

Abbott family watchmakers — census records

Source: Dennis Moore, Prescott Museum, 12 March 2001

● *Joshua Abbott*

Farnworth, watchmaker
Bapt 19 August 1838. Father: William, mother: Margaret

1851 Census (Farnworth)

Apprentice watchmaker aged 12, High Road to Runcorn
William/Mary and children William 15, Mary 10, Daniel 7, Hannah 8 months – all born Widnes

Son of William and brother of William, both watch movement makers
(May be the grandson of John and nephew of Thomas Abbott – both watchmakers)

1861 Census (Farnworth)

Watchmaker polisher aged 22, Barrows Yard
Alice 17 and Margaret 5 months, born Farnworth

Children:

Margaret bapt 19 May 1861, Farnworth
William bapt 24 May 1863, Farnworth
John (Josiah?) bapt 15 Oct 1865, Farnworth
Margaret Elizabeth, bapt 21 Apr 1867, Farnworth
Daniel bapt 25 Dec 1869, Widnes Dock

● *Thomas Abbott*

1841 Census (Widnes)

Journeyman watchmaker, aged 45
Wife: Ellen aged 35

Children:

John bapt 4 Mar 1829 Widnes
Ellen bapt 21 Aug 1831 Widnes
William bapt 28 Jul 1834 Widnes
Mary bapt 17 May 1837 Widnes
Sarah bapt 11 Sept 1840 Widnes

27 June 1859 at St Mary's Church, Edge Hill, Liverpool, marriage between Ellen Abbott aged 28 of 6 Vine Street, Liverpool and William Beesley aged 26, watchmaker of 36 Chatsworth Street, Liverpool, son of William Beesley, a watchmaker.

● *John Abbott*

Widnes/Appleton (1848)/Farnworth

1851 Census Farnworth

School Brow, Farnworth
Watch movement polisher aged 23
Martha, aged 21, born Ditton
Margaret 3, Ellen 1 – both born Widnes

1861 Census Farnworth

Barrows Yard
Watchmaker polisher aged 33
Martha aged 34
Margaret 13, Sarah 9, Henry 7, Mary E 2, Martha 3 months – born Farnworth
Same house as Joshua Abbott, watch polisher

1871 Census Farnworth

33 Scotch Row

Watchmaker aged 43

Martha aged 44

Henry 17, Mary E 12, Martha 10, Isabella 4 – born Widnes

1881 Census Farnworth

33 Church Street, Farnworth

Watchmaker aged 52

Martha 54

Mary E 22, Martha 20, Isabella 14 + Annie 2, James 8 months (both grandchildren) – born Widnes

Children:

Margaret bapt 23 Apr 1848 Appleton

Ellen bapt 31 Mar 1850 Farnworth

Henry bapt 15 May 1853 Farnworth

Mary bapt 1 Jul 1855 Farnworth

Mary Ellen bapt 28 Nov 1858 Farnworth

Martha bapt 31 Mar 1861 Farnworth

Isabella bapt 1 Nov 1863 Farnworth

Isabella bapt 21 Oct 1866 Farnworth

Watchmaking — Abbott

Would SKS know if they really and actually "made" watches in the early 1800's in Liverpool. Or did the parts come from some other country and were assembled there. Had never thought of England as being renowned for the actual making of timepieces. Thanks for any expert opinions. My gggrandfather was listed as a "watchmaker" and two of his children as "watch finishers". REET from Canada

There is a town on the outskirts of Liverpool, Prescott, which was renowned as a clock and watchmaking centre of this area.

According to my father in law (born 1897) this industry was brought to an end by the marketing of the "Ingersoll" watch, which was mass produced and very cheap.

There is actually a clock museum in Prescott owned by a tv personality, Stuart Hall.

This is only about 12 miles from Liverpool.

Yes there were lots of watchmakers and clockmakers in Lancashire in the early 1800's and earlier. A good book I borrowed from the library was "Lancashire Clocks and Clockmakers" by Brian Loomes, published by David and Charles. This was an excellent source and gave me many ALKER clockmakers.

Somebody on the Cheshire list has an index of watch/clock makers.

Yes, certainly. I know of no importation of watch parts. There were hundreds of watchmakers in the British Isles, perhaps more of them centered about London, but Liverpool was a famous watchmaking center, prominent at least as early as mid-eighteenth century. There's an excellent watch museum in Prescott, near Liverpool (Prescot Watch and Clock Museum, Church Street, Prescott L34 INS). Watchmaking was a sort of cottage industry, with certain families being well known for specific watch parts. The man who was responsible for the collection of all these various parts and assembled them into a running timepiece got the honor of engraving his name on the back plate.

Liverpool watches are known for their big jewels, known as "Liverpool

Windows".

The advent of mass production in America, in mid-nineteenth century, was the death of handcrafted watches in England. The industry struggled on, and in 1879 the Lancashire Watch Company (in Prescott) was founded, in an attempt to reverse the fortunes of the industry by adapting the production methods of the Americans. The project was undertaken too late. The Lancashire Company struggled for a few years, but eventually went bankrupt. A few very small firms managed to survive up to about WWII.

Off the top of my head, but more or less accurate.

Fred Swart

Many thanks for all the information, comments and questions about watch-making in the Farnworth/Widnes/Prescot area. As I understand, the watches were made in the area and shipped in parts to the US, where they were assembled. The parts were actually made in the area, as the occupations of my Abbott family indicate:

Watch movement polisher
 Watch balance maker
 Master watch balance maker
 Apprentice watch balance maker

This information is taken from the 1851 census. At least one member of the family (John Abbott, aged 52) was still working with watchmaking in the 1881 census. My gggrandfather was listed as a watchmaker and finisher from 1829 to 1834 and he lived in Kirkdale at the time. Do any of your records go back that far? I know he didn't die in 1835 and lived to at least 1840 when his last child was born but there seems to be no record of his being in the trade after 1835. He also had two of his children listed as finisher. His name was JOHN NEALE. Thanks from REET from Canada

A 1795 record mentions that watch/clock part and tool making existed in and around Prescott "beyond the memory of living watchmakers".

John Saggerson & Sons (later Saggerson Brothers) started business at Eccleston Lane Ends about 1820 before moving to a factory in Cross St (Yew Tree Place) Prescott in 1826.

Several Saggerson brothers were involved in the business which probably concentrated on making parts rather than the assembled items.

Business prospered until about 1900 and then slowly dried up due to competition. My grandmother was a Saggerson and earned her keep by making precision wheels and cogs which needed young eyes.

The factory was derelict in the 1940s but was not demolished until about 20 years ago. Yew Tree Place is still marked on a house on St Helens Road.

Anyone interested in the Saggerson family?

The Prescott Clock Museum is excellent.

Barry.

I've always been led to believe, that one of the main reasons for the one o'clock gun, fired from Morpeth dock, on a signal from Bidston, was so the watch and clock industry on Merseyside could set and time their clocks.

Many ships clocks were made in Liverpool, and we must have been one of the leading clock makers during the last century.

Jim (Merseyside)

I don't see any reason why you can't get the book in Canada Reet. Here is the url for it

<http://www.brianloomes.com/books/books.html>

There are many more of Brian Loomes web sites. In fact he owns an antique clock dealing business in Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire. The sites are excellent

for seeing his work. he seems very knowledgable in old clockmakers.

Have fun exploring.

Carole

Jim, and I don't know why - the name Sewell comes to mind, are they one of the famous Liverpool watchmakers?? I sometimes see when browsing around antique shops here in Australia (well I am actually looking for a Kelly directory circa 1891!!) this name on ships clock and really nice pocket (fob) watches.

Barbara

Found the website for SEWILLS (my spelling was wrong) - they have a 200 year history in Liverpool. Sewells are still in business. they are off Dale St.

<http://www.sewills.com/definitive/640.htm>

Barbara, Dorothy

Abbott James - Watch movement & makers. Address : Farnsworth Prescott (no street address listed)

Taken from a trade directory for Prescott date 1872

JOHN ABBOTT, Parr Square

Nathan ABBOTT, 41 St .Helens rd.

Both watch balance makers

Good Luck

Mike In Prescott

Hi Eric

1829/30 pigots

PRESCOT

Thos. ABBOTT Eccleston st Watch pinion maker

Eric, I found these in an 1824/25 Directory:

FARNSWORTH

Abbott Jas., watch movement mfr.

In PRESCOT

WATCH PINION MAKERS

Abbott Thos., Atherton street

SHOPKEEPERS.

Abbott Wm. Eccleston street

HOTELS, INNS, & TAVERNS

Bricklayers Arms, John Abbott, Eccleston st.

in RAINHILL

Abbott Hugh, 'Ship Inn'

in SUTTON

Birchall, Cross & Abbott, brewers, Leather hill

I decided to include the rest of your ABBOTTS, however I did not find GANDY at all.

This comes from

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