

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 837

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 837

Witness

Mrs. Richard Lavelle,
Ardnagreina,
Castleknock,
Co. Dublin.

Identity.

Daughter of the
late James O'Mara.

Subject.

Mission of her father, James O'Mara, to
America, 1919-1920, re. Irish-Republican Loan.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2140

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

Tel. Castleknock 24.

Ardnagreina,

Castleknock,

Co. Dublin.

25th April 53

Dear Miss Kissaue,

I am afraid I have made a mess of this statement by so many alterations. I thought it better to do my best to be accurate. Bob Brewster, whom I rang up (and who is completely friendly and anxious to be of any possible help to me about the book & full of lively recollections of Dad's part in the movement) gave me the proper date of when he rec'd the £2000 from Dad. Garth Haly was later accountant i.e. was anyway in the Benjamin Franklin Bureau days. I don't know that he was

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STATEMENT BY MRS. RICHARD LAVELLE
(PATRICIA O'MARA)

Ardnagréine, Castleknock, Co. Dublin.

In April, 1920, when my mother followed my father to America, I accompanied her. I was their eldest daughter and at the time was studying science at the National University, Dublin and Galway. I never sat for my degree.

We travelled by London and Paris. We could not get the visas either in Dublin or London, as we were known to the police. We also had some difficulty in getting the American visas in Paris but eventually succeeded, I think through some American influence. Neither of us had, of course, any official objective in our journey.

My father met us at New York where he had his Republican Loan office in 411, Fifth Avenue. After a week we went to Washington where we found Harry Boland, who had his office there. We spent about ten days there and returned to New York where we spent the most of the summer. De Valera paid various visits to New York during this time and stayed there a considerable time after the arrival of his wife from Ireland in, I think, June.

Harry Boland, Jim Burke and his sister and Liam Mellows were coming and going to New York also. Kathleen O'Connell was de Valera's secretary at this time, and then or perhaps later he had one or two others who accompanied him more or less as secretaries, ^(P.M.L.) a ~~man~~ ^{Joseph (P.M.L.)} called Begley and ^(P.M.L.) another called Paddy Fleming. Seán Nunan was in New York working, I think, in Dad's office at this time. Gilbert Ward was the Accountant. Fawcett^s was Irish

Consul and had a separate office. I did not know McCartan very well because he does not seem to have come to New York much while I was there. I often met Joe McGarrity and Frank P. Walsh and his family, as they were great friends of my father. *Also Mayor Kim Read (PM)*

As I was not working, I was a lot on my own and my father did not wish me to go around unaccompanied, and many of these associates of my father that I have mentioned accompanied me on my various sightseeing trips from time to time. It was a terribly hot summer and we could only eat at night, and all of the Irish Republicans that happened to be in New York used to gather into some roof garden after midnight for tea and toast.

We stayed in a small and less expensive hotel called The Walcott, quite close to the Waldorf-Astoria where de Valera stayed. I knew Mrs. de Valera very well and went about a good deal with her.

I left America in September, 1920, to resume my studies in Dublin, but my mother stayed on, so I did not see the delegation headed by Mary McSwiney that arrived in America at the beginning of 1921.

In the spring of 1948 Dad handed me two suitcases full of folders containing letters and told me he would give me the rest when he found them, and we would start work in the writing of his reminiscences when he returned from America where he was going on business that year. I was to sort out the papers and get them into readiness for the task. Actually we did nothing that summer which we spent in our house in Cashel, Connemara. In the autumn he was not feeling so well and it was decided he should have an operation. He died four days after, aged seventy-five

years. I have had the papers ever since and have always intended to write my father's life. I have been going through them and have sorted them into appropriate groups, that is, private letters and official letters.

I started to write the book last year and have completed about a third of it. Naturally it covers a good deal more than the years, 1913 to 1922, which is the historical period with which your Bureau is concerned. For instance, I have letters dealing with the early Sinn Féin time, 1907-1908, when he resigned his seat in the English Parliament for South Kilkenny. There is among these a copy of a resolution from the Castlisisland Branch of the National Council congratulating him on his courage in resigning his seat. I have also some debentures of the Sinn Féin Printing & Publishing Co., Ltd., dated September 8th, 1909.

In 1906 when there was some land grabbing in Kilkenny, he wrote an interesting letter which was printed in a Kilkenny paper, advocating the withholding of the special police rate which was to be levied on the County and pointing out the absurdity of expecting any effective action from a Parliamentary Party which counted 83 members against 587 hostile or indifferent British members. The editor of the paper had a very good comment on this.

Another important letter among the papers I have is one from Dad to Father Brennan of Kilkenny, who was a staunch Irishman and a friend of Dad's, explaining his reasons for resigning his seat, and there are many letters of congratulation on his courage in taking the step he did. This letter to Father Brennan, of which I have a copy, was published in the 'Kilkenny People'. The editor, Mr. Keane, was a great friend of Dad's and a good Irishman.

He went out of politics for the time being; his business affairs were very exacting and, although the only other resigned member of Parliament, Charlie Dolan, contested a constituency in North Leitrim in the Sinn Féin Party interest, Dad confined himself to his business which indeed was a full-time job and kept him in London where he lived, since 1893, working for the O'Mara firm.

Dad moved to Ireland about 1914 and bought the bacon-curing firm of Donnelly's in Cork Street, Dublin, and devoted himself mainly to building up that business.

After the 1916 Rising he again turned his mind to the national cause and followed the course of events. He first became really active in the conscription period. Grandfather was active too in that. It is a family tradition that Grandfather was offered a baronetcy if he would go on a conscription platform, but he refused absolutely. He also had refused, as Mayor of Limerick, to receive King Edward the VII, who was at the time Prince of Wales. He went to the station and asked that the luggage be taken back.

(Phd) ten days about after the E. Cavan Election i.e. about July 1st 1918 *(Phd)*
It was, I think, after the General Election of 1918 *(Phd)*

that Dad gave £2,000 to establish a representative abroad to counteract the English propaganda against Ireland. *(Phd)*
(Phd) interest on that sum *(Phd)*
receipt for ~~that~~ is among the papers I hold.

De Valera must have become aware of Dad's financial ability because during the South Armagh election he asked Dad to take over the organising of that and, later, of the East Cavan election, so as to ensure that the money collected would be used to the best advantage. When the Director of Elections *B. Brennan (Phd)* was arrested in November, 1918, during the election
^

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took (Ph L)

with which he had helped along (Ph L)

campaign, Dad was asked to take over the work which he did, with the successful result we all know.

Again, when there was the question of organising the Republican Loan in America, de Valera asked for Dad. He went over at once and spent from October, 1919, to May, 1921, on that work. He established offices first in New York and then agencies and representatives in many towns throughout the States. He took over the premises of the American Commission on Irish Independence for this. The Loan, which amounted to over three million dollars, was an unqualified success.

After de Valera's return to Ireland, Dad and he disagreed. Dad objected to what he considered undue interference in the execution of his work and resigned from his American activities, also from his trusteeship of the Dáil Loan and from his membership of the Dáil. I have all the papers leading up to this decision which, to my mind, was really caused by a clash of temperaments between the two of them and by the slowness of communication between Ireland and the U.S.A. They had often differed vehemently while both were in America, but they always found a way to reconcile their differences. *I would like to mention*

August 1921. An unanimous vote of thanks proposed by Michael Collins & seconded by De Valera (Ph L)

When I have finished my book, most of the historical papers, which are mainly concerned with the American Dáil Loan and which Dad had filed in his office in the U.S.A., I hope to deposit with the Bureau of Military History. I reserve judgment as to some others which I look upon as purely private documents written to my father personally. Of course, I intend to consult the rest of the family about this, but I think they will have no objection.

SIGNED: Patricia Lavelle

DATE: 25th April 1953

(Patricia Lavelle)
25th April 1953.

WITNESS S. Ni Chiosain
S. Ni Chiosain