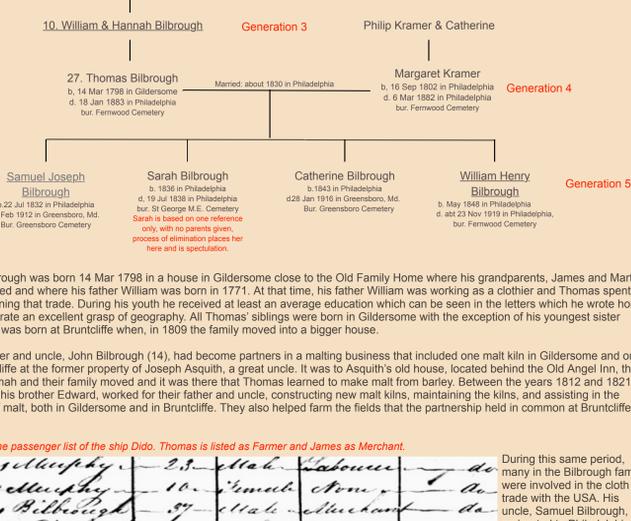


Bilbroughs of Gildersome and Bruntcliffe

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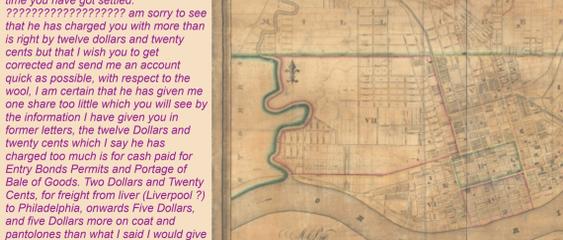
27. THOMAS BILBROUGH



Thomas Bilbrough was born 14 Mar 1798 in a house in Gildersome close to the Old Family Home where his grandparents, James and Martha Bilbrough, lived and where his father William was born in 1771. At that time, his father William was working as a clothier and Thomas spent his early life learning that trade. During his youth he received at least an average education which can be seen in the letters which he wrote home and demonstrate an excellent grasp of geography. All Thomas' siblings were born in Gildersome with the exception of his youngest sister Hannah who was born at Bruntcliffe when, in 1809 the family moved into a bigger house.

Thomas' father and uncle, John Bilbrough (14), had become partners in a malting business that included one malt kiln in Gildersome and one kiln in Bruntcliffe at the former property of Joseph Asquith, a great uncle. It was to Asquith's old house, located behind the Old Angel Inn, that William, Hannah and their family moved and it was there that Thomas learned to make malt from barley. Between the years 1812 and 1821, Thomas and his brother Edward, worked for their father and uncle, constructing new malt kilns, maintaining the kilns, and assisting in the production of malt, both in Gildersome and in Bruntcliffe. They also helped farm the fields that the partnership held in common at Bruntcliffe.

Below: from the passenger list of the ship Dido. Thomas is listed as Farmer and James as Merchant.



During this same period, many in the Bilbrough family were involved in the cloth trade with the USA. His uncle, Samuel Bilbrough, had emigrated to Philadelphia and had become a successful merchant and his cousin John Bilbrough, who lived a few hundred yards away in Bruntcliffe, also went to Philadelphia to seek his fortune. The lure of an easy life as a wool merchant must

have appealed to Thomas and Edward and they saved their wages for the day that that life would also be theirs. The chance came in 1821 when they purchased or spun their own woolen goods and packed them aboard the ship "Dido". Thomas, accompanied by his uncle James Bilbrough, boarded the same ship for Philadelphia and arrived there on the 7th of July 1821. The letter below, written by Thomas himself, gives an excellent description of his activities during the first year and a half after his arrival.

Philadelphia Dec 1, 1822

To his Brother Edward Bilbrough of Bruntcliffe

"Dear Brother, I received yours dated Feb 23rd 1821 since which date, this is the third letter I have wrote, and have not yet received any answer to them. I would thank you to write rather oftener and I hope by this time you have got settled.

???????????????????? am sorry to see that he has charged you with more than is right by twelve dollars and twenty cents but that I wish you to get corrected and send me an account quick as possible, with respect to the wool, I am certain that he has given me one share too little which you will see by the information I have given you in former letters, the twelve Dollars and twenty cents which I say he has charged too much is for cash paid for Entry Bonds Permits and Portage of Sale of Goods. Two Dollars and Twenty Cents, for freight from Liver (Liverpool?) to Philadelphia, onwards Five Dollars, and five Dollars more on coat and pantaloons than what I said I would give and indeed more than I made of me by this and the former information, you will be able to give me an exact account how we stand. I am glad you have sent no more goods as goods of all descriptions are scarce and if they cannot be made low in England the exporters must lose. I have been in the Western country, I had a fine trip. I started April 19th and got back October 29th. I have made my home with cousin John since and have been trading in cattle. I brought some cattle down out of the state of Ohio to Philadelphia about four hundred miles. I think a person might make money in trading with the Western Country if they had four or five hundred Dollars, so they could purchase goods to load on a large boat and trade them down the Ohio river and then bring cattle back or buy flour or Pork and take it on to New Orleans. There are a great many making a living in trading up and down the river Ohio and the Mississippi which are two very large rivers, the Ohio nine hundred and twenty miles long and then it joins the Mississippi which runs nine hundred miles further down to New Orleans. The two rivers forming a navigable river from Pittsburg to New Orleans, a distance of eighteen hundred and twenty miles, while I guess there is not less than a hundred steamboats employed besides hundreds of Keel Boats and thousands of flat boats which go down to New Orleans from all parts of the Ohio and Mississippi laden with the produce of the state of Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, and all the states joining the two rivers. I will now give you a short history of my travels in the western country April 19th. I started on after my goods to Pittsburg which is three hundred miles and is a fine and rich, settled about half way and the rest of the way is all hills and mountains and very thinly settled till within a few miles of Pittsburg which is a very thriving town and a great deal of iron work done there. They burn coal which they have in great plenty. I stopped about a week there and sold part of my goods. I saw John Dixon of Morley, he is keeping a Dry Goods store Ben Dixon is in the neighborhood and has been sold out two or three times. While I was in Pittsburg a skiff and loaded my goods in it and then I started down the Ohio river to Cincinnati which is four hundred and thirty miles. The banks of the Ohio are very pleasant all the way down with a great many fine towns where I stopped and traded my goods. I sold my skiff and the remainder of my goods at auction when I was in Cincinnati. I took a ride down to Aurora in Indiana with a letter I had for one Mr Harris and he introduced me to one Mr Fox from Foxhall somewhere near Hightown, and one Mr Rawson from Rawfolds. Mrs Fox knew my Aunts very well, she went to Commercial school with Aunt Mary. They have bought a fine farm on the banks of the Ohio which they call Foxhall. You see, one meets with old country people in all parts of the globe, in all my travels in the west I was scarce a day but I met with Englishmen. Cincinnati is above one half English and there are a great many settlements in Ohio and Indiana of nothing but English and nearly all seem to like the country well and most of them get land of their own and are quite independent. From Cincinnati I traveled through all the estate of Ohio to Louisville? Where I bought my cattle and drove them to Wheeling where I cross the Ohio river into Virginia and then took the Turnpike Road over the mountains to Kentucky. The state of Ohio is a very fine state, very rich and rich land and a great many fine prairies which are fine for raising cattle and the price of the land at two Dollars per acre and they can raise the best crops of wheat that ever I did see and twenty bushels per acre. Price of grain in Cincinnati was 37 cents per bushel corn 12 1/2, oats 12 1/2, flour 3 Dollars a bushel? I met 1 Dollar & 10 cents, corn 95 cents, oats 95 cents, beef 6 Dollars per hundred, pork the same. I shall be glad to hear how you all are. I hope you are all well as we all are at present. Uncle Samuel is keeping a wool store, cousin John is still manufacturing. I remain your well wisher and friend.

Thomas Bilbrough

I believe that Thomas and Edward's exporting plans eventually failed, because of a lack of capital and the inability to compete with better financed operations buying and selling in bulk. Why their uncles, who owned one of those larger importing firms, didn't help out, no one knows. Thomas cast about for whatever work he could find but probably fell back upon the two skills he knew well, malting and cloth making.

I believe that Thomas, prior to his marriage, stayed with John Bilbrough and his family whenever he was in Philly. In the 1820 US Census for Philadelphia, cousin John Bilbrough was living in the Blockley district, Blockley was a small village on the west side of the Schuylkill River, joined to Philadelphia by a bridge at Market St. At the time of the above letter, John was "still manufacturing" so it's safe to say that John was living in Blockley but by 1825 John had opened a dry goods store downtown and had moved into that vicinity.

Letter May 10th 1829 to his father, William Bilbrough, in Bruntcliffe. Thomas is 31.

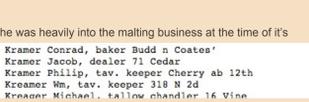
Philadelphia

Father, I now take my pen to write you a few lines, which would give me much pleasure in making use of it much oftener. Could I see a line from you or any of my relations but you cannot be surprised at me not writing when I cannot get an answer, if these few lines reach you, I hope they will find you in health as I am at present and that you will send me an answer, as you have not forgot me altogether. As Benjamin Mitchell mentioned in a letter, that John Bilbrough received lately, that you would write if you knew where to direct. Now I never wrote without giving an address and the last letter I received was from my brother about three years ago. Which I answered with three letters, one to you, one to Brother and one to Uncle John, and I wrote another to you a while after, none of which have been answered. Whether you received them or not I cannot tell but I have often enquired for letters and been told some times to hear from you. Before this reaches you, no doubt you will have heard the death of my Uncle Samuel. He has been dead four weeks today and I did not hear till Tuesday though I am malting in the city within a short distance of where he lived. ?????? I hear he was dangerous sick, he died of the Dropsy and has left a wife and one child. He was very much respected in business and his loss is very much lamented. I have not seen my Uncle Joseph since Samuel's death and I think it very hard and unnatural that he did not let me know or invite me to the funeral. If I have not been so fortunate in my affairs as he has, I do not know the reason why he should not let me know but I will ask him the first time I see him. I am told that he has bought Wilson's Woolen Factory on Churchill and Spruce Street for 31,000 Dollars. It is the largest Woolen Factory that I know in the state and I am told cost about 50,000 Dollars building about two years ago. I understand he is going to carry it on. How manufacturing is doing at present, I do not know. I am so confined in the Malt house that I have not seen any of them lately and do not know many that have done well. The last time I saw John Bilbrough he said it was very bad and he was not doing much at it, his wife and family were all here. Since I last wrote to you, I have been working in the Malt House in the winters and one summer I was spinning. When I was not standing for wool, this was often. And one summer I was weaving cotton flannel and hat????????? Last summer I was not well and did nothing but travel about. I was at New York and went to the North River at Albany, Troy, Lunenburg????? Piquette and at a great many other places through the state. I went to see if I could not find something better than what I was doing in Philadelphia, but did not find things much better and money was scarce and hands plenty. There is large businesses at each of the above places and a great deal of malt made and I could have had work at several places if I had stopped till the winter but the wages are no better than in Philadelphia. I am now Malting Rye for the Distillery and expect to be busy for a month yet. I have six cent per bushel and can make one hundred and fifty per week. The two last seasons I was malting for Pepper and had six Dollars per week which is the regular wages of Malsters here and the place I am now is a small place and I have all to do for raising cattle and the price of the land at two Dollars per acre and they can raise the best crops of wheat severe winter here, this last the hardest I have seen here and the river Delaware was closed a long time and we had to stand in the malt house better than a month and had barley in the river and could not get it. What I shall do when I have done malting I do not know, but I shall remain in the neighborhood of Philadelphia and as you write, address to the care of John Bilbrough. My respects to all inquiring friends I wish to know how you all are and hope you are all well as I am at present.

I remain your son

Thomas Bilbrough

The above letter is important as it shows that Thomas was not married and that he was heavily into the malting business at the time of it's writing. Thomas met and married Margaret Kramer, she was the daughter of Phillip and Catherine Kramer. Her father, Phillip, was an innkeeper on Cherry St. between 12th and 13th streets (see right, 1825 Directory of Philadelphia).



Further proof of this is seen in the postscript of the 1839 letter below). It's easy to imagine that Thomas met Margaret through his malting business, at the time innkeepers made their own spirits and beer and had to purchase malt for the brewing process. Thomas must have married after the above letter was written and before the end of 1831; based upon the birth of his first child, Samuel Joseph Bilbrough born in July of 1832. Son Samuel Joseph was named after Thomas' two uncles who had emigrated to Philadelphia and had become successful merchants.

Samuel Joseph Bilbrough, Thos, eng'r Willow n Spruce
Bilbrough Mrs, d h George n 10th

Thomas missed being listed in the 1830 US Census and the first official document regarding him that I have found, after the ship manifest, is from an 1835 directory of Philadelphia (left). Thomas is listed as an engineer, whatever that meant in those days, and living in a tiny populated area near the east side of the Schuylkill River. The 1835 directory of Philadelphia (left). Thomas is listed as an engineer, whatever that meant in those days, and living in a tiny populated area near the east side of the Schuylkill River. The 1835 directory of Philadelphia (left). Thomas is listed as an engineer, whatever that meant in those days, and living in a tiny populated area near the east side of the Schuylkill River.

Bilbrough in the directory is Thomas' uncle Samuel's widow, Margaret Sarah Bilbrough. Presumably, Thomas had settled down by then into a more steady profession so as to support his new family but in the 1837 directory, he is listed as a laborer. The following letter will give you a better understanding of what Thomas was up to:

Letter Sep 18, 1839 to his father, William Bilbrough, in Bruntcliffe. Thomas is 41.

Philadelphia

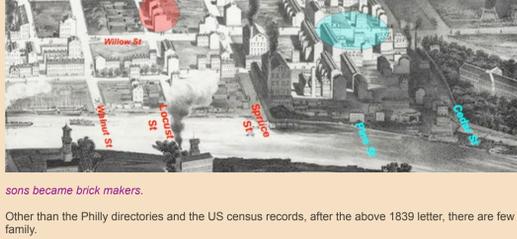
Dear Father, I have the painful task to inform you of the death of your brother Joseph. He was found drowned on the 9th in a slip in New York. The particulars I have not been able to learn, but I think it must have been accidental as he was found in the morning with his watch in his pocket and 200 dollars. I first heard of his death last Wednesday. I then sent a letter on to New York, to Michael Drury a friend of Uncles, to learn more particulars about his death and affairs and wished he would get some responsible person to administer that the children could receive the benefit of his effects. The last evening I received a letter. The following is a copy.

"New York Sep 16 1839.
Mr. Thomas Bilbrough
Sir! I am in receipt of your letter in relation to your uncle's affairs in the city. I am unacquainted with his affairs except what I am able to Mr. Bullock in a letter to him. Since then the Public Administrator has taken possession of his effects until his heir or heirs can arrive to attend to the same. I do not know what assets he had, I do not know how his affairs are situated. The Public Administrator for the city of New York is always the responsible person and holding a situation of importance, but I do not know his name being almost a stranger here myself. All that can be done is for his son to come out forthwith and to attend to the same, as no one else can do it for him. He must also bring some proof with him to show that he is the son of the late Joseph Bilbrough also a Certificate from the Church Registry of his Baptism to assist. Respectfully Yours
Michael Drury No. 45 Water Street"

Today I saw Mr. Bullock and showed him the above letter, and he said I had best write home. For he understood that the city Authorities had three hundred dollars in their hands and he must have a certificate of Father's Marriage and his Baptism and also his Mother's and signed by the American Consul in England. I have not seen my uncle Joseph for about two years. I should like to have gone to New York to have learnt more of his affairs, but times are so hard and I have lost much time lately that I could not well afford to go. I am wool sorting at working part time. I intend to get malting this winter if I can. I hope this letter will find you all well, as I am and family, at present. I remain with respect, Your Son

Thomas Bilbrough

N.B. Address to the Care of Catherine Crammer
Cherry St. betwixt 12 & 13 Street Opposite Factory St.
At the time of writing the above letter, Thomas was 41 years old and the pattern of seasonal malting and cloth making hadn't changed in 20 years. From directory entries that I have found for the 1840's and 1850's, Thomas is listed as living in the same general area as before however he is recorded as "Manufacturer". What he is manufacturing is not known but I suspect he had his own malting business and went back to cloth making as a seasonal necessity though in the 1850 census he is listed as "Wool Sorter".



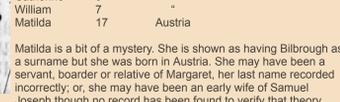
Depicted in an 1857 "birdseye view" of Philadelphia, left, we see an area of southwest Philly showing a section of the Locust Ward and Pine Wards with the Schuylkill River at the bottom. Thomas and his family lived in or near the blue oval at "Willow below Pine, in the 1840's. During the 1850's and the early 1860's the family lived in the red circle at 2312 Locust St. Also shown to the right of the sketch, below Cedar Street, are a number of smoking brick kilns supplying Philadelphia with its #1 construction material. Both of Thomas'

sons became brick makers.

Other than the Philly directories and the US census records, after the above 1839 letter, there are few documents about Thomas and his family.

The first census Thomas and family appear is the US Census of 1840, the information given in this census was limited to the naming of the "head of household" and counting, by age, the other occupants of the residence without any reference to name or relationship. Listed, we have 1 male, "5 and under 10" (Samuel Joseph), 1 male "40 and under 50" (Thomas), 1 female "20 and under 30" (an unknown person, perhaps Margaret's sister, Sophia Charlotte Kramer) and 1 female "30 and under 40". They are shown living in the "Locust Ward", a Philadelphia district between Walnut and Spruce Streets and at that time, stretching from the Schuylkill River to Broad St. (see map above).

In an 1845 directory for Philadelphia, right, Thomas is living in the Pine Ward and not Locust. These directory entries are typical of the 1840's. Joseph Bilbrough is the son of Thomas' cousin John. Margaret is the widow of Thomas' Uncle Samuel and Samuel is the son of Thomas' Uncle Joseph and also his cousin.



The 1840's saw the birth of Thomas and Margaret's two other children,, Catherine, named after Margaret's mother and William Henry named after Thomas' father. I believe that during this period Samuel Joseph became a brick maker apprentice to the Hallowell family, master brick makers who owned a brick yard on Buck Rd. near Long Lane, a mile or so south of the Bilbrough's home.

In the 1850 census we find Thomas and his family once again living in the "Locust Ward" of Philadelphia (many of Philly's original streets were named after trees). Living together we find:

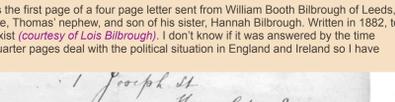
Bilbrough Joseph, carp. Brown Front bel Vine
Bilbrough Mary Ann, Sch bel 13th
Bilbrough Samuel, com. mer. 29 N Front,
Front bel Otter (K)
Bilbrough Sarah, Mrs., Brown bel 13th
Bilbrough Thos. manuf. Locust n Beach
Bildeback Eliza, 42 Tammany

Thomas age 52 born in England
Margaret 45 Philadelphia
Samuel 18 "
Catherine 9 "
William 7 "
Matilda 17 Austria

In the above 1851 directory entries, the Bilbrough family had relocated to the 2312 Locust St. address. Also, two different Bilbroughs appear, Mary Ann and her mother Sarah, daughter and wife of cousin John Bilbrough. Both were living with Sarah Bourne and her husband James, Sarah was cousin John's daughter.

In the 1860 census, still on Locust, Thomas is listed as "Thos Bilboa - 64 - Wool Assorter - England". Margaret, Samuel, and William are present and there is a new addition, Catherine, age 20, Samuel's new wife. Catherine Alwine. Samuel's profession is listed as "Brick-maker", and Catherine has no apparent profession. In southeast Philadelphia, "Kate" Bilbrough, Thomas and Margaret's daughter, is found living as a domestic servant for a Charles Hallowell. Mr. Hallowell is a "Master Brick Maker", and lives only a few doors from Samuel Alwine's brothers and sisters.

In 1865, Thomas and Margaret moved to 2643 Ellsworth St., about 3/4 of a mile or so to the south of their Locust St. home. By the time of the Civil War, all malt made for brewing was produced by large firms and since the 1840's, woolen mills employing the latest technologies were springing up all over the northeast



Right: from an 1865 directory, William is his son.

US, and Thomas' expertise in wool work would be a valuable service. Thomas must have found it necessary to work for one of these firms to make ends meet. Though it sounds like hard labor, he probably was an expert at grading, mixing and the manufacturing of wool products. I'm certain that Thomas moved to be near to Continental Mills, a large woolen factory situated just around the corner from their new Ellsworth address.

Sometime between 1860 and 1874, Thomas visited the land of his birth and his family in Yorkshire. Two Bilbrough genealogists, alive in Yorkshire at the time, mention this fact but I have been unable to confirm this with any other record. That he may have gone at the death of his father (1861) seems most likely.

Left: Thomas and Margaret's home on Ellsworth (on far right)

By the 1870 census, their daughter Catherine is still living at home, William lives next door with a new wife, and a family of Alwines live in couple of doors down. Samuel Joseph and Catherine have moved to a new location and have a family of their own. Thomas' profession (at the age of 72) is "Works in a Woolen Mill".

1880 is the last Federal Census in which Thomas and Margaret appear. They are still living at 2645 Ellsworth St. Thomas is 82 and "Disabled", Margaret is 72 (but actually 78) and "Kate" (Catherine) is still living there too, next to her name is written "asst. at home".

Below is the first page of a four page letter sent from William Booth Bilbrough, written in Leeds, Yorkshire, Thomas' nephew, and son of his sister, Hannah Bilbrough. Bilbrough in 1882, to my knowledge it is the only possession of Thomas' that can be traced (courtesy of Lois Bilbrough). I don't know if it was answered by the time Thomas died in January of the next year. The first two and a quarter pages deal with the political situation in England and Ireland so I have transcribed the family news portion, also below.

"I have now given you some political news, will now come nearer home. Mother is very well for anything I know, but have not seen her for a few weeks because she is living at Gomersal. Her nephew is very kind to her, letting her have a little house near to himself. I don't know whether you was introduced to him or not while you were over here in England, but his name is John Rhodes, he married Uncle George Booth's eldest daughter. In one of your communications to me a few weeks since, you expressed the wish that I might have a house full of children, that wish is being realized to a small extent we have two sons Granville eldest 3 years old, and William Edward Hargreaves Bilbrough who is 4 months old, and I think we are just as many as we can keep. I am working at Hunslet for James Bilbrough my cousin, & Edward Crowther my Brother in Law. You will perhaps have heard that James and Thomas Bilbrough have dissolved their partnership. If you consider to write my mother, this address will find her: Hannah Bilbrough - Mr. John Rhodes, Gomersal Nr Leeds. Will you let me know how your children are and your children's eldest 3 years old, and William Edward Hargreaves Bilbrough who is 4 months old, and I think we are just as many as we can keep. I am working at Hunslet for James Bilbrough my cousin, & Edward Crowther my Brother in Law. You will perhaps have heard that James and Thomas Bilbrough have dissolved their partnership. If you consider to write my mother, this address will find her: Hannah Bilbrough - Mr. John Rhodes, Gomersal Nr Leeds. Will you let me know how your children are and your children's eldest 3 years old, and William Edward Hargreaves Bilbrough who is 4 months old, and I think we are just as many as we can keep. I am working at Hunslet for James Bilbrough my cousin, & Edward Crowther my Brother in Law. You will perhaps have heard that James and Thomas Bilbrough have dissolved their partnership. 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