

From: ERNEST EUGENE LAWS, % "WILLOWBECK," DRAYTON ST. LEONARD,
5. 1. 1981. OXON, OX9 8BE.

To: THE WORSHIPFUL,
THE MAYOR of Campbelltown, N.S.W., Australia.

Your Worship, Dear Sir, Please forgive me for not knowing your name: since nearly seven years ^{ago} my physical lot has been severe cripplement because of multiple arthritis. And that has prevented my going around to seek information. And for the same reason please be merciful and forgive my schoolboyish careful shaky hand-writing. It is laborious and wearisome; but that is the only way in which I can be easily legible. And easy legibility, teacher told me, is a prerequisite of ^{agreeable} correspondence.

This letter is for the purpose of ~~me~~ begging you to try to procure for me accurate information regarding my birth in Campbelltown in October of 1890 and also the circumstances surrounding the permanent departure from Campbelltown of my parents (Charles Laws and Mary Ann Laws [née McGarry]) and their entire family when I was a small child. Perhaps there was a grave scandal or even something shameful; for my parents went to Sydney and lived and worked in lowly circumstances there and never again attempted to run a hotel or even a bar although they had run the Railway Hotel in Campbelltown and (as I was told) a hotel in Liverpool, N.S.W., before going to Campbelltown. Before I was born my parents had had eleven children (six sons and five daughters), of whom one son and one daughter had died. Perhaps the child (Mary or "Mollie"), who was born about 4½ years after me, was also born in Campbelltown. The eldest, Vincent, was 20 in December of 1890. the next, Lillian, was in her 19th year; the next, Maud was in her 17th; the next, Robert, was in his 14th; and the four next were quite old enough to have known about and remembered my birth. And my parents and those eight children had no doubt about my having been born in Campbelltown in the Railway Hotel on 27 October of 1890 when mother was about to be 40 on November 1st, 1890. Father and mother were born in England.

In 1972, by the kindness of the authorities of the N.S.W. office in the strand, London, I received from the Registrar General in Sydney a copy of my birth certificate. The registration was made in March of 1891. Mother was the "informant". The "witness" was the nurse, Mrs. Hawarth (that is what I think it is). The registrar's name is, I guess, D.E. Traighton. The place of my birth is given as Railway Line Campbelltown: the date as October 28th, 1890. On my calling in question the accuracy of ^{those} particulars the Registrar General replied that the copy sent to me was indubitably a copy of the original.

In the certificate father is described as Hotel Keeper; and it is

2

stated that he married Mary Ann McGarry in Liverpool, N.S.W., on 20th February, 1870. He was nearly 22 (he was born on 29 February, 1848). Mary Ann was born on 1st November, 1850.

My only childhood recollections of Campbelltown are the following:—
1) My having been very frightened on hearing my sisters say that they had seen Fisher's ghost (I had and have no idea who Fisher was); 2) my being in the stable and seeing ~~the~~ horse-dung being thrown with precision ^{by two of my sisters} at the lightly bedrugged fat bottom of a girl each time she exposed it while turning somersaults on the straw-strewn floor (of course her fat bottom meant no more to me ~~than~~ than a childish giggle: I suppose she was merely a daring innocent, what is called a hoyden or romp or tomboy); 3) My being under the seat of a buggy or gig or trap while ~~my mother's~~ father drove with mother beside him along along a road that bordered the railroad, and my being fascinated by the moon, which I thought was racing or sailing through the clouds and sometimes hiding behind them and yet always remaining above me (ever since then it has been my delight to be under that spell whenever there is a good moon in a not heavily clouded sky).

Only twice after the family's departure did I return to Campbelltown. Mother took me there for a day when I was a fairly grown boy, and left me there in the care of Mr. Samuel ("Sam") Jenner while she went about her business. Mr. Jenner, I was told, was known to all in Campbelltown, and was the manufacturer of a soft drink. My impression on entering his yard was that he was what was called in the slums of Sydney a "bottle-O," i.e. a buyer and seller of used bottles: there were stacks of them in the yard. So little was I a country boy that he had to teach me how to mount his horse. And he set me to helping him to wash thoroughly some soft-drink bottles, of which I broke one while he was absent for a minute or two; but on my confessing the mishap, he praised me and counselled me to own up at once whenever I should cause any mishap or commit any fault for which someone else might be blamed and punished. My next and only other visit to Campbelltown was in 1915. Then I inspected the particulars given for my baptism in the Baptismal book of St. John's (I think it was St. John's) Catholic Church, of which Father Dunne (or Dunn) was still the parish priest. He had baptised me; and I suppose he had noted down the date of my birth. I knew that Matthew Gunn was my Godfather and Margaret (Maggie) Paton was my God-mother.

Perhaps in 1890 the name of the hotel was Railway Line. If that is so I shall be deeply disappointed: I have been quite thrilled to think that I was not only a seventh son, but also had the rare distinction of having been born on the railway line. I imagined mother's

dropping or falling me on the railway line (~~off the main line~~ ~~and~~ ~~then~~ ~~bending~~ ~~down~~ ~~and~~ ~~taking~~ ~~me~~ ~~up~~ ~~just~~ ~~in~~ ~~time~~ ~~to~~ ~~prevent~~ ~~the~~ ~~oncoming~~ ~~rushing~~ ~~puffing~~ ~~Billy~~ ~~(that~~ ~~is~~ ~~what~~ ~~we~~ ~~used~~ ~~to~~ ~~call~~ ~~an~~ ~~old~~ ~~time~~ ~~railway~~ ~~engine)~~ ~~from~~ ~~crushing~~ ~~us~~ ~~both~~ ~~into~~ ~~eternity~~.) and then bending down and taking me up just in time to prevent the oncoming rushing puffing Billy (that is what we used to call an old time railway engine) from crushing us both into eternity.

What an experience ^(in later life) it used to be to see and hear ~~one~~ approaching a train ~~train~~ approach and stop at a station and put off passengers and luggage and goods and take on others and also fuel and water and blow off steam and blow the whistle, and then huff and puff slowly away and gain speed and disappear into the distance on the lonely track!

I beg you, your worship dear Sir, please to help me; firstly by asking the curator of the building that was the Railway Hotel (I have read that it is preserved as being of importance because of its architecture) whether it was ever called Railway Hotel and ~~whether~~ what is any information he has regarding its occupancies as keepers by Charles and Mary Ann Laws in the late eighties and early eighties-nineties and regarding why they ended or had to end such occupancy (I should like the vindictive truth); secondly by asking the Catholic Parish Priest whether the date of my birth was recorded by Father Dunne in the Baptismal Book and, if it ~~was~~ ~~what~~ ~~it~~ ~~was~~, what ~~it~~ it was; thirdly by having this letter published gratis (i.e. without my having to pay or be paid for its publication) in whole or in part in all or in any of the Campbelltown newspapers and magazines, etc., of any description. There may be some native of Campbelltown that will be by that means induced to remember having heard an ancient relative or friend speak of Charles and Mary Ann Laws (I think that mother was always known as Ann: I did not know that her first name was Mary until I in 1972 received the copy of my birth certificate) and of their having left Campbelltown with all their children, and of why they did so. Such persons, when memory has been jogged, could communicate their information to one or another ^{or to you,} ~~paper~~. There may even be a Campbelltownian centenarian that will ^{give} personal recollections of the departure of the Laws family. Perhaps editors in nearby towns (e.g. in Liverpool) might oblige by publishing my letter in whole or in part. I think I read that no copy of a Campbelltownian newspaper for the early eighties-nineties exists.

Herewith is an addressed envelope; and also an Australian dollar and an English pound (together they will be enough to enable you, if you feel kindly toward me and have a little time to spare, to send me by airmail briefly, howsoever unpleasant it may be, the craved information. Truths are truths and facts are facts, no matter

how expedient it may have been ^{at} one time to conceal them. I send this letter registered because I want to make it as sure as I can that it will reach you before I die. The doctor says that my life is still going strong. That may be true despite my daily and nightly pains; but it is certain in the natural course of events that it cannot last much longer.

I think that in 1915 I signed my name on the page on which my baptism is recorded. That can afford a proof that this letter is genuine. Please, sir, preserve this letter in your official archives: it does contribute slightly to the history of old Campbelltown. The writing of it took me much trouble and time. Please forgive crossings-out and blot: my left eye is useless for reading and writing, and my right is feeble even with the help of a fresh recently prescribed lens.

In 1912, not living at home, I wrote to mother and asked her to let me have a list of the family's birthdays. She sent me a list written under her direction by either Robert or Norman. It is now before me, and is dated 1912, and must have been written in October; for at my name in the list the age and date of birth are given as "92 This month Octr 27th." This is the only written corroboration or confirmation I have of my contention that my date of birth was October twentieth-seventh and not twenty-eighth.

It would gratify me to know if in Campbelltown there is a national museum or Art Gallery; in case I could arrange to send to it a framed portrait of me done in 1924 or 1925 in London by Charles H. Shannon, R.A. He did three of me, - 2 in profile, 1 full-face. He shared a house with Charles Ricketts, R.A. They were my friends, and had been friends of Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde. They together illustrated one of his books of fairy stories; and Ricketts illustrated his magnificent poem *The Sphinx*.

On separate leaves are herewith lines of mine: 1) *Ninety Years with zest*; 2) *O Wisdom! guard Australia!*. The latter was written in 1977, and was sent ^{in 1977} to the editor of a London paper, and offered gratis for publication in that paper or in any of its Australian owner's many other papers, etc., in Australia and Usona (i.e. United States of North America). The editor returned my lines. He highly praised them, and advised me to send them to *Australia House*, London. I sent them, with a stamped addressed envelope, to *Australia House*, getting from the postoffice a certificate of postage; from that day to this there has not been a reply from the authority there. I pray that all papers, no matter what they are, in Campbelltown will publish them; and that a Campbelltownian composer will put them to rousing dignified music that will be played & sung in one or another school. Please offer gratis to *Ninety Years with zest* to an editor, or to editors, of your choice. I hope that whosoever prints my lines will do so with my spelling and punctuation: then any errors will be only mine.

That the All-Merciful and All-Compassionate will grant to you and your dear Ones, your Worship Dear Sir, and to all Campbelltownians and Campbelltown a happy healthy prosperous 1981 and will cuddle closely each of you is the earnest wish of E. E. Laws.

—: O Wisdom guard Australia!:-

1) O Wisdom! guard Australia, lead her safe and sound,
Instruct her babes and youth to be for worth renowned,
Preserve her men and women true to honour found,
And may her glory to her greater good redound,
And everywhere her name with confidence be crowned,
And everywhere her name with confidence be crowned!
We will advance Australia ~~under every dome,~~ ^{neath the heaven's dome,}
And frankly show the world she is our precious home,
She is our precious home, she is our precious home.

2) By birth or choice Australians proud we take our stand
And dedicate ourselves to our Beloved Land
To hold her free and clean and prosperous and grand,
And aid her friends and counter any hostile band,
And promptly, gladly serve her at her own command,
And promptly, gladly serve her at her own command.
We will advance Australia ~~under every dome,~~ ^{neath the heaven's dome,}
And frankly show the world she is our precious home,
She is our precious home, she is our precious home.

3) And town and country folk in unison we place
In us our trust to tend the welfare of our race,
To keep us sure and strong on land, at sea, in space,
And our defences on our own resources base,
And, if at war, the foe until we win outface,

And, if at war, the foe until we win outface.
We will advance Australia ^{neath the heaven's dome,} ~~under every dome,~~
And frankly show the world she is our precious home,
She is our precious home, she is our precious home.

4)
O Wisdom! guard Australia, lead her safe and sound,
Instruct her babes and youth to be for worth renowned,
Preserve her men and women true to honour found,
And may her glory to her greater good redound,
And everywhere her name with confidence be crowned,
And everywhere her name with confidence be crowned!
We will advance Australia ^{neath the heaven's dome,} ~~under every dome,~~
And frankly show the world she is our precious home,
She is our precious home, she is our precious home. E.E.L.

In the hope that they will help to make Australia and
Australians better known admired and liked universally
I, the undersigned author of the above lines, hereby offer them
gratis (i.e. without my having to pay anyone or by anyone be paid)
to the whole world for anyone to reproduce them in any manner
whatsoever in whole or in part in the original English or in translation
or adaptation, or to recite them in private or in public, or to accom-
pany them with music and to sing them, or to put them to any
other use whatsoever.

E. E. Laws,
% "Willowbeck",
Drayton St. Leonard,
Oxon, OX9 8BE,
England. 9. 1. 1981

—: Ninety with zest:—

Thankful, within the bounds of work and rest,
I have survived my ninety years with zest,
And much have learned of worth,—
That pity, probity and trust are blest,
And that of Time's rewards and gifts are best
Affection, kindness, mirth.

Age follows age, essentially the same;
We gulp at baited hooks that change but name;
And good and ill remain;
And sometimes flares what seems a leading flame
To take us into Peace from strife and shame;
And what was is again.

Ah! men and women, join in Wisdom's cause,
With full regard for Truth and Nature's laws,
To cure or lessen ill!
These grim alternatives to that give pause:
Stark tyranny, or anarchy's fell claws,
Or savagery, or nil.

L. Oct. 1980,
% Willowbeck,
Drayton St. Leonard,
Oxon, OX9 8BE, England.