

The Watson Family's GREATEST HITS



Newspaper Clippings; Family Stories; and an Assortment of Old Photos
(But Mostly Watson Men Behaving Badly)

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Watson Brothers Caught Fishing

Gurdon Watson was less of a scofflaw than his brothers. Maybe he was generally better at not being found out. This news item describes one time he was caught red-handed:

“WATSON BROTHERS CAUGHT FISHING

“NEW LONDON MEN ARE COMPELLED TO SPRINT IN POQUONOC ON SUNDAY

“An exciting experience fell to the lot of two residents of New London in Poquonoc Sunday. Ira C. Watson and his brother, Gurdon W., of Willetts avenue, had an idea that the day was just about right for a good mess of pickerel, so they went over to Poquonoc and set in a number of tilts in Mohignet lake early in the morning. The fish were biting all right and a nice string reposed in a hole in the ice by the side of the pond when E. E. Spicer arrived.

“Mr. Spicer has watched the ice this year with an anxious eye, as he depends upon this pond for much of his supply, therefore he made a bee line for the nearest offender as soon as he saw what was going on. He was in time to grasp Ira by the arm before he could get away, but as Mr. Spicer is minus one finger his hold was not very firm and Ira twisted himself free, starting across the pond on a run for home and friends.

“Mr. Spicer is not exactly a sprinter, as he weighs over 200 pounds, but he chased his man for a long distance, sticking to him until he saw an opportunity of gaining a little by cutting across a corner. Here he came up with the fugitive, who again dodged sharply, dropping his hat as he turned. Mr. Spicer picked that up and held on until his quarry was well blown, then got him. Mr. Spicer told him that he was under arrest and that he would have to go with him to Groton. Mr. Watson pleaded hard to be allowed to go free, but Mr. Spicer was for a long time obdurate. Finally he consented to permit the man to go, telling him that he would think the matter over and decide what he would do about it later.

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The other fisherman had made a good start when he saw trouble imminent and got away in safety. Such was the haste of both, however, that they left all their fishing gear on the ice with the exception of several of the tilts, which they cut from the lines, leaving lines, hooks and fish behind them.

The reason for Mr. Spicer's anxiety about stopping fishing in the pond through the ice is that the ice is to a great degree spoiled by the holes cut by the fishermen. In his lease of the pond Mr. Spicer has arrangement made whereby he has complete control of the fishing rights, paying \$25 extra per annum on that account. He intends to place a watchman at the pond for the remainder of the winter and it is a certainty that the next fisherman caught will not get off so easily.

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Ira and Gurdon Watson *may have been* fishing in Mr. Spicer's pond at an earlier time, since they seemed to have special knowledge of where the pickerel fishing was good:

Fine String of Pickerel.

Ira C. and G. W. Watson, brought as fine a string of pickerel into the city this afternoon as has been seen by local sports in some time. There were 18 pickerel and one perch. Some of the pickerel averaged two pounds in weight. The Watson brothers went out early in the morning and caught the beauties, “over there.”

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morning and caught the beauties, ‘over there.’” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Tues., May 30, 1905, pg. 6

Gurdon *Really* Liked to Fish

Gurdon earned some mentions in the New London newspaper *The Day* in connection with his fishing skills.

On August 16, 1913, *The Day* reported that Gurdon and two other men had landed a total of 125 blackfish while out fishing together.

On August 8, 1911, Gurdon made the news by catching a large lobster on his fish hook:

**CAUGHT LOBSTER
ON A FISH HOOK**

**GURDON WATSON LANDED 5 3-4
POUND CRUSTACEAN AT
OCEAN BEACH.**

Lobsters are seldom caught by the hook, at least none but the species that blossom along Broadway, but Monday afternoon Gurdon Watson pulled a real live lobster from the Sound on the end of a hook.

Watson was fishing from the big rocks at Ocean Beach. He had caught a few blackfish when he felt a tug on his line. He pulled and the resistance was so strong that he thought he had hooked the sea bottom and was trying to pull it to surface.

He pulled and pulled and finally from the water brought forth a lobster dangling from the end of the hook. And it was some lobster too. It weighed 5 3-4 pounds and when laid in a market basket covered the entire bottom.

Watson had, in feeling about for fish, hooked the lobster under the claw on the end of the fish hook and brought him securely to land. He believes that hereafter he will eschew fishing for mere fish and catch lobsters only for the price is way up and going still, at last accounts.

Got 125 Blackfish.
Paul Paquette, William Treat and Gurdon Watson had a successful fishing trip in the former's powerboat Friday, bringing home 125 blackfish, all of good weight. All their friends were generously remembered.

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In April 1929 Gurdon earned another mention in the local press:

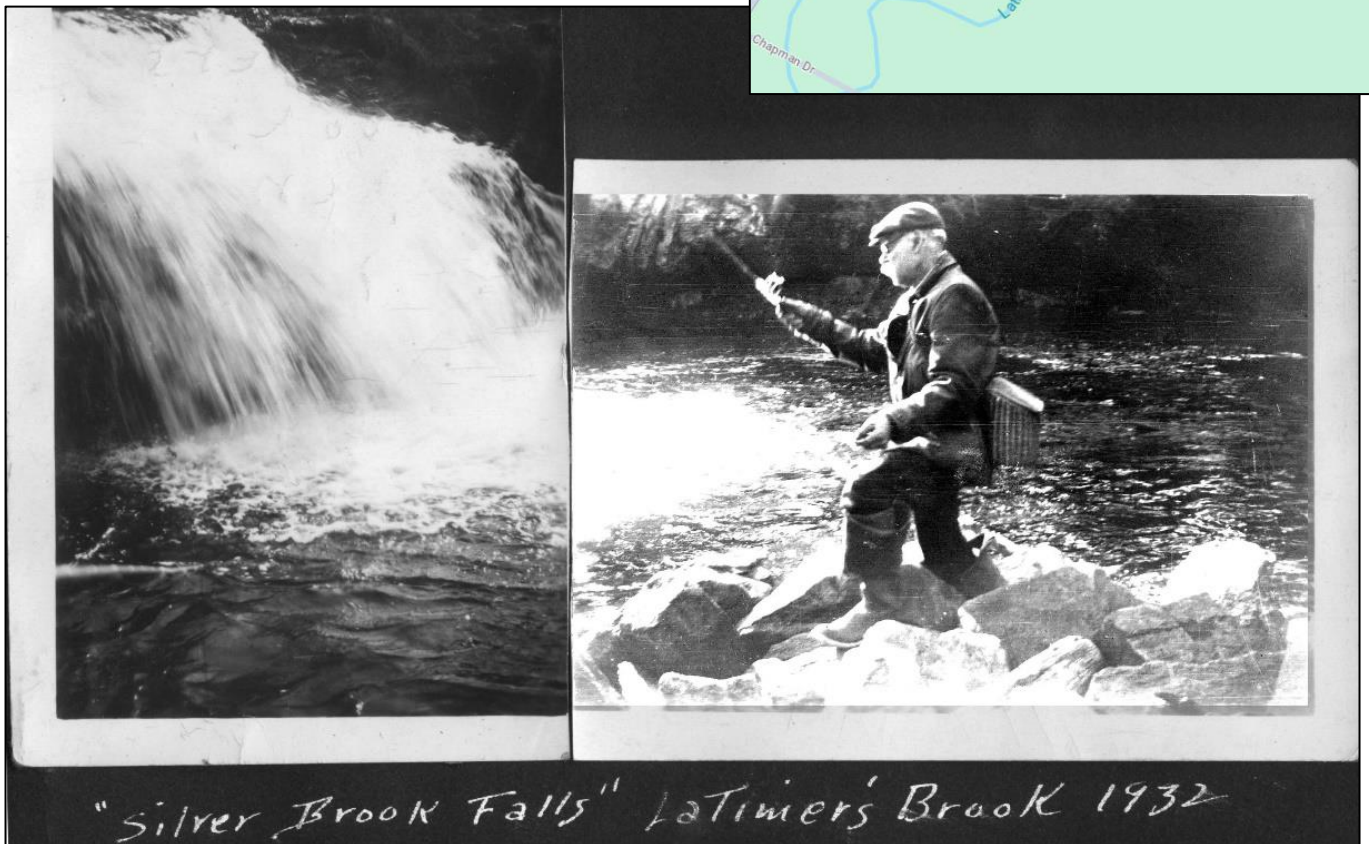
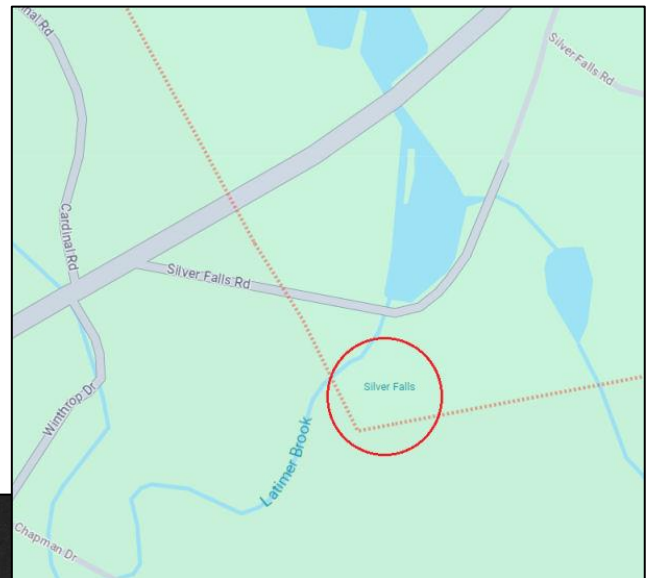
“Gurdon W. Watson of 280 Willetts avenue was included in the list of local fishermen who had a very successful time in their favorite brooks yesterday. Mr. Watson brought home a string of 18 fine trout, nearly all of which measured from eight to 11 inches long and weighed in proportion.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; evening edition, April 16, 1929, pg.7

Catches 18 Fine Trout.
Gurdon W. Watson of 280 Willetts avenue was included in the list of local fishermen who had a very successful time in their favorite brooks yesterday. Mr. Watson brought home a string of 18 fine trout, nearly all of which measured from eight to 11 inches long and weighed in proportion.



Colorized photo at left: Gurdon Watson dressed and equipped for a day of fishing. This picture came to us from a grandson of Gurdon's daughter Grace.

Black-and-white composite photo, below: Gurdon Watson enjoying a day of fishing. This came to us from Elmer E. Watson Jr.'s collection. The photos are labeled with the words "Silver Brook Falls, Latimer's Brook, 1932." [Google Maps](#) shows *Silver Falls*, along *Latimer Brook*, in the extreme southwestern corner of Montville, CT.



Elmer E. Watson Sr. and Jr. also fished for sport. These two black-and-white photos shown below are dated to April 1931.



Elmer Sr., with his back to the camera, is fishing in Latimer's Brook (now known simply as *Latimer Brook*). Elmer Jr. holds up a mess of trout caught by one or both of them.



Elmer Jr., more advanced in years, is shown in this old color photo with a decent-sized fish he'd caught.

Elmer Watson's Future Mother-in-Law

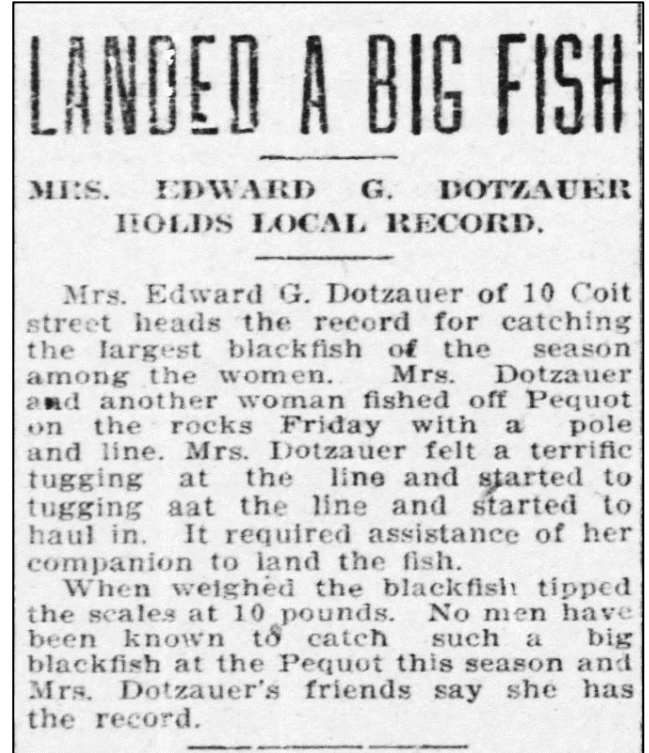
Turns out, the ladies in New London, CT, liked to fish, too. And someone working at *The Day* during the nineteen-aughts must have been keeping score for the fishing enthusiasts in New London:

“LANDED A BIG FISH

“MRS. EDWARD G. DOTZAUER HOLDS
LOCAL RECORD

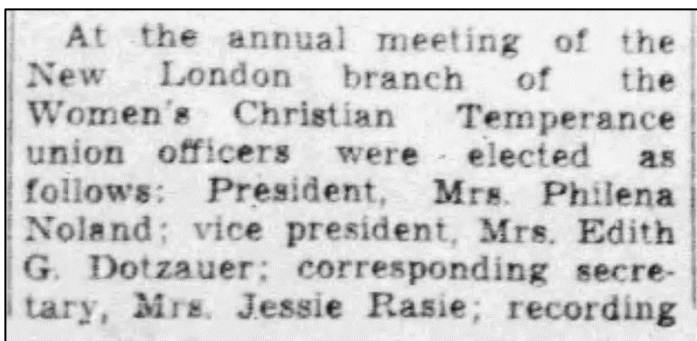
“Mrs. Edward G. Dotzauer of 10 Coit street heads the record for catching the largest blackfish of the season among the women. Mrs. Dotzauer and another woman fished off Pequot on the rocks Friday with a pole and line. Mrs. Dotzauer felt a terrific tugging at the line and started to haul in. It required the assistance of her companion to land the fish.

“When weighed the blackfish tipped the scales at 10 pounds. No men have been known to catch such a big blackfish at the Pequot this season and Mrs. Dotzauer's friends say she has the record.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Wed., Oct. 23, 1907, pg. 7



Edith Lottie (Gates) Dotzauer, wife to Edward G. Dotzauer, would see their daughter **Mabel** married to Gurdon Watson's son **Elmer** on May 14, 1914, in New London.

They shared a love of music: Elmer played the violin; Mabel, the piano. There were also important differences between their families. For starters, the Dotzaues were deeply religious people. The Watsons were not.



Mabel's mother once served as vice president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in New London, of which Mabel also was a member. But Elmer was no teetotaler; he came from a family tradition of home-brewed beer. It's more than likely he imbibed regularly at the American Legion hall.

Edith Dotzauer died in the same year that Prohibition began. Elmer's and Mabel's union, like Prohibition itself, did not stand the test of time.

Gurdon Pled Guilty

Gurdon Watson had another encounter with the name Latimer, but it wasn't a brook jumping with fish. It was Judge Frederick P. Latimer of Groton, CT. This encounter came in the same week that Gurdon hooked the lobster.

Long story short, Gurdon's outboard motor on his boat was too loud.

According to the [Spring 2001 Bugeye Times](#) published by the Calvert Marine Museum, "Up until [1929], outboards had above-water exhausts that were very noisy. When fishermen left early in the morning, everyone around was wakened from the noise of the loud motors."

On August 10, 1911, Gurdon Watson was one of twelve motor boat owners/operators fined in Groton town court for "violating the state law regarding the muffling of motors."

"All were arrested by State Policemen Wheeler, Jackson and Rudd Wednesday afternoon and evening. The state policemen were accompanied by Deputy Harbor Master Fred Perry."

"*Gurdon Watson pleaded guilty to the charge against him.*" Reportedly he was the only one to do this. It's possible he'd removed the muffler from his motor and was being honest about it.

"After one or two more of the accused had been presented and heard, Judge Latimer decided

that he would hear several of the boats in operation to convince himself. He declared a recess of about an hour, and the court, accused and witnesses went to the wharf" where four of the men were "directed to run their boats out on the river for a distance of half a mile or more" so Judge Latimer could hear what they sounded like.

Afterwards, Judge Latimer declared that "in view of the circumstances he saw no course left for him but to find all the accused guilty. He stated however that in his opinion *the state law was a wickedly unjust one*, and it

Motor Boat Operators Fined in Groton Court

Activity of State Police Resulted in Rush of Business
for Judge Latimer This Morning — Several
Appeals Were Taken.

Twelve owners and operators of motor boats were fined in the town court of Groton this morning for violating the state law regarding the muffling of motors. They are: George E. Sherburne, Gurdon Watson, Reuben L. Clark, Carl J. Hansen, Louis Swift, Tony Benvenuti, George Pendleton, George Hanson, all of New London; Stephen Bagnell of Noank; Wallace B. Chapman of Groton; Roy Perkins of Groton, and Allyn Harrison of Harrison's Landing. All were fined \$5 and costs, amounting to \$16.32. Capt. Hubert White of Southampton, L. I., was discharged. Notices of appeal were filed by Reuben Clark, Allyn Harrison, Roy Perkins, George E. Sherburne, George Pendleton and George Hanson. They were held on bonds of \$75 for appearance at the next term of the court of common pleas.

All were arrested by State Policemen Wheeler, Jackson and Rudd Wednesday afternoon and evening. The state policemen were accompanied by Deputy Harbor Master Fred Perry.

The case against George E. Sherburne was heard first. Sherburne pleaded not guilty. State Policeman Wheeler testified that Sherburne's engine could be heard about a half mile away.

Gurdon Watson pleaded guilty to the charge against him.

The case of Reuben L. Clark to New London was heard next. He was represented by Attorney Frank H. Hinckley of Stonington. State Policeman Wheeler testified that he with the other state policemen were in a launch near the Groton shore about opposite the Griswold when he heard

Clark's launch approaching. The launch was about a half mile away. State Policeman Rudd corroborated the testimony of Wheeler. George Clark, who was an occupant of the boat at the time it was overhauled, said that the boat was muffled. Walter Lathrop of Mystic was called by Attorney Hinckley. He said that in his opinion the engine of the Clark boat was effectively muffled. He knew the boat and the engine and muffler were both manufactured by his concern. He thought that on a calm day the explosion of the engine could not be heard more than 1,000 feet.

Judge Latimer interrupted the testimony of the witness. He said that in view of the fact that the witness was a member of the concern that made the muffler in question, he would not place any value on his testimony. He did not wish to insinuate that the witness was making any false statements, but that he did not think the testimony of the witness was valid. Attorney Hinckley replied that Mr. Lathrop had been introduced as an expert witness who was familiar with the features of the muffler. Judge Latimer would hear no more of the testimony of the witness.

The defense then called the owner of the boat. Clark said the boat was muffled in compliance with the law. The defense started to call another witness, but the court decided that enough evidence had been introduced and that he would go on with another case.

Attorney Hinckley stated that he was ready to give a practical demonstration to convince the court that his client's engine was muffled effectively. He had had the boat brought over to Groton and it was tied at the wharf of the Groton Coal Co. The boat could be operated and the judge could determine for himself whether the engine was muffled to cover the law.

Carl J. Hansen was next charged with operating a motor boat whose engine was not effectively muffled. He was represented by Attorney Perry J. Hollandersky of New London. State Policemen Rudd and Wheeler both testified that they could hear the explosion of the engine of the defendant's boat over half a mile away.

Judge Sees Boats Operate.
At this stage of the proceedings Judge Latimer decided that he would hear several of the boats in operation to convince himself. He declared a recess of about an hour and the court, accused and witnesses went to the wharf of the Groton Coal Co. Here George Sherburne, Reuben Clark, Louis Swift and George Pendleton were directed to run their boats out on the river for a distance of half a mile or more.

After the demonstration the proceedings were resumed. The remaining defendants had signified their willingness to let the court decide their cases on the strength of his opinion formed from the demonstration.

Judge Latimer declared a recess of ten minutes. At its expiration he stated that in view of the circumstances he saw no course left for him but to find all the accused guilty. He stated however that in his opinion the state law was a wickedly unjust one, and it was hard to construe its meaning. The law read that motors should be effectively muffled, but just what was meant by that was ambiguous. There was only one construction that could be put on it in his estimation and that was that the motors must be silenced completely. It was not for a court to place any other meaning on the law and to question the constitutionality of the statute.

Considerable amusement was afforded in the court room when Capt. Hubert White was charged with a violation of the law. He was one of the two that pleaded guilty. Prosecuting Attorney Warren B. Burrows stated to the court that the defendant lived in Southampton, L. I., and was perhaps not entirely familiar with state laws of Connecticut.

"Do you come to New London very often?" When were you over here last?" asked Judge Latimer of the defendant.

"I don't remember the exact date, but it was some time in '97," was the reply.

"Well," replied the court, "you may be discharged, and remember, that you have been here in 1911."

"I am 80 years old; have been around the world three times, rounded Cape Horn nine times and been through the Civil war," replied Captain White, "and I have never been arrested before."

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This matter was reported in *The Day*, New London, CT; August 10, 1911, pg. 5 (clipping shown on previous page); and the *Norwich Bulletin*, Norwich CT; August 11, 1911, pg. 7 (quoted above).

It’s bad enough that “all were fined \$5 and costs, amounting to \$16.32.” But Gurdon also got his motor vessel operator’s license withheld. We learned this from the *List of Officers of Merchant Steam Motor and Sail Vessels Licensed during the Years Ended June 30 1912 the Years Ended June 30 1913-June 30 1915 ; for a Period of Five Years.*, which we found on [Google Books](#).

FIFTH SUPERVISING INSPECTION DISTRICT.				119
PERSONS FROM WHOM LICENSES WERE WITHHELD IN THE LOCAL DISTRICT OF NEW LONDON, CONN., YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1911.				
Name.	Date of refusal.	Name.	Date of refusal.	
<i>Masters of steam and motor vessels.</i>		<i>First assistant engineers of steam vessels, inland.</i>		
Doughty, William H.....	May 31	Briggs, Frank C.....	Mar. 22	
Stokes, Newton.....	June 21	Edwards, Charles C.....	May 2	
<i>Master and pilot of steam and motor vessels.</i>		<i>Engineers of motor vessels of over 15 gross tons carrying freight or passengers for hire.</i>		
Campbell, George D.....	July 3	Purdy, Harry H.....	June 6	
<i>Second-class pilot of steam and motor vessels.</i>		Raynor, David.....	Mar. 28	
McGulre, James F.....	May 9	Wederkinch, Francis C.....	Apr. 25	
<i>Chief engineers of steam vessels, ocean.</i>		<i>Operators of motor vessels.</i>		
Cooper, Robert E.....	June 8	Bliven, Nelson H.....	July 11	
Smith, Noyes A.....	Nov. 1	Payer, Mander.....	June 27	
<i>First assistant engineer of steam vessels, ocean.</i>		Watson, Gurdon W.....	Aug. 8	
Nelson, William.....	Apr. 25	<i>Master of sail vessels of over 700 gross tons.</i>		
		Hallock, James.....	Aug. 8	

The Injuries Were Of a Most Painful Character

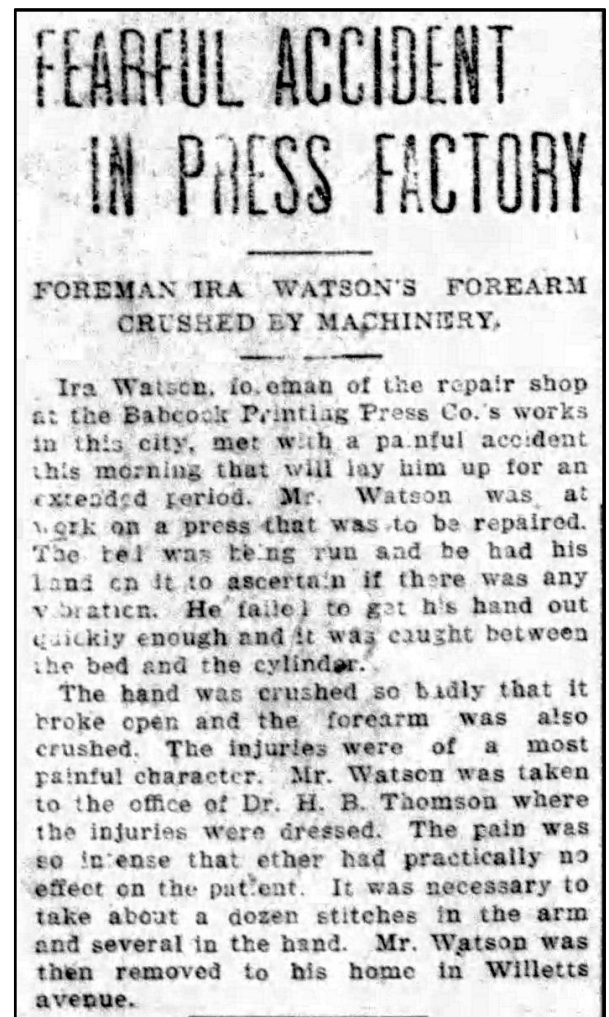
We mentioned the workplace accident that Ira had in 1902 in our article "[The Saga of Ira Watson and Nellie Ormsby](#)." More recently we found a fuller description of that incident in a newspaper item:

"FEARFUL ACCIDENT IN PRESS FACTORY

"FOREMAN IRA WATSON'S FOREARM CRUSHED BY MACHINERY

"Ira Watson, foreman of the repair shop at the Babcock Printing Press Co.'s works in this city, met with a painful accident this morning that will lay him up for an extended period. Mr. Watson was at work on a press that was to be repaired. The bed was being run and he had his hand on it to ascertain if there was any vibration. He failed to get his hand out quickly enough and it was caught between the bed and the cylinder.

"The hand was crushed so badly that it broke open and the forearm was also crushed. The injuries were of a most painful character. Mr. Watson was taken to the office of Dr. H. B. Thomson where the injuries were dressed. The pain was so intense that ether had practically no effect on the patient. It was necessary to take about a dozen stitches in the arm and several in the hand. Mr. Watson was then removed to his home in Willetts avenue."



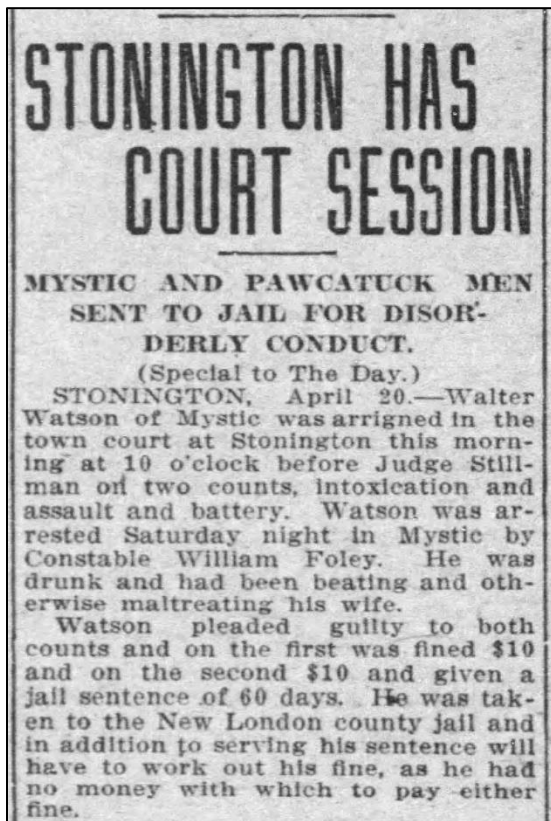
As we noted in "[The Saga](#)," Ira's accident occurred just weeks after the birth of his son Charles. Sleep disruption might have affected Ira's reaction time when his hands were on the machinery.

We doubt Ira got paid by his employer while he was recovering and may even have lost his job as a consequence. Workers' compensation laws were not in force when Ira was injured.

When Ira's wife Nellie filed for divorce, she claimed that Ira was "habitually intemperate and intolerably cruel." We know from other news items that he definitely had a drinking problem and could be physically aggressive. Ira probably used alcohol to dull his lingering physical pain as well as his frustrations. We also know he wasn't the only Watson brother to abuse alcohol.

Intoxication and Assault & Battery

Walter Watson and his wife, Mary Ernestine Lewis, lived in the village of Greenmanville in Mystic, Connecticut, on the Stonington side of the Mystic River. That's why, when Walter was arrested for disorderly conduct, he got hauled into court in Stonington, not Groton.



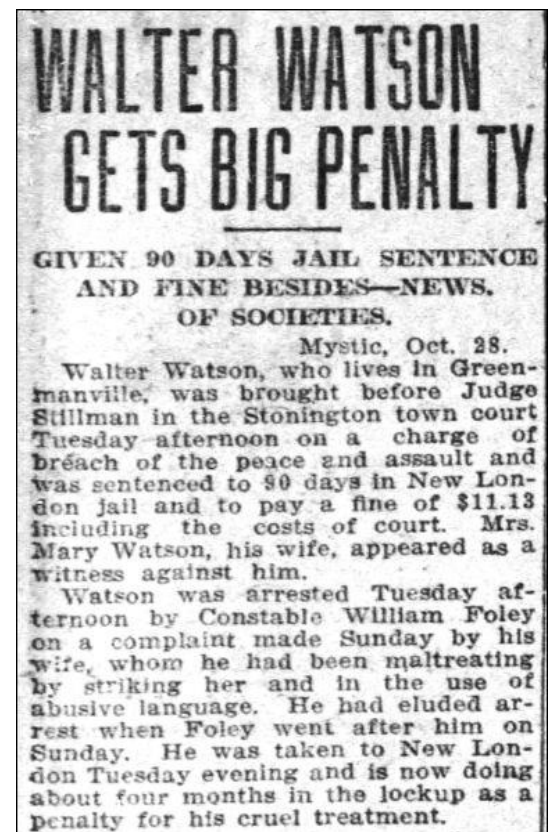
“Walter Watson of Mystic was arraigned in the town court at Stonington this morning at 10 o'clock before Judge Stillman on two counts, intoxication and assault and battery. Watson was arrested Saturday night in Mystic by Constable William Foley. He was drunk and had been beating and otherwise maltreating his wife.

“Watson pleaded guilty to both counts and on the first was fined \$10 and on the second \$10 and given a jail sentence of 60 days. He was taken to the New London county jail and in addition to serving his sentence will have to work out his fine, as he had no money with which to pay either fine.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Monday, April 20, 1908, pg. 8

This happened shortly after the birth of Walter's second child. Four months later, baby Clarence E. Watson died. Things did not improve between Walter and Mary.

“Walter Watson, who lives in Greenmanville, was brought before Judge Stillman in the Stonington town court Tuesday afternoon [Oct. 27th] on a charge of breach of the peace and assault and was sentenced to 90 days in the New London jail and to pay a fine of \$11.13 including the costs of court. Mrs. Mary Watson, his wife, appeared as a witness against him.

“Watson was arrested Tuesday afternoon by Constable William Foley on a complaint made Sunday by his wife, whom he had been maltreating by striking her and in the use of abusive language. He had eluded arrest when Foley went after him on Sunday. He was taken to New London Tuesday evening and is now doing about four months in the lockup as a penalty for his cruel treatment.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Wed., Oct. 28, 1908, pg. 3



Well Known for Disturbing the Peace

“THREE ARE FINED IN TOWN COURT

“RESIDENTS OF MYSTIC ARRAIGNED FOR BREACH OF PEACE

“Arthur Sebastian, Walter Watson, and Everett Watson, residents of Mystic, were arraigned in town court this morning before Judge Frederick P. Latimer to answer for breach of the peace. The court imposed a penalty of \$1 and costs, amounting to \$9.07, on Everett Watson. Sebastian and Walter Watson each were given a fine of \$7 and costs, the costs in one instance amounting to \$17.64 and in the other to \$16.64. Owing to the financial depression none of the trio was able to meet the requirements of the occasion and all went to the Franklin street mint to make the currency.

“The men, who were arrested Thursday night by Constable William Douglass, acknowledged that they were intoxicated. All are well known in Mystic for their periodical disturbances of the peace and this was recognized by the court, Judge Latimer accompanying the imposition of sentence by a few remarks to the effect that a worse fate would befall them if they appeared before him again. Everett Watson, being the one who had offended least, was dealt with more leniently.”

— *The Day*, New London, CT; Fri., Aug. 6, 1909, pg. 8

GROTON BOROUGH.

**THREE ARE FINED
IN TOWN COURT**

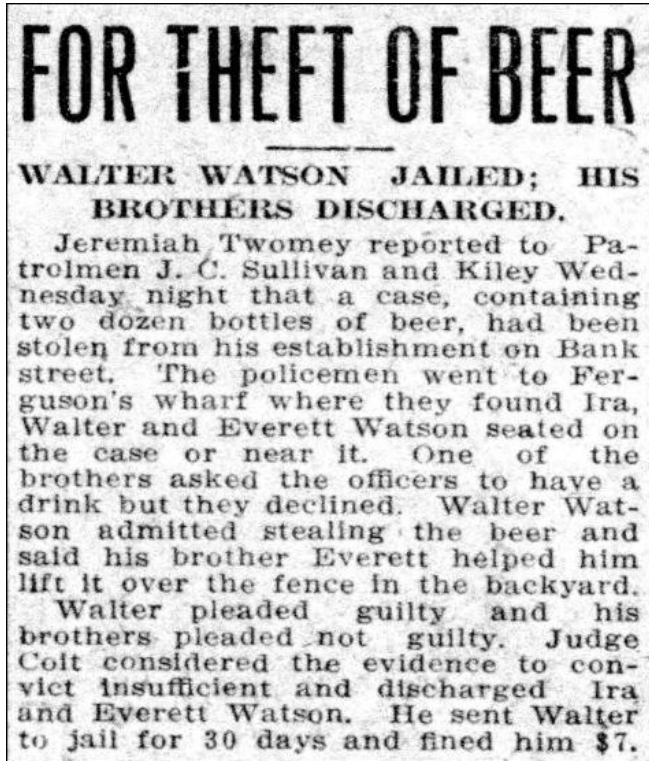
**RESIDENTS OF MYSTIC AR-
RAIGNED FOR BREACH OF
THE PEACE.**

Groton, Aug. 6.
Arthur Sebastian, Walter Watson and Everett Watson, residents of Mystic, were arraigned in town court this morning before Judge Frederick P. Latimer to answer for breach of the peace. The court imposed a penalty of \$1 and costs, amounting to \$9.07, on Everett Watson. Sebastian and Walter Watson each were given a fine of \$7 and costs, the costs in one instance amounting to \$17.64 and in the other to \$16.64. Owing to the financial depression none of the trio was able to meet the requirements of the occasion and all went to the Franklin street mint to make the currency.

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For Theft of Beer

Walter Watson left Mystic and headed to New London. He was enumerated there twice in 1910 – first on April 16th in his brother Gurdon's household; and again on April 21st in the household of his sister Georgie and brother-in-law Henry Gavitt. By summer 1911 Walter was back in the local news, this time with his brothers Ira and Everett.



“Jeremiah Twomey reported to Patrolmen J. C. Sullivan and Kiley Wednesday night that a case, containing two dozen bottles of beer, had been stolen from his establishment on Bank Street. The policemen went to Ferguson's wharf where they found Ira, Walter and Everett Watson seated on the case or near it. One of the brothers asked the officers to have a drink but they declined. Walter Watson admitted stealing the beer and said his brother Everett helped him lift it over the fence in the backyard.

“Walter pleaded guilty and his brothers pleaded not guilty. Judge Coit considered the evidence to convict insufficient and discharged Ira and Everett Watson. He sent Walter to jail for 30 days and fined him \$7.”

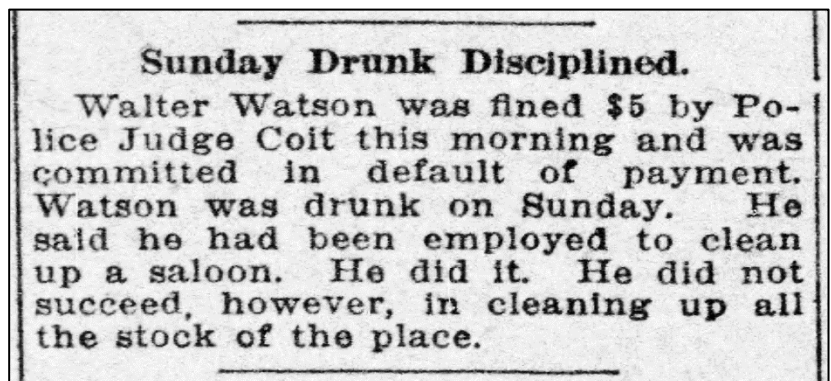
— *The Day*, New London, CT; Thurs., July 27, 1911, pg. 6

Drunk on a Sunday

“Sunday Drunk Disciplined

“Walter Watson was fined \$5 by Police Judge Coit this morning and was committed in default of payment. Watson was drunk on Sunday. He said he had been employed to clean up a saloon. He did it. He did not succeed, however, in cleaning up all the stock of the place.”

— *The Day*, New London, CT: Mon., April 13, 1914, pg. 5



Firebug Watson

In 1910, Mystic was “hit by [a] wave of serious fires”:

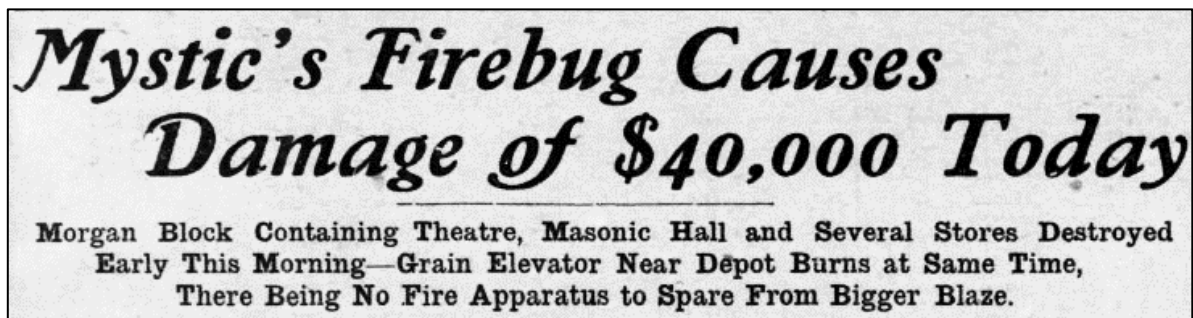
“July 26 – Cottrell Lumber Yard fire destroyed old grist mill, storage sheds of Silex Wks., and steamer Dream, Jos. Wells, owner, at the Silex dock;

“Sept. 22, Burrows coal wharf and R. B. Chute’s junk shop;

“Oct. 11, top floor of Central Hall Block and grain shed of Arnold Rudd, Jackson Ave. (the Noank fire engine drawn to Mystic by Robt. Noyes’ automobile for this blaze).”

Stonington Chronology 1649-1949 : Being a Year-By-Year Record of the American Way of Life in a Connecticut Town, by William Haynes; Pequot Press 1949; page 106. (Found online at [this link](#)).

That last conflagration was the worst. The New London newspaper *The Day* summed up the damages in its October 11th headline:



Per the *Stonington Chronology*:

Oct. 12, insurance detectives and state police swarmed into Mystic;

Oct. 14, Everett Watson arrested for incendiarism.

This is how Everett Watson found himself facing Judge Latimer a second time.

The *Norwich Bulletin* and *The Day* printed breathless reports of how burglaries appeared to be linked to the blazes:

A Mystic selectman “found the accused, with other men, out very early on the morning of August 3 in a dark alleyway and *with a bag of fowls in their possession*. The identity of Watson’s companions on that day has not been made known yet.”

“Another important witness will be Cornelius Costello, operating a watch-repairing and jewelry business in Mystic. Mr. Costello saw Watson after the fire in which the watch shop was involved and in his hearing mentioned that a reward would be given for return of goods taken. Costello says that *Watson spoke to him afterwards, telling him that he had knowledge of where the watches stolen were*.”

— *Norwich Bulletin*, Norwich, CT; Sat., Oct. 15, 1910, pg. 7

Ernest E. Rogers, owner of the Mystic Grain company building destroyed by fire on Oct. 11th, reported that his building was “undoubtedly burned” to cover up a robbery on the premises.

“A little of the office furniture was all that was saved. Augur holes had been bored in every drawer of the standing desk but there was nothing of value to the thieves in the drawers. The cash register was broken open and the money it contained, which was less than one dollar, was taken.” — *Norwich Bulletin*, Norwich, CT; Tues., Oct. 25, 1910, pg. 6

Another account of Everett Watson’s troubles was published in the *Bridgeport Herald*:

“FIREBUG WATSON IS ORDERED HELD

“Probable Cause Found in Case of Mystic Suspect

“HEAVY BAIL ASKED

“Everett E. Watson, twenty-three years old, charged with being responsible for the four recent serious incendiary fires in Mystic, was formally arraigned before Judge Frederick P. Latimer in the Groton town court Monday and held for the higher court on a charge of arson. He was committed to the New London jail in default of \$2,000 bail.

“Mystic within the past month has had two double incendiary fires, occurring simultaneously in different sections of the village. The first two fires entailed a loss of \$8,000, and the second assumed the proportions of a near conflagration, destroying \$40,000 worth of property in the business heart of the village. Watson was arrested by the state police October 12 and his case continued until last week.

“At this hearing Watson testified he did not leave his home between 10 o'clock on the night of October 10 and 6:30 o'clock on the morning of October 11. The fire occurred at 4 o'clock that morning. Watson's evidence was corroborated by his wife, but several witnesses testified to having seen him leaving and returning to his home early that morning, and Judge Latimer found probable cause and ordered the prisoner held for high court.

“Watson is a [house] painter. He has lived in Mystic ten years and *has been regarded by many as an eccentric character*. He has been under suspicion since the first fire. When arrested by State Policemen Rudd, Mitchell and Bridgeman, and before being questioned, he denied all knowledge of the authorship of the fires.” — *Bridgeport Herald*, Bridgeport, CT; October 23, 1910, pg. 13

Everett Watson languished in the county jail until he got his day in court on January 4, 1911.

“A nolle absolute was entered in the case of state vs. Everett Watson of Groton, who was charged with setting fire to property in Groton belonging to Luther Morgan on October 11, when several fires occurred in that vicinity.” — *Norwich Bulletin*, Norwich, CT; Thurs., Jan. 5, 1911, pg. 7

Everett Watson, the man charged with arson in setting fire to Central hall, Mystic, had the case against him nolle without restrictions.

— *The Day*, New London, CT; Wed., Jan. 4, 1911, pg. 6

Why was Everett's case nolle? We don't know. We looked for other references to this matter in the local papers, but found nothing to tell us if anyone else was ever prosecuted for these crimes. Clearly the state decided not to proceed with its case against "Firebug Watson."

But Everett's name remains enshrined in the history of Stonington as an arsonist.

As to why Everett Watson was *regarded by many as an eccentric character* – people probably knew his wife was old enough to be his mother – and was his father's first cousin. On the questionnaire for the 1917 Connecticut military census, Everett revealed that he was "deaf." Being hard of hearing may also have contributed to the impression he made on other people.

The 1912 New London city directory listed Everett Watson living at 12 Home Street. Everett and his wife Minnie had moved from Mystic to New London following their ordeal. Likely that's why Everett was around in July 1911 when his brother Walter needed help getting that stolen case of beer over the fence.

If Only

As he drove his wagon *loaded with wet goods* through the dry town of Ledyard, Walter Watson could have saved himself a lot of trouble. All he needed to do was *turn out* – i.e., pull over – when the vehicle *containing state policemen* honked at Walter. **But he didn't.**

Annoyed that they couldn't pass the wagon, the policemen decided to make trouble for the wagon's driver, leading to these headlines:

“WALTER WATSON IN COURT AT LEDYARD

“NEW LONDONER PRESENTED THIS
AFTERNOON ON CHARGE OF SELLING LIQUOR

“Walter Watson of this city was presented this afternoon at Ledyard before Justice Danzy Pevey charged with violation of the liquor laws in selling liquor in a no license town. Prosecuting Liquor Agent Frank Q. Cronin of this city is prosecuting and Attorney Marion Davis of this city is defending.

“Watson is employed as driver by a local wholesale liquor dealer. He was driving a wagon loaded with wet goods along a road in Ledyard on Sept. 10 when an automobile containing state policemen came up in the rear. The driver of the machine blew for the wagon to turn out. Watson wouldn't turn out, the state policemen thought the time for a little investigation ripe and they uncovered the wagon and found the goods. Watson's arrest followed.

“In a case of this kind it is not necessary to prove an actual sale. Under the statutes, bringing liquor into a no license town constitutes a sale and therefore a violation of the law.”

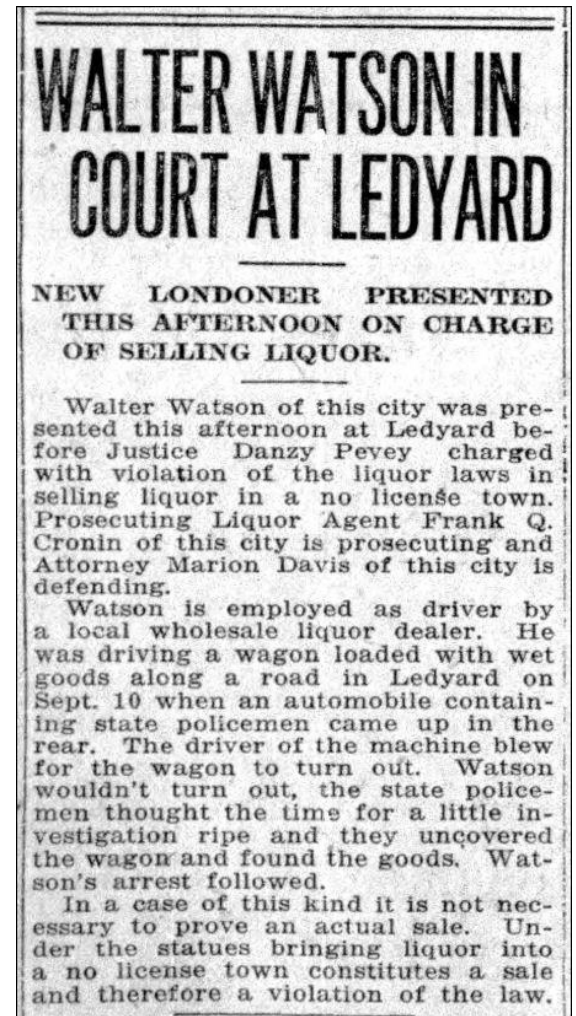
— *The Day*, New London, CT; Mon., Sept. 27, 1915, pg. 3

Another newspaper ran this same item, adding at the end, “The case was disposed of before Justice Pevey Monday when Watson pleaded guilty and was fined \$25 and costs. He paid up.”

— *Norwich Bulletin*, Norwich, CT; Tues., Sept. 28, 1915, pg. 8

This is the first time we're aware of Walter Watson having a defense lawyer.

Both newspapers misspell the name of the justice overseeing this case. His name was Danzy **Povey** (not Pevey). Danzy Russell Povey also was the postmaster at Gale's Ferry in Ledyard.



A Live Bee in His Ear

“HAD LIVE BEE IN EAR FOR TWO DAYS

“GURDON W. WATSON'S PECULIAR EXPERIENCE AS A RESULT OF A RECENT HUNTING TRIP

“Gurdon W. Watson of 280 Willetts avenue had the unusual experience this week of carrying a live bee around in his ear for two days. The circumstances under which the bee located in the ear and the other features of the story make it quite a remarkable accident.

“Mr. Watson was on a hunting trip with some friends and was staying at a cottage in the country. A fire place fire smoked out the bee, which buzzed about and lodged in Mr. Watson's ear.

“Attempts to get the insect out were unsuccessful. The bee buzzed, causing Mr. Watson great inconvenience and discomfort. After it had been there two days the idea of smothering it was conceived. A fellow employe of Mr. Watson at the Brown Cotton Gin Co.'s plant blew tobacco smoke into the ear and the bee was stifled.

“Then Mr. Watson visited the office of Dr. Oliver Winship and Dr. Winship removed the dead bee.”

— *The Day*, New London, CT; Oct. 29, 1915, pg. 4

When the Cotton Gin Mutual Aid Association held its annual banquet in December, one of the men “read a roll call in which he called attention to the well wishes of the association for its members and in proof of these well wishes *the members were given small tokens.*”

“Gurdon Watson, ear lops, to prevent any more bees lodging in his ears.”

— *The Day*, New London, CT; Dec. 7, 1915, pg. 9

HAD LIVE BEE IN EAR FOR TWO DAYS

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EXPERIENCE AS RESULT OF A
RECENT HUNTING TRIP.**

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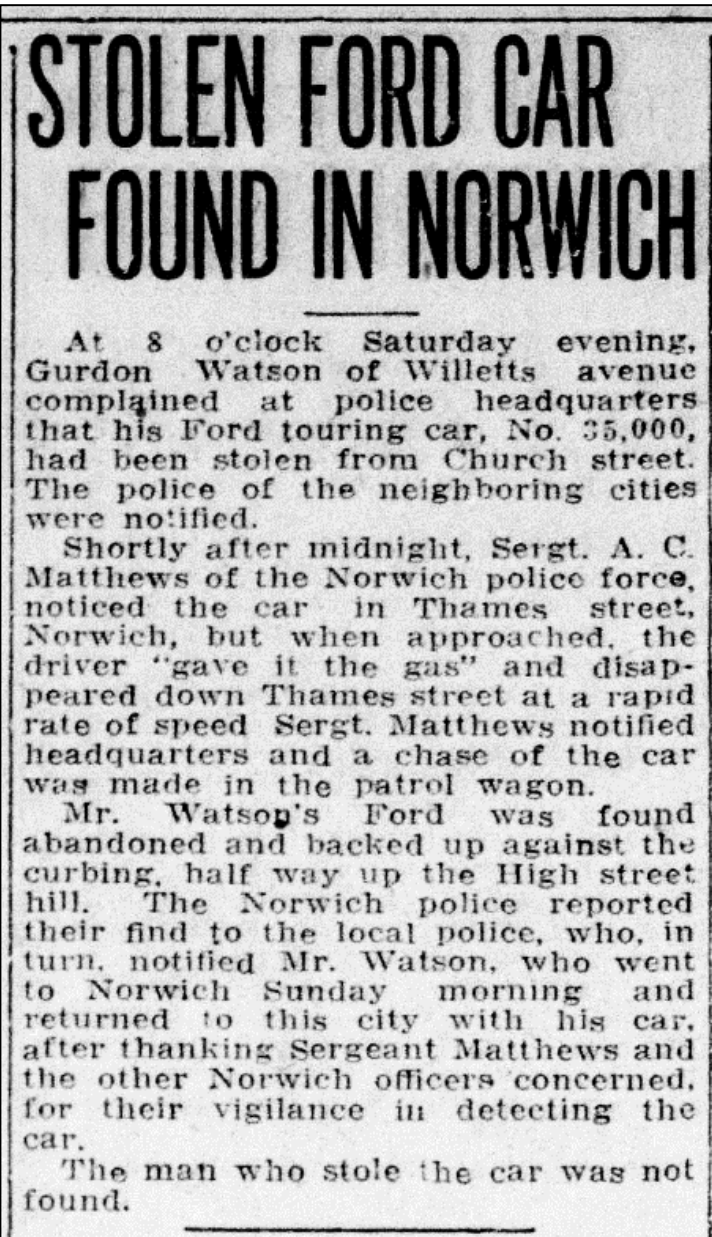
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Then Mr. Watson visited the office of Dr. Oliver Winship and Dr. Winship removed the dead bee.

Gurdon's Ford Touring Car Stolen

He got it back.

The culprit remains at large.



**STOLEN FORD CAR
FOUND IN NORWICH**

At 8 o'clock Saturday evening, Gurdon Watson of Willetts avenue complained at police headquarters that his Ford touring car, No. 35,000, had been stolen from Church street. The police of the neighboring cities were notified.

Shortly after midnight, Sergt. A. C. Matthews of the Norwich police force, noticed the car in Thames street, Norwich, but when approached, the driver "gave it the gas" and disappeared down Thames street at a rapid rate of speed. Sergt. Matthews notified headquarters and a chase of the car was made in the patrol wagon.

Mr. Watson's Ford was found abandoned and backed up against the curbing, half way up the High street hill. The Norwich police reported their find to the local police, who, in turn, notified Mr. Watson, who went to Norwich Sunday morning and returned to this city with his car, after thanking Sergeant Matthews and the other Norwich officers concerned, for their vigilance in detecting the car.

The man who stole the car was not found.

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For what it's worth, Church Street in the city of New London no longer exists. Apparently it (and Wait St.) became part of State Street.

From State Street in New London, to Thames Street in Norwich, is about 12 miles due north — a pretty good joyride for 1919.

He Tumbled Into a Ditch

It was necessary to run a correction after *The Day* published an item about one of the Watson brothers:

“GURDON W. WATSON TUMBLED IN DITCH

“WILLETTS AVENUE RESIDENT INJURED IN AN ATTEMPT TO BOARD TROLLEY CAR

“Gurdon W. Watson of Willetts avenue incurred a painful injury Friday evening in lower Bank street. He came out of a place of business there to catch a passing car, which he put chase for. In his hurry he failed to notice an open ditch where the water department had been at work and he fell in this.

“He lay at the bottom of a ditch for some minutes, probably, as he was seen by the crew of another trolley car crawling out of the hole. He had a bad wound over the eye. He was taken on board the car as far as the corner of Howard street and then he went to the office of Dr. Harry M. Lee, who dressed the wound and sent the man home. No serious results are anticipated. The ditch he fell into had been guarded by a lantern, but it is supposed that this had been knocked over or extinguished in other manner, as it was found at the bottom of the excavation later.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Sat., Oct. 21, 1905, pg. 6

GURDON W. WATSON

TUMBLED IN DITCH

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Walter A. Watson Injured.

In the item concerning the injury of a Mr. Watson in Saturday night's *Day* the first name of the victim of the accident in lower Bank street was given erroneously. The name should have been Walter A. Watson, instead of Gurdon Watson.

“Walter A. Watson Injured

“In the item concerning the injury of Mr. Watson in Saturday night's *Day* the first name of the victim was given erroneously. The name should have been Walter A. Watson, instead of Gurdon Watson.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Mon., Oct. 23, 1905, pg. 6

Gurdon was fully twenty years older than Walter. Whoever made the initial identification must not have gotten a good look at the man who crawled out of the ditch.

This incident can be put into the context of what else was going on in Walter's life at the time.

On November 3rd, exactly two weeks after his fall into the ditch, Walter married 16-year-old Mary Ernestine Lewis. We suspect this was a shotgun wedding, because their son Floyd Allen was born five-and-a-half months later, on May 23, 1906.

If Floyd was a full-term baby, he was conceived probably around late August 1905.

On August 8, 1905, Walter's mother died.

Walter's life must have been stressful in those weeks and months. His coping mechanisms included alcohol consumption and a sexual relationship with a teenage girl. Walter probably had a lot on his mind when he stumbled into that ditch. His tumble seems like a metaphor for his troubled life.

Walter Allen Watson died in New London at the age of 35 on Nov. 6, 1917. Cause of death was tuberculosis ("1 year") and alcoholism ("years"). He was buried in [his father's lot](#) in Jordan Cemetery, Waterford, CT.

Ira Stalked His Estranged Second Wife ...

“PAID \$10 FOR HIS FRACAS OVER WIFE’S CONDUCT

“Ira Watson was fined \$10 and sentenced to ten days in jail in police court today on the charge of breach of the peace. Watson, who has been separated from his wife, is alleged to have followed her and two other women from the Capitol theatre down Bank street and accosted them. A ‘rough and tumble’ resulted with a brother of one of the women who was summoned and arrived on the scene. After the first round of the encounter, not clearly revealed to the authorities, the brother turned to go down the street and then Watson jumped on the man when his back was turned and tore off his shirt. The arrest of Watson followed. Watson admitted today that he had not been living with his wife, but claimed that she was going about with other men.”
— *The Day*, New London, CT; Mon., May 28, 1923, pg. 7

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... And Assaulted his Brother-In-Law

IN THE POLICE COURT.
Class of Offenders Up for Discipline There This Morning.
William Clay was abusive to Patrolman White when the officer advised him to go get aboard the last boat for Groton Friday night. He was given ample opportunity, but declined to take the policeman's advice. Clay was fined \$5 on a charge of intoxication by Judge Coit this morning.
Frank Sullivan, a stable hand, was charged with intoxication, but, as it was his first appearance and he had employment, the charge was nolle.
Ira Watson was arraigned for breach of the peace in striking Henry Gavitt, but it was disclosed that the affray was trivial and the charge was nolle.

“IN THE POLICE COURT

“Class of Offenders Up for Discipline There This Morning

“Ira Watson was arraigned for breach of the peace in striking Henry Gavitt, but it was disclosed that the affray was trivial and the charge was nolle.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Sat., Aug. 24, 1912, pg. 6

Henry Gavitt was husband to Ira's sister “Georgie” (Georgia Anna) Watson.

The *affray* probably wasn't trivial. We don't know how the police got involved. It's likely that Georgie Gavitt urged her husband not to press charges, and to downplay what happened.

Minerva's Glass Eyeball

On May 21, 1904, [Minerva \(George\) Watson](#) injured her eye while splitting wood. The local newspaper reported on this accident:

“Mrs. Gurdon Watson of Willetts avenue suffered a painful accident Saturday which lost her the sight of an eye and may necessitate removal of the whole eyeball. Mrs. Watson was splitting kindlings Saturday morning when a small piece struck her eye, penetrating the ball for some distance. She was taken immediately to the office of Dr. J. C. Taylor and the eye given attention.

“It was found that a portion of the eyeball had run out of the wound and the victim was in great pain. There is considerable probability that the eyeball will have to be removed, and the sight is gone at any rate, Mrs. Watson being able to distinguish between light and darkness with that eye.”

The Day, New London, CT; May 23, 1904, pg. 6

PIECE OF KINDLING DESTROYS SIGHT

MRS. GURDON WATSON SUSTAINS
PAINFUL INJURY—ACCIDENT
HAPPENED CUTTING WOOD.

Mrs. Gurdon Watson of Willetts avenue suffered a painful accident Saturday which lost her the sight of an eye and may necessitate removal of the whole eyeball. Mrs. Watson was splitting kindlings Saturday morning when a small piece struck her eye, penetrating the ball for some distance. She was taken immediately to the office of Dr. J. C. Taylor and the eye was given attention.

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In this lovely old photo of Minerva (which we “colorized” at [MyHeritage.com](#)), you can tell that her right eye is the glass one. It’s surprisingly natural-looking.

Minerva’s grandson Elmer Ellsworth Watson, Jr. recalled, “My grandmother Watson had one glass eye. She always claimed that I threw a bottle at her and put her eye out. I never remember doing that, and I think it was a ‘story’ she made up.”

We assume that Minerva’s glass eyeball went to the grave with her when she died in 1935.

A Spiritualist Conducted the Funeral Service

Minerva died at home, of a heart attack, on May 22, 1935.

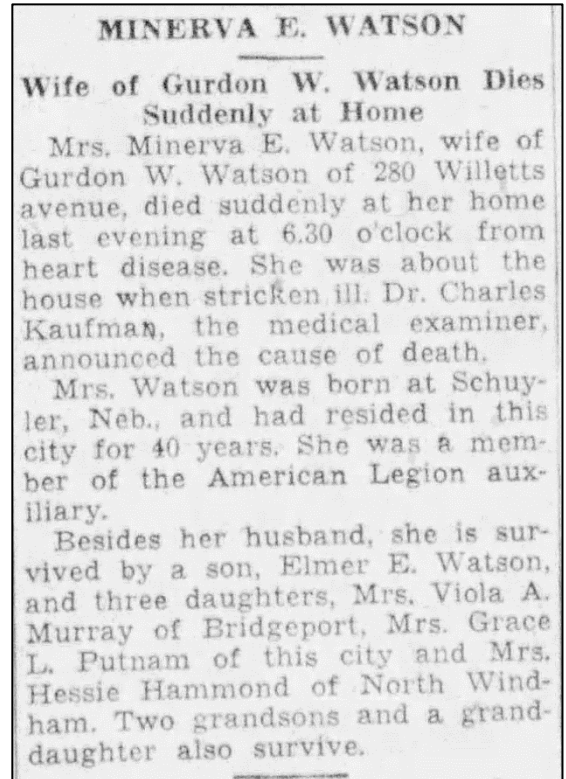
“MINERVA E. WATSON

“Wife of Gurdon W. Watson Dies Suddenly at Home

“Mrs. Minerva E. Watson, wife of Gurdon W. Watson of 280 Willetts avenue, died suddenly at her home last evening at 6:30 o'clock from heart disease. She was about the house when stricken ill. Dr. Charles Kaufman, the medical examiner, announced the cause of death.

“Mrs. Watson was *born at Schuyler, Neb.*, and had resided in this city for 40 years. She was a member of the American Legion auxiliary.

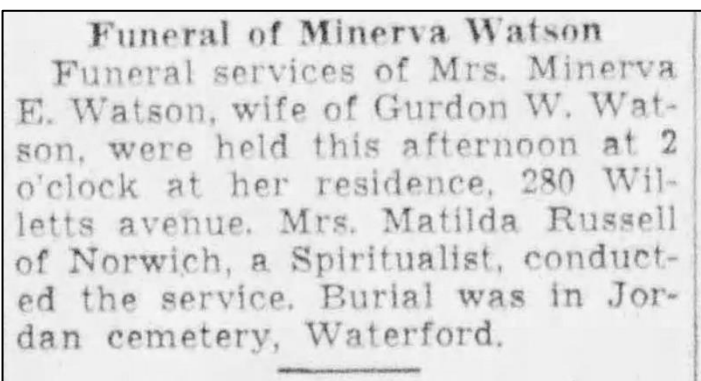
“Besides her husband, she is survived by a son, Elmer E. Watson, and three daughters, Mrs. *Viola A. Murray* of Bridgeport, Mrs. Grace L. Putnam of this city, and Mrs. Hessie Hammond of North Windham. Two grandsons and a granddaughter also survive.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Thurs., May 23, 1935, pg. 10



We have italicized, above, two things from Minerva's obituary that are incorrect:

- Minerva was born in Indiana. Schuyler, Nebraska, was her daughter Hessie's birthplace.
- Gurdon and Minerva's daughter was named Viella, not Viola.

Minerva's funeral was conducted at her home by Mrs. Matilda Russell, a Spiritualist.



New London had a Spiritualist Temple, at 258 Bank Street in 1935, and Mrs. Russell was connected with it. Among other things, they offered healing services and séances. Per *The National Spiritualist's* June 1976 newsletter, Matilda Russell was a “certified medium for fifty years.”

In 2010 Elmer Watson Jr. wrote to us, “Many of the Watsons were Spiritualists. Uncle John [*John Hammond, Hessie's second husband*] was one. That is why he remained in such broken body position [*sic*]. He believed that a Spiritualist could lay his hands on and heal all!!!! Yes, I was at my grandmother's funeral. I can see her now as she laid in the open casket in the living room. I was twenty years of age. A purple ribbon hung on the front door for some time thereafter.”

Found Dead on House Porch

"Ira C. Watson, about 70, a resident of this city many years, was found dead on the porch of his lodging house, 36 Shapley street, last night and Medical Examiner Charles Kaufman declared him a victim of heart disease. His landlady, Miss Nellie Farnan, saw Mr. Watson lying on his back at 10:57 o'clock and notified the police she was unable to rouse him.

"Radio Patrolmen George Bruhns and William J. Riordan were dispatched to the house and found Watson was dead. After the body was examined by the medical examiner it was removed to the Prentis funeral home.

"Mr. Watson was said to have been in failing health for some time. He was accidentally injured a few years ago and since then had been required to use crutches.

"Many years ago he was employed by the late Jeremiah Twomey, a wholesale and retail liquor dealer, and later worked as a machinist in various local factories. In recent years, the police said, he had been working at odd jobs.

"The deceased is survived by a brother, Gurdon Watson of Bridgeport, and a sister, said to reside in Noank." —
The Day, New London, CT; Wed., Nov. 3, 1943, pg. 11

Gurdon *had* moved to Bridgeport, probably about a year earlier, to live with his daughter Viella and her husband John Murray. The sister "said to reside in Noank" was Hattie Tourjee. The sister not mentioned was Georgie Gavitt, who by this time was living with her family in Brooklyn, NY.

Ira's children – Gertrude, Charles, and Ethel – also survived him, as did his ex-wife, Nellie Ormsby, by then married to Theodore Miller and living in Providence, RI. As we understand it, there was no contact between Ira and his children after Nellie regained custody in 1911, took the kids to Rhode Island, and altered their surname from Watson to *Wilson*.

Hattie Tourjee was the informant for Ira's death record. He was laid to rest in [their father's lot](#) in Jordan Cemetery, Waterford, CT.

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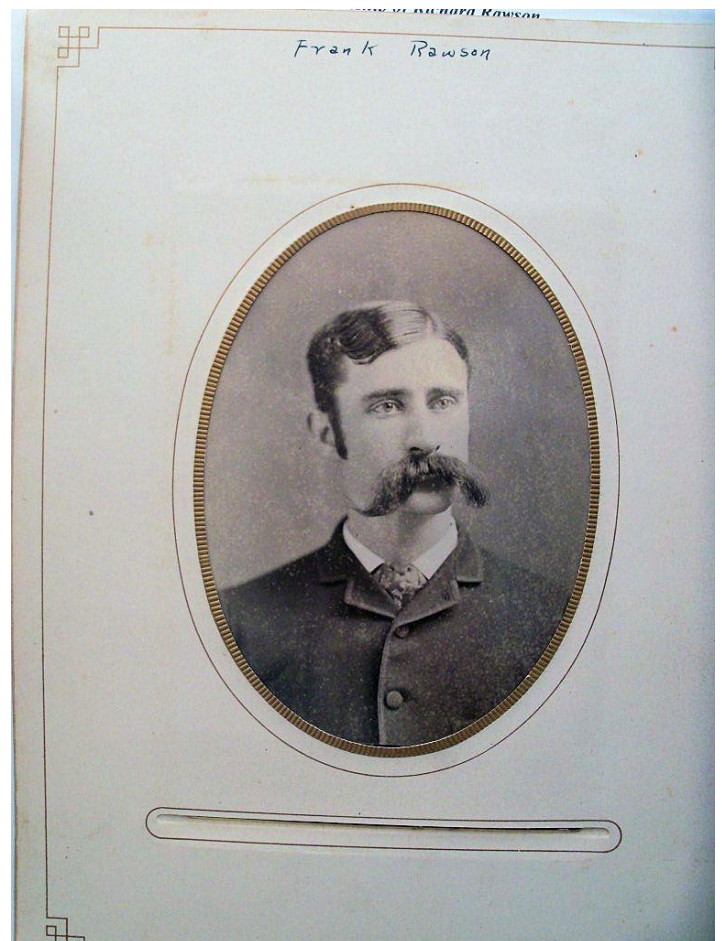
A Photo of Ardelia Watson (1868-1922) As a Reference Point

The opportunity to cross-reference old family photos is rare. We were able to do this with one particular photo preserved by Minerva's daughter Hessie.



It's a portrait of Ardelia, [Nehemiah Watson](#)'s oldest daughter, likely taken in 1889 when she married Frank Rawson. Her name is written on the back in Elmer E. Watson Jr.'s handwriting. He wouldn't have known her, so we have to assume that someone else supplied the info.

In 2010 we corresponded with George Hancock, a man who posted online that he had an antique photo album that once belonged to the Rawson family. Mr. Hancock generously sent us a number of photo images, the originals of which were hand-labeled by a previous owner. It's clear that our photo is identical to the one shown below from the Rawson album, labeled "Delia Watson Rawson." We've included the photo of Frank Rawson, Ardelia's husband, on the right. He had an impressive moustache.



A slightly-younger Ardelia is easily recognized in another photo (shown at right). This cabinet card portrait includes the photography studio's name, address and year on the photo mount: G. Wallace Wright / 1887 / 11 Union St., Putnam, Conn.

A second photo in Hessie's collection has the identical photo mount (shown at lower left). Remarks taped to the back of this second photo suggest that it *might* be Melissa Baker, wife of Elhanan Watson Jr., but no one knew for sure.

We think it likely that these two photos, taken at the same place in the same year, portray mother and daughter. The woman in the second photo probably is Nehemiah Watson's wife and Ardelia's mother – Mary Ellen Lewis, who celebrated her 44th birthday in September 1887.



But could it be Melissa and her daughter in these photos? It's possible but not probable.

Melissa (Baker) Watson's only surviving daughter, Alnetta, was born June 22, 1875. If Melissa and Alnetta were the subjects of this pair of portraits, "Nettie" was *at most* twelve years old at the time. The girl in the 1887 photo looks older than twelve – and she strongly resembles the later photo of Ardelia.



A Photo Mystery Possibly Solved

This picture, and another one taken on the same occasion, came to us via a grandson of Gurdon's daughter Grace (the same person who supplied the photo of Gurdon in his fishing regalia).

He readily identified the man on the left as Gurdon Watson, and we concur. He also thought that the man on the right probably was Ira C. Watson, Gurdon's brother. We get a better look at him in the next photo.

His guess as to the woman standing next to Gurdon: Possibly Minerva Watson.

The companion photo to this group of four is three men in the same spot with a few more clues.



There's Gurdon again on the left, and the man on the right that we think is Ira. They resemble each other. Ira's WWI draft registration says he had blue eyes; the eyes of the man on the right are light in tone. We'll declare him to be Ira.

There is a gravestone visible behind Ira: they're standing in a cemetery.

MyHeritage.com offers PhotoDater™, "an exclusive, free new feature that estimates when old photos were taken." PhotoDater estimated the dates of these pictures at 1930-31.

Whose funeral/burial might the Watsons have been attending around that time?

Was it Ira's estranged second wife, Kate, who died on March 5, 1929? While it's

possible her funeral was the occasion for these photos, we have our doubts that Ira and the others attended her burial in Jordan Cemetery.

The likeliest answer is Everett Watson, the youngest of the Watson siblings, who died on April 22, 1929. He was buried in Elm Grove Cemetery in Mystic, a place that shows up in satellite imagery with way more trees than Jordan Cemetery. (Even a century or so later, original landscaping choices tend to persist.)

Everyone in these two photos is wearing clothing appropriate to springtime in coastal Connecticut.

So who is this guy standing between Gurdon and Ira in the second photo? Acting on a hunch, we poked around at



Ancestry.com and found an old photo (right) of Fred Tourjee, Harriet Watson's husband.

The elderly man's striking jawline and the shape of his nose are a good match for the younger man's features.

Our source for the photo of Frederick W. Tourjee in old age was Ken Johnson's *Johnson-Dillon-Claflin-McGill-Tourjee* family tree.

We are awaiting a response from Mr. Johnson via Ancestry.com's messaging center, in hopes that he'll formally approve our using his photo.

Fred Tourjee's presence on this occasion helps us in identifying the women.

Our initial thought was that the woman on the left *might be* Hattie (Watson) Tourjee; and the woman on the right *might be* Georgie (Watson) Gavitt – making that picture a group photo of the four Watson siblings alive at the time of Everett's death.

Then we considered the age of the woman on the left. We know that Hattie was three years older than Fred, but this woman seems a little *too* old to be Fred's wife. She might be Everett's widow, Minnie, who would have been about 64 years old at the time. More likely, it *is* Minerva who, in spring of 1929, would have been a few months shy of her 70th birthday.

OBITUARY

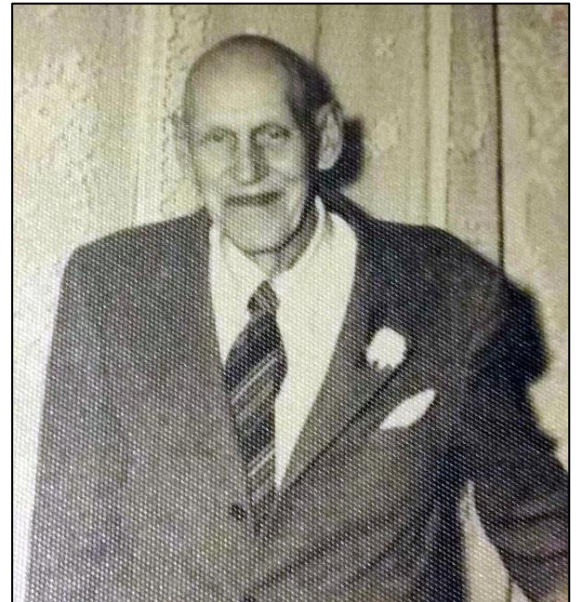
EVERETT E. WATSON

Dies at Mitchell Ward Following Long Illness

Everett E. Watson, a painter, died last night at the Mitchell ward of the Lawrence and Memorial Associated hospitals following a lingering illness. He was 43 years old.

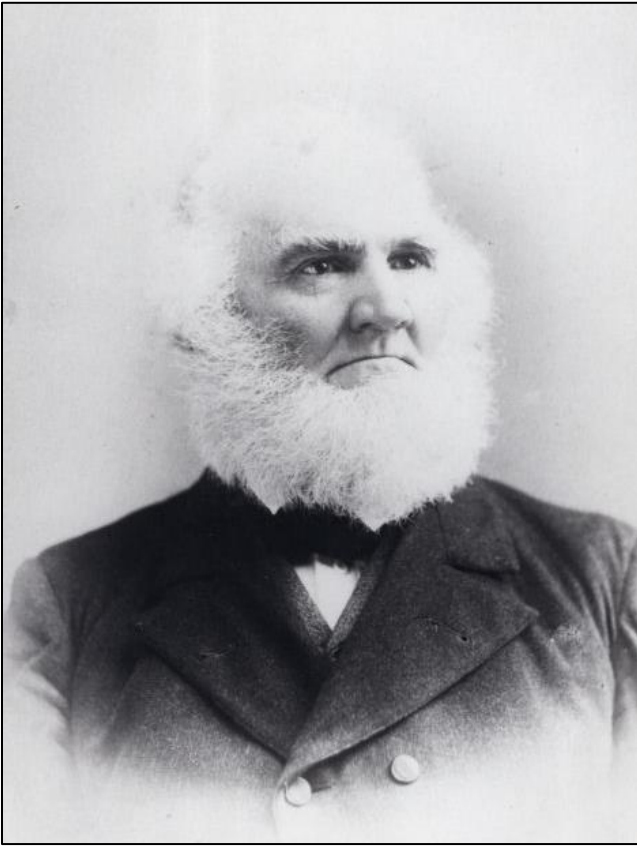
Mr. Watson was born in North Grosvenordale, this state. He resided here for a number of years. His last residence was at 167 Bank street. He has not worked since before last Christmas because of illness.

The deceased is survived by his wife, Mrs. Minnie Watson; two brothers, Gurdon and Ira Watson of this city, and two sisters, Mrs. Henry Gavitt of this city and Mrs. Fred Tourjee of Noank.



We think the woman on the right is Hattie (Watson) Tourjee, who was 59 years old in the spring of 1929. She looks the right age to be Fred's wife; and her smile is a dynamic link to the cheerful grin on Fred's face. Everyone else was just standing around obediently for this photo session, while Fred and Hattie were taking turns with their camera.

An Assortment of Old Photos



Top left: [Elhanan W. Watson Sr. \(1816-1903\)](#).
He was father to Nehemiah Watson (1841-1921)
and Elhanan W. Watson Jr. (~1843-1888).

Below right: Minerva E. George and Ardelia
Watson pose together in a tintype photograph, circa
1886. The original is badly darkened. We brought
it back to life using digital imaging tools.



Bottom left: Minerva E. George and Gurdon W.
Watson pose for what may have been their formal
wedding portrait, circa July 1886. This photo was
a *cabinet card* – a photograph affixed to a sturdy
cardboard mount measuring 4¼ by 6½ inches.



Top left: An undated photo of Georgia Anna “Georgie” Watson (1880-1961). She was a daughter of Nehemiah Watson and Mary Ellen Lewis. Georgie married Henry H. Gavitt (1875-1948).

Below, right: A photo of Elmer Ellsworth Watson Sr. (1887-1942) as a little tyke.



Bottom left: A cabinet card photo of Elmer Ellsworth Watson Sr. (1887-1942) and his sister Viella (1889-1961).

The expressions on these two kids’ faces are amusing. The offstage direction may have involved “Hold still!” and “We’re *almost done*.”

Hubbell
& Blackstone,



18 FRANKLIN SQUARE.
NORWICH, CONN.

Top right: An undated photo of Elmer Ellsworth Watson Sr. (1887-1942). The collar style suggests that this portrait was made prior to World War I. Perhaps this photo was taken in 1914, the year that Elmer married Mabel Dotzauer (1892-1971).



Below, left: An undated photo of Grace Louise (Watson) Putnam (1894-1940), the youngest of Gurdon and Minerva Watson's three children.

After Minerva's death in 1935, Grace, her husband Russell N. Putnam, and their daughter Jane Elizabeth ("Betty") moved into Grace's childhood home in New London to live with Gurdon.



Like her mother nearly five years earlier, Grace died at home, suddenly, of a heart attack. Her daughter Betty was only 14 years old at the time. Grace was laid to rest in Jordan Cemetery, near Minerva.

Below, right: Grace's obituary as published in *The Day*, New London, CT; evening edition for Tues., February 13, 1940, pg. 10.

Russell Putnam (1894-1973) remarried after Grace's death; his second wife was Elizabeth Warner Huey (1912-2007). Russell and Elizabeth are buried together in Joshuatown Cemetery, Lyme, CT.

Obituary

GRACE LOUISE PUTNAM

Wife of Russell N. Putnam Dies Suddenly from Heart Disease

Mrs. Grace Louise Putnam, wife of Russell Nelson Putnam, died suddenly today at her home at 280 Willetts avenue. Heart disease was the cause of death, Dr. Edward Gipstein, the acting medical examiner, said.

Mrs. Putnam was born in this city, the daughter of Gurdon and Minerva George Watson, and she had many friends here.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her father, a daughter, Betty Jane; a brother, Elmer E. Watson of Groton, and two sisters, Mrs. HESSIE HAMMOND of North Windham and Mrs. JOHN MURRAY of Bridgeport.



Left: A photo of Elmer Ellsworth Watson Sr., dated October 1, 1918, in St. Denis de Piles, Gironde, France. He served in WWI with Battery A, 68th Artillery, US Army Coast Artillery Corps.

Elmer arrived with his regiment in St. Denis de Piles on Sept. 1, 1918, having gotten there via England. The 68th was busy with training in St. Denis. This was described in a publication, called *Mess Kit*, that Elmer included in a letter to his mother, dated October 6, 1918.

In spite of the fact that we have not done any fighting we have not been idle. Our men have been getting special training in Auto. and Tractor driving, in Motorcycle riding, Telephone and Signal work, gas defence and camouflage. Our men have all returned from the Tractor and Auto. School and their record, which is posted on the bulletin board, shows very plainly that they were there for business. Pvt. Dunne was one who qualified so well that he has been transferred to the School as an instructor.

A history of the 68th Artillery Regiment, Coast Artillery Corps, can be found at this [web page](#) owned by Joe Hartwell © 2001-2019.

To Elmer's great disappointment, the war ended before the 68th could see any action. He left St. Denis on January 23, 1919.

Elmer Jr. recalled the time when his father returned from the war: "I was four years old when my father returned home in 1919 from serving overseas in World War I. He came into the living room in full dress uniform, and the image has stuck in my mind as the very first thing I could ever remember."

CLARK'S CORNERS
Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Chapel and daughter were in New London Monday.
Allen Jewett was in Norwich Monday.
Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Watson and son, also Mr. Watson's mother, all of New London, were week-end guests of Mrs. Willis Wade. Mr. Watson returned last week from France.

The *Norwich Bulletin* reported that Elmer and family, plus Minerva, made a trip to Clark's Corners in Hampton, CT, to visit with Hessie Wade (Minerva's daughter and Elmer Sr.'s half-sister). "Mr. Watson returned last week from France." — *Norwich Bulletin*, Norwich, CT; March 11, 1919, pg.10

Elmer Sr. was a member of New London's John Coleman Prince post of the American Legion, serving as Vice Commander and Drum Major.



Top left: A blurry photo of Elmer E. Watsons Sr. as Drum Major, leading an American Legion parade in New London, Connecticut, circa 1932. As his son Elmer Jr. put it, “He led the parades up State Street, swinging his baton all the way.”

Below, right: A photo of Elmer Watson Jr. (1915-2016) in 1916.



Bottom left: An undated photo of Jane Elizabeth “Betty” Putnam (1925-1992), daughter of Russell Nelson Putnam and Grace Louise Watson.

Gurdon Watson in Family Lore

A lot of family lore about Gurdon Watson came to us from Elmer E. Watson Jr.

“Grandpa raised a nice garden and used to give us vegetables to take home. I also used to watch him make home brew in a big oval copper kettle in the kitchen. As I remember, he called it ‘3.2 brew.’ He loved his beer. He also liked to eat those little, very hot, green peppers like you would eat an apple. He used to say to me, ‘Ellsworth, they are as hot *going* as they are *coming*.’ I finally figured out what that meant!”

Photo at right: Gurdon sitting in his yard near his garden.

Elmer Jr. remembered that there was “no talking during meals” at his Watson grandparents’ house – and that his grandfather called his grandmother *Minervie*.

Gurdon Watson worked as a machinist at the Brown Cotton Gin Co. in New London, a shop that made machine parts for cotton gins. Eventually Brown Cotton Gin evolved into the Babcock Printing Press Company, switching to manufacturing printing press components.

Gurdon once was sent by Babcock to do on-site repairs for a printing press in the Midwest. He was considered the best man for the job; and apparently it was a big deal at the time.

Elmer Jr. also recalled two of Gurdon’s cars – one a Maxwell, the other an Oakland.

“The Maxwell that my grandfather, Gurdon, owned was quite a car. At that time, the Maxwell was noted for going over a fair sized hill without shifting the gears. He drove it only in good weather, and every winter that car went into his garage and was placed up on blocks. Many people did just that during those years.

“Cars built during the 1920’s and 1930’s and a few in the early 1940’s always had vases on the side post separating the back window from the front. The Maxwell, which was built in 1923, had one of these vases and Grandma put flowers in it. Of course, there were no silk, paper or other types of flowers then; it was always a fresh bouquet put in those vases from time to time.



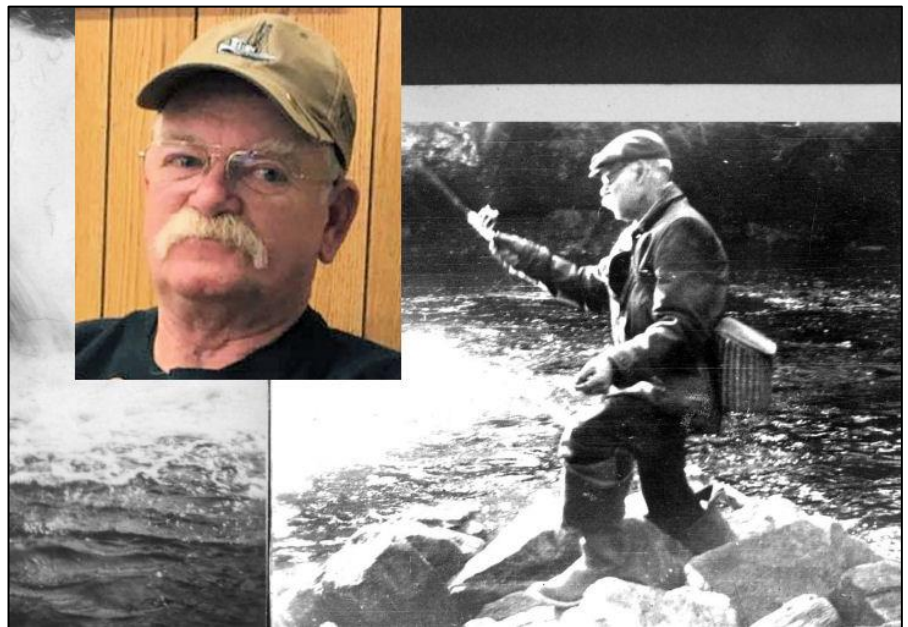
“I remember one hunting trip when I drove that Maxwell up to the farm [*where HESSIE lived*] at Clark’s Corner [*in Hampton, CT*]. It was just Granddad, Don, and me.

“Gurdon had had a couple of beers, topped off with a couple of glasses of homemade elderberry wine. Well, halfway home I noticed that Granddad was about *two sheets to the wind*, and chewing tobacco. He turned to me and said, ‘Ellsworth, aren’t you going a mite too fast?’ I was going exactly thirty miles an hour. I was told not to drive more than twenty five miles per hour.

“Then Gramps turned toward the window and gave a good healthy spit of tobacco juice out the window. Well, he thought the window was open, so that glob of spit hit the window and drained down it into the door. I never saw my grandfather laugh so loud and long as he did. Of course, I was doubled over with laughter, too. Brother Don was sitting in the back seat, and he was disgusted with the spit all over that window.

“Our grandfather Gurdon owned an Oakland, too. The Oakland landed along the other side of Gurdon’s garage, next to the garden, when he was ‘done’ with it. This car was seen to have grass and wild flowers growing out of the top. The top was made of a black corrugated type of fabric, so the dirt and dust accumulated readily on it.”

Elmer Watson’s sister-in-law Dorothy Dotzauer once remarked that Gurdon had a *doppelgänger* among his descendants. We have paired a picture of that person with the photo of Gurdon fishing in Latimer Brook. Dorothy said that this great-grandson not only looked like Gurdon; he sounded like him, too – especially when he laughed.



Another of Elmer E. Watson Jr.’s recollections involves Gurdon’s violin-crafting:

“It was great fun going to Grandmother’s house and getting ‘goodies’ to eat and watching my grandfather Watson make violins in his garage.”

Gurdon would carve the violin’s scroll – the head of the instrument, above the pegbox – in the shape of a bulldog’s head. He referred to the instruments he made as *violins*; but specified that his personal instrument, which he called “the Old Black Crow,” was a *fiddle*.

Gurdon occasionally took his fiddle down to the local bar in New London and played it there for the entertainment of the patrons. The payoff was free beers.

“A friend of Grandpa’s, who lived a few blocks down Ocean Avenue, gave him the pieces of a half-size violin that had been stored in his attic for many years. Grandpa put it all together, played it for me, then handed it to me and said, ‘Ellsworth, this is now yours.’ Wow!”

In 1921, *The Day* newspaper published an article about Gurdon’s violin-making. Unfortunately, his name got garbled from Gurdon into *George*. We know this has to be Gurdon, who lived at 281 Willetts Ave. in New London.

**WATSON'S VIOLIN
REAL MASTERPIECE**

George W. Watson of 281 Willetts avenue has just completed the construction of a violin which is considered a masterpiece. The instrument is of such perfect construction that local violinists who have played it are astounded at its beauty of tone and claim that they would not be surprised if it equalled the creations of Stradivari.

The secret has been handed down to Mr. Watson through several generations. The making of violins is not Mr. Watson's profession but is purely a hobby. He has been making and experimenting on violins for several years and has turned out several excellent instruments. It was not until recently, however, that he succeeded in reaching the perfection in construction and design and beauty of tone for which he has been striving.

The instrument which Mr. Watson has just turned out is made of wood 100 years old and came from an old building. The violin weighs one pound and the style and design is similar to other instruments.

Herbert G. Rich, professor of violin at Connecticut college and leader of the Lyceum theatre orchestra, has consented to play the instrument at the Lyceum theatre tonight.

“WATSON’S VIOLIN REAL MASTERPIECE

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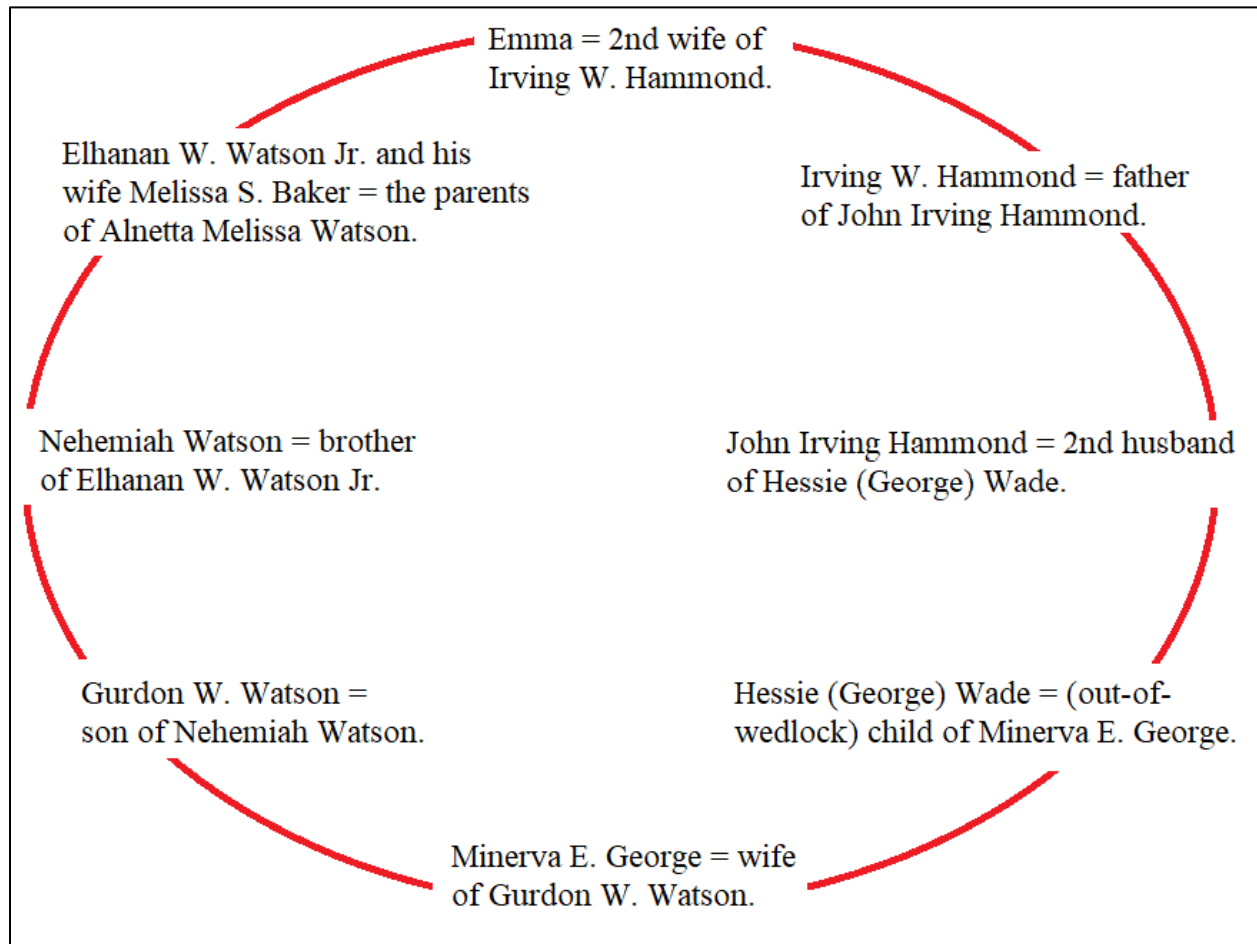
“The instrument which Mr. Watson has just turned out is made of wood 100 years old and came from an old building. The violin weighs one pound and the style and design is similar to other instruments.

“Herbert G. Rich, professor of violin at Connecticut college and leader of the Lyceum theatre orchestra, has consented to play the instrument at the Lyceum theatre tonight.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; February 9, 1921, pg. 7

An Unexpected Watson Connection

When Emma Hammond drew up her will in 1911, she bequeathed to Alnetta Melissa Watson: “...my china sugar bowl, with a history thereof.”

Who was Emma Hammond? How was she connected to Alnetta Watson? In the drawing below, we map out seven degrees of separation between Emma Hammond and Alnetta Watson.



Turns out, Emma was closely related: She was a younger sister of Alnetta’s mother, Melissa S. (Baker) Watson. It took us a while to figure this out, for a couple of reasons:

Emma’s maiden name *and* the surname of her first husband were identical: Emma Baker married Oscar R. Baker, her second cousin.

Emma’s given names were listed in various forms in census records. In 1860 she was “Mary E.” By 1870 she was “Imogene.” In 1880, when she was listed as Oscar Baker’s wife, she was “Emma G.” Adding to the confusion, Emma signed her last will and testament “Emma H. Hammond.”

Then we found her death notice, in which she is named **Emogene**. (*Norwich Bulletin*, Norwich, CT; Sat., July 8, 1911, pg.13). Her 1880 census listing as “Emma G.” was a phonetic rendering of her name!

The death of Mrs. Emogene Hammond, wife of I. W. Hammond, occurred at the Day-Kimball hospital on Saturday, she having undergone a surgical operation from which she did not recover. The deceased was a faithful wife and mother, devoted to the interests of her family. The influence of her life was helpful and inspiring to all, and she will be missed by the community. She is survived by her husband and two sons, Raymond Baker and Fred Baker. Burial was in the North cemetery.

Emma (Baker) Baker married, as second wife, Irving W. Hammond. That wedding took place in Hampton, CT, on June 29, 1899. The location of their wedding suggests that, like Irving, Emma was a resident of Hampton at the time.

Irving's first wife, Mary E. Rawson, had died on August 6, 1896, leaving him with two children – five-year-old John and 22-month-old Marian.

Emma drew up her will on their 12th anniversary, just two days before her death. She also made bequests to Irving's children:

“I give to my step son John I. Hammond the glass watter [sic] pitcher and tumblers and the silver thimble, both of which he gave to me, also on condition that he comes and makes it his home with his own People, my piece of furniture known as my Ward Robe, otherwise I give said ward robe to my Step Daughter Marian Hammond also my center and extention [sic] tables.”

John Hammond is quoted often in Alison Davis's 1976 self-published book *Hampton Remembers: A Small Town in New England 1885-1950*. Considering that John was eight years old when his father married Emma, you might expect him to mention her when speaking about his family. Here's what John had to say:

“My mother died when I was five and my sister and I were brought up by my Aunt Cynthia Hammond, my grandmother and the housekeeper.”

No mention of Emma. *Unless* ... Was Emma “the housekeeper” before she became John's stepmother?

In any case, it's amazing to find this connection between two families we had diagrammed separately. It shows us what a small world Windham county, Connecticut, was in those days.

Stories From the Old Farm in Hampton, CT

As Recalled By Elmer E. Watson Jr.

Deer in the Orchard

Hessie and John Hammond had a salt lick situated near their apple orchard, to attract deer. Why would anyone would want to draw deer towards their precious fruit crop? Apparently the idea was to create hunting opportunities.

“Early one morning, a deer was spotted in the orchard. My grandfather [Gurdon Watson] opened the back door of the kitchen, stuck the rifle out of it, and shot the deer. Never had to leave the house to get his deer.”

A Fish in the Well

Elmer Watson Sr. would fish in Merrick Brook, located about a quarter of a mile east of the Hammonds’ house. One day he hooked a trout through its eye. Elmer decided to drop that trout down into the farm’s well. “The fish, being blind in one eye, sometimes missed the worms when we first would drop them into the well. Eventually the trout would find them and that’s the way it was fed. That trout lived there for many years.”

Rats and Corncobs

Elmer Jr. slept in a feather bed upstairs whenever he stayed with Hessie and John. “When all was quiet, I could hear the rats rolling the corn cobs in between the walls of the bedroom.”

The Outhouse

The house didn’t have an indoor bathroom until around the 1950s. Prior to that, one had to use the “two-holer” outhouse on the path to the chicken house east of the farmhouse. “All we had to use for paper was the Sears-Roebuck catalog. There was no door on the outhouse, so there was no privacy.” (That doorless outhouse must have been particularly awful in the winter.)

Message Delivery Dog

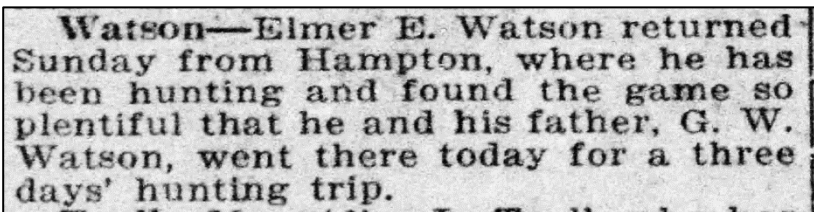
“Before the telephone was brought into the house, my Aunt Hessie relied on the dog to deliver messages to the Burnham family down under the hill and around the corner to their house. How, you say? Well, Hessie would write a note and put it in a little bag and tie it around the dog’s neck and, of course, the bag also contained a doughnut. The dog was sent on his way racing down the hill and around the corner with that note. As soon as Mrs. Burnham read the note and answered it, the dog was on its way back up the hill because he knew he would get the doughnut as soon as he arrived back home. Sure enough, into the yard he came panting and shaking [sic] his tail. Hessie read the note and handed the dog his reward. I don’t know to this

day how he was trained to do that errand, but it was a great story and I saw the dog do it several times during my summer vacation from school.”

Elmer Ellsworth Watson Jr. wrote these memories in August 2002. He passed away in 2016 at the age of 101. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/167615180/elmer-ellsworth-watson>

Watson Men “Gunning Up Hampton Way”

Gurdon Watson and his son Elmer enjoyed hunting in Hampton when they visited HESSIE. Or maybe it was the other way around: Gurdon and Elmer enjoyed visiting with HESSIE when they came up to Hampton to hunt.



Watson—Elmer E. Watson returned Sunday from Hampton, where he has been hunting and found the game so plentiful that he and his father, G. W. Watson, went there today for a three days' hunting trip.

The New London newspaper *The Day* noted a day of hunting so good, both men apparently skipped work to devote themselves to bagging as much game as they could:

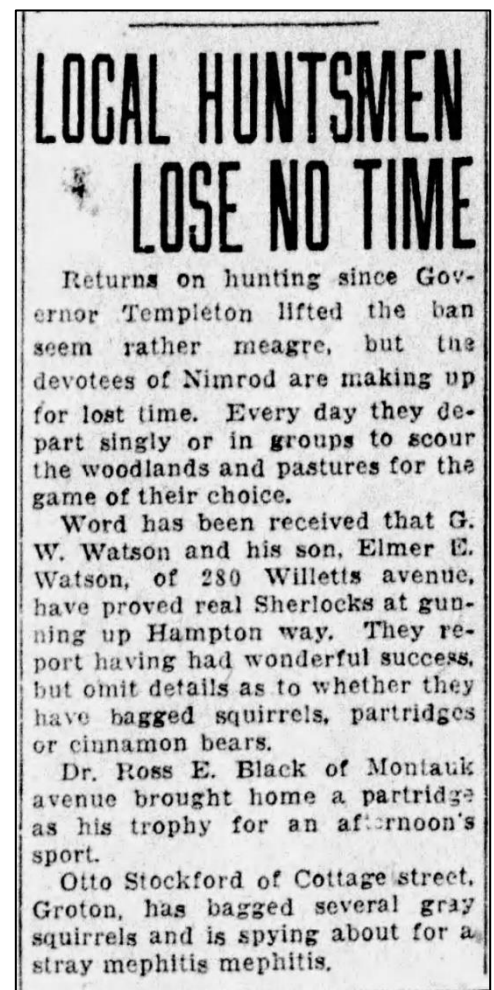
“Elmer E. Watson returned Sunday from Hampton, where he has been hunting and found the game so plentiful that he and his father, G. W. Watson, went there today for a three days' hunting trip.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Mon., Nov. 10, 1913, pg. 4

The following Thursday, the *Norwich Bulletin* newspaper confirmed that “Conductor Elmer Watson, accompanied by his father, G. W. Watson of New London, is on a hunting trip in Hampton.” — *Norwich Bulletin*, Norwich, CT; Thurs., Nov. 13, 1913, pg. 5

That mention of Elmer Watson as a conductor refers to his employment with the Shore Line Electric Railway. The Shore Line was an inter-urban trolley line running along Connecticut's southern coast that functioned more like a commuter rail than a city trolley service. Maybe Elmer brought his boss some venison to make up for his absence.

Another mention of Elmer's and Gurdon's hunting prowess surfaced in 1924, when they and others “lost no time” grabbing their guns for a shortened hunting season. Per the local paper's tongue-in-cheek account:

“Word has been received that G. W. Watson and his son, Elmer E. Watson, of 280 Willetts avenue, have proved real Sherlocks at gunning up Hampton way. They report



**LOCAL HUNTSMEN
LOSE NO TIME**

Returns on hunting since Governor Templeton lifted the ban seem rather meagre, but the devotees of Nimrod are making up for lost time. Every day they depart singly or in groups to scour the woodlands and pastures for the game of their choice.

Word has been received that G. W. Watson and his son, Elmer E. Watson, of 280 Willetts avenue, have proved real Sherlocks at gunning up Hampton way. They report having had wonderful success, but omit details as to whether they have bagged squirrels, partridges or cinnamon bears.

Dr. Ross E. Black of Montauk avenue brought home a partridge as his trophy for an afternoon's sport.

Otto Stockford of Cottage street, Groton, has bagged several gray squirrels and is spying about for a stray mephitis mephitis.

having had wonderful success, but omit details as to whether they have bagged squirrels, partridges or cinnamon bears.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; Fri., Nov. 21, 1924, pg. 7

Regarding that last line in this news item: *Mephitis mephitis* is the scientific name for the striped skunk.

Why was the hunting season shortened? Connecticut’s 1924 *Biennial Report of the State Board of Fisheries and Game* says:

“On October 28, 1924, on account of an almost unprecedented drought, Governor Templeton felt constrained to issue a ... proclamation against hunting, which was recommended by both the State Forester and Superintendent of the State Board of Fisheries and Game, and remained in effect until November 17th, thereby cutting out a large part of the open season for hunting grouse and pheasant.” (page 79)

Charles A. Templeton was governor of Connecticut between 1923-1925.

The Watson Family’s Greatest Hits is a companion piece to [The WATSON Family of West Greenwich, Rhode Island – Part 3](#). Part 3 traces, among other things and people, the ancestry and life of Nehemiah Watson and his wife Mary Ellen Lewis; and includes basic information about their children.