Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1156

Lawson, Louisa

(1848 - 1920)

Born	18480217, Guntawang, Mudgee district New South Wales Australia
Died	19200812, Gladesville New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Businesswoman, Feminist, Suffragist, Women's rights activist, Writer

Summary

Louisa Lawson was an independent and resourceful woman who fought for women's rights during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Australia. Married at eighteen years of age to Niels (Peter) Larsen, later Lawson, she produced five children, one of whom died in infancy. Another child, Henry became one of Australia's most famous writers. On her move to Sydney from country New South Wales in 1883 she supported her family by doing washing, sewing and taking in boarders. In 1887 she bought the Republican and with her son Henry edited and wrote most of the newspaper's copy. In 1888 she established the Dawn, a journal devoted to women's concerns and continued publication until 1905. In May 1889 Louisa launched the campaign for female suffrage and announced the formation of the Dawn Club where women met to discuss 'every question of life, work and reform' and to gain experience in public speaking. Louisa Lawson could claim success when women in New South Wales gained the suffrage in 1902.

Details

Louisa Lawson was the second of twelve children of Henry Albury and his wife Harriet, nee Winn. She attended Mudgee National School and was asked to work as a pupil teacher but her parents required her to remain at home to assist with the care of her younger brothers and sisters. After her marriage to Norwegian born Niels Hertzberg Larsen (Peter), she had five children between 1867 and 1877. Left alone to rear her children when her husband was away working, she earned a living in a variety of ways, such as sewing, selling dairy produce and fattening cattle.

Her move to Sydney in 1883 signalled the end of her marriage and her launch into new ventures. She and her son Henry worked together on the Republican, which she bought in 1887. Through the pages of the Dawn she took up women's causes in particular the fight for female suffrage in New South Wales. She encountered problems with the Typographical Union as she had employed female printers, but the union refused membership to females. It attempted to force her to dismiss her printers, which she refused to do.
She advocated the enfranchisement of women believing that they would change evil laws and protect women and their children. On the formation of the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales in 1891, Louisa Lawson was elected to its Council. Its meetings were held at the Dawn office. She was also a member of the Women's Progressive Association and campaigned for women to be appointed to public office.

Louisa Lawson died at the Hospital for the Insane, Gladesville, on 12 August 1920.

Events

2001 - 2001
Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

Published resources

Resource Section
Lawson, Louisa (1848-1921), Radi, Heather, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110019b.htm

Journal
The Dawn : a journal for Australian women, Lawson, Louisa, 1888-1905

Book
Louisa, Matthews, Brian (Brian Ernest), 1988

'Dert' and 'Do', Lawson, Louisa, 189-

The lonely crossing and other poems, Lawson, Louisa, 1905

Louisa Lawson: collected poems with selected critical commentaries, Lawson, Louisa, 1996

Louisa Lawson, Henry Lawson's crusading mother, Ollif, Lorna, 1978

The Complete Book of Great Australian Women: Thirty-six women who changed the course of Australia, De Vries, Susanna, 2003

Edited Book
200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988,
https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20071105022623/http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/78644/20071105-1315/www.200australianwo

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders

Archival resources

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection
Sub-series 7.1: Papers relating to Louisa Lawson and Henry Lawson, 1859-1934

Louisa Lawson poems 189- -1916

Poems (4), ca. 1916 by Louisa Lawson with newspaper cutting

Louisa Lawson, poems, articles, biographical notes, criticism, 1896-1927, with autograph letter signed, 1901

Papers of Louisa Lawson and D'Arcy Wentworth collected by Sir William Dixson, 6 July 1805-29 July 1912

Lawson family papers, 18-- - 1926

National Library of Australia
[Biographical cuttings on Louisa Lawson, writer, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

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