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John Willet Watson Jr. (1833-1917)

John Willet Watson Jr. was born on January 1, 1833, in West Greenwich, Rhode Island, the son of John Willet Watson and his wife Betsy Corey. We know this from John’s death record; and from his biography in [A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut](#).

John's biographical sketch begins by using an alternate spelling of his middle name. It's possible this variant originated with John himself, or via his family. It may have arisen when John's biographical data was edited for publication. (Note: We have marked in **bold typeface** certain items for further discussion.)

“JOHN WILLETTE WATSON—Perhaps more widely than any others do the records of an ocean-bordered section reach out into the interesting and significant places of the world. In New London county, Connecticut, there are few of the old families who do not count at least one member who has followed the sea, at least for a time. More than eighty years ago, John Willette Watson, as a child, became a resident of this county, and the story of his life closely follows the growth of this section in importance as a mercantile and industrial center, his activities, through the greater part of his life, centering in the agricultural districts of the county, and in the productive pursuits which are the foundation of all prosperity.

“Mr. Watson was born in West Greenwich, Rhode Island, January 1, 1833, and died in Gales Ferry, New London county, Connecticut, November 7, 1917, having nearly reached the eighty-fifth anniversary of his birth. He was a son of John and Betsy (Corey) Watson, both of old New England families, and the death of his mother when he was seven years of age brought about changes in the circumstances of the family, and his removal to **Westerly**. With only the scant opportunities of the district schools of that day for the acquiring of an education, Mr. Watson **at a very early age began working on the farm**. While still a young lad of impressionable age he came to Mystic, and here the lure of sea reached deep into his soul as he watched the coming and going of the outside fishermen. He soon secured the opportunity of joining them, and for **eight years** was identified with the fishing trade between here and Florida, taking a man's part in the work of the fleet with which he was connected. At the **age of twenty-four years he shipped for a whaling voyage**, which eventually covered a period of **three years in length** and took him all around the world.

“A short time after his return to his native land he heard, with the other high-souled young men of the day, the shot which, fired on Fort Sumter, re-echoed to the northernmost boundaries of the nation. He enlisted from the town of Groton, and going to the front, participated in the early battles of the war, including Vicksburg and Port Hudson, serving under General Banks.

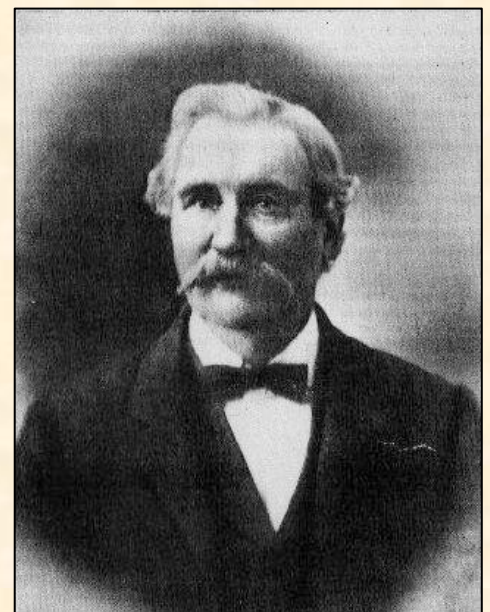
He was wounded in the latter engagement, and in the year 1863 was honorably discharged from the service. Returning at once to his home in this county, he removed his little family to the community in the southwestern part of Ledyard, known as Gales Ferry. Here he took up the peaceful activities of the little farming village, and throughout the remainder of his lifetime tilled the soil, and occasionally, as the building operations of the neighborhood made occasion, he bore a part as a stone mason. Active almost until the time of his death, Mr. Watson was one of the best known men of the section, and his high integrity and genial disposition gave him the friendship and goodwill of all with whom he came in contact. He was a man of rare good sense, and capable of calm, unbiased judgment, and his influence in his community gave impetus to all good movements and stood as an example in honorable citizenship for the younger men as they followed after him.

“Not long after his return from the voyage around the world, Mr. Watson married, in Mystic, **Marian** Chapman, the ceremony taking place on June 27, 1859. They were the parents of six children: William R.; J. Lewis; Charles H.; Jennie M., who became the wife of Joel Harrison Davis; George W., and Augusta E. The mother died at Gales Ferry, in the family home, on October 10, 1904.

“As a devoted husband and father, as a citizen loyal not only to the written tenets of his native land but to the ideals which inspire all lofty codes of human conduct, John Willette Watson left a mark on the records of his day, both those records which are written for all men to read, and those records which live in the hearts of men, and which go down to posterity in noble impulses and worthy deeds.”

Marshall, Benjamin Tinkham, editor. *A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut*. Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1922; Volume 3, page 299.

Right: A photo of John W. Watson published with his biographical sketch in *A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut*.



1849: West Greenwich, RI

John Watson is first of record when he was named in a legal guardianship arrangement drawn up by the town of West Greenwich in the fall of 1849. He is mentioned as “John Watson, a minor over fourteen years of age.”

As mentioned in our [essay on John’s father](#), this Watson family ended up back in West Greenwich, *not* Westerly. From *Modern History of New London County*: “Mr. Watson **at a very early age began working on the farm.**” As benign as this sounds, it probably refers to the West Greenwich Poor Farm, to which John, his father, and his siblings, were taken in 1843.

Less than a year after Allen Ellis was appointed as John’s legal guardian, neither of them were residing in West Greenwich.

The next section is a bit tedious. If you aren’t interested in the details, just skip it.

1850-1859: Griswold and/or Mystic, CT; and New Bedford, MA

In 1850 John W. Watson was enumerated in Griswold, CT, living in the household of Shepherd Brown. John’s birthplace was recorded as Rhode Island; but he was listed as being 15 years old, which is short by two years.

It’s possible this John W. was a different Rhode Islander with the same name, especially when considering John’s early career in the fishing trade:

“While still a young lad of impressionable age **he came to Mystic**, and here the lure of sea reached deep into his soul as he watched the coming and going of the outside fishermen. He soon secured the opportunity of joining them, and for **eight years** was identified with the fishing trade between here and Florida...”

Whether John left West Greenwich and went first to Griswold – or he headed straight to Mystic – we don’t know. But we can compare the numbers provided against the data.

The records of Ledyard First Congregational Church tell us that John W. Watson got married on June 27, 1859. (The original record names his bride as “Mariam.”)

Connecticut, U.S., Church Record Abstracts, 1630-1920 for John W Watson

Volume 058 Ledyard

WATSON, John W., of Groton, m. Mariann Chapman, June 27,
1859, by Rev. Timothy Tuttle

The date of John's wedding, and how old he was at the time (26), contradict a statement in his biographical sketch:

“At the **age of twenty-four years he shipped for a whaling voyage**, which eventually covered a period of **three years in length** and took him all around the world.”

John W. Watson shows up on a crew list for a whaling ship – not in Mystic, but in New Bedford, Massachusetts. In 1853, the ship Brunswick sailed out of New Bedford, with John on board as one of the greenhands (inexperienced sailors).

The New Bedford Whaling Museum, per [their own description](#), worked with the Mystic Seaport Museum in building their ship and crew databases.

“In March of 2018 the New Bedford Whaling Museum and Mystic Seaport Museum launched Whaling History.org. That site incorporates this crew list database with six other databases, three of these related to American offshore whaling. This crew list database was first created and posted by the New Bedford Free Public Library (NBFPL). It used records kept by the chaplains of the New Bedford Port Society and delivered the names and physical descriptions of men leaving the port of New Bedford on whaling voyages from 1840 to the end of whaling in 1927.”

We searched the Mystic Seaport Museum's online database [New London Crew Lists, 1803-1878](#), for John's name. We found one entry that *could* be our John, if he was living in New London in July 1856. John does **not** appear in this database with the same info found at the New Bedford site.

It's reasonable that John might have followed his older brother Willet Hazzard to New Bedford. And the timeline for John's three-year whaling voyage works well with the 1853 date. Presumably he would have been back on land by 1856, in plenty of time to return to Connecticut, meet his future wife and marry her in 1859. (Perhaps the reference to “the age of twenty-four years” is when he met his bride and swore off any more lengthy whaling voyages.)

If we dispense with its questionable details, John's biography still tells a great story. He got out of Rhode Island and never went back. John probably spent *some* period of his younger life working in the fishing trade out of Mystic, CT – years

that could have accumulated both before and after his whaling adventure. Family lore has a way of preserving nuggets of truth while muddling the details.

Marriage and Family

John W. Watson was “of Groton” when he wed Miriam CHAPMAN in Ledyard, CT, on June 27, 1859.

Miriam was born on January 8, 1833, in the part of Groton that became the town of Ledyard just three years later. She was the daughter of Samuel Chapman Jr. and his wife Abiah Crouch.

Her name appears in a variety of different spellings, including Mariam, Marian, and Marion. We settled on Miriam because it shows up the most often. Researcher (and great-granddaughter) Anne Fisher refers to John’s wife as Miriam, confirming this choice.

John and Miriam had six children – William Riley; John Lewis; Charles Henry; Jennie May; George Willett; and Augusta Ella. (More about each of them later.)

1860: Groton, CT

The 1860 census page on which John and Miriam were listed says they lived in the area of the Centre Groton post office – the north-central part of town. Three weeks after the census taker came calling, their first child, son William, was born.

Civil War Service, 1862-63

From John’s biography in [*A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut*](#):

“He enlisted from the town of Groton, and going to the front, participated in the early battles of the war, including Vicksburg and Port Hudson, serving under General Banks. He was wounded in the latter engagement, and in the year 1863 was honorably discharged from the service.”

John enlisted in Groton, CT, on September 9, 1862, in Co. K, 26th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, serving at the rank of Private.

He was injured in the early days of the [siege of Port Hudson](#), Louisiana. A description of the John’s war injuries is found in one of his pension documents, which states that “on the 27th day of May 1863, at the battle before Port Hudson,

LA, [he] received a wound in the right leg about midway between the ankle and knee joint by a canister shot or ball passing through the leg & chipping off about three inches of one of the bones in the leg & cutting off one or more cords.”

To obtain a copy of a soldier’s Civil War pension application file, submit an [NATF Form 85](#) to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). If you want John’s file, specify his pension certificate # **35,034**.

As of this writing, the cost for a *Full Pension Application File—Civil War* is \$80 for the first 100 pages and \$.70 for each additional page. The *Pension Documents Packet* costs \$30. But the *Packet* contains far fewer pages – what one might call the “highlights” of the file. If you have the means to get the entire thing, we suggest you do that.

John returned home with his Company, mustering out on August 17, 1863, in Norwich, CT. (We’re guessing that his leg injury didn’t result in amputation.)

John was lucky not to have succumbed to infection following his injury. We don’t know if he also came home with malaria, a parasitic infection not curable in those days. Soldiers who fought in the Deep South often suffered for the rest of their lives with malarial infections.

On February 17, 1864, John applied for an invalid’s pension. His request was granted: John received a government stipend for the rest of his life. Doubtless he used some of it to hire help as needed in the running of his farm in Ledyard.

1870-1917: Ledyard, CT

John and Miriam Watson lived in Gales Ferry, on the eastern bank of the Thames River in Ledyard. Various items mentioning John, reported in the *Norwich Bulletin* and the New London newspaper *The Day*, place him in the Allyn’s Point neighborhood.

Our comparison of an [1868 map of Ledyard](#) with the 1870 census page on which the Watsons and their immediate neighbors were listed shows where in Allyn’s Point they lived.

Using the above link, look on the map for “Dist. N^o. 13” near the Gales Ferry inset. “Allyn’s Point” is written below the inset. Near the bottom of District #13, there’s a notation for the house of **Mrs. Chapman** – followed, on that same road, by **Daniel Clark** and **J. Avery**.

In the 1870 census, Daniel Clark's listing comes immediately after John W. Watson's. One family separates Daniel Clark's listing from Joseph Avery's. John Watson's census listings between 1870 and 1910 show that he had essentially the same neighbors – he wasn't moving around within Ledyard.

On July 4, 1870, John W. Watson Jr. bought two parcels of land in Ledyard, totaling seventy or more acres “with all the buildings thereon situate,” from Mrs. Sally M. Chapman. He also took out a \$900 mortgage on this property from the Norwich Savings Society. John lived on and worked this farm for the rest of his life. By 1900, John owned his farm free and clear (per census data).

A page from the 1870 census, “Schedule 3 – Productions of Agriculture,” tells us a few things about John's status as a farmer.

John managed 75 acres of land, 25 of which were “improved” (i.e., cleared, with some combination of buildings, crops, and pasture); and 50 of which were “woodland.” The cash value of this farm was \$1500. The cash value of farming implements/machinery was \$50. The total amount of wages paid during the year, including value of board, was \$20.

He owned two “milch cows,” a pair of working oxen, and two swine. The total value of this livestock was \$350.

The Chapman/Watson house likely is no longer standing. If it were, it would be in the vicinity of the intersection of Chapman Lane and CT-12 in Gales Ferry. (At the [Google Maps](#) website, Allyn's Point is noted simply as *Allyn Point*.)

The 1900 census captures the fact that John and Miriam had been married for 40 years. It also tells us that, of the six children Miriam bore, four of them were still living: Her two eldest sons had died in the five years prior.

Miriam died in Ledyard on October 10, 1904. Cause of death: Valvular disease of the heart. She is [buried](#) in Gales Ferry Cemetery in Ledyard, CT.

After Miriam's death, Miss Olive Rogers (1847-1925), also of Ledyard, became John's housekeeper. She appears in John's household in the 1910 census.

On February 19, 1917, less than nine months before his death, John W. Watson was interviewed by a Connecticut military census agent. We doubt it was actually

necessary for John to participate in this military census during the runup to WWI; perhaps the old soldier in him couldn't resist. A sampling of his answers:

John said he was 86 years old (he was actually 84). He was 5 ft., 11 in. tall, and weighed 200 lbs.

Have you ever done any Military or Naval Service in this or any other Country? In the Civil War ... 11 months.

Can you do any of the following:

Ride a horse? no

Handle a team? no

Drive an automobile? no

Ride a motorcycle? no

Understand telegraphy? no

Operate a wireless? no

Any experience with a steam engine? no

Any experience with electrical machinery? no

Handle a boat, power or sail? no

Any experience in simple coastwise navigation? **yes**

Any experience with High Speed Marine Gasoline Engines? no

Are you a good swimmer? **yes**

John's two "yes" answers harkened back to his whaling and fishing trade days.

On November 7, 1917, John died suddenly at his home in Allyn's Point, from acute dilatation of the heart. The medical examiner's report said this:

"The deceased was apparently in good health when he arose about 6 a.m. He went out to the barn and attended to some chores. About 6:30 a.m. his daughter saw him on the ground a short distance from the house and, running out, found him dead."

John's daughter Jennie was the informant for his death record.

John Willet Watson Jr. is [buried](#) with his wife Miriam in Gales Ferry Cemetery in Ledyard, CT.

John and Miriam Watson's children

1. William Riley Watson

William Riley Watson was born July 17, 1860, in Groton, CT; he died on July 3, 1898, in Ledyard, CT. Cause of death: Chronic gastritis. William is [buried](#) in Gales Ferry Cemetery in Ledyard, CT.

William married, in February 1886, Anna Belle MAIN (1869-1941), the daughter of Thomas G. and Mary (Main) Main. William and Annie had five children: Marion Delia Watson (1889-1956); Amelia Elizabeth Watson (1890-1960); William R. Watson Jr. (1891-1941); John Willet Watson (1896 - after 1941); and Everett Lewis Watson 1898-1977).

About a year after William's death, his widow Annie married William Henry COON (1871 - ~1920).

According to descendants of William and Annie Watson's son William R. (1891-1941), Annie B. (Main) Watson "gave away her children when she wanted to marry again."

"My Bill's grandfather William was given away to the Starkweather family here in Griswold. He had at least a sister Millie and one other brother, possibly named Everett, who lived in Preston, Conn. The Starkweather family left the farm here in Griswold to my Bill's grandfather and the family has lived in the area ever since."

Email, dated 26 June 2001, from Kirsten (Person) Watson, genealogist and wife of William R. Watson IV (1948-2007)

William R. Watson Jr. shows up in the 1900 census in Elmer G. Starkweather's household in Griswold, CT. His sister Amelia was enumerated with her mother and stepfather in Ledyard on June 7th and then again with the Starkweathers and her brother William on June 20th.

Elmer G. Starkweather (1847-1929) and his wife Elizabeth Wilkinson (1852-1937) were childless. They seem to have treated William like a son. Together, the three of them joined a church (where Elmer later became a deacon):

A March 1907 article in the New London newspaper *The Day* noted that the First Congregational Church in Griswold had welcomed 20 new members on March 3rd "as the result of revival services." The new recruits included

Mrs. Elmer Starkweather (received by letter from the local Baptist church); and William Watson and Elmer Starkweather, both of whom were baptized on that occasion.

Other records show that William R. Watson Jr. worked on the Starkweather farm. The 1930 census shows William's household, including his wife Aldea (Pepin) Watson and their two sons, right next door to widow Elizabeth Starkweather.

We don't know if the Starkweathers formally bequeathed their farm to William R. Jr., or if they gave a portion of it to him during their lifetimes. Either way, William R. Watson Jr. seems to have enjoyed a stable and even affectionate relationship with Elmer and Elizabeth.

Things did not go as well for William's siblings and their mother Annie. An incident occurring on October 20, 1913, provides a glimpse into life with Henry Coon. And it was front page news:

Stepfather Tried to Kill Stepson

Is Charge on Which Henry Coon of Lantern Hill Is Held Under \$2,000 Bonds—Another Stepson Shot the Accused Stepfather.

(Special to The Day.)

LEDYARD, Oct. 22.—Dwellers in the Lantern Hill section of this town are greatly stirred and are reported to be in fear of consequences of serious nature should Henry Coon, a farmer of the vicinity, succeed in getting someone to provide the \$2,000 bonds on which he is held for trial on charge of attempting to kill his 16-year-old stepson, Everett Watson, and thereby obtain liberty to return to his home.

At present Coon is in jail at Norwich, suffering from a slight flesh wound in the cheek, inflicted by another stepson, John Watson, in self defense, the latter says. This stepson is out on bonds of \$200 on charge of assault, his bond being provided by Constable H. H. Main, a neighbor of the Coon family. Coon and his stepson were given a hearing before John H. Barnes of Norwich, acting as justice of the peace, on Tuesday at the Coon home.

Found Stepson Had Disobeyed.

The trouble between Coon and members of his family happened Monday

night. Coon returned from a day spent in Norwich, much the worse for liquor, it is alleged. He found that his 16-year-old stepson, Everett, had failed to do some task he had set for him that day and had amused himself otherwise. Enraged by this disobedience, Coon, it is said, seized the lad, pummeled him severely and when the boy broke away and fled to the barnyard, grabbed a 32 calibre Hopkins & Allen revolver he sometimes carried and fired four shots after the boy. By good fortune none of the shots reached its mark, but the sound of them served to notify an 18-year-old brother John, of trouble at the house. He left his work and hurried to the scene and declares he found Coon abusing his mother, a woman of about 40 years, who has borne three children to Coon as well as the two by her earlier marriage.

Pistol Fired During Struggle.

According to Watson, Coon still had the revolver in his hand and Watson feared he would wound the woman. He speedily jumped upon the older man, intent on wresting away the revolver, which he accomplished, but in the struggle the weapon was discharged and the bullet entered Coon's head just behind the ear, plowed its way along just below the skin and emerged from the fleshy part of Coon's neck.

Coon was taken to Westerly for treatment by Dr. Scanlon and later to Backus Hospital at Norwich. The wound, while giving him some pain, was found not to be at all serious, and after attention at the hospital it was found possible to take Coon to his home for a hearing and later to lodge him in the county jail. Everett Watson, after escaping the shots of his angry stepfather, fled to the home of Constable Main and brought him to the scene. Main secured aid of Deputy Sheriff Casey in conveying the wounded man to Westerly and thence to Norwich.

Other Complaints of Coon.

Coon, who is held in prison because of his inability to get a bondsman, is about 35 years of age. He is said to be a good citizen when not under the influence of liquor, but a terror when he has overindulged. About a month ago Daniel Main, a farmer living near Coon, was given a merciless beating by Coon, it is alleged. A dog belonging to Coon had bitten one of Main's

children and later the dog was found dead. Coon blamed Main for the death and gave him a thrashing in revenge, it is said.

The Watson boys are industrious and well behaved and are highly spoken of by all their neighbors.

Coon, it is said, has asked Lafayette Main, famous for his connection in some capacity with a large share of the civil and criminal cases that have come to the courts from this vicinity for several years past, to become his bondsman. Should he succeed in getting out on bond, neighbors fear he will return and do harm to his family and to those in the vicinity he considers his enemies. — *The Day*, New London, CT; October 22, 1913; pg. 1

Henry Coon ended up pleading guilty to the charge of assault with intent to kill. In early January 1914, he was sentenced to one year in jail.

His attorney, T. M. Shields, “stated for the prisoner that he was a man of good reputation as a citizen and husband, when not under the influence of liquor; but when under the influence is a crazy man. ... It had been Coon’s wish not to put up a defense on trial in court, as to do so it would be necessary to bring in his wife and family to testify against.” (*Norwich Bulletin*, Friday, January 9, 1914, page 5)

The charge against Henry’s stepson John W. Watson was dropped.

On February 13, 1915, the *Norwich Bulletin* reported the following on page 9:

“Frederick Cook of Poquentanuck has leased the Robert Austin farm owned by Horace H. Main and will soon take possession. Mrs. Henry Coon and family formerly occupied the place but have moved to Mystic.”

Given that Henry Coon shows up again in the Lantern Hill section of Ledyard in 1915 (accused of theft but later cleared), we may reasonably assume that Annie and family quietly moved away to Mystic while Henry was still incarcerated.

After September 1915, Henry Coon disappears. If he died in Connecticut, it wasn’t in Ledyard.

By 1920, Annie – listed as widowed in that year’s census – was living in Pawcatuck, CT, a village in the town of Stonington bordering Westerly, RI. In

1925 and in 1930, she was enumerated in Westerly. The 1940 census found Annie living in Preston, CT, just north of Ledyard. She resided with her divorced son Everett and his two sons, Everett Jr. and William R. Watson (yes, *another* William R. Watson).

Annie B. (Main) (Watson) Coon died on January 2, 1941, in Westerly, RI. She was [laid to rest](#) in Union Cemetery in North Stonington, CT.

Annie's obituary was published in *The Day*. It contains a couple of questionable items, which we have put in **bold type**:

“Mrs. Annie B. Coon of Preston, **wife of William H. Coon of that place**, passed away yesterday afternoon at Westerly Hospital. She was in her 74th year.

“Born in North Stonington on October 21, 1867, she was a daughter of the late Thomas and Mary (Main) Main.

“**Surviving besides her husband** are the five daughters, Mrs. Amelia Bogue of Mystic, Mrs. Vincent Novellino of New York, Mrs. Maurice Main of Stonington, Mrs. Peter Grills of Bradford, and Mrs. Lawrence Kenyon of Hopkinton, and four sons, William R. Watson of Jewett City, Everett L. Watson of Preston, **James Haley** of Preston and William H. Coon, Jr., of Preston.

“Funeral services will be held from the Avery funeral home here Saturday afternoon. Interment will be in Union cemetery, North Stonington.”

— *The Day*, New London, CT; Fri., January 3, 1941, evening edition; pg. 7

Annie was listed as widowed in the 1920, 1930, and 1940 federal censuses; and in the 1925 Rhode Island state census. We think someone got the facts mixed up and confused Annie's son William H. Coon Jr. with his probably-dead father.

Annie's surviving son named as *James Haley of Preston* is a mystery item. Either that was purely a mistake, or John W. Watson was using an alias.

When Annie's oldest son, William R. Watson, died on November 6th of the same year, his brother John was mentioned as a survivor.

Local Native Dies

William R. Watson, 50, R.F.D. carrier in Griswold for nearly 20 years, who died Thursday was born in Ledyard June 7 1891, but had lived the greater part of his life in Griswold. He was a veteran of the World war, having served for two years as a fireman on mine sweepers. He married Aldea Pepin on Nov. 19, 1923.

He is survived by his widow, two sons, William, Jr., and John; two sisters, Mrs. Amelia Bogue of Mystic and Mrs. Marion Novelino of New York city; two brothers, Everett of Preston and John of Ware, Mass.

“William R. Watson, 50, R.F.D. carrier in Griswold for nearly 20 years, who died Thursday was born in Ledyard June 7 1891, but had lived the greater part of his life in Griswold. He was a veteran of the World war, having served for two years as a fireman on mine sweepers. He married Aldea Pepin on Nov. 19, 1923.

“He is survived by his widow, two sons, William, Jr., and John; two sisters, Mrs. Amelia Bogue of Mystic and Mrs. Marion Novelino [sic] of New York city; two brothers, Everett of Preston and John of Ware, Mass.”

— *The Day*, New London, CT; Saturday, Nov. 8, 1941, evening edition; p. 2

2. John Lewis Watson

John Lewis Watson (known as “Lewis”) was born November 23, 1862 in Groton, CT; he died September 21, 1895. Cause of death: Heart disease. He is [buried](#) in Gales Ferry Cemetery in Ledyard, CT.

Lewis’s wife was Mary Frances ALLYN (1868-1937), whom he wed in Norwich, CT, on October 6, 1886. Mary Frances was the daughter of Thomas A. and Eliza M. (Bailey) Allyn. Lewis and Mary Frances had no children. Following Lewis’s early death, Mary Frances remarried: She became the 3rd wife of Sherwood Gardner Avery (1842-1929) on April 10, 1901, in Norwich, CT. When Mary died, she was not buried with Sherwood (though her name was inscribed on his gravestone in anticipation of her joining him for eternity). Instead, she was laid to rest with Lewis, her name on [their shared gravestone](#) inscribed as Mary A. W. Avery.

3. Charles Henry Watson

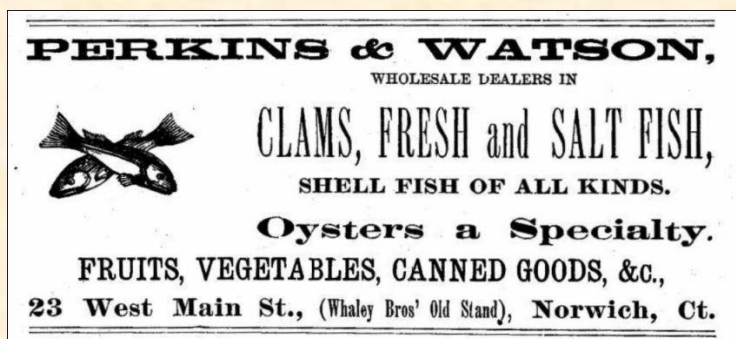
Charles Henry Watson was born June 6, 1865, in Ledyard, CT; he died January 23, 1934, at his home in the village of Uncasville, Montville, CT. This son appears to be a namesake for his paternal uncle.


On September 4, 1889, Charles married Ida Prescott ROGERS (1868-1947) of

Montville, CT, the daughter of William and Hannah (Comstock) Rogers. Ida died May 8, 1947, in Uncasville.

Charles and Ida were residents of Uncasville – bordering the Thames River just west of Gales Ferry – for many years. They had no children together.

The 1886 Stedman's Directory (#26, pgs. 213 and 368) for Norwich, CT, lists



PERKINS & WATSON,
WHOLESALE DEALERS IN

CLAMS, FRESH and SALT FISH,
SHELL FISH OF ALL KINDS.
Oysters a Specialty.
FRUITS, VEGETABLES, CANNED GOODS, &c.,
23 West Main St., (Whaley Bros' Old Stand), Norwich, Ct.

Charles as a partner in Perkins & Watson – selling fish and oysters at 23 West Main St. in Norwich and rooming at the same address. The same directory for 1887 (#27, p. 217) lists him as having removed to Gales Ferry.

In the 1900 census, Charles' occupation was listed as grocery clerk. By 1910, he was working as a "carpenter (house)." The 1917 Connecticut military census reveals that Charles had served six years with the Connecticut National Guard. In that military census, he gave his occupation as "mill watchman."

The 1920 census, in which he is listed as "Charlie," he was working as a laborer in a paper mill. That labor may also have been of the watchman type. In 1930, Charlie was a watchman for an oil company.

Charlie's obituary, published in *The Day* on Wed., January 24, 1934 (clipping from page 2, shown at right) states that "his last employment was with the Tydol Oil Co. as night watchman at Scotch cap, Waterford."

[Charles H.](#) and [Ida \(Rogers\)](#) Watson are both buried in Comstock Cemetery in Uncasville, Montville, CT.

Charles H. Watson Dies

Charles H. Watson, for many years a resident of Montville, passed away yesterday afternoon at his home in Uncasville. He had been in poor health for the past two years. About three weeks ago he was threatened by pneumonia and under the care of a physician. He later suffered a heart attack and failed to revive. He was born in Ledyard June 6, 1865, and was united in marriage to Ida Rogers in September, 1889. His last employment was with the Tydol Oil Co. as night watchman at Scotch cap, Waterford.

The deceased was a member of Union lodge, A. F. and A. M., and Palestine Commandery, Knights Templars, at New London and the Shrine in Hartford. He was a member of Uncas lodge, Ancient Order of United Workmen, in Montville. Besides his wife he is survived by two sisters, Mrs. Jennie Davis of Norwich and Mrs. Augusta Thompson of Chicago; one brother, George Watson, in Hartford. Mr. Watson was of a pleasing disposition and all who knew him were friends who held him in high esteem.

4. Jennie May Watson

Jennie May Watson was born August 3, 1866, in Ledyard, CT. Some newspaper items identify Jennie as having been a teacher in the Ledyard public schools. She died on December 13, 1939, in West Hartford, CT. Family lore says her brother George, who lived in West Hartford, took care of Jennie before her death there.

On April 3, 1889, Jennie married Joel Harrison DAVIS (1845-1918). Harrison and Jennie had no children together. They lived in Norwich, CT, where Harrison was

the proprietor of a general store. In 1915, Jennie took over managing the business when her husband's health began to fail. After Harrison's death on December 9, 1918, Jennie rented the store out to others.

In 1922, Jennie's grandniece, Jean May Spencer, came to live with her. Jean was the daughter of Florence (Gray) Spencer (1888-1922). Florence, who *died suddenly in Philadelphia July 15th, 1922*, was the daughter of Jennie's sister Augusta. Florence's obituary – as Mrs. Charles F. Spencer – was published in the *Norwich Bulletin* (Norwich, CT) on July 20, 1922, pg. 5.

Mrs. Charles F. Spencer.

The funeral of Mrs. Charles F. Spencer was held Wednesday afternoon at the parlors of Church & Allen with services conducted by Rev. David A. Pitt, D. D. Relatives filled the places of bearers and burial was in the family plot in the cemetery at Gales Ferry. Rev. Dr. Pitt read a committal service.

Mrs. Spencer was born in Ledyard 34 year ago, the daughter of Orrin Gray and Augusta Watson Gray. She was married in Norwich to Charles F. Spencer, then of Springfield, by Rev. P. C. Wright, on Sept. 6, 1906.

She died suddenly in Philadelphia July 15th. The Spencer family at one time lived on Laurel Hill. Mrs. Spencer is a niece of Mrs. Jennie Davis of Laurel Hill. She is survived by her mother, husband and other relatives.

After 1922, Jennie referred to Jean as her daughter, though we are unaware of any legal adoption; and Jean retained her Spencer surname until marriage. Jean M. Spencer (1918-2009) married Gordon Wyman Dean (1913-2002) on July 15, 1938, in Norwich, CT.

The announcement of Jean Spencer's engagement, shown at right, was published in the New London, CT, newspaper *The Day*, evening edition, Fri., July 16, 1937; pg. 13.

Engagement Announced

Mrs. Jennie M. Davis of Norwich announces the engagement of her daughter, Jean May Spencer, to Gordon Wyman Dean of Comstock Bridge road.

[Joel Harrison Davis](#) and [Jennie \(Watson\) Davis](#) are buried together in Gales Ferry Cemetery in Ledyard, CT.

5. George Willett Watson

George Willett Watson, born May 7, 1868, in Gales Ferry, Ledyard, CT; died July 14, 1950, in West Hartford, CT.

See that additional T at the end of George's middle name? It appears consistently in his paper trail as well as on his grave marker (photo at right from George's [Findagrave memorial](#) page).



One of George's granddaughters took the time to compile an overview of George's career. We present her work here, lightly edited:

George, a farmer's son, was a bookkeeper, accountant, and auditor during his career of over fifty-three years.

He began by studying at the Snell Business College (later known as the Norwich Business College) in Norwich, CT. It is not known how he attended this institution, but the Stedman's City of Norwich Directory tells us he was working as a clerk at W. H. Cardwell's grocery store at 3/9 Market Street, Norwich (in the same building as the Snell Business School) during the years from 1887 to 1890. During this time the city directory listed him as boarding at the home of his employer Mr. Cardwell at 313 Main Street, Norwich.

The 1891 Stedman's Directory listed George as "removed to Waterbury." In Waterbury, George began a twenty-eight year career as a bookkeeper with Waterbury Clock.

In 1919, hearing "that Mr. Fuller was very progressive" and that the Fuller Brush Company "offered many opportunities," and feeling "he was in a rut" ... he moved his family to Hartford and began to work in Accounting, under George Marsh, then treasurer of the company. At some point during his years there, George became Fuller Brush's head auditor. He worked for Fuller Brush for twenty-six years, retiring in 1944.

George collected stamps, a hobby he began when he was about 10 years old. He loved music, especially marches. George also enjoyed gardening while his health permitted.

On November 16, 1892, in Waterbury, CT, George married Grace Edith MINTIE. Grace, born April 11, 1874, in Waterbury, CT, was the daughter of James H. and Mary L. (Nichols) Mintie.

The 1900 census shows George and Grace Watson residing at 41 State Street in Waterbury. It was a two-family house, which George owned with a mortgage. George, Grace, and family lived in one-half of this house; Grace's parents and siblings lived in the other half.

George and Grace had three children – Bernice, Lewis, and Barbara. More about them later.

Tragedy struck this family when daughter Barbara was only 13 months old: Grace became ill with typhoid fever and developed complications, dying on November 10, 1910 of a cerebral embolism. She was 36 years old.

Grace Watson's death was reported in the *Norwich Bulletin* newspaper (Norwich, CT: Sat., November 19, 1910, p. 9):

“John Watson of Allyn's Point ... received word on [Friday morning] of the death of his daughter-in-law, Mrs. George Watson, who had been ill for some time past with typhoid fever at her home in Waterbury.”

Grace (Mintie) Watson was [laid to rest](#) in Riverside Cemetery in Waterbury, CT.

According to family lore, Barbara's “Auntie May,” Grace's sister, “wanted to take Barbara and bring her up with her sons.”

Grace's sister Mary E. Mintie (1882-1952) married Scottish-born William James GRAY (1884-1964) on October 10, 1905 in Waterbury, CT. They had four sons – Douglas, Robert, J. Osborn, and William Jr.

But George didn't want to give Barbara away. He arranged for one of Grace's cousins, Ida May (Lathrop) Lamoureux, to move into the house and help out.

Ida, a divorcée, was in a position to help. In 1910, she and daughter Hazel were living with Grace's widowed father in Waterbury. Ida's son Walter was living elsewhere in Waterbury with his grandparents. It's our understanding that George welcomed Ida's children into his household when Ida moved in.

On February 19, 1913, in Waterbury, George and Ida got married.

Ida May LATHROP was born May 18, 1869, in Derby, CT, the daughter of Orin F. and Charlotte "Lottie" Elizabeth (Nichols) Lathrop. She first married William L. Lamoureux (Sr.) around 1890 and had two children with him, Hazel and William L. Jr.

In 1919, George and family moved away from Waterbury when he took a job with the Fuller Brush company. They were enumerated in West Hartford in the 1920 and 1930 censuses.

Ida M. (Lathrop) (Lamoureux) Watson died in Hartford on July 26, 1937, at age 68. She was [laid to rest](#) in Riverside Cemetery in Waterbury, CT.

Just weeks shy of his 70th birthday, George got married for the third time. On April 16, 1938, in Watervliet, Albany co., NY, George wed Eleanor MITCHELL, age 62. This was Eleanor's first marriage.

Eleanor's full name was Martha Eleanor Mitchell. She was born in Colne, Lancashire, England in February 1876, the daughter of Abraham Mitchell (1839-1911) and his wife Nancy (Pilling) Mitchell (1845-1921). Eleanor immigrated to the United States with her family around 1895. They settled in Cohoes, Albany co., NY, where Abraham Mitchell worked as a machinist.

Eleanor's brother Joseph lived in Watervliet, NY. Two of Eleanor's siblings – Bertha and Arthur – lived in West Hartford. Depending on which of her obituaries you read, Eleanor became a resident of West Hartford in 1928 or in 1936.

We don't find George and Eleanor in the 1940 census.

Sometime after 1944, George suffered a stroke that left him an invalid.

George Willett Watson died July 14, 1950, in Hartford. He is [buried](#) in Riverside Cemetery in Waterbury, CT, with his first two wives.

Eleanor (Mitchell) Watson survived George by six years. Per her obituary, she lived in Hartford up until the last ten days of her life. Eleanor's final days were spent at the Home for Aged Women in Cohoes, NY. She died on August 5, 1956 in Cohoes, Albany co., NY. Eleanor was laid to rest in Waterford Rural Cemetery, Waterford, Saratoga co., NY, where her parents [Abraham](#) and [Nancy](#) are buried.

George and Grace (Mintie) Watson's three children:

i. Bernice Mintie Watson

Bernice Mintie "Bunny" Watson (16 Feb 1896 – 27 Dec 1981) married Irwin Theodore "Ted" LANDHY (1899-1973).

After graduating from the private Northfield School in Northfield, MA, Bernice went to Chicago, IL, to study to become a teacher.

Why Chicago? Possibly a family connection: George's sister Augusta likely was already there by the time Bernice finished high school.

Bernice later ran a private nursery school for the children of the [Armour](#) and [Swift](#) families and others. Family lore says that Mrs. Philip D. Armour III gave Bernice a set of sterling silverware as a wedding gift.

Bernice married Ted Landhy in Chicago on June 6, 1925. Ted, born August 6, 1899, in Chicago, Cook co., IL, was the son of Oscar Ferdinand Landhy (1871-1930) and his wife Lottie Marie Carlson (1874-1934). Ted was an electrical engineer and a veteran of WWI. Bernice and Ted had one child, daughter [Joan Elizabeth Landhy](#) (1927-2016), who married the [Rev. James Marvin Taylor](#) (1925-2007).

Bernice and Ted moved to Mansfield, OH and later to Monroe, LA. Bernice was active in the Presbyterian Church in Monroe.

[Ted](#) and [Bernice](#) Landhy are buried in Mulhearn Memorial Park Cemetery in Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA. Bernice's name is marked on the vault in the Chapel Mausoleum as "Bunny Landhy."

ii. Lewis James Watson

Lewis James Watson (16 May 1899 – 23 Jan 1958) – whose birth record apparently names him as *James Lewis* Watson – went by his middle name. He

shows up in subsequent records as Lewis James Watson.

On November 21, 1920, in Washington, D.C., Lewis married Marian Maud BEALS (4 March 1899 – 21 April 1970). (The transcription we found of their marriage record names Lewis Watson's bride as *Maude M. Beals.*)

Marian's mother, Cora May BEALS (1882-1958), was the daughter of Charles Ainsley BEALS (1854-1928) and his wife Mary Frances ALLEN (1860-1946). Cora married Edward A. EDGAR circa 1905, which means that Edward probably wasn't Marian's father. Cora might have been unwed when she gave birth to Marian – possibly explaining why Marian's maiden name was identical to her mother's. That, or Marian's biological father also was surnamed BEALS.

Lewis and Marian had children:

- [Dorothy A. Watson](#) (1924-1990, who married Ernest Edward LUPP (1916-2003))
- [George Lester Watson](#) (1925-1993), who married (1st) Pearl Mildred NORRINGTON (1915-1947); and (2nd) Isabelle Beatrice NORRINGTON (1928-2004)
- [Helen Ann Watson](#) (1927-2016), who married (1st) Jess Amos SANDERS (1925-1996); and (2nd) Alan Mark KING (1929-1993)
- Son, born on or around February 16, 1928, in Washington, DC (birth reported in the *Evening Star* newspaper, Washington, DC; February 16, 1928, p. 9). This son probably died in infancy; he does not show up in the 1930 census. He may have been named Alan: Helen Ann (Watson) King's 2016 obituary says that "she was preceded in death by her brothers Alan Watson, George Watson (Isabelle), John Watson (Elizabeth); sisters Dorothy Lupp (Ernest) and Marian Yates (Owen)." We have not found Alan's death record.
- [John Mintie Watson](#) (1929-1991), who married (2nd?) Elizabeth Hildegard REINER (1927-2003)
- [Stillborn son](#), 9 September 1930, Washington, D.C.
- [Marian Evelyn Watson](#) (1934-1963), who married Owen T. YATES, Jr.

Lewis J. Watson was a career military man. We learned about some of his service from a couple of newspaper articles (the *Hartford Courant* [Hartford, CT], July 28,

1942, pg. 2; and the *Lock Haven Express* [Lock Haven, PA], January 24, 1959, pg. 16).

As a boy of 15, Lewis ran away from home to join the US Navy, succeeding through the time-honored tradition of lying about his age. While Lewis's obituary says he served overseas during WWI, family lore adds that he was also at the Navy Yard in Groton, CT (now known as *Naval Submarine Base New London*). Perhaps that's where Lewis enlisted.

After two years in the Navy, Lewis left to join the US Army.

Lewis Watson's career included duty as private secretary for two U.S. Army high-ranking officers – General Walter Krueger, during WWI; and General Douglas MacArthur, in 1936. At Fort Meade in Maryland, he taught shorthand and typing and was court reporter.

In 1942, at the New Cumberland, PA, Army Reception Center, Lewis was promoted to the rank of sergeant-major – making him “the chief non-commissioned officer of the reception center for Pennsylvania selectees.” It was noted that he had already served “at Norfolk, VA; Fort Jay, NY; Fort George G. Meade, MD; Headquarters of the Department of Panama, and the Third Corps Area Headquarters at Baltimore, MD.”

Lewis, Marian, and their family were enumerated in the 1930 and 1940 censuses as residents of Fort Meade in Anne Arundel county, MD.

By 1941, Lewis was living in Pennsylvania. An article on page 9 of Harrisburg, PA's newspaper *Evening News* for June 14, 1941, refers to Sergeant “Lewis J. Watson of Harrisburg.” Harrisburg is three miles, as the crow flies, northeast of New Cumberland, where the Army Reception Center was located.

A 1943 city directory for Harrisburg, PA, lists Lewis J. Watson and his second wife, Florence M.

Florence Mabel CONFER (1892-1981) was the daughter of Perry Franklin Confer (1856-1936) and his wife Mary Melissa Houtz (1853-1940). In 1909 Florence married [Ray Ditzler STOVER](#), with whom she had one child, Mary Rebecca Stover (mentioned in Lewis J. Watson's obituary as his daughter). Florence and Ray divorced sometime in or before 1917.

In 1921, Florence married [Raymond Edgar LaRUE](#). They had no children together. Raymond died in 1931. When Florence (Confer) (Stover) (LaRue) Watson passed away in 1981, she was [laid to rest](#) with Raymond E. LaRue.

The 1950 census records Marian Watson, age 50, divorced, residing at 72 Fifth Street in Odenton, Anne Arundel co., MD. Living with her: daughter Marian (15); daughter Dorothy (Watson) Lupp (27) and her children Joan (9), Jane (7), and 8-month-old James Lupp; son John M., 21; and daughter-in-law Joanne Watson, 17.

It appears that son John was first married to a woman named Joanne. We haven't found a record of this marriage and don't know what became of her.

Marian's half-sister, Mary (Edgar) Grooms, her husband Marvin Grooms, and their two children lived right next door.

Marian worked as a seamstress at Ft. Meade. The work (listed in the census as "other") performed by her 15-year-old daughter Marian may have been child care for her young nieces and nephew while their mother Dorothy worked at Ft. Meade as a stenographer. John was employed as a personnel clerk, also at Ft. Meade. The only household member not working at Ft. Meade was John's wife, Joanne, who was a "spooler" for a plastic company.

In 1950 Lewis was still in Harrisburg, PA; he was enumerated there with wife Florence. His occupation was listed as court reporter and clerk for the US Army.

On May 30, 1951, after thirty-four years of service, Lewis J. Watson received his discharge from the military at the rank of sergeant major. He and Florence moved to Lock Haven, Clinton co., PA.

Lewis worked for the American Aniline Products Company in Lock Haven from 1952 until January 12, 1958, when he suffered a heart attack.

Lewis James Watson, age 58, died on January 23, 1958, at his home at 141 W. Fourth Street, Lock Haven. He was [buried](#) in Fairview Cemetery in Millheim, Centre co., PA – the same cemetery where Florence was interred with her second husband after her death in late October 1981.

After the 1950 census, we lose sight of Marian (Beals) Watson until her death in Oklahoma in 1970. Her obituary tells us that she was living with her daughter Dorothy (Watson) Lupp; and that her son John lived nearby.

MRS. MARIAN WATSON

Mrs. Marian M. Watson, 71, of 1429 SW 87, died Tuesday at South Community Hospital following a lengthy illness. Services are pending with Vondel L. Smith Mortuary.

Mrs. Watson was born in Bristol, Long Island, N. Y., and came to Oklahoma City 3½ years ago from Georgia. She had attended St. James Catholic Church.

Survivors include two sons, George L., New Albany, Ind., and John, 813 SW 56; two daughters, Mrs. Ernest E. Lupp, of the home, and Mrs. Alan King, Brockton, N. Y., and a sister, Mrs. Mary N. Grooms, Maryland.

“Mrs. Marian M. Watson, 71, of 1429 SW 87, died Tuesday at South Community Hospital following a lengthy illness. Services are pending with Vondel L. Smith Mortuary.

“Mrs. Watson was born in Bristol, Long Island, N.Y. [sic; should be *Bristol, RI*] and came to Oklahoma City 3½ years ago from Georgia. She had attended St. James Catholic Church.

“Survivors include two sons, George L., New Albany, Ind., and John, 813 SW 56; two daughters, Mrs. Ernest E. Lupp, of the home, and Mrs. Alan King, Brockton, N.Y., and a sister, Mrs. Mary N. Grooms, Maryland.” – *The Daily Oklahoman*, Oklahoma City, OK; April 22, 1970, p. 21

Marian M. (Beals) Watson was [laid to rest](#) in Sunnyside Cemetery in Del City, Oklahoma co., OK.

iii. Barbara Elizabeth Watson

Barbara Elizabeth Watson (29 Sept 1909 – 6 March 1998) married Howard Harrop SARGENT Jr. (1911-1986).

We are fortunate to have details on Barbara’s life from one of her children; and from Barbara’s obituary (*Hartford Courant*, Hartford, CT; March 9, 1998, p. 18). We have drawn upon these sources and others to compose the following biography.

Barbara was born when her sister, Bernice, was 14 years old and her brother, Lewis, was 11. When Barbara was little more than a year old, her mother, Grace, died from complications of typhoid fever.

Barbara’s father arranged for Grace’s cousin, Ida May (Lathrop) Lamoureux, to move in and help care for little Barbara. Ida, a divorcée, brought along her daughter Hazel May Lamoureux (age 15) and son Walter Leslie Lamoureux (age 13). George and Ida married in 1913.

Siblings Bernice and Lewis Watson left home when Barbara was still quite young.

We know that Bernice completed her high school education at a boarding school in Massachusetts; and that Lewis ran off to join the Navy around 1914. Family lore raises questions about whether the older Watson kids' early exit from home was due to resentment of their stepmother, or rivalry with their stepsiblings – or both.

Barbara was about five years old when she learned that Ida wasn't her birth mother. She was outside picking flowers beneath an open window when she overheard her father discussing it with a friend.

In 1919 the family moved from Waterbury to Hartford. After graduating from Hartford High School, Barbara worked on the editorial and reporting staffs of various publications in the Hartford area and in Chicago, IL, including the *Hartford Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and Myers Publishing Co. (a publisher of small local newspapers).

Per the 1930 census, stepmother Ida's occupation was "society editor" for a newspaper. Ida's work may have piqued Barbara's interest in writing and provided some opportunities.

Barbara also was a painter. She attended the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, and studied art privately as well. During her time in Chicago, and later, Barbara had paintings accepted for exhibition.

For a brief time while living in Chicago, Barbara worked as personal secretary to Mrs. Philip D. Armour III, at Mrs. Armour's Lake Forest estate. We know that Barbara's sister Bernice had connections to the Armour family; this couldn't have been coincidental. The job was short-lived because of the lengthy commute.

In August of 1934, Barbara's engagement to Howard Harrop Sargent Jr. was announced in the *Hartford Courant* (August 7, 1934, p. 11).

Engagement Announced.
Mr. and Mrs. George Willett Watson of Washington Circle, West Hartford, have announced the engagement of their daughter, Miss Barbara Watson, to Mr. Howard H. Sargent, Jr., of Marshall Street, son of Mr. and Mrs. Howard H. Sargent of St. Paul, Minn.
Miss Watson attended the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. Mr. Sargent is a graduate of St. Paul's Academy and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the class of 1933. He is a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity.
The wedding will take place next month.

On September 28, 1934 – the day before her 25th birthday – Barbara married Howard at the Asylum Avenue Baptist Church in Hartford.

Howard was born on June 5, 1911, in St. Paul, MN, the son of Howard Harrop SARGENT Sr. (1880-1961) and his wife Mary Hale CUTLER (1882-1973).

Howard and Barbara resided in Hartford and in Glastonbury, ultimately moving to Portland, CT, in 1947, where they lived for many years.

Barbara's passion for writing and art continued after marriage, but time was limited while her children were young. Later on, Barbara resumed painting.

Two of Barbara's paintings were exhibited by the Connecticut Society of Women Painters: One was displayed at the Society's annual exhibition at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, CT; the other was shown at the New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain, CT.

Howard Sargent died in Middletown, CT, on December 16, 1986. His obituary provides details about his career:

“Howard H. Sargent Jr., a former test pilot for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft and an engineer at Raymond Engineering Laboratories, died Tuesday at Middlesex Memorial Hospital in Middletown. He was 75.

“Sargent was hired by Pratt & Whitney in 1933 after graduating from Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in aeronautical engineering.

“During WWII, he was the company's chief test pilot and was one of the first pilots to fly PWA's R-2800 and Wasp engines.

“In 1947, he joined Raymond Engineering Laboratories in Middletown as a research and development engineer.

“He was born in St. Paul, Minn., and lived in Portland for 39 years. He was a former member of the Portland Zoning Board of Appeals.” – *Hartford Courant*, Hartford, CT; December 18, 1986, p. 7

Besides his wife, Howard was survived by their two sons and two daughters. He is [buried](#) in Swedish Lutheran Cemetery in Portland, CT.

In 1991, Barbara moved to a senior living community in Chester, CT. She died in Chester on March 6, 1998. Her ashes are [interred](#) in Swedish Cemetery.

6. Augusta Ella Watson

Augusta Ella Watson was born October 6, 1869, in Ledyard, CT; she died June 21, 1941, in Chicago, Cook co., IL.

Augusta's first husband was Orrin Avery GRAY (1853-1931), whom she wed on November 5, 1887, in New London, CT. Orrin's first wife, Julia A. Brooks, had died in New London on March 6th of that same year.

Orrin and Augusta (Watson) Gray had four children: Florence Ida Gray (1888-1922), who married Charles F. Spencer; Floyd I. Gray (Nov 1889-20 Sep 1890); Jennie A. Gray (1892-1906); and Floyd Watson Gray (1895-?).

The 1900 census shows Augusta living with Florence, Jennie, and Floyd in Norwich, CT. Orrin was enumerated in New London, CT, boarding in the household of Charles E. Collins. There was trouble in this marriage, described in some detail in the local newspaper:

“GROTON FAMILY TROUBLE

“Orrin Gray, who is employed on one of the barges of the Thames Towboat company's fleet, returned to Groton a few days ago and discovered that his household effects had been removed to Norwich. There had been some trouble in the family and Mrs. Gray had decided to separate from her husband and thought she would complete her plans while her husband was away. Mr. Gray as soon as he discovered what had taken place swore out a [writ of replevin](#) and went to Norwich to locate his goods. He found his wife and her three children, but could not locate the goods. He attempted to obtain possession of his favorite son, but there was resistance and a lively scene followed. The police were summoned and Mr. Gray was obliged to retreat. He will return, it is stated, and make another attempt to get the goods and the boy. The family while in Groton lived near the depot.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; April 12, 1900, pg. 3

This story got picked up again in the newspapers a few months later:

“SUES GROTON MAN

“ORRIN GRAY SEEKS DAMAGES FROM DUDLEY P. CHAPMAN

“Dudley P. Chapman, a wealthy resident of Fairview avenue, Groton, is made the defendant in a suit for \$10,000 damages brought by Orrin Gray, also of Groton, for criminal conversation with his wife, Mrs. Augusta Gray whose affections, Gray alleges, have been alienated by the defendant.

“Mr. Gray claims, says the Norwich Bulletin, that he has been aware of the existing circumstances for several months; it will be remembered that about three months ago Mrs. Gray, while her husband was in New London, had her household goods packed and shipped to Norwich, leaving the home desolate. She, with her three children accompanied the goods to this city, and since that time has resided with the family of J. H. Davis on Laurel Hill.

“Mr. Gray followed her in a few days, secured a part of the goods, and caused a commotion on Laurel Hill by trying to steal his little boy who was there with his mother. Police help was necessary to frustrate Mr. Gray’s attempt to get his child. Since that time Mrs. Gray has stayed in Norwich with her sister, Mrs. J. H. Davis. An attachment to the amount of \$15,000 has been placed on the property of Dudley P. Chapman in Groton by Sheriff Arthur L. Story, and the case will come up for a hearing at the September term of the court in New London.

“Mr. Gray claims that D. P. Chapman seduced his wife, and caused her to score his (Gray's) love and affection, which misdemeanor, he alleges, has covered a period from January to June of the present year.

“Mr. Chapman is married, is about 65 years old, and has two grown-up daughters. He is a respected citizen of Groton and is reputed to be worth about \$40,000.” — *The Day*, New London, CT; July 28, 1900, pg. 5

After leaving their Groton home, Augusta and her children may have stayed with Jennie (Watson) Davis at first. The 1900 census shows Augusta and her kids, as of June 16th, living at 297 Crouch Ave. in Norwich, walking distance from where Jennie and Harrison Davis lived at 318 Laurel Hill Ave.

Apparently Dudley P. Chapman settled out of court with Orrin Gray by paying \$2,500 to Gray. We’d guess that Chapman was guilty of counseling Augusta Gray to leave her (likely abusive) husband.

Augusta met her second husband, Charles H. NEAL (1846-1905), in Norwich.

Charles H. Neal, a native of Epping, NH, appears in Norwich city directories as early as 1893. Charles was absent from its pages in 1903, when he was living in Brentwood, NH. Augusta Gray was missing from the Norwich city directory in 1904, when *she* was living in Brentwood.

Each went to New Hampshire to obtain a divorce.

Charles had been married twice before. He wed his first wife, Emma P. LEIGHTON of Dover, NH, in Haverhill, MA, on January 15, 1869. Emma divorced him in February 1881 on grounds of “abandonment and willing absence.”

On March 12, 1881, in Haverhill, MA, Charles wed his second wife, Georgia A. “Georgie” LITTLEFIELD of North Berwick, Maine. On May 9, 1903, Charles – as a resident of Brentwood, NH – secured his divorce from Georgie, on grounds of “abandonment.”

Then Charles returned to Norwich, and Augusta went to live in Brentwood.

On October 22, 1904, in Exeter, NH, Charles H. Neal married, as his third wife, Augusta Ella (Watson) Gray. Augusta’s divorce from Orrin A. Gray became final nearly two weeks later, on November 4, 1904. Her cause for seeking a divorce: “Abandonment.”

We know from a single newspaper item that divorce proceedings had begun earlier in Connecticut (*The Day*, New London, CT; Dec. 20, 1902, pg. 2). Perhaps it didn’t work out in Augusta’s favor, leading her to file for divorce in New Hampshire instead.

In the divorce case of Augusta E. Gray vs. Orrin E. Gray, an answer was ordered filled within three weeks.

Charles and Augusta had one year together as husband and wife. On November 25, 1905, Charles died at their home, 141 W. Thames St. in Norwich. Cause of death: “Valvular disease of the heart; and general [anasarca](#).” He was buried in Maplewood Cemetery in Norwich, CT.

On March 13, 1906, Augusta’s daughter Jennie died in Norwich at age 14 of tubercular meningitis. She was [laid to rest](#) in Gales Ferry Cemetery in Ledyard.

On September 6, 1906, in Norwich, Augusta's daughter Florence was married to Charles F. SPENCER (1873-1960).

Charles, born in Fall River, MA, was the son of Charles A. and Mary S. (Wiggins) Spencer. In 1900 Charles was residing in Norwich, his widowed mother living with him. At the time of his marriage, he was "of Springfield, MA." In 1907 Charles F. Spencer's name appears in the Springfield city directory.

Perhaps a year later, Augusta followed her daughter and son-in-law to Massachusetts. The 1908 Norwich city directory noted that Augusta E. Neal, widow of Charles H. had "rem[oved] to Springfield, Mass."

We don't know if Augusta brought her only surviving son, Floyd Watson Gray, with her to Springfield. We don't know if Floyd was still alive at that time. Floyd W. Gray's complete disappearance from the record suggests two things to us:

Orrin Gray may have gained custody of his "favorite son." If so, Floyd would have left Norwich to go live with his father. By June 1903, Orrin had moved to Hartford. When he was enumerated there in 1910, Floyd was not with him.

Someone named Orrin Gray died in New London on February 18, 1903. We have seen only the transcribed data available at the Connecticut State Library's [Connecticut Vital Records — Index of Deaths, 1897-1968](#), not the original record. We've found that Augusta's first husband Orrin A. Gray lived until 1931; and there doesn't seem to be another candidate with the same name. We'd guess that this death record was for "Junior." Floyd W. Gray likely didn't survive past 1903.

Per the 1909 Springfield, MA, city directory, Augusta Neal, widow of Charles, made her home at 111 Dawes St. Two employees of Springfield's Nayasset Club boarded at this same address that year: Ernest Reynolds and [Harry Thompson](#).

Per the *Lost New England* website, the [Nayasset Club](#) was "a social organization that at the time included many of Springfield's prominent citizens."

Neither Augusta nor Harry appear in the 1910 Springfield city directory. And 111 Dawes Street had new occupants.

We haven't found a marriage record for Augusta Neal and Harry Thompson.

Our next glimpse of Augusta is via her father's 1917 obituary, in which she was mentioned as "Mrs. A. E. Thompson of Chicago." When her daughter Florence died in July 1922, Augusta was named in Florence's obituary the same way.

Despite our best efforts, we haven't found Augusta (with or without Harry) in the four censuses between 1910 and 1940.

We were surprised to find a number of women named Augusta Thompson, living in or near Chicago, whose husbands were named Harry. Their disqualification: Not one of these women were Connecticut natives; many were German immigrants.

Augusta was a widow when she died in Chicago, IL, on June 21, 1941. A [transcription of her death record](#) at [FamilySearch.org](#) gives her name as *Alice E. Thompson* and shaves five years off her age. All of the other information is essentially correct.

Her obituary ran in the New London, CT, news paper:

HOLD RITES HERE

Body of Former Resident, Mrs. Thompson, Brought for Burial

Funeral services for Mrs. Augusta Watson Thompson, a former resident of the Allyn's Point section and daughter of the late Marian Chapman and John W. Watson, whose death occurred Sunday at her home in Chicago, were held yesterday afternoon at 3 o'clock at the Gales Ferry Methodist church. The service was conducted by the Rev. Albert Abbott, pastor, and Mrs. Eugene LaFontaine, a former neighbor and schoolmate of the deceased, played organ selections.

Granddaughters of Mrs. Thompson and their families from Chicago and Norwich, with her brother, George Watson, and Mrs. Watson, from Hartford, with local friends, were in attendance. The interment was in Gales Ferry cemetery.

"Funeral services for Mrs. Augusta Watson Thompson, a former resident of the Allyn's Point section and daughter of the late Marian [sic] Chapman and John W. Watson, whose death occurred Sunday at her home in Chicago, were held yesterday afternoon at 3 o'clock at the Gales Ferry Methodist church. ...

"Granddaughters of Mrs. Thompson and their families from Chicago and Norwich with her brother, George Watson, and Mrs. Watson, from Hartford, with local friends, were in attendance. The interment was in Gales Ferry cemetery." — *The Day*, New London, CT; evening edition, June 27, 1941; pg. 16

Augusta E. (Watson) (Gray) (Neal) Thompson was laid to rest in Gales Ferry Cemetery in Ledyard on June 24, 1941.

With appreciation for the research work of Anne Fisher, a great-granddaughter of John W. Watson Jr. through his son George Willett Watson.

And with gratitude for the generosity of her brother Doug, who shared Anne's research with us – allowing us to better describe John W. Watson Jr. and his family in this essay.

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