

# The Globe

## LATEST

### 7:30 O'CLOCK

## PRISON AT WINDSOR

### Inquiry Into Conduct of Its Officers.

#### Nothing to Prevent Trusty Going Into Mrs Rogers' Cell.

#### Had the Full Run of the West Corridor.

Harold W. Harpin, formerly a guard, and John E. Proctor, up to last spring deputy warden at the Vermont state prison at Windsor, were examined in Boston this morning by the commission which is making an investigation into the conduct of the institution.

They testified to the fact that supplies were apparently being taken from the prison by E. W. Oakes, the superintendent, and also described the absence of attention to the management and discipline of the prison by the superintendent. Prisoners, they said, did outside work in the garden of John Oakes and also in that of warden Edwin D. Harpin.

The conduct of the prison with reference to Mary Rogers, the murderess condemned to death, came up with an inquiry based on the statements that Vernon Rogers, a "trusty" in the prison, had made keys which gained him access during the daytime to the cell occupied by Mrs Rogers. Neither Mr Harpin nor Mr Proctor knew whether Vernon Rogers had been in Mrs Rogers' cell, but they stated there was no one to prevent him making keys to fit the old-fashioned locks on the doors of the cell in the west corridor, where Mrs Rogers was confined, and spending part of the day in the cell.

Gov Bell and Prison Commissioners C. A. J. Safford and N. G. Williams conducted the inquiry in a room at Young's hotel this forenoon. Atty Gen Flitts acted as counsel for the commission, Judge C. S. Palmer of Burlington represented E. W. Oakes, formerly superintendent, and J. C. Enwright of Windsor protected the interests of Ex-Warden Edwin D. Harpin.

Harold W. Harpin, son of the ex-warden, testified that he was employed as a guard, but was discharged in March at the time his father was removed by Supt Oakes. He was on duty nights, in the corridor of the wing in which Mary Rogers was confined.

In the gossip of Windsor young Harpin, who is only 19, figured. He testified this morning that he did not have a key to Mrs Rogers' cell while he was on duty, and was never called to her cell during the night. He passed it every two hours and it was his duty to look in to see that the woman was all right.

The witness said he had seen prisoners at work in Oakes' garden, and also working in the garden of John Oakes, the superintendent's brother. Asked if he had ever seen supplies taken from the prison, young Harpin said he had seen Supt Oakes' son-in-law, Dr. Burbridge, on Sunday taking away oil cans when he visited the prison in his automobile.

Harpin declared that neither he nor his father had ever taken anything away from the prison.

Asked about the opportunities Vernon Rogers, a trusted prisoner, had to gain access to Mrs Rogers' cell, young Harpin said:

"Vernon Rogers had the run of the prison excepting the workshop. He was employed in the west corridor, but he went to the engine room and to other parts of the prison when he wished.

"During the day he had the west corridor to himself. There was no guard in the corridor nor was there any supervision during the day. I used to lock Vernon Rogers up at 9 p. m.

"The locks on the doors to Mrs Rogers' cell were old-fashioned, and Vernon Rogers could have gone to the tool house and obtained wire or anything else from which he could have made a key."

Atty Gen Flitts asked: "With the old fashioned locks in that part of the prison, and with no supervision, was there anything to keep Vernon Rogers and Mrs Rogers apart except their personal honor?"

"That was all there was," said Mr Harpin.

When he was on duty during the daytime in the guardroom, Mr Harpin said he had no instructions to look down the west corridor to see what was going on there. From where Warden Harpin's desk stood the witness said it was impossible to see the west corridor.

John E. Proctor, now living in Boston, said he was a guard at the Windsor prison from May, 1900, until September, 1901, and after that was in charge of the prisoners in the shop until a few months before he left, when he was appointed deputy warden.

He testified that during his more than three years of duty in the shop, Supt Oakes only went there four times on business, his other visits being when he was showing personal friends over the institution. All cases for discipline were referred to Warden Harpin, the superintendent being rarely consulted.

Mr Proctor said the superintendent was in his office for about an hour and a half during the forenoon and sometimes he would not be seen for two or three days. Several times when he wished to consult him Mr Proctor said he had to telephone to a store in the village for the superintendent.

Asked if he knew of any bitter feeling between Oakes and Harpin, Mr Proctor said not until less than a year before he left, when the superintendent ordered him not to go to the warden for certain orders.

He said he never heard of any effort on Harpin's part to secure Oakes' place.

Mr Proctor said he saw Supt Oakes come from the cold storage room with some steak in a 10-quart pail, and later take a bundle to his buggy and drive away, the inference being that the superintendent had taken the supplies from the prison. He had also seen Dr Burbridge, the superintendent's son-in-law, taking an oil can from the prison to his automobile.

Supt Oakes has a summer home at Lake Sunapee, and it has been alleged by various witnesses that he sent supplies from the prison to his cottage. Mr Proctor stated that he knew nothing about that beyond the fact that he had heard John Oakes say he "must ship some stuff to Sunapee."

"Mr Harpin was always where he could be found when needed, but I could rarely find Mr Oakes," said the witness. "Mr Harpin was much more popular with the prison officers."

"Before going to Windsor, I was employed for several years in the Rhode Island state prison. It struck me as extraordinary when they placed a death watch over Mary Rogers that two men should have been employed and no woman assigned to the duty."

"I knew about Vernon Rogers but did not know that he was charged with having frequented Mrs Rogers' cell until after I left the prison. I put him in solitary confinement upon Mr Oakes' orders, but I thought it was because he had been using an oil stove in his cell."

"Vernon Rogers had plenty of opportunity to get whatever tools he needed to open the locks, and as no one was on duty or watching the west corridor during the day, there was nothing to interfere with Rogers going to Mrs Rogers' cell if he wished."

"Some of the prisoners who did work in their cells were allowed files and whatever tools they required. They were even given lamps to heat glue."

Mr Proctor said one of the officers, who was married, was rather attentive to one of the table girls four years ago, and he saw them together a good deal about the prison. While on duty in the guardroom he had seen the officer creep softly upstairs on his way to the part of the building where the woman was employed.

The names were not mentioned, but

were given to the stenographer, to be kept secret until the two have an opportunity to testify.

The witness said the woman was discharged, but reinstated some eight months later.

Mr Proctor described the punishment of a prisoner named Manchester, by warden Harpin, because he had vilified Supt Oakes. The prisoner was hoisted from his feet with his wrists bound until he promised not to denounce the superintendent again.

The witness said he resigned his place because he felt aggrieved at Supt Oakes for not giving him the post of warden after the discharge of Edwin D. Harpin.

"I told him what I thought of him, but I had nothing against him after I left the prison," said Mr Proctor.

During the cross-examination by attorney Enwright, representing Ex-Warden Harpin, Mr Proctor repeated gossip he had heard in the village that one of the guard of Mrs Rogers had held the murderess on his knee.

Judge Palmer, acting for Ex-Supt Oakes, protested.

"This is the most outrageous admission of village gossip for evidence that I have ever seen," said Judge Palmer hotly. "If I were in the place of the men mentioned I would get a gatling gun for those people. This man spoken of is one of the cleanest men in Windsor county, and I protest against the admission of this libelous and false gossip."

Commissioner Williams asked a few questions which brought out the fact that there was no foundation for the remark that Vernon Rogers, the prisoner, was responsible for the statement that the guard had been affectionate toward Mrs Rogers.

"We only wish to show that there is no truth in this gossip," said Commissioner Williams. "We wished to see if this witness knew anything more than the gossip of Windsor village. That was all."

Atty Enwright explained that while he did not believe the story, it came to him in an affidavit made by Alvah Sanderson. Sanderson deposing that Vernon Rogers said he had seen Mrs Rogers seated on the guard's knee.

Judge Palmer attempted to show that Mr Proctor's testimony was due to his hostility toward Ex-Superintendent Oakes, but the witness said he was only disappointed when he did not get the promotion, but did not harbor any ill will.

This afternoon Atty Gen Flitts secured from general freight agent Donovan of the Boston & Maine railroad a schedule of rates to be used in showing the cost of supplies.

There are no other witnesses to be examined in Boston, and the hearing is to be resumed in Vermont.