

Transcription

May the 1st, 1888

Dear William, I now take the pleasure of writing a few lines to you after a long time to let you know that I am in good health at this time. Hoping that these few lines will find you and all the family in good health. Thanks be to God for the health.

Dear William I was in very bad health last November. I was five weeks very bad [and] not expected [to live] but thanks be to God I got a longer day to look out for myself. My feet and legs was swelled. We kept it from going up to the body. My days is not long here now. Old Joe[*], your uncle, is just waiting on the hour to die. He is here, so none of us is able to do any work. I was always waiting for a letter from you to let me know how Robert is doing as he is not writing to me. He promised to me that he would send to me as I said to him the land here is not paying. Nothing here. Only auctions every day in this town.

I got a letter from John. He is well and expects to be home to England this summer. He says he will come to see me. He sent me three pounds and told me to not fret for Maggie and the man [*Maggie's husband Joseph Wright*] is all right if he minds himself and keeps steady. He is well liked. I got him there with Sinsons [*Simpson's?*] Factory. He has five shillings a day. He is a good tradesman but they raised the tided [*they raised the tithe or tax?*]. They have one little boy [*Robert William Wright*] and [a] grand chap he is. She looks well.

I had Farrel's son here and nothing would do him but [be] with me and I hurled him [*possibly meaning whirled him, i.e. round and round*].

James is well and he has the same mind he ever had, although well natured. I send my love to yous all and all the children and John Stewart and Isabella and my blessing, as it may be my last. Let me know all about Robert. Is he with you or not? Robert is a brave chap, now he ought to look sharp.

No more from your affectionate father, farewell

Robert Byers, Drumagoland

Write soon

Notes

* Cathryn Watson believes this is Joseph Watson – Margaret's older brother, b.1805, d.Jul-Sept 1889.

Cathryn writes: "The year of Joseph's birth provides some evidence that perhaps Robert's date of birth, 1805, is incorrect on his death certificate. Robert refers to Joe as 'Old Joe'. The 1821 census shows 4-5 households of Watson families living next door to Joseph and Anne Byers who have three sons: Robert b.1814, Thomas b.1815 and James b.1820.

If Robert were born around 1814 this would make him closer in age to his first wife, Margaret, who was born in 1812 and would possibly make more sense in regards to the timeline of the birth of their child Anne Jane in 1837. Robert and Margaret would have been in their earlier twenties, rather than Robert potentially being in mid to late thirties when his first child was born. It would also then be fitting that Robert would refer to Joe as 'Old Joe'.

James Byers – b.1840 - d.24 June 1916, Chicago, Cook, Illinois, USA

DB adds: There is also the possibility that 'Old Joe' is the Joseph Byers who might well have been a brother of Robert.