

Thomas Alfred Leach and family

Thomas Alfred Leach was born on 17th May 1859 the fourth son of Thomas and Ellen Leach whose story is told in the article **Thomas and Ellen Leach**.

He was named after his father Thomas and an older sibling Alfred who died in his infancy in 1847. This probably explains why he was known as Fred. He may well have been born in Northowram which was where the family were for the 1861 census. However, by 1871 the family had moved to Lightcliffe which was where Fred Leach was baptised on 1st June 1873.

1873 June No. 196	Fanny Leach	Sharp	Lightcliffe	Bentham	G. Bagot
1873 June No. 197	Eleanor Brown	Married	Lebanon	G. Bagot	
1873 June No. 198	Thomas Leach	Lightcliffe	Bagot		

This was Whit Sunday when the Rev George Bagot baptised ten children including Thomas Alfred's niece Fanny Sharp, the daughter of his eldest sister Sarah Sharp née Leach. **Fanny Sharp** married **Francis William Bradley** who became the Sexton and Verger at St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe. Their highlighted articles tell the Sharp family story.

On the 1881 census form no occupation was recorded for the 21-year-old, Thomas Alfred Leach, who was living with his widowed mother and two siblings in Sugden Buildings just up the road from Bailiffe Bridge. Was this an omission and did he work for Firth's carpet factory as most of his family did? Quite probably as eventually he would work for them in the USA.

On August 30th 1882, 22-year-old Fred Leach arrived in New York from Glasgow on the SS *Devonia*. This was an Atlantic crossing that his older brother George Leach had made more than a decade before.



Fred Leach may well have been in the first group of carpet workers from Bailiffe Bridge to take up the offer made by their employers T.F. Firth & Sons Ltd., to go to America to start up their new mill in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was there in 1886 that he married an American, Eleanor McCauley. That same year T.F. Firth & Sons Ltd. bought an old woollen mill in a new place that they renamed Firthcliffe. Read more at [Firth's Carpets in the USA.pdf](#)

Rebecca Culbertson Leach was born on 30th March 1887 and baptised on 10th May 1887 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. By the time George Frederick Leach arrived on 22nd January 1889 the family were in Firthcliffe, Cornwall, Orange County so presumably Fred had transferred to the Firths' new carpet mill there.

Thirty-six-year-old Fred Leach, a carpet finisher, brought his family over to the U.K. in 1895 when the children were eight and six. This seems to be something that the Firth company paid for. They arrived in Liverpool on 15th June 1895 on the SS *Umbria*, getting back to New York on the same ship on 3rd August 1895. As you can see from the census records the children also worked for Firths in Firthcliffe when they left school.

1900 USA Federal census

Fred Leach Head 44 Carpet Finisher
 Eleanor Leach Wife 42
 Rebecca Leach Dau 13 at School
 George F Leach Son 11 at School
 Annie Matton Boarder 25 ???? Carpet
 Hattie Matton Boarder 20 ???? Carpet
 Address Firthcliffe, Cornwall County, USA

1910 USA Federal census

Fred Leach Head 50 Finisher Carpet
 Eleanor Leach Wife 53
 Rebecca C Leach Dau 23 Milliner
 George F Leach Son 21 Designer Carpet
 Charles F Towers Boarder 51 Engineer Steam
 Address Firthcliffe, Cornwall County, USA

Between the two censuses Fred's nephew, the civil engineer, Thomas Leach, son of his brother John Leach, took up a post in Montreal, Canada. On at least one of his voyages, he gave his uncle F(red) Leach's address in Firthcliffe, Cornwall County as his destination. As did another nephew, Alfred Leach, when he travelled out to Firthcliffe on his own in December 1910 and then emigrated permanently with his family in 1913. He, as a carpet weaver, and then other members of his family worked for Firths in Firthcliffe. Read more about the nephews in

John Leach and family

Their American born cousin, George Frederick Leach married Grace Emily Spencer on 16th November 1910 in Cornwall, New York

No. 2285				FOR THE GROOM		FOR THE BRIDE	
NAME	George Frederick Leach	COLOR	White	NAME	Grace Emily Spencer	COLOR	White
RESIDENCE	Firthcliffe	AGE	21 years	RESIDENCE	Cornwall	AGE	19 years
OCCUPATION	Designer of Carpets	NO. OF MARRIAGE	First	OCCUPATION	At Leisure	NO. OF MARRIAGE	First
BIRTHPLACE	Firthcliffe	WIDOW		BIRTHPLACE	Brooklyn, N.Y.	WIDOW	
FATHER	Fred Leach	DIVORCED		FATHER	Bedell Wood Spencer	DIVORCED	
BIRTHPLACE	England	" WHEN		BIRTHPLACE	Baltimore, N.Y.	" WHEN	
MOTHER	Eleanor McCauley	" WHERE		MOTHER	Mary Smith	" WHERE	
BIRTHPLACE	Ireland	RELATION		BIRTHPLACE	England	RELATION	
COSENT BY				COSENT BY			
DATE OF LICENSE	Nov 14, 1910	DATE OF MARRIAGE	Nov 16, 1910	PLACE OF MARRIAGE	Cornwall, N.Y.	OFFICIAL	Hugh R. Lutton
PROFESSION	Minister	WITNESSES	George Livingston, William Locks				

The two households looked like this in 1915.

1915 New York census

Fred Leach Head 56 Foreman Finishing Dept
 Eleanor Leach Wife 58 House Duties
 Rebecca C Leach Dau 28 At home
 Charles Norrie Boarder 56 Engineer at Carpet Mill
 Address Willow Av., Firthcliffe, Cornwall County,

1915 New York census

Bedell W Spencer Head 50 Cashier
 Mary S Spencer Wife 44 Housework
 George F Leach Son-in-law 26 Designer Carpet Mill
 Grace S Leach Dau 23 Housework
 Address Quaker Av., Cornwall County

Over in Europe the Great War had already started. Here is George Frederick Leach's U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918

Form 1 306 REGISTRATION CARD 1889 No. 24

1 Name in full: George Frederick Leach Age, in yrs. 28

2 Home address: Cornwall New York

3 Date of birth: January 22nd 1889

4 Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? Natural born citizen

5 Where were you born? Cornwall New York USA

6 If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject?

7 What is your present trade, occupation, or office? Carpet designer 21

8 By whom employed? Firth Carpet Co.

9 Where employed? Firthcliffe, New York

10 Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? Wife dependent

11 Married or single (which)? Married Race (specify which)? American

12 What military service have you had? Rank None branch None years None Nation or State None

13 Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? Wife dependent

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

George Frederick Leach (Signature of registrant)

REGISTRAR'S REPORT 31-4-8-A

1 Tall, medium, or short (specify which)? Medium Slender, medium, or stout (which)? Slight

2 Color of eyes? Brown Color of hair? Brown Bald? No

3 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes, or is he otherwise disabled (specify)? No

I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

H. H. Chadeayne (Signature of registrar)

Precinct Cornwall

City or County Orange

State New York

June 5, 1917 (Date of registration)

But then on 17th August 1918 George died. He was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, New Windsor, Orange County, New York, U.S.A. with the memorial stone below.



Eventually there would be more similar memorial stones around this larger headstone for the Spencer and Leach family.



But back to the Willow Avenue in Firthcliffe, where the Leaches were for the next batch of censuses.

1920 USA Federal census

Fred Leach Head 60 Finisher Carpet Mill
Eleanor Leach Wife 65
Rebecca C Leach Dau 32
Address Willow Avenue, Firthcliffe, Cornwall
County, USA

1925 New York census

Fred Leach Head 66 Foreman Finishing Dept
Eleanore Leach Wife 71
Rebecca C Leach Dau 38
Address Willow Avenue, Firthcliffe, Cornwall
County, USA

1930 USA Federal census

Fred Leach Head 70 Foreman Carpet Mill
Eleanor Leach Wife 76
Rebecca C Leach Dau 43
Address Willow Avenue, Firthcliffe, Cornwall
County, USA

1940 USA Federal census

Eleanor Leach Head 86 Widow
Rebecca Leach Dau 53
Elizabeth P Livenston Lodger 26
Teacher Cornwall HS
Address Willow Avenue, Firthcliffe, Cornwall
County, USA

Before the 1940 census was taken Lightcliffe baptised Thomas Alfred Leach know as Fred had died on 24th December 1935. Like his son he was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery with this almost identical memorial stone.



The 1940 USA census, recorded above, was taken on 1st April. Later that year Eleanor Leach née McCauley died. She too has a memorial stone in Woodlawn Cemetery.



There are at least two more of these memorial stones around the Spencer Leach headstone. They are for Mary Boardman Spencer and Bedell Wood Spencer, the parents of Grace Emily, the wife of George Frederick Leach. They died in 1932 and 1942 respectively. The young widow remarried Percy Dixon Briggs on 9th August 1919.

Her sister-in-law Rebecca Culbertson Leach, daughter of Fred and therefore a granddaughter of Thomas and Ellen Leach of Lightcliffe, died on 23 Apr 1973 at Hopewell Junction, Dutchess, New York, USA. No burial record or memorial stone has been found for her.

D. M. Barker

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