

THE FAMILY OF COATES
OF BURY, LANCASHIRE

A NOTE BY JACK COATES - PART I

INTRODUCTION

The thought had often occurred to me that I knew little of my family background and, sadly, my parents and their contemporaries had died without anyone recording their knowledge and memories of their own and earlier generations. My father spoke seldom, and in his later years never, about his family and consequently it came as something of a surprise to learn that two of his uncles had emigrated in the last century, one to Australia and the other to the U.S.A. All contact with their descendants had been lost for many decades. My informant, a cousin Rene, said that Uncle Alfred had lived in Geelong, Victoria at one time and by an incredible stroke of luck another cousin, Norma, produced a letter Alfred had written to his brother Arthur, our grandfather, in May 1889. They knew nothing of the other uncle, Thomas, although they seemed to associate him with Portland, Oregon where they thought he had achieved high civic office. These conversations took place in the Summer of 1984. At that time neighbours of mine happened to be in Melbourne visiting relatives so I wrote to them asking if they would check the Geelong Telephone Directory to ascertain whether any Coates were listed. They did better than that. They brought back a copy. I found twenty-one Coates listed, none related as I now know. However, I wrote to the Editor of the Geelong Advertiser and invited anyone recognizing Alfred Coates as an ancestor to get in touch with me. The Editor published my letter and the response exceeded my greatest expectations. I had had no inspired thoughts about tracing Thomas and his family beyond a vague notion that I might try the Library of the American Embassy in London. Then one of my Australian correspondents came up with a contact in the U.S.A., Alfred's grandson. His father had gone to America in 1906 from Geelong and stayed there. From him, I learned that Thomas did indeed have a distinguished career but in Tillamook, Oregon not Portland.

I am indebted to all those friends and relatives who have provided information and in particular to Mary Winifred Cook and William Stanley Coates II without whose help and encouragement this project would not have been possible.

I hope those who read these notes will find them of interest. Readers will note that I have used the title The Family of Coates of Bury, Lancashire. At present the paper is more precisely the outline story of William Coates, Master Clogger of Bury, Lancashire and his Scottish wife Agnes Dickson, and their descendants. I have yet to trace our roots back beyond 1824.