

AUGUSTUS COX

Born: February 29, 1864  
 Died: January 9, 1928  
 Buried: Walthamstow Cemetery, Private Grave  
 Undertaker: Frank White  
 99 Wood Street  
 Walthamstow

Married: Louisa Vernone  
 Born: December 29, 1866,  
 Died: August 1952  
 Buried: Vancouver, B.C.

Children:

1. Alfred Augustus  
 Born: May 9, 1888  
 Died: March 23, 1889
2. Percie Charles  
 Born: January 10, 1890  
 Died: August 29, 1969  
 Buried: Hillside Cemetery,  
 Petrolia, Ontario.
3. Grace Louise  
 Born: February 21, 1891  
 Died: August 17, 1891
4. Augustus Henry  
 Born: May 18, 1895  
 Died: Infant
5. Reginald Vernone  
 Born: March 26, 1900  
 Died: January 1981  
 Buried: Vancouver, B.C.
6. Dorothy Agnes  
 Born: June 25, 1901  
 Died: January 26, 1902

AUGUSTUS COX

Augustus was born in Charles and Matilda's home  
 2 Drummond Cres., Euston Square, London, England February  
 29, 1864.

My knowledge of his early life begins when Augustus  
 married Louisa Vernone on October 23, 1887 in the Parish  
 Church of St. Mary's, Fulham, County of Middlesex.

Their first home was at 147 Hammersmith Road.

To Augustus and Louise was born 6 children, 4 boys  
 and 2 girls. Percie Charles and Reginald Vernone were the

only children to grow to maturity, the others died in infancy. According to records the family moved several times during their early marriage but remained on the outer edge of London.

Augustus was an employee of the London Post Office for many years and became supervisor of a Postal Division.

He was a member of the Salvation Army. It is not known if he was a musician, however he introduced his two sons to music at an early age. Both Percie and Reg were fine pianists and Percie was an excellent cornet player while Reg was an accomplished French Horn and Bass Fiddle player. Both sons were tutored within the Salvation Army family and this training set the pace for their professional life for the remainder of their lives.

In 1911 Percie left home to reside in Canada and in 1913 Louise and Reg followed to take up residence with Percie in Port Arthur.

For many years I was under the impression that Percie expected Augustus to come to Canada and I'm sure Augustus did plan to but this was not to be. The marriage was in deep trouble and Louise discouraged Augustus from joining the family. It was very obvious from his letters to his sons that he was sad to be separated from them. However he remained an important member of the family to his sons.

Augustus lived the rest of his life at 33 Carr Rd. in Walthamstow until he died of cancer on January 9, 1928. I remember the news of his death reaching us at our home in Toronto.

On a trip to Britain in 1980 we tried to locate Augustus' grave. We thought that all we had to do was find Walthamstow Cemetery but on arrival learned there were five cemeteries in Walthamstow. One was Jewish and one was Roman Catholic so we were able to rule them out and the most likely one was approached. The Vicar searched his records without success and he directed us to a large cemetery which was in deplorable condition and where we were again unsuccessful in our quest.

Before leaving the area we walked to 33 Carr Road, Augustus' last abode and I was pleased to actually see the home Percie, my father, left from in 1911 to come to Canada.

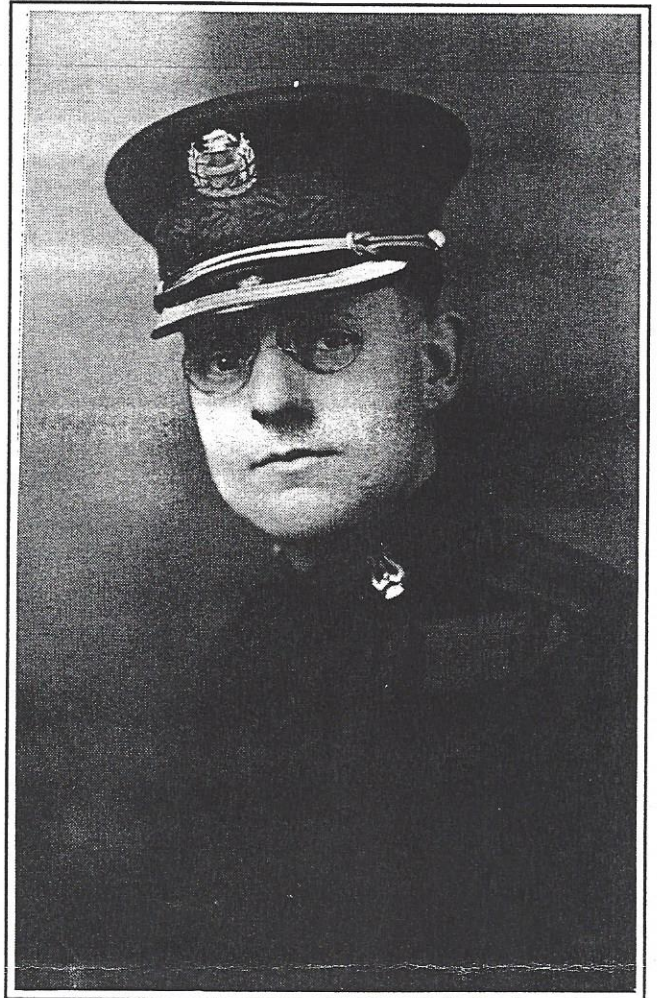
I will always regret that I did not learn a great deal more about Grandfather Augustus Cox.

Following are 2 letters written by my grandfather, one to Percie in 1917 and one to Reg in 1924. It is obvious he was a lonely man who missed his sons.





Reginald Vernone Cox



Percie Charles Cox

*33 Carr Road, Walthamstow, England*





PERCY CHARLES COX

Born: January 10, 1890  
 Died: August 29, 1969  
 Buried: Hillside Cemetery,  
 Petrolia, Ontario

Married: Eva Jane MacArthur - June 1914, Port Arthur  
 Born: January 15, 1895  
 Died:  
 Buried:

## Children:

1. Frances Edna Cox  
 Born: July 14, 1920 - Current River, Ontario  
 Died:  
 Buried:
2. Roy Vernone Cox,  
 Born: June 13, 1925 - Huntsville, Ontario  
 Died:  
 Buried:
3. Vernone Percie Cox  
 Born: May 10, 1928 - Toronto, Ontario  
 Died:  
 Buried:

Percy Charles was probably born in the Fulham District, London, England and during his early life lived in the district of South Leyton before settling at 33 Carr Road in Walthamstow.

His musical career began at age 17 when he became a member of the Leytonstone Salvation Army Band and the Headquarters Singers located on Fortress Road, London. It was with the Band that he studied the cornet and at some time in his early life studied the piano becoming proficient in both instruments.

It is apparent that the Salvation Army training prepared Dad for a gratifying career. Music was the love of his life which he pursued with vigour and with much success.

During his youth he worked for an uncle who operated a bakery and this is probably where he developed his talent for baking. The family name of "May" still remained above the door of the bakeshop in 1964 when Dad and Mother visited London.

He also told us of working with a family friend Sid Knight who delivered milk. In those days the milkman carried a large can of milk on a push cart and the housewives brought their pitchers out to the street to be filled. He reported he was responsible for a few spills for which he was severely reprimanded.

Father entered the service of the Postal Department and remained in their employ until emigrating to Canada.

Dad made the decision to come to Canada and left Thursday, March 16, 1911 travelling by train to Liverpool.

In the summer of 1984 I became aware that mother had a hand written diary Dad kept from the time he left home until he reached Port Arthur at the head of Lake Superior. I was very excited about discovering this interesting account of his journey to Canada. It seems appropriate to include it as it was written. Unfortunately a page or possibly two is missing but what remains is of great interest to us. Dad's personality and character shines through his daily comments. He seemed to enjoy the adventure and the companionship of his fellow travellers.

It is hoped that the following account will be enjoyed by all who read it.

*Not I have excluded the diary as I felt it irrelevant to your need should you like to have it let me know*

Thurs., March 16, 1911

Left Marylebone at 10 o'clock for Liverpool, our first stop was Aylesbury at 10:55, just getting off to sleep, very cold, got warm after leaving our next stop at Rugby at 12 o'clock, had a little sleep, our third stop was Leicester at 12:30 leaving there 12:45, next stop was Nottingham at 1:10, left there 1:20, next stop Godly at 3:20 leaving there 4:25, slept nearly all this time, next stop was Stockport 4:30, next was Warrington at 5:20 arriving at Liverpool 6:55. There was a bus waiting for us, took us to Prussia St. to restaurant, had a good breakfast - 2 eggs. Left our baggage at station with exception of pilgrim which we took with us to breakfast. After breakfast we had a wash then got some post-cards and wrote them numbering 18 and two letters then we went and posted them and went for a stroll. It was a wet morning. We went down to the ferry. Got back to restaurant 9:30 waited for bus to take us to landing stage, waited there 10 minutes before going on then. All single chaps went on first we had to take our hats off on going on to the gangway. I don't know what for. We were shown our way to birth, very nice and clean but very stuffy. Then we sorted our hand bags out, it was a bit of a job then the dinner bell went at 12 o'clock. This is what we had - soup, meat and potatoes, fish, prunes and rice, very nice. We are moving now, very slowly. Just going up on deck, just put jersey on, cold. Left harbour 4:50.. Concert party on board of 100 performers.



for a wash, then sat down and had a smoke, the time now is 12:20, everyone seems to be pleased they are off the boat. We have just passed 3 or 4 carriages pitched off the line, quite comforting this just before you get to a place called Lochalsh. I had a sleep during afternoon, woke up 3:30 had tea, next stop was White River. We had a fine sing, played cornet solo, Lost Chord, Thora, Violets, Sweet and Low and finished up with hymns. Before this I found a New Theo man, we had a fine chat. He is a constant reader of C.C. He was a fine fellow. Put kettle on made some bovril, went to bed 9 o'clock. Expect to arrive at 1:30 a.m. as in the morning, just teasing. That good old Lake Superior, also 2 engines and carriages burning and derailed, happened Saturday, 3 killed, the first one mentioned earlier in day no one hurt at all. We are now just passing that interesting spot that the boys will never forget and so unfortunately I can't forget either but still I believe God is with me and will bring me through alright. It is now 1 a.m. just put boots on. The train just pulled into Port Arthur. I just put my rug on my arm when someone said "your here" and it was good old Sid. What a relief. I was the only one to get off the train. The house is a long way from the station on the top of a hill. We called in at Percy B. Backhouse, quite a nice chap then we got to Pev's. She was waiting up, got some nice bread and milk waiting for me. It has been snowing hard. Had quite a blizzard, very cold. Sid and I slept together at Pev's. Got up 9 o'clock next morning.

On arrival in Port Arthur Dad settled in a modest home situated near Wolseley Street not far from the McArthur family.

Dad met Eva McArthur while living in the same neighbourhood and they were married June 22, 1914 at the McArthur family home 340 Wolseley St. After living awhile in a rented home they bought a home in Current River a community on the outskirts of Port Arthur.

Winters in this area were very severe with plenty of snow and the water supply was carried indoors in a bucket. My mother often reminded me of this when I married and enjoyed indoor plumbing. However, I will relate an amusing incident later. It was in the house in Current that I, Frances Edna was born on July 14, 1920.

For awhile Dad was employed as a house painter and became a member of the Fort William Band. In 1912 the Port Arthur City Band was formed and Dad transferred to this band to fill the solo cornet chair.

In 1917 Mr. J. W. Guttridge R.M.S.M., a graduate of Knellar Hall, a famous English School of Music was appointed Director of the Port Arthur City Band. Mr. Guttridge was an expert instructor and Dad was fortunate to study under him which furthered his expertise and led ultimately to his becoming the director of the Port Arthur City Band until April 1, 1923 when he conducted his final concert. A copy of the program is included on the following pages.

During the early years of World War I Dad was employed at the local shipyards in the machine shop. This was a wartime job and while here Dad formed the Pasco Concert Band - Port Arthur Shipyard Co. Band. During his tenure with the shipyard he travelled on a ship delivery through the Great Lakes to Montreal. The vessel was too large to navigate the locks so was cut in half to enable safe transport through the water system. Dad was on the second half and we thought he was very brave.

Also during this period Dad went to Camp Sewell, Alberta as conductor of the 96th. Lake Superior Regimental Band.

His first experience of Church Organist and Choirmaster in Canada was at Knox Presbyterian Church, Port Arthur.

Mother told of Dad's forgetfulness. He would leave home to play a concert and leave either his music or his mouthpiece at home and mother would have to make a wild dash to the concert location.

In 1918, the year of the terrible flu epidemic, families were devastated. Dear friends of Mother and Dad's were stricken and Mrs. Gent, a young mother succumbed leaving Harold with 2 small sons. Mother and Dad took the 2 children Harold Jr. and Leslie into their home and cared for them for several years before I was born. The Gent family returned to England and Mother and Dad visited one of the boys while on a visit to England in 1964.

Following the War Dad joined the Postal Dept. where he remained until he left Port Arthur. There were 8 postmen employed in Port Arthur at that time.

Grandmother Cox and her son Reg had come to Canada in 1913. They shared Dad's home until he and Mother were married remaining in Port Arthur until 1918 or 1919 when they moved to Lynn Valley, a beautiful quiet village on the shore of Burrard Inlet across from Vancouver, B.C.



In 1923 Dad was approached by Charles O. Shaw, a wealthy man who owned and operated the Anglo-Canadian Concert Band sponsored by Mr. Shaw's Anglo-Canadian Leatherwork Tannery located in Huntsville, Ontario. For a number of years they performed as the feature band at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. Mr. Shaw invited Dad to come to Huntsville and after auditioning he was offered the solo cornet chair in the band and employment in his business organization.

Our family moved to a company house provided to employees, however we soon located a lovely old home much more to our liking. It was an interesting house set on a large corner lot and the house had a huge verandah across the front and down one side. I loved this rambling house where I lived for 3 years. It was here Roy was born June 13, 1925. My memories of these few years are very happy. My dog "Cappie", a collie, was my constant companion and Dad made a harness for him so he was able to pull me on my sled. At first he wasn't anxious to oblige but when he did decide to perform I was left sitting in the snow after such a sudden take off.

Mr. Shaw owned a luxury summer hotel, "Bigwin Inn" on Fairy Islet and the Company crews spent several weeks each spring preparing the Inn for the summer trade and mother and I went with Dad several times for the day.

Dad was a busy man but never too busy to further his love of music. He became Organist and Choirmaster of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Rev. J. B. Skeene was the presiding minister.

As well as the church choir he organized and conducted the Huntsville Choral Society.

While the Huntsville Band was performing at the Canadian National Exhibition Dad was approached by a Captain John Hayward, conductor of the Toronto Transportation Band. He was impressed with Dad's performance and offered him the solo cornet chair in his band and a daytime job with the T.T.C.

In the summer of 1926 we took up residence in a rented house on Glebemount Rd. in east end Toronto where we lived for a year before moving to 63 Kingsmount Pk. Rd. 2 blocks west of Woodbine Ave. and south of Gerrard St. It was in this home that Vern. was born on May 10, 1928. The family remained in this home until September 1939.

In 1931 the family embarked on a super holiday. Mother had been busy all winter sewing on wardrobes for we children and in mid-June she left with us from Union Station bound for Port McNichol where we boarded the S. S. Noronic to travel to Port Arthur to visit for 2



weeks with Grandmother and Gradfather McArthur and her sister Marion's family. Our next stop was Fort Francis where we visited mother's sister Clara and family before moving on by train to Vancouver. The months of July August and September until mid-October were spent with Dad's brother Reg and his wife May and Grandmother Cox. We stayed in Reg and May's lovely home in Lynn Valley on Burrard Inlet. Dad joined us early in September. We all enjoyed and marvelled at the beautiful mountains and the countryside and we made a weekly trip to Stanley Park where the Vancouver Symphony played a Sunday Concert. Reg was playing French Horn in the Symphony Orchestra and we were very proud of him.

We children became well acquainted with the mammoth Douglas firs and Lumberman's Arch and the lovely gardens in the park.

On one occassion there was a fire at the ferry docks and there was a great danger that the gasoline storage area nearby might cause a great destruction to lower Vancouver district. We returned to Lynn Valley via the 2nd. Narrows bridge.

At this time the sidewalks in the village were board walks and the business district consisted of a General Store with the Post Office tucked into one corner.

This holiday is one that will always remain a pleasant memory.

We hadn't lived in Toronto very long before Dad took on the duties of Organist and Choirmaster at Emmanuel Presbyterian Church on Swanick Ave. Here he found himself working with his friend Rev. J. B. Skeene.

The association with this church proved to be a long, happy experience with many memories of good music and good fellowship.

I have a vivid memory of the wheezing tempermental organ coming to a halt during a Sunday morning service and an energetic bass bounding into the workings and pumping the bellows with the old hand pump. His concern was so great that he hit the top and then the bottom of the bellows box creating an added dimension to the quality of the sound emanating from the instrument as it returned to life.

This wonderful association lasted through the 1930's depression providing leadership on Sunday and secular musical evenings throughout the year. Lots of good fun.

Each Christmas and Easter Dad led the choir in



cantatas by the old masters and in the spring a variety concert was presented. These endeavours were lovingly prepared and gratefully received by the congregation and neighbourhood. It was remarkable that this small church could contribute such fine musical events.

A Mr. Ed. Watson, a member of the choir, was a very talented artist who was responsible for set designs and artistic interpretation of all the musical concerts.

When the depression persisted throughout the 1930's many men were laid off their jobs and one sunny day in the spring Dad arrived home with our own family calamity to deal with.

A reprieve from this serious situation came when Dad was accepted into the T. Eaton Company's interior decorating department and employment continued for several years helping us through these troublesome times. Along with Church choir, teaching piano and musical instruments, interior decorating for friends and painting the church inside and out we managed financially.

Dad became Bandmaster of the Queen's Rangers military band in 1929, the regiment being headquartered in the Toronto Armory on Bloor Street. This building burned down and was replaced with the present Fort York Armouries located just west of the Princess Gates at the C.N.E.

In 1936 the Queen's Rangers amalgamated with the York Rangers and became known as the Queen's York Rangers.

The band quarters consisted of a large rehearsal room with excellent library facilities and a roomy lounge with a small kitchenette.

Dad and one of the bandsmen decorated these rooms. The ladies auxiliary took over and furnished the lounge where many social events were held.

The Band was a healthy musical organization which performed at a series of concerts in the city parks in the summer and appeared 4 or 5 times during the C.N.E. It was a proud moment when Dad and his Band played the first concert presented on the new band shell.

Mother and Dad were so good to see that we children got to picnics and the beach. Our picnics took us to such places as High Park, Kew Beach, Taylors Bush, Rouge Hills, Riverdale Zoo, Centre Island, Hanlan's Point as well as visits to the St. Lawrence Market, the Ontario Museum, Niagara Falls and Port Dalhousie.

Several long trips were highlights in our young



lives. Three visits to Port Arthur to visit our Grand-parents were exciting events. The first and third trips were by boat in 1927 and 1931, the second was by train.

As most families growing up in the 30's we learned about hard times. It is difficult for young people to-day to understand the concerns of parents and the hardships of people all over our continent during those years. Despite the difficulties I believe we learned a very valuable lesson. We accepted the fact that we could not expect many extras or luxuries and we learned to plan our own entertainment. As I look back I feel it was a good time to grow up but difficult for our parents who always remained helpful and supportive to us.

Dad's musical career continued to grow when in 1936 he attended summer school at Jarvis Collegiate where he studied string instruments and teaching techniques in preparation for tutoring students in Toronto Public Schools. He successfully completed his course but I must say he nearly drove the family mad while he struggled to learn violin and cello.

He was one of the pioneers of music in Toronto schools and this gave many children the opportunity to learn to play an instrument that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Vernone and Roy began their instrumental education at this time.

In 1937 Dad became Bandmaster of the Lindsay Boys' Band travelling to Lindsay each Tues. and Friday leading the band and teaching individual lessons. This necessitated him purchasing his first car, a 1931 Chev.

In 1938 Dad retired as the Organist and Choirmaster at Emmanuel Church and accepted a similar position at St. George United Church in Georgetown, Ont.

As I look at the account of his life during the depression I can't imagine how he accomplished it all. He surely worked hard to keep his family solvent.

Of course he wasn't the only parent who sacrificed and worried. Mother was always struggling to make ends meet and caring for us through the children's illnesses - measles, mumps, scarlet fever, chicken pox, tonsillitis, colds, flu, whooping cough, tonsilectomy, and scrapes and bruises. She sewed and knitted and prepared wholesome meals for us and was a fastidious housekeeper and she was the disciplinarian.

In 1939 the Canadian Oil Company of Petrolia, Ontario offered Dad the position of Bandmaster of its newly acquired Petrolia Citizens Band now to be known



as the White Rose Concert Band. Dad would also have employment in the office at the Petrolia Refinery. It was an offer that would relieve him of all the traveling he was subjected to in Toronto. Petrolia was a town of 2,900 people, 16 miles from Sarnia, Ontario.

Dad and I settled in Petrolia in July of 1939 and Mother and the boys joined us Labor Day week-end and the family settled into a house on Princess St.

The musical talent in Petrolia proved to be of high calibre and Dad soon had a fine band that the Company Town could be very proud of, in fact he immediately began to prepare them for competition at the C.N.E.. To the delight of all they took first prize and did so the following 2 years after which competitions were suspended for the duration of the war.

Teaching became an important part of Dad's life once again. In his tiny studio in the Town Hall he gave individual instructions to hundreds of young women and young men in wind, reed and tympanic instruments and also taught piano at home. I can never remember a time when our home wasn't a busy music studio.

Dad brought home to Petrolia many distinguished honours from throughout Ontario and several States in the U.S.A. In doing this he spread considerable publicity for Petrolia and the Canadian Oil Co.

Dad's office position with the Company proved to be a success and a pleasant change from his music. The Canadian Oil Co. subsidized the band handsomely making Dad's job pretty well trouble free.

Life in this town was quite a change from life in Toronto and it took some getting used to.

As I mentioned, our first home was a rented home. It was an attractive house except the kitchen which was as cold as Iceland during the winter. In 1944 the family moved to a large house on King St. where they remained until 1950 when Mother and Dad built a cosy little bungalow on a large lot on Garfield St. They worked hard to make this house into a homey place and the grounds attractive.

When the Canadian Oil Co. built their new refinery in Chemical Valley on the St. Clair River they relinquished their support of the Band but the band members put their shoulder to the wheel. The organization continued in a healthy form then to be known as the Petrolia Concert Band.

About 1959 Dad developed some health problems

and was diagnosed as having a serious diabetic condition and along with this glcoma developed.

This was the beginning of a slow deterioration of his health, however he was a cheerful man who dealt with his problems calmly. Mother was his salvation on a day to day basis. She prepared suitable meals and tried to make sure he didn't cheat on the side which he did at times and this caused an upset in the household.

Dad continued to conduct the Band and to teach his students despite his failing eyesight. It kept him happy and useful.

In June 1964 Mother and Dad celebrated their 50th. wedding anniversary and the family gathered for a surprise party at Vern. and Mary's home in Oakville. It was a happy time with all their children and grandchildren present.

In August they flew to London to spend a month. This was Dad's first visit to his homeland since leaving in 1911. Mother was born in Canada and had never been overseas. We were all so happy they had their fine trip.

In 1967 the Advertiser Topic, Petrolia's newspaper printed the following article.

Percie Cox, R.M.R., Petrolia's music man received the Centennial Medal presented by the Federal Government for his dedicated service as Bandmaster and Music Teacher for more than 28 years. Without this man's dedication and service to the musical life of the community a whole area of the town's heritage would be missing. In our opinion his record of service surpasses the contribution of any other individual. The choice was made primarily on his devoted service to the community over every year he has lived in Petrolia. He molded the White Rose Band and later the Petrolia Concert Band into the colourful spectacle each of us will remember. He personifies band music for his work in this area. He is most deserving of the Centennial Medal.

The Topic also reported on a visit Mother & Dad made to Thunder Bay in the late 60's when Mother was a delegate to the Ontario Municipal Association Convention. While there Dad met with an old friend, Tom Grimshaw, a former student and they were interviewed by the Port Arthur Chronicle. They reported that the man who played the sweetest cornet this side of heaven was visiting Port Arthur, now Thunder Bay, and was responsible for forming the Pasco Band in the early 1900's.



In 1969 I was about to leave on a trip to Vancouver with my friend Joyce Poulson and decided to call home before taking off. I had a very warm conversation with Mother and Dad.

In less than hour of returning home Mother called to tell me Dad had died a few hours earlier in Petrolia Hospital where he had gone, presumably for a check-up before taking a vacation to Thunder Bay. He passed away peacefully on August 29, 1969 in his 80th year.

Our families gathered, Roy from Agincourt, Vern and Mary from Dollard des Ormeaux, Quebec, my family from Lindsay and Toronto and Mother's sister Emma from Parry Sound.

Dad was buried from the Wm. Jay Funeral Home, Petrolia and interred in Hillside Cemetery, Petrolia on September 2, 1969.

Our Father was gone and I felt no great sadness. He and I had shared a great relationship and I would always have many fond memories of the times we shared together. He lived a full, productive life and to me his memorial was in the talent he had developed in so many children during his many years of teaching.

Mother maintained their home until moving to Lindsay in December 1973 where she resided in a nice apartment on the River until December 1988 when at 92 years she was hospitalized and where she still lives at the time of writing January 1989.

Written

by

Frances Graham