

John B. Richards
Counselor at Law
Suite 214 First National Bank Bldg.
Duluth, Minn.

July 7th 1921.

To the Honorable Board of Pardons, of the State of Minnesota:
St Paul, Minn.,

Gentlemen:

My attention has been called to the case of Gilbert H. Stephenson convicted last September of rioting in Duluth on June 15th 1920. It was claimed that he was one of a mob, which, inflamed with passion, over the alleged assault upon a white girl, attacked the jail and hung three negroes in custody.

It is said that the crowd around the jail was larger than 5000; and its frenzy overcame the opposing police force. While many persons were active in the extreme measures taken, there were comparatively few arrests and but two or three convictions of rioting.

My interest has been aroused by facts stated indicating that very grave doubt exists whether Gilbert H. Stephenson took part in the riot.

I did not hear the testimony; but there appears to be so much variation, uncertainty and mistake as to the appearance and identity of the defendant, Stephenson, as to excite serious doubt of his guilt as charged.

This doubt is increased by the positive statement of Sargeant Ricketts heretofore made to you, who was on duty at the police station, and was face to face with the leaders of the mob, who says that he had known Stephenson for eight years, would have recognized him if active in the mob, and that he did not see him taking any part in the riot.

It appears also that Stephenson is a young man of good family, of good character and good habits. I know some of his relatives, and nothing but good of all. He certainly has no criminal strain. His father is J. M. Stephenson, now living at Duquette, Minnesota, who is a veteran of our Civil

John B. Richards
Counselor at Law
Suite 314 First National Bank Bldg.
Duluth, Minn.

war, belonging to the 3rd Iowa Cavalry.

It is certain, also, that public sentiment was greatly excited, demanding some sacrifice, some satisfaction by way of convictions to atone in part for the stain and disgrace put on Duluth by that mob; and the jury was undoubtedly influenced by that public feeling; and it may not have viewed the evidence in as favorable light for the defendant as was his just due.

Under all these circumstances, and especially in view of the punishment already inflicted upon Stephenson by his imprisonment for a full year, I am convinced that justice would be done, and no public wrong committed, if your Honorable Body should now grant Stephenson a full pardon.

I do not understand just why no appeal to the Supreme Court was taken from the verdict; but failure to take such appeal should not cause your body to fail to give weight to the other facts above stated.

Very Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John B. Richards". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name and closing. It features a large, looping initial "J" and a stylized "R".