

By William Nason, 2019

The precise lineage of the family of my grandfather, Bernard Walton Trafford, is fairly well understood and dates back to 1690 when the first Trafford fled from his estate outside of London to South Dartmouth, Massachusetts. In addition, there is a great deal of general knowledge of the Trafford Family dating back to 11th century England.

Contrary to my earlier beliefs, the Traffords were not French but had the prefix "de" added to their name to please William "the Conqueror" after his assumption of the English throne in 1066 after the "Battle of Hastings". Prior to this the Traffords had owned several manors in Lancashire where the city of Manchester now stands. Initially, they resisted William's reign in a major battle near Mobberly in Cheshire, but subsequently came to terms with the Normans and were granted a pardon. One of the conditions of the pardon was the addition of the prefix "de" to their name as William and his Norman followers were from Normandy, France.

During the 11th century, their lands primarily encompassed the manors of Trafford, Stretford and part of Edgeworth (now part of the industrial area of Manchester). In the 14th century, the Trafford lands were expanded significantly by a profitable marriage with the expansion of their estates into Cheshire.

Things were going well with the family until Sir Cecile de Trafford came along. Cecile was made a knight at Hogton Tower in 1617, but in 1632, converted to Catholicism at a time when worship in any church other than the Anglican Church was a crime. As a consequence, 1/3 of his estates were confiscated by the King in 1638. More of his estates were

sequestered after he sided with the reigning monarch in the English Civil War (1642 to 1651). This war established the dominance of the English Parliament over the monarchy in governing England. Cecile died in 1672, and his sons Edmund and Humphrey were forced to move from the family estate occupied since 1617 to Whittleswick Hall which was renamed Trafford Hall. Subsequent generations lived at Trafford Hall, but until 1841, were not able to hold public office because of anti-Catholic laws. With the dismantlement of these laws in 1829 under Queen Victoria, the family was released from the limitations imposed by these laws. In 1841, John Trafford was made a Baronet by Victoria, and the name de Trafford was changed to just Trafford. Finally, during the Industrial Revolution in the 1850's, some of the Trafford Lands in Lancashire were sold and transformed into an industrial park in Manchester known as Trafford Park.

It appears that it was the family's Catholicism that got my ancestor in such trouble that he had to flee to South Dartmouth in 1690. To understand why the political situation deteriorated enough to force his flight, one has to understand the "Glorious Revolution". Since 1534, Queen Elizabeth I had made the Anglican Church the official church of England and banned worship at all other churches. In 1685 James II+VI became king. James was Catholic, and at his ascendancy, he attempted to dismantle the anti-Catholic laws of Elizabeth's reign. This act was illegal, because at that time, England was governed under a parliamentary system. In addition, there was great concern that the revocation of these laws was the first step in James's strategy to return England to Catholicism. Needless to say, there was significant push back from Parliament and the governing forces of England which led to the "Glorious Revolution".

The revolution was led by Mary and her husband William with the backing of parliament. Mary was the daughter of James II+VI and, as the heir apparent, was brought up in the Anglican Church on the instructions of her grandfather, Charles II. Therefore, William of Holland, given James's illegal actions and the threat of the imposition of the Catholic faith on England, invaded England in 1689 from Holland and easily defeated James' army. James was banished to France, and William and Mary ascended the throne as co-sovereigns.

Given the "Glorious Revolution", I surmise that it was a difficult time for Catholics in 1689. The story of the flight my ancestor to America in 1690 is recounted in the biography of my great grandfather, William Bradford Trafford, published in 1883 in "the History of Bristol County". I suspect that William may have contributed significantly to this article and may have glorified the article somewhat. It is troublesome that neither the name of this fleeing ancestor nor the exact location of his estate, other than outside of London, are given, but such is history.

The story is as follows: My nameless ancestor was an affluent gentleman who lived outside of London with his family. Prior to his escape, he was warned that soldiers were coming to take him off to jail for his eventual execution for his practice of Catholicism. Hearing this, he went to his stables, borrowed the uniform of his groomsmen, and escaped detection by the soldiers. He then chartered a ship which delivered his family and him to South Dartmouth, MA. Following his arrival, nothing further is known about him except that his English Estates were confiscated and

that he had two sons: Thomas, who stayed in South Dartmouth and another son, who moved to New Jersey.

Given the vagaries of the story and given the appearance of the story in my great grandfather's biography, I suspect that he had a great deal to do with the creation of the flight and its circumstances whether it be totally accurate or not. As told, the story lends credibility to the noble origins of the American Branch of the Trafford Family and who doesn't want to have noble origins with knights and huge English Estates in one's background.

Little is known about Thomas except he had one son, Phillip (b-1719) who continued to live in S. Dartmouth. Phillip's oldest son was Joseph (b-1750) who apparently served in the Revolutionary War and was promoted because, as one of three guards, he was the only one to ask General Washington his password as directed by his orders. Joseph had five children, the oldest of which was William Bradford Trafford (Born Nov. 1, 1778). William had three children: two older daughters and a son, William Bradford Trafford Jr. (born December 15, 1819), who was my great grandfather. William Sr. was in the maritime trade and was presumed to have died at sea prior to the birth of his son.

Given the loss of his father, his early years were marked by poverty. At the age of 10, he was forced to work in the Fall River mills to help support his family. As a result, he had very little formal education. However, he was a hard worker, and at age 15, he started to rent discarded equipment from the mills and used it to supplement his income. This enabled him to create enough savings to go into business with Augustus Chace in 1846 at the

age of 26. With an investment of \$2300 from Chace and \$700 from William, they purchased discarded mill machines and set up a mill in Globe Village in Fall River which spun coarse yarn. Because of the frailty of the machines, the lack of labor, and low water power, the two men worked until 2 to 3 AM daily doing the work of six men. Eventually the mill became more successful, allowing William and Augustus to purchase the Westport Manufacturing Company in 1854 in Westport, Massachusetts. In 1861, Augustus left the partnership, and William continued to run the mill in partnership with his two half-brothers, Elijah and George Lewis, who were born from his mother's 2nd marriage to Mr Lewis. William continued to run the mill very successfully until his death on February 4th, 1880 at the age of 61.

Westport today is largely a summer community with houses along the two branches of its river, a harbor, and beautiful beaches interspersed with working farms. However, its mercantile history dates back to the 1670's when settlers took advantage of the water power afforded by the East Branch of the Westport River (Noquochoke River). Because of the tidal nature of the river which extended 10 miles north from the Atlantic Ocean, the village of the Head of Westport was built to take advantage of the power generated by the 40 foot drop of the river just above the village. This allowed for timbering, the development of saw mills, and the milling of goods which were floated down the river. Eventually, the hulls of ships were constructed in the village, and by the mid 1800's, it was a very prosperous village. In the early 1800's, the Westport Cotton Manufacturing Company was started, and during the War of 1812, thrived as it had no competition from English goods. However, with the end of the war, British

goods flooded the market, and the company failed. In 1822, new owners took control and changed the name to the Westport Manufacturing Company. Under its new owners the company struggled until William Trafford and Augustus Chace purchased it in 1852 for \$8,000.

It is not clear why William and Augustus decided to move from Fall River to Westport. It seems as though the advantages of Fall River outweighed those of Westport because of easy access of transportation and raw materials (primarily cotton). On the other hand, the Westport site was located on a major trail between Fall River and New Bedford dating back to the Indians and allowed easy transport of goods along the East Branch of the Westport River. Another factor contributing to the decision to move may have been driven by the difference of water power at the two sites. As earlier referenced in William's history recounted in the History of Bristol County, sufficient water power was a problem at their mill in Fall River, but much less of an issue in Westport where there was a 40 foot drop of the river. Also, the ability to expand to expand operations in Fall River may have played a role, since by 1854, desirable locations for mill expansion were becoming more difficult and expensive to find due to the explosion of the growth of milling in the city. Finally, Westport was closer to home for William, because he had grown up in South Dartmouth, Mass which bordered the new mill.

Unlike its predecessors, The Westport Manufacturing Company was very successful under William's leadership until his death in 1880. Very hard work, an unusual business model for the use of cotton discards, and ruthless business practices all contributed to his success and eventually

made him a rich man. At his death, a newspaper listed his assets as the following:

Personal Estate-\$160,000

Real Estate-\$27,291

Bills Receivable-\$107,408

5/12 of the Westport Manufacturing Company

(Not included was the cost of a mansion he was building on Rock Street in Fall River.)

Unlike its competitors in Fall River, the Westport mill did not produce finished cloth, but instead produced carpet chain or warp, mop yarn, cotton twine, candle wicking and cotton packing. The cotton used for this production was basically cotton waste from other mills, either rejected because of poor quality or discarded and left over after the milling process. Early on, William employed 150 mostly immigrant workers on the Westport site of 130 acres. By his death in 1880, he employed 300 workers, had expanded the site of the mill to 1400 acres, doubled the manufacturing capacity of the mill and was unable to keep up with orders placed by his customers. This growth forced him to expand operations back into Fall River in the late 1870's and the necessity of moving his family back into Fall River.

It appears that some part of William's success rested on an unscrupulous approach to business. Recent correspondence between William and his customers has been uncovered and reveal practices such as promised but late orders, short orders, wrong orders, poor quality orders, and unpaid bills to vendors when he is lending money to other businesses. This

correspondence is one-sided, and we have no record of William's responses. It is clear, however, that the systems and capacity of the company were overtaxed, and William was doing his best to smooth over its insufficiencies. It is hard to know whether his so-called shady dealings were the norm in the 1870's when production facilities were overtaxed and systems for distribution manned by poorly educated employees. Despite his manner of practice, the company continued to thrive and support the Trafford family in good style until a combination of the Depression and competition from Southern mills put it into bankruptcy in 1938. This was an unfortunate year for the family since that same year, the Hurricane of 1938 took three of their rather substantial summer houses from the East Beach of Westport into the sea. Remnants of the old mill complex still stand and operate under different ownership, but the main manufacturing site along Route 6 was torn down in the 1980's.

The presence of William and his company had a very positive effect on the village of Westport in that it maintained economic activity, added new families as well enhanced cultural and educational oportunites for this little town. In its creation of a town around the mill, the company supported a school, church, community center and company store. Unlike most company towns, employees were encouraged to build their homes with the hope that they would feel a greater responsibility for their community. Many of the houses can still be found along Beeden Road and Place as well as Forge Road. The village has been described as "one of the most pleasing, and successful business villages". It appears that William took a paternalistic pride in the village by building his own house there, but also by establishing tight rules for the oversight of the community. He was very

specific about the prohibition of alcohol sales as well as public drunkenness.