

Ralph Bleasdale, The Family Patriarch by R. Carter Blaisdell

The earliest mention of the Blaisdell family name was in a record of the Parish Church of Chipping: **John Bleasdale** on October 15, 1559 and a baptism on same date of **Henry Bleasdell**. The only Blaisdell entry between 1559 to 1584 are in the Chipping Parish records.

During that period there were 34 ways to spell the family name; the most dominant today: Bleasdale in England, Blaisdell in America.

Hamlet of Bleasdale

The hamlet of Bleasdale is 5 miles west of Chipping and 10 miles north of Preston, the county seat of Lancashire County, England. Most of the 500 entries for all of Lancashire County were found in the Chipping (136) and Goosnargh (124) parish records. The two churches are only 4 miles apart.

There were no parish records found anywhere in Lancashire County between the years 1633 and 1637. Likely this reflects the turmoil in this county, which was a hotbed of Puritanism. Rev. **Richard Mather** and Rev. **William Thompson** had preached in Bolton. They were Puritan divines who had been defrocked by the King's Church of England for their "nonconformity to the King's Prayer Book."

Bolton, Hotbed of Puritanism

Rev. Thompson preached and ministered in York, Maine while **Ralph Bleasdale** was a resident there between 1635-1640. The name Ralph is unique to Bolton, which was considered "The Geneva of England," indicating strong Calvinistic leanings (**John Calvin** of Geneva, **John Knox** of Scotland, **Oliver Cromwell** of England).

An influential family in Bolton was the **Shuttleworth** family. In their accounts is an entry of a "**Rauffe**" [Ralph] **Bleasdale** in 1582.

Fitting all these various items into the composite picture in which the parts seem to confirm the whole and the whole the parts, we do get a consistent result, which, while it will always remain without actually positive assurance, nevertheless, does make a reasonable and probable whole. With these qualifications of uncertainty the result is as follows:

Ralph and His Family

Ralph Bleasdale was born in Hawkshead March 11, 1593. He was born into, or achieved, a measurable comfort through the wool trading business. He was brought up amid Puritan influences, which deeply impressed him and which ultimately shaped his life and sent him to the lands beyond the ocean.

He was a man of more than common education. He married **Elizabeth Parker** of Chipping September 3, 1629. Before leaving England they had a son, **Henry**, age 3. Henry's five sons perpetuated the family name. In four generations his progeny numbered 410.

Escape Route to New World

As a trader in wool and woolen goods ['tailor'] Ralph became aware of the sea travel, and possibly himself had made the trip from nearby Liverpool to Ireland; then to Milford Haven, Wales, where he could take a ship to New England, thus avoiding detection and the difficulties of land travel to Bristol, from which many ships for America originated.

This course he took. His ship, the *Angel Gabriel*, left Bristol June 4, 1635. He and his family boarded the ship at Milford Haven, Wales, June 9, and arrived at Pemaquid Pt., Maine, August 14. The ship was destroyed in the Great Colonial Hurricane the morning of August 15.

Pemaquid was at the northern edge of English land claims, next to the French claims, thus frequent friction. Ralph and family moved to York – then Agamenticus – and owned land there. He moved on to Salisbury in 1640 and was the 64th of 69 founding fathers of Salisbury, MA, who held “in common” the land for the town, hence called “Commoners.”

A Man of Ability and Achievement

Salisbury records show Ralph was a “Prudential Man,” constable, farmer, tailor, attorney, keeper of the ordinary (tavern), which doubled as the town hall. He was referred to as “Goodman Ralph Blasdel” and his wife as “Goody Blasdel.” Ralph was one of those 69 founders to be given the title of Mr., the town’s highest honor.

All in all, he must have been a man in whom the family should take abundant pride as, let us hope, he might, in turn, take pride in the family which he founded.

The above account is based on *Blaisdell Papers*, Vol. 2, No. 8, Autumn 1944; Vol. 4, No. 8, Sept. 1954; *Genealogical Outline*, Volume 10, No. 5, Supplement, June 1983; Rev. **Richard Mather**’s *Journal*, 1635; **J. Mason Burnham**’s 1985 paper on 350th anniversary of the *Angel Gabriel*’s 1635 voyage; genealogical and family data provided by **Philip R. Freimann**, BFNA Genealogist. **R. Carter Blaisdell** is Editor, *Blaisdell Papers*. This article appeared in the June 2009 issue, *Blaisdell Papers*.