

Children of Samuel⁴ #26 Watson: Benjamin⁵ Watson

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This article is part of a larger family history, **The WATSON Family of West Greenwich, Rhode Island**, which can be found via [this link](#) to Part 1 and [this link](#) to Part 2.

A branch of the Watson family of Rhode Island settled in West Greenwich and lived there for nearly one hundred years. The patriarch of this branch was Samuel, designated #7 in *The American Family of John Watson of the Narragansett Country, Rhode Island*.

Benjamin⁵ Watson, son of Samuel #26 Watson

Benjamin⁵ WATSON (Samuel⁴, Samuel³, Samuel², John¹) was born in West Greenwich circa 1783-84, the fourth of Samuel #26 and Abiah (Young) Watson's nine children.

Benjamin Watson in West Greenwich

Benjamin Watson is first of record in West Greenwich in 1808, when a "Town Council & Court of Probate," held on September 8, 1808, was convened to deal with the matter of local road maintenance. Names of residents, apparently grouped according to where they lived, were listed along with the "Valuation of Each mans Estate." We find Benjamin Watson in the district No. 13 list.

Benjamin's estate valuation was indicated by a flat line. The lowest number appearing on the valuations was 100. Perhaps anything less than that was considered too small to count toward road maintenance taxation.

In the 1810 census for West Greenwich, Benjamin Watson was listed as a head of household. The numbers reveal two males under the age of ten, which reflects the sons born to Benjamin and his wife in 1806 and 1809.

Benjamin's next appearance in West Greenwich records came on March 11, 1813, when he sold land in that town to Israel Gates, an abutter. We describe this land transaction in Part 2 of "The WATSON Family of West Greenwich, Rhode Island." To read it, click [here](#).

All signs point to Benjamin having moved his family to Voluntown, Connecticut, after selling his West Greenwich property. It was a move west of only a few miles.

Benjamin's Wife

Benjamin Watson likely married early in 1806, based on the date of his first child's birth. His bride was Mary "Polly" Young, born in RI circa 1785. On April 25, 1865, when Mary signed her will (by making her mark), she described herself as being 80 years old. Mary's nickname shows up in the 1813 deed created when Benjamin sold his property.

Some have speculated that Mary was the daughter of Elias Young, probably because Benjamin's and Mary's youngest son was named Elias. It's a reasonable idea, but we can't prove or disprove it. He shows up once in West Greenwich, in 1808, in the district No. 6 list for local road maintenance, as mentioned above. But in 1800 and 1810, Elias Young's household was enumerated in Exeter.

Considering that his mother Abiah was born into the Young family, it's possible that Benjamin married one of his cousins.

There might have been more consanguinity: The name of Elias Young's wife shows up in various places as *Hannah Watson*. (We have found no records of this marriage.) We have long wondered if Elias Young's wife was the daughter of Robert⁴ Watson, older brother of Benjamin's father Samuel #26 Watson.

In a family history written by one of Benjamin's and Mary's great-grandchildren, Mary was described as "a small, black-eyed, dark skinned woman" who "had a quick fiery temper." This description has to be family lore, since the likely author was around four years old when Mary died in 1879.

Benjamin's and Mary's Children

Benjamin and Mary (Young) Watson had eight children:

1. JOSEPH LYMAN⁶, known as "Lyman," was born on December 27, 1806, in Washington, Rhode Island. Lyman Watson married 1st Alsa Ann PHILLIPS (~1808 – 1848), with whom he had six children. Lyman married 2nd Mary Etta TUFTS (1819 – 1903), with whom he had one child. Joseph Lyman Watson died

in 1893 and was buried in Crandall Cemetery in Mendota, LaSalle county, IL.

2. STEPHEN N., born in 1809 in Rhode Island, possibly in Coventry. Stephen married Caroline B. HILL (1813 – 1894), a Rhode Island native, with whom he had at least three children. Stephen N. Watson died in 1859 and was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Central Village, Plainfield, Windham county, CT.

3. AMY was born in 1812 (in Coventry, RI, per the 1850 census). In 1836, Amy married William Thompson YOUNG (1814 – 1891), with whom she had at least five children. Amy (Watson) Young died in 1899 and was buried in Grove Street Cemetery, Putnam, Windham county, CT.

4. MARY M., born in 1815 in Voluntown, CT. In 1838, Mary married George W. CHASE (circa 1818 – 1885), with whom she had at least five children. Mary M. (Watson) Chase died in 1902 and was buried in Grove Street Cemetery, Putnam, Windham county, CT.

5. BENJAMIN PERRY, known as “Perry,” born in 1815 in Voluntown, CT, a twin to his sister Mary. In 1843, Perry married Hannah COLE (1824 – 1909), with whom he had one child. Benjamin Perry Watson died in 1885 and was buried in Swank Cemetery, Johnson County, Iowa.

6. HANNAH, born in 1818, probably in Voluntown, CT. She married Thomas BURLINGAME, with whom she had probably eight children. Hannah (Watson) Burlingame died in 1852. She was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Central Village, Plainfield, Windham county, CT.

7. SON, one of two males under age 10 enumerated in Benjamin Watson’s household on 7 August 1820. This child probably died young; he is not represented in the Watson household in the 1830 census.

8. ELIAS WILLOUGHBY, born in 1823 in Voluntown, Connecticut. His family called him Willoughby, so we’ll use it here. In 1850, Willoughby married Lucy Fidelia FISK, with whom he had five children. Elias Willoughby Watson died in 1910 and was buried in Prairie Repose Cemetery in Dover, Bureau county, IL.

Coventry, RI, Connection

A handwritten copy of an obituary places the birth of Lyman in Washington, RI.

Given that Washington is the name of a county in Rhode Island, *at first* we thought that Lyman might have been born in the town of Exeter, just south of West Greenwich. Then we found the 1850 census listing for Amy (Watson) Young. Her birth place was listed as Coventry, RI.

In Coventry, in 1810, a village called Braytontown was renamed *Washington*, apparently in honor of the Washington Manufacturing Company located there.

If both the first- and third-born children of Benjamin and Mary Watson were born in Coventry, we think it likely that their second-born child, Stephen, came into the world in the same locale.

In 1810, the household of Benjamin Watson was enumerated in West Greenwich. Did Benjamin and Mary Watson live in Coventry, just north of West Greenwich, for a time? That's certainly possible.

It's also possible that Mary (Young) Watson lived in West Greenwich but chose to give birth in Coventry. Perhaps she had family and/or friends there who assisted each other during childbirth, a common practice in those days. As another Watson wife put it in 1837, when she expected "to be confined by sickness [*childbirth*]," she would "require the special care and attention of her Friends."

Benjamin Watson in Voluntown, CT – and Exeter, RI

On January 20, 1818, Benjamin Watson *of Voluntown, Connecticut*, bought 74 acres of land in Exeter, RI, for \$500, from Abel Casey of West Greenwich.

Know all men by these presents that I Abel Casey of west Greenwich in the County of Kent and state of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation[s] Yeoman for and in Consideration of five hundred Dollars to me in hand Well and truly paid to my full Satisfaction before the Ensealing of these presents by Benjamin Watson of Voluntown in the county of Windham and State of Connecticut do give grant Bargain & have given granted Bargained Sold and Convayed [*sic*] and Confirmed unto the said Benjamin Watson his heirs and assigns forever one Certain tract or Parcel of land Situate Lying and Being in Exeter in the County of Washington and State of Rhode Island aforesaid Containing by estimation Seventy four acres be the same more or less and is Bounded as follows Viz., South on the Ten Rod Highway so called West

on the Two Rod highway North on Rowland Rathbuns [sic] Land see the old Deed from thence South fourteen and a half degrees East to the highway the first mentioned Bounds To have and to hold the said granted and Bargained Premises together with all the appurtenances and priviledges [sic] thereunto Belonging free of all Incumbrances [sic] whatsoever unto him the said Benjamin Watson his heirs and assigns forever as a perfect and absolute Estate of inheritance in fee in fee [sic] simple forever I the said Abel Casey for my Self my heirs, Executors & Administrators do Covenant and Engage the above Devised premises to him the said Benjamin Watson his heirs and assigns against the Lawfull [sic] Claims of any person whatsoever to Warrant and Defend by these presents forever in Witness whereof I have hereunto Set my hand and Seal the 20 [sic] of January AD 1818

Signed Sealed and Delivered
in the presents [sic] of

John Wylie
Polley Wylie

Abel Casey

Windham county SS Sterling
January the 20 day AD 1818

Personally appeared Abel Casey Signer
and Sealer of the above Written

Recorded January 22 1818
Stephen Reynolds T. Clk

Instrument and Acknowledged the Same
to be his free Act & Deed before me John
Wylie Justice of Peace Rec^d on file to

Record January 22ⁿ AD 1818 at half past
Eleven A.M. Witness Stephen Reynolds T. Clk

The location of this property appears to have been immediately north of present-day Ten Rod Road (State Route 165) and *possibly* bounded on the west by present-day Escoheag Hill Road, if that corresponds to the “Two Rod Highway” mentioned in the deed. The [Rowland Rathbun Lot](#), a small, historic family cemetery in Exeter, is described as being 300 feet north of Barber Road – another clue that may tell us approximately where Benjamin Watson’s land was situated.

We think that Benjamin may have taken his parents into his household for a time: Samuel #26 Watson was residing in Voluntown when he first applied for a Revolutionary War pension in 1818. By 1820, Benjamin’s parents were living again in West Greenwich.

At Voluntown Town Hall we found no birth records for Benjamin’s and Mary’s

children, nor deeds for any property purchased there. The only records regarding Benjamin Watson that we found in Voluntown were a couple of lawsuits.

The first suit was brought on April 15, 1820, and continued on April 22nd. The plaintiff was “H. Parkhurt” (whose surname *might have been* Parkhurst). The defendant was “B. Watson.” The issue behind the suit, unfortunately, is not described in the record:

No. 477		Windham County SS At a Justice Court held at
H. Parkhurt [sic]		Voluntown in said County on the 22nd day of
vs.		April AD 1820. Present James Alexander Esq.
B. Watson		Justice of Peace for said county holding s ^d Court

Action of Trespass on the case demanding \$15 as per events on file dated April 15th 1820 ———

In this case the parties being called both appeared and were at Issue on the plea of “not guilty” – as on file

This Court having fully heard the parties with evidence pleas & allegations and fully considered thereof – is of the oppinion [sic] and doth adjudge ~~and find~~ that the Defendant is guilty in manner and form as the plaintiff in his declaration hath alledged [sic] and therefore find for the Plaintiff to Recover of the Defendant the sum of \$15 Damage and his Cost Taken and allowed at the sum of \$5..75 cents Whereupon the Defendant moved for an appeal to the next County Court to be holden in said Windham County on the 3^d Tuesday of August next which is allowed and the defendant as principal and John Stanton of s^d Voluntown as surety became jointly and severally bound in a Bond of Recognizance of \$50 ~~that~~ to prosecute said appeal According to law – and to pay all cost & Damage in case he fail to make his plea good a state duty of fifty cents is paid herein

Attest James Alexander Justice of Peace

The phrase “action of trespass on the case” is a legal term used, apparently, when some harm has been caused *indirectly* to the plaintiff through the action of the defendant. We found a beautifully clear example of this in the book *Introduction to Law* that differentiates between a direct and an indirect injury:

A farmer tosses an old fence post aside, which lands in the road, accidentally

injuring a man passing by in that moment – *versus* – a farmer tosses an old fence post aside, which lands in the road and, hours later, causes injury to a man passing by in the dark when he trips over it and falls.

The record of this case shows that the Hon. James Alexander found Benjamin Watson guilty of some indirect harm caused to Mr. Parkhur[s]t. We found no record of Benjamin’s appeal or its outcome.

The second suit was brought in September of 1820. As with the earlier record, the language is general, referring to “events on file.” In this case, Benjamin was the plaintiff. The defendant was Roger Hewit.

No. 490		
Benj. Watson		Windham County SS At a Justice Court holden
vs.		at Voluntown in s ^d county on the 16 th day of
Roger Hewit		Sept 1820. Present James Alexander Esq.
Action on <i>[illegible]</i>		Justice of Peace for said county – on motion —
Demanding \$10 as		
per events on file		
This case is adjourned until the 18 th of Sept Inst. at 2 oclock <i>[sic]</i> Sept 18 th <i>[sic]</i> 1820 – the parties being called the Plaintiff appeared and produced his book Account – the Defendant being three times called made default of appearance Whereupon the Court after duly considering the case is of oppinion <i>[sic]</i> and adjudges that the Plaintiff recover of the defendant the sum of \$5.00 debt and his cost taken and allowed the sum of \$2.43 and that <i>[Execution?]</i> Issue thereon		
Attest James Alexander Justice of Peace		

We found Roger Hewitt – his surname spelled with a double-T – in other records.

According to other people’s research, Roger Hewitt was born in in Stonington, CT, on December 18, 1767, the son of Elkanah Hewitt and his wife Elizabeth Miner. In 1810, Roger was a resident of Norwich, CT; in 1820 he lived in Voluntown. By 1830 Roger and his family had moved to Preston, CT. Roger Hewitt died in Preston on October 24, 1838, at the age of 71. Beyond these basic facts, little is known about Roger. His whereabouts in 1790 and 1800 are not immediately apparent from census records.

Moving around a lot can be a sign of poverty and the need to follow or find work opportunities. We wonder if Mr. Hewitt struggled to make good on his debts.

In between those two lawsuits, the census taker came calling. The record for 1820 appears to put Benjamin Watson's household in Sterling, CT, immediately north of Voluntown. There is no reason to believe that Benjamin and family were anywhere other than Voluntown. Please see the Appendix to read [Why We Think Benjamin Watson Lived in Voluntown \(not Sterling\), Connecticut](#).

The 1820 census recorded seven children living in Benjamin Watson's household – four sons and three daughters. This headcount includes one young son who does not appear in this family in the 1830 census.

The youngest of the Watson children, son Elias Willoughby, would be born in Voluntown in 1823.

Benjamin in the Kent County Jail

Benjamin's younger brother, Samuel⁵ Watson Jr., was jailed on November 7, 1820, for burning down a barn belonging to Edward Richmond of Exeter, RI. Samuel⁵ Jr. confessed to having done this "horrid deed," saying that he was influenced by two older men.

On January 22, 1821, Benjamin Watson was imprisoned in the Kent county jail. The reason for his incarceration was that Thomas T. Hazard of West Greenwich "was in fear that [Benjamin Watson] would do him some private injury by burning his Mills or other property."

It doesn't take much imagination to see a connection between what Samuel Watson Jr. had done just a few months earlier and what Thomas T. Hazard was feeling threatened about.

The Supreme Court Judicial Records Center in Pawtucket, RI, could not find court documents pertinent to any trial proceedings that may have shed light on this event. Ken Carlson of the Rhode Island State Archives thinks that a magistrate might have decided to incarcerate Benjamin without benefit of a trial, in what was the 19th century equivalent of a restraining order.

Benjamin submitted his first petition to be released, soon after he was locked up:

To the Honourable the General Assembly of said State to be holden at East Greenwich in the County of Kent on the third Monday of February AD 1821

Humbly sheweth, Benjamin Watson of Volentown [*sic*] in the State of Connecticut, Yeoman, that on the Twenty second day of January AD 1821 he was brought before a Court of Justices on the Complaint of Thomas T. Hazzard of said West Greenwich, who made oath before said Court that he was in fear that your Petitioner would do him some private injury by burning his Mills or other property; and said Court were of opinion that said complaint was well substantiated and proved, and required your Petitioner to recognize with one or more Sureties in the sum of Two Thousand Dollars; to appear at the next Court of General Sessions of the Peace to be holden at East Greenwich in the County of Kent on the third Monday of August next and to keep the peace and be of good behaviour; and also to pay all costs of prosecution taxed at fourteen Dollars & Seventy Eight Cents. Now your Petitioner would represent to your Honours, that he is far from being sensible of entertaining or expressing any malicious designs towards the said Hazzard; and that the fears, which the said Hazzard has of suffering injury from your Petitioner, are in a great measure imaginary. He would represent to your Honours, that the largeness of the sum required of him to recognize in, renders it impossible for him to find any persons who will be willing to become his Sureties. He will, therefore, be under the necessity of continuing in prison until the sitting of the Court of General Sessions, to the great injury and suffering of himself and family; more especially, as it will defeat the arrangements which he has been making to remove the ensuing Spring into the western Country –

Wherefore he humbly prays your Honours to take his unhappy situation into your Honours wise consideration, and to liberate him from Jail, upon such terms and conditions, as to your Honours may deem reasonable and expedient.

And as in duty bound will ever pray –

(signed) Benjamin Watson

Seventeen men signed Benjamin's petition, following the words "We the Subscribers, being well acquainted with the aforesaid Benjamin Watson, and

having read the foregoing Petition, do recommend the granting of the prayer of it.” The signers were John Casey; Wm Gallup; Kinyon Corey; Nathaniel Gallup; Thomas Backus; Benadam Gallup; Chester Gallup; John A. Gallup; Silas James; Henry Young; John Stanton; Josiah Barber; Jeremiah Hoxsie; Joseph James; Varnum Bitgood; Reynolds Barber; and Solomon Austin.

Benjamin Watson’s petition to be released was denied.

Benjamin’s next petition for release was made in anticipation of the General Assembly’s meeting in May 1822. This time, however, Benjamin is “of West Greenwich” rather than Voluntown:

Petition of Benjamin Watson for liberation from Jail

State of Rhode Island & Providence Plantations

To the Honourable General Assembly of said State to be holden at Newport in the County of Newport on the first Wednesday of May AD 1822

Humbly sheweth, Benjamin Watson of West Greenwich in the County of Kent, that he has suffered a long and tedious confinement in the Jail in the County of Kent under a Judgment of a Justices Court, holden on the 22nd day of January AD 1821, grounded upon the complaint of Thomas T. Hazzard, that “he was in fear that your Petitioner would do him some private injury by burning his Mills or other property” – That your Petitioner was required by said Court to find Surety in the Sum of Two Thousand Dollars to keep the peace and to pay the Cost of prosecution; neither of which has he been able to do. He has to state to your Honours, that knowing the complaint of the said Hazzard against him to have been made without reasonable grounds of fear, and having a numerous family of children, who were and still are needing the exertions of your Petitioner for their support, he was imprudently and rashly induced to be concerned with two other Prisoners in breaking and escaping from Jail. But he hopes with confidence that, although his conduct in this respect is altogether unjustifiable [*sic*], this Honourable Assembly will not deem it a ground of his being any longer held in confinement, especially as he has already amply atoned for that offence by his past sufferings. Your Petitioner would represent to your Honours, that during the short time of his enlargement from Jail, he visited the Complainant, spent a considerable time with him, and that his fears were not in the least alarmed; nor did he entertain

a wish for your Petitioner's recommitment or return to Prison. Your Petitioner states with sincerity to your Honours that he never harboured any malicious intentions towards the Complainant, and that the misrepresentations of sundry persons inimical to your Petitioner was originally the cause of the Complaint against him.

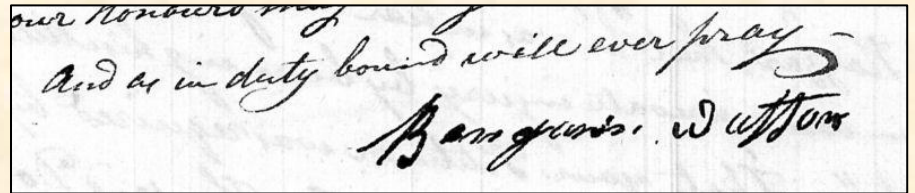
Wherefore he humbly prays your Honours to take his unhappy situation into your Honours wise consideration; and inasmuch as fifteen months have elapsed since the Complaint originated against him, which has never been renewed; that your Honours would liberate him from Jail without bonds, and remit the Cost or take his Note for the same, or grant him such other relief as to your Honours may deem just –

And as in duty bound will ever pray –

(signed) Benjamin Watson

We are impressed to learn by this document that Benjamin managed to break out of jail. That his priority on this occasion was to speak with

“the Complainant” – Thomas T. Hazard of West Greenwich – suggests that Benjamin wanted to resolve whatever issue existed between them. Benjamin's desperation regarding the welfare of his wife and children is plain to see.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive. The text reads "And as in duty bound will ever pray - Benjamin Watson". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Benjamin Watson's second petition to be released was denied. He filed his third petition in the weeks following the second one:

Petition of Benjamin Watson

State of Rhode Island & Providence Plantations

To the Honourable the General Assembly of said State to be holden at Newport in the County of Newport on the second Monday of June AD 1822

Humbly sheweth, Benjamin Watson of West Greenwich in the County of Kent, Labourer, that he has been confined in the Jail at East Greenwich about fifteen months on a Complaint of Thomas T. Hazzard against him; wherein

the said Hazzard alledged [*sic*] that he was afraid that your Petitioner would do him some private injury, and required Sureties of the Peace and good behaviour against your Petitioner. He would represent to your Honours, that although the Court of Justices required him to enter into a recognizance with Sureties to appear at the then next Court of General Sessions of the Peace; no measures whatever have been taken by the Complainant for the detention of your Petitioner in Jail, and the Court of Sessions would undoubtedly release him from jail, were it in his power to pay the Costs of prosecution, which amount to Twenty two Dollars and Seventy eight Cents. But he would represent to your Honours that he is entirely destitute of Property; that all his connexions [*sic*] are in a similar situation in regard to the means of assisting him; That he has an aged father in Connecticut, who is supported by a Pension from the United States; and that your Petitioner's numerous family, consisting of a wife & seven children, are, and have been, during his confinement, in a suffering condition for the want of his aid and assistance to furnish them with the common comforts of life. He would also represent, that owing to his long confinement, he has himself become destitute of comfortable cloathing [*sic*].

Wherefore he humbly prays your Honors to take his unhappy situation into your Honours wise and humane consideration, and to release him from jail upon such terms and conditions as to your Honours shall seem meet & expedient.

And as in duty bound will ever pray –

(signed) Benjamin Watson

We are surprised by Benjamin's mention of his "aged father in Connecticut, who is supported by a Pension from the United States." Benjamin was imprisoned in January 1821, months after his father was enumerated in 1820 as a resident of West Greenwich, RI, not Voluntown, CT. And Benjamin seemed to believe that his father, who was dropped from the pension roll after March 1821, was still receiving a stipend from the federal government. To the best of our knowledge, neither was true.

For the third time, Benjamin was denied his freedom. At this point, the paper trail documenting Benjamin's situation ends.

Did Benjamin Watson Die In Jail or Out?

In 2015, at the suggestion of Ken Carlson of the RI State Archives, we contacted the Supreme Court Judicial Records Center in Pawtucket, RI, to see if we could learn more. Andrew Smith of the Records Center looked for court documents relating to Benjamin Watson's incarceration in the Kent county jail. He found nothing.

While we have no specific data, our *guess* is that Benjamin Watson died in jail. We base this idea on a few general clues.

A biography of Elias Willoughby Watson (Benjamin's youngest child) was published in a *History of Bureau County, Illinois* in 1855. Willoughby's bio begins thus:

“E. W. Watson, Berlin, was born in Voluntown, Conn., March 25, 1823. He is the son of Benjamin and Mary (Young) Watson. His father died when our subject was an infant...”

Mary's and Benjamin's youngest child was born 42 weeks after Benjamin's third petition was turned down on or around June 10, 1822. That's an interval of nine-and-a-half months. Obviously, Benjamin *did* get out of jail, possibly breaking-out a second time. We'd guess that the authorities found Benjamin and re-imprisoned him.

Willoughby's birth in Voluntown also suggests that Mary (Young) Watson continued to live there, probably waiting for her husband to be released.

The line about Benjamin's death occurring while Willoughby was “an infant” presents a problem of interpretation. In the 21st century, we assume that word means a baby or at least a child too young to walk. But in an older, broader sense, an infant is a minor child. We can't be sure that Willoughby was not yet a toddler when his father died.

Another clue comes from the biography of Willoughby's brother Benjamin Perry Watson, published in 1883 in a *History of Johnson County, Iowa*.

“At an early age the subject was left fatherless, and was fifth of seven children, and when a little over five years of age he commenced work in a cotton factory, and only got three months of schooling afterwards.”

Benjamin Perry Watson – “Perry” – was born on June 3, 1815. The assertion that he went to work in a cotton factory at “a little over five years of age” corresponds more or less to the timing of his father’s imprisonment.

The fact that Perry got only “three months of schooling afterwards” doesn’t *necessarily* mean that his father never returned. *Perhaps* Benjamin was released from jail in a sickened condition and died soon after.

The odds are that Benjamin didn’t come back, that he died in jail. And his young children, forced to work from a tender age, had little chance to attend school. (The 1910 census records the fact that Willoughby, the youngest of the Watson siblings, couldn’t read or write.) The phrase “left fatherless” speaks poignantly to that loss without supplying details.

Most people estimate the year of Benjamin Watson’s death as circa 1824. That’s probably a good guess, given one more small clue – the birth, in 1826, of his sister Alice’s youngest child, a son she named Benjamin G. We think that child might have been named for his lost uncle.

We’d like to know what happened to the 74 acres of land in Exeter, RI, that Benjamin Watson acquired in 1818. Was it sold by someone in the Watson family? Left abandoned? Seized by the town of Exeter over unpaid taxes? The history of that property could yield new clues as to what became of Benjamin.

Widow Mary Watson and Her Family

Massachusetts

Mary Watson appears in Mendon, Massachusetts, as head of household in the 1830 census. In the years following, her two oldest children – sons Lyman and Stephen – show up in Mendon tax valuation records. Eventually, Mary and her children returned to live in Connecticut. None returned to Voluntown.

Lyman was the first to marry. In 1833, in Mendon, he wed Alsa Ann Phillips, born circa 1808, the daughter of Simon Phillips. We haven’t found them in the 1840 census but suspect they lived in Killingly, Connecticut.

Connecticut

Stephen was in Connecticut by 1840, living in the town of Windham. He had

married Caroline B. Hill, a native of Rhode Island. In that year's census, a male child under the age of five, probably a son, was part of this household, along with a female between the ages of five and nine. They probably didn't survive: No one corresponding in age to these children appears in Stephen's household in 1850. An older female (aged 50 to 59) living in this family may have been Mary Watson; she would have been about 55 years old by then. Or she might have been a relative of Caroline's.

Daughter Hannah, married to Thomas Burlingame, was living in Killingly, CT, in 1840. That census indicates they had a son under the age of 5.

Daughter Mary, married to George Chase, lived in Killingly, too. Like her husband, Mary was "of Killingly" when they wed on May 1, 1838. The 1840 census shows a young daughter in their household.

By 1850, all of Benjamin's and Mary's children can be found in Connecticut. Mary, however, does not appear in any of her children's households in that census year. Perhaps she was "in transit" from one to another at the time.

Stephen was still in Windham. Willoughby and his new wife were living with Lyman's family in Mansfield. Amy, Perry, and Mary lived in Killingly with their families.

Hannah and her family now resided in Plainfield. She and husband Thomas Burlingame, a house painter and Rhode Island native, were enumerated with seven children – William H., age 12; Ellen M., age 10; Joseph, age 8; Albert, age 7; Hannah, age 5; Elizabeth, age 3; and Thomas, age 2. The two eldest children were listed as born in Killingly; the younger ones all were born in Woodstock, CT. One of the children must have provided the data to the census taker: The place of birth for both parents was written as "unknown."

Per family lore, Lyman Watson "had two mills in Connecticut, a handle shingle mill and a grist mill." Indeed, Lyman was listed as a "miller" in the 1850 census. The real estate he owned, per this census, was valued at \$4500.

Also per family lore, Willoughby worked in one or both of his brother's mills (though, oddly, the 1850 census lists Willoughby's occupation as "none"). According to his bio in *History of Bureau County, Illinois*, "[b]efore coming to this State he had been a mechanic." We're guessing that Willoughby spent some

portion of his time fixing the parts that kept Lyman's mills running.

Probate records tell us that Stephen owned a sawmill in Windham, where he lived. Per the 1850 census, the real estate that Stephen owned was valued at \$3000.

First Death Among the Watson Siblings

Hannah (Watson) Burlingame died on August 26, 1852, at age 33. She was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Central Village, Plainfield, Windham county, CT (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/84610232/hannah-burlingame>).

The only other Burlingame burial in this cemetery we can find is William H. Burlingame, who died on January 20, 1867; he looks to be Hannah's eldest child. Hannah's namesake daughter, Hannah A. (~1846 – 1886), likely also is buried in Evergreen Cemetery. Hannah A.'s husband, William A. Hall (~1843 – 1888), is interred there; and Hannah A.'s death record says she was buried in Central Village, CT.

Hannah (Watson) Burlingame's widower Thomas appears in the 1860 census with a new wife, Joanna (whose maiden name *may have been* Dean).

All of Hannah's children are still in this household – William; Ellen; Joseph; Albert; Hannah; Elizabeth; and Thomas. There are three additional youngsters – Harriet, age 9, whose age tells us that she was Hannah's last child; as well as Allen, age 6; and Anna, age 4. Allen and Anna would be the children of Thomas's second wife Joanna.

Transitions

In 1854, Lyman left Connecticut to go live in Illinois. He took his wife, his children, and his mother with him. Lyman moved to Troy Grove, in LaSalle county. Willoughby and his wife went, too, settling in Berlin, Bureau county, IL.

Perry Watson soon followed his brothers, moving his family to LaSalle county, IL, in 1857. In 1865 he would relocate to Johnson county, Iowa.

At some point, Stephen Watson and his family left Windham to live in Warwick, RI. Their daughter Hannah Hill Watson, born in 1852, died quite young in 1858. The fact that she was buried in Evergreen Cemetery, in Central Village, Plainfield, suggests that the family might still have been living in Connecticut at the time of

this child's death, and removed to Warwick afterwards.

By 1860, only the surviving Watson daughters, Amy and Mary, and their families still resided in Connecticut – both of them in the town of Killingly.

More About the Watson Sons

Stephen N. Watson

For years we thought that Stephen Watson was a lawyer, based on his occupation as written in the 1850 census (excerpted below):

1	3842	Stephen N Watson	40 M	Lawyer	3000	R. Island
2	"	Caroline "	30 F	"		" "
3	"	Mary E "	10 "			" "
4	"	Caroline F "	7 "			" "

Then, at Ancestry.com, we found probate records for Stephen's estate which mention a saw mill that he had owned in the town of Windham, CT. Stephen wasn't a lawyer; he was a *sawyer*.

Stephen N. Watson is described as "late of Warwick, State of R. Island" in documents that entered probate in Windham county, CT, on June 30, 1859. Stephen's property included "1 house & about 30 acres of Land with Saw Mill & appurtenances thereon belonging," appraised at \$1500.

The inventory included logs and lumber and a "Lot [of] Hay in Barn," in addition to items like a bee hive; a box stove; a plough; a gun; a "pleasure wagon" and harness; a brass kettle; a quilting frame; a quill wheel; and a "fire frame" (defined at merriam-webster.com as "a cast-iron frame made to be permanently set into a large fireplace to reduce its size").

There were no personal items like wearing apparel in this inventory. It's as though this family packed up the household necessities and left the big stuff behind.

Stephen's widow Caroline and their two surviving daughters were still living in Warwick at the time of the 1860 census.

Caroline sold off the Windham, CT, property, valued at a total of \$1574.54, to pay off debts:

To the Honorable Court of Probate within and for the district of Windham, the subscriber administratrix of the goods and estate of Stephen N. Watson late of Warwick in the State of R. Island deceased reports —

That the personal estate of said deceased beside the furniture of said deceased being less than enough to support the family for six months and the debts amounting to \$3146.27, I sold all the real estate by order of said Court of Probate, at private sale for \$1200, with which I obtained a discharge of all the debts against said estate so that now there are no debts or property, due or remaining —

Dated at Plainfield, April 28th, 1861

(signed) Caroline B. Watson

Sworn to and subscribed this 28th day of April 1861
Before me William Dyer Justice of the Peace

Stephen Watson was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Central Village, Plainfield, CT (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/84488756/stephen-n-watson>).

Daughter Mary Emeline Watson died in 1869, at age 28 or 29. She was laid to rest with her father and sister in Evergreen Cemetery.

The 1870 census shows Caroline B. Watson living in Killingly, CT, with her one surviving child, Caroline Frances Watson – who went by “Frances,” no doubt to avoid confusion between herself and her mother. The elder Caroline was running a boarding house that, in addition to daughter Frances, housed thirteen other people.

By 1880, mother and daughter were living in Plainfield. They shared a house with enough other people surnamed Hill that we wonder if they were relatives of Caroline B., whose maiden name was Hill.

Caroline B. (Hill) Watson died in 1894. She, too, was interred in Evergreen Cemetery.

Frances Watson remained in Plainfield, at least as far as we can tell from the census record. In 1900, she was living alone. In 1910, Frances seems to be in the same place (the neighbors’ names look familiar) but she was sharing the house

Miss Frances Watson, 77, died on Tuesday at the home of Mrs. York, in Plainfield, where she has been staying for several months on account of ill health. She had lived here all her life and was the last of her family. Funeral services were held here on Saturday afternoon at four o'clock at the Congregational church. Rev. Mary Macomber, officiated. The body was taken to the vault in the Memorial chapel at Evergreen cemetery.

with other folks.

By 1920, Frances was living in the home of Nathan and Nellie York in Plainfield.

Frances died at the York residence in March 1920. On March 9, 1920, the *Norwich (CT) Bulletin* ran her obituary on page 9.

Frances was, indeed, “the last of her family.” None of the children of Stephen and Caroline Watson ever married or had offspring that we know of. We do know that Frances had *not* lived in Plainfield “all her life,” but there was no one left to supply the correct information.

Caroline Frances Watson was buried in Evergreen Cemetery with her parents and sisters. Her house was sold at auction to a man named Guilford Dyer who lived in Plainfield.

At the auction held at the home of the late Miss Frances Watson the home, which has been in the Watson family for many years, was sold to Guilford Dyer, who owns adjoining property.

Joseph Lyman⁶ Watson

We know the most about Joseph Lyman Watson because of the family lore preserved by one of his granddaughters. This lore, however, contains some stories that we can't confirm.

Lyman's First Wife

Lyman's first wife was Alsa Ann PHILLIPS, born circa 1809. Both Lyman and Alsa Ann were residents of Mendon, Massachusetts, when their marriage intentions were recorded by that town on February 24, 1833. We have found her name written as *Alsa*, *Alcy*, *Elsa*, and *Elsie*. We are referring to her as *Alsa* because of how she was named in both her father's will and in a related legal document.

In the 1830 census, the name immediately following that of Mary Watson, Lyman's mother, was Abraham Phillips. We thought we'd find a connection to Alsa Ann, but didn't. Alsa's father was Simon Phillips of Glocester, Rhode Island. He named her in his will, along with his son Edwin.

PHILLIPS, Simon, of Gl, infirm. Will dated 1 Sep 1847, proved 26 Feb 1848, pg 260. Mentions: Son Edwin Phillips. Daughter Alcy Watson wife of Lyman Watson of CT. Brothers Thaddeus Phillips & Caleb Phillips dec. Sister Esther Jarvis late of N.Y. dec leaving unnamed heirs. Friend Samuel Steere exor. Witn: Wanton Steere, Francis Reynolds, Samuel Steere.

The family lore says that Alsa "was a love child of her otherwise childless father and was adopted and raised as his lawful child. She came from a home of some wealth and refinement. Her father was a judge." Those assertions don't quite line up with what we find in the above abstract of Simon's will – unless Simon Phillips and his wife adopted both Edwin and Alsa. We find no references to Simon being a judge.

Lyman and Alsa Ann had six children together:

William, who died on September 17, 1838, at the age of four years and four days. This child was buried in Adams-Smith Cemetery in Killingly, CT.

Mary Jane⁷, born in June 1836 in Connecticut. On March 15, 1857, in Illinois, she married Lewis N. Rogers (1829 – 1875), with whom she had three sons (surname ROGERS) – Burnham; George Franklin; and Herbert.

Ann Maria⁷, born circa November 1838 in Connecticut; died on October 28, 1860 in Illinois. She went by her middle name.

Sarah Elizabeth⁷, born February 8, 1843, in Killingly, CT. Sarah married Albert E. Swap (1839 – 1915), with whom she had four children (surname SWAP) – Albert Jay; Claude Ludell; Elsie; and Sarah Ethel Lorena.

Melissa⁷, born January 16, 1845, in Connecticut. Melissa married Edgar Lott Presher (1844 – 1901) on December 20, 1865, in LaSalle county, IL. They had two children (surname PRESHER) – sons Joseph Lott and Edgar Blye.

William Lyman⁷, born February 14, 1848, in Mansfield, CT. William married Harriet A. Swap (1850 – 1933) on February 21, 1872 in LaSalle county, IL. They had two daughters (surname WATSON) – Elsie D., who died at 17 months of age; and Edna L., who is presumed to be the source of the family lore.

On December 31, 1847, Alsa's father, Simon Phillips, died at the age of 64. He was buried in what is called the [Phillips Lot](#) because his was the only interment with an inscribed headstone. Simon Phillips' Find a Grave memorial can be found at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/163249937/simon-phillips>.

Simon's will, which left half of his estate, more or less, to Alsa, was proved in Glocester, Rhode Island, on February 26, 1848.

Alsa died two days later.

Alsa's death occurred exactly two weeks after her son William Lyman was born. It's reasonable to assume that her passing was due to some complication of childbirth, likely infection.

Alsa Ann (Phillips) Watson was laid to rest in Adams-Smith Cemetery in Killingly, CT, where her first-born son (also named William) was buried in 1838.

In January 1849, Lyman Watson petitioned the Rhode Island General Assembly, asking to be appointed guardian to his minor children in the matter of their inheritance through their deceased mother. This was necessary, apparently, because Lyman was a resident of Connecticut, not Rhode Island.

Lyman's request was granted on January 13, 1849, by the Glocester Court of Probate, to which the petition had been sent for approval. Permission was given for Lyman to sell the inherited real estate and invest the proceeds for the benefit of his children, "provided however, that the said sale and investment be made under the advice and direction of the Court of Probate of said Glocester."

Lyman's Second Wife

On April 2, 1849, Lyman married again. His second wife was Mary Etta TUFTS of Eastford, Connecticut, born in March 1819, per the 1900 census.

Mary Etta *may have been* the daughter of Chester Tufts (~1782 – 1843) and his

wife Prudence Strickland (~1785 – 1843). This family lived in both Ashford and Eastford, in Windham county, Connecticut. The record of Mary Etta’s marriage to Lyman Watson says that she was born in Ashford and was a resident of Eastford.

The 1900 census, taken when Mary Etta (Tufts) Watson was 81 years old, records an odd “fact” about her. In response to the questions posed in columns 11 and 12 – “Mother of how many children” and “Number of those children living” – Mary Etta’s data says that she’d had four children, two of whom were then living.

Simpson Francis M.	Wife	W. M.	Nov. 1853	46	M.	24		
Katharine	Wife	W. F.	Dec. 1854	45	M.	24	7	5
Marietta	Daughter	W. F.	Oct. 1841	18	S			
Arthur	Son	W. M.	Dec. 1844	15	S			
Earl	Son	W. M.	Nov. 1846	13	S			
Lyman	Son	W. M.	Feb. 1890	10	S			
Elmer	Son	W. M.	Sept. 1894	5	S			
Watson Mary E.	Mother-in-law	W. F.	March 1819	81	Wd.		4	2

To the best of our knowledge, Mary Etta (Tufts) Watson had only one child – Catherine, who married Francis M. Simpson. We cannot account for this anomaly except to say that there must have been a misunderstanding.

The family lore suggests that the Watson children didn’t like their stepmother: “A year or so later, tired of struggling along with his family of babies, the eldest twelve, Lyman married a spinster of uncertain age and temper, Marietta Tufts.”

Lyman Watson’s household was full in 1850. The census listing does not include his mother (we can’t find Mary Watson in this census); but her name may have gotten missed in the shuffle of five children and two adult couples which included Willoughby Watson and his wife.

Joseph Watson	41	"	Miller	1800	5	W. Island
Mary E	30	F	"			C - T
Mary J	11	"				"
Ann A	9	"				"
Sarah E	7	"				"
Eliza	5	"				"
Wm L	2	M				"
Edw W	27	"	none			W. Island
Jillia J	20	F	1 M			C - T

On December 21, 1853, in Mansfield, CT, Mary Etta gave birth to her only child. Lyman and Mary Etta named their daughter Catherine Amelia, and called her Kate.

Moving to Illinois

Kate Watson was still a baby when her father sold his Connecticut property and moved his family to Illinois in 1854. Lyman's mother, Mary Watson, went with them, as did Willoughby Watson and his wife Fidelia.

Lyman settled in [Troy Grove](#), LaSalle county, IL, where his mother continued to live with him and his family. Willoughby and Fidelia Watson settled in Berlin, in Bureau county, about fifteen miles west of Troy Grove.

Weddings and Funerals

By 1860, eldest daughter Mary Jane was married to Lewis N. Rogers and living in Meriden, LaSalle county, about 10 miles northeast of Troy Grove. In that census, Mary Jane's 17-year-old sister Sarah shows up twice – once in the Rogers household (where she's listed as "servant") and again in the household of her father and stepmother.

Daughter Maria's appearance in the 1860 census, in her father's household, would be her last. She died at 21 years, 11 months of age on October 28, 1860. Maria was buried in Crandall Cemetery in Mendota, LaSalle co., IL.

Daughter Melissa married Edgar Lott Presher in LaSalle county, IL, on December 20, 1865. Following their wedding they moved to Kentland, in Jefferson Township, Newton county, Indiana, which is where they remained.

On December 13, 1866, in LaSalle county, IL, daughter Sarah married Albert Ebenezer Swap. Albert was a Civil War veteran who served for nearly three years in Co. C, 7th Illinois Cavalry. Albert wrote to Sarah during the war. This web page – <https://sparedshared5.wordpress.com/2014/03/02/1863-albert-ebenezer-swap-to-sarah-elizabeth-watson/> – posts once such letter that Albert composed on November 11, 1863, in Tennessee. (We hope this link remains alive; this is a particularly lovely piece of family history.)

Son William Lyman married Harriet A. Swap (1850 – 1933) on February 21, 1872 in LaSalle county, IL. Harriet Swap, born in Wisconsin, was the younger sister of Albert E. Swap, husband to William's older sister Sarah. These Swap siblings were the children of Andrew Lafayette Swap Jr. and his wife Sybil Hitchcock.

William and Harriet Watson eventually followed Edgar and Melissa (Watson) Presher to Newton county, Indiana. William, Harriet, and their daughter Edna were enumerated in Jefferson Township in 1880. This family shows up in later census years in Grant Township, also in Newton county.

On March 15, 1876, in LaSalle county, Kate Watson – Joseph Lyman Watson’s youngest child – wed Francis Marion (“Frank”) Simpson (1850 – 1907). Frank, Kate, and their family lived with her parents and her grandmother Mary Watson.

On March 26, 1879, Mary (Young) Watson died at her residence in Troy Grove. Lyman was executor of Mary’s estate. We have not found any listing of her grave site; but we could *assume* that she was buried in Crandall Cemetery, where Lyman and Mary Etta are interred.

Watson Burials in Crandall Cemetery

The photos for [Crandall Cemetery](#) at the Find A Grave website bear witness to the sad condition of this small rural cemetery. Many, if not most, of the markers are toppled in such a way as to suggest vandalism.

Of the 31 burials recorded for this cemetery, eight of them are Watson-related. These include [Ann Maria Watson](#), Lyman’s daughter with his first wife Alsa Ann; [Joseph Lyman Watson](#) himself, and his second wife [Mary Etta \(Tufts\) Watson](#); and five of Lyman’s grandchildren who died young.

Two of the child graves came from the family of Albert E. and Sarah E. (Watson) Swap. The dates of birth and death for their daughter [Elsie](#) are the same – November 26, 1869. Their son [Claude L.](#) died on February 29, 1880 at the age of 9 years, 5 months, and 3 days.

Another two child burials include [Bertha E. Simpson](#), firstborn child of Catherine “Kate” Watson and her husband Francis M. “Frank” Simpson, as well as their second-born, a son named [Freddie](#). Both of these children appear in the 1880 census. Freddie is listed as “Infant” (male) and noted as having been born in May. He was about two weeks old at the time, and they hadn’t yet named him.

<i>Simpson Frank</i>	W	M	28	
<i>Kate</i>	W	F	26	
<i>Bertha</i>	W	F	2	
<i>Infant</i>	W	M	1/2	May

Freddie M. Simpson died on October 29, 1880, at the age of 5 months, 10 days. Bertha E. Simpson's inscription apparently was hard to decipher: She died on October 28th (with the year missing) at the age of 2 years, 3 months and 1 day (with a question mark added). Since the death dates of these youngsters seem to be one day apart, perhaps some contagious disease took them both.

A close look at the Find A Grave memorial for [Mary Etta \(Tufts\) Watson](#) reveals a discrepancy. We know she lived until 1903, yet that listing gives her death date as May 7, **1874**. What's that about?

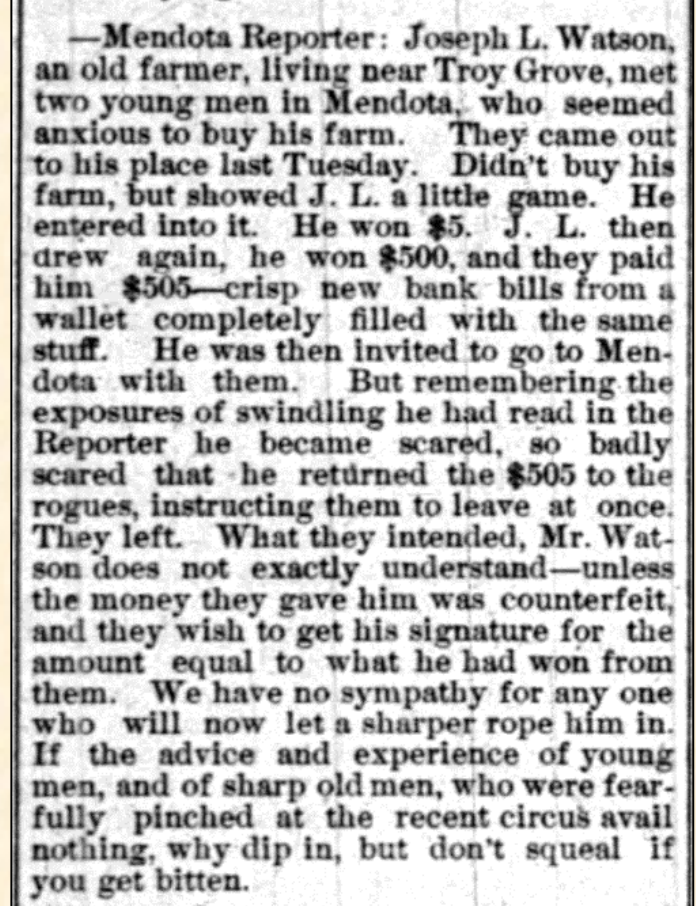
A little extra data at this listing says "d/o [*daughter of*] Ma & HA 1 yr 5 mo 2 da." That "Ma" could be a mis-transcribed or difficult-to-read "Wm." William L. and Harriet A. (Swap) Watson lost their seventeen-month-old daughter Elsie D. Watson in 1874. And yet ... we find a grave memorial for Elsie D. Watson, including a photo of her gravestone, [at Goodland Cemetery](#), in Goodland, Newton county, Indiana, where her parents are buried.

When Elsie died in 1874, William and Harriet Watson probably buried her in Crandall Cemetery. Either they reinterred her remains in Goodland when they moved there to live; or they simply put a commemorative gravestone with her name and dates in the plot they purchased for their own burials.

Crandall Cemetery is located on the east side of East 475th Road in Troy Grove Township ([according to Google Maps](#)). Find A Grave, however, lists this cemetery as being in Mendota.

Lyman's Last Years

On June 27, 1885, the *Streator Free Press* newspaper in LaSalle county published an item mentioning Joseph L. Watson. Lyman, who would have been 78 years old at the time, fortunately managed not to get taken in by a couple of grifters.



—Mendota Reporter: Joseph L. Watson, an old farmer, living near Troy Grove, met two young men in Mendota, who seemed anxious to buy his farm. They came out to his place last Tuesday. Didn't buy his farm, but showed J. L. a little game. He entered into it. He won \$5. J. L. then drew again, he won \$500, and they paid him \$505—crisp new bank bills from a wallet completely filled with the same stuff. He was then invited to go to Mendota with them. But remembering the exposures of swindling he had read in the Reporter he became scared, so badly scared that he returned the \$505 to the rogues, instructing them to leave at once. They left. What they intended, Mr. Watson does not exactly understand—unless the money they gave him was counterfeit, and they wish to get his signature for the amount equal to what he had won from them. We have no sympathy for any one who will now let a sharper rope him in. If the advice and experience of young men, and of sharp old men, who were fearfully pinched at the recent circus avail nothing, why dip in, but don't squeal if you get bitten.



This undated photo of Lyman and Mary Etta Watson was shared with us by one of their descendants. We don't know what prompted the making of this photograph. Perhaps they were marking a special occasion, like their 40th wedding anniversary in 1889.

Joseph Lyman Watson died at his home on April 6, 1893, aged 86 years, 3 months, and 9 days. He was buried in Crandall Cemetery in Mendota, LaSalle county, Illinois.

We have a digital copy of a photocopy of a handwritten copy of what appears to be Lyman's obituary. It says:

Death of an Old Citizen

Joseph Lyman Watson, an old and respected resident, well and favorably known in all this vicinity, passed away at his residence Friday, April 6th. Mr. Watson was born in Washington, Rhode Island, December 27, 1806, and came to Troy Grove in 1854 where he has ever since resided. He was buried from the old homestead where he had resided for many years Saturday afternoon. The simple services at the home conducted by the Rev. Allen were attended by many sympathizing neighbors, friends and relatives. The remains were laid to rest in the Crandall burying ground.

The widow and five children, Mrs. M. J. Rodgers [*sic*] of Meriden, Mrs. E. A. Swap of Fairbury, Mrs. E. L. Presher of Kentland, Ind., Mr. W. L. Watson of Goodland, Ind., and Mrs. F. M. Frank Simpson of Troy Grove survive the husband and father.

Mary Etta survived her husband by ten years. She was photographed with daughter Kate Simpson, granddaughter Myrtle (Simpson) Gustavson, and a baby great-grandchild that we assume to be Francis L. Gustavson, born in 1902. Mary Etta (Tufts) Watson died in 1903 and was buried with Lyman in Crandall Cemetery.



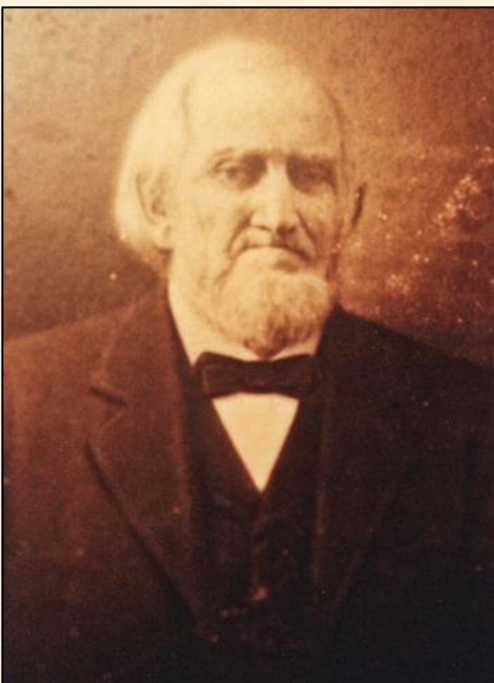
Elias Willoughby⁶ Watson

Nearly half of Willoughby Watson's biographical sketch in a *History of Bureau County, Illinois* talks about his wife's parents. Comments in italic are ours.

“E. W. Watson, Berlin, was born in Voluntown, Conn., March 25, 1823. He is the son of Benjamin and Mary (Young) Watson. His father died when our subject was an infant, but his mother lived to the age of ninety-three years, and died March 25, 1877. *[Mary Watson died on March 26, 1879.]* E. W. Watson was the youngest of eight children, five of whom are now living.

“He was married June 4, 1850, to Fidelia L. Fisk, in Tolland County, Conn., who was born in the same county April 7, 1830. Her parents, William A. and Selyma (Whittemore) Fisk, were both natives of Connecticut. In 1855 they *[William & Selyma Fisk]* came to Bureau County, and settled in Malden, where he was engaged in business until his death, October 13, 1871, at the age of seventy years. He was one of the successful business men of Malden, and always ready to assist in any public enterprise. His wife died in Connecticut, within two miles of her birth-place, April 16, 1884, at the age of eighty-three. Of their family four are still living. *[According to this, Selyma returned to Connecticut after her husband William's death. But she seems to be buried in Malden, Bureau co., IL, with her husband.]*

“Mr. Watson came from Tolland County Conn., in 1854, and settled on his present farm, which was then but slightly improved. Before coming to this



State he had been a mechanic, and had but little money, but by industry has accumulated a competency. His farm contains 195 acres of well-improved land. Mr. and Mrs. Watson have five children, viz.: Ida L., born August 11, 1857, wife of F. M. Johnson, an attorney in Grundy Centre, Iowa; Carrie F., born May 26, 1860; Charles A., born April 30, 1863; William T. S., born March 7, 1866; Jennie M., born April 5, 1868.”

This undated photo of Elias Willoughby Watson was shared by the same Watson researcher who provided us with the other photos shown in this essay.

Elias Willoughby Watson died on June 1, 1910 at the age of 87. He was buried in Prairie Repose Cemetery in Dover, Bureau county, IL, with his wife Fidelia, who had died in 1909. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/102728458/elias-willowby-watson>

Benjamin Perry⁶ Watson

Aside from census and burial records, most of what we know about Benjamin Perry Watson comes from his brief biography, published in a *History of Johnson County, Iowa* in 1883. Comments in italic are ours.

“B. P. Watson, farmer, Post Office, River Junction, was born on June 3, 1816. [*He was born in 1815.*] His grandfather Samuel Watson was a soldier of the Revolution from the first until its close and also in the War of 1812. [*Samuel Watson did not serve during the War of 1812.*] At an early age the subject was left fatherless, and was fifth of seven children, and when a little over five years of age he commenced work in a cotton factory, and only got three months of schooling afterwards. He worked there the greater part of the time for thirty years. In 1857 he immigrated to Illinois, LaSalle county, and followed farming and in 1865 came to Johnson County, and bought the farm he now lives on of 200 acres and has it well-improved. He was married at Plainfield, Connecticut, September 4, 1843, to Miss Hannah Cole, a native of that state. They have one son Chauncey L. who is still at home and has charge of the farm. He raises some fine horses and cattle.”

In 1850, when Perry, his wife Hannah, and their one-year-old son Chauncey Leroy were enumerated in Killingly, CT, Perry’s occupation was listed as “Livery Stable” – which Ancestry.com describes as “Services incidental to transportation.” Perry’s work likely involved stable maintenance and caring for the horses.

The 1860 census shows Perry, Hannah, and son Chauncey residing in Mendota, LaSalle county, IL. By 1870, this family was living in Fremont, Johnson county, IA, which is where they stayed.

Perry died on Feb. 7, 1885. He is buried in Swank Cemetery, Johnson County, IA (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/115046374/benjamin-perry-watson>).

We have long thought that Perry Watson’s biographical sketch in a *History of Johnson County, Iowa* sounds plaintive in tone. In this type of self-congratulatory

bio, men often mentioned their parents and made general observations about their families of origin. Not Perry. He spoke instead of his grandfather's service in the American Revolution, and of the hardships he endured as a "fatherless" child. There is no mention of where he came from originally.

Then we found a copy of his mother's will at Ancestry.com. Was there a falling-out between Mary Watson and her son Perry?

Mary (Young) Watson's Will

In 1865 Perry Watson left Illinois, moving to Iowa to live. Likely he departed before July 3rd, the date of the 1865 Illinois state census; he does not appear in that enumeration. On April 25th of the same year, Mary made her last will and testament, in which she mentions each of her living children *except Perry*.

Mary Watson's will was written in the legal language common to such documents; and it's short and to the point.

To her daughters Amy Young and Mary Chase she left identical bequests: The sum of \$100 and one set of silver teaspoons "consisting of six in number to be excepted [*sic*] by her the said (Amy / Mary) in full discharge of all claim to my said estate."

To her son Elias Willoughby Watson, Mary bequeathed "the sum of five hundred dollars to be excepted [*sic*] by him the said Elias in full discharge of all claim to my said estate."

Mary appointed her son Joseph Lyman Watson to be the sole executor of her will, and bequeathed to him "all the Rest Residue and Remainder" of her estate.

At the time of Mary's death, before any of her debts were paid, her estate was worth \$1,765.67. Her "chattel property," consisting only of her wearing apparel, bed, and bedding, was valued at \$35.00 – which covered the cost of Mary's coffin. (The shroud and the "services of home" came to \$8.25 more.)

Mary didn't own real estate; but she did have assets in the form of notes and bank stock, which probably had been paying dividends over the years.

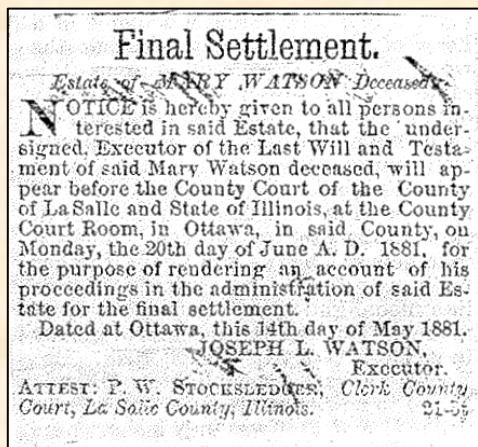
Mary's note relative to "School Directors District N^o 10" in Mendota township, dated Sept. 7, 1874, appears to have been some kind of municipal bond. It was worth \$1,400, plus \$242.67 in accrued interest. Her "Six Shares of \$40 each in Merchants Bank, Norwich, Connecticut," dating to March 3, 1846, were sold at a loss for \$200, though it did come with \$11.30 in interest. (We wish we knew how Mary came into this investment money in both 1846 and 1874.)

NOTES AND ACCOUNTS.						
BY WHOM OWING.	DATE.	INTEREST.	GOOD.	DOUBTFUL.	DESPERATE.	AMOUNT.
School Directors District No 10, Town 36. N. R. 1. E. 3 ^d P. 1 ^m .	1874 Sept 7 th	8 p ^{er} cent				\$1,400 00
Six Shares of \$40 each in Merchants Bank, Norwich, Connecticut	1846 Mar 3 ^d					240 00
			Sub. Due from Mar. 1 ^o 1878.			

DATE.	ITEMS OF RECEIPTS.	Amount.	Total Am't.	
			Dolls.	Cts.
1879.	Interest on \$1400 - note (one year)	\$112 00		
1880, March 15	Sub. on note of School Directors, Dist. No. 10, Town of Mendota Ill.	112 00		
1880, May 1	Rec ^d the full amount of note of School Directors, District No. 10 Township of Mendota, and all interest due thereon, amounting to	\$1418 67	\$1642 67	

In the end, Lyman Watson got \$946.79 from his mother's estate, which took two years to pass through probate.

The documents show that Lyman, through his attorney, published notice of the impending final settlement of Mary Watson's estate in the *Mendota Reporter* newspaper in spring of 1881. On June 22, 1881, he also mailed three notices to



other people in the Watson family not mentioned in Mary's will.

Once such notice was sent to Mary's granddaughter through her deceased daughter Hannah (Watson) Burlingame. This granddaughter also was named Hannah; her married name was Hall, and she lived in "Wooster" (Worcester), Massachusetts.

Another was sent to Emeline Watson of Plainfield, Connecticut. We wonder if it reached Caroline Frances Watson – "Frances" – the sole surviving child of Mary's deceased son Stephen N. Watson. (Emeline Watson had died in 1869.) Plainfield, CT, was the correct address, so perhaps the substitution of *Emeline* for *Caroline* was just a minor error.

And another was sent to Benjamin P. Watson via *Iowa City, Iowa*. Perry lived in Fremont, Johnson county, IA, about 70 miles southwest of Iowa City as the crow flies. We wonder if that notice ever reached Perry.

The point of these notices was to inform Hannah, Frances, and Perry that if they wished to assert a claim against Mary Watson's estate, they were required to

"... appear before the County Court of the County of La Salle and State of Illinois, at the County Court House in Ottawa, in said County, on Monday, the 18th day of July A.D. 1881, for the purpose of rendering an account of his [*sic*] proceedings in the administration of said Estate for the final settlement."

One of the probate documents informs us that "no one ... appeared to object or show cause ..." – indicating that none of these folks traveled to LaSalle county, IL, on such short notice.

The simplest explanation for why Mary left her son Perry out of her will is because she might already have given him what amounted to his inheritance.

When that is the case, it's typical for a testator to mention a son or daughter by name, saying that he or she had already received their portion. Mary's failure to mention Perry at all seems significant.

And given that Perry had been living in Fremont, Johnson county, IA, for a long time, we wonder why Lyman did not have a better mailing address for his younger brother. This, too, hints at estrangement.

Watson Family Lore

Family lore from Joseph Lyman Watson's branch has survived in a typescript document attributed to Edna (Watson) Bruce (1875 – 1954), his granddaughter.

We lightly edited this document – correcting typos and spelling, and adding some punctuation for clarity. Items in *italic* are the author's own comments.

THE WATSON FAMILY

[Of] the Watson family I do not know anything farther back than my great-grandmother Mary Young Watson. She was the mother of CAROLINE [*this is incorrect; should be AMY*], STEPHEN, HANNAH, PERRY, MARY, LYMAN, and WILLOUGHBY and their home was in Connecticut in two different villages, one in Mansfield Center. These were near the city of Willimantic. Her husband's business (I don't know).

She was born in 1790 or a little later [*more like 1785*], was a small, black-eyed, dark skinned woman. This dark skin and black eyes appear in each generation. Her son Lyman had hazel eyes and dark hair, not black, but his three daughters had coal black hair and eyes; his son William had hazel eyes and dark brown hair, but this William's grandson Robert Watson Bruce went back to the darker hair and eyes. She had a quick fiery temper. This, too, has appeared in each generation.

In those days men were imprisoned for debt. Her husband signed a note for a friend. When this note came due the friend had disappeared; my great-grandfather had not the money to pay it. My great-grandmother had small children and was expecting to be delivered of another in a few days. Her husband was notified that on a certain day he must pay or go to prison. He could not pay and was preparing to go.

The sheriff came, great-grandmother Mary Watson met him at the door and pleaded with him for her husband. He was obdurate; he must have, in the name of the law, the money or the man. "You shall not enter my house," she said in a fit of rage. And seizing an ax that stood in the corner, [she] struck the astonished sheriff

such a blow that he died from the effects.

Those were terrible times for everyone. Her child was born; in due time came her trial, and she was acquitted and her husband was not sent to prison.

When Joseph Lyman, my grandfather, married, she made her home with him. She had been a widow for some years. I have visited the house where they began housekeeping, it is more than 100 years old. The same trees and hardy rose bushes are there that were planted by Lyman and his bride Elsie Ann Phillips Watson in 1834.

Elsie Ann was a beautiful girl, small, good form, black eyes and hair and a clear pink complexion. Of her mother I don't know much, otherwise, but she was a love child of her otherwise childless father and was adopted and raised as his lawful child. She came from a home of some wealth and refinement. Her father was a judge. On her wedding day he gave her a bushel measure of silver dollars, which were kept in the attic and they were spent for her use only. So frugal was she that when her eldest daughter Mary Jane was 20 years old and Elsie Ann had been dead three years, some of the dollars were left; and Jane made a big uproar because her stepmother used some of them to buy a carpet.

Lyman and Elsie lived happily. To their union, six children were born: William, who died in infancy; Mary Jane; Maria; Sarah Elizabeth; Melissa; and William Lyman. Elsie died when this baby boy was two weeks old.

A year or so later, tired of struggling along with his family of babies, the eldest twelve, Lyman married a spinster of uncertain age and temper, Marietta Tufts. To her, one child was born, Katherine.

My grandfather had two mills in Connecticut, a handle shingle mill and a grist mill. Remember Connecticut was the home of the Salem witchcraft [*actually, that was Salem, Massachusetts*] so do not be surprised at some of the stories the Watsons believed and told and retold.

Once grandfather was on the train after his wife's death and she appeared to him and warned him to jump off, which he did. In a few minutes the train was wrecked and some were killed.

Great-Uncle Willoughby had an order for shingles and was trying to run the saw.

A moth kept putting out the light; then the saw wouldn't run, and the dust seemed like blood. He knew what to do. He stopped the saw, beat a horse-shoe red hot, and nailed it on the butt of the log. The next day the saw worked all right but an old woman in the neighborhood had a bad burn shaped like a horse-shoe on one hip. He decided to quit and went to the grist mill and tried to grind some corn, but the meal ran out appearing like blood.

Once when hauling logs a hand held the wheel so it could not turn. He hit it a terrible blow and an old woman in the neighborhood suffered a broken wrist.

Many of these superstitions were carried into the new country but finally died out. *[This sentence was followed by "(Russell)." We don't know what that means.]*

[Aunt] Jane believed in all kinds of signs. She believed she had special warnings of Uncle Lewis's death, also cousin Frank's. She told tales of things that she saw and heard in her old house in Meriden *[in La Salle county, IL]*. Your grandmother and Aunt Missie *[probably Melissa (Watson) Presher]* used to refer to them as Aunt Jane's ghosts.

One time when your mother was a little girl, she and her mother went there for a visit. *[We don't know who "your mother" is.]* She wandered around, looking at things, and came back and said, "Where does Aunt Jane keep her goats? I can't find them."

In 1854, when Mary Jane, the eldest, was 18 and William was 6, the family went west. Wonderful tales had come back of the great fertility of the prairie land in Illinois from their friends the Hills, Rays, and Turners, and others who had preceded them to Illinois. A sale was made, and all their linen, bedding, etc., was packed in seven trunks and the long journey began – Lyman, Marietta, three daughters, one son, the baby Kate and the grandmother Mary.

They left the train at La Salle and made the rest of the trip 20 miles in a bus, loaded with trunks. When they reached there, the children were glad to see their old playmates. In a comparatively short time they were settled on their own place, 160 acres a mile and a half from the town of Mendota in La Salle county. This farm is still owned and farmed by the son of Aunt Kate named Lyman.

They began the years of farming in a new country. The Black Hawks, a band of friendly Indians, and their chief Shanbena were still there. I have heard my father

tell tales of him. He was cutting up pumpkins for the cows once and, looking around, saw Shanbena on his little black pony. He dropped the ax and ran as [fast] as he could while the old Indian laughed. Once he saw him in town and some men were trying to get him weighed; he refused, said scales were for hogs. Another time, when driving through a creek, his fat squaw fell out in the water and Shanbena laughed. I have visited his grave. A stone that on the prairie are called “nigger heads” [*sic*] is used to mark it. In my father’s library is a book containing his history.

So the boy William grew up. The stepmother had little interest or affection for him; his father was busy and gave him little attention.

Remarks and Reflections on the Family Lore

In many respects, this family lore is typical: It presents a number of facts fairly accurately, and garbles the rest. It also preserves a history of searing trauma, which helps to explain why (and which of) the stories were told and retold.

The lore about Benjamin Watson being on his way to jail appears to be a sanitized version of events, one that preserves Benjamin’s innocence (genuine or not). The aspects of the “disappearing friend,” and Benjamin not being able to pay a certain sum of money, bear some relationship to the facts.

Benjamin’s first petition for release was co-signed by seventeen men who recommended “granting of the prayer of it.” Benjamin was required “to find Surety in the Sum of Two Thousand Dollars to keep the peace and to pay the Cost of prosecution; ... that the largeness of the sum required ... renders it impossible for him to find any persons who will be willing to become his Sureties.” When Benjamin submitted his second petition for release, those friends were absent and Benjamin was no longer “of Voluntown” but “of West Greenwich.”

The matter of Mary Watson having “a quick fiery temper” is illustrated by the story of how she swung an ax at the sheriff. We think it entirely possible that Mary threatened someone with an ax. We think it unlikely, however, that she killed someone with an ax – and then was tried and acquitted for the same.

It’s unsettling, however, that this family lore contains a ‘memory’ of a violent death. It could be that the death of Benjamin Watson, in or out of prison, became attached to the memory of the anguish of the situation.

“Those were terrible times for everyone.” In 1821 alone, both Benjamin and his brother Samuel Jr. were languishing in jail; and their father, Samuel #26 Watson, lost his federal pension, falling back into poverty. In 1822, Benjamin’s brother Hazzard Watson died. And, of course, Benjamin himself died circa 1824. There was much suffering for the Watson family in a concentrated period of time.

“Chief Shanbena,” mentioned in the family lore, is a well-documented Native American from that place and time. His name can be found spelled *Shaubena* and, most commonly, *Shabbona*. Visit [Chief Benjamin Shabbona’s Find A Grave memorial](#) to read a biography and view a photo of this man.

Summary

Benjamin⁵ Watson was born in West Greenwich, Rhode Island, circa 1783-84, the son of Samuel⁴ #26 Watson and his wife Abiah Young.

Benjamin married Mary Young circa early 1806. They had eight children together, seven of whom survived to adulthood.

About seven years after selling his land in West Greenwich and moving to adjacent Voluntown, Connecticut, Benjamin Watson was jailed for allegedly uttering threats against Thomas Tillinghast Hazard of West Greenwich, a man from a wealthy and influential family. Unable to raise the exorbitant sum of surety money required for his release, Benjamin spent years in the Kent county jail, which is likely where he died. We do not know exactly when and where Benjamin died, nor where he was buried.

Mary (Young) Watson and the children moved to Mendon, Massachusetts, where they lived for a decade or more. Eventually all of them returned to Windham county, Connecticut, which is where they raised their families.

Three of the Watson siblings, their wives and children – and widow Mary – moved to Illinois in the 1850s. The westward migration continued with one of the sons moving to Iowa, and grandchildren going to Indiana to live.

Sometime in the 20th century, a Watson great-grandchild recalled the family stories to a younger descendant, who put those memories down on paper. That family lore captures the dramatic arc of Benjamin’s and Mary’s story, the names of

their children (most of them) and some of the personal history of the eldest of the Watson siblings, Joseph Lyman Watson.

Appendix

Why We Think Benjamin Watson Lived in Voluntown (not Sterling), Connecticut

The 1820 US federal census records for the towns of Sterling and Voluntown, both then in Windham county, Connecticut, may have gotten reversed somehow.

The pages for Sterling – that town’s name written at the top – have “Voluntown” written perpendicularly on the left margin of all ten pages, with the word Voluntown appearing not once but twice on the ninth. The pages for Voluntown – likewise with that town’s name written at the top – have “Sterling” written perpendicularly on the left margin of all seven pages.

In an effort to learn more about this weird twist in the records, we called the Boston branch of the National Archives. George Sermuksnis answered the phone that day and took a look at the microfilmed images of the pages in question. He was flabbergasted; he’d never seen this before. Mr. Sermuksnis’s best guess was that somehow these pages acquired an extra layer of notation. To him, the sideways writing looked like it was replicated, carbon-copy style, over multiple pages. And he agreed with us that the whole thing was pretty “squirrely.”

Every scrap of information we have about Benjamin Watson’s time living in Connecticut points to Voluntown as his place of residence. He had children born there in 1815; he was “of Voluntown” when he bought land in Exeter, RI, in 1818; and his first petition for release from jail, written in 1821, refers to him as being “of Voluntown.”

Did Benjamin Watson ever own property in Voluntown? There is no record of him buying land in that town. The earliest land evidence in Voluntown for anybody named Watson dates to 1849, when Elhanan W. Watson Sr. (Benjamin’s nephew) bought property from Jareb and Olive Lewis.

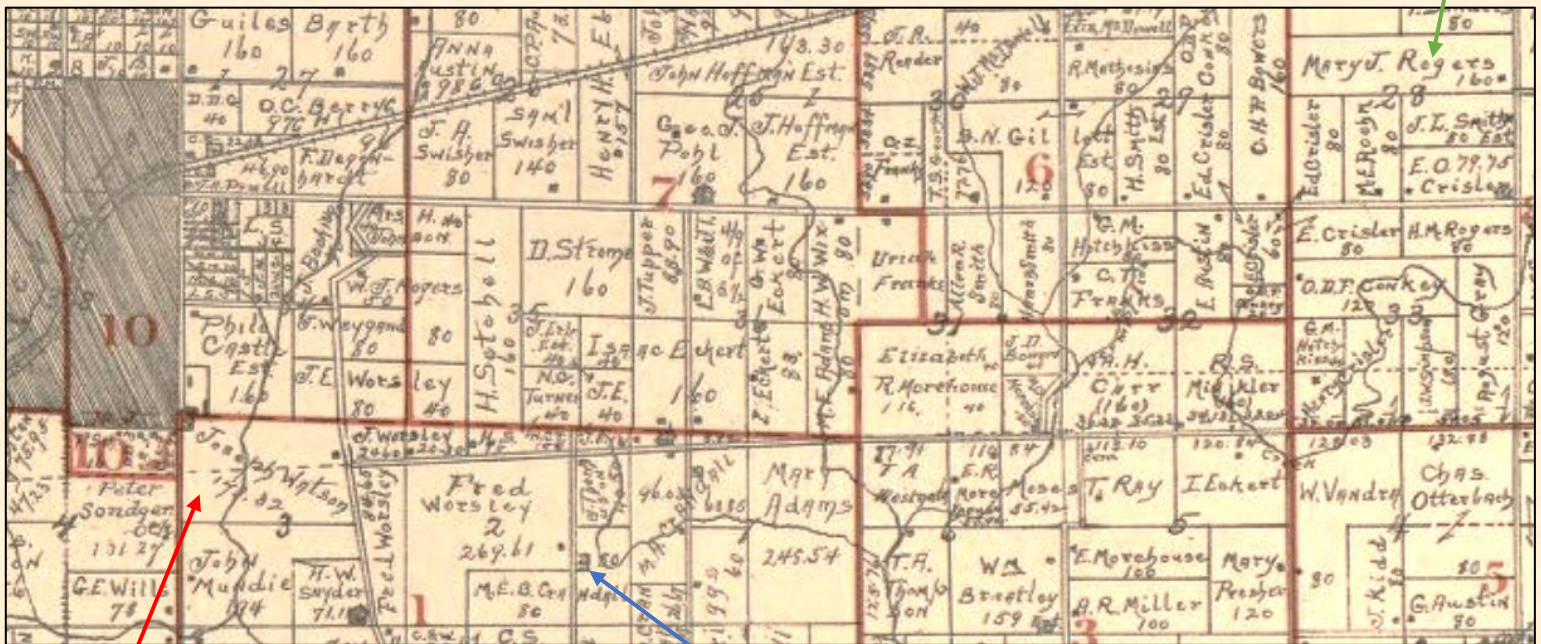
Our best guess is that the Watsons – both Benjamin and his younger brother Jeffrey – were tenant farmers. The 1820 census, potentially flawed as it may be, notes that three people in Benjamin’s household were engaged in agriculture.

In case anyone thinks that town and county lines were being moved while Benjamin lived in Connecticut, here are some useful dates: Sterling was set off from Voluntown and incorporated as a separate town in 1794. Voluntown had been part of New London county but became part of Windham county when the latter was created from New London and Hartford counties in 1726. In 1881 Voluntown rejoined New London county.

Where Joseph Lyman Watson Lived in Troy Grove, LaSalle County, Illinois

The location of Joseph Lyman Watson's Troy Grove property, on which he lived for nearly 40 years, is described in the family lore as "160 acres a mile and a half from the town of Mendota in La Salle county." Lyman's memorial at Find A Grave offers a nugget of info likely derived from his obituary (which we haven't found): "Died at home south of the fairgrounds."

We found the name Joseph Watson on an 1895 plat map of LaSalle county, Illinois. His property was directly south of the fairgrounds. It looks like Joseph Lyman Watson owned 170 acres near the town of Mendota, on the far northern edge of Troy Grove. The Little Vermilion River bisected the Watson land.



The above red arrow points directly to the land of Joseph Watson, who we know to be Joseph Lyman Watson. A tiny square right above the dotted line across this property shows the location of a dwelling house. The blue arrow points to a small

rectangle with a cross inside it. This is the location of Crandall Cemetery on the east side of East 475th Road, where Lyman and members of his family are buried.

The green arrow in the upper right corner of that same plat map excerpt shows the location of Mary Jane (Watson) Rogers' 160-acre property. When this map was published, she had been a widow for twenty years.

When the Watson lore was being written up, the author stated, "This farm is still owned and farmed by the son of Aunt Kate named Lyman." The census record bears this out: In 1940, Lyman Simpson (1890 – 1967) was enumerated in Troy Grove – and he had a near neighbor surnamed Worsley, just like his grandfather Joseph Lyman Watson did.

We found an aerial view of the Watson land and added notations, including the location of the fairgrounds and Crandall Cemetery. It appears that Joseph Lyman Watson's land is still in agricultural use today.



Resources and Acknowledgments

[Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) is our favorite source for census, vital, and probate records, including (but not limited to) –

Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. Original data: Town and City Clerks of Massachusetts. *Massachusetts Vital and Town Records*. Provo, UT: Holbrook Research Institute (Jay and Delene Holbrook).

Connecticut, Town Marriage Records, pre-1870 (Barbour Collection) [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006.

Connecticut, Wills and Probate Records, 1609-1999 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Original data: Connecticut County, District and Probate Courts.

Wills; Author: Illinois. Probate Court (La Salle County); Probate Place: LaSalle, Illinois. Ancestry.com. *Illinois, Wills and Probate Records, 1772-1999* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

U.S., Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: *Applications for Headstones for U.S. Military Veterans, 1925-1941*. Microfilm publication M1916, 134 rolls. ARC ID: 596118. Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Record Group 92. National Archives at Washington, D.C.

Information about the village of Washington in Coventry, RI, was obtained at web site [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington, Rhode Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington,_Rhode_Island).

“Highway Districts and Property Values in West Greenwich.” Transcribed by Iain H. Bruce. *Rhode Island Roots*, Vol. 26, pages 85-91. Warwick, RI: Rhode Island Genealogical Society, 1975–. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2012.)

Benjamin Watson’s sale of land in West Greenwich to Israel Gates: WG Land Evidence, Vol. 4, page 269.

The [Rowland Rathbun Lot](#) is located at Coordinates: 41.5860390, -71.7331500.

Records of the two lawsuits to which Benjamin Watson was party in 1820 were found in *Voluntown Court Records 1800 – 1838*, pages 216 and 221. Town Clerk's office, Voluntown Town Hall, 115 Main Street, Voluntown, CT 06384.

We obtained a definition of “action of trespass on the case” from this book:

Walston-Dunham, Beth. *Introduction to Law*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Cengage Learning, 2009; pgs. 217-218 of eBook accessed May 2020 via [Google Books](#) – https://www.google.com/books/edition/Introduction_to_Law/mleVxfhOUHIC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22action+of+trespass+on+the+case%22+Walston+Dunham&pg=PA218&printsec=frontcover

Rhode Island State Archives (<https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/state-archives>):

Rhode Island General Assembly – Petitions Failed / Withdrawn, 1811-1874, ID: 01/13/C#0869 & C#1179, Rhode Island State Archives, 33 Broad St., Providence, RI 02903 (petitions of Benjamin Watson).

Rhode Island General Assembly – Petitions Finding Aid 1783 – 1890; Vol. 70, 1847 - 1850, #64, Rhode Island State Archives, 33 Broad St., Providence, RI 02903 [Joseph L. Watson to sell real estate (Simon Phillips)].

Hannah (Watson) Burlingame's date of birth was calculated from her headstone inscription data using the Tombstone Birthday Calculator at this website:

<http://www.searchforancestors.com/utility/birthday.html>

History of Bureau County, Illinois, H. C. Bradsby, editor (Chicago: World Publishing Company, 1885), p. 686.

History of Johnson County, Iowa (1883; reprint, LaCrosse, WI: Brookhaven Press, 2000), p. 946.

Maierhofer And Briel. *Map of La Salle County, Illinois*. [Illinois: Maierhofer and Briel, Map Publishers, 1895] Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013593104/>

Aerial view of the land owned by Joseph Lyman Watson was obtained via web site <https://viewer.nationalmap.gov/advanced-viewer/>

Newspaper clippings were obtained at Newspapers.com and Ancestry.com.

Find A Grave memorials:

Joseph Lyman Watson's Find A Grave memorial:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/126970300/joseph-lyman-watson>

(be advised, there are errors in his listing and that of Mary Etta's)

Ann Maria Watson's Find a Grave memorial:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/126969925/a-maria-watson>

Mary Jane (Watson) Rogers' Find a Grave memorial:

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55648767/mary-j_-rogers

We have not located Sarah Elizabeth (Watson) Swap's burial place. She likely died in McAlester, Pittsburg county, Oklahoma, where she appears in the 1920 census, living with her married daughter and family. Sarah's husband Albert E. Swap, who died in 1915, supposedly is buried in *Graceland Cemetery in Mendota, IL*, per the application for his military veteran headstone. In 1910, Albert and Sarah were residing in Fairbury, Livingston county, IL.

Melissa (Watson) Presher's Find a Grave memorial:

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/106592939/melissa-s_-presher

Though Melissa's name appears consistently in early records without any middle name, her gravestone has the middle initial S. We don't know what it stands for.

William Lyman Watson's Find a Grave memorial:

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/106827379/william-l_-watson

Elsie D. Watson's Find a Grave memorial:

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/106827340/elsie-d_-watson

(William Lyman Watson's daughter with Harriet A. Swap)

Catherine Amelia (Watson) Simpson's Find a Grave memorial:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59961407/catherine-simpson>

Acknowledgements

We are thankful for the assistance given to us by the following folks:

George Cady (1795-1865), enumerator of the 1850 census for the towns of Brooklyn, Canterbury, Killingly, Plainfield, and Sterling, in Windham county, CT. Normally, census takers recorded birth places only by state or country. This man wrote down the *town* and state when listing birth places. What a gift to those of us researching people in these towns! [George Cady's Find A Grave memorial](#) tells us that he served as town clerk in Plainfield. In the 1850 census, he listed himself as a Plainfield, CT, native. George also served as a Windham county surveyor; perhaps he developed his fine handwriting doing that work.

Jean Querciagrossa, a descendant of Joseph Lyman Watson. Jean shared an abundance of this family's history with us, including some great old photos. We appreciate how much light her work has shed on this branch of the Watson family.

Kelly Sullivan and her mother, Mary Lou Fiske, of Hope Valley, RI. Kelly and Mary Lou shared with us enormous amounts of their research on members of the Watson family. They frequently didn't track source citations for their data; but we have found it extremely useful over the years as starting points for further pursuit.

Kenneth Carlson, Reference Archivist at the Rhode Island State Archives in Providence. Mr. Carlson's great enthusiasm for the history preserved at the Archives is wonderfully matched by his friendly, knowledgeable help.

George Sermuksnis, archives technician at the Boston branch of the National Archives. It was a pleasure to speak with him on the phone, even if we didn't exactly solve the mystery of the unusually-marked census pages.

Andrew Smith at the Supreme Court Judicial Records Center in Pawtucket, RI. At our request, Mr. Smith went looking for court documents relating to Benjamin Watson's incarceration in the Kent county jail. Even though he found nothing, we are grateful for his help. The lack of records in this case is "an answer."

Cheryl A. Sadowski, Voluntown, CT, Town Clerk. She brought index books right to the telephone and consulted them for possible records of land ownership by the Watsons. Ms. Sadowski told us there were no Watson grantees in any land evidence prior to 1849, when Elhanan W. Watson, Sr., bought property from Jareb

& Olive Lewis (a warranty deed). This suggests that neither Benjamin nor Jeffrey Watson (Sr.) were property owners in Voluntown. And it allowed us to understand that the farm on which Jeffrey lived in 1850 was likely the land that his son Elhanan (Sr.) purchased.

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