

William Martin Leggett alias William Montague Clarence Campbell

Summary of information provided by Chris Vening

Chris Vening has researched very thoroughly the life and claims of William Martin Leggett or as he was mostly known in Australia, William Montague Clarence Campbell. Chris traces him from his birth, through his various careers and his poetry and writings to conclusively show us that William Leggett reinvent himself as William Montague Clarence Campbell the illegitimate son of George IV when in Australia. His Australian family obviously believed this as they recorded George IV as his father on his death certificate which has of course helped maintain the belief that he was of royal blood.

He was obviously a talented writer as were his parents before him and many other family members. Denis Woodhams first examined William's royal claims in a series of articles in our Journal from June 1999 to March 2000 entitled "Buckenbours's Royal Blood – William Montague Clarence Campbell and made a tentative connection between the names Campbell and Leggett but as Chris says in the article Denis lacked the blessings of today's Internet — particularly the access it provides to digitised historical newspapers.

Extracts from Chris Vening's article

"A commanding figure, straight as an arrow, broad shoulders, wavy black hair, a massive forehead, an Oriental complexion, and an eye, a single glance from which was never forgotten." Thus New Brunswickers of the 1880s remembered William Martin Leggett, poet of the wilderness, teacher, soldier, missionary. "One of the most polished gentlemen of his time," wrote a memorialist in the Saint John *Daily Sun*, "scrupulous in dress, affable in his manner, and kingly in his bearing.

He was hailed as "The Bard of New Brunswick," yet when he left for England in 1845 to pursue a career in letters he may as well have sailed off the edge of the earth. From that point, as one Canadian source puts it, "his life and career are shrouded in mystery."²

Once in England, he invented a new identity, enlisted in the Army and was shipped out to New South Wales. There this gifted and eccentric man would remarry, raise a second family, lead a precarious, semi-nomadic existence as poet, reporter, teacher, gold digger, sheep station manager, soup kitchen attendant, police spy and free selector, and go to his grave claiming that he was the son of the king of England.

William himself, in a partially legible document held by the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, states that he was born on 15 December 1808. He was the son of teachers: American-born Joseph Regan Leggett and his wife Mary Martin, the daughter of a loyalist ex-naval surgeon and army chaplain. Both parents wrote verse for the newspapers, and his mother's sister Rachel Martin was a poet of some renown.

He was certainly not the illegitimate son of George IV.

If you wish to read the full 23 pages the link below will enable you to download the pdf file. www.mdhs.org.au/pdfs/Campbell.pdf The article was originally published in "Script and Print" the journal of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand.