

The Faces of Acton's History: Fern Emma Brown

A Vintage Acton history series

Fern Emma Brown was born in 1890 and moved to Acton, with her family, when she was a young child; eventually becoming Acton's genial postmistress and church organist for almost four decades.

Brown contributed her talents and good nature to the community of Acton in many ways. She was one in the family of eight who looked after her ailing parents until they died. Her father, John Brown, was once chief engineer at the Beardmore Tannery.

Brown's working career was at the post office, located at 28 Mill Street East, and when the brick building was opened in 1914, that is when she first started working there as a postal clerk. Her career at the Acton post office eventually led her to be named as postmistress during World War Two.

As for Brown's career in music, she started in 1910 at the age of 20, as an organist at the Methodist Church and continued after the change to a United Church came in 1925. For many years, Brown would play the organ for two church services every Sunday in the old brick church, since demolished (once located at 70 Mill Street East and later replaced by a new church in 1960). Along with being the church's organist, she also held various offices in church groups such as steward and treasurer of the official board. She was also a keen member of the Acton Music Club.

After 38 years, Brown retired as church organist in 1948 and prior to her retirement, she had encouraged a young man, by the name of George Elliott, to pursue his musical interests, who eventually became assistant organist upon her retirement. She would later retire from the postal service in 1955.

Two years after her retirement from the postal service, Brown unexpectedly died at her home, located at the north-west corner of John and Church, on September 17th, 1957, at the age of 67. She had lived there with her friend Bertie Speight, who was secretary-treasurer of the Acton Hydro-Electric Commission.

Even after more than 60 years since her death, Fern Brown remains a prominent figure in local history as being Acton's first postmistress and an accomplished church organist who contributed greatly to her community.



History Credit: Dills Collection - 'Herstory' series / Acton Free Press; Compiled by Scott Brooks

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