

William Cafferata, 1812-1874

Born on 7th September 1812, William Cafferata was the youngest son of Lancashire surgeon-dentist, Joseph Cafferata and his wife Mary (nee Pendleton). He was baptised at St Peter's Church (in Liverpool city centre) on the 20th July with the family recorded as living at Cornwallis Street in the parish register. ⁽¹⁾

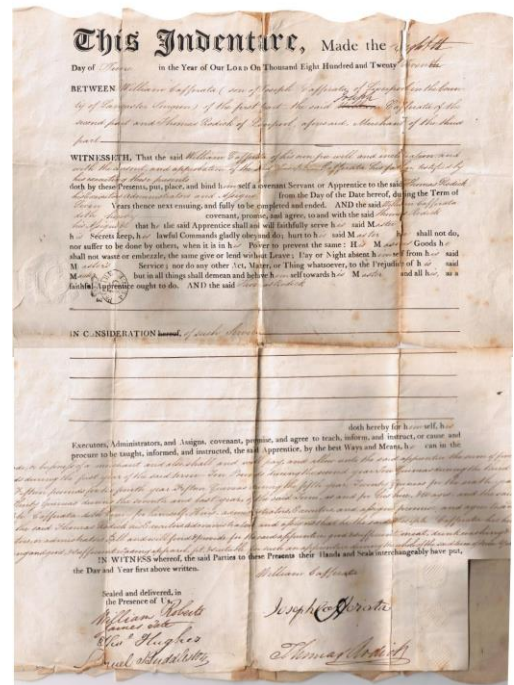
We don't know much of his early life, but when William was fourteen in 1827, he and his father signed an indenture which apprenticed him to Thomas Rodick for seven years. Rodick pledged to teach William the trade of merchant, and to pay him the sum of £5 in the first year. His wages would increase each year along with his developing skills: £10 in the second year, 10 guineas in the third year and so on. By the seventh year, William was getting good money whilst learning his trade: £30 guineas (The average annual earnings for an agricultural labourer in 1834 was £27 17s 10d ⁽²⁾). In return William promised that he would:

"His Secrets keep, his lawful Commands gladly obey and do ... His Master's goods he shall not waste or embezzle ... but in all things shall demean and behave himself towards his Master and all his, as a faithful Apprentice ought to do."

As well as William's own commitment in return for learning the trade, his father Joseph undertook to provide him with "meat, drink, washing & lodging and good sufficient wearing apparel, suitable for such an apprentice during the whole of the said term". ⁽³⁾

William completed his apprenticeship on the 7th June 1834, with Thomas Rodick saying that William had brought "much credit to himself and much satisfaction to me". Following this successful conclusion, William set himself up in business as a book keeper, later branching out and becoming a share broker. He would follow this line of work for many years, creating the wealth that would allow the later formation of the family firm of Cafferata & Co.

By 1839, William was living at 13 Windsor Street, Toxteth along with his brother John who, like William, was described as a book keeper. It is probable that William carried on his book-keeping business from this address as he is listed there in Gore's Liverpool Directory of 1839.



*William Cafferata's Indenture document,
dated 8th June 1827*

As well as living and working together, the two brothers also both married in 1839, although from this point their paths diverge. John was married according to the rites of the Church of England, but William was married in the Roman Catholic Church in Newark, Nottinghamshire on his



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birthday, the 7th September. His bride was Elizabeth Waterworth, who was some 5 years younger than her new husband. She was born in St Helens, Lancashire in 1817, the daughter of a draper, John Waterworth. Like the Cafferatas, the Waterworths were a Catholic family and Elizabeth's brother James was a priest. His parish was that of Newark and Elizabeth was listed as living with him at Old Hall, Millgate on her marriage certificate. A sister, Margaret Waterworth also lived with James and witnessed the marriage along with Sarah Brown. The occasion of his marriage may have introduced William to the town he later made his home.

The newlyweds returned to Liverpool and set up home together, but over the next few years they would move fairly often as both their family and William's business interests grew. In 1841 William and Elizabeth lived in Great Orford Street, near what is today the Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral. The Cafferata household, as recorded by the 1841

census, is of definite interest – they were affluent enough to have two servants and William had an apprentice, 16 year old Alexander Russell, living with him. It is also noteworthy that one of the servants, Ann Rice, was only 7 years old, and that her brother Thomas, aged just 5, was also living with William.

Elizabeth would have been around 3 months pregnant with her first child when the census was taken, and James Waterworth Cafferata was born at the end of the year, on the 21st December. Eight more children followed, and their places of birth show how the family relocated. Another son, William Madden, was born in Oxtun, on the Wirral on the 26th August 1844 and a third, Redmond Parker, was born in Liverpool on 6th January 1847.

William had made the transition from Book-Keeper to Share Broker before 1845, and was listed in Gore's 1847 Directory as having offices in Exchange Street East. Working in a port town such as Liverpool inevitably meant that William's share dealings would have included maritime undertakings. One such included "The Merchant Traders' Ship Loan & Insurance Association" which proposed an issue of 20,000 shares at £50 each in November 1845 in order to raise the not

inconsiderable sum of £1,000,000. William was the Liverpool agent in the sale and the advertising for the sale promised “A total absence of risk for the shareholders.” ⁽⁴⁾

William’s fourth son, Henry Taylor Cafferata, was born in Birkenhead in 1849 when the family lived at 4 Moore Terrace, but by the time of the 1851 census the family had moved back to Liverpool and were living at 17 Huskisson Street. The couple’s only daughter, Eliza Chamberlain was born in 1852 then four more sons followed; Adolphus (born 1854), Joseph (1856), Nicholas (1859) and Albert (1861). Socially the family remained involved with the local Catholic churches – Elizabeth was named as the “Lady Patroness” of the Birkenhead Catholic Charity Ball in January 1852, with tickets on sale at 7s 6d each. ⁽⁵⁾ The same year, William was a noted member at a meeting of Catholic electors in Liverpool. Politically, he defended his own interests, voting in the 1852 general election for the Peelite candidate Edward Cardwell and the Liberal Joseph Christopher Ewart. The Peelites were a party that proposed free trade. At the time there was no secret ballot and the names of the voters were published in the papers along with who they had voted for. William’s favoured candidates were both beaten by the Conservatives in the election. ⁽⁶⁾ William was also involved with the Catholic Female Orphan Society and was elected the organisation’s Treasurer in January 1855. ⁽⁷⁾

The autumn of 1856 saw William called for jury service in the case of Parry v Barnes, in which a Liverpool jeweller, Mr W J Parry sought to recover a lady’s debt from her husband. Being a businessman himself, William may have sympathised with Mr Parry, but that didn’t stop both him and the rest of the jury finding in the defendant’s favour. ⁽⁸⁾

William’s career as a **Share Broker** continued apace, with Slater’s 1855 Directory listing his business address as 2 Royal Bank Buildings. William was very successful; in actual fact, he was credited in his son Redmond’s obituary as having founded the Liverpool Stock Exchange. ⁽⁹⁾ Evidence of William’s increasing affluence can be found in the schools he was able to afford for his sons; He was able to send his five eldest to the prestigious (and Catholic) Stonyhurst College, at Clitheroe in Lancashire.



William’s house in Newark, 23 Millgate

In the early 1860s William felt the need for a new challenge and he started looking for a business to invest in. James Waterworth was still priest in Newark and he may have been the catalyst for the decision to move to Nottinghamshire. The opportunity presented itself in 1862 and William bought the Great Northern Works on Beacon Hill and embarked on a new career. Engineering was his initial focus, making boilers, but William also turned his hand to mechanical innovation. In 1864 he and George Gell patented a machine that would clean “beans, wheat, grain, seeds or other substances such as plaster of Paris”.⁽¹⁰⁾ It wasn’t all smooth going though. Following the disastrous boiler explosion in Norwich and subsequent court cases, William seriously considered selling up, but in the end he kept the business, changing direction and developing the plaster making side.

Despite the difficulties with his business, William continued to play an active part in society, sitting on a committee to decide how Newark should celebrate the marriage of Edward, Prince of Wales in 1863.⁽¹¹⁾ His charitable work continued, with William being a steward of the Railway Benevolent Institution.⁽¹²⁾ He was also loyal to those he trusted, giving evidence as to the character of Thomas Spick who, in 1869, was charged with stealing wood. William stated that he had known Spick for 5 years and he “would trust him with twenty boat loads tomorrow.” Spick was found not guilty.⁽¹³⁾ The Cafferatas lived at 23 Millgate, and William’s record in the 1871 census described him as “manufacturer of Plaster, Gypsum, Terra Alba, Brick and Tiles, etc. and miner of Gypsum, etc., employing 158 men, landowner and farmer 125 acres.”⁽¹⁴⁾ William also continued supporting charities and other good causes, donating £2 to support the poor of Paris, still suffering in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War.⁽¹⁵⁾

By the time William had reached his early sixties, his health was beginning to fail and in June 1874 he wrote his will, witnessed by his wife’s brother and sister, James and Margaret Waterworth. The purpose of the will was clearly to provide for his family, and it was unusual in the respect that he made Elizabeth his sole heir and executrix although he directed that his sons Redmond Parker and Adolphus Moubert should be employed to manage and conduct the business. The business was to be carried on until at least the date at which his youngest son, Albert Stourton reached the age of 21.⁽¹⁶⁾

It was at his home in Millgate that William died on 5th September 1874 with the Newark Herald reporting the cause of death as “paralysis”.⁽¹⁷⁾ He was buried in Newark Cemetery.



William and Elizabeth Cafferata's grave in Newark Cemetery

Notes

- (1) IGI records, familysearch.org: Register of Baptisms 1810 - 1812, Page 89, Entry 1166 LDS Film 1656377
- (2) A Short History of English Agriculture by W. H. R. Curtler, Oxford, 1909
- (3) William Cafferata's Indenture Document, 1827
- (4) The Hull Packet, 28th November 1845, Classified Ads.
- (5) Liverpool Mercury, 30th January 1852, Classified Ads.
- (6) Liverpool Mercury, 30th March 1852 & 7th July 1852.
- (7) Liverpool Mercury, 30th January 1855
- (8) Liverpool Mercury, 15th October 1856
- (9) Newark Advertiser, 24th December 1913
- (10) Leeds Mercury, 11th April 1864
- (11) Nottinghamshire Guardian, 20th February 1863
- (12) The Times, 6th June 1874
- (13) Nottinghamshire Guardian, 23 July 1869
- (14) Census Ref: HO RG10/3542/24
- (15) Nottinghamshire Guardian, 3rd March 1871
- (16) William Cafferata's will 15th June 1874
- (17) Newark Herald 12th September, 1874.