the performance of the cruel act. I shall not retaliate in kind, Nora, no, I shall nobly revenge myself by communicating a piece of good news.

Father Dougherty will be in Washington on Wednesday!!! Ain't you glad? Go down to St. Patrick's about one o'clock and you will see him. Don't put off going at the specified time, because he will only remain in the city long enough to take his dinner.

Now, have not I been very kind? Nora, I expect to see you in Baltimore very soon. We told Lis, (don't you remember?) that you were coming back at Easter. Come soon. Ma and I want to go shopping this afternoon, so I shall have to terminate our chat a little earlier than I would otherwise wish. Ma sends you much love. Minnie would have a message for you, were she at home, but she has been in Howard Co. for nearly two weeks. Father Dougherty sends a kind remembrance. Camilla feels much affection for Nora and wished her a great deal of happiness

'Tis True<sup>22</sup>

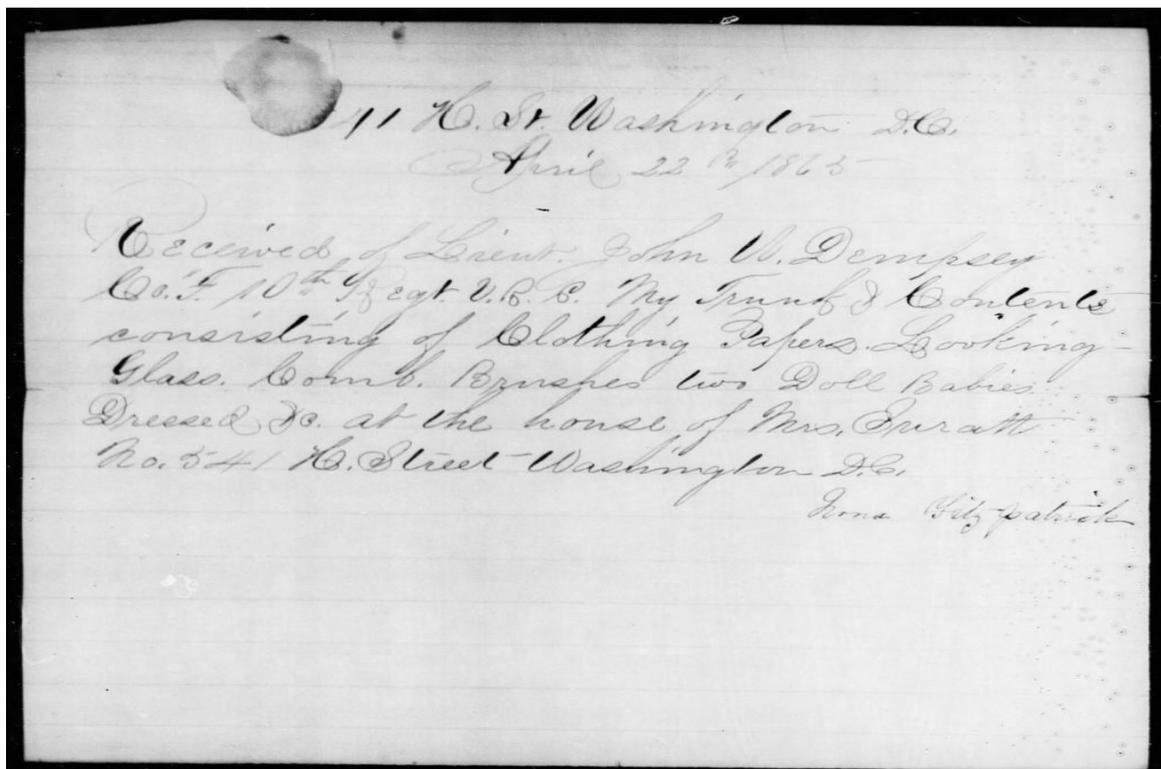
"Father Dougherty" likely refers to Father John Dougherty of Baltimore, who was the chaplain at the Carmelite Chapel (attached to the convent where Nora's sister resided) and the assistant priest at St. Vincent de Paul's.<sup>23</sup> Otherwise, I cannot trace the various people mentioned here. (On June 28, 1865, forty-four letters addressed to Nora were returned to her by the government; sadly, the correspondents are not named.<sup>24</sup>)

Nora likely never received this rather feather-headed but charming letter, for on the evening of April 17 she, Mary Surratt, Anna Surratt, and Mary's niece Olivia Jenkins were sitting in Mary Surratt's parlor when visitors appeared at the door: the police, come to arrest Mary and anyone unlucky enough to be at the boardinghouse with her. One wonders what Nora was still doing there, for at this point, all of the other boarders had left: Louis Weichmann and John Holohan were "helping the police" stalk the missing John Surratt, the rest of the Holohan family had decamped from the Surratt residence, and little Miss Dean had left to visit her own mother, never

to return.<sup>25</sup> Why had James Fitzpatrick not removed his daughter from this compromising location? Perhaps he was unaware of Booth's close association with Nora's landlady, perhaps he had not yet had time to make alternative living arrangements for Nora, or perhaps Nora had refused to leave.

As police searched the house, finding among other suspicious items Nora's carte de visite of John Wilkes Booth (concealed between two others in her album), the women, under guard, waited for a carriage to haul them to the headquarters of General Augur. While Mary Surratt gathered wraps and the younger women sat silently in the parlor, yet another unexpected caller arrived: Lewis Powell. Like her landlady, Nora later claimed that she had not recognized the man she knew as "Mr. Wood." Pressed for an explanation, she said that she had been frightened by her arrest.<sup>26</sup>

Powell, his fate sealed, having been put under arrest as well, the women were at last transported to the provost general's office for questioning, and then to the Carroll Annex of the Old Capitol Prison. There, Nora was imprisoned before being released on April 22 on the condition that she not bring messengers between her fellow prisoners and those on the outside. After taking the oath of loyalty, she was allowed to return to her lodgings to retrieve her trunk and its contents: clothing, papers, a looking glass, a comb, brushes, and two dressed dolls.<sup>27</sup>



11 K. St. Washington. D.C.  
April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1865

Received of Lieut. John W. Dempsey  
Co. F. 10<sup>th</sup> Regt. U.S. B. My Trunk & Contents  
consisting of Clothing Papers Looking  
Glass. Comb. Brushes two Doll Babies  
Dressed &c. at the house of Mrs. Surratt  
No. 541 K. Street Washington D.C.  
Nora Fitzpatrick

Nora did not enjoy her freedom long. On April 24, she was recommitted with instructions that she be kept apart from the other ladies and not be allowed to communicate with them.<sup>28</sup>

According to her cellmate, thirty-four-year-old Mattie Virginia Lomax, Nora was rearrested at a church fair—probably the one organized by Father Wiget of St. Aloysius' Church. Held in a specially constructed building on F Street by Gonzaga College, the fair ran from April 17 to May 8, 1865. Nora was standing behind a booth when a man informed her that she was wanted at the Provost Marshal's office for a few moments. After consulting "Father W"—presumably Father Wiget—Nora obeyed the summons. At the provost marshal's office, when Nora did not answer the questions in the manner desired, her interrogators asked whether Mary Surratt had forced her to take an oath of silence, then put her in an ambulance. Realizing that she was not being taken back to the fair but to prison, Nora recalled, "I knelt down in the ambulance, and making the sign of the cross, placed myself under our Lord's protection. They brought me here, and put me in this room. I was terribly frightened at being alone, and all night long I walked up and down; I would not have gone to sleep for anything in the world."<sup>29</sup>

Over the next few weeks, Nora—her identity disguised by Lomax in her memoir as "Mary"—and Lomax led a miserable existence. Before Lomax was committed, she recalled, she had encountered Nora's father, "an old man with snow-white hair, which hung down on his shoulders," who told her that he had been coming to prison day after day to see Nora, but was refused permission by the authorities. He was allowed to send a basket of cakes to his daughter, which Nora and Lomax ate in preference to the sickening prison fare until the mice and roaches found their stash. Each woman had an iron bedspread with sheets, pillows and a blanket. On one evening, the pair were frightened by a yowling cat, on another, by two drunken male prisoners who attempted to visit them in their cell. Nora on one occasion was awoken at two in the morning to be questioned about whether she knew a Mrs. Callan, where the lady went to church, and who her confessor was; Lomax thought that Nora had been questioned at that hour in hopes of catching her off guard.<sup>30</sup>

Nora was questioned by W. P. Wood, the superintendent, on April 28. She acknowledged that Booth, "Mr. Wood," and George Atzerodt (whom she knew only as "Port Tobacco") had visited the H Street boardinghouse. Nora did not remember Mary Surratt letting anyone into the house the night of the assassination. In contrast to Louis Weichmann, who painted a picture of Mary as nervous and brooding after her return from Surrattsville on April 14, Nora described her landlady as "lively & talking" that evening after returning from the country.<sup>31</sup>

There was a reason that Nora was of particular interest to the authorities. An unidentified "Negro woman," probably a new servant in Mary Surratt's boardinghouse named Susan Mahoney Jackson, had claimed that on the night of the assassination, three men came to the house and went with Mrs. Surratt to the basement, where the servant was in the custom of bedding down for the night. There, the servant claimed, she feigned sleep as the men informed Mrs. Surratt that

her son John had been in the theater with Booth that evening. According to the servant, Nora was a witness to this nocturnal exchange and assured the men that the servant girl was asleep and could not hear them. Both Nora and Mary Surratt were questioned intensely about this rather unlikely incident, to the evident bafflement of both lodger and landlady. Col. John A. Forster wrote on April 30, 1865, that Nora's "acting as a spy over the servant" and her concealed photograph of Booth "induced her arrest & seem to call for holding her with Mrs. Surratt and Miss Surratt."<sup>32</sup>

Mary Surratt was transferred to the Old Arsenal on April 30.<sup>33</sup> According to Lomax, she and the other prisoners were mingling when Mary was taken away, to the great dismay of Anna Surratt. Lomax and Nora, however, expected Mary's absence to be only temporary and took turns watching all night for her return. Only later did the women realize that Mary's life was in danger. With Mary's departure, Nora was moved upstairs with Anna.<sup>34</sup>

At her landlady's trial, Nora testified for both the prosecution and the defense. For the prosecution, she named John Wilkes Booth, Lewis Powell, and George Atzerodt as visitors to the house and testified to her excursion to the theater. For the defense, she testified to sharing a room with Mrs. Surratt, buying a photograph of Booth at the same time Anna Surratt purchased hers, and to having last seen John Surratt a fortnight before the assassination. In her opinion, Mrs. Surratt treated Louis Weichmann more like a son than like a friend. She joined other defense witnesses in attesting to Mrs. Surratt's poor eyesight. Nora claimed not to have recognized Powell when he made his untimely appearance at Mrs. Surratt's house on the night of April 17, but testified that she recognized him later when he removed his makeshift skullcap at General Augur's office.<sup>35</sup> Evidently the prosecution had lost its faith in the servant's story about Mary Surratt's three visitors and Nora's spying on the servant as she feigned sleep, for Nora was not questioned about this incident. Her testimony for the prosecution satisfied the government, for on May 22, following Nora's appearance in court, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordered her release from prison.<sup>36</sup>

At John Surratt's trial two years later, Nora reprised much of her testimony from the conspiracy trial before, although she was put on the stand for much longer in 1867 than in 1865. Reading her testimony, it is hard to escape the conclusion that after the execution of Mary Surratt, she was determined to do what she could to help Mary's son avoid the same fate. On examination by the prosecution, she found many things difficult to remember, but her memory for detail sharpened considerably on examination by the defense—except where matters to which Weichmann had testified, such as Mary's requesting him to pray for her intentions, were concerned. Of these, Nora had no recall whatsoever.<sup>37</sup> Certainly the *National Aegis* thought that that Nora had "done her best to aid Surratt and damage Weichmann," while the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* commented on how little she appeared to know despite having boarded with Mrs. Surratt, and added, "Most people believe she could tell if she would."<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the prosecution felt that it had elicited enough testimony from Nora to support its case, especially when her father was thrown into the

balance: "Do you doubt her? She is a native of your city; the daughter of Mr. James Fitzpatrick, a gentleman of the highest character, and personally known, perhaps, to all of you."<sup>39</sup>

John Surratt's trial ended in a hung jury. Two years later, Nora made a last appearance in connection with Mary Surratt when she was one of the select few attending Mary's reburial in Mount Olivet Cemetery on February 9, 1869—a sign that she had remained close to the family of her former landlady. According to the *New York Times*, Nora rode in the first carriage with Anna Surratt, Father Walter (the officiating priest), and Mrs. Cantatori, a niece of President Tyler. The *Evening Star* reported, "Miss Anna Surratt and Miss Fitzpatrick seemed greatly affected during the services."<sup>40</sup>

Other than her trial testimony and her attendance at Mrs. Surratt's reburial, nothing indicates what Nora was doing in the years just after her landlady's hanging. City directories show that her father remained at his Eleventh Street lodgings throughout the rest of the 1860's, but where Nora was staying and how she occupied herself are unknown.

While Nora's days in the spotlight were over, her troubles were just beginning. In happier times for his family, John Surratt in a letter to his cousin had joked that he looked into the boardinghouse parlor and saw "Miss Fitzpatrick playing with her favorite cat,—a good sign of an old maid,—the detested old creatures."<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, John Surratt's prediction was incorrect. On January 13, 1870,<sup>42</sup> Nora married Alexander Whelan, a widower, and her choice of husband proved to be every bit as disastrous as her former landlady's.

Born in October 1836 in Quebec to Irish parents, Alexander Whelan came to the United States in 1855 and by 1860 had made his way to Baltimore, where he worked as a house and sign painter and a grainer. At the time, he was living with his first wife, Margaret, and their daughter, Mary Catherine, born in Baltimore on October 17, 1858; a second daughter, Anna Elizabeth, followed in October 1861. By 1863, Alexander, whose listing in the register of draft-eligible males as "married" indicates that his first wife was still living, had moved to Washington. He was employing others by May 1867, when a report of a painters' union meeting refers to A. W. Whelan as an employer. In 1869 his business was at 513 H Street North, one door east of Seventh Street; his advertisement informed the public, "Especial attention given to graining and marbling." The following year, he resided on H Street Northwest near Third. At the time the census was taken on June 25, 1870, he and a pregnant Nora were living with his two daughters, eleven-year-old Mary and nine-year-old Anna.<sup>43</sup>

It is difficult to imagine James Fitzpatrick, who had given his daughter such a good education, being entirely happy with Nora's choice of a laboring man as a husband, even a skilled laborer who had his own business. He may have had another reason for displeasure: on July 17, 1870, seven months after her marriage, Nora bore a child, James A. Whelan.<sup>44</sup> Either little James was the fortunate survivor of what at the time would have been a dangerously premature birth or

Nora had been pregnant at her wedding. But there was an even greater objection to the match, which would soon become apparent if it had not been so already: Alexander Whelan was an alcoholic. Nora's brother, said to be dedicated to saving souls, could find no kind words for Whelan, whom he dismissed as "a worthless drunkard," and Anna, Whelan's own daughter, described him as a slave to drink.<sup>45</sup> Nora's husband was probably the hapless Alexander Whelan who in 1878 had his shoes and handkerchief stolen by a passing sailor as Whelan was "resting" outside of the Marble Saloon on Pennsylvania Avenue. Unable to resist the theft, as the *Evening Star* delicately put it, Whelan remained where he was until a friend happened along, noticed his shoeless condition, and hailed the police, who shortly thereafter found the sailor strolling down Pennsylvania Avenue with Whelan's shoes in his hands.<sup>46</sup>

There was another side to Alexander Whelan, though. Over the years, he patented three inventions: a hinge for window shutters, doors, and gates in 1869, another hinge in 1870, and an apparatus for controlling horses in 1899.<sup>47</sup> Whether his inventions were profitable is unknown, but such cleverness might have attracted Nora to her husband. Alexander also seems to have "taken the pledge" at times, as he was active in temperance activities in 1891.<sup>48</sup>

Nora's second son, Bernard Alexander Whelan, was born on January 27, 1874.<sup>49</sup> His first name is intriguing: might he have been named for Father Bernardine Wiget, who had attended Mary Surratt on the scaffold? A third son, John Albert Whelan, was born on November 3, 1879.<sup>50</sup>

On May 6, 1876, James Fitzpatrick, age 76, died in Providence Hospital of "senile debility," having spent nearly half a century in Washington.<sup>51</sup> Such a fixture in the capital had he become that when he retired in May 1870, the *Evening Star* commemorated the event with a short article.<sup>52</sup> James was buried at Mount Olivet. In his will, dated March 15, 1875, he left his two daughters twenty-five dollars apiece; the rest of his estate went to his son, Peter.<sup>53</sup>

Anna Fitzpatrick, a cloistered nun, had no need for her father's worldly goods. But why did James Fitzpatrick all but disinherit Nora, the mother of his grandchildren? Later, and probably truthfully, Peter explained that his father, knowing that Peter would not allow his sister to want for anything, had favored him in order to protect Nora against her husband. Nonetheless, Nora contested her father's will and her brother's appointment as executor, but on December 12, 1876, her petition challenging the grant of letters testamentary to Peter was overruled, after which nothing more is heard of her case.<sup>54</sup>



Worse than disinheritance and a lost court case, however, was soon to follow for Nora. On August 24, 1885, Peter Fitzpatrick, in circumstances that will soon be explained, wrote a harrowing account of his sister's troubled life. For years, he claimed, Alexander Whelan had kept his family in "absolute destitution. Everything went for drink." Finally, in August 1882 Whelan abandoned his family. Peter then placed his sister and his nephews in a boardinghouse, on the one condition that Whelan not be allowed to enter the premises. Whelan returned, however, and persuaded Nora to leave the house with him, obliging Peter to pay the rent and grocery bills. Scarcely a month later, for reasons Peter does not explain, Nora was taken to Providence Hospital, the children to the orphan asylum—and Whelan to the house of correction. Had Nora

or her children been victims of domestic violence, or was Whelan imprisoned on other grounds? Was Nora hospitalized for a physical condition, a mental illness, or both? I have found no answers to these questions, but whatever sent her to the hospital was serious, for she remained there as a private patient from January 1883 to May 1883 before escaping.<sup>55</sup>

Having absconded from the hospital, "under a boiling sun," Nora began "a wild and anxious search after her children," resulting in a fever which nearly caused her death. It was only at this point, at least according to Peter, that Nora began to suffer from mental illness: her fever left her mind "so enfeebled" that she was sent to Mount Hope Asylum in Baltimore, where she remained for fourteen months. "Grief [and] anxiety for her children wore her to a thread," however, and believed to be dying, she was transferred to Providence Hospital in September 1884. Her health improved in her new surroundings, but "[a]nxiety . . . for her children & unwillingness to submit to the restraints of the Hospital brought on occasional attacks of frenzy." In May 1885, Nora escaped from Providence Hospital once again. For several weeks, she was docile, but a visit to the orphanage where her two younger children were staying, and the absence of the oldest one, upset her. Peter added that her condition was probably also aggravated by the "recent great heat." When Nora became "a source of annoyance & anxiety to others," Peter placed her at the Government Hospital for the Insane, then known unofficially as "St. Elizabeths," the legal name it bears today.

Founded in 1852, St. Elizabeths (the official name, reflecting colonial usage for the tract of land on which it sits, contains no apostrophe) admitted its first patients in 1855. It was founded on principles of "moral treatment," which "involved providing patients with comfortable surroundings in which to live, good food to eat, and caring for them with kindness and respect."<sup>56</sup> It boasted "a small zoo, pleasure walks, a farm on which to work, and striking views of downtown Washington, Alexandria, and the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers." If Nora had a private room as her brother wished, she was fortunate, as the asylum was over capacity, although Dr. William Godding, the second person to hold the position of superintendent, added a number of buildings. Female patients suffered more from the overcrowding than male ones, as the areas in which they could gather were more restricted and an all-female hospital never came to fruition.

It was not until the twentieth century that treatment records as we know them were kept at St. Elizabeths. The file of one patient who was admitted in 1861 contains no physician's notes until 1903! Nora's thin file is typical of others of the late nineteenth century: it contains only letters from her siblings, her stepdaughter, and a Mr. Fullerton, all addressed to Dr. Godding.<sup>57</sup>

Nora's admission to St. Elizabeths in August 1885 stimulated a flurry of letter-writing. On August 4, 1885, Anna Bartlett, Nora's recently married stepdaughter, wrote a rambling but informative letter to Dr. Godding, which indicates that Nora had been suffering physically as well as mentally.<sup>58</sup> On about July 27, she wrote, Nora had been taken with a "flooding," the first

she had had in two years; she had also been suffering from "falling of the womb" for at least ten years. Nora had been patient in all of her sicknesses until her mind became so flighty, but she could not be held accountable for what she said. Anna wrote that her father, Alexander Whelan, had been a "slave to [drink] for many years" and that he went on sprees, forcing Nora to separate from him—an interesting variation from Peter's account, which states that Alexander simply deserted his family. Anna added that her home life was such that she had been obliged to depend on her own resources for her living until she married her own sober and industrious husband.

Peter wrote to Dr. Godding on August 7, 1885, from Baltimore's Loyola College. He stated that a Dr. Samuel Bond had informed him that Nora had been placed in the asylum and that Dr. Bond had drawn up the necessary papers. His agent, Mr. Fullerton, would visit Dr. Godding once he returned to the city. In the meantime, Peter asked that Dr. Godding inform him of Nora's prospects for recovery. He requested that Sister Michael, his and Nora's cloistered sister, not be informed of Nora's condition, as "such distressing news could be attended by no good results." Finally, Alexander Whelan was not to be allowed to see his wife if he should call. "He is a worthless drunkard—the cause of her misfortune."

Mr. Fullerton (probably James Fullerton, listed in the 1885 Washington city directory as a lawyer) wrote a short note on August 17, 1885, from the Chester County House in the fashionable resort of Atlantic City, New Jersey. He noted that Peter wanted to procure a private room for Nora, which he thought would promote her recovery, and gave Dr. Godding the address of Thomas Parsons, who would pay what was needed until Mr. Fullerton's anticipated return to the city on September 1. With that, Mr. Fullerton set down his pen and presumably settled back to enjoy the ocean breeze.

Peter Fitzpatrick was not enjoying a similar respite. On August 24, 1885, he wrote a second letter to Dr. Godding, the one mentioned above in which he describes Nora's tumultuous history, and reiterated his request that she receive a private room. Detailed as his letter is, it is notable for one glaring omission: it contains no reference whatsoever to the events of 1865. Indeed, Peter wrote, "Mrs. Whelan was unacquainted with suffering until she met with her drunken husband."

Nora's death certificate, issued in 1896, indicates that Nora suffered from chronic melancholia, described in a 1901 medical manual as "the terminus of all other forms of spirit depression. It is the inevitable goal of continued mental shock, and worry, and brooding, and physical decay. The term is an epitome of all the disappointments of fickle fortune. The condition is a sarcasm upon human happiness, and the ultimate of vengeful fate. The means to this end are false and unsatisfying philosophies. Its field of operation is wide as the world, and the number of victims which this Giant Despair claims for his own is as myriad and legion."<sup>59</sup> Given the lack of any treatment records, it would be irresponsible, especially for a layperson, to attempt to assign Nora a modern diagnosis, although it is hard to escape the idea that her gynecological ailments might have affected her mental health.

At the asylum, Nora had an attendant, Mrs. Ryan, whose duties included writing to Nora's relatives and accompanying her on outings. This was probably Mary Ryan, listed in St. Elizabeths' payroll records for this period. The 1880 census for St. Elizabeths shows a Mary Ryan, confusingly listed as both a boarder and as an attendant, married to Francis Ryan, listed as an attendant; the city directory for 1880 mentions both Francis and Mary as attendants at the hospital. According to the census, Mary Ryan was an Irish immigrant who was a few years older than Nora, having been born around 1840. Although the census taker noted Mary Ryan as being illiterate, this is belied by the correspondents in Nora's file, who mention receiving letters written by her. As no other Mary Ryan figures as an attendant at St. Elizabeths during this period, it seems that either the census taker erred or Mary Ryan at some point before Nora's admission in 1885 had learned to read and write. (Unfortunately, most of the 1890 census records, which might have helped to sort this out, were destroyed by fire.) Payroll records from the asylum show that in 1884, Mary Ryan was paid \$15 a quarter; by 1892, her salary had risen to \$20.

Nora's daily life at the asylum is undocumented, but the hospital, in accordance with the dictates of "moral treatment," appears to have made an effort to make life as pleasant for its patients as it could be under the circumstances.<sup>60</sup> A minority of them worked at various tasks around the hospital, while in the evening entertainments were put on, from lowbrow minstrel shows to highbrow slide shows about the Corcoran Art Gallery. Each year, the patients could dance and mingle at an Easter ball. Some were allowed to leave the grounds on "parole," in a few cases unattended; Nora herself traveled to Baltimore on several occasions, accompanied by Mrs. Ryan. Patient living quarters were segregated by sex and by race; the criminally insane were eventually given their own quarters. The most unusual living arrangement at St. Elizabeths was that of Sarah Catherine Borrows, a wealthy patient who lived on the hospital grounds in her own private cottage, built at her mother's expense with the understanding that it would be turned over to the hospital after Sarah's death. Mrs. Borrows herself moved into the cottage with her daughter and died there in 1896. As Sarah was admitted to the hospital in 1886, a year after Nora, and lived in a wing with other women before her cottage was constructed, it is likely that Nora would have met this privileged patient at some point.

In late November or early December 1886, Peter Fitzpatrick fell ill with a fever, believed to be typhoid or malaria. He had been thought to be improving when on the morning of December 10, 1886, having arisen in a cheerful mood, he died of "paralysis of the heart." He was only forty-seven, and accounts of him suggest that overwork had hastened his end. It was noted that his older sibling, Sister Michael, felt his death keenly, but was bearing up bravely. The reaction of his younger sister at the asylum is unrecorded.<sup>61</sup> Father Fitzpatrick was buried at Woodstock College after a funeral was held at his church, St. Ignatius, on December 13, 1886.<sup>62</sup>

Although Peter had asked that Anna Fitzpatrick (Sister Michael) not be notified of Nora's admission to St. Elizabeths for fear she might be distressed, he had underestimated the nun, who dealt both capably and compassionately with her institutionalized sibling. The year after Peter's

death, Sister Michael began writing to Dr. Godding. On September 2, 1887, she told him that she had had two or three letters from Nora, which seemed "sane enough but very carelessly written." Sister Michael had also heard from Nora's attendant, Mrs. Ryan, who complained of how "very trying she is at times and how very negligent about her personal appearance." Sister Michael asked Dr. Godding to inform her of Nora's mental state.

Over the next few years, save for a gap in 1891, Sister Michael wrote to Dr. Godding once or twice a year to inquire about her youngest sibling. She provided another important service for Nora: safeguarding the interests of her and her children. Nora's share of her intestate brother's estate amounted to \$4,000, which remained in the hands of an administrator. In January 1888, Sister Michael, under her secular name of Anna M. Fitzpatrick, petitioned the Washington equity court for a writ of inquiry in lunacy, so that Nora could be examined by a jury and her insanity determined; the purpose of the petition, it seems, was to appoint a committee to oversee Nora's modest inheritance so that her minor sons could benefit from it.<sup>63</sup> I have found nothing to indicate that Nora opposed the proceedings.

In November 1888, having ascertained from Dr. Godding that Nora seemed better, Sister Michael sent five dollars for Nora and Mrs. Ryan to travel to see her in Baltimore. When Sister Michael next wrote to Dr. Godding on April 30, 1889, she noted that Nora had told her that Dr. Godding had asked Nora whether she wanted to come to Baltimore to visit her after Easter. Sister Michael added that Nora's letters seemed "very much more connected in thought than they were some months ago."

In response to this letter, Dr. Godding seems to have broached the idea of Nora's leaving the asylum. Sister Michael, having prayed over the matter, responded on May 23, 1889, that she did not believe that Nora could live on her own and that Nora did not have sufficient income to pay for a companion. Poignantly, she added that the family had "no relatives or friends to whom [Nora] might be entrusted"—a sad indication of how constricted the family circle had become over the years. Evidently, no one considered it advisable for Nora to return to her husband. Concluding that it was best that Nora remain where she was until her boys were in a position to care for her, Sister Michael enclosed another five dollars for Nora and Mrs. Ryan to visit Baltimore.

Sister Michael noted in the same letter that she was relying on "paid strangers" for the care of Nora's sons. Although this conjures up rather gloomy Dickensian visions, Nora's younger two sons were probably by this point being raised much as Nora and her motherless siblings had been. The 1889 catalog for Holy Cross College in Worcester shows that Bernard A. Whelan of Baltimore was studying there; the designation of Baltimore as his residence probably reflects Sister Michael's oversight of his education. In May 1889, Bernard took to the stage in the school's production of *The Seven Clerks*, and was a "favorite of everybody"; the following year, he won an elocution medal. John A. Whelan, the youngest son, entered Gonzaga College in

Washington, D.C., or possibly Georgetown, at some point.<sup>64</sup> The boys' uncle, Peter, had taught at both Holy Cross and Gonzaga.

When Sister Michael next wrote Dr. Godding in August 1892, she was distressed to learn that Nora was suffering from "false hearing"—not auditory hallucinations, it appears, but a hearing disorder affecting the way one heard one's own voice.<sup>65</sup> She again enclosed the expenses for a trip to Baltimore. The following June, Sister Michael wrote on behalf of Nora's grown stepdaughters, who wished to get a pass to see Nora so that they did not have to lose so much time at the gatehouse of the asylum. Sister Michael was grieved to hear from Mrs. Ryan that Nora was "not so well again," as her mind had seemed so clear the last time Sister Michael had seen her.

Sister Michael's last letter to Dr. Godding is dated September 10, 1894. She again sent five dollars in traveling expenses and noted that this time, one of Nora's sons would accompany her and Mrs. Ryan to Baltimore. The following year, on March 11, Sister Michael died at her convent. She was buried at Bonnie Brae Cemetery. Her two oldest nephews, James and Bernard Whelan, were among her four pallbearers.<sup>66</sup> Whether Nora was able to attend her sister's funeral is not recorded.

One last letter remains in Nora's file. It reads:

Washington DC  
1412 12th  
Jan 12th

Dr Godding

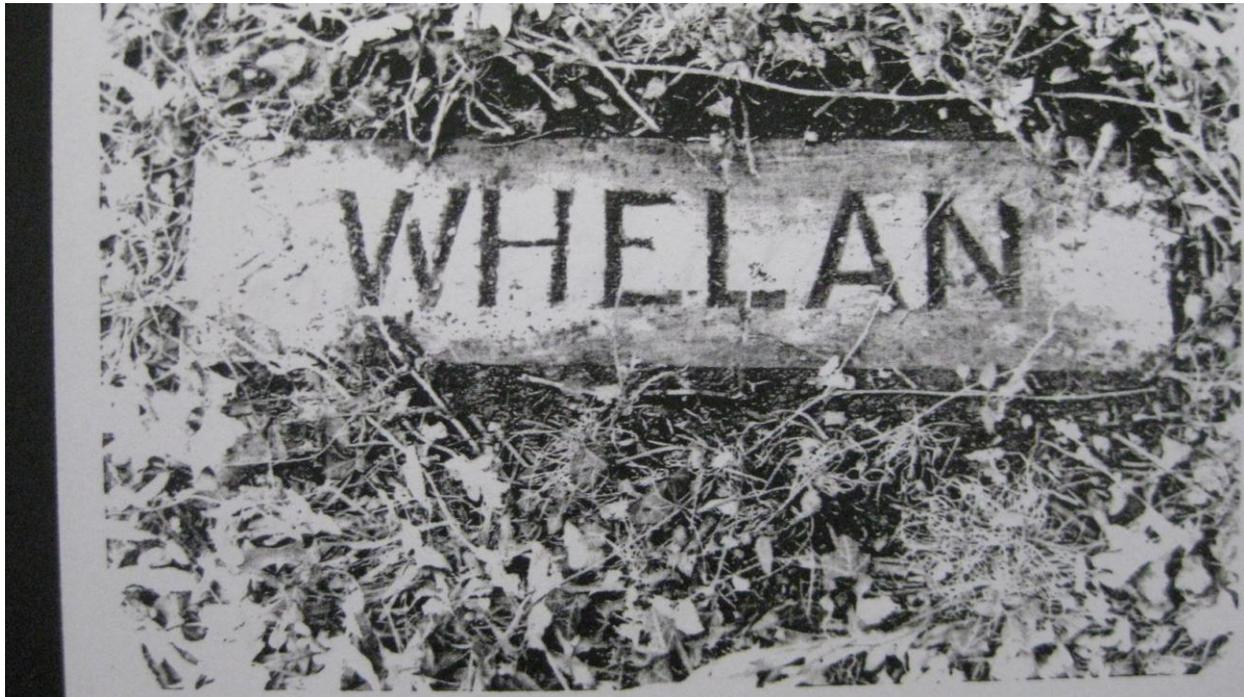
Dear Sir

I must thank you very much in which we one and all are indebted to you, for your kindness to Ma. I would if I had any say in the matter left the cloth[e]s over there for the poor Patients but the boys her sons, wished me to get them or send for them as they wanted them for what purpose I can't say. did you find out the cause of her death. I ask this because we would like to know as I saw when laying her out, where the body had been opened. we are glad her death was peaceful as much as I looked for it. it was a s[h]ock with my sincere thanks for years of kindness and trouble I remain as ever sincerely yours

A. E. Bartlett

Probably about this time, Anna Bartlett signed an undated receipt indicating that she had received \$2.03 from Dr. Godding.

Nora's death certificate indicates that she died on January 7, 1896, of pulmonary tuberculosis, from which she had suffered for four years. Her psychiatric diagnosis was chronic melancholia.<sup>67</sup> Dr. Godding, who completed the death certificate, initially wrote "Widowed" for Nora's marital status before correcting it to "Married," which suggests that Nora's husband had had little if any contact with staff at the asylum. After a funeral at the Church of the Holy Name on January 9, 1896, Nora was buried at Mount Olivet near her parents and baby sisters. The Hall research files contain a photograph of her simple grave marker, bearing only her surname WHELAN.<sup>68</sup>



John A. Whelan, Nora's youngest son, was a minor at the time of his mother's death, necessitating that a guardian be appointed to handle the \$1,053.98 that amounted to his share of Nora's estate. In February 1896, Alexander Whelan, who whatever his failings as a husband appears to have remained on good terms with his sons, filed a petition in equity stating that John had requested that Thomas Waggaman be appointed, as Alexander could not post the required bond and did not believe he was suited to the task. Waggaman, by contrast, was eminently well suited: the treasurer for Catholic University, he was a wealthy real estate developer and art collector who also handled a number of trusts. Later, unsuccessful investments would lead to his going spectacularly bankrupt, to the detriment of many—though by this time, John A. Whelan had long since come into his majority and thus escaped this disaster.<sup>69</sup>

Alexander Whelan did not remarry after his long-institutionalized wife died. He may be the Alexander Whelan who, when being tried for disorderly conduct on November 1, 1901, acknowledged that he had been drunk but did not remember being disorderly. The court, pointing out that he was charged with disorderly conduct and not with drunkenness, sentenced him to a

fine of five dollars or, alternatively, two weeks on the prison farm.<sup>70</sup> On a more pleasant (and verifiable) note, Alexander, along with other members of the family, attended his granddaughter's eighteenth birthday party in 1904.<sup>71</sup> He spent his last days at his daughter Mary's home at 924 14th Street NW, where he died of chronic interstitial nephritis on July 13, 1916, age 80. Alexander was buried at Mount Olivet, in a plot some distance from Nora's. Probably the old man's twilight years had been rather comfortable, as Mary was the owner of a thriving corset business on F Street. By this time she could afford to invest in Washington real estate, booming then as it is today, and she had purchased land at 918 14th Street NW with the intention of building a \$50,000 apartment building.<sup>72</sup>

Shortly before the 1900 census, Nora's son James, a railway worker, married a woman from New York named Nellie L. Manley. On October 11, 1901, their eight-month-old son, James Arthur Whelan, died; another girl, Frances, died on March 5, 1912.<sup>73</sup> Three other children were living as of the 1920 census: Mary Grace, Charles, and Eugene. Employed by the Washington Terminal Company as a car repairer, James Whelan developed tuberculosis and went to the Fairview Sanatorium in Asheville, North Carolina, a popular destination for the consumptive seeking cures, where he died on April 6, 1927. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Asheville's Riverside Cemetery, where he keeps company with the authors O'Henry (William Sydney Porter) and Thomas Wolfe.<sup>74</sup> If Nora has living descendants, it is likely through James, as her other sons do not appear to have had any known offspring.

Despite his promising youth, Bernard Whelan had a checkered career. In 1898, a Bernard Whelan was sentenced to serve ninety days for housebreaking and larceny; the defendant's recorded age, twenty-four, makes it all but certain that this Bernard was Nora's son, born in 1874.<sup>75</sup> Three years later, on the evening of July 8, 1901, a Bernard Whelan smashed a large showroom window on Seventh Street. Passersby went in hot pursuit of the man and turned him over to police.<sup>76</sup> It is probable, but not certain, that the man involved in the 1901 incident was Nora's son; however, an inmate in a workhouse in St. Joseph, Missouri, is clearly the right Bernard Whelan: his status is noted on a draft registration card for the First World War which lists his half-sister Mary as his nearest relative and gives her Washington address. By the time of the 1920 census, though, Bernard had left the workhouse and was employed as a janitor at St. Joseph's Commercial College, run by the Christian Brothers.

Mary Catherine Whelan, Nora's stepdaughter, was by far the most successful of Alexander Whelan's five children. When she died childless on May 13, 1924, she left an estate valued at \$100,000, from which her sister and surviving half-brothers all benefitted. Mary left bequests to the St. Ann's Infant Asylum, the St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum of Berwyn, and St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum of Washington; the last institution had sheltered her half-brothers James and Bernard for a time. Mary, who owned a house on Mount Pleasant Street in Washington as well as real estate in Florida, left her sister Anna a life interest in the Washington house and a monthly annuity of \$150; her half-brother Bernard received an annuity of \$60 per month. The

income from the residue of the estate was to be divided between Anna Bartlett, James A. Whelan, Bernard A. Whelan, and Anna Bartlett's two grown children.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps in providing an annuity for Bernard, but not his older brother, Mary Whelan recognized that he might have some difficulty earning a living because of his criminal past. He may also have had health problems; his death certificate indicates that he had an old cerebral hemorrhage. Bernard was back in his hometown by 1930, when the census shows that he worked as a salesman for a private school; He died of pneumonia at Gallinger Municipal Hospital on January 17, 1938, and was buried two days later in Mount Olivet in the same plot as his father.<sup>78</sup>

Nora's youngest son, John A. Whelan, graduated from Georgetown University Law School in 1903 and received a masters of law degree the following year.<sup>79</sup> He does not seem to have practiced law, however, but worked as a bank clerk for a time and then in business. His career eventually took him to Salt Lake City.<sup>80</sup> In 1916, he joined the Utah National Guard.<sup>81</sup> John accepted a commission in the Quartermaster Corps on May 4, 1918 as a second lieutenant and served in France before being honorably discharged as a first lieutenant on August 1, 1919. Back in Washington, he stayed with his sister Mary at her Mount Pleasant Street house and worked for the Federal Board of Vocational Education, but his civil service career was cut short by an outbreak of influenza and pneumonia. At Providence Hospital, John succumbed to pneumonia at age forty on January 30, 1920. Shortly before her own death on November 23, 1936, Anna Bartlett arranged for a government-issued marker, available for veterans, to be shipped for use on John's grave. His obituary photograph in the *Evening Star* shows a handsome soldier in military dress.<sup>82</sup>

John was buried in his father's plot.<sup>83</sup> Thus, all of Nora's children lie at a remove from her, reflecting in death the family's situation in life. Did her sons know only of Nora's ill-fated marriage and her descent into mental illness, or did they ever learn of the role their mother briefly played in history? One hopes that they did.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> William C. Edwards and Edward Steers, Jr., *The Lincoln Assassination: The Evidence* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 511, Louis J. Weichmann, *A True History of the Assassination of the Abraham Lincoln and of the Conspiracy of 1865*, ed. by Floyd Risvold (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, Special Term (Probate), In re Last Will and Testament of James Fitzpatrick (records held in National Archives).

<sup>3</sup> *Evening Star*, May 7, 1870.

<sup>4</sup> Philadelphia Passenger Lists, 1800-45 (accessed through Ancestry.com); *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 22, 1847.

<sup>5</sup> District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950; tombstone of James Fitzpatrick in Hall research file for Nora Fitzpatrick; personal communication from Geraldine Novak, St. Patrick's Church, March 13, 2014.

---

<sup>6</sup> Tombstone of James Fitzpatrick in Hall research files; *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 22, 1847. There is a discrepancy between Margaret's tombstone, which has her dying at age 31, and her obituary, which has her dying at age 34; the death dates, however, match.

<sup>7</sup> *Woodstock Letters*, vol. 16 (1887), p. 106; *Evening Star*, July 13, 1854.

<sup>8</sup> Rev. John J. Ryan, S.J., *Chronicle and Sketch of Church of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Baltimore, 1856-1906* (Baltimore: A. Hoen and Co., 1907), pp. 29-30; *Woodstock Letters*, vol. 16 (1887), pp. 105-07; Gonzaga College Catalog, 1862; Rev. Owen A. Hill, S.J., *Gonzaga College: An Historical Sketch: From Its Foundation in 1921 to the Solemn Celebration of Its First Centenary in 1921* (Washington, D.C., 1921), pp. 73, 78; Charles F. Donovan, S.J., David R. Dunigan, S.J., and Paul A. FitzGerald, S.J., *History of Boston College from the Beginnings until 1990* (University Press of Boston College, 1990), pp. 42, 74-75; Holy Cross College Catalog, 1864.

<sup>9</sup> *Evening Star*, August 2, 1855; Edward Steers, Jr., ed., *The Trial: The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Warren Currier, *Carmel in America: A Centennial History of the Discalced Carmelites in the United States* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co, 1890), p. 256; *Baltimore Sun*, October 4, 1856.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Peter Fitzpatrick dated August 24, 1885 in National Archives, St. Elizabeths Hospital, Case No. 6365. All letters quoted from Peter Fitzpatrick here are in this file.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication from Suzie Egan, Director of Alumnae Relations, Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School, March 4, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> For what follows in the next two paragraphs see *Catalogue of Pupils of the Georgetown Academy of the Visitation, B.V.M.: For the Academic Year 1860-61*, pp. 3-6, 14-16, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Fitzpatrick letter dated August 24, 1885.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Fitzpatrick letter dated August 24, 1885.

<sup>16</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 507; Weichmann, p. 28; Steers, *The Trial*, p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> Virginia Lomax, *The Old Capitol and Its Inmates* (New York: E. J. Hale & Son, 1867), p. 83. For the unlikely suggestion that Nora was a rebel spy, see Kate Clifford Larson, *The Assassin's Accomplice* (New York: MJF Books, 2008), p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Warren, *In the Web of History: Gonzaga College and the Lincoln Assassination* (Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2009), pp. 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> Trial of John Surratt, vol. I, p. 713; Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 1219. On the night of the assassination, Anna was sleeping on the top floor with her cousin Olivia Jenkins.

<sup>20</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 511, 545; *Evening Star*, March 15, 1865; Steers, *The Trial*, p. 121; *Trial of John Surratt*, vol. I, p. 234.

<sup>21</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 511.

- 
- <sup>22</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 39-40.
- <sup>23</sup> *Sadlier's Catholic Almanac*, 1865, p. 54; *Wood's Baltimore City Directory*, 1864, 1865-66.
- <sup>24</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 512.
- <sup>25</sup> Edward and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, p. 1219; *Trial of John Surratt*, vol. I, pp. 675-76, 689.
- <sup>26</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 509, 545; William C. Edwards, ed., *The Lincoln Assassination: The Rewards Files* (Google Ebook, 2012), p. 196-97.
- <sup>27</sup> Old Capitol Prison records in National Archives and Fold3.
- <sup>28</sup> Old Capitol Prison records in National Archives and Fold3.
- <sup>29</sup> *Diamond Jubilee of St. Aloysius' Church, Washington, D.C., 1859-1934*, p. 24; Lomax, pp. 85-86. Although Lomax is usually referred to as "Virginia," Old Capitol prison records record her first name as Mattie.
- <sup>30</sup> Lomax, pp. 38-39, 66-67, 74-75, 82-83, 92-93, 98-99, 105-07, 151-52. Lomax describes "Mary" as being only around sixteen (p. 67), though Nora was actually twenty. The discrepancy may be part of Lomax's effort to disguise Nora's identity, or perhaps Nora appeared younger than her true age. In closing argument in the John Surratt trial, she was referred to as "little" Miss Fitzpatrick. *Trial of John Surratt*, vol. 2, p. 1237.
- <sup>31</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 507-10; Weichmann, pp. 174-75.
- <sup>32</sup> Edwards and Steers, *The Lincoln Assassination*, pp. 509, 544-45, 1247.
- <sup>33</sup> Edward Steers, Jr., and Harold Holzer, eds., *The Lincoln Assassination Conspirators: Their Confinement and Execution, as Recorded in the Letterbook of John Frederick Harttranft* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), p. 72.
- <sup>34</sup> Lomax, pp. 171-75, 206.
- <sup>35</sup> Steers, *The Trial*, pp. 121, 132.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter book of Edwin Stanton, Library of Congress.
- <sup>37</sup> *Trial of John Surratt*, vol. I, pp. 232-35, 713-23.
- <sup>38</sup> *National Aegis*, July 20, 1867; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, June 22, 1867.
- <sup>39</sup> *Trial of John Surratt*, vol. II, p. 1101.
- <sup>40</sup> *New York Times*, February 12, 1869; *Evening Star*, February 9, 1869. Correspondence by David Rankin Barbee with Anna Surratt's son Dr. Reginald Tonry, in which Barbee refers to Nora as "an angel in that terrible ordeal," suggests that Nora was held in high regard by Mary Surratt's descendants. "His Mother's Memories," in *The Lincoln Assassination from the Pages of the Surratt Courier*, vol. 2, p. XI-23 (Clinton, Maryland, Surratt Society, 2000). The Mrs. Cantatori who rode in the carriage was Sarah Cantatore, who married an Italian, John Cantatore. A convert to Catholicism, she entered the Georgetown Visitation convent in 1876 as Mary Regis Cantatori after being widowed.

---

Boston College, *The Sacred Heart Review*, Volume 33, Number 11, March 11, 1905; *Washington Times*, February 9, 1905; 1870 federal census for Washington, D.C.

<sup>41</sup> Weichmann, p. 106.

<sup>42</sup> District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950.

<sup>43</sup> Baltimore census for 1860; Washington, D.C., censuses for 1870, 1880, 1900; Baltimore City directory; Washington city directory; Draft records listing for Washington, D.C., for June/July 1863, p. 326; *Evening Star*, May 10, 1867, and May 15, 1924; Passport application for Mary C. Whelan dated May 22, 1923. The 1851 Canadian census shows a 15-year-old Alex Whalan living in the Notre Dame area of Quebec City and working as a boot and shoe maker. He was living with a 55-year-old man with the surname of Whalan and a difficult-to-read first name that may be an elided form of "Alexander," a 55-year-old woman named Catherine Grand or Grant, and an 18-year-old named Patrick Whalan.

<sup>44</sup> North Carolina death certificate of James A. Whelan.

<sup>45</sup> Letter of Peter Fitzpatrick dated August 7, 1885; letter of Anna Bartlett dated August 4, 1885. For Peter's description as being dedicated to saving souls, see *Donahoe's Magazine*, vol. XVII, February 1887, p. 197.

<sup>46</sup> *Evening Star*, June 26, 1878.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, patent nos. 85,977, 104,294, and 626,581; patent applications held at National Archives. Although the patent applications do not contain the inventor's birth date or similar identifying information, and only one gives an address, the signatures on all three applications appear to match those of Nora's husband. The address listed in the second application is 214 H Street between Second and Third, which is consistent with Alexander's residence given in the city directory for that year. Finally, the third invention was assigned in half to a James A. Whelan of Washington, D.C. This was the name of Alexander and Nora's eldest son, a lifelong resident of Washington who generally used his middle initial. As I have not found any connections between another Alexander Whelan and James A. Whelan living in Washington at this period of time, it appears highly probable that this Alexander was indeed Nora's husband.

<sup>48</sup> *Washington Post*, July 16, 1891; *Evening Star*, August 4, 1891

<sup>49</sup> Draft registration card for Bernard Alexander Whelan.

<sup>50</sup> Guardianship file for John A. Whelan in District of Columbia Archives; *Evening Star*, February 2, 1920.

<sup>51</sup> District of Columbia death certificate for James Fitzpatrick.

<sup>52</sup> *Evening Star*, May 7, 1870.

<sup>53</sup> Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, Special Term (Probate), In re Last Will and Testament of James Fitzpatrick (records held in National Archives).

<sup>54</sup> *Evening Star*, December 13, 1878.

---

<sup>55</sup> Peter's story can be partly corroborated at this point by the *Evening Star*, which in its account of year-end awards for schoolchildren records that James Whelan and Bernard Whelan, students at St. Joseph's Orphan's School, received prizes in June 1883. *Evening Star*, June 21, 1883. My inquiry for patient records from Providence Hospital for this period met with no success.

<sup>56</sup> For what follows see Frances M. McMillen and James S. Kane, "Institutional Memory: The Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital at the National Archives," *Prologue* (Summer 2010).

<sup>57</sup> St. Elizabeths Hospital, Case No. 6365, at National Archives. The letters from Peter Fitzpatrick, Anna Bartlett, Anna Fitzpatrick, and Mr. Fullerton discussed below are contained in this file.

<sup>58</sup> Anna Whelan and William Bartlett were issued a marriage license shortly before July 3, 1885. *National Intelligencer*, July 3, 1885.

<sup>59</sup> Selden Haines Talcott, *Mental Diseases and Their Modern Treatment* (New York: Boericke and Runyon Co., 1901), p. 105.

<sup>60</sup> For what follows see Thomas Otto, *St. Elizabeths Hospital: A History* (Washington, D.C., U.S. General Services Administration: 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Notre Dame Archives, December 4 and December 11, 1886 (<http://archives.nd.edu/calendar/c188612.htm>); *Donahoe's Magazine*, vol. XVII, February 1887, p. 197; *Washington Critic*, December 11, 1886; Ryan, pp. 29-30.

<sup>62</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, December 14, 1886.

<sup>63</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, January 10, 1888.

<sup>64</sup> Holy Cross College catalog, 1889; *Worcester Daily Spy*, May 15, 1889, and June 3, 1890; *Evening Star*, February 2, 1920. Bernard's taste for drama continued until at least 1897, when his brother John, having organized the "Northeast Social Club," appointed him as dramatic manager. *Morning Times*, September 24, 1897. Although John's obituary states that he attended Gonzaga, he is mentioned in a 1905 article about an alumni meeting as being an 1895 graduate of Georgetown, presumably from its preparatory school. *Evening Star*, June 15, 1905.

<sup>65</sup> Samuel Sexton, M.D., *The Ear and Its Diseases, Being Practical Contributions to the Study of Otology* (New York: William Wood & Co., 1888), p. 331.

<sup>66</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, March 13 and 14, 1895.

<sup>67</sup> Death certificate in Hall research file on Nora Fitzpatrick.

<sup>68</sup> *Evening Star*, January 8, 1896; Hall research file on Nora Fitzpatrick. The marker appears to have disappeared, as I could not find it when I visited the cemetery on May 4, 2014, although the gravestone for Nora's parents and infant sisters remains in place.

<sup>69</sup> Alexander Whelan's petition can be found in the District of Columbia Archives.

<sup>70</sup> *Evening Star*, November 1, 1901.

---

<sup>71</sup> *Evening Star*, October 19, 1904.

<sup>72</sup> Alexander Whelan's death certificate; *Washington Post*, May 16, 1909; *Washington Post*, July 14, 1916; *Washington Times*, July 14, 1916; letter from Mount Olivet Cemetery dated December 7, 1971, in Hall research file on Nora Fitzpatrick.

<sup>73</sup> *Washington Times*, October 13, 1901; *Washington Post*, March 6, 1912.

<sup>74</sup> *Evening Star*, April 8, 1927; North Carolina death certificate for James A. Whelan; Riverside Cemetery website: <http://cityofasheville.github.io/riversidecemetery/Main/index.html#records>

<sup>75</sup> Workhouse records, D.C. Archives. Bernard had initially been charged with grand larceny. His codefendant, Louis Berkey, was a twenty-year-old waiter. See also *Evening Star*, October 5, 1898.

<sup>76</sup> *Washington Times*, July 9, 1901.

<sup>77</sup> *Evening Star*, June 21, 1883, and May 15, 1924; *Washington Post*, May 23, 1924; Mary C. Whelan's will in District of Columbia Archives.

<sup>78</sup> *Washington Post*, January 18, 1938; Bernard Whelan's death certificate; e-mail communication from Cheryl Tyiska, Assistant Manager, Mount Olivet Cemetery, January 20, 2014.

<sup>79</sup> *Evening Star*, May 30, 1903, June 7, 1904.

<sup>80</sup> *Evening Star*, October 20, 1905; *Sunday Star*, January 7, 1906; *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 2, 1908, April 2, 1913, and November 25, 1917; *General Register of Georgetown University*, 1916, pp. 499-500.

<sup>81</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 21, 1916.

<sup>82</sup> *Washington Post*, May 7, 1918; *Evening Star*, January 31, 1920, February 2, 1920, and November 24, 1936; death certificate for John A. Whelan; notations on Anna Bartlett's application for government headstone dated October 10, 1936.

<sup>83</sup> E-mail communication from Cheryl Tyiska, Assistant Manager, Mount Olivet Cemetery, January 20, 2014.

<sup>84</sup> I would like to thank Cliff Roberts on the Lincoln Discussion Symposium forum for supplying the information that allowed me to begin my research on Nora, which saved me countless hours of genealogical inquiry. I would also like to thank Laurie Verge and Sandra Walia for their assistance in supplying Nora's file at the Hall Research Library.