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BASSETT FAMILY FUND ESTABLISHED DECEMBER 2005

The Bassett family has a rich history in the Valley, especially in Derby. The family's beginnings trace back to John and Margery Bassett who immigrated to the United States from England in 1642. They landed in Boston as indentured servants, and after paying their debts, they moved to New Haven with their son Robert. Robert's son, Sgt. Robert Bassett bought part of the Hawley Purchase in Derby in 1716. One parcel at the foot of Great Hill on Silver Hill Road was known as the Bassett Farm and three more pieces were on Great Hill. The farm passed down the male side of the Bassett Family for generations, and was sold in 1926 when William Bassett Sr. and his five siblings moved off the farm.

Bill Bassett was very mechanical as a boy. When he was older, he was always putting some kind of car together from scavenged parts. His skills led him to start the W.E. Bassett Company in 1939 at the age of 25. The company started as a general machine shop and during the war it made munitions parts. After the war when steel was again available, the Bassett Company began to make rubber heel washers, bag clips, and various other metal parts.

In 1947 Bill Bassett designed the "TRIM" nail clipper and started making them in his factory on Francis Street in Derby. It was the first clipper made using modern manufacturing methods.

It took the market by storm and in 1952 a new plant was built on Roosevelt Drive in Derby. Bill continued to add products: nail files, tweezers, toenail clippers, and a multi-bladed knife. The Derby plant was expanded five times to accommodate the growth and, in 1978, a second factory was built in Shelton. That factory was expanded to double its size in 1987, and in 1988 the company office moved to Shelton.

Bill Bassett was a very generous person and was trusted and respected by the people with whom he worked. He was fair, hard working and understanding of the needs of others. He was involved with the Boy Scouts and gave generously to them, both his time and financial resources. Unfortunately, Bill became ill in 1955 and was never able to return to work full time. His older brother, Harry who was working for him as head of manufacturing, stepped in and ran the company very successfully as president until 1976 when he became Chairman of the Board.

Like his brother, Harry was also very generous and believed as Bill did, that it was the good Valley people that helped the company become a success. Harry was involved in many civic organizations, including the Valley Chamber, Griffin Hospital, Boy Scouts, and Junior Achievement. He established the very first Valley Foundation with the Valley Chamber of Commerce as fiduciary agent. Even though the initial Foundation did not work out as he would have liked, Harry felt that it was essential to find long-term ways to support the non-profits throughout the Valley.

Both Bill and Harry set a tone for the company of giving back to the community. That philosophy continues today. Now, more than 26 years later, Mr. Bassett's son and current Chairman of the Board of The W.E. Bassett Company, William C. Bassett, along with his wife Judy, and their children, Lynne, Betsy and Bill are carrying on the Bassett tradition of giving by starting the Bassett Family Fund at the Valley Community Foundation.

"Judy and I along with our children wanted to continue the legacy of giving that my father and uncle established here in the Valley. The proceeds from this Fund are to be used for community services in the five valley towns," said William C. Bassett. His daughter Lynne Bassett Perry agreed saying, "Working with our parents and the Valley Community Foundation, we hope to support many worthwhile Valley organizations now and in the future. Our hope is that this Fund will help make the Valley a better place to live and work for generations to come." ■



The William C. Bassett Family