

OFFICE OF
CITY RAILROAD COMMISSIONER.

DULUTH, MINN., March 20th, 1893. 189

Hon. Knute Nelson,
Governor of Minnesota,
St. Paul, Minn.

J. H. Brown

Dear Sir:-

Myself and D. A. McLarty of Granite Falls, were attorneys in 1885 for one Mrs Purvis who was indicted for murder. The murder consisted in poisoning her husband. She was convicted of murder in the second degree and sentenced for life in December of that year. She has therefore now served nearly eight years. There were peculiar circumstances concerning the case which could not properly be brought before the court at that time as a defense, but which in my judgment would be proper for you to consider in the application for the pardon which I am informed today has been made through her friends and some of the citizens of Granite Falls. I can only briefly say here that I investigated the thing very thoroughly at the time and became satisfied beyond the possibility of a doubt that she was urged into the matter by one Howard, who went even so far as to arrange all the details of the crime himself, but the evidence unfortunately was of such a character that it only pointed toward Mrs purvis. I laid the matter before the County Attorney at the time, who is now Judge Powers, and sought to have Howard indicted and punished as well as Mrs Purvis. The only trouble was that as I said before, what evidence could be obtained only pointed toward her, so that it was so far as prosecution was concerned to have been solely upon her evidence as an accomplice, which as you are aware would not be sufficient to convict, and Mr. powers, as I think now and thought then, very properly declined to attempt a prosecution of Howard. I explained the matter fully to Judge ^{Brown} who was then presiding judge, and he agreed with Mr. Powers that there

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would not be sufficient evidence to convict Howard. He also said to me that a proper showing of those facts after Mrs Purvis had remained in prison on a reasonable length of time, would be proper to bring forward in support of an application for pardon, and if he were then presiding he would render what help might seem to be proper. I knew Mrs Purvis some time before the crime was committed, and also have taken pains from time to time to inquire of the prison authorities as to her conduct in prison, and I have always known her to be, with this exception, exemplary in her conduct as a citizen both before and since in prison, and I am sure that the ends and aims of justice have been met by her punishment and that society will be perfectly safe if she is released, which I think ought to be done and let her spend the balance of her days with her two sons, who at the time she was sentenced were about five and seven years old respectively, as I remember.

If you desire any further or more minute information than I have here given and if you will indicate that you so desire, I will come to St. Paul and confer with you in the matter.

Yours very truly,

C. E. Shannon

Stillwater, Minn., March 22nd, 1893. 189

To His Excellency,

Knut Nelson,

Governor of Minnesota,

St. Paul, Minn.

Sir:-

Replying to your inquiries of March 20th, 1893, as to status, character, and standing of Sarah Purvis, a life convict in this Prison, I would respectfully state that she was admitted here December 1st, 1885; that her conduct as a prisoner has been exemplary, and that she has been in the 1st Grade since the establishment of the Grading system in this Institution. She is a very ignorant woman and, I should judge, might have been easily led; and I understand that she was so influenced in the commission of her crime. She has two boys, thirteen and fifteen years of age respectively. She seems to think a great deal of them, and has been in constant communication with them since she has been here. She has improved both mentally and morally since her confinement here. I do not think her a bad woman at heart, and should you decide to cut down her sentence or pardon her, I do not think you would have cause to regret it. It seems to me, however, that a commutation might have a better effect; it would then give her something to look forward to with a hope of deliverance in the near future, say one year or so from this time.

Pardon my presumption in making this suggestion. Intended to have sent this letter with the papers forwarded you yesterday in her case.

Very Respectfully Submitted,

Henry Wolfer
Warden.

WARDEN
MINNESOTA STATE PRISON,

H. E. Benner, Steward

Stillwater, Minn.

Dec. 22, 1897.

Roland H. Hartley, Esq.,

Clerk State Board of Pardons,

State Capitol, St. Paul, Minn.,

Dear Sir:-

Enclosed please find correspondence from Mrs. Sara C. Purbis and her son, bearing upon her application for a pardon or commutation of sentence, in order to allow her to leave the state in company with her relatives, who intend to move south on Jan. ~~14~~ next. This letter was referred to our Board of Managers, at its last monthly meeting, with the result that the following Resolutions were passed, and are a part of the minutes now on record in this office.:

RESOLVED: That it is the sense of this Board that Sara C. Purbis, a female convict, who is now, and has been on Parole, since Dec. 7, 1894, ought to be pardoned or have her sentence commuted, for the following reasons:

First,- because her conduct has been uniformly good since she has been on Parole.

Second,- For the reason that her full time will soon expire, viz: Mch. 8, 1898.

Third,- And for the still further and more important reason that her relatives are going to move South on Jan. 4, 1898, and wish to take her with them. For the fore-going reasons, be it

RESOLVED: That this Board does hereby recommend to the Board of Pardons of the State of Minnesota, a commutation of sentence or a

WARDENS OFFICE
MINNESOTA STATE PRISON,

*Henry Woelfel, Warden.
F. H. Lemon, Deputy.
George B. Bixby, Clerk.
A. C. Bremer, Steward.*

Stillwater, Minn.

Dec. 22, 1897.

pardon for Mrs. Purbis, so as to allow her to leave the state not later than Jan. 4, 1898, and be it further

RESOLVED: That the warden is hereby instructed to forward a copy of this resolution to the State Board of Pardons.

Respectfully submitted!

Henry Woelfel
Warden.