

**Sir Percy Rolfe Sargood
(1865-1940)**

Merchant/philanthropist



Born in Melbourne on September 26, 1865, the young Percy Sargood gained business education and experience there and in London.

He moved to New Zealand in 1891 as Christchurch and Dunedin manager of the warehousemen, importers, and manufacturers, Sargood Son & Ewen. In 1903, he succeeded his father, and partner John Alexander Ewen, serving at the helm of that firm from 1903 until his death in 1940. There were over 250 employees and, under his direction, the firm was one of the first to form a staff provident fund. He was a popular, public-spirited, and unostentatious man.

Knighted in 1935, Sir Percy gave distinguished service to many organisations, including Rotary and, for the Chamber of Commerce, represented New Zealand at the International Conference in London, and the 1926 Empire Conference in Dunedin.

He purchased Wanaka Station in 1912 and pioneered irrigation in the area, planning and developing a dam and turbine device on the Kawarau river, to irrigate the Cromwell Flats (Ripponvale, in particular) for orcharding. He also championed a railhead through to Wanaka to enhance transport of produce to Dunedin. Alas, he did not win that struggle!

He had strong supporting ties to YMCA, and also to scouting, receiving that movement's highest award for outstanding service.

Passionate supporters of the arts, Sir Percy and Lady Sargood donated Logan Park Art Gallery to Dunedin in 1927, as a memorial to their only son, Cedric, one of so many Kiwi soldiers killed at Gallipoli in 1915. He founded the Empire Art Loan Collections Society in 1930, donated paintings to Dunedin and National Galleries, and was government representative on Otago Museum's management committee.

Following Sir Percy's death, in a characteristic gesture of his enlightened thinking, he had gifted the bulk of his estate as a trust fund for the benefit of the arts, youth and education. That is the Sargood Bequest which continues to benefit the community 70 years on.