

## ORIGINS OF THOMAS TRACY

“The name *Tracy!* That most honorable and ancient name. A name that has been handed down to us for over *seventeen hundred* years on the female line and a *thousand* years on the male line, an unbroken chain: not a link missing from three hundred years after Christ’s time to the present day, down through *twenty-seven* generations of crowned heads, then twenty generations more of the noble house of Tracy.”

---Tracy, N.B. *HISTORICAL ADDRESS BEFORE THE FOURTH ANNUAL REUNION OF THE TRACY FAMILY : AT GOULDSBORO, MAINE : AUGUST 19, 1899.* Auburn, Maine: Auburn Print and Stamp Works, 1900

Questions that have plagued American Tracy genealogists for the last few hundred years...

Where did Thomas Tracy, a ship’s carpenter, an immigrant to Watertown in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who was later Lt. Thomas Tracy of Norwich, Connecticut Colony, live the first twenty-five or so years of his life and who were his parents?

Are we of that “noble house of Tracy” ?

*Well... maybe...*

### **The Most Popular Theories Regarding The Origins Of Lt. Thomas Tracy Of Norwich, Connecticut Colony, New England**

It seems, within the greater Tracy Family, the received wisdom is that Lt. Thomas Tracy of Norwich, Connecticut Colony, is descended from a quite long lineage, one that traces back innumerable generations, with lesser or greater degrees of certainty (replete with lesser or greater degrees of noble or royal blood) to Le Sire de Traci. And from there, as some would have it, even further back to Woden (circa 300 CE). (And then to... well, there is an old genealogy extant purporting to take the Tracy line back to Adam and Eve...) Until somewhat recently, most published genealogical studies on Thomas Tracy’s family manage to somehow make a connection to such a lineage, some more convincingly than others.

Actually, several theories about Lt. Thomas Tracy’s origin have been proffered over the years, but on close examination all have been disproven with the exception of the two below. And while neither of these theories has been disproven, the answers they give to our questions regarding Thomas Tracy’s origins have yet to be proven. Keep in mind, too, these are theories that are based on informed speculation about events that occurred around 400

years ago in the seventeenth century, and that these events are now being viewed through the lenses of twenty-first century historians and genealogists.

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### **SON OF SIR PAUL TRACY, Bart. AND LADY TRACY (née Anne Sharkerly)**

This theory is the most commonly cited pedigree for Thomas; and while it is based on unproven facts, it is plausible even though it is not necessarily the most probable. This theory is in fact the 'Official' history for the lineage of Lt. Thomas Tracy as provided by The Tracy Reunion Association Inc., Gouldsboro, Maine, celebrating the 108th annual Tracy reunion in 2016.

It is one, among others with slight variations, put forward by several well known Tracy genealogists, and is particularly championed by Charles Stedman Ripley in his 1895 genealogy, *The Ancestors of Lt. Thomas Tracy of Norwich, Conn.* Ripley says unequivocally that the Thomas Tracy who immigrated to Watertown c. 1636... "was born in Gloucester, in the vicinity of Tewksbury, and was a grandson of Richard Tracy of Stanway". Ripley goes on to say, "Of this we are very certain, for his immediate descendants write these facts, the information having been obtained from Thomas himself". In addition, based on his readings of the works of earlier genealogists Ripley says that, "It has always been supposed from the early writing of the American Tracys, that Thomas was a younger son of a younger son of Richard Tracy of Stanway...". Ripley goes on to show how this younger son of Richard (whose name is apparently never mentioned in those early writings of the American Tracys) must have been Paul Tracy - actually Sir Paul Tracy, Bart. (Baronet) - second of Richard's three sons. Descent from Sir Paul provides the link to the pedigree that goes back, "for over seventeen hundred years on the female line and a thousand years on the male line..." the lineage quoted in the preface of this essay.

Richard's eldest son, Nathaniel, appears to have been unmarried in 1623 - 13 years after Thomas' assumed birth; and Richard's youngest son, Samuel, had a son named Thomas, but this son was some 10 years older than the Thomas who emigrated and arrived in New England c.1636. (Besides, this older cousin Thomas was born in Herefordshire - not Gloucestershire.) Through the process of elimination, Ripley deduces that Paul must be the younger son of Richard Tracy that the descendants of Lt. Thomas were referring to.

Sir Paul, Bart. and his wife, Lady Tracy, née Anne Sharkerly, are said to have had a family of twenty-one children (yes, 21!). Ripley's research shows that one of the youngest of Sir Paul's nine sons was a Thomas, born in Stanway in 1610, and baptized in 1611. Ripley cites birth and baptism records that are in "the possession of the Herald's College". If they are,

and confirm these dates, this theory approaches fact. However, a genealogist by the name of Charles H. Browning in arguing against yet another proffered pedigree for Thomas which also had him born c. 1610, (but as the son of Nathaniel) pointed out in *The Boston Evening Transcript* (a newspaper carrying a genealogical column of note published in the early 20th century) for 7 September 1904, “no baptism of Thomas Tracy is found in the parish registers of Tewksbury, co. Gloucester, about 1610... ”.

Ripley cites seemingly irrefutable sources, i.e., Thomas Tracy's "immediate descendants write these facts, the information having been obtained from Thomas himself", but he doesn't name the descendants, nor does he provide any information as to where the writings may be reviewed for corroboration or credibility. If these writings can be found, once again, this theory approaches fact. But, with all due respect to author Ripley, since no recent researchers (within the last 125 plus years) seem to have been able to locate and review Ripley's source material, there exists a shadow of doubt over the whole argument. (Remember, Ripley himself was a couple of hundred years removed from any one who would have had personal knowledge contemporary enough to be considered a primary source.)

It might/should be noted that among the names of Sir Paul Tracy's twenty-one children only two, Thomas, and John, are among the names of Thomas Tracy's seven children. None of his sons were named Paul, honoring a grandfather, and Thomas named his only daughter Miriam, not Anne in honor of his mother or Alice in honor of a sister who left him a legacy. If these were the grandchildren of Sir Paul, under normal circumstances one might expect to find one or two more names in common between the families.

The biggest obstacle this theory comes up against is that among numerous prominent genealogists, the very highly respected Donald Lines Jacobus dismisses Ripley's theory of Thomas' ancestry, primarily based on the three points discussed below. Jacobus is considered by many to be the Dean of New England genealogists. His two volume work, *The Waterman Family*, has served as an important source for information on Thomas Tracy (and others of our families) that has been incorporated into *Our Tracy Tree of Ancestry*.

Mr. Jacobus' observations must be taken seriously. But given that his objections are based mostly on speculation (though it must be said his speculations are well informed), I believe one could just as reasonably speculate on tenable counter arguments, or possible explanations, for each of these objections. (Jacobus calls Ripley out on only one specific factual error, quite rightly - one regarding Lt. Thomas Tracy's first wife who could not have been the Widow Mason as Ripley also states.)

So let's look at Mr. Jacobus' objections, and then, assuming the role of a devil's advocate for a space, let's speculate on alternatives for each of them:

First, Jacobus refers to research done in England by H. Minot Pitman (a lawyer and full time genealogist) who found evidence of a will of Alice Tracy who was a daughter of Sir Paul, and thus a sister of Thomas. Jacobus says of the will, referring to Thomas, "... He is mentioned in the will of his sister, Alice Tracy (died 1645) in July 1639 in terms which in no way imply that he was absent from England." (Thomas had been in Salem, Massachusetts Bay Colony, since 1636/37, and in Watertown before that.) Alice subsequently died without apparently having seen a need to revise her will in regard to her brother, leaving open to question Thomas' whereabouts. Apparently the omission of a clear statement as to where her brother was living would have meant (at least to Jacobus without his explicitly saying as much) that the brother in question must have been in England in 1639 and was still in England in 1645.

That Thomas was named in the will of an older sister could be due to any number of reasons one can imagine... that she must have had a special interest in the welfare of this young brother of hers is obvious by the fact of her will mentioning him. Their mother died when Thomas was about five years old... Alice may have had a hand in Thomas' early upbringing. While Jacobus says the will was written in "terms which in no way imply that he was absent from England", Jacobus does not say that the will does imply or indicate that he was, or had to have been, in England... apparently the will does not locate him in one place or another. Of course, there is always the possibility that, for one reason or another, his sister did not know where he was in 1639. The will was proved in 1645. Neither Jacobus (nor apparently his source, Pitman) indicate if a distribution was made according to the terms of the will, or if a distribution was made at all, which suggests that there is no mention of where Thomas was in 1645.

It appears that Jacobus has inferred more from Pitman's report than Pitman himself was willing to conclude. The work of Jacobus, and that of his sources (most importantly the original notes of H. Minot Pitman, who conducted on-site research in England) has been closely reviewed by Martin Booth Tracy, Ph.D., a direct descendant of Thomas Tracy (descent confirmed by yDNA testing) (and who is my 7<sup>th</sup> cousin). Martin Tracy quotes from Pitman's notes relative to the will, "So far then it must be admitted that no impossible obstacle has been proved to the theory Lt. Thomas Tracy was a son of Sir Paul Tracy's; on the other hand no definite confirmation has been found." (In general, Martin Tracy concurs with Jacobus' conclusions.)

However, Jacobus does allow that this will does confirm that Paul had a son named Thomas, and that the age of his son Thomas is appropriate for Ripley's theory.

Next, Jacobus points out that the baronetcy held by Sir Paul was extinguished in 1678, and that fact indicates there was no male heir in the family line. Conceivably Thomas, though living in the colonies, would have been heir to the title, properties, and dignitaries attached to the baronetcy... Jacobus interprets the fact that he never made a claim on the estate is evidence that Thomas did not have a claim.

As to this issue, Jacobus implies, at least, that Thomas should/could have had a claim were he in fact Sir Paul's descendant.

Baronet is a hereditary title established in 1611 by King James and is given by a monarch to a high ranking commoner, usually as a reward for having gifted the monarch with a generous sum of money. It is not a title of nobility.

As the ninth son in a very large family, Thomas, the son of Sir Paul would have undoubtedly been well aware that there was very little hope for him to inherit much of a fortune let alone a title due to the laws of primogenitor. *(Pitman, in his report, according to Martin Tracy, states that Thomas was included in the 1624 will of their father (will was proved in 1626). Pitman apparently inferred from the fact of his being mentioned that Thomas was favored by his father. Under normal circumstances of the period, Thomas might have expected to receive a small allowance... with luck, enough to support a single man.)* The age difference between Thomas and his older brothers means their sons were born within a year or two of Thomas, making them close to his own age. And the son of Sir Paul's heir and then his son, (and so on...) would have had precedence over any other males in Sir Paul's family.

As has also been noted in many cultural histories reflecting on 17th century New England, the colonists maintained a certain level of antipathy toward the concept of primogeniture and hereditary rights as exercised in Old England. Perhaps we should note that over time Thomas was elected or appointed to positions arguably equivalent in stature and responsibility to those of a member of the titled landed gentry back in Old England.

By 1678 Lt. Thomas was about 68 years old and had been away from England for over forty years. In that time he had by all accounts established himself as a prominent and highly respected member of his community, a worthy individual who was elected frequently (over twenty times in as many years) to represent his neighbors' interests before the central colonial legislature, and who in 1678 had been appointed to the respected office of Justice of the

Peace. Perhaps most significantly, Thomas was a wealthy man and the owner of large tracts of land, literally thousands of acres, in eastern Connecticut Colony.

So, some informed speculation: Assuming Thomas was indeed the son of Sir Paul, Bart., there may have been little incentive for him to compromise all that he had acquired in 42 years of an adventurous, successful existence in New England and return to Old England at that point in his life... especially if he may have doubted the value of the estate there compared to the value of his estate in Connecticut. Thomas himself may not have been particularly taken with the idea of carrying a hereditary title. Arguably, if, from a distance of about 400 years, it's fair to assume that Thomas should have pursued his birthright, it's equally fair to assume that he may not have wanted to. (In truth, there doesn't appear to be any evidence that Thomas was even aware of the possibility of such a claim.)

*(Sir Paul Tracy was created a Baronet in 1611. He died in 1626 and was succeeded first by his son Richard; then came Richard's son Humphrey; followed by Humphrey's son Richard who died unmarried; the title passed then to Humphrey's brother John, the 5<sup>th</sup> Baronet who died childless in February 1677/78. With apparently no more known successors in the first heir's (Richard's) direct line, a vacancy existed which presumably could have been filled by Thomas who was the brother of the first heir, Richard. (... assuming Thomas was known to exist and had he made a claim); instead, the Baronetcy was declared extinct in February 1677/78 with the death of Sir John Tracy, Bart.)*

Third, Jacobus makes much of the fact that Thomas was on occasion referred to as 'Goodman' but never referred to as 'Mr.', and Jacobus states that this, "... is alone sufficient to negative (sic) an immediate connection with an English family of title or gentility."

This is the one of Jacobus' objections that is most difficult to dispute because he does have a legitimate point, up to a point. A case could be made that he is wrong on this count... but it takes a bit of explaining to make the argument.

It is difficult for us modern Americans, the egalitarians that we are, to completely appreciate the social mores of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mr. Jacobus obviously did understand. Honorifics, when applied at all, were taken very seriously in New England. Today, we tend to show respect to any man we feel deserves it by using 'Mr.', or even at times 'Sir', when addressing him; a much broader application than these titles had in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. (Today in

America, calling someone ‘Sir’ does not mean they are necessarily a knight.) ‘Goodman’ was an honorific showing respect, and less a social title of rank or status. It was used in colonial times in much the same manner as today we use the title ‘Mr.’.

Jacobus’ perspective is supported when G. H. Hollister in his *The History of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1855) says of the term ‘Goodman’: “Its application predicated of him to whom it was given, a humble origin, and it comprehended the better sort of yeomen, laborers, tenants, and other dependents above the grade of servants, who owned a small estate, and who sustained a good moral character.” So, Thomas Tracy, a ship’s carpenter, one who had not claimed anything more than a ‘humble origin’, would properly have been referred to as ‘Goodman’, assuming he met the other criteria.

Hollister also points out that in New England, as evidenced by colonial records, titles were rarely used, aside from a few military titles. He says, “The prefix of “Master” (Mr.) belonged to all gentlemen... Master corresponds very nearly in meaning to the English word, gentleman. In Connecticut, it embraced clergymen, and planters of good family and estate who were members of the General Court; those bred up at a university, and those of sufficient education to manage the general affairs of the colony, either in a civil or ecclesiastical way, and who had been sufficiently well born. “Comparatively few of the representatives from the several towns, even though they might be returned year after year, were honored with this title. To be called master, or to have one’s name recorded by the secretary with that prefix... was a more certain index of the rank of the individual as respects birth, education, and good moral character... It may be observed, by reference to our colonial records, that there were scores of men of good family and in honorable stations who still did not possess all the requisite qualities of masters. *It was seldom that all young men, of whatever rank, were called masters.*” (Emphasis added)

In both Old England and New England, a man who was known to be, and possibly even one who had just claimed to be, the son of Sir Paul would have undoubtedly been considered to be in a social category that was a notch above the common populace, i.e., a member of the gentry... hence, a ‘gentleman’. And so, considered as having “been sufficiently well born”, he would, as Jacobus points out, have been almost certainly addressed as ‘Mr.’.

However, Thomas had arrived in Watertown while a young man in his mid-twenties and had presented himself as a ship’s carpenter... he had not arrived

in New England known to be, or presenting himself as, the son of a baronet... and one would have to assume that he did that by choice, again, assuming he was the son of Sir Paul, Bart. Perhaps his age (per Hollister above), but certainly his profession mitigated against his being called Mr. on his arrival.

Jacobus clearly understood the social mores of the time... but he didn't make any allowance for the personal choice of someone who may have realistically come to terms with his reduced social status in the 10 years since his father's demise in 1626 and his arrival in Watertown in 1636. Thomas would no doubt have considered it presumptuous, to say nothing of socially hazardous, to expect that he, now a ship's carpenter, should be addressed as 'Mr.' And having established his credentials in the beginning as a ship's carpenter, it wouldn't be the kind of thing where he could later suddenly say something along the lines of, "Oh, and by the way, my father was... , and you should be calling me...".

Thomas, starting a new life in a new place - a youthful adventurer (who had left his known world for an unknown one) who had no expectation of becoming part of the landed gentry in Old England - may not have wanted the encumbrance of an association which would have placed unwanted expectations on a young man who had accepted his 'younger son' status and the independence afforded him as a well educated and skilled ship's carpenter. (One who would have been called 'Goodman'.)

About the son of Sir Paul becoming a ship's carpenter... Both H. Minot Pitman and Martin Tracy address the likelihood (slim, they say) of Thomas, the son of a baronet and so a member of the gentry, being engaged in the shipbuilding trade. But neither of them outright deny the possibility.

A Baronet is not a noble, i.e., a member of the hereditary ruling class, i.e., a 'Peer'. A Baronet is a member of the landed gentry, a class status that is (narrowly and specifically in England) between the nobility (peers) and those who were of the 'trade' or yeoman class and worked for a living. (Knights were also in this class, below baronets.) Baronets were at the bottom of the ladder of the titled gentry... kings and queens were at the top.

Sir Paul died in 1626 when Thomas was about 16 years old. Thomas was a minor and if his father had not already done so before his death, Thomas' immediate future would have been decided for him by his older brother, the heir of Sir Paul. (Apparently Sir Paul's will does not address Thomas' future.) Social historians point out many examples showing that 17<sup>th</sup> century estates of the landed gentry having a large number of children were frequently

diminished through an obligation to support younger members. (Certainly a circumstance applicable to this Tracy family - some of those 21 children undoubtedly survived their father and had children of their own.) Very often the younger sons of gentry such as Sir Paul were 'put to trade' in order to support themselves. In fact, some social historians suggest that for the younger sons of the gentry this was more often the case than not. (This was not the way for those on the ladder above baronets, the nobility - they generally handled the situation of younger sons who were expected to pay their own way by making carefully arranged marriages, religious, government, or military appointments.)

It is more than conceivable that, in order to relieve the family of the obligation to support him, he had been 'put to trade'. So Thomas, by his own choice or by the choice of the elder brother upon whom he was dependent for his living, in the 10 years between his father's demise and his own appearance in Watertown acquired the skills of a ship's carpenter. One could reasonably speculate, based on the life choices he made later, that an independent minded, teen-aged Thomas had made this decision on his own.

Considering these possibilities, it may not have been so unlikely that Thomas was apparently never referred to as Mr. Tracy.

Arguably, these alternatives neutralize Jacobus' reasons for rejecting Ripley's theory. So, while Ripley's ancestry for Lt. Thomas Tracy of Norwich is still unproven, it does lead one to a reasonable conclusion. That said, as Pitman, then Jacobus, and later Martin Tracy point out, Ripley never produced any valid documentation to support his theory; and despite diligent searching on the part of genealogists over the last 122 years, none has been found by anyone else. The fact these searches have been fruitless puts the theory under a serious shadow of doubt. So, until direct evidence meeting the genealogical proof standards can be found... in sort of a twist on a much later, and much more famous, (Robert) Ripley... this is Ripley's theory, "Believe It or Not!"

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**SON OF UNKNOWN PARENTS (but possibly of a Christopher Tracy) FROM NORFOLK,  
ENGLAND**

This second hypothesis is not only plausible, it is perhaps even the most probable explanation for Lt. Thomas' parentage, or at least his origin. It isn't popular with a lot of Tracys who prefer to believe our ancestry includes not just nobility, as it does, but also Nobility - with the titles. However, it is a far more realistic assessment of the probable background of the ship's carpenter, our Thomas Tracy.

It is primarily based on a great deal of compelling, but circumstantial, evidence involving relationships and associations. The theory puts forward the possibility that Lt. Thomas of Norwich in New England was related to a Tracy family from Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England.

The chief fact behind this theory is that there was at around the same time as Thomas showed up in New England, a Stephen Tracy who had arrived at Plymouth earlier, in 1623. This second Colonial Era Tracy was a Pilgrim; a 'delayed Saint', i.e., one who did not arrive on the *Mayflower* but was nonetheless a 'Pilgrim', both in philosophical/theological terms and in immigration history terms. Stephen most likely emigrated from Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England, and arrived in New England, certainly by way of Leiden, Holland, in 1623. He described himself as being "of Great Yarmouth in old England."

Considerable research has been done on Stephen Tracy's family, both in Old England and in New England; most of it independent of research on Lt. Thomas Tracy's family. However, both Stephen's and Thomas' families became connected to the Waterman family in New England and that family has been researched and well documented by Donald Lines Jacobus.

For complete discussions of Thomas Tracy's origins and of the relevant Tracy Family genealogies printed up to the dates of publication see:

Jacobus, Donald Lines. *The Waterman Family*. New Haven, Connecticut, 1939. ppg 691-694;

And:

Tracy, Martin Booth. *The Puritans ~ Thomas and Stephen Tracy: A Personal Quest For Family Lineage*. North Charleston, South Carolina, 2017.

Jacobus points out that both Stephen's and Thomas' Tracy families had strong ties to the Waterman family; to the Plymouth Colony, Marshfield especially; and, members of each of these Tracy families lived within close proximity to one another in eastern Connecticut Colony.

To quote from Jacobus:

"Let it be noted that John Tracy, son of Stephen, settled in Windham, Conn., not far from the family of Thomas Tracy of Norwich; that Thomas Tracy (great grandson of Stephen) settled in Marshfield, Mass., and married the widow of an own nephew of

Thomas Waterman whose wife was the daughter of Thomas Tracy of Norwich; that Deborah Tracy (great granddaughter of Stephen) married Thomas Bourne, a first cousin once removed of Thomas Waterman whose wife was the daughter of Thomas Tracy of Norwich; and that children of John Partridge (grandson-in-law of Stephen Tracy) settled in towns of eastern Connecticut, Samuel Partridge locating in Preston, where many of the family of Thomas Tracy (of Norwich) resided. Be it further noted that Thomas Tracy of Norwich married for his second wife, Martha (Bourne) Bradford, daughter of a Marshfield family, whose first husband was son of Gov. William Bradford of Plymouth; also that John Tracy, eldest son of Thomas (of Norwich) married a Winslow girl of Marshfield, niece of his stepmother, Martha (Bourne) Bradford.”

Those are a bunch of very complicated relationships, but it boils down to there being several familial connections between the two families.

Again, from Jacobus:

“All this may be without special significance; but it would not be strange if the two founders of Tracy families in New England were related, and these facts, slight as they are, must be weighed when the evidence is considered pointing to the origin of Thomas Tracy. Most important, Jonathan, son of Thomas, named a son Christopher, and Stephen had a brother Christopher who *could* have been father of Thomas”. (emphasis Jacobus’)

Original research done by Martin Tracy, with an emphasis on the origins of the members of the community of Watertown into which Thomas Tracy was accepted, bolsters the likelihood of this theory of Thomas’ Norfolk origin. Martin Tracy notes that Watertown where Thomas was accepted and admitted soon after his arrival in New England was populated largely by emigrants from East Anglia, many if not most of them from Norfolk.

This is a point heretofore given little attention by other Tracy genealogists. This factor, of acceptance, is important because Thomas arrived in Watertown at a time when acceptance of individuals unknown to the rest of a community’s members was quite rare... the success or failure of a nascent community being established in an unfamiliar territory was dependent on a citizenry trusting of one another, understanding and sharing a common goal. Acceptance of an unknown individual in fact required a referral from someone who actually did know that individual. It would have been highly unlikely that Thomas traveled alone from Old England to New England... he would most likely have been among friends and/or acquaintances who were at least familiar with one another and had common interests. Even if they hadn’t personally known each other before they set out on the voyage to New England, they all embarked for New England from the same port, almost certainly one in Norfolk or in next-door Suffolk; at least some of his fellow passengers had

undoubtedly been invited to Watertown to join the settlers, perhaps family members, already there; and over the course of the weeks long voyage all of the passengers would have come to know one another pretty well. These would have been just the people to vouch for Thomas. This point is, perhaps, the most convincing factor of any in determining Thomas' origins.

It should be noted that Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, where Stephen was from, had a very active shipbuilding industry operating in the 1600s and had for several hundred years been called upon to supply the crown with ships. Surprisingly Jacobus doesn't call attention to the possibility that if Thomas also came from near there it could explain his association with that trade when he arrived in New England... a trade he could have acquired after having been apprenticed to a shipbuilder, by a local Norfolk family.

Other researchers into the origins of Lt. Thomas have found that a Thomas Tracy of Norwich in England was cited for not attending church at St. Peter Mancroft on St. Clements, that is on 23 November, in 1631. (Church attendance was required by law in England at the time so this absence was noted and recorded... but that's another story.) The following year, once again a Thomas Tracy was cited for his absence, this time for failure to attend St. Peter Hungate, also in Norwich. So, a Thomas Tracy was expected to be in Norwich, Norfolk, England, at times when he was not (1631 & 1632)... at times when the Thomas Tracy who ended up in Norwich, Connecticut Colony, could have been en route to Watertown, Massachusetts Bay Colony. This may or may not be relevant since a cursory examination of church registers available on-line for Great Yarmouth and Norwich, Norfolk, England, shows more than one Thomas Tracy among the parishioners listed in Norfolk in the same time-frame, some of whom, based on baptismal dates, would have been about the same age as the Thomas who immigrated to Waterford.

An even more tenuous connection to Norfolk, England, has been suggested... Lt. Thomas Tracy, from his early days in New England, was quite frequently found in the company of John Mason - the two of them were the only English witnesses to the deed granting the land to the proprietors of Norwich, Connecticut Colony in 1659; and 'Mason' is a name found in Norfolk, England (Norwich is the county seat of Norfolk, England). This could imply that these two gentlemen may have had some kind of connection back in Old England, or were at least simpatico based on their having come from the same part of their mother country. And of course, it is assumed that John Mason, and possibly Thomas Tracy - co-witnesses to the deed for the nine-miles-square of Moheagan land purchased that became Norwichtown - undoubtedly exercised some influence when it came to providing the English name for the town. Many, if not most, New England colonial towns were named after the founders' native home in Old England.

Jacobus has concluded that Stephen Tracy and Lt. Thomas Tracy were probably related - uncle and nephew respectively (based on their ages), and probably both were from Norfolk, England. Martin Booth Tracy agrees that it is possible that the two Tracys were related and that it is highly probable that Thomas was from Norfolk.

The principle of Occam's razor leads one to the conclusion that this theory provides the most likely answer to the question of Thomas Tracy's origins; and while it has the support of many objective and highly regarded genealogists, it is just speculation... until the requisite direct evidence meeting the genealogical proof standards can be found.

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### BOTTOM LINE

So... Where did Thomas Tracy, a ship's carpenter, an immigrant to Watertown in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who was later Lt. Thomas Tracy of Norwich, Connecticut Colony, live the first twenty-five or so years of his life and who were his parents?

Well, as of May 2017, no one has been able to definitively answer those questions with data from any generally accepted genealogical sources. But it would be kind of cool to think he was (and so we are) descended from Woden/Odin, wouldn't it?

In the meantime, considering the opinions and conclusions of H. Minot Pitman, Donald Lines Jacobus, and Martin Booth Tracy, (and despite my own carefully laid out arguments in support of Charles Stedman Ripley's Gloucester theory) I'm convinced the theory that Lt. Thomas Tracy was originally from Norfolk is the most realistic, and that our Tracy Family has our roots there. (Probably.)

Go to [Lt. Thomas Tracy](#)

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Cousin Martin Tracy's book, *The Puritans ~ Thomas and Stephen Tracy: A Personal Quest For Family Lineage* is available through [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)