

JOHN PARSONS

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John Parsons (No 4390) was convicted at the General Sessions of the Peace at Birmingham on the 19 October 1854 for housebreaking. He had a previous felony and was sentenced to 15 years transportation. John was transferred to Portsmouth Convict Prison in the April-June quarter of 1856. The January-March quarterly prison returns for 1857 note he was in good health, his behaviour was very good and that he was transported to Australia on 4 March 1857. John arrived in Western Australia on 3 July 1857 per *Clara*. He obtained his ticket of leave on 5 January 1859 and Conditional Pardon 18 July 1861.

In 1868 a woebegone story appeared in The Herald:

A CONVICT'S STORY

Among the petitions of the House of Commons to be found in the latest report is one of John Parson's, a convict under sentence in Pentonville Prison.

In 1854 the petitioner states, he was convicted in Birmingham Sessions of housebreaking and was sentenced to transportation for fifteen years. He served the first three years of his time in England, and was then taken to Western Australia, where he served four and a half years. He then received a ticket-of-leave, and after working as a domestic servant for two and a half years more, he obtained a pardon for the remainder of his term. Being desirous of remaining in Australia, he went to Adelaide, where he was recognised by the police as a pardoned convict, and ordered to leave the city in seven hours on pain of being sent to prison for three years. He produced his pardon, but was told by one of the magistrates, that it was no use there, and was recommended to go back to England. He tried to ship to Melbourne; but no captain would have him on board, as there was a penalty of £100 for taking convicts to that city. He then went to Singapore, where on landing he was told by the police that, being a discharged convict, he had no right to come there, and he could not remain. He then took a ship to England, went to Birmingham, and, finally to Worcester, in which city he was arrested on a charge of being illegally at large, tried, convicted, and sent back to penal servitude. He narrated all the preceding circumstances to the Judge who tried him, and the Judge reserved certain technical points in his favour, which were, however overruled. He petitioned the House of Commons for a remission of his sentence.

John was convicted, on his return to England, at the City of Worcester Assizes on 5 March 1866. The charge was – "*feloniously being at large within H.M. dominions without lawful cause before the expiration of a term for which he had been previously ordered to be transported*". Written in the Convicted and Sentence column of the Criminal Register, was the comment – "*Point of Law reserved. Judgement respited*".

The outcome of John Parsons' petition is unknown. It probably had little success as he had broken the regulations of a Conditional Pardon ie he was not permitted to return to England.

References:

AJCP Reel 2857, HO 27/145, p235

AJCP Reel 2838, HO 27/109, p433

AJCP Reel 5222 HO 8/131, p207

AJCP Reel 5220 HO 8/128, p165

The Herald (Fremantle), 26 September 1868

Convicts of Western Australia, 1850-1887 by R Erickson and G O'Mara.