



Brighton and Beyond

A History of the Cowley Family

Memories of Frederick William Cowley

The following was sent to me by Eric Davison who was born and lives in the USA -

"I am a descendent of Frederick William Cowley. I have no accurate record of his birth date but it had to be sometime in the early 1870s since he married my grandmother in about 1895.

They were married in Detroit although they were both immigrants; he from Brighton and she from Yorkshire. She was born Jessie Andrews.

F W Cowley raised seven children - Charles, Albert, Frank, Caroline (my mother), Hilda, Jessie and Sally.

Grandfather was a veteran of the Spanish American War. He was also the proprietor of the Cowley Shoppe, a custom furniture and home decorating shop in Detroit. The facade of that shop is in the Detroit Historical Museum. I have no idea whether it is on display or in storage.** Sons Charles and Frank worked with him in the business. Frank Cowley died on or around 1943 of an epileptic seizure. Frederick William Cowley died sometime in the early 1960s, Charles about 10 years later, and my grandmother a few years later - 1965 I believe.

My mother, Caroline, was the last to die. She died in 2002 at the age of 96. The other girls all died within the 10 years prior.

The family resided in Detroit, Michigan and attended St. Andrews church, an Anglican church that was the home to many expatriate Brits. My mother and father met and were married there.

The Cowley family had a summer home in a town about 40 miles north, Lake Orion. My grandfather was the first to build a cottage on the island. He named the island Victoria and his cottage Brighton.

Son Albert (a WWI veteran) lived permanently in Lake Orion. He had four children, three of which are still alive. Frank and Charles had no children.

Of the Girls, Hilda Cowley Shipley had no children. Jessie Cowley Russell married Robert S. Russell. He was a veteran of WWII. They had two children. Sally Cowley Hopkins had two sons and there were four children from the marriage of Caroline Cowley Davison and Charles Davison, an immigrant from Chippenham, Wiltshire. There were two boys and two girls in the family.

There were about 12 Cowley great grandchildren and I believe that there are only about 6 or 7 great, great grandchildren. "

Eric Davison

8 December 2008

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**** Note about Cowley shop façade**

I contacted the Detroit Historical Society about Frederick William Cowley and the story about the shop façade. The following is the reply that I received from Adam Lovell, Curator of Collections –

“We get many requests every week of this very nature. Unfortunately we are not able to help most of the inquirers. I'm afraid this is the case in regards to the storefront you are talking about. We salvaged a number of local storefronts in the 1950s before they were demolished. We used architectural elements from that salvage to recreate a c.1900 Main Street in our museum. If Mr. Cowley's shop was one of the salvaged buildings, there is a very good possibility that the entire store front or at least elements of it are installed in our permanent exhibit. No records were kept about the name or nature of the businesses or residences. Attached are some photographs taken at the time of the salvage efforts.

On a better note, a search of our database indicates that we do in fact have the commission of Frederick Cowley at the time of the Spanish-American War. No image exists, and no location is noted as you can see. We have an idea of where the framed commission is located, but it would take a considerable effort to pull it up.”

The photographs that are referred to above can be seen on the web site together with the catalogue entry for Frederick William's commission.

Peter Cowley

November 2009