

Children of the Patriarch: Hazard⁴ 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](#).

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*. Samuel was the grandson of John Watson, and the son of Samuel² and 1st wife Mercy (Helme) Watson. His line of descent as a 3rd-generation Watson is rendered Samuel³ (Samuel², John¹).

Children of the Patriarch: Hazard⁴ Watson

Hazard⁴ WATSON (Samuel³, Samuel², John¹) likely was one of the patriarch's older children. We have estimated that Hazard was born circa 1742, based on (a) the order in which he named his siblings in his will; (b) the earlier dates upon which his brothers Robert and Silas married; (c) where the apparent gaps in age occur, i.e., where Hazard himself might have fit in; and (d) the fact that he was old enough to have served in the Seven Years War. As we have said elsewhere, while various records exist for the children of Samuel³ and Hannah (Hazard) Watson, few of them offer clues as to how old they were at the time.

Hazard⁴ Watson died in late October 1762. Because he did not survive to marry and have children, he did not get his own number designation in *The American Family of John Watson of the Narragansett Country, Rhode Island*. *John Watson* also gets a few things wrong about Hazard. This is what *John Watson* says about him on page 18:

“HAZARD, of Exeter. According to the probate records, when departing upon an expedition to ‘Savannah’ in Cuba (the Seven Years War 1756-1763) the last of Oct 1762, he left a will which mentioned his father and mother, brothers Robert, Silas, Nicholas, Samuel and Freeborn, and sister Mary, and named Robert of Exeter as executor. This will was admitted to probate 25 Dec 1762 based upon affidavits of two men who had personal knowledge of his death and burial. The witnesses to the execution of the will were Mercy and Jeffrey Watson, his cousins, children of his uncle Jeffrey². (Ex P 2:182, 15 Dec 1762)”

A correction: In the above quote, “Uncle Jeffrey” Watson is mis-assigned to the second generation. This particular Jeffrey Watson was the son of John² Watson (designated #2 in *John Watson*) and Hannah Champlin; his line of descent as a 3rd-generation Watson is thus rendered Jeffrey³ (John², John¹).

Also: We did not find Mercy’s and Jeffrey Watson’s names anywhere in Hazard Watson’s will, as obtained at the Exeter Town Hall. Newman Perkins, Ebenezer Perkins, and Samuel Perkins witnessed Hazard Watson’s will on April 29, 1762. It was proved Dec. 13th on oath of two of these Perkins men, and recorded on Dec. 15th of 1762.

A Transcription of Hazard⁴ Watson’s will

We endeavored to transcribe this document pretty much as it appears, which also means that we included the long internal S letterform – f – whenever that was used. Wherever we found a particularly odd spelling or word usage, we inserted *[sic]* in the space following. Hazard’s given name appears as “Haszard,” a common spelling variation.

Oliver Bates & Benj^a Adam Gallop both of West Greenwich being of a Lawfull age Testifieth and Saith that they were in the Expedition againft the Havannah *[sic]* on the Island of Cuba, in Company with Haszard Watfon of Exeter and to their certain Knowledge the Said Haszard Watfon is Dead and that he Died some time the Laft of October laft paft and that they both Saw him after he was Dead and the Said Oliver Bates Saith that he helped to Bury him

Oliver Bates

his

Benj^a X Adam Gallop

mark

Taken on Solemn oath in Exeter in the County of Kings County the thirteenth day of December AD 1762

Newman Perkins Juft of y^e Peace

====

IN the Name of God Amen this Twenty Ninth Day of Apriel [sic] AD 1762 I Haszard Watfon of Exeter in the County of Kings County Labourer being in good Health and of Perfect mind and Memory thanks be given to God for the Same calling to mind the Mortality of my Body and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to Die Do make and ordain this my Laft Will and Testament, that is to say Principally and first of all I Give and recommend my Soul into the Hand of God that gave it me praying that when it Shall be Separated from this Body that it may be received into the Arms of my Glorious and Eternal Saviour Jefus Chrif and my Body I commit to the Earth to be Defently [sic] Buried at the Discretion of my Executor hereafter to be mentioned and as Touching Such Worldly Estate as it hath pleased God to Bles me with in this life I give Demife [sic] and Dispose of in the following manner and form ~

Imprimus I Give and Bequeath to my Honoured Mother Hannah Watfon Five Hundred Pounds Old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my loving Brother Robert Watfon one Hundred Pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my Loving Brother Silas Watfon one hundred pounds Old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my Loving Brother Nicholas Watfon Fifty Pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my loving Sister Mary Watfon the Sum of Two Hundred & Fifty Pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my loving Brother Samuel Watfon the sum of One Hundred & Fifty Pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my loving Brother Freeborn Watfon the Sum of Two Hundred & Fifty pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath all the Remainder part of my Estate, to my Honoured father and Mother Samuel and Hannah Watfon and I do hereby Constitute make and Ordain my Brother Robert Watfon of Exeter in the County of Kings County my Sole Executor of this my Last Will and Testament and I do hereby otherly *[sic]* Difallow Revoke & Disannul *[sic]* all and every other former Testament Wills Legacies & Bequeaths and Executors by me in any wife before named Willed and bequeathed Ratifying and Confirming this and no other to be my Laft Will & Testament In Witness whereof I have hereunto Set my Hand and Seal the Day & year above written Signed Sealed Published Pronouned *[sic]* and Declared by the Said Hafzard Watfon as his Laft Will and Testament in ^the^ Prefence of

Newman Perkins

Ebenezer Perkins

Samuel Perkins

Hafzard Watfon

(Seal)

Newman Perkins & Ebinezer *[sic]* Perkins Two of the witneses *[sic]* to the within Will Personally appeared in Town Council of Exeter the 14th Day of December AD 1762 and on Solemn Oath Declared that they Saw the within Testator Hafzard Watfon Sign Seal Publish Pronoune *[sic]* and Declare the within Instrumen *[sic]* to be his Laft Will and Testament and that they Two Signed as witneses thereunto at the Same time and in his Prefence and that they Saw the other Witnefs (to wit) Samuel Perkins Sign thereto as a Witnefs at the Same time and in the Testators *[sic]* Prefence and that in their Judgments he was of a Sound Difposing mind & Memory at the Same time Signed by Order of the Town Council of Exeter the Day & Date abovefaid

Witnefs

Recorded December y^e 15th

AD 1762 By

Benj^a Raynolds C C

The Siege of Havana

The Siege of Havana, Cuba, is described as part of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), the global conflict involving Great Britain, France, and Spain. From the viewpoint of British colonial North America, it was an extension of the French and Indian War (1754-1763).

Per Rhode Island in the Colonial Wars:

“In February, 1762, the Colony voted to raise 666 men for the year's campaign. In March an act was passed to raise 178 men for H. M. [*His Majesty's?*] regular army. Samuel Rose was made Colonel of the Rhode Island regiment. The first detachment was hurried to New York in May and shipped to Cuba. The Rhode Island contingent was commanded by Lt. Col. Hargill and consisted of (187 or, as some accounts say, 210 men), being the first detachments of the companies under Hargill, Fry, and Russell. The remainder of the regiment, the second detachment, went to Albany under Col. Rose. Havana was captured by the Colonial and Regular troops on August 13th, 1762, and the Rhode Islanders returned home in November, having lost about half their number through sickness and battle.”

Hazard Watson served in the company commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Hargill. Interestingly, Nicholas Watson shows up as having served in that same company at the same time. Was that Hazard Watson's *brother* Nicholas, or his *uncle* Nicholas? We wish we knew.

Ben Adam Gallop also served in Lt. Col. Hargill's company at Havana in 1762. He was one of the two men from West Greenwich who attested to the fact of Hazard Watson's death, Oliver Bates being the other. Oliver Bates likely also served in Lt. Col. Hargill's company; there's a listing for a name that got transcribed as Oliver “Bales” or “Bailey.” Another man by the name of Oliver Bates served in the same expedition to Havana but was part of Capt. Fry's company.

The Siege of Havana took place between approximately June 6th and August 14th of 1762. Since witnesses Oliver Bates and Benjamin Adam Gallop reported Hazard Watson's death as having occurred in late October 1762, it's likely that Hazard's primary cause of death was illness rather than war wounds.

Thoughts and Reflections

The religious language used in the opening lines of Hazard Watson's will is of interest to us – because we have found no records to indicate what church or faith tradition the patriarch's family may have embraced. Much of this language turns up in other early wills, however, suggesting that it was actually legal boilerplate. Yet the specific phrase “my Glorious and Eternal Saviour Jesus Christ” (with or without the letter U in the word *savior*) appears to be less common in the formulaic phrasing of the time.

Old tenor money was the currency for years in the New England colonies, each issuing its own “bills of credit”:

Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island all had, long before the 1730s, emitted paper money in bills of credit known as “old tenor” bills of credit, and “old tenor” had become the most commonly-used unit of account in New England. The old tenor bills of all four colonies passed interchangeably and at par with one another throughout New England.

<https://eh.net/encyclopedia/money-in-the-american-colonies/>

We are impressed with the amount of old tenor money – in sum, £1300 – that Hazard willed to his parents and siblings. In his will, Hazard is described as a “labourer,” which would indicate he was a working man who did not own real estate. Trying to work out how much that £1300 in old tenor was worth in today's dollars is deemed difficult, if not impossible. Zachary Garceau, in “Making Sense of Money in Colonial America,” wrote:

What were colonial currencies worth in today's terms? Professor John J. McCusker has written, “£750 in Massachusetts during 1750 is worth roughly \$48,000 in 2000,” acknowledging that this figure is an approximation. In fact, historians do not agree on a basic formula to determine the current value of

colonial American currency, owing to a lack of complete economic data, the fluctuating value of imported goods, and the fact that each colony—while following the English system—had its own currency. <https://vitabrevis.americanancestors.org/2015/02/making-sense-money-colonial-america/>

To get a sense of what that £1300 was worth in Rhode Island in 1762, we may compare it to old tenor sums spent on land transactions in the same general time period.

On October 27, 1760, William Wilson of West Greenwich sold 98 acres of land in that town to Hazard Watson's uncle Nicholas Watson for "two thousand five hundred pounds old tenor or current mony [*sic*] of New England." That sale comes out to about £25.5 old tenor per acre. Four years later, Nicholas Watson sold those same 98 acres to Robert Campbell of Newport for "three thousand pounds in bills of publick Credit of the old Tenor." That sale comes out to about £31.6 old tenor per acre.

This suggests that Hazard Watson's £1300 in old tenor money would have been sufficient to buy roughly 42 to 51 acres of land in West Greenwich, Rhode Island, in 1762. (Prices for land closer to the coast likely were higher.)

We wish we knew what Hazard Watson's rationale was for the varying amounts he left to his siblings. If his bequests were based on the quality of the relationship, perhaps it could be said that his sister Mary and brother Freeborn were his favorites.

Digital copies of Hazard⁴ Watson's will

Below: Page 182, top

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Oliver Bates & Benj^a Adam Gallop both of West Greenwith
being of Lawfull age Testifieth and saith that they were
in the Expedition against the Havannah on the Island of Cuba
in Company with Hazard Watson of Exeter and to their
Certain Knowledge the said Hazard Watson is Dead and that
he Died some time the Last of October last past and that
they both saw him after he was Dead and the said Oliver
Bates saith that he helped to bury him

Oliver Bates
Benj^a ^{his} Adam Gallop
mark

Taken on Olemm Path in Exeter in the County of Kings
County the Thirteenth Day of December A^d 1762

before me
Newman Perkins Just of Peace

In the Name of God Amen this Twenty Ninth Day of
April 1762 I Nathaniel Watton of Exeter in the County
of Kings County Labourer being in good Health and of
Perfect mind and Memory thanks be given to God for
the same calling to mind the Mortality of my Body and
knowing that it is appointed for all men once to Die Do
make and Ordain this my Last Will and Testament.
That is to say Principally and first of all I Give and
recommend my Soul into the Hand of God that gave it
me praying that when it shall be Separated from this
Body that then it may be received into the Arms of my
Glorious and Eternal Saviour Jesus Christ and my Body
I commit to the Earth to be Decently Buried at the Discretion
of my Executor hereafter to be mentioned and as Touching such
worldly Estate as it hath pleased God to Bless me with in
this Life I Give Devise and Dispose of in the following man-
ner and form

Imprimis I Give and Bequeath to my Honoured Mother Hannah
Watton Five Hundred Pounds Old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my loving Brother Robert Watton
one Hundred pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my Loving Brother Silas Watton
one Hundred pounds Old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my Loving Brother Nicholas Watton
Fifty Pounds Old Tenor money

Item

Item I Give and Bequeath to my loving Sister Mary Watton
the Sum of Two Hundred & Fifty Pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my loving Brother Samuel Watton
the Sum of One Hundred & Fifty Pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath to my loving Brother Freeborn Watton
the Sum of Two Hundred & Fifty Pounds old Tenor money

Item I Give and Bequeath all the Remainder part of my Estate to
my Honoured father and Mother Samuel and Hannah Watton
and I do hereby constitute make and Ordain my Brother
Robert Watton of Exeter in the County of Kings County my
sole Executor of this my Last Will and Testament and I do
hereby utterly Disallow Revoke & Disannul all and every
other former Testament Will Legacie & bequeaths and
Executors by me in any wise before named Willed and
Bequeathed Ratifying and Confirming this and no other
to be my Last Will & Testament In Witness whereof I
have hereunto set my Hand and Seal the Day & Year
above written Signed Sealed Published Pronounced and
Declared by the Said Hazard Watton as his Last Will
and Testament in ^{my} Presence of

Newman Perkins
Ebenezer Perkins
Samuel Perkins

Hazard Watton (Seal)

Newman Perkins & Ebenezer Perkins Two of the Witnesses
to the within Will Personally appeared in Town Council
of Exeter the 14th Day of December A^d 1762 and on
Solemn Oath Declared that they saw the within Testator
Hazard Waffon Sign Seal Publish Pronounce & Declare the
within Instrument to be his Last Will and Testament and
that they Two signed as witnesses therunto at the same time
and in his Presence and that they saw the other Witness (to
wit) Samuel Perkins Sign thereto as a Witness at the same
time and in the Testator's Presence and that in their Judg-
ments he was of a Sound Disposing mind & Memory at
the same time Signed by Order of the Town Council of
Exeter the Day & Date above said

Witness

Recorded December 15th
A^d 1762 By

Benj^a Reynolds C. C.

Section Summary:

Hazard⁴ Watson, son of Samuel³ Watson and Hannah Hazard, was born circa 1742, possibly in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. Hazard was “of Exeter,” Rhode Island, when he drew up his will on April 29, 1762, before leaving on an expedition to Havana, Cuba, during the Seven Years War. He died in late October of that same year, probably due to illness. Hazard’s will was probated in Exeter in December 1762.

While Hazard⁴ Watson did not have children of his own, he left behind in his last will and testament the names of his family of origin. We thank him for bequeathing to his siblings’ descendants the knowledge of those names.

Resources

Davis, George C., and Jean Adams Bradley. *The American Family of John Watson of the Narragansett Country, Rhode Island*. Kingston, R.I.: Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, 1983.

At FamilySearch: <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/112023-the-american-family-of-john-watson-of-the-narragansett-country-rhode-island>

John Watson contains a number of errors, mostly where it (mis)assigns vital and other records to individuals sharing first names with relatives. All Watson researchers should endeavor to confirm this book’s statements against actual records as available.

Chapin, Howard Millar, 1887-1940. *Rhode Island in the colonial wars; a list of Rhode Island soldiers & sailors in the old French & Indian War, 1755-1762*. 1918. <https://archive.org/details/rhodeislandincol00inchap/page/n4>, accessed online in January 2020.

Field, Edward. *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History*. Boston: Mason Pub. Co, 1902. Accessed online via Google Books in January 2020: <https://books.google.com/books?id=4PkLAAAYAAJ&pg=PA440&lpg=PA440&dq=Hargill+Havana+1762&source=bl&ots=oDIJnR->

[mgN&sig=ACfU3U2X4UZBSyWgpChLuzuWVFMHjDJJfA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjYkZGQydbmAhWMQs0KH4NA-gQ6AEwCHoECGEQAQ#v=onepage&q=Hargill%20Havana%201762&f=false](https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/french-and-indian-war/)

Background info on “Seven Years’ War” vs “French & Indian War” was obtained at the mountvernon.org web site, accessed in January 2020: <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/french-and-indian-war/>

Town Clerk’s office, Exeter Town Hall, 675 Ten Rod Road, Exeter, RI;
Exeter Probate records, Volume 2, pages 182-183: the will of Hazard⁴ Watson

Ancestry.com <https://www.ancestry.com/>

Rhode Island Colonial War Servicemen, 1740-62

Flint, James, ed.. *Rhode Island Colonial War Servicemen, 1740-62* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999. Original data: Chapin, Howard. *Rhode Island in the Colonial Wars*. Providence, RI, USA: The Society, 1920.

“During the eighteenth century, two largely European wars spilled over into the North American colonies. This database is a listing of men called into service by Rhode Island in 1740-1748 and 1755-1762 as a result of these conflicts. Each record provides the soldier or sailor's name, and the war in which they served. Also included are notes regarding the branch of service, wounding or death information, and battles in which the individual was involved. It contains the names of over 3800 men. For those seeking information regarding colonial Rhode Island ancestors, this can be a useful database.”