

Children of Samuel⁴ #26 Watson: Samuel⁵ Watson Jr.

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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 these links to [Part 1](#) and [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*.

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr., son of Samuel #26 Watson

Samuel⁵ WATSON (Samuel⁴, Samuel³, Samuel², John¹) was born circa late 1799 in West Greenwich, Rhode Island, the ninth and youngest child of Samuel⁴ #26 and Abiah (Young) Watson.

After the 1806 death of [patriarch Samuel³ Watson](#), the generational suffix “Junior” passed from Samuel⁴ #26 Watson to Samuel⁵.

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. is not represented in the numbers for Samuel #26 and Abiah Watson's household in the 1800 census, an anomaly we can't explain. (That same census places his mother Abiah in an age category we consider incorrect. We wonder who provided the info to the census taker.)

We do find Samuel⁵ represented in his parents' household for the 1810 and 1820 census years.

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. in Jail (1820 – 1823)

“For the Folly & Wickedness of His Misguided Youth”

On November 7, 1820, Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. was jailed for burning down a barn belonging to Edward Richmond of Exeter, RI. Samuel⁵ Jr. confessed to this “horrid deed,” saying that he was influenced by two older men (one surnamed Tanner, the other Benjamin Bly).

Samuel Jr.'s trial, slated for April 1821, resulted in his being “remanded back to Prison.” He survived a near-fatal bout of illness (later described as “Typhus”) to be brought to trial a second time in October 1821, when he pled guilty to the charges. Samuel Jr. would spend two more years in jail.

Notes on Samuel Watson's Junr [*sic*] Petition

He was committed to Prison on the 7th day of November 1820 to await his trial at the Supreme Judicial Court at their April term 1821 – the petty Jury did not agree. He was remanded back to Prison to receive another trial at October term 1821 – previous to which in the month of September he was attacked with a violent fever – his life despaired of and with great difficulty was brought before the Court in October when he plead [*sic*] guilty. That he has suffered in close confinement during two inclement Winters – that his health is now greatly impaired and has frequent Occasions to apply for medical assistance – and the probability is should he be confined during the present summer – he will be visited with greivous [*sic*] sickness again. That when he was concerned with the other two persons in burning the barn he was induced to commit that great wickedness by those two men, viz., Bly and Tanner, who are much older than he and capable to lead a young man not possessing strict principles of rectitude to commit acts that he would not have thought of had it not been for their instigations, leading him into a variety of dissipations and destroying those feelings of duty owing to GOD and man. Watson was about 21 years of age when he perpetrated the horrid [*deed?*] with Bly and Tanner.

In June 1822 Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. petitioned the Rhode Island General Assembly, saying that he was utterly unable to pay the fine and the costs associated with his prosecution and conviction. Samuel⁵ proposed that the Assembly set him free on the condition that he leave New England.

Note: In the following document, the archaic word Gaol (Jail) was consistently misspelled as Goal. We corrected this for purposes of clarity.

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

To the Honourable General Assembly of said State to be holden at Newport on the second Monday of June A.D. 1822. Samuel Watson Jr., of West Greenwich in the County of Kent (labourer) now a prisoner confined in close Gaol in the County of Washington on a conviction for Barn burning.

Humbly begs leave to represent that at the Supreme Judicial Court of this State holden at South Kingston within and for the County of Washington at the April term of said Court in the year A.D. 1821 – He was Indicted with others for burning a barn [illegible] the property of Edward Richmond of Exeter in the County of Washington. On which Indictment, the Petty Jury on his trial at said term did not agree and he was returned to Prison to await another trial at the October term of said Court A.D. 1821 – at which term he plead [*sic*] guilty and resigned himself to the mercy of the Honourable Court whose sentence was that he should pay as a Fine to and for the use of the State, the sum of one hundred dollars, and that he be imprisoned in the State Gaol in the County of Washington twelve calendar months from the [rising?] of said Court, and that he pay all cost of prosecution and conviction, and stand committed to said Gaol 'till sentence be performed in all its parts – the cost of prosecution and conviction taxed at 22 dollars 35 cents. He would further humbly represent that he is destitute of property and entirely unable to pay any part of said fine or cost. He would further humbly represent that he has two Uncles, one brother, and one sister settled in the westerly part of the State of New York, that his uncles and brother are farmers, who would gladly receive him to labour with them that he might obtain a living by honest industry.

Therefore he humbly begs your Honours to liberate and discharge him from Prison upon condition that he shall leave this State and every other State in New England and not return again without being immediately subject to be apprehended and recommitted to prison. He would further represent that last Autumn he was visited with grievous sickness with the Typhus fever and probably would have died with his disease had it not been for the humanity of Wm [*or Mr*] Stanton the Gaoler in having him removed from the dungeon and lodged in a comfortable upper chamber where every kind attention was rendered him during his severe sickness. That he has a weakly constitution and dreads the events that may happen if he is obliged to be confined to Gaol during the present summer. That he has already suffered more than nineteen months imprisonment having been committed to prison for trial on the 7th of November A.D. 1820. That he is in the twenty-third year of his age – He feels a full conviction and sincere sorrow for the horrid deed he committed and sincerely repents of his great wickedness and has an earnest desire that he may be preserved from the like or any other enormity again. He does therefore most solicitously implore the Merciful interposition of the Honourable General Assembly to take his unhappy case into their consideration and relieve him from his present suffering State in such manner as they in their Wisdom may see proper.

And he as in duty bound will ever pray –

(signed) Samuel Watson Junior

Petition

Samuel Watson Junr

to the Honourable General Assembly

June Session 1822

Not Rec^d

(Not recommended)

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr.'s petition was denied; he remained in prison.

In October 1823 Samuel⁵ again petitioned to be released from jail. This time they let him go.

Sam^l Watson Junior

HR Oct 28, 1823

To the Honourable General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island [illegible] to be holden at South Kingston on the last Monday of October 1823

Humbly petitioning herewith Samuel Watson Junior of West Greenwich in the County of Kent but now a prisoner in the State's Gaol in the County of Washington, that on or about the 7th of November 1820, at Exeter in the County of Washington he was arraigned before a justice court on a charge of having on the 3d of November 1820, at Exeter aforesaid, set fire to & burnt a barn, the property of one Edward Richmond of said Exeter & on the aforesaid 7th of Nov^r was by said justice court committed to the aforesaid Gaol for trial [before?] the Supreme Judicial Court in the County of Washington for the October term [illegible] 1821, was by said Court convicted of said offense and sentenced to pay as a fine to and for the use of the State one hundred dollars; to be imprisoned twelve calendar months; to pay all costs of prosecution and conviction, taxed at \$22:37 cts and stand committed to said Gaol till sentence performed. Now your petitioner would humbly represent that the twelve months for which he was sentenced have more than a year since elapsed. That during his three years imprisonment a malignant feaver [*sic*] reduced his body to a skeleton and brought him to a serious & fearful contemplation of his prospect beyond the grave which impressed his mind with deep contrition for the folly & wickedness of his misguided youth; that although he was not a principal in the fact for which he stands convicted, he nevertheless laments that remuneration to the individual injured is not in his power; but in as much as repentance is an atonement for transgression, he humbly trusts he has expiated the guilt for which he lingered a condemned and incarcerated felon. Although he can give no better pledge for his future good behavior than

a sincere assurance of his disposition, henceforward to lead a peaceable and honest life, yet he hopes to be forgiven. [Illegible] has nothing wherewith to pay said fine or costs – he therefore humbly prays your honours to discharge him from prison, if not otherwise, upon condition of his leaving the State not again to return within the same.

(signed) Samuel Watson Junior

Upon the petition of Samuel Watson Jr of West Greenwich in the County of Kent who stands committed to the State's Gaol in the County of Washington on a conviction for burning a barn, the property of Edward Richmond of Exeter in said County of Washington praying to be discharged from his said imprisonment – *At this point the handwritten document becomes difficult to read because of crossed-out words and lines written above the stricken text. We think it says ...* Voted and resolved that the passage of said petitioner be granted. And the sheriff of said County be and is hereby directed to discharge him accordingly.

In the Senate

House [illegible] Oct. 31, 1823

read the same day &

Voted &c by order

comd by order

Tho [Illegible] Clk

Henry Bowen, Secy

Record References for Samuel⁵ Watson Jr.'s Birth Year

The records generated by Samuel⁵ Watson Jr.'s incarceration tell us that he committed his crime – burning down someone's barn – on November 3, 1820, when he was *about 21 years of age*:

“a charge of having on the 3d of November 1820, at Exeter aforesaid, set fire to & burnt a barn, the property of one Edward Richmond of said Exeter”

“Watson was about 21 years of age when he perpetrated the horrid [*deed*]”

If Samuel⁵ had celebrated his twenty-first birthday before November 3rd, he would have been described as being 21 years old. To say that he was *about 21* is to imply that he was *nearly so*.

Samuel⁵'s petition to the Rhode Island General Assembly “to be holden at Newport on the second Monday of June A.D. 1822” states that he was at that time *in the twenty-third year of his age* – meaning that Samuel⁵ had celebrated his twenty-second birthday but was not yet 23.

These clues point to Samuel⁵ Watson Jr.'s birth most likely having occurred in late 1799.

Under the Influence

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. said that he was influenced by two older men, Tanner and Bly, who led him “into a variety of dissipations.” We suspect alcohol consumption was part of that. Setting fire to someone’s property might seem like a fun idea when your judgment is impaired *and* you’re hanging out with the wrong crowd.

We have no evidence on Samuel⁵ Watson Jr.’s habits. But an 1833 item from West Greenwich Town Council records names eight men whose alcohol consumption was troublesome enough that the town of Exeter sent a warning to its neighbor:

“Notice is given to this council by the Town Council of Exeter that Seth Terry, Benjamin Terry, Moses Terry, Joseph W. Richmond, Benjamin H. Young, David Benjamin [*sic*], Norris Shearman, and John Rogers do practice the odious vice of drunkenness and are posted in that Town as Common Drunkards. Whereupon it is voted by this Council that notice be posted up in this Town restraining all retailers and others from selling or vending any strong liquor to said persons under the penalty of the law in such case made and Provided.” – 28 December 1833 – WG Town Council Book # 7, page 171

Two of those men – Joseph W. Richmond and Benjamin H. Young – had ties to the Watson family. Benjamin H. Young was the son of Abiah (Young) Watson’s brother Benjamin, making Benjamin H. a first cousin to Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. Joseph W. Richmond was Samuel⁵’s brother-in-law, husband to his sister Sarah.

We share this information to suggest that the extended Watson family didn’t seem to be teetotalers. The consumption of “strong drink” was part of their culture and probably something that Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. did, too.

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr.’s Wife, Penelope “Nellie” Corey

Census data and the marriage records of his children tell us that Samuel⁵’s wife was named Penelope. The 1924 death record of their daughter Alice preserves Penelope’s maiden name, Corey.

Penelope “Nellie” Corey was born circa 1795 in Connecticut.

Vital records for the town of Griswold, New London co., Connecticut, include a record of the marriage of Samuel Watson Jr. and Eleanor Corey on April 26, 1824, by Thomas Stewart, J.P.

WATSON, Samuel, Jr., m. Eleanor COREY, Apr. 26, 1824, by Thomas Stewart, J.P.

Yes, we see the discrepancy in the bride’s given name; *Eleanor* is not Penelope.

Imagine for a moment the person recording this marriage asking himself: The nickname *Nellie* comes from what given name? This man (back then, it was always a man) decided that Samuel Watson Jr.'s bride's proper name must have been Eleanor.

We think this marriage record is for Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. and Penelope Corey. They were living in Griswold in 1860, and their daughter Alice was born there circa 1835.

The 1820 census for Griswold, Connecticut, includes the household of Thomas Cory. There is no other Cory/Corey household in that town in that census year. The numbers for Thomas's large family (ten people) include one female aged 16 to 25. If Thomas Cory were Nellie's father – and there's a reasonable chance he was – she likely was his eldest child.

The timing of this marriage also fits with the timing of Samuel⁵'s release from prison in 1823.

Samuel⁵ Jr. and Penelope (Corey) Watson's Children

We expect that Samuel⁵ and Penelope Watson had many more children than the three listed below. We know the names of these children thanks to the 1850 census and to the records of their marriages in Rhode Island.

ALICE⁶ M., born probably in October 1834, most likely in Griswold, Connecticut.

Alice married at least three times and, according to census records, had fourteen children, one or more of whom were born out of wedlock. We chronicle Alice's long life in in her own sections, beginning at the bottom of [page 9](#), below.

NELSON S., born on March 9, 1835 (if his *age at death* is correct), likely in Connecticut.

On June 28, 1864, in Smithfield, RI, Nelson married Susan A. Smith, born circa 1842 in Pawtucket, RI, the daughter of John and Susan Smith.

It appears that Nelson and Susan had no children. They made their home in Rhode Island, living in North Providence (1865), West Greenwich (1870), and Johnston (1875 – 1890). Nelson S. Watson was a widower when he died of consumption on April 26, 1896, in Richmond, RI. He was 61 years, 1 month, and 17 days old.

3. CALVIN R., born circa 1838, likely in Connecticut.

On August 21, 1864, Calvin married Eliza Winsor, born circa 1831 in Providence county, RI, the daughter of Orson Earle and his wife Abby. This was Eliza's second marriage; she was first married to Charles S. Winsor in 1858 (as his second wife.) We're *guessing* Eliza was a widow when she wed Calvin.

Calvin and Eliza Watson appear together in the 1865 Rhode Island state census,

living in Johnston, RI. Enumerated with them was 17-year-old George H. Winsor, who likely was Eliza's stepson – Charles Winsor's child from his first marriage.

We don't know if Calvin and Eliza had children together.

Calvin R. Watson disappears from the record after 1865. His occupation, per that census and his marriage record, was "sailor." Perhaps he went to sea and never returned.

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. in the Census

1830-40

We have not found Samuel⁵ and Penelope Watson in either the 1830 or 1840 federal census.

The name Samuel Watson appears twice in the Stonington, CT, census for 1840. But the people enumerated in those households are all over the map in terms of age and gender. One of these families, a household of five, is a mix of black and white folks. The other, a household of three, is composed solely of black people. In both cases, however, the listings never reflect what we'd expect to find for a couple in their thirties and forties, almost certainly with children.

Samuel⁵ and Penelope Watson may have been missed in those two census years. Later census records show that Samuel⁵ spent his life as an unskilled laborer who never settled down in one place. If Samuel⁵ and his family lodged in the households of others in 1830 and 1840, they were enumerated as faceless numbers.

Records regarding their three children (the ones we know about) suggest that Samuel⁵ and Penelope Watson lived in Connecticut between (at least) 1835 and 1838.

1850

Twenty-six years after Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. (presumably) got married, we get our first look at him and his family in the 1850 census. They were living in Seekonk, MA.

Samuel⁵'s occupation, listed only as laborer, doesn't tell us anything about the kind of work he was

Samuel R Watson	48	M		Labourer			"
Penelope Watson	57	F					60
Eley Watson	15	F					"
Melam Watson	13	M					"
Calvin R Watson	12	M					"

doing. (We have no idea why Samuel⁵ has the middle initial R in his name. It's the one and only time we find that.)

The Watson children – Elcy (Alice), Nelson, and Calvin – are close in age. If Nellie was this fertile in her earlier married years, there had to be more offspring than just these three. Almost certainly Calvin was the lastborn; his year of birth corresponds to when Nellie would have been 42 or 43 years old.

Apparently Samuel⁵ and Nellie were still living in Seekonk in 1853, the year their daughter Alice gave birth to a son in that town.

1860

When the 1860 census was taken, Samuel⁵ and Nellie were living in Griswold, Connecticut. (The census taker mangled the spelling of *Penelope*.)

Samuel Watson	60	m	✓	Farm Laborer		100	Rhode Island
Penelope "	65	f	✓				Connecticut

Their names were written at the very bottom of a census page. On the following page we find another family enumerated as living in the same house as Samuel and Nellie:

Edward Hall	25	m	✓	Day Laborer		50	Rhode Island
Alice "	25	f	✓				Connecticut
George "	7	m	✓				"

This looks like a young family surnamed Hall. In fact, it's a guy named Edward Hall living with Alice Watson and her son George Watson. We have not found evidence of Alice Watson having married Edward, though it's always possible she did.

We note that Samuel⁵ now worked as a farm laborer, which means he worked on someone else's land. If he had owned the land, Samuel⁵ would have been listed as a farmer.

We have not found sons Nelson and Calvin in the 1860 census.

Daughter Alice⁶ Watson, 1853-1875

Like her namesake [aunt Alice⁵ Watson](#), this daughter of Samuel⁵ and Penelope Watson appears in records with the nicknames Alcy, Elcy and Elsie. Like her aunt, Alice⁶ led an interesting life.

Vital records for the town of Seekonk, Massachusetts, tell us that Elsie Watson gave birth there in April 1853 to an "illegitimate" child named George. This son was enumerated in Alice's household in 1870, listed after his grandmother Nellie.

Watson, Nellie	75	f.	W.	Knutting			Connecticut
George B.	17	M.	M.	Worked in Cotton Mill			Massachusetts

To the best of our knowledge, George R. Watson was the firstborn of Alice⁶'s children.

The 1900 and 1910 censuses asked women how many children they had borne, and how many were then living. Alice⁶ lived long enough to answer these questions in both censuses. Her consistent response: She was the mother of *fourteen children, four of whom were then alive*.

There are many inconsistencies woven through other records involving Alice⁶, primarily about her age and birthplace. We have put some details in **bold type** to highlight them.

Marriage #1

On **August 8, 1863**, in Providence county, RI (possibly Smithfield), **Alice Watson** married Edwin Burdick. Edwin was 26 years old at the time, and a resident of Hopkinton, RI. Alice was 29 and living in West Greenwich, RI. Both were listed as Connecticut natives. Alice's parents' names were given as Samuel and "Penlope." This was a **first** marriage for both parties.

A child named **James Edwin Burdick** was born in Coventry, RI, on **January 4, 1863**, to Edwin and Alice Burdick – eight months prior to the Burdick-Watson wedding.

Alice was the informant for this birth, which was registered on May 27, 1863. Under the heading for "Sex, Color and Condition," we find an amazing entry: James Edwin Burdick was listed as the **sixth child** born to Alice. This same birth record states the father's birthplace as Coventry, RI, and the mother's as West Greenwich, RI.

Marriage #2

On **March 6, 1864**, in Coventry, RI, **Alice Burdick** married Nelson Handy. Nelson was listed as being 30 years old at the time, and a resident of Coventry. Alice was 29 and living in Hopkinton, RI. Nelson was born in Burrillville, RI, the son of Asa and Esther Handy. Alice's birthplace was listed as Griswold, CT; her parents' names were given as Samuel and Penelope. This was a first marriage for Nelson Handy, a **second** marriage for Alice.

We don't know what happened to Alice's first husband, Edwin Burdick; we *assume* he died. We found one item that, *if it's the right person*, may tell us something about what happened to their son:

In the **1865** RI state census for West Greenwich, a two-year-old child named **James E. Burdick** was listed among the occupants of the Whitman Harrington household, the town poor house. James's "occupation" was listed as pauper.

Where was Alice (Watson) (Burdick) Handy in 1865? We think she was living with her brother and sister-in-law, Nelson and Susan (Smith) Watson.

11	Nelson	Watson	30	M	Prov	16
	Susan	"	28	F	Bristol	17
	Lydia	Handy	35	F	Prov	18
	George	"	12	M	"	19
						20

In this excerpt, above, from the **1865** RI state census for North Providence, RI, we find 35-year-old Lydia Handy with 12-year-old George Handy. George is the big clue in this record: He's just the right age to be Alice's son George, born in 1853 in Seekonk, MA. Lydia is the *around* the right age to be Alice (about four years too old).

In addition to the name discrepancies, Lydia's and George's birthplaces were listed as Providence ("Prov"). We can't explain these inconsistencies, but we're betting that Lydia Handy was really Alice.

Marriage #3

On **July 3, 1866**, in Providence county, RI (possibly Pawtucket), **Alice Handy** married Palmer Smith. Palmer was listed as 27 years old; Alice was 31. Both were residents of North Providence at the time. Palmer's birthplace was written as Cumberland, RI; Alice's was listed as Griswold, CT. Alice's parents' names were given as Samuel and Penelope. This marriage was listed as Palmer's **first** and Alice's **second**. In fact, it was a **third** marriage for both of them.

Palmer Smith's first wife was Alvira Carpenter, the daughter of Bartlett Carpenter and his wife Chloe. Palmer and Alvira wed on February 4, 1856, in Pawtucket, RI.

Palmer and Alvira had three children – Sarah Elizabeth Smith (born circa 1856); William Bartlett Smith (born October 22, 1859); and a stillborn son (November 15, 1861, Johnston, RI). Sarah and William appear in the 1870 census with their father Palmer and stepmother Alice. We can't find them or their parents in 1860.

Between December 16, 1861 and February 7, 1863, Palmer Smith served in the Union Army during the Civil War with the Fifth Regiment RI Heavy Artillery.

We *assume* that Alvira (Carpenter) Smith died prior to July 28, 1864, the day that Palmer Smith married Phoebe Reynolds in Attleborough, MA. Phoebe was the daughter of Isaac and Freelove H. Reynolds. Palmer and Phoebe were enumerated together on May 12,

1865, in the RI state census for that year. They were living with Phoebe's parents in Attleborough East. (Palmer's children Sarah and William were not listed with them.)

We don't know what happened to this marriage. We find no records to suggest that Palmer Smith and Phoebe (Reynolds) Smith had children together.

What happened to Nelson Handy, Alice (Watson) Burdick's second husband? It's always possible that Nelson died not long after his marriage to Alice. However ...

In the 1865 RI state census, we find a man named Nelson Handy, age 28, *living in Coventry* with other people surnamed Handy – but Alice is not among them. This Nelson was *born in Burrillville* and was the right age to have been the son of *Asa Handy* who was enumerated in Thompson, Connecticut, in 1850, with a 14-year-old son named Nelson. In other words, Nelson Handy's age as listed in the record of his marriage to Alice *may have been inflated*.

If we have the right man here, why isn't Alice living with him? Did she divorce him? Did he divorce *her*? We wish we knew.

Apparently the third time was the charm for both Alice and Palmer Smith: They were weeks away from celebrating their 45th wedding anniversary when Palmer died in 1911.

Alice⁶ Watson's Children with Palmer Smith

Palmer and Alice (Watson) Smith had eight children:

1. Anna D.⁷ Smith, born in Scituate, RI, on January 5, 1867 (Alice must have been about three months pregnant when she wed Palmer). On August 25, 1883, in Exeter, RI, Anna married Andrew D. Abbey (~1860 – 1937). Andrew and Anna had fourteen children, eleven of whom were alive in 1910. Anna (Smith) Abbey died in Hope Valley, Richmond, RI, in 1962. She was buried in Wood River Cemetery, Richmond, RI. [findagrave.com/memorial/66107506/anna-d-abby](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/66107506/anna-d-abby)
2. Betsey Jane Smith, born October 1869 and christened on October 20th of that year in West Greenwich, RI. This daughter appears in the 1870 federal census but *not* in the 1875 RI state census.
3. Emeline Penelope⁷ Smith, born in January 1871, in Exeter RI. Emeline married John Henry Hall (1859 – 1938), with whom she had five daughters. Emeline died in 1953, likely in Richmond, RI, where she lived. She was buried in Wood River Cemetery, Richmond, RI. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/203801522/emeline-penelope-hall>
4. Palmer Hiram Smith, stillborn, October 25, 1872, West Greenwich, RI.

5. Son, born October 19, 1873, Richmond, RI; died 1873, Washington, Coventry, RI.
6. Michael Smith, born in Exeter RI, in the fall of 1874. This son appears as a 7-month-old infant in the 1875 RI state census but *not* in the 1880 federal census.
7. Nelson Sylvanus⁷ Smith, born November 23, 1874, in Richmond, RI. Nelson married (1st) Addie May Cherry (1874 – 1954), with whom he had a daughter named Sylvia. Per his Find A Grave memorial, Nelson married (2nd) Sarah Pickett. Nelson Smith died on June 28, 1957, in Cranston, RI; he was buried in Wood River Cemetery, Richmond, RI. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/203804753/nelson-s.-smith>
8. Susan A. Smith, born August 18, 1876, in Richmond, RI. Circa 1918-1919, Susan married Stephen Benjamin Rathbun (1885 – 1956). Susan (Smith) Rathbun died on December 29, 1965; she was buried in Wood River Cemetery, Richmond, RI. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/206288431/susan-smith-rathbun>

Alice and Palmer's children Anna, Emeline, Nelson, and Susan show up in the 1900 and 1910 censuses – they were the four children “still living.” The four children born to Alice in the ten years between George R. Watson (1853) and James Edwin Burdick (1863) remain unidentified.

The various birthplaces of Alice and Palmer's children indicate how much moving around this family did, likely to allow Palmer Smith to find employment.

Samuel⁵ Jr. and Nellie's Final Years

Per the 1860 census, Samuel⁵ and Nellie Watson were living in Griswold, Connecticut. It appears that they finished out their lives in Rhode Island.

Nellie Watson appears in the 1870 census in Exeter, RI, living with daughter Alice and son-in-law Palmer Smith.

In 1870, Palmer Smith worked in a cotton mill, as did his daughter Sarah. His household included himself and Alice; his children Sarah and William, from his first marriage; two-year-old Annie D. Smith; eight-month-old Betsey J. Smith; 75-year-old Nellie Watson (occupation: “knitting”); and seventeen-year-old George R. Watson (Alice's out-of-wedlock son).

We don't find Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. in the 1870 census anywhere.

The 1875 RI state census shows the Smiths living in Exeter, in the Pine Hill district. In this census, Palmer was listed as a farmer. The family included Palmer and “Elsie”; Palmer's son William, now working as a spinner in a cotton mill; Anna D. (age 7); *Phanelophine E.* (Emeline Penelope, age 4); and Michael (7 months old).

By this time, Palmer's daughter Sarah was married. On January 25, 1873, in Exeter, RI, Sarah wed Henry Harrison Thayer, the son of Stephen Sanford Thayer and his wife Mary Ann Sherman.

Also missing from this family in 1875: Penelope "Nellie" (Corey) Watson. We assume that Nellie had died by this time. We don't know where she is buried.

We find Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. in the 1875 RI state census in West Greenwich. He was one of five people, all listed as paupers, boarding in the household of Benjamin R. Hoxie. The word Asylum is written to the left of this listing: This was West Greenwich's poor house.

Asylum	252	Mr	250	Benjamin R. Hoxie	20	M	W	Head	5	M	W	Greenwich	A	Farmer
				Julian B. Hoxie	27	F	W	Wife	6	M	W	Greenwich	A	Housekeeper
				Henry G. Hoxie	5	M	W	Son	4	F	W	Greenwich	A	Scholar
				Harriet L. Hoxie	4	F	W	Daughter	5	F	W	Greenwich	A	Scholar
				Frank A. Hoxie	3	M	W	Son	6	F	W	Greenwich	A	
				Bessie M. Hoxie	1	F	W	Daughter	7	F	W	Greenwich	A	
				Jeremiah Ellis	72	M	W	Boarder	8	W	W	Greenwich	A	Pauper
				Samuel Watson	85	M	W	Boarder	9	W	W	Greenwich	A	Pauper
				John Wilson	58	M	W	Boarder	10	M	W	Greenwich	A	Pauper
				Poley Kettle	73	M	W	Boarder	11	F	W	Greenwich	A	Pauper
			Clark Caprell	50	M	W	Boarder	12	F	W	Greenwich	A	Pauper	

Note that Samuel⁵ Jr.'s age was given as **85**, a full ten years beyond what we would expect. The discrepancy with Samuel Jr.'s age continues into the record of his death in West Greenwich on October 13, 1875, at the age of **81**. Per our calculations on his likely year of birth, Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. died a couple of months before he would have celebrated his **76th** birthday.

The fact that Samuel⁵ shows up on the poor farm in West Greenwich suggests that his children were unwilling or unable to give him a home at the end of his life. We can only guess at the circumstances that brought this about. It's poignant that Samuel⁵ Watson Jr., who once offered to leave New England in exchange for his freedom, finished out his life in the place where he was born and grew up.

We do not know where Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. is buried.

Daughter Alice⁶ Watson, 1880-1924

In 1880, Palmer and Alice Smith were still living in Exeter. Palmer's occupation in 1880 was listed as "farm laborer." Anna (age 12), Emeline (age 9), and Nelson (age 5) all attended school. Youngest child Susan was only three years old.

By 1885 they had relocated to nearby Richmond, RI, where Palmer's occupation was "farmer." Only the three youngest children – Emeline, Nelson, and Susan – still lived at home. Anna D. Smith had married Andrew Abbey in 1883; their daughter Eva was born in May of 1885.

In 1900 we find Palmer and Alice living in Hopkinton, RI, the town bordering Richmond to the east, Exeter to the north, and the state of Connecticut to the west. Their children all grown up, they were enumerated by themselves in that year's census. But they had family right next door. The two households enumerated immediately after Palmer's and Alice's were those of son Nelson and his little family; and daughter Anna Abbey and her big family.

The 1910 census shows Alice and Palmer Smith still in Hopkinton. Andrew and Anna (Smith) Abbey, with nine of their eleven surviving children, were enumerated just ahead of Alice and Palmer. (Like her mother, Anna gave birth to fourteen children.) John and Emeline (Smith) Hall and two of their daughters were enumerated as a separate household but shown to be living in the same house as Alice and Palmer.

Palmer Smith died on May 28, 1911, in Barberville, Hopkinton, RI. He was buried in Wood River Cemetery, Richmond, RI <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/108458616/palmer-smith>.

In 1920 we find Alice living in Arcadia village, Richmond, RI, with her daughter Susan and son-in-law Stephen B. Rathbun. Further down the same census page we find Alice's step-daughter Sarah E. (Smith) Thayer, now the widow of Henry Thayer, and four Thayer sons.

Alice died in Richmond, RI, on April 20, 1924.

Daughter Susan Rathbun was the informant for the record of Alice's death. There are several notable items in that record:

Alice's middle name was Merino.

We wonder if Alice's mother, whose occupation was listed in the 1870 census as "knitting," was familiar with Merino wool – and perhaps thought it a lovely name to give her daughter.

Alice's age at death was given as 94 years, 6 months, and 16 days – which translates to a birth date of October 4, 1829. We think Alice's birth year more likely was 1834.

Census records after 1880 seem to inflate Alice's age by five years (except for the 1885 RI state census, which listed her as being *32 years old*, way too young).

Alice's last child (Susan) was born in August 1876. If Alice's childbearing years ended when she was around 42 years of age, then Alice probably was born in 1834. If she'd been born in 1829, Alice would have been having children until she was 47, which we consider unlikely.

For this reason, we think that Alice was actually 89 years old when she died. (The birth date on Alice's gravestone reflects the questionable data on her death record.)

Alice's birthplace was given as West Greenwich, RI. More likely it was Griswold, CT.

We have found this “fact” in more than one record pertaining to Alice. But the census record, over a period of years and including her adult children’s data, points far more consistently to Connecticut as Alice’s place of birth. We wish we knew why Susan (Smith) Rathbun believed her mother was born in West Greenwich.

Alice was buried in Wood River Cemetery, Richmond, RI, where she shares a twin headstone with Palmer Smith. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/108458790/alice-m.-smith>

Summary

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr., the son of Samuel⁴ Watson and Abiah Young, was born in West Greenwich, Rhode Island, likely late in 1799.

In November 1820, Samuel⁵ Jr. joined two older male companions in burning down a barn belonging to Edward Richmond of Exeter, RI. For this crime he spent three years in state prison.

Six months or so after his release, Samuel⁵ married Penelope “Nellie” Corey, likely on April 26, 1824, in Griswold, Connecticut. Nellie was born in Connecticut circa 1795, possibly the daughter of Thomas Cory. Samuel⁵ and Nellie had at least three children together – Alice; Nelson; and Calvin.

It appears that Samuel⁵ did lead “a peaceable and honest life” after his release from prison. But as an unskilled laborer, he wasn’t prosperous. Samuel⁵ didn’t settle in any one place, likely because he never had the means. His children were illiterate, probably because they went to work, not school, at an early age.

After living for decades in Connecticut and Massachusetts – in places fairly close to Rhode Island – Samuel⁵’s family returned to his home state. All three of Samuel⁵’s children got married in Rhode Island, in the 1860’s. Nellie Watson (but not Samuel⁵, for some unknown reason) was enumerated in 1870 in Exeter, RI, living with her daughter Alice⁶ and son-in-law Palmer Smith.

Alice⁶ M. Watson appears to have been the only one of Samuel⁵’s and Nellie’s children who had descendants.

Samuel⁵ Watson Jr. was last of record in the 1875 RI state census. In that year he was enumerated as living on the poor farm in West Greenwich, RI, which is likely where he died.

Appendix

Research by Kelly Sullivan and Mary Lou Fiske

In 2001, Kelly Sullivan and her mother, Mary Lou Fiske, of Hope Valley, RI, shared with us their research on members of the Watson family.

Kelly and Mary Lou 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. We are including some of their findings here *despite being unable to confirm them independently through our own research.*

Though we [couldn't make sense](#) out of the 1840 census record of a Samuel Watson in Stonington, CT, Kelly and Mary Lou found data pointing to the possibility that Samuel⁵ and Nellie Watson lived there. We present, in the paragraphs below, what they shared with us:

“SAMUEL WATSON, a mariner who resided in Stonington, Conn. in 1840, age 24-36, 3 in household. In 1841 the town of Stonington notified the town of East [sic] Greenwich, RI, that Penelope Watson and four children were [living] on [town] expense (Stonington town accounts). In 1856, Stonington warned Mrs. Watson and 8 children out of town. In 1857, the town warned [out] Penelope Watson, wife of Samuel Watson of West Greenwich, RI. (Copied from book about the Blacks in Conn. from the Westerly library.)”

“THIS INFORMATION WAS TAKEN FROM RECORDS CONCERNING ‘BLACKS’ on town expense. (In the census she [Penelope] is always listed as ‘white.’”

Samuel Watson being identified as a “mariner” is of interest. His sons, Nelson and Calvin, were sailors, as noted in their marriage records and in the census – Calvin in 1865, and Nelson in 1880.

In 1840, Stonington, CT, tallied a small community of black residents. The number of black males was 122, with black females counted at 144. In North Stonington, black males numbered 80; black females totaled 64.

There were black folks in Connecticut with the surname Watson – for example, a black family headed by a man named James Watson enumerated in Griswold, CT, in 1830.

And we find the Watson surname associated with black folks in Stonington, CT.

Was there a black man named Samuel Watson, originally from East or West Greenwich, RI, living in Stonington, CT, with a wife named Penelope (or, more likely, *Nellie*) and children? Or did Samuel⁵ Watson Jr., his wife, and children get lumped into a category applied mostly to marginalized black people because they, too, were poor?

Either scenario is possible. The answer to this puzzle may lie in Stonington's town council records. Sometimes warning-out items were described in a surprising amount of detail.

A family connection to a street name

Palmer and Alice (Watson) Smith's daughter Anna married Andrew Abbey (also spelled *Abby*).

Andrew Abbey was known around Hope Valley, RI, as "Dutch" Abbey. He owned a lot of property in the area, including the triangle or "island" created by a small side road off Arcadia Rd. near its intersection with Skunk Hill Rd. The farmhouse on that island, built in 1882, belonged to Dutch Abbey. Around the 1980's, the little side road was named Dutch Island Road in tribute to him.

We don't know why Andrew Abbey was called "Dutch," but we note that the name on his headstone includes the middle initial D.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/66107293/andrew-d-abby>

Resources

[Ancestry.com](#), our favorite source for census and other records, including:

Connecticut, Town Marriage Records, pre-1870 (Barbour Collection) [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006. Original data: White, Lorraine Cook, ed. *The Barbour Collection of Connecticut Town Vital Records. Vol. 1-55*. Baltimore, MD, USA: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1994-2002.



[FamilySearch](#), our favorite source for vital and other records, including:

"Rhode Island Marriages, 1724-1916," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F8V2-9HD> : 22 January 2020), Edwin Burdick, 1863.

"Rhode Island Births and Christenings, 1600-1914," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F899L9K>: 17 December 2019), James Edwin Burdick, 1863.

"Rhode Island Marriages, 1724-1916," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F8VZ-SY5> : 22 January 2020), Nelson Handy, 1864.

"Rhode Island, Town Clerk, Vital and Town Records, 1630-1945," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QG1N-RKL8> : accessed 2 November 2020), Palmer Smith and Alvira Carpenter, 4 Feb 1856; citing Marriage, Pawtucket, Providence, Rhode Island, United States, Rhode Island State Archive, Providence City Archives, city and town clerk offices; FHL microfilm.

“Massachusetts Marriages, 1841-1915,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:N4MN-BWL> : 24 May 2018), Palmer Smith and Phoebe J. Reynolds, 28 Jul 1864; citing East Attleborough, Town of Attleborough, Bristol, Massachusetts, United States, State Archives, Boston; FHL microfilm 1,433,021.

“Rhode Island, Town Clerk, Vital and Town Records, 1630-1945,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QG1N-LGZ3> : accessed 2 November 2020), Palmer Smith and Alice Handy, 3 Jul 1866; citing Marriage, Pawtucket, Providence, Rhode Island, United States, Rhode Island State Archive, Providence City Archives, city and town clerk offices; FHL microfilm.

“Rhode Island Deaths and Burials, 1802-1950,” database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/903/1:1:F8V9-VYV> : 22 January 2020), Palmer Hiram Smith, 1872.

“Rhode Island Marriages, 1724-1916,” database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F8VD-N38> : 22 January 2020), Sarah Elizabeth Smith in entry for Henry Harrison Thayer, 1873.

“Rhode Island, Deaths and Burials, 1802-1950,” database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F8V9-K85> : accessed 4 July 2015), Samuel Watson, 13 Oct 1875; citing West Greenwich, Rhode Island, reference p 19; FHL microfilm 925,978.

“Rhode Island, Vital records, 1846-1898, 1901-1953,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F86H-9QQ> : 4 November 2020), Palmer Smith, 28 May 1911; citing Death, Hopkinton, Washington, Rhode Island, United States, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence; FHL microfilm 004250591.

“Rhode Island, Vital records, 1846-1898, 1901-1953,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F84K-1P8> : 4 November 2020), Alice Merino Smith, ; citing Death, Richmond, Scituate, Providence, Rhode Island, United States, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence; FHL microfilm 004248564.



A record of Nelson S. Watson’s death was found by the author on 1 September 2010 in the book *Marriages – Deaths 1850 – 1910*, page 45 of the Deaths section, at Richmond (RI) Town Hall. Nelson’s name was hand-recorded as “Nelson H S Watson” (the H was inserted ahead and a bit above the stricken-out S). His parents were named as Samuel and Penelope Watson.



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 Samuel⁵ Watson Jr.)



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