

## **Biography**

### **Sir Titus Salt**



Titus Salt was born near Leeds, Yorkshire, in 1803 to Congregationalist parents. He was the eldest of 6 children. His father leased a 100 acre farm in the area where he worked hard and prospered.

In 1822, Titus's father Daniel left the farm and started his own business in Bradford as a woolstapler. Titus, then aged 18, joined his father and learned all aspects of the wool trade. He travelled to London, Liverpool, Norfolk and Lincolnshire learning about different types of wool and how to buy and sell between farmers and wooltraders.

When he was 28, Titus bought some Donskoi wool from Russia, but he couldn't sell it – the tangled fibres made it difficult to process. Some of us might have given up at that point, but not Titus Salt; instead, he bought a mill of his own and began to spin the wool himself. His mill prospered, and soon he bought four more mills in the centre of Bradford.

In 1830 Titus Salt married Caroline and they had 11 children, all of whom have a street named after them in Saltaire.

In 1834 Titus noticed some bales of Alpaca wool at a Liverpool warehouse. He experimented with it, and found he could weave it into beautiful lustrous cloth – perfect for making expensive dresses for rich ladies. By the time he was 40, the success of the Alpaca and Donskoi wool that he was weaving had made Titus one of the richest men in Yorkshire.

By 1850 he had served a year as Mayor of Bradford, and had exhibited his alpaca and some mixed fabrics at 'The Great Exhibition' in Crystal Palace, London. Titus was a man of action rather than words, so scarcely any records exist of his speaking or writing.

Throughout his career, Salt had been aware of the poverty of his staff. As his success grew, he drew up plans to build a new mill on the outskirts of Bradford, away from the polluted industrial boom-time city, with fresh air and more space. A spot adjoining the Leeds Liverpool Canal and the River Aire was perfect for transport, and it was surrounded by beautiful moorland, too.

The mill was built in warm yellow sandstone in the Italianate style. It opened in 1853, on Titus Salt's 50th birthday. He went on to create a whole village for his workers. There were houses, a church, a school, a place for adult learning and a park, among other facilities. He named the village Saltaire. It was an extraordinary project.

In 1869 Salt was created a baronet by Queen Victoria, thus becoming *Sir Titus Salt*.

In 1876 the last building in Saltaire was completed, and later that year Sir Titus Salt died at his home.

Bradford gave him a civic funeral, watched by 100,000 people.

He is buried in the mausoleum at Saltaire Congregational Church, opposite the mill.

### ***About Bradford in the days of Titus Salt***

Bradford is in a valley, and the canal water in the basin of this valley was filthy, stagnant, reeking of industrial effluent and waste materials. Disease was rife.

When Titus Salt was born in 1803, the population of Bradford was 13,000 and the wool industry employed woolcombers and weavers to produce the worsted cloth. Many of the workers were children.

In 1833, children between the ages of 9 and 12 had their working hours reduced by law - to no more than 9 hours a day, and not more than 48 hours per week.

By this time the population of Bradford was exploding - it had risen to over 43,000. The Industrial Revolution meant that machines speeded up production at the mills and created jobs. So migrants settled in the town to find work, and the population grew and grew. Overcrowding was inevitable; disease was rampant. Life expectancy for the poor was as young as 20 years.

A writer on The Bradford Observer of 16th October 1845 described the living conditions of the city's poverty-stricken inhabitants:

*"In the course of last week I have visited some of the most filthy and wretched abodes that the mind of man can conceive, in which misery of the lowest description was personified. In a portion of this town called The Leys, there are scores of wretched hovels, unfurnished and unventilated, damp, filthy in the extreme and surrounded by stagnant pools of human excrement and every thing offensive and disgusting to "sight and smell". No sewers, no drainage, no ventilation. Nothing to be seen but squalid wretchedness on every side, and the features of the inmates show a perfect and unmistakable index of their condition; all this is to be seen in the center of this wealthy emporium of the worsted trade."*