

ROBERT PURDY, CIVIL WAR SOLDIER FROM MARSHALL COUNTY

Written by Linda Cunningham Fluharty, May 21, 2012

Eric McFadden sent a file (which follows) about Civil War soldier, Robert C. Purdy, of Moundsville, Marshall County. Purdy had some connection to the President Lincoln Conspiracy-Assassination trials and Eric's records are from that proceeding. At first, it seemed that the Robert Purdy was the man in the 3rd West Virginia that subsequently became the 6th West Virginia Cavalry, but evidence now indicates that the Robert C. Purdy related to the Assassination Trial enlisted in the 2nd Maryland Cavalry and was transferred to Company "M" of the Maryland 1st Regiment Potomac Home Brigade. Since only one Robert C. Purdy has been found, perhaps the same man was in both organizations.

Service Records of Robert C. Purdy exist for both regiments. Robert C. Purdy in Company "I" of the 3rd Infantry/6th Cavalry was 41 when he enlisted 11 Dec 1861 in the 3rd Infantry. He was born in West Chester, NY. He received a Medical Discharge 11 July 1863. This is his family in the 1860 Census of Marshall County:

PURDY (551)

Robt. C...39-wm...painter...NY

Minerva...38-wf...OH

William...20-wm...VA

Mary E...18-wf...VA

Henrietta M...16-wf...OH

Martha N...12-wf...OH

Robert C Purdy - "alias Ashley," according to the Service Record - in Company "M" of the 1st Regiment Potomac Home Brigade, Maryland was **23 years** old (one page says 33), 5'10" tall, born in Marshall County, when he enlisted 9 Sep 1864 at Cumberland, MD to serve two years. - Listed as "Deserted" on one paper but it is not clear... QM Sergeant Nov & Dec 1864 but absent sick in Cumberland, MD. In Jan 1865 he was absent in US Gen Hosp. Same in Mar & Apr 1865. On company M/O Roll June 28, 1865 but "Absent sick in Hospital Cumberland MD 1 Feb 1865. Additional papers in his Service Record indicate he was accused of attempted rape of a young girl. He claimed he was following orders and was going to PA to arrest deserters but there are no orders found... In 1866, following the war, he traveled from Marshall County to Pittsburgh in an attempt to get a discharge document. The Service Record ends without firm conclusions. - The letters in the file mention that he left the hospital to go to the Assassination trials and was at the hospital until it finally closed.

Robert C. Purdy's wife, Minerva Goodrich, was living with her daughter Henrietta in 1870, but Robert is not found. He did have lung disease, so perhaps he died before 1870.

The most important pages from the 2 Service Records are presented here.

The first 2 images show the service of Private Robert C. Purdy in Company "I" 3rd West Virginia, subsequently the 6th West Virginia Cavalry. The rest are related to the service of Robert C. Purdy, who enlisted in the 2nd Maryland Cavalry in 1864. He was transferred to the 1st Potomac Home Brigade, Maryland.

ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES.



CERTIFICATE OF DISABILITY FOR DISCHARGE.

(To be used, in duplicate, in all cases of discharge on account of disability.)

Private *R. C. Pindy* of Captain *H. W. Hunter*
Hunter's Company, (*D*) of the *11th* Regiment of United States
N. Y. Vols was enlisted by *H. W. Hunter* of
the *11th* Regiment of *N. Y. Vols*, at *Rochester N. Y.*
on the *eleventh* day of *Dec* 186*1*, to serve *3* years; he was born
in *West Chester* in the State of *New York* is *Single*
years of age, *5* feet *10 1/2* inches high, *Fair* complexion, *Gray* eyes,
Dark hair, and by occupation when enlisted a _____ During the last two
months said soldier has been unfit for duty _____ days. (Here consult directions on Form 12, p. 269, Medical Dept. Gen. Reg.)

STATION: *W. S. G. Hospital, Newton University*
DATE: *July 4, 1863*
C. W. Jones
Surgeon U.S.A.
Commanding Company

I CERTIFY, that I have carefully examined the said *R. C. Pindy* of
Captain *H. W. Hunter's* Company, and find him incapable of performing the duties of a soldier
because of (Here consult par. 1134, p. 245, and directions on Form 12, p. 269, Med. Dept. Gen. Reg.) *It is his pulmonary,*

Unfit for service, - Disease not incident to the service, but evidently aggravated by protracted exposure in service.

DISCHARGED, this *eleventh* day of *July* 186*3*, at *Newton University*
Hosp't Balto Md
C. W. Jones Surgeon. *usv*
In ch Hosp't
Commanding the Post.

NOTE 1.—When a probable case for pension, special care must be taken to state the degree of disability.
NOTE 2.—The place where the soldier desires to be addressed may be here added.
Town— County— State—

P

6 Cav.

W. Va.

Robert C. Purdy

....., Co., 6 Reg't W. Va. Cavalry.

Appears on Returns as follows:

Feb'y 1862 - (Pvt Co. I. 3
Va. Inf.) Absent
on furlough sick

April 1863 - Absent
detchd on special
service (Mch. 1863)

Aug. & Sept. 1863 - Absent
detached by order
Major Genl Milroy

Oct. 1863 - (Co. I. 3 N. Va. Mtd
Inf.) Absent on
special duty for
Genl Milroy

Nov. 1863 - (Corpl) July 16
Baltimore discharg
ed for disability

Book mark:

O. J. Taylor

1 P. H. B. Cav.

Md.

Robert Purdy

Co. M, { 1 Reg't Potomac Home
Brigade, Maryland Cavalry.

Appears on

Company Descriptive Book

of the organization named above.

DESCRIPTION.

Age *23* years; height *5* feet *10* inches.

Complexion *light*

Eyes *grey*; hair *dark*

Where born *Marshall Co. Va.*

Occupation *farmer*

ENLISTMENT.

When *Sept. 9*, 186 *4*.

Where *Cumberland*

By whom *H. Gilbert*; term *2* y'rs.

Remarks: *Dropped*

J. H. Allen

P. H. Morgan, Cav
| Co. M, 2 Cav. | Md.
(Indpt.)

Robert Purdy
Priv., Recruit Co., 2 Reg't Maryland Cav.*

Appears on

Company Muster-in and Descriptive Roll
of the organization named above. Roll dated
Cumberland Md, Sep 9, 1864.

Where born *Marshall Va*

Age *33* years; occupation *Farmer*

When enlisted *Aug 18, 1864.*

Where enlisted *Cumberland*

For what period enlisted *2* years.

Eyes *Grey*; hair *Dark*

Complexion *Light*; height *5 ft. 10 in.*

When mustered in *Sep 9, 1864.*

Where mustered in *Cumberland*

Bounty paid \$ *100*; due \$ *200 100*

Where credited

Company to which assigned

Valuation of horse, \$ *100*

Valuation of horse equipments, \$ *100*

Remarks: *Cumberland Alleghany Co Md (over)*

* This organization subsequently became Co. M 2 Reg't Maryland Cavalry (Indpt.)

Book mark:

H Miller

1" Potomac Home Brig Cav
P | Co. M, 2 Cav. | Md.
(Indpt.)

Robert Purdy
1st Lieut, Co. M, 2 Reg't Maryland Cavalry.

Appears on

Company Muster Roll

for Nov & Dec, 1864.

Present or absent absent

Stoppage, \$ 100 for

Due Gov't, \$ 100 for

Valuation of horse, \$ 100

Valuation of horse equipments, \$ 100

Remarks: Absent sick
Cumberland Md

This organization was broken up and transferred to various companies. 1 Reg't Potomac Home Brigade, Maryland Cav., by order of Sec'y of War, January, 1865.

Book mark:

A Miller

1 P. H. B. Cav.

Md.

Robert Purdy

Priv. Co. 1 Reg't Potomac Home
Brigade, Maryland Cav.

Age 23 years.

Appears on Co. Muster-out Roll, dated

Wappes Ferry, Va. June 8, 1866.

Muster-out to date, 1866.

Last paid to Paydn from Enlistment, 1866.

Clothing account: No account.

Last settled, 1866; drawn since \$ 100

Due soldier \$ 100; due U. S. \$ 100

Am't for cloth'g in kind or money adv'd \$ 100

Due U. S. for arms, equipments, &c., \$ 100

Bounty paid \$ 100; due \$ 66 2/3

Valuation of horse, \$ 100

Valuation of horse equipments, \$ 100

Remarks: Absent sick in
Hospital Cumberland
Md. Feb. 1st 1865.

By comparison

Book mark:

Grogan
Copyist

14th Qrs 2^d Brig 2^d Div
Dept. H. V. 2^d Jan 16/65

The within papers referred
to. C. O. of the Post at
New Creek H. V. 2^d for
report. These papers to
be returned.

By command of
Brig Gen. J. A. Lightburn
Comd'g

H. L. McMaster
Lieut Col 4th Reg

(one enclosure)

Recd. No. 100 2^d Div
New Creek, W. V.
January 16, 1865

Respectfully returned
with Lieut Col 4th Reg's
report

W. Kelley Capt
Company Co. 2^d
2^d Div

145, "M", vol 3-65
Ed Qrs 2^d Brig 2^d Div H. V.

New Creek Va
Jan 16. 65

Respectfully returned with
report

J. A. Lightburn
Brig. Gen. H. V. 2^d
Comd'g

Note return in L. R. 5
file.
By 24

J. M.

Recd. No. 100 2^d Div
C. O. P. 23, Jan 16. 65

As @ 2^m Inf. Div. Det^{ch}

Cum Grd and Ms Jan'y 15 1885

Brig. Genl. J. A. J. Lightburn.

Comd'g 2^d Div^{ison}

New. Creek W. Va.

General.

I have the honor to enclose copy of
Enrollment, or letter of S. S. McAleer, requiring Sicut
A. W. Bier, Comd'g Company of 1st MS P&B, at the date thereof
stationed & doing duty at South Branch Bridge on B&O RR
to investigate charges against a man of his company and
make prompt report of facts.

Nothing having been heard from Sicut
Bier on this subject, the General Comd'g Division directs that
he be required to return the papers at once, with a statement
showing the result of his investigations, and to furnish a prompt
report of the reasons why the errors in said enrollment continued.

were not more promptly obeyed.

I am, General,

Very respectfully

Your Obedient Servant

Thayer Melvin

A. A. G. M.

Co now serving with 22 Pacific Northwest

Vol 24 Co "M" 2^d Md Cal
South Branch, W. Va.
January 5/1865

The following is the
endorsement on the written
report to statement
made by Sent. H. A. Beer,
on the 15th of January/1865.
The papers were sent by
mail.

The young lady stated
that this man Perry met
her about two hundred
yards from Mr. Williams
house, examined her
purses and ^{said he} was authorized
to arrest her, but if she
would allow him to have
connection with her he
would let her go. On her
refusal, he offered her money
going up with ^{her} on the back
-neck road some two miles,
compelling her to walk in
the mud to prevent making
a noise, on arriving at the
top of South Branch mountain
she cut down to left, when
he attempted to ~~force~~ force her
by placing his arm around
her neck and throwing her
on the ground, when he
was discovered by a scouting

party from Co. M 2^d Md Cal
Capt. in Charge of ~~Co~~ Capt
O. W. Duff

H. A. Beer 1st Lieut
Company 1st of
South Branch

Copy

Head-Quarters, ^{2d.} First Infantry Division,

DEPARTMENT OF WEST VIRGINIA.

Cumberland Md. 1865.

"Endorsement on letter, dated South Branch
Md. January 2^d 1865.

S. J. M^r; Aler, States, that a man by the
name of Judy alias Ashley ^{3d} belonging to Capt
J. H. Kelley's Co "M" 2d Md Cav. attempted to
commit a rape on a young lady living at
his (M^r Aler's) house."

Ad Quarters 2d Inf Div Dept West V^o

Cumberland Md. Jan 30. 1865.

Respectfully referred to Sient Bier Commanding
at South Branch, for investigation and report.

If this charge is ascertained to be well
founded, this man Judy will at once be placed
in confinement, if with the Company, if not, a re-
port of facts will be made and his whereabouts
stated, Sient Bier will at once make inquiries

By order of

Col. Kelley

(Signed) S. Melvin

A. A. G.

Special Colonel
S. Melvin A. G.

Adjutant General's Office,
Washington, D.C. March 14th 1869.

Gentlemen:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of papers forwarded by you to this office in the case of Robert C. Purdy, Co. "M." 2nd Md. Cav. and to inform you that this man should report to Post Brig. Genl. W. N. Brown, Chief Mustering Officer at Baltimore, Md. for discharge from the service of the United States.

I have the honor to be,

Very Respectfully,

Yours Obedient Servant

Geo. W. Peck

Assistant Adjutant General

Messrs. Archery and Piddell,

Atty. Pittsburg,

Pa.

(Apr - 315 - 66.)
3 - 8 -)
✓

282

P.

1864

New Creek Sept 28th 1864

Priddy Robert
G. M. Supt Co M 2nd Ind Cav

States that he received orders from Capt T. W. Kelley to proceed to Bedford Co Penna. and arrest certain men, deserters from Co M 2nd Ind Cav. but failed to carry out his orders, on account of the interference of some armed citizens who ordered him away.

Filed

Apz-315-1166
Pittsburg Pa.

Arthur & Riddell
Attorneys
P

Forward application
for discharge of
Robert C. Purdy
Co. M. 2^d Md. Cav.
Apz-469. H. H. H. H.
in order that he may
receive pay bounty
&c. He having been
turned out of Cumberland
Land (Md) Hospital
without discharge
or transportation
Recd At O March 16

application

of
Robert C. Purdy
Co. M. 2^d Md. Cav.
transferred to
Co. M. 1st Potomac Home Brigade
for

Discharge

Aug. 1902. This paper was formerly filed
with the records of the Acting Assistant
Post Marshal General, of Del.,
in the Enrollment Div. R. & P. O.

Arthur & Riddell
his Attorneys
Pittsburgh
Pa



W. Russell
March 14/66

State of Pennsylvania
County of Allegheny 383

On this 6th day of March A.D. 1866
before me Clerk of the Court in and for
said County came Robert C. Parry
whom I certify to be respectable and
entitled to credit - who being only
some days that he resides in Merrihall
County West Virginia, and his Post-Office
address is Monmsville W. Va. - that he
is the identical Robt. C. Parry who
enlisted at Cumberland Md on the 23rd
day of August 1862 in company M.
Capt. T. W. Kelly 2^d Md. Cavalry
he remained in this Co. organization till
he was sent to the Hospital at Cumberland
on account of disease of the lungs - while
in the Hosp^l said Company was distri-
buted and he was allotted to Co. M.
Capt. Jewnett 1st Potomac Home Brigade
of Cavalry commanded by Col. Cole -
he never reached the latter company
but remained in the Hospital till
summoned to attend the assassination
trials as a witness - after said trials
he was sent back to same Hospital
where he remained until the Post
Hospital broke up and he was
turned out without any discharge

original statements, and not even trans-
position furnished him. He there-
fore respectfully requests the Secretary
of War to order his discharge with
such pay, bounty &c as is due him.
He has pay due him from his
enlistment - never having rec^d
any pay - and only what clothing
was necessary. He has come
from his home to Pittsburgh Pa. to
make this application - has scarcely
money sufficient to take him home
again, and he asks that his
master and may be ordered to
do as to cause him as little expen^d
as possible. He has not a single
acquaintance in Pittsburgh Pa. his attorney in this behalf
is ^{Arthur D. Riddle of Pittsburgh Pa.} he hereby appoints -

Robert C. Lundy

Sworn and subscribed before me this
day of year aforesaid and I certify
that the affiant above named is five
feet 10 1/2 inches high, fair complexion
gray eyes, dark hair, and he believes
he is now about 35 years of age and
from his statement that he was born
in Clarke Co. Va. and by occupation
a Farmer -

Robert Purdy was a member of Co. "M" 2^d Ma
Cal. (an Independent orgⁿ) and was trans-
ferred to Co M. 1st P. A. B. Ma. CW. vols
on the M. O. Roll of which Co. dated
June 28th 1865 he is up as "absent sick in
Hospt. Cumberlanda Ma, Feby 1st '65"

A. G. O. March 10th '66
HMM

A-17. (C.M.O.M. + D.) - 1866.

Pittsburgh, Pa.,
March 16, 1866.

Arthur & Biddell,
135 Fourth Street.

State that Private Robert C. Purday,
Co. M., 2nd Md. Cav., was sent
to Hospital at Cumberland, Md.,
where (except while attending
the assassination trials) he
remained until the Hospital
was broken up, when he was
turned out without discharge
or any papers whatever.
After several months untraced
his way home; that he had
inquiries since the march
ably to C.M.O. Md. Hd.
for discharge. &c.

Aug. 1862. This paper was formerly filed
with the records of the Acting Assistant
Provost Marshal General, of Md. and Del.,
in the Enrollment Div. R. & P. O.

Robt C. M. O. M. + D. Mar. 23, 1866.

Chief Muster Office
For Maryland & Delaware,
Washington, D.C., 29, 1866
Respectfully returned to
Arthur & Biddell, Pittsburgh,
Pa.

Before this man can be
discharged, it will be
necessary for him to furn-
ish some evidence of his
having been sent to Hos-
pital, and of his discharge
therefrom. Did he serve
in Cole's Cavalry, and if so,
by what name? His iden-
tity must also be estab-
lished. In default of
any better evidence, his
own affidavit may be
forwarded to this office,
with a reference com-
missioned officers who
may know him. As the
Case now stands, this office
would not be authorized
to grant him a discharge.
When he furnishes all the

information in his power,
under oath, his case will
be further investigated,
until which time it will
not be necessary for
him to appear in person.

Wm. H. Bruce
Brig. Genl.
Chief Muster Officer
For Md. & Del.
C. B. V. L. H. P. No. 161. 2d. 2d. 2d. 1866.

Office of Arthurs & Riddell,

135 FOURTH STREET.

Pittsburgh, Pa., March 16. 1866

Post. Brig. Genl W. H. Brown
Chf. Surg. Officer at
Baltimore Md,

Dear Sir

Row. C. Parry of Co. M. 2^d
Md. Cavalry - after serving several months
in Det. Co. as Scout & was sent the
Hospital at Cumberland Md. where
he remained (excepting whilst attending
the Assassination Trials as a witness) till
the Hospital was broken up - when he
with several others was removed out with
our discharge or any papers whatsoever
after several months he worked his way
home - and through us applied to the
War Dept. for discharge - The Adjutant
Genl Ausmus he should report to you for
discharge - Please inform us if you will
muster him out and furnish him with such papers
as will enable him to draw his pay &c and if in any
way he can obtain transportation to & from
Baltimore?

Respectfully

Arthurs & Riddell

Civil War Veteran, Robert Purdy

Compiled by Ernie McFadden.

The following constitutes what I know of Robert Purdy. My descent is through his daughter Martha Purdy Deitz and her daughter Lillie May Deitz McFadden. Census Records were viewed through Ancestry.com. The marriage and death dates were obtained through the Marshall County WVGenWeb site. Copies of military payroll records were copies of government archives obtained by my father.

- Birth:** Mid-1820 to Mid-1821 based on census records. 1850 and 1860 enumerations were dated in mid-July. Age of 41 given in December 1861 upon enlistment in Union Army would indicate an 1820 birth.
- Birth Place:** NY as listed in 1850 and 1860 census. Most of the Purdy families in NY area arrived in Fairfield CT about 1650, moved into Westchester County (Rye area) NY over the next 50 – 70 years and then spread from there. The first Purdy I've found record of in Marshall County, Jonathan Purdy, came from this area.
- Spouse:** Minerva Goodrich. Source: Marshall County WVGenWeb site / Marriages / 1835 – 1889 lists date as 31 Dec 1838. Minerva is listed at either age 27 or 29 in 1850 (it's difficult to read which), age 38 in 1860, age 49 in 1870 and 58 in 1880.
- Children:**
1. William b. 1840 (based on 1850 & 1860 Census).
 2. Mary E. - b. 1842, m. 22 Mar 1868 Thomas Carr (b. in Ireland, son of Samuel & Jane Carr). Children – Samuel (d. 22 Jan 1889 at age 19 of lung condition [TB?] per Marshall County death records) and Minerva (Age 8 in 1880 census).
 3. Henrietta M. b. 1844 (based on 1850 & 1860 Census).
 4. Martha N. - b. 1848, m. 12 May 1867 Lewis A. Deitz. Children – Robert, Rosa, Edda, Lillie May (Lilla in 1880 Census), unnamed daughter (died 21 Sep 1879 – aged 2 days). Martha apparently died between 15 Jun 1880 (date of 1880 Census enumeration) and 8 Apr 1883 when Lewis remarried. Lillie May Dietz m. Harry S. McFadden 11 Nov 1894.
 5. Robert (b. Sep 1854, d. 6 Oct 1855 - Flux).
- Military:** Enlisted Company I, 3rd Virginia (U.S.) Infantry [a.k.a. 3rd Virginia Mounted Infantry, 3rd West Virginia Mounted Infantry and 6th West Virginia Cavalry] on 11 Dec 1861. He received a disability discharge on 11 Jul 1863 (some on line sources show 1862, but payroll records confirm the 1863 date.) The payroll records also indicate that Robert Purdy served on detached duty under orders of Major General Robert Milroy, in command at Winchester, Virginia. Other evidence (see below) indicates he remained in government service as a scout after his discharge from the 3rd WV.
- Death:** No information concerning Robert Purdy after June 16, 1865.

**Testimony of Robert Purdy given to the Military Commission
Investigating the Assassination of President Abraham Lincoln**

The following pages are a copy of published transcripts of testimony given by Robert Purdy of Marshall County WV to the military commission charged with investigating the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and trying the surviving conspirators. Purdy's testimony was given on June 16, 1865 at the Old Penitentiary (now on the grounds of Fort Lesley J. McNair) in Washington D.C.

I stumbled across this information while reading a book entitled The Trial, edited by the historian Edward Steers Jr. and published by the University of Kentucky Press in 2003. It would be a considerable understatement to say that I was surprised to find testimony by Robert Purdy, an ancestor about whom I have been able to find little information.

Purdy was testifying about a letter apparently sent to John Wilkes Booth at the National Hotel in Washington D.C. by a Confederate sympathizer in what is now northeastern West Virginia. The letter was not delivered until after the assassination, so Booth never saw it and the hotel staff turned it over to the government. In the transcripts it is referred to as the "Lon Letter" after the signature of its author.

The book is primarily the transcripts of the trial taken in an early form of short hand by Benn Pitman who was contracted by the U.S. government to provide daily transcripts to the commission, prosecution, defense and some members of the press. There is also commentary about the trial and the individual conspirators by Steers and other historians and researchers.

Judge Advocate Bingham was John A. Bingham, a U.S. Representative from Ohio, appointed Special Judge Advocate for the trial and who served as the lead prosecuting attorney examining the witnesses.

The Mr. Aiken, who cross-examined Robert Purdy, was Frederick Aiken, Esq., one of the defense attorneys for Mary Surratt.

THE "LON" LETTER

CHARLES DAWSON.

For the Prosecution. — June 2.

I am a clerk at the National Hotel in this city. In looking among the initials for a letter for a gentleman whose name begins with B, I found a letter addressed "J. W. B." The initials struck me as being rather peculiar, and I took the letter unopened to Judge Advocate Bingham, about the 24th of May.

[The letter was read as follows, and it and the envelope were put in as evidence:]

ENVELOPE.

[P.O. Stamp.]
Cumberland,
May 8,

J. W. B.,
National Hotel,
Washington,
D. C.

SOUTH BRANCH BRIDGE, APRIL 6, 1865.

FRIEND WILKES: I received yours of March 12th, and reply as soon as practicable. I saw French, Brady, and others about the *oil* speculation. The subscription to the *stock* amounts to \$8000, and I add \$1000 myself, which is about all I can stand. Now, when you *sink* your well go DEEP enough; don't fail, every thing depends on you and your *helpers*. If you can't get through on your *trip*, after you *strike ile*, strike through Thornton Gap, and cross by Capon, Romney's, and down the Branch, and I can keep you safe from all hardships for a year. I am clear of all surveillance, now that infernal Purdy is beat. I hired that girl to charge him with an outrage, and reported him to old Kelly, which sent him in the *shade*, but he suspects to (too) damn much now. Had he better be *silenced for good*? I send this up by Tom, and if he don't get drunk you will get it by the 9th; at all events it can't be understood if lost. I can't half write. I have been drunk for two days. Don't write so highfalutin next time. No more; only Jake will be at Green's with funds. Burn this.

Truly, yours,
Sue Guthrie sends much love.

LON

The only guest at the National Hotel that I knew of to whom the initials J. W. B. belonged was John Wilkes Booth. Any letters addressed to Mr. Booth in full would have been put into his box, as he had a room at the house. These being mere initials, the letter was put in with sundry letters for those who had no room in the house.

ROBERT PURDY.

For the Prosecution. — June 16.

I reside in Marshal County, West Virginia, near the Ohio River. I have been in the service of the United States since the 11th of December, 1861. Since the 23rd of August last, I have belonged to a scouting company.

The letter signed "Lon" I never saw until it was published in the public papers. I have no knowledge whatever by whom it was written. I have heard of French, who is referred to in the letter, but I do not know any one named Brady living on South Branch.

There is a man in that region of country named Lon; his full name is Leonidas McAleer, but he generally goes by the name of Lon. I have seen his handwriting. He showed me some notes that he said he had been blackmailed about. The writing of the letter resembles his. I am the Purdy referred to in the letter.

I captured a rebel spy a few miles from Lon's house. I understood he was to meet with Lon McAleer that day to carry information there. I flanked the field and captured him, in company with two men named Darnduff, and a very reliable colored scout belonging to General Kelly. Lon McAleer had been playing both sides, loyal and disloyal; but as he had been lately bragging of his Unionism, I thought he would be glad to learn that the great rebel spy had been captured, so I rode down to him and told him. He cursed me for capturing the man, and said I should have taken his money and let him go. He said, when he went out and saw a small squad of rebels who could do no great damage to the railroad, he did not report it; but when he saw a force that could operate against Cumberland and New Creek, he always reported it. A day or two after that, I overtook a girl near his house. I halted her and searched her, and found her carrying letters. This was in the winter, in January, I think. A charge, such as that alluded to in the letter was made against me, but it was entirely false, and I afterward went to McAleer to get the thing settled. McAleer had a white servant named Tom, a deaf man, who afterward married this girl. I have heard he drinks.

I do not know any person of the name of Green in that neighborhood; but there are Greens some seventy or eight miles off, and there may be other families of that name that I do not know of.

The route through Thornton Gap, crossing by Capon, Romney's, and down the Branch, is an obscure route, of which I never knew till lately. It passes right through by Green's house at Thornton Gap. Green's reputation is that of a very disloyal man.

I do not know the Sue Guthrie mentioned, but I have ascertained that she is a lady who lived with Mr. French. I once wrote a letter to French, warning him that some deserters from our army were going to commit robbery at his house. It was then that McAleer told me that French was his father-in-law.

Cross-examined by MR. AIKEN.

I am acting for the government as detective and scout. I have been charged with writing that letter myself. I was at South Branch Bridge in January last. South Branch empties into the Potomac River, and is from twenty-one to twenty-three miles from Cumberland. There is a railroad through South Branch to Cumberland. People at South Branch Bridge are not in the habit of taking their letters to Cumberland to mail. They generally take them to Green Spring Run, about one and three-fourths miles above.

NOTE: The following email was received 18 Feb 2008:

----- Forwarded Message: -----
From: Ed Steers <edsteers@lincolnherald.com>
To: <JAMESSMITH27@comcast.net>
Subject: Robert C Purdy
Date: Sun, 17 Feb 2008 19:30:32 +0000

Here is a copy of a letter Robert C. Purdy wrote to the President of the Conspiracy Trials, it was in the documents pertaining to the trial and was forwarded to me by Ed. Steers the author of the Trial. It would be appreciated if you would add it. I sent Ernie McFadden a copy of it also.

Dear Mr. Smith,

In searching the evidence file if the M-599 I found one document re Robert C. Purdy. I have copied it and "pasted" it below. This is all I could find.

Purdy, Robert
US General hospital
Cumberland June 4th 65
President, Conspiracy trials, Washington, DC

Sir
I read a letter in the testimony of June 2nd. Said letter dated at South Branch, and purporting to be written to Booth. I am the infernal Purdy mentioned in that letter. A false charge was made against me by a girl supposed to be put up to it by a man named Lon. McAlear or (Leonidas) and I suffered much from the charge but was entirely innocent. I have been a detective nearly during the war and became too troublesome to this McAlear and others, hence they worked for my ruin. I at two different times wrote to President Lincoln that he would be assassinated but received no notice of their reception, consequently did not write any more. I know a good deal about the workings of the confederacy having scouted among them a good deal. If you think my evidence will be of benefit, if you so order me, I will come on and testify to what I know, but I have no funds to pay my way as I have not been paid for near a year. If I have done wrong in writing to a man of your position, please pardon me. I only mean to do right.
Very Respectfully
Your obt. Servant
Robert Purdy

NOTE: Email from Jim Smith <pawswoodshop@gmail.com>, May 19, 2012:

If you could add the following info to the Military Section of Marshall County regarding Robert C. Purdy it would be appreciated.

The following article, which was obtained from the Library of Virginia, was published in the June 13, 1865 issue of the Alexandria Gazette on page 2, col. 1

"A government detective named Purdy, has been arrested for writing a fraudulent letter, addressed to Booth the assassin, and charging the writing of it upon two men of South Branch, Va. for the purpose of bringing them into trouble. Purdy is in close confinement."