

A Senior Thesis  
**EXCLUSIVE!**

behind the scenes of  
**Booth**

THE NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS PRESENTS  
R. KEITH HARRIS AS "BOOTH" EDITED BY JONATHAN OLIVE PRODUCTION DESIGNER CRAIG BAURLEY  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MORGAN JENKINS PRODUCED BY REYNOLDS ANDERSON STORY BY ADAM WILSON  
SCREENPLAY BY TRAVIS BEACHAM & CHRISTOPHER WALID DIRECTED BY MARK FREIBURGER

An in-depth look  
at the production design  
of Craig Baurley.

Fall 2004

Special Thanks:

Burton Rencher  
Steven Rambusek  
Mary Colston  
Jason Calamusa  
Mom & Dad  
V's Treasures

CONTENTS

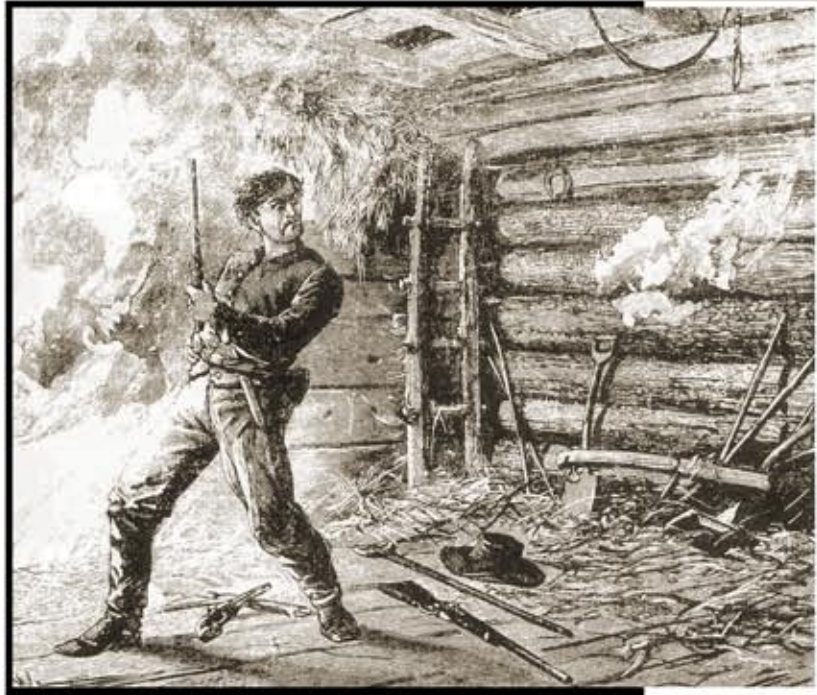
Introduction . . . . .	.2
Research . . . . .	.4
Conceptuals . . . . .	.6
Design . . . . .	.8
Construction. . . . .	.10
Locations . . . . .	.12
Production . . . . .	.16
Set Photos . . . . .	.24
Budget . . . . .	.26

A Senior Thesis:

In my 4th and final year at the North Carolina School of the Arts, I participated in a 16mm student short entitled Booth. As each key member involved we head up our respective disciplines. For me that is the art department, as production designer. This document constitutes the net results of those efforts. It attempts to give a complete picture of my designs and execution; trials and tribulations.

Craig M Baurley  
- Class of 2005 -

# Introduction



How are we going to make this good? When it came to our senior film project, Booth was not the film that any of us wanted to do. The director, Mark Freiburger, for lack of option chose Booth as a starting point. He asked me if I would come on as production designer, but my initial reaction was that of hesitation. On the one hand, the crew he had assembled thus far was quite respectable. There was no question of talent; but would that alone get us through an uninspiring premise. It's not so much that Mark or I hated the original script on the basis of what it was, it just wasn't possible to do it well considering budget, resources, etc. Not only that, but we all felt it took itself too seriously for something that, despite how hard we'd like to forget, is a student film.

Alterations varied from a script involving a time traveling Oswald, to an exploding carriage. What was settled on in the end tailored to what we could do fairly well in our particular situation. We all agreed to not take it terribly seriously and to have fun with it. Make it 'Hollywood' Chris Waid, one of the writers, would insist.



## Story Synopsis

Set in the immediate post-civil war era, John Wilkes Booth and his conspirators (Dutch, Paine, and Herald) plan the simultaneous assassination of president Abraham Lincoln, the vice president, and the secretary of state. The hope is a brutal attack on the United States government, but more personally Booth is after Lincoln, the man. He has his doubts that it can be done. After some initial failures, Booth suspects the plan is cursed. Before going ahead, he travels to consult with a gypsy fortuneteller called Magdalena. She discovers Booth's ultimate demise but wishes to conceal the truth for his mind is already made. Lincoln has to die; Booth's fate is set.



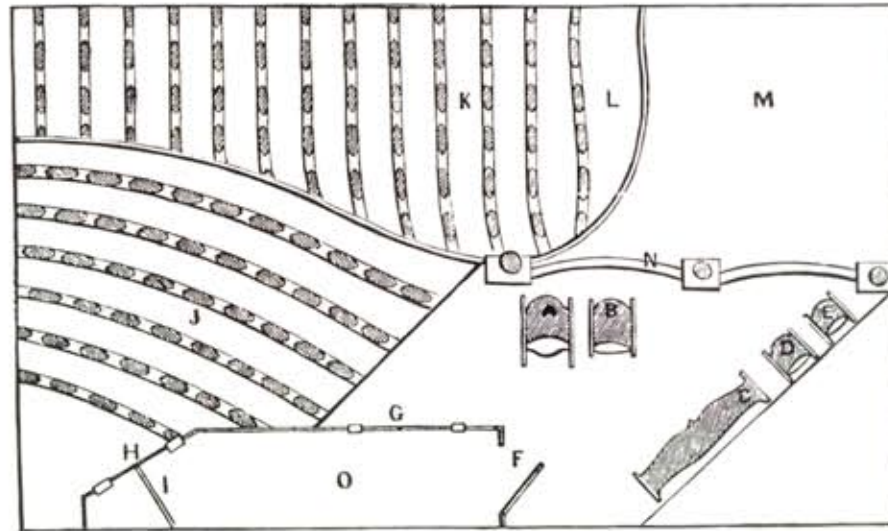
By the time a script that we agreed on (we meaning me, Mark, the producer Reynolds Anderson, and the writers) was available, and through circumstance Mark and I became available to consider the production design, there were a mere 2 weeks before the conceptual stage had to end for critical pre-production to begin. In my mind, we were off to a rough start already.

*In the search for inspiration, I pulled books on Booth, the Civil War, & Lincoln's Assassination. I would save images that caught my attention or pushed me in some direction. The image to the upper left kind of gave an impression of a superhero (or villain) version of Booth. Lincoln (lower right) inspired the irry fantasy element to the movie. Images on this page excerpted from 'A true history of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and of the Conspiracy of 1865' / Louis J. Weichmann; edited by Floyd E. Risvold. New York: Knopf, 1975. 1st ed.*

# Research

"We know the facts, we just don't like them."

The first task at hand was compiling all of the information that is known about the assassination of president Abraham Lincoln. A surprise to me, there are innumerable books on the assassination night alone (including some peculiar juvenile renditions). The director was researching similar material for both re-writes and a grounds for the world. We both wanted to find out the circumstances, players, and tools that allowed the event to unfold. Even if later we decided to ignore a lot of these facts, (and we did) at least we were aware of it.

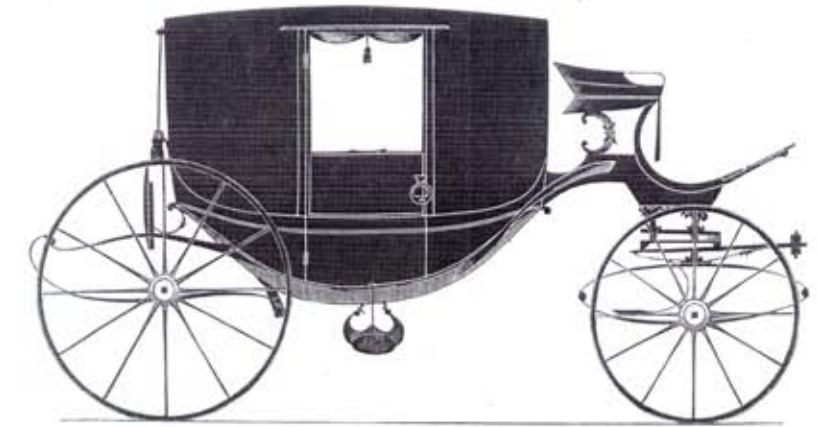


The greatest worry I had sifting through this material was 'OK that's how it was, we certainly can't afford this; how can we make this work?' Part of the decision to make this movie a little surreal was just that. You can't make a period movie of any scope in film school- accurately anyway. If we make it a little nutty, nobody will question it. The moment we took ourselves too seriously, we were in trouble. Is that period? Why not. Lincoln appears in the film as a robot after all.



Top: An exact layout of the presidential box in Ford's Theater. Left: A wanted notice for the conspirators. Above: The actual single-shot derringer pistol used to kill the president. Images excerpted from 'The Lincoln murder conspiracies' / William Hanchett Publisher Urbana: University of Illinois Press, c1983.

One of the more difficult challenges was finding a carriage. I pulled dozens of photos, designs, and blueprints of 19th century horse-drawn cabs to at least get an idea of what we were looking for. Mellisa Lawyer was in charge of finding and negotiating the use of one. I handed all of my information to her; as if there were many to choose from. Considering our production couldn't pay any sizable amount of money, nor could we travel too far from the confines of Forsyth County; our options were slim. We ended up with something plausible, but not very fitting to the scene or cinematic (bright white). Because of the terms of



use (it being basically free) we were allowed to do modifications 30 minutes before we shot, that could be removed in 15. That only really allowed the blatantly 21st century elements to be disguised.

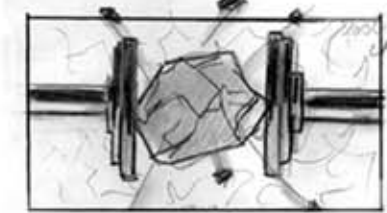
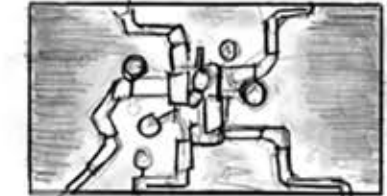
Above: A coach from the mid-19th century. Image from 'Stage-coach & tavern days' / Alice Morse Earle. New York: Dover, c1969. Below: An Artist's rendition from inside the president's box, just before Lincoln is shot.



# Conceptuals

"If I had a million dollars...."

Right: Early storyboards depicting the most daunting dream sequence in which Lincoln literally appears as part of a machine.



I like to think in terms of the "design process" when creating visual content. That means starting with numerous ideas vastly differing in configuration and style. From there you choose images that speak to you and develop those more with a series of refinements. In the case of Booth, that was but a distant concept. Knowing the amount of work to simply make my design happen, I had no choice but to more or

less go with the first idea that popped into my head; the first idea that "worked." Backing up a bit, I wanted to unify the movie a little stylistically and furthermore find something to sink my teeth into. Since the majority of the screen-time in the new script took place in a fictitious fortuneteller's cabin, that was a place to start. Booth journeys to this destination to decide his destiny, and thus he had to be as far away from his reality as possible.

With that we decided on "the layer." Almost like a 007 super-villain's world dominating headcorders built inside a volcano, the fortune teller's layer had to sort of physically morph from reality to fantasy. Thus, the cabin exterior would open and grow into a swampy mess of roots and ancient trees. The illustration above is what I came up with. At this point it had to be broken down.



# Design

## A Reality Check.



Since the Cabin was the largest, most intensive set, I will go into great detail of it here. To me, this was my thesis project, everything else was secondary. Mark was pretty open with everything I showed him and only made minor requests here and there. I started with some illustrations, then developed a rough clay model. The clay model was sort like sketching in

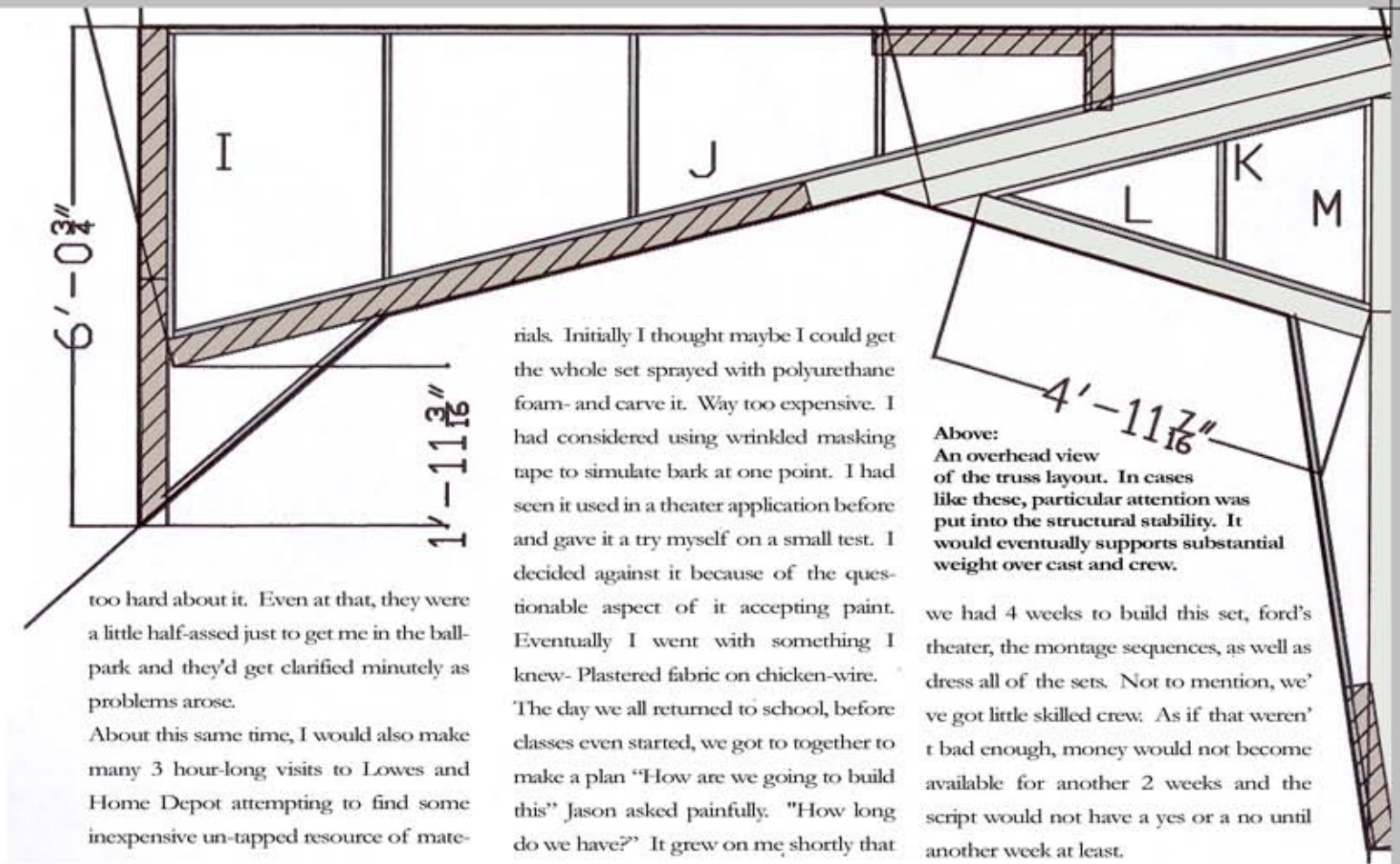


Top & Above: A 1-inch scale model of the gypsy cabin set. Because of the organic nature of the set, this model was actually used to generate construction documents, layouts, plans, etc. In fact, an earlier 1/2-inch scale model was used to generate overall dimensions of this one.

3D. Even though it was crude, all of the proportions and layout were decided at this point. From here I did a detailed rendering of the set to establish surface detail and texture. With those items firmly at hand I started building a model twice as big out of wood, foam, and sculpy clay in 1/12 scale (1" to foot). This became the basis for everything. By telephotoing a digital camera lens, I was able to gain images that had no perspective. In this way, drafts were rendered from the model virtually by tracing. It also served as a means of constant reference during construction. It provided a way to describe how a root grows out of the ground and into the wall without me saying a word; all I had to do was point. With everything at hand I

showed Steven Rambusek, my art director, the plans. His initial excitement was reinforcement that something was brewing that might be worthwhile. I also recruited Mary Colston as set dresser and second art director and Jason Calamusa as construction.

Auto-Cad became an important tool to me as well. I've never been that proficient at making my computer drawings look that spectacular and am often criticized by faculty at that very point. But the more important factor in this case was speed. Most of my drawings served as an advanced calculator to figure out angles, dimensions, etc without thinking



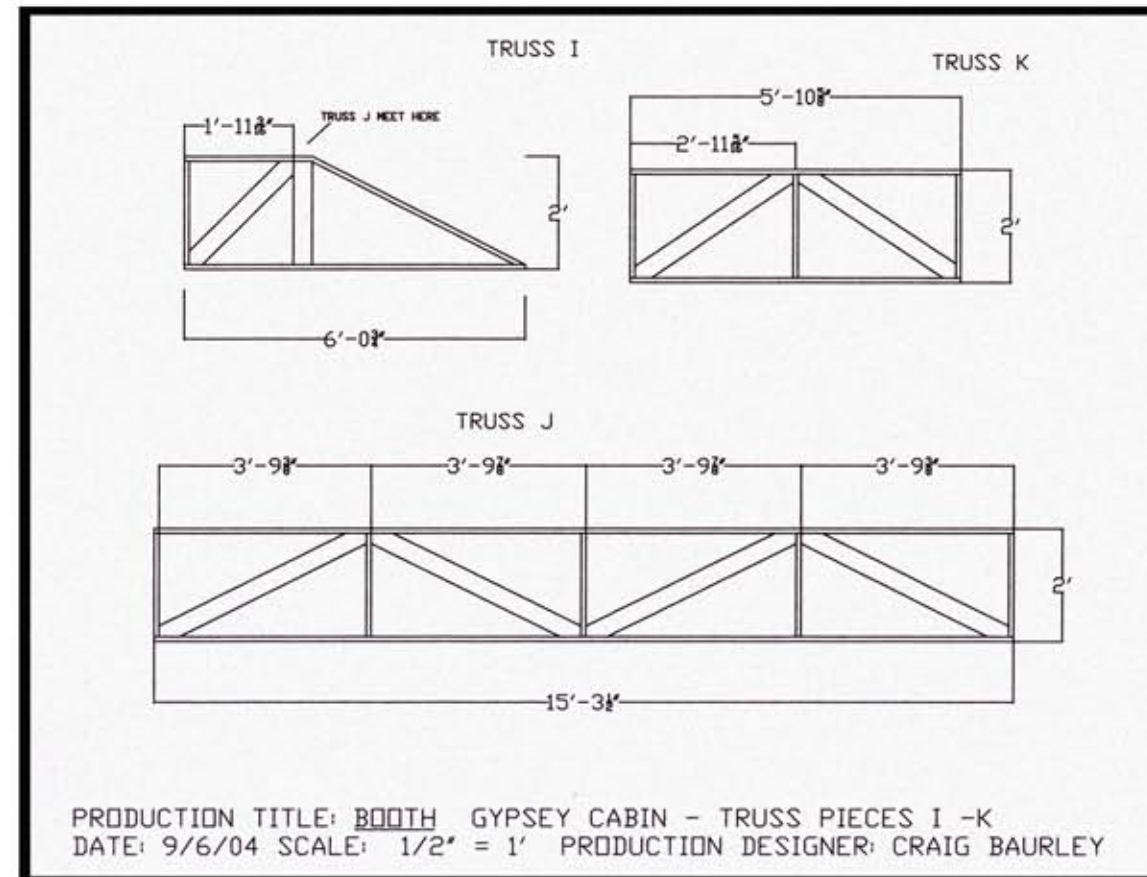
Above: An overhead view of the truss layout. In cases like these, particular attention was put into the structural stability. It would eventually support substantial weight over cast and crew.

too hard about it. Even at that, they were a little half-assed just to get me in the ballpark and they'd get clarified minutely as problems arose.

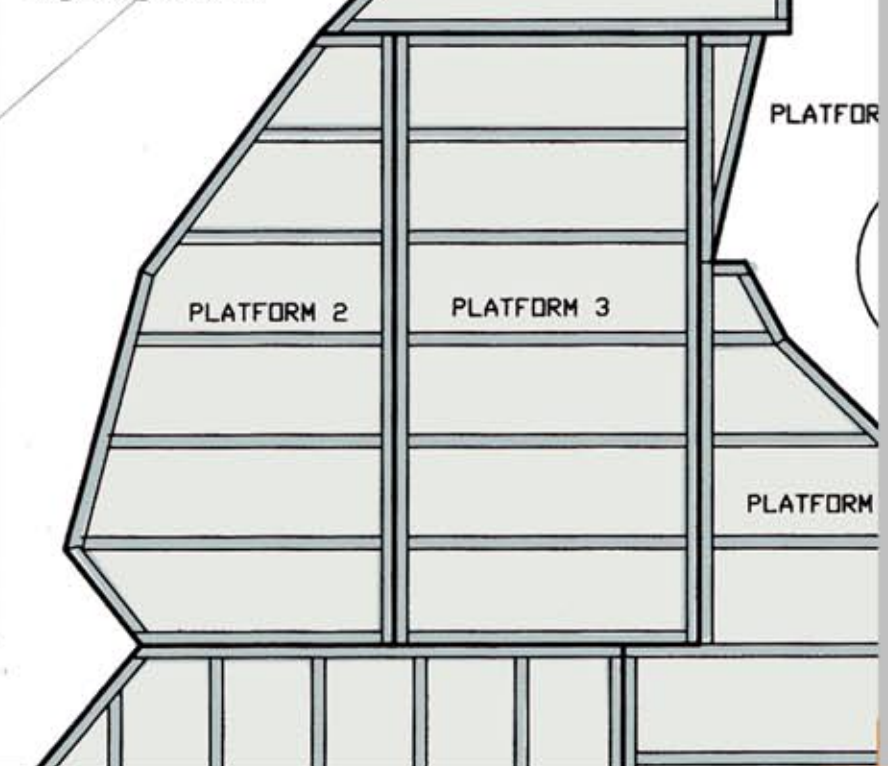
About this same time, I would also make many 3 hour-long visits to Lowes and Home Depot attempting to find some inexpensive un-tapped resource of mate-

rials. Initially I thought maybe I could get the whole set sprayed with polyurethane foam- and carve it. Way too expensive. I had considered using wrinkled masking tape to simulate bark at one point. I had seen it used in a theater application before and gave it a try myself on a small test. I decided against it because of the questionable aspect of it accepting paint. Eventually I went with something I knew- Plastered fabric on chicken-wire. The day we all returned to school, before classes even started, we got together to make a plan "How are we going to build this" Jason asked painfully. "How long do we have?" It grew on me shortly that

we had 4 weeks to build this set, Ford's theater, the montage sequences, as well as dress all of the sets. Not to mention, we've got little skilled crew. As if that weren't bad enough, money would not become available for another 2 weeks and the script would not have a yes or a no until another week at least.



Left: One of many of the Auto-CAD construction drawings. Although not always the most professionally rendered, under a time-restraint, they served as a quick and dirty way of generating cut lists and work flow.



Right: The overall platform layout; created from an overlay of the original organic form.

# Construction

Will it ever end?



started testing out materials and building small test components to the set: the pot, table, etc. These were small enough items that it could be justified as R&D but still progressing towards the goal and cutting substantial time out of the ultimate build. Luckily good news arrived: The script was approved, and all the plans were a go. Money would not be available but it didn't need to be. With assurance that we were OK, we could be reimbursed later. Immediately we purchased enormous amounts of lumber and started calling in on people to pool resources. We prefabricated all of the platforms and modified the wall flats. Unfortunately we couldn't erect anything until the lighting grid was hung. Although it isn't really my job, I forced the parties involved to get a move on. The persistence paid off as it



Above: The cabin on stage 6 at various stages of completion Above Right: Ford's Theater Box- mid construction.

At this point, I must say I was the most troubled. If I don't start right now, I would not be able to complete this set. And yet, there's probably a 50% chance that this script won't be approved at all. The advice I received from my advisor and faculty was to be sure, go through the proper channels, and take it step by step.

I had this discussion with Steven. Here we have a chance to do something pretty cool. We either went out on a limb and just did it and faced the consequences or back down now the safe way out. As it is in my personality to try even when my gut instinct is telling me failure lurches around the corner, I pressed on. We went into work mode and questioned none of our former decisions for the remainder of the production. Initially we



was up in 2 days. By that time, all of the hard frame structures were ready and we got the entire structure up in one night. We had dozens of freshmen film students, blissfully unaware of the work ahead, sign up to do any tasks needed. Tons of demolition debris had to be sorted, sifted, and nails pulled up to provide just the material of the cabin walls. It was that same time that the labor intensive step of forming chicken wire trees began. The sculpture aspect stayed within the principle crew, while the 1000 feet of chicken wire was to be cut down to form fitting pieces by our labor crew. After that, everything was covered with plaster soaked fabric and cracks stuffed with leaves and other vegetation. Both, laborious tasks handed off. Of course, it is with these steps that the most time

past. It wasn't so difficult to do: it was the volume and inaccessibility. It was a major task to simply get to a work area; scaffolding had to be carefully jerry-rigged to provide work surfaces. Painting was a breeze with the pneumatic spray gun. Everything got a base coat and then strategic placement of darker and lighter variations. Eventually all the props were set in place then sprayed with a blend. This dulled everything to make it appear as if it had been there a long time.

# Locations

## Bringing it all together.



Above: Early location scout pictures of Bethabara and Tanglewood Park along with a rejected plantation house.

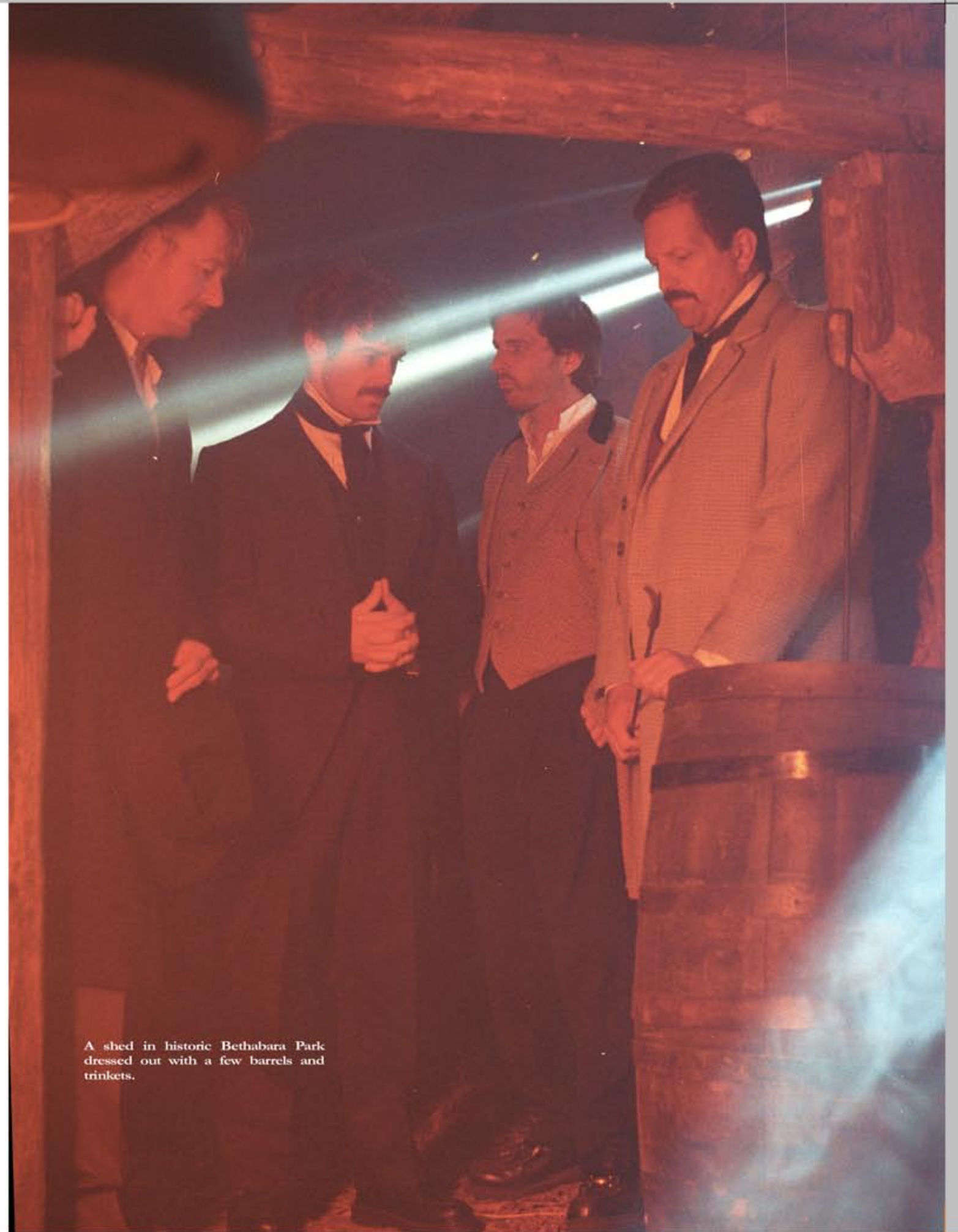
A great deal of the movie takes place in the cover of night deep in the woods. Winston Salem, NC made the wilderness a no-brainer in Booth however several necessities in production scheduling mandated one locations over another. The opening of the movie begins with a speeding horse drawn carriage and a heist. A carriage operator and period carriage went way beyond our budgetary restraints. Therefore by the luck of finding a good natured owner willing to help some

students out, we had a carriage under the stipulation that we shoot in his own back yard, Tanglewood park.

We found a shed for the conspirators and a rural looking area for bandits to hide out at Bethabara Park. Mary Colston managed to scrounge enough rustic dressing to pass this location off.

Booth's apartment and the dinner feast were covered by the Brookstown Inn. It provided all the background except for the dinner table and settings. Due to time restraints we were actually forced off the location. The apartment became a stage shoot. With no additional money, we redressed Ford's Theater to become a bedroom on the same day.

Below: The final setup at the Brookstown Inn. The entire dinner set-up was moved in.



A shed in historic Bethabara Park dressed out with a few barrels and trinkets.





Above: The finished set with (left to right) Craig Baurley, Steven Rambousek, Chase Livengood, Morgan Jenkins, and Mary Colston.

It was at first my goal to have everything completely ready for the shoot. In an ideal world this would be the case, so that come time to shoot, you can sit back and relax a bit. An "Ideal World" is the key to this.

As the Production start date crept up,

locations came and went. New problems arose, and things didn't go to plan. I can't say I was surprised.

One of the larger problems was joining our Ford's Theater Lobby, etc with our Ford's Theater booth. We built the hallway on stage partly as means for

making a subtle transition between the largely unlike architectural qualities. So after we built the hallway to match a location, we lost that location. Thus it made little sense.

New requests from the director, miscommunications with the DP, etc all led

to a pile up of a to-do list that took my attention away from the things that mattered to me with the main set. We didn't have it done until a day or two before the shoot on the second weekend. That was more than a week behind schedule.

# Production

## It all comes down to this.

In a lot of ways, my job as production designer is coming to an end when production starts; a time everyone else is anticipating as there only time to shine.

Our first weekend was a rough one. It was all locations, with a move almost every day.

Day 1

We shot the most under-conceived location first: downtown Winston-Salem's Steven's Center as Ford's theater. The location was first scouted days before we shot there and thus I had little prep except a bag full of tricks to disguise this and that. It wasn't a matter of "design" or making this location spectacular as it was masking modern elements. All my job became was gopher boy to move this and that so that wall sockets and exit signs wouldn't show. Everyone on the production was stressed this day as they had so little time for a first time crew.

But alas, we got through it and moved on to the plantation. The plantation was found on a similar time frame as Ford's Theater but more ideal. It was the best option of a number of finds and we were not terribly rushed to get out of there. Again, my job was diminished to covering power boxes and doorbells.

Day 2

We started off doing the montage paintings for the dream sequence along with the robotic Lincoln. I could have helped this more had I had the time in preproduction. Micheal Duise and Jesse Kester were solely in charge of this event after my initial drawings. To their credit, they are talented and worked hard but have no conception of camera lenses, depth of field, scale, etc. Both Morgan

and myself were very worried about the whole thing once we saw what they had. At that point, there was no changing it- I just had to do a lot of damage control and slap dry ice every which way to make it look cool.

The stage part of the day ended nicely with a photographic title graphic illuminated by a dollied light and fog.

Right: Director Mark Freiburger, Actor Keith Harris, and Director of Photography Morgan Jenkins on set. Below: Booth enters the cabin during a rehearsal.

The night shifted over to Tanglewood park. I didn't go so that I could prepare for the next day but I hear things did not go well. Not art dept concerns but generator/ lighting issues outdoors in the dark. Glad I wasn't there.

Day 3

Behtabara park- the most lax of the location days. Jason Steven and I did some creative dressing but mostly sat



Right: Booth's apartment was scrounged together with remains of the Ford's Theater set. The doorway became a window- dressed with the same lace as the box set.



back and watched.

Day 4

Day four was hell. We started off at the Brookstown Inn. Not only did we have to not disturb anyone in the hotel lobby but setup a feast, dead bodies, a tricky lighting set-up etc in an hour or so. Then we had 2 hours to shoot both that and an "apartment" at the same location. From the art department, we were ready for them but even I knew this would never happen. After some bitter arguing, we had to cut the shoot short- cutting out some substantial shots that make some sense out of the dinner scene and the apartment all together. Worst yet, there was no chance of return. Nobody said anything at the time but I knew what that meant- that was to become a stage set.

After we moved off this location, we went out to Tanglewood. I had to track down the carriage owner and modify the carriage with tape, flags, fabric and safety pins within a half of an hour. We could only shoot the carriage for about 3 hours. At that time we had to start faking it. By this I mean we were hanging curtains on

C-Stands in order to simulate POV shots and so forth. The night ended with some bitter rivalry between the key crew and we left incomplete.

The only bright side was this was the last day to the weekend shoot, we'd pick up in 4 days.



Above: Keith Harris stands on the Porch to the cabin. These shots became difficult as we had to move our limited black backing to fit camera, but also leaving enough distance for trees and shrubbery. Below: A corner of the Steven's Center as Ford's Theater. A bit of a stretch, I know.

Day 5

This marks the start of the stage shoot on the gypsy layer. Surprising, mostly

everything was already handled. The set was pre-lit, it was finished, dressed, and there weren't major problems. There were some issues with the fog machines and dry ice- but mostly it was good.

I spent most of my time taking pictures on set and then setting up a big still photography shoot after-wards.

Day 6

This was a continuation of the gypsy shoot. There isn't much to say. I did find, as I predicted, certain clumsy members of the crew knocked, dinged and damaged set elements. It was however, completely manageable.

Day 7

We shot Ford's Theater, the hall, and various insert shots. I thought we would have had this down better. I had discussed with Mark quite a bit how this set would be shot. I was giving him very little set, I knew

and wanted to make sure he had what he needed. For some reason, on this day, it kept coming up "Hey Craig, where's the... how do we see..." Did we not discuss this?

In any event, there was some scurrying to make everything work out in a very last minute fashion.

What topped this off was that when we were done, we literally had to build Booth's apartment out of the Ford's Theater walls and dress it while the crew shot some inserts. That was an unnecessarily stressful situation- but a necessary one. Remarkably, with the lighting and some reused props, I personally think it came out better than it would have at the Brookstown Inn.

Day 8

This was a half-day out at Tanglewood to pick up shots. It had little to do with the

Right: Mark Frieburger directs Keith Harris (Booth) in the plantation scene.



art department.

DAY 9

Additional Pick-Ups

Our pick-up day was spent entirely on stage. This day was spent repairing the damaged and aging set here and there. Fortunately for everybody involved there were no wide-shots that had to be re-shot.

The only thing out of the ordinary was us faking a piece of Tanglewood park with gravel carried in from the parking lot. That was about it, and the shoot was over.

We struck the sets soon thereafter. People often ask if that is hard to do? On the contrary, it is the easiest thing to do by any means. After building all this rage and stress over the course of months, the best way for me (and my immediate crew) to let it all out is smash the living day lights out of our work. Only then do you truly feel it's over. And I'm glad some time has passed for me to write this thesis- to a gain a little bit of

perspective on the matter.

Had you asked me about all of this as it was happening, you would have received an incoherent mess of bitter remarks. Time having past, I think I enjoyed what I did. I have not seen the finished movie but I have a better feeling about Booth than any other film I've worked on so far. Somehow, beyond anything I had to do with, it came together. The acting was decent, it was shot well, and I'd even go so far as to say: I might not be embarrassed to show it to people.

As production designer, I did learn one thing, I don't want to be a production designer. I knowingly distorted my roll and priorities on this film to fit a bit more of what I like to do. The everyday grind of the production part of the art department is not appealing to me at all. I like building from the ground up new environments and new ideas; I don't have any interest in copying history or making decisions based on the better good of the movie as a whole if it conflicts with



Above: Final showdown- Booth takes aim to assassinate the president.



making it look good. I struggle on set sometimes putting dressing this way or that or scouting locations because in a very basic way: it doesn't matter to me. I don't feel connected to it.

This may seem like a bad attitude to take but a lawyer doesn't fix cars and a plumber doesn't write poetry. I have interest in the details of designed and fabricated elements as opposed to a visual cohesion. I can force myself to do it, but don't have the same passion for it.

Booth has helped me clarify my own aspirations immensely. There are certain genre movies (sci-fi/ fantasy) I would jump on as art director but largely I prefer the innovative type quality found in special

effects.

The other way to look at this is the somewhat backward way we have to do things in school. There are no assigned set dressers, prop masters, etc. There were only 3 people besides myself dedicated to the art department. And that's only as dedicated as they could be with jobs, school work, and so on. We'd recruit labor from the freshmen class but unpaid, unskilled labor is only so useful. I'd end up spending most of my time stuffing leaves in chicken wire and plastering tree trunks instead of attempting to focus on an overall look to the movie.

Perhaps, in another world, if I felt that I had some control over matters beyond stage work, I'd think upon a production designer's job differently.

Top to Bottom: Booth at Bethabara Park (Gypsy's front yard), the infamous tarot cards, Booth's apartment on stage, the stage cabin porch, and Booth's entrance to the Gypsy's fortune telling cabin.



I often speak of this illusive control because I've been used to such ludicrous situations. For instance, at Bethabara park the scene called for a campfire. There is an open campfire that we were literally going to shoot with burnt logs from the previous weekend. It was spelled out- absolutely no flame of any kind. We had to get by with a buried pipe line for a fog machine combined with cable to illuminate various light bulbs. The net result was rather mediocre- and a lot of work that could have been better spent- rather than dodging red tape. Similarly on the gypsy cabin set, the NCSA fire dept representative mandated that only 3 candles be lit at any given time and that 3 separate individuals be present with 3 separate fire extinguishers. The candles had to be encased with glass and all other unlit candles on set had to

to have cut wicks. This was all punctuated with a generous "we'll shut you down".

Another issue was the weapons. We're not allowed to use anything but the school's collection. Those guns are terrible. I was told initially that the school would order non-guns to my specifications. This proved to be as hollow as my faith in it. So much time had passed with this idea that it was taken care of that I had to buy a cowboy gun from K-B- toys and paint it with model paints to get something halfway decent. Amazingly, it was still better than the school's collection. We needed extra guns so i was forced to paint the crappy school guns- adding shadow and age to mask how bad they are.

After the whole fiasco, we had to have a representative from the school on set to handle something that is sold in a toy store. These problems aren't much in and of themselves, but added up, it's more than a nuisance.

They cause energy to be spent just getting by and not making something really awesome. It's the difference between fixing and making. This is where being a production designer has left a bad taste. Maybe I'm wrong...

I do want to make a point of thanking the key crew though. Despite the problems we had together, I think the people I was working with made this one of the most pleasant and easy going productions I've been involved with. Mark especially, thanks for always staying level headed.

*"If you take a good look at the photo below, you may notice the fabric seams and some of the more plain surfaces. Chase Livengood's lighting really helped this one out for the shoot as we strategically detailed certain regions that we knew would have more illumination. We actually had the final lighting set-up for several days to tweak."*



Top: On location at Tanglewood park. You can see the not-so-ideal carriage with it's miscellaneous band-aid flags and drapery. Below: A photo-stitched panoramic view of the cabin with fluorescent house-lights on.



# Set Photos

## The unseen details.

Some particular attention was spent with the Gypsy's personal space. I wanted to show these off and also thank Mary Colston for doing such a good job on the cards themselves. I tried to give you the most freedom I could and I think it paid off.

Also I should say thanks to Steven Rambusek. I couldn't have gotten through this without you and thanks for being a bigger work-horse than I am.

Jason Calamua-interesting humor, thanks for keeping it loose.



Above: The complete table detail.  
Left: A close-up on the tarot card of "the machine."

Top Right: A view from Booth's seat.  
Right: Mary sits at the cabin entrance.

