

BRAY Percy Daniel

information for this biography was gleaned from the official history of the Bray family, *'The Bray Saga'*(2001), and family researcher Alan Bray

Percy Daniel Bray was the 12th child of **William** and **Emily Hannah Bray** of Onehunga.

Born 14 May 1879 (BDM Records), Percy died but fourteen months later, 13 July 1880, and was buried in **Saint Peter's Cemetery, Onehunga** on 15 July.

This biography features Percy's parents **William** and **Hannah**.

William Bray, eldest son of **Thomas and Sarah** (nee Tarr) **Bray**, was born c 1831 in Devon, England.

The Bray family (Thomas and Sarah, plus their five children Grace, **William**, George, Mary and James) arrived in New Plymouth, New Zealand, in 1841 on the ship *'Willian Bryan.'* Their passage was part of a planned settlement by the *Plymouth Company* that brought immigrants from Devon and Cornwall in England to the 'New' Plymouth (originally called *Ngamotu*) in New Zealand.

In 1842, the Bray family moved from New Plymouth to Kawhia, where they stayed for a short time, before making their way to Auckland. Records show Thomas was included in the 1844 Auckland Jury List.

Emily Hannah (known as 'Hannah' to everyone) **Redwood**, daughter of **John and Emily Redwood**, was born 8 January 1844 at Saint Pancras, London, England.

In 1855 John and Emily Redwood brought their family to Auckland on the ship *'Egmont.'* Hannah was then in her early teens.

William Bray, now in his mid-twenties, met Hannah Redwood, in her teens. As they say: 'the rest is history.' The Redwoods thought that Hannah was too young to marry William. Eventually 'elopement' was the name of the game. After finding a chaperone, William and Hannah (aged 15) decided to elope by schooner to Paihia, in the Bay of Islands, where they were married on 21 October 1858, in the not-quite-completed Paihia Anglican church. Their marriage licence listed Hannah's age as 18 years.

Arriving back in Auckland, William and Hannah started their life together in Newton, where William had a livery stable and serviced horse trams. Come the early 1860's, the couple lived in the Mount Albert area, where their first five children were born:

1. William John	b.1861	Mount Albert	
2. Emily Sarah	b.1863	Mount Albert	d.1864; buried Symonds St Cemetery
3. Evelina	b.1865	Mount Albert	
4. Arthur	b.1867	Mount Albert	
5. Emily Ellen	b.1869	Auckland	

They then shifted to Onehunga where their next eight children were born (and baptised at **St Peter's Church**).

6. Alfred Ernest	b.1871	Onehunga	
7. Charles	b.1873	Onehunga	
8. Henry James	b.1874	Onehunga	
9. George Herbert	b.1875	Onehunga	
10. Wilfred	b.1878 twin	Onehunga	
11. Annie May	b.1878 twin	Onehunga	
12. Percy Daniel	b.1879	Onehunga	d.1880; buried in St Peter's Cemetery
13. Leonard	b.1881	Onehunga	

Come November 1865, William had set up as a firewood and cartage contractor and businessman in Onehunga. Although he could not read or write he proved himself to be a shrewd businessman. Year by year the business grew to what was then considered as a sizeable one (with six two-horse drays). He managed that business until 1901 when he retired, and his two sons Henry and Herbert took over the business and by 1905 it became the well-known Onehunga cartage business, *H. Bray and Company* with its own building in the main street of Onehunga.

Both Hannah and William were active members of Saint Peter's Church and the wider community.

Hannah became the first woman elected to the governing Church Vestry Committee.

William was an active member of the Onehunga branch of the *Ancient Order of Foresters* (this Society began in England in 1834 and was established in NZ as a Friendly Society in 1852; it assisted members in times of need along with widows and orphans of deceased Foresters by way of a weekly payment; it also paid interment fees for members, amongst other deeds).

William, aged 83, tragically drowned in the Manukau Harbour, 21 June 1911.

Hannah, aged 77, died 10 November 1917, at Selwyn Street, Onehunga.

Both were buried in the Waikaraka Cemetery.