

John Willet Watson of West Greenwich, Rhode Island

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This article is part of a larger family history, **The WATSON Family of West Greenwich, Rhode Island**, which can be found via these links to [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), and [Part 3](#).

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

John Willet Watson, likely son of Hazzard⁵ Watson

In our [article about Hazzard Watson](#), we discussed our reasons for thinking he may have been the father of John Willet Watson of West Greenwich. Here's what we said:

Willet Watson gave the name Hazzard to his eldest son, Willet Hazzard Watson (1829-1909). This is a pretty big clue to Willet's parentage, especially as the name Hazzard (with or without the double-Z) wasn't used by the families of Samuel⁴ #26 Watson's other children.

We also know the town of West Greenwich intervened when Willet was unable to cope after his wife's death. This tells us that Willet "belonged" to West Greenwich; he was born there. The town honored its obligation and exercised its authority to deal with Willet and his children.

If we're right about Willet Watson being the son of Hazzard and Amy Watson (and we think we are), his line of descent is rendered as Willet⁶ (Hazzard⁵, Samuel⁴, Samuel³, Samuel², John¹).

John Willet Watson shows up in some records as John W. Watson, other times as Willet Watson. It appears that he commonly went by his middle name, which is what we'll use here unless citing a specific record.

Where and when Willet Watson was born

We have found no birth record for Willet Watson.

The 1840 census, the only one in which Willet appears as head of household, places him in the age category of *between 30 and 39 years of age*. That points to a year-of-birth range between 1801 and 1810.

In the 1850 census, Willet is listed as 40 years old, pointing to a birth year of 1810.

When Willet Watson died in 1858, his age at death was recorded simply as 50 years (no numbers given for months or days). There are so many blank places on this death record that we question the accuracy of that most personal of details – how long Willet had *lived*. If we accept this death record at face value, it points to a birth year of 1808.

In a twist of fate, Willet Watson was identified by his first and last initials in a report created by social reformer, and Commissioner of the Poor, Thomas Robinson Hazard of Portsmouth, RI.

In September 1850, the same month in which Willet was enumerated in West Greenwich's "poor house," Thomas R. Hazard visited the poor of West Greenwich. He noted that "JW" was 43 years old at the time, i.e., born circa 1807.

This is the only nuanced record of John Willet Watson's age, the only one that doesn't end in a zero.

IF Willet Watson was, indeed, 43 years old in September 1850 and 50 years old at the time of his death in May 1858, we might reasonably assume that Willet's 51st birthday would have occurred between May and September 1858.

All of the above leads us to a *tentative circa date* of 1807 as the year of Willet Watson's birth. This means Willet would have been about 15 years old when Hazzard⁵ Watson died in 1822.

As to *where* Willet Watson was born, we feel 99.9% confident in saying that he was born in West Greenwich. We know that Hazzard and Amy Watson lived there. More important is the fact that when Willet Watson fell on hard times in the latter years of his life, the town of West Greenwich was directly involved in the welfare of Willet and his family. This was the system of poor relief in New England at the time – the town of a person's birth bore the cost of that obligation.

Willet's wife, Betsey Corey

West Greenwich town council records for November 1829 tell us that Willet had a wife and child – and a second child soon to be born. This suggests that Willet married and started his family circa 1827.

We know that Willet's wife's name was Betsey Corey, thanks to the death records of two of his children. (A third child identified her as Betsey but supplied a different maiden name. More about that later.) We have not, however, found any record of Willet's and Betsey's marriage.

Who were Betsey's parents? We don't know. Nor do we know when and where she was born. In the 1840 census, the adult female in Willet's household fell into the same age category as he did. So we may assume that Betsey was reasonably near in age to Willet.

At least two of Betsey's children gave Exeter, RI, as their birthplace, at a time when we know (from town council records) that she was residing in West Greenwich. This suggests that Betsey's women friends, who assisted her during childbirth, lived in Exeter – making it feasible that Betsey was from Exeter originally. There were no Cory/Corey households enumerated in West Greenwich in 1820, further boosting the likelihood that Betsey hailed from Exeter.

Willet and Betsey's children

Willet and Betsey Watson had at least seven children:

1. LOUISA, born circa 1827-1828. Louisa was mentioned in West Greenwich town council records on November 30, 1829. She does not appear in Willet's household in 1840; she may have died young.
2. [WILLET HAZZARD](#), born December 31, 1829, in Exeter, RI (calculated from his death record); died in Middleborough, MA, on June 9, 1909.
3. [SARAH ELLEN](#), born December 14, 1831, in RI, likely in the town of Exeter; died in the village of Mystic, Stonington, CT, on February 5, 1908.
4. [JOHN WILLET JR.](#), born January 1, 1833, in West Greenwich, RI; died in Allyn's Point, Ledyard, CT, on November 7, 1917.
5. [CHARLES HENRY](#), born circa 1837-1838 (possibly earlier) in Rhode Island; died between 1870 and 1875, likely in Rhode Island.
6. [GEORGE PERRY](#), born circa 1839 (possibly earlier) in West Greenwich, RI; died in Sterling, CT, on March 16, 1915.
7. [JAMES RILEY](#), born circa 1840, likely in the month of May, possibly in Voluntown, CT; died in Titusville, Brevard co., FL, on August 13, 1915.

Betsey Watson in West Greenwich records

Betsey Watson's name appears four times in West Greenwich town council records in the span of four months' time. It is only after Betsey's death in 1840 that Willet himself shows up in such records.

30 November 1829 – WG Town Council Book # 7, page 133:

Voted Thomas Wait allowed \$3.35 for keeping **Betsey Watson and child** to this date. Order granted.

Poor Vendued: (item) **Betsey Watson and child Loiza** [sic] to Oliver Matteson \$1.32/week until Betsey is confined. Then \$1.00 a week in addition for two weeks and the town to pay her Doctoring.

25 January 1830 – WG Town Council Book # 7, page 136:

Poor Vendued: (item) **Betsey Watson and her two children** to John Tillinghast \$0.96/week

29 March 1830 – WG Town Council Book # 7, page 136:

Voted John Tillinghast allowed \$8.64 for keeping **Betsey Watson and children** to this date. Order granted.

These town council items involve several aspects of poor relief, the welfare system of its time.

When a person or family was deemed to be “in a suffering condition,” the town might provide a few basics, like a bushel of corn or some firewood, to get folks through a rough patch. In Betsey Watson’s case, she and her children were “kept” in someone else’s home; and the host was paid by the town for doing so.

These items reveal that Betsey was obviously pregnant. When she was “confined” – to give birth and then recuperate – the town would pay her medical expenses (“Doctoring”).

“Poor Vendued” – This notation tells us that Betsey Watson and her children were *auctioned off* at town meetings to the lowest bidders. West Greenwich town council records from that time period are filled with such vendue items. The names of the poor often remained the same, with a bit more variation among the names of the townspeople who bid successfully on them.

In Betsey’s case: On November 30, 1829, after Thomas Wait was reimbursed \$3.35 by the town for having housed, fed, and otherwise cared for Betsey and her daughter Louisa, a new contract was awarded to Oliver Matteson, whose winning bid was \$1.32 per week. The town anticipated the additional expense of caring for Betsey when she gave birth by tacking on an extra couple of dollars to cover her confinement period.

At the town meeting held on January 25, 1830, John Tillinghast was awarded a new contract to care for Betsey and her *two* children. His winning bid of 96 cents per week produced payment of \$8.64 at the March 29th town meeting, nine weeks later.

For the poor of the town, there were definite disadvantages to being vendued. Not only did these unfortunates lose control over their own lives; they would be set to work by their temporary hosts, who expected to profit from their guests’ labor. Betsey Watson, mother of a toddler and a newborn, likely was assigned domestic tasks considered appropriate for women.

An earlier, more generic entry from West Greenwich town council records sheds additional light on the New England poor relief system:

31 August 1818 – WG Town Council Book #6:

“Voted and Passed as a Rule of the council that when any of the poor are put out at wages, and the person who has them shall refuse to give them up to the person who may bid them off – that then and in that Case the person Refusing as aforesaid shall pay Double what the pauper was bid of [sic] at —— ”

None of this, of course, explains *why* the town of West Greenwich was administering poor relief to Betsey and her children. Where was Willet Watson during this time?

1830

The year 1830 is remarkable in what it *doesn’t* tell us.

Hazzard⁵ Watson, the man we believe was Willet's father, died in 1822. Considering that there were nine people in Hazzard⁵ Watson's household in 1820 – including five males the right age to be sons – one might expect to find at least a few of these Watson offspring in the 1830 census for West Greenwich.

Yet there is only one Watson household enumerated in West Greenwich in the 1830 census, that of Hazzard⁵ Watson's father [Samuel #26 Watson](#). The numbers for Samuel #26's household account for himself, his daughter Alice and her small children.

We know that Hazzard's wife Amy was living in West Greenwich in late September 1829 because of a town council item that mentions her:

20 September 1829 – WG Town Council Book # 7, page 131:

Charles Stone allowed \$6.50 for taking care of Amey Watson [sic] through her sickness. Order granted.

And yet we are left in the dark as to where the remnants of Hazzard⁵ Watson's family were living in 1830. If they were residing in West Greenwich in the households of other people, they were counted only in gender and age categories, not by name.

As for Willet Watson, we wonder if his absence was caused by employment that took him away – say, working on a whaling vessel, like his son John W. Jr. did as a young adult – or if Willet was doing time in a prison setting.

1837

Betsey Watson ran afoul of the law in 1837, when she was convicted of stealing. Her petition for release from jail is the only place we find her named as “Elizabeth.”

To the Honourable General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations to be holden at South Kingston in the County of Washington on the last Monday of October AD 1837.

Humbly sheweth,

Elizabeth Watson, wife of John W. Watson of West Greenwich in the County of Kent, That she was convicted before a Justice's Court holden at said West Greenwich on the Twentieth day of September AD 1837 of stealing and carrying away from the possession of Oliver Wickes of said West Greenwich, twelve hair combs of the value of four Dollars and about two Dollars and fifty Cents in Cash, making in the whole Six Dollars and Fifty Cents. And said Court sentenced your Petitioner to pay, as a fine for the use of the State, the sum of Seven Dollars; to Oliver Wickes, the owner of the property stolen, Two Dollars and thirty Cents, being one fold the value thereof [sic], the same having been restored, and in default of paying the same to be imprisoned in jail for the space of (blank) [sic] days.

And that she pay all Costs of prosecution & conviction, taxed at \$20 & 6^{cts} –

Your Petitioner would represent to your Honours that she has no property whatever to pay said fine & cost and restoration money, nor has her husband any. That she has a family of children that require her care and attention at home, and that she herself expects very soon to be confined by sickness and to require the special care and attention of her Friends.

Whereupon your Petitioner humbly prays your Honours to remit the whole of said Sentence, and to discharge her from jail – and as in duty bound will ever pray

“Expects very soon to be confined by sickness” means that Betsey was pregnant and nearing her due date. The “special care and attention of her Friends” refers to the women who would assist her during labor and delivery.

The Rhode Island government, in an undated decision, granted Betsey her release from jail.

House of Representatives No. 41837

Upon the Petition of Elisabeth [sic] Watson a convict confined in the States Jail in the County of Kent praying for liberation

Voted and resolved that the prayer of said petition be granted; and the sheriff of said County is hereby directed to discharge her accordingly

Voted & c per order Geo [Ripley?] clerk

In Senate read the same day & [continued?]

by order (signed) Henry Bowen Sec’y

And what about Oliver Wickes, the person from whom Betsey stole? He doesn’t seem to have been one of the local bigwigs.

We notice that Oliver Wickes’ name shows up on the same 1840 census page for West Greenwich as “Amy Watson, widow” and “Elcy” (Alice) Watson – they lived in the same general neighborhood. If Willet and Betsey were living with Amy in 1837, that would have put them in reasonably close proximity to the Wickes household.

1840

Willet appears as head of household only once (listed as *John W. Watson*) in the 1840 census in Voluntown, CT. The numbers for Willet’s family that year correspond closely to the ages of his known children.

His household consisted of eight people: Two males under age 5; two males aged 5-9; one male aged 10-14; one male aged 30-39 (Willet); one female aged 10-14; and one female aged 30-39 (Betsey). Of those, four were “employed in agriculture.”

Betsey (Corey) Watson died sometime in 1840. We know of this from an entry for her son John Jr. in *A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut* (**bold** formatting is ours):

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.**

This family ended up back in *West* Greenwich, not *Westerly*. They may have lived with Abiah Watson, Willet's grandmother – whose death around 1843 may have caused what came next.

After Betsey's death

Things did not go well for Willet and his children after Betsey's death. Records from West Greenwich, RI, give us a glimpse into two serious *changes in the circumstances of the family*.

5 December 1843 – WG Town Council Book # 7, page 251:

Voted that Charles Tillinghast have an order on the Town Treasurer for \$5.00 for removing Willet Watson's family to the Poor House and keeping them one knight [sic]. Order granted.

Legal proceedings for the guardianship of Willet Watson's children took place in 1849:

At a Court of Probate held at West Greenwich in the County of Kent on the 27th day of Oct Sept AD 1849

Present: { Benjamin R. Hoxsie }
{ Oliver Matteson }
{ Job Pratt }Members
{ Peleg Matteson }
{ Amos Hall }

Upon the petition of Benjamin R. Hoxsie to this Court [for] the appointment of a Guardian to the Children of Willet Watson of this town It was decreed by said Court that Allen Ellis be appointed Guardian of John Watson, a minor over fourteen years of age, Charles H., Perry, Hazard & Riley Watson – under fourteen years of age, Children of the said Willet Watson, and that he give bond in the sum of one hundred dollars. Burrill Matteson & Charles Capwell accepted as Sureties ~

The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Kent [illegible] By the Court of Probate of the Town of West Greenwich in the County and State aforesaid

To Allen Ellis of West Greenwich in said county – Greeting

You having this day been appointed Guardian of John Watson a minor over fourteen years of age, Charles H. Watson, Perry Watson, Hazard Watson, and Riley Watson, minors within the age of fourteen years, Children of Willet Watson of said Town, and having given bond according to Law – exercise said office of Guardian and vested with all the power and authority to said office belonging –

In testimony Whereof I have by order of said Court –

hereunto Set my hand and affixed the seal of said Court this 27th day of October AD 1849

John James c^t clk [court clerk]

This guardianship document mentions all of Willet's sons, though we wonder why it groups Hazard with his younger siblings. Willet Hazzard Watson would have been nearly 20 years old when this guardianship was drawn up.

Daughter Sarah Ellen Watson is not named in this guardianship. We know that she got married in Voluntown on December 8, 1849, six days before her 18th birthday. (We suspect Sarah went to live with [Jeffrey and Annie Watson](#) in Voluntown at some point – possibly when her father and brothers were “removed” to the West Greenwich Poor House.)

Jeffrey Watson was a younger brother to Hazzard Watson. Jeffrey would have been Willet's uncle and Sarah's grand-uncle.

1850

The census captures how scattered this family was by 1850.

Henry C. Watson, age 12, and James R. Watson, age 9, were living in the West Greenwich household of Benjamin R. Hoxsie, “manufacturer” – the person who petitioned for the Watson children's guardianship. George P. Watson, age 11, was listed as living in the household of Robert Hall, also in West Greenwich.

Henry C. Watson is *Charles*; James R. is *Riley*; George P. is *Perry*.

John Jr. was boarding in the household of Shepherd Brown in Griswold, CT. Inexplicably, John was listed as being 15 years old. At least his birthplace was recorded correctly as Rhode Island. His occupation was listed as “laborer.”

Allen Ellis – named as guardian of the Watson boys in the year prior – shows up in the 1850 census in Scituate, RI, where he ran the “poor asylum” there. No one surnamed Watson was listed among his charges.

We note that Benjamin R. Hoxie – whose name appears first in the guardianship document; and in whose household Henry C. and James R. Watson are found in 1850 – was the son-in-law of Allen Ellis. legal guardian for Willet Watson's minor children.

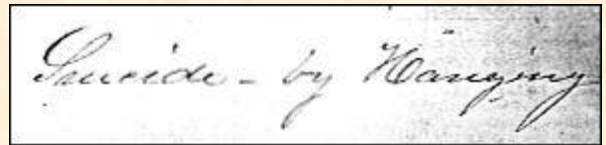
Sarah Ellen (Watson) Cory was enumerated with her husband Joseph in Voluntown, CT, just ahead of Jeffrey and Annie Watson's listing.

We don't find Willet Hazzard Watson in the 1850 census. He was probably still onboard the bark George Washington, a whaling vessel, which set sail from New Bedford, MA, in 1848.

Willet Watson shows up in West Greenwich in 1850 as a resident of the Poor Farm. He was listed in that census as a "basket maker" and "intemperate." The word *intemperate*, in this context, means that Willet was given to excessive consumption of alcohol.

Death of Willet Watson

Death records for West Greenwich indicate that in May 1858, Willet Watson, age 50, committed suicide by hanging.



His was the first death listed for the month of May, but no particular day was given. The next entry was for May 20th, so Willet likely died before then.

The lack of specificity for Willet's date of death suggests that he had been dead for some days before his body was discovered.

We do not know where Willet was buried. We'd guess he was given a pauper's grave in town.

Thoughts about Willet's life and death

Most suicide victims are people suffering from depression and/or a substance abuse disorder. We know that Willet Watson had a drinking problem. Given what we know about his life, chances are good that he was depressed – and had been so for a while.

The untimely death of Willet's wife Betsey might have triggered his downward spiral. Other losses probably added up, compounding his grief and contributing to a sense of hopelessness.

If we are correct that Willet was born in 1807, he would have been about 15 years old when Hazzard Watson, the man we believe to be his father, died. That loss would have been huge.

We have wondered why so few of Hazzard Watson's children are traceable. Did they all die young? That is a real possibility. Smallpox and other deadly diseases could decimate families in a matter of weeks if not days. If something like this happened to Willet's family of origin, the surviving members would have been traumatized.

After Betsey's death, a number of Willet's older female relatives passed away. Why focus on them? Because they may have offered not just practical help but, crucially, emotional support.

Willet's grandmother, Abiah (Young) Watson, died around 1843, possibly prompting Willet and family's move to the town poor farm. Hazzard's wife Amy, who we believe to be Willet's mother, died in or after 1850. Alice Watson, Hazzard's sister, died on May 7, 1855.

Jeffrey Watson's wife Joanna died on May 22, 1858 – *right around the same time Willet took his own life*. Since we don't know the exact date of Willet's death, we can't speculate as to whether his aunt Joanna's death was a last straw for Willet; or if the tragic news of Willet's death was too much for Joanna's elderly heart. Either way, the proximity of these deaths is worth noting.

We feel sadness as we contemplate Willet Watson's tragic end, but also a sense of wonder that he managed to stay alive for so long.

Summary

Willet Watson, likely son of [Hazzard⁵ Watson](#), was born around 1807, probably in West Greenwich, RI. Around 1827, Willet married Elizabeth "Betsey" Corey. Betsey was about the same age as Willet; and she *may have* come from neighboring Exeter, RI.

Willet and Betsey had at least seven children – two daughters and five sons. In 1840, possibly at or near the time of her youngest child's birth, Betsey died.

Willet and his children went back to West Greenwich to live. Late in 1843, Willet and family were removed to the Poor House in West Greenwich. In the fall of 1849, the town of West Greenwich placed most of the Watson children in guardianship and farmed them out to live with other families.

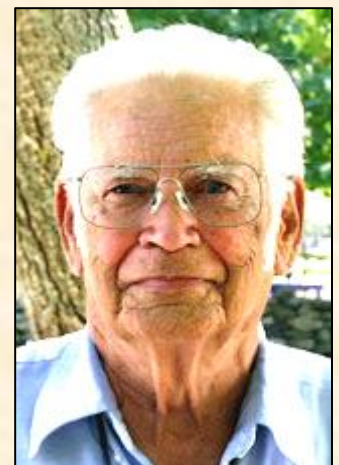
The 1850 census reveals that Willet, still living at the Poor House, was "intemperate" – he had a drinking problem. In May 1858, Willet took his own life. His place of burial is unknown.

Acknowledgment and Dedication

We dedicate this essay to the late Dr. Arthur Thomas Corey (1919-2018), great-grandson of Sarah Ellen Watson. Sarah was Willet Watson's daughter and the wife of Joseph Corey.

We found this photo of Art at a Cory Family Society web page regarding its [DNA project](#).

Art did family history research at the town hall level in Connecticut, gathering data from the original records he found. And he was generous in sharing his data on Sarah's family with us via a series of emails.



Both Art and I got DNA testing at [23andMe](#). We shared 21 centimorgans of DNA across one (half-identical) segment on chromosome #6 – the right amount of shared genetic material for 5th cousins once removed.

[Rest in peace, Art](#), and thanks again for everything.

More about Willet and Betsey's children

Willet Hazzard Watson (1829-1909)

Early on, Willet Hazzard Watson went by his middle name, possibly to avoid confusion with his father. By 1870, he was using his first name. We follow this pattern in our paragraphs, below.

New Bedford, Massachusetts

Records show that Hazzard Watson sailed out of New Bedford, MA, in 1853 on the ship Brandt. On that voyage, Hazzard worked as a *boatsteerer*.

“A boatsteerer in any whaleship was one of the most responsible members of the ship’s company. He had to be a skilled harpooneer to fasten on to the whale, and an able boat-handler to guide the frail craft while the boatheader (officer) took up the lance to kill the whale. Incompetence could result in injury or death.”

– Retrieved from the Internet Archive’s [Wayback Machine](#) on 7 May 2024.

Hazzard’s status as *boatsteerer* tells us that he had prior whaling experience.

We located his earlier voyage by using a common mistranscription of the surname Watson – “Walson” – at the New Bedford Whaling Museum’s [Whaling Crew List Database](#). And we got a hit, with yet another mistranscription: “Yazard Walson” sailed on the bark George Washington in 1848; rank *greenhand*. A greenhand is an inexperienced sailor.

This is why we don’t find Hazzard Watson in the 1850 census. He had already begun his early career as a mariner and was offshore when that census was taken.

On October 12, 1857, in New Bedford, MA, Willet Hazzard Watson married Jane PITTSLEY. Jane, born April 12, 1836 (calculated from her death record) in New York state, was the daughter of Benjamin Pittsley and likely his 2nd wife, [Watey](#).

Jane and Willet Hazzard Watson had one child:

Joseph Henry Watson, born February 20, 1856, in New Bedford, MA; died August 20, 1892, in Taunton, MA.

Joseph's birth preceded his parents' marriage by more than a year and a half. We think Hazzard might have returned from a two-year whaling voyage to discover that he was a father.

In the 1860 census for New Bedford, Hazzard Watson was listed as "Isaac."

Isaac? It has two syllables and an internal Z sound, just like *Hazzard*.

We're confident it's Hazzard. "Isaac" is the right age; born in Rhode Island; occupation Seaman. His wife Jane and son Joseph are with him, and their data is correct, too, except that Jane's birthplace is given as Rhode Island.

On August 20, 1861, in New Bedford, Hazzard Watson enlisted in the US Navy for a term of two years.

The record of Hazzard's enlistment tells us he was 31 years old; born in Exeter, RI; was 5 ft. 10 in. tall; and had dark eyes, hair, and complexion.

We assume this was for Civil War service. The record states that the enlistment was for "General Service," not "Coast Survey."

Hazzard's name turns up again in June 1863 in a Navy draft registry. We don't know if he got called back into service again.

Note: A man named Willard Hazard Watson, of Exeter *and* of North Kingstown, RI, served in Co. G, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery during the Civil War. *His name is very similar, but this is not our guy.* This fellow was much younger, unmarried, and living in Exeter, RI, when first registered for the draft in 1861. He mustered in on December 2, 1861, at North Kingstown; was taken prisoner of war from July 1863 to October 1865; and reported at Providence, RI, on November 23, 1865.

New London, Connecticut

Beginning in 1865, Willet Watson appears in a decade's worth of New London city directories and tax lists as a hotel keeper; a saloon keeper; and a retail liquor dealer. The one exception was in 1874, when Willet's directory listing referred to him as a farmer.

The 1870 census also shows Willet as a hotel keeper. Considering that he had boarders in his New Bedford, MA, household (per the 1860 census), this appears to have been a natural progression into the hospitality business.

The 1876 New London directory is the latest we find a listing for Willet, though it's possible he remained in New London longer.

Providence, Rhode Island

An 1879 Providence, RI, directory lists Willet H. Watson's boarding house at 252 N. Main St. On that same directory page, there's a Joseph H. Watson who could be Willet and Jane's son; he was old enough by that time to be on his own.

Massachusetts: Back and forth between Middleborough and Taunton

By 1880, Willet H. Watson and his wife Jane were living in Middleborough, MA. Willet's occupation, at age 50, was now "laborer."

Between 1880 and 1906 – the year Jane Watson died – and 1909, the year Willet died, they lived in Middleborough and Taunton.

City directories for 1883, 1885, 1889, and 1890 place Willet in Taunton. Taunton's 1891 directory tells us Willet had "removed to Middleborough."

Directories for 1895 and 1899 place Willet in Middleborough. His occupation had evolved from laborer to gardener.

We don't find Willet and Jane in the 1900 census. Perhaps they were busy moving from Middleborough to Taunton, and just missed the census taker.

City directories for 1901-1907 place Willet back in Taunton.

Jane (Pittsley) Watson died in Taunton, MA, on November 22, 1906, at age 70. She was [buried in Westville Cemetery](#) in Taunton.

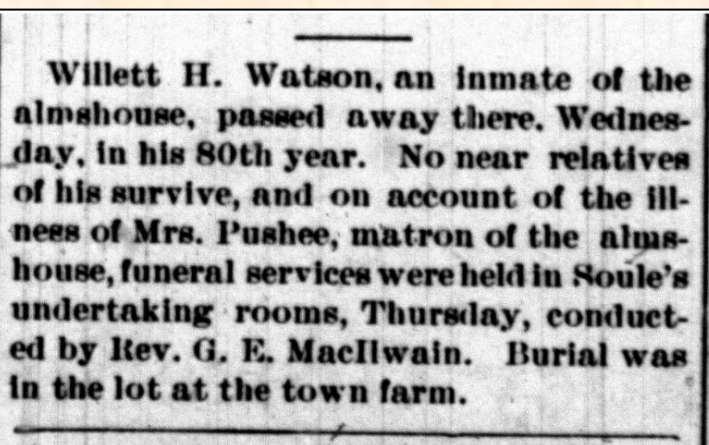
Willet was in Middleborough again probably by 1908. In the 1909 Middleborough directory, he was listed as "Willard W. Watson," with the notation that he was boarding at the poor farm (also known as the town farm).

Willet Hazzard Watson died on June 9, 1909, at the Middleborough town farm. He was laid to rest in the burial ground there. From the Middleborough Librarian: "A number of graves are still there on the east side of the railroad track on Wood Street near the bridge."

Willet's obituary appeared in the *Middleboro Gazette* on June 11, 1909, page 2. The image copy of that obit, shown at right, was added to Willet's [memorial page](#) by Find a Grave contributor Sarah D.

Willet and Jane Watson's descendants

Joseph Henry Watson (1856-1892) predeceased both of his parents, but not before marrying and having children.



Willet H. Watson, an inmate of the almshouse, passed away there, Wednesday, in his 80th year. No near relatives of his survive, and on account of the illness of Mrs. Pushee, matron of the almshouse, funeral services were held in Soule's undertaking rooms, Thursday, conducted by Rev. G. E. MacIlwain. Burial was in the lot at the town farm.

He first married Arlena R. SMITH on May 31, 1883, in Taunton, MA. Arlena, born August 7, 1868, in Taunton, was the daughter of Charles Herman Smith and his wife Johanna Fredericka Deitch. Arlena died July 9, 1891, in Taunton.

Joseph's second marriage, to Lucinda J. MACOMBER, was brief because Joseph died soon after. They wed on June 24, 1892, in Taunton; Joseph died on August 20, 1892, in Taunton.

Lucinda, born about 1845 in Taunton, was the daughter of Elias & Thankful Macomber. Joseph and Lucinda did not have children together.

Children of Joseph & Arlena (Smith) Watson are:

1. **Geneva Arlene Watson**, born March 27, 1885, in Taunton, MA. She married Louis Flibotte Jr., on February 24, 1902, in Attleborough, MA. Louis was born July 11, 1884, in Taunton, MA.
2. **Richard Henry Watson**, born April 8, 1888, in Taunton, MA; died March 22, 1949, in Maple Shade, Burlington county, NJ.

Richard Henry Watson married Catherine Elizabeth TREANOR on June 4, 1911, in Boston, MA. Catherine was the daughter of Owen Treanor and Catherine Rafferty. She was born January 19, 1889, in Clogher, County Tyrone, Ireland; and died May 24, 1966 in Maple Shade, Burlington county, NJ.

Children of Richard H. and Catherine (Treanor) Watson are:

- i. **Richard James Watson**, born October 14, 1913, in Fremont, Sandusky county, Ohio; died in Berlin, Camden county, NJ.
- ii. **Catherine M. Watson**, born August 24, 1914, in Boston, MA; died August 7, 1937, in Maple Shade, Burlington county, NJ.
- iii. **Paul Ernest Watson**, born April 25, 1917, in Boston, MA; died March 1975 in Ashland, MA.
- iv. **Pauline Margaret Watson**, born November 26, 1919, in Jamaica Plain, MA; died May 6, 1986, in Cherry Hill, Camden county, NJ.
- v. **Anita Rose Watson**, born February 11, 1923, in Boston, MA; died February 12, 2008, in Vero Beach, Indian River county, FL.

Later generations of this family include these surnames:

DiDOMENICO; DOWNS; LEVANDOSKI; McINTOSH; McKITTRICK; NEMO; POHUBKA; ROBLES; ROCKHILL; TOOLE; TORCHIE; and TRACY.

We thank Pastor Steven G. Rockhill for sharing his research with us, much of which we used here.

Sarah Ellen (Watson) Corey (1831-1908)

Our knowledge of Sarah comes mostly from census records and from research shared by Arthur T. Corey, her great-grandson. Art commented to us in an email about the spelling of his surname:

“Incidentally, the spelling ‘Cory’ or ‘Corey’ is not significant. In fact, I have found the name spelled both ways on the same document referring to the same person. My own father spelled his name ‘Cory’ when my older brother was born. He later changed the spelling to ‘Corey,’ because he wanted to be sure he could inherit his mother’s substantial estate.”

We have found no record of Sarah’s birth. Her death record gives her birth place as “Essex, RI” – a nonexistent place. Given that her older brother Willet Hazzard Watson was born in Exeter, RI, likely Sarah was born there, too.

Voluntown

Our first glimpse of Sarah is in the record of her marriage: On December 8, 1849, in Voluntown, Connecticut, Sarah married Joseph COREY.

Joseph, the son of Martin C. Corey and Elizabeth Willcox, was born between 1819 and 1821, probably in Rhode Island. (Joseph’s death record gives his birth place as Voluntown, CT; but his marriage registration and more than one census record say he was born in Rhode Island.)

We have no idea if Sarah’s husband Joseph Corey was somehow related to Sarah’s mother, Betsey Corey. We wouldn’t be surprised if they were.

Our second glimpse of Sarah is in the 1850 census, which identifies Sarah (Watson) Corey as a “person over 20 years of age who cannot read & write.” She was only 18 years old at the time; but point taken.

Sarah and Joseph were [enumerated](#) immediately ahead of Jeffrey Watson.

Art Corey wrote at a Cory Family Society [webpage](#): “It may be significant that Joseph and Jeffrey were next-door neighbors in Voluntown. My guess is that Joseph was working on the Watson farm and that they both came from the same place in RI.”

We know now that Jeffrey and Annie Watson were living in 1850 on a farm that they didn’t own. The property had been purchased on behalf of their grandsons Nehemiah and Elhanan W. Watson Jr. This is explained in “[Estate Money](#)” in **The WATSON Family of West Greenwich, Rhode Island, Part Three**.

We think that Jeffrey and Annie Watson brought Sarah to live with them in Voluntown, probably when Willet Watson and his children were “removed” to the Poor House in

West Greenwich, RI, in 1843. Life at the Poor House would have been dangerous for a young girl.

According to the 1900 census, Sarah had given birth to twelve children, only four of whom were then living. We have found the names of seven of those children.

Sarah and Joseph Corey's descendants

1. **Lydia A. Corey**, born likely in September 1850, probably in Voluntown; died May 18, 1907 in New London, CT. Circa 1868, Lydia married Irish immigrant Edward CODY. They had four children (surname Cody): Amy; Edward F.; William F.; and Royce G.
2. **Orra J. Corey**, born circa 1852, probably in Voluntown. This daughter likely died prior to 1870.
3. **Joseph Henry Corey**, born August 23, 1856, in Voluntown. He died April 23, 1926, in the village of Pawcatuck, Stonington, CT. *This son went by his middle name.* On June 14, 1882, in Stonington, CT, Henry married Irish immigrant Ellen CRONIN of Milltown, CT. Henry and Ellen had two children: [Daniel P. Corey \(1883-1970\)](#); and [Mary Ellen Corey \(1885-1896\)](#). Daniel P. Corey was the father of Dr. Arthur Thomas Corey, to whom we have dedicated this essay.
4. **Axa A. Corey**, born in February 1859, almost certainly in either Windham or New London county, CT; died February 4, 1936, in Stonington, CT. *This daughter used the nickname Axie; it's what appears on her headstone.* Around 1877, Axie married Charles H. FULLER (1851-1921). Axie and Charles had two children: A daughter who was born and died in 1894; and son [Norman Charles Fuller \(1896-1955\)](#).
5. **Emma J. Corey**, born 1866 in Voluntown; died February 16, 1881, in Ledyard, CT, aged 14 years. Cause of death was cerebrospinal meningitis.
6. **Frank Corey**, born circa 1876, likely in Voluntown; died probably after 1900. In the 1880 census, he is listed with no middle initial. Some folks think this son is Frank Lillebridge Corey, who married Eunice Emeline Ingraham. We have a nagging feeling about the available data and don't necessarily agree.
7. **Bertha E. Corey**, born 1878; died 1896. This info is from the gravestone she shares with Joseph and Sarah (Watson) Corey.

We note that Bertha was born when Sarah would have been 45 years old. Either Sarah Corey had more fertile years than average; or this child was actually a granddaughter.

The 1860 census shows Joseph and Sarah Corey and their young family living in Plainfield, CT. Their move from Voluntown is unsurprising, given that the farm where they lived near Jeffrey Watson was sold between June 1857 and March 1858. They were back in Voluntown by 1866, where daughter Emma was born.

Census records tell us that Joseph Corey was a farm laborer – he worked on other people's farms. The 1870 census lists Joseph and family just before Henry Wylie, a wealthy Voluntown

farmer. There's a decent chance Joseph worked on the Wylie farm. Other near neighbors include Asa Gates and Seth Brown.

An 1868 historical map of Voluntown shows where Joseph Corey lived, close by these people.



The Wylie School – labeled in the above map to the left of H. Wylie's name – is located at 531 Ekonk Hill Road in Voluntown. It was built in 1856 on land donated by Henry Wylie.

The above map was obtained at a [web page](#) associated with the University of Connecticut Library Map and Geographic Information Center's [historical map collection](#). The image we use here is excerpted from the full map.

If we assume that daughter Emma was living with her parents when she died in Ledyard in February 1881, this suggests that Joseph and Sarah moved from Voluntown to Ledyard soon after the 1880 census was taken. Art Corey believed that Joseph and Sarah moved to Ledyard in part to be near their daughter Axie and son-in-law Charles Fuller.

Joseph Corey died on May 12, 1887, in Ledyard. He was [laid to rest](#) in Gales Ferry Cemetery, Ledyard, CT.

From Art Corey's notes:

Death records in Ledyard Town Hall show:

Joseph died May 12, 1887 of T.B. age 68, b. 1819 (probably actually 1821), birthplace Voluntown, CT; buried at Gales Ferry Cemetery. Note: Ledyard Town Hall is about 10

miles south of Voluntown – both are now in New London County. I calculated the birth date of 1821 for Joseph from his age given on several census records, and from his age when married in 1849.

The 1900 census shows Sarah living with Axie and Charles and their son Norman. They resided in Uncasville, a village in Montville, CT, just west of Ledyard. Around 1904, Charles and Axie relocated to the village of Mystic, CT, on the Stonington side; and they brought Sarah with them.

Sarah (Watson) Corey died on February 5, 1908, in Mystic, at the Church Street home she shared with the Fullers. She was [buried](#) with Joseph in Gales Ferry Cemetery.

From Art Corey's notes:

Death records in Stonington Town Hall show Sarah Ellen (Watson) Corey died suddenly of heart disease in Mystic (where she was living) on Feb. 5, 1908, age 76, 1 mo., 11 days. Her birth date was given as Dec, 14, 1831, in Essex, RI (probably Exeter, as there is no Essex in RI).

In Gales Ferry Cemetery, a single large tombstone bears Corey and Fuller names. On one side:

Joseph Corey (1819-1887)
Sarah E. Corey (1832-1908)
Bertha E. Corey (1878-1896)

On the opposite side:

Charles H. Fuller (1851-1921)
Axie A. Fuller (1859-1936)
Infant daughter (1894-1894)

An Understandable Error

Per Art Corey, Sarah's death record names her mother as Betsy *Wilcox* rather than Betsey Corey. We find that in her obituary, too:

“Mrs. Sarah Ellen Corey, widow of Joseph Corey, died suddenly Wednesday afternoon at the home of her son-in-law, Charles Fuller, in Church street. She was taken with a sinking spell and expired on a couch without the slightest warning and before medical assistance could be summoned. Deputy Medical Examiner George D. Stanton of Stonington was

• **Mrs. Sarah E. Corey Stricken.**
Mrs. Sarah Ellen Corey, widow of Joseph Corey, died suddenly Wednesday afternoon at the home of her son-in-law, Charles Fuller, in Church street. She was taken with a sinking spell and expired on a couch without the slightest warning and before medical assistance could be summoned. Deputy Medical Examiner George D. Stanton of Stonington was called in and gave permission for the removal of the body. Mrs. Corey was born 76 years ago last December to Willetts and Betsy (Wilcox) Watson. She had been a resident of Mystic about three years. The funeral will be held Saturday morning at 10 o'clock and will be conducted by Rev. Welcome E. Bates, pastor of the Union Baptist church.

called in and gave permission for the removal of the body. Mrs. Corey was born 76 years ago last December to Willetts and Betsy (Wilcox) Watson. She had been a resident of Mystic about three years. The funeral will be held Saturday morning at 10 o'clock and will be conducted by Rev. Welcome E. Bates, pastor of the Union Baptist church." — *The Day*, New London, CT; February 6, 1906, pg. 3

Whoever provided the information for Sarah's death record and obituary – we'd guess Axie and/or Charles Fuller – misremembered Sarah's mother's maiden name for a simple reason: It was very similar to Joseph Corey's mother's maiden name. Joseph Corey's mother was Elizabeth "Betsy" (Wilcox) Corey. Sarah's mother was Elizabeth "Betsey" (Corey) Watson.

In other words, both of Axie (Corey) Fuller's grandmothers were named Betsey Corey – one before marriage, the other after. It was easy to confuse one for the other.

The newspaper notice of Sarah's burial included mention of her brother John Willet Watson Jr.:

Former Resident Buried Here.
The remains of Mrs. Sarah E. Corey, widow of Joseph Corey, whose sudden death occurred at her home in Mystic Wednesday, were brought to the village Saturday afternoon for interment in the Gale's Ferry cemetery. Mrs. Corey was a sister of John Watson and resided several years ago near the Stoddard district school in the Allyn's Point section.

"The remains of Mrs. Sarah E. Corey, widow of Joseph Corey, whose sudden death occurred at her home in Mystic Wednesday, were brought to the village Saturday afternoon for interment in the Gale's Ferry cemetery. Mrs. Corey was a sister of John Watson and resided several years ago near the Stoddard district school in the Allyn's Point

section." — *The Day*, New London, CT; February 11, 1906, pg. 2

Sarah's brother John Willet Watson Jr.'s death record names his parents as Willet Watson and Betsey Corey. And brother Willet Hazard Watson's death record names his parents as John Watson and Betsey Corey. For them, there wasn't a surfeit of women with near-identical names.

John Willet Watson Jr. (1833-1917)

John Jr.'s section ended up exceeding 30 pages, so we saved it as a separate PDF file which you can access via this link: [john.w.watson.jr 1833-1917](#)

Charles Henry Watson (~1837 – ~1863)

Charles Henry Watson's life was short. The scant paper trail he left behind doesn't tell us much.

In the 1850 census, he appears as Henry C. Watson. Other records list him as Charles H. Watson. His birth name probably was Charles Henry.

In the record of his daughter Rosetta's marriage, he was named as Henry Watson – which suggests he went by his middle name.

Enumerated in 1850 as a 12-year-old, farmed out to an unrelated family as part of his guardianship arrangement, he may have asserted his preferred name.

We'll call him as Henry, except when referring to records that use his first name.

Henry's year and place of birth: He may have been born in 1837, in Rhode Island, almost certainly in West Greenwich. We know that Betsey Watson was due to give birth in October or November of that year (see section "1837," above).

Based on the age of his children, Henry probably got married around 1855. His bride was Amey Ann PLACE. Amey Ann, born in 1837 in Killingly, CT, was the daughter of James Place (~1807-1880?) and his wife Anna Mitchell (~1807-1850).

Henry Watson appears in the 1860 census twice:

On June 22, 1860, Henry – listed as *Charles H. Watson* – was living in Killingly, CT, his wife's hometown. Both he and Amey were noted as being 24 years old (likely incorrect). Henry's birth place: Rhode Island. Twin four-year-old girls, Rosetta and Maryetta Watson, lived with them. In the same house were James Place, 14-year-old Eliza Ann Place (Amey's father and sister), and a boarder named John Young.

On August 3, 1860, Henry – again listed as *Charles H. Watson* – was living in Thompson, CT. This time, both Henry and Amey were noted as being 22 years old (probably correct). Their girls were still four years old.

Henry and Amey's twin daughters, born in Killingly, were their only children. Available records suggest that only one of them, Rosetta, survived long enough to marry. Rosetta and her husband were childless, ending Henry's genetic line.

In both of his 1860 enumerations, Henry's occupation is listed as "Operative." This means he was a textile mill worker who operated looms and other machinery.

Death may have come for Henry during the Civil War.

We can't be sure that Willet Watson's son Henry is the same Charles H. Watson who enlisted in Rhode Island in 1861. But it's possible, because we find Amy and her daughters in Rhode Island in 1865.

Per the *Register of Rhode Island Volunteers 1861-1865* (database transcriptions found at Ancestry.com):

On September 4, 1861, Charles H. Watson enlisted in Battery D, 1st Light Artillery Rhode Island. *Coventry, RI*, was listed as his residence place.

Coventry abuts the Connecticut state line. It's not far from Killingly or Thompson. Charles H. Watson's muster-out date and place were given as February 19, 1863, in Hampton, VA, along with the remark that he had *died* [of] *disease*.

The National Park Service online database includes basic information on [Charles H. Watson](#) but does not include remarks about whether he survived the war.

In June 1863, Charles H. Watson's name shows up in a "consolidated list of soldiers subject to do military duty" in Rhode Island's Second Congressional District.

Charles H. Watson, of *Johnston, RI* (not Coventry as before), age 27, "operative," born in RI, married, serving with the 1st Artillery.

We don't know if Henry was already dead when this record was made; or if he lingered in hospital at Hampton, VA, before succumbing to disease. We do know that in early June 1865, Henry's older brother John W. Watson Jr. named his newborn son Charles Henry Watson.

In 1865, Amy and her 9-year-old daughters were enumerated in Warwick, RI, living in the same house with her brother Henry B. Place, his wife and son; their father James Place; and a man named Joel Henrys. Amey's occupation: "Works in Mill." Joel's occupation: "Woolen Mill."

The HENRYs surname was applied to Amey and her girls. Had Amey gotten remarried? Apparently.

On June 2, 1865, in Warwick, RI, Joel HENRYs got married for the first time. His bride's name was Emma A. GRAHAM. This was a second marriage for Emma, whose birthplace was Killingly, CT (just like Amey), and whose parents were named James and Hannah.

Where the surname *Graham* came from, we have just one guess: If this marriage record was copied from the original, errors were made in the process. But everything else more or less tracks. Amy became *Emma*; her mother Anna became *Hannah*. This marriage record shows Amy to be a couple of years older than Joel, which (more or less) corresponds to their ages as listed in the 1865 RI state census.

Five years later, Joel Henrys is gone. Divorced? Dead? We don't know, because we can't find him anywhere.

In 1870 Amey and her 14-year-old girls were enumerated in North Providence, RI, living in the household of 51-year-old Henry J. Rose. While old Henry Rose "work[ed] at farming," Amey and daughters Rosetta and Marietta worked in a cotton mill.

In this census listing, the ROSE surname was applied to Amey and her girls.

Had Amey married Mr. Rose? We find no marriage record for Amey and Henry J. Rose. Also, we find no mention of Henry J. Rose either before or after the 1870 census.

The 1870 census gives us our last glimpse of daughter Marietta, who then disappears from the record.

On August 13, 1873, in North Providence, RI, daughter Rosetta married Joseph TURNER (1852-1936). Joseph, a farmer, was born in England, the son of John and Mary Turner. As mentioned earlier, Joseph and Rosetta had no children.

The 1875 RI state census shows Amey A. *Watson* living with her brother Edward B. Place in North Providence. Both worked at textile mill jobs.

In 1875 Joseph and Rosetta Turner were living in Johnston, RI. Rosetta's maternal grandfather James Place and uncle Lucian Place lived next door. People surnamed Briggs boarded in the Turner household – folks who were related to the man Amey would marry next.

On May 17, 1877, in Smithfield, RI, Amey A. *Watson* married Isaac L. BRIGGS.

Isaac, an “operative,” was born circa 1848 in Johnston, RI, the son of Stephen Briggs (~1812-aft 1880) and his wife Harriet C. Cowen (1825-1893?). This marriage was noted as being the first for each – which, in Amey's case, we know is incorrect. Amey's age at this marriage was given as 28, which knocked eleven years off her true age. Both were residents of Smithfield at the time they wed.

The 1880 census shows Isaac and Amey living in Johnston, RI. He worked in a cotton mill; she kept house. We don't find either of them in the 1900 census.

A 1904 city directory for Fall River, MA, includes a listing for *Amy* Briggs, widow of Isaac L., boarding at 169 Wilson Road. That address is where her daughter Rosetta and son-in-law Joseph Turner lived. Joseph was now a grocer with his own store in Fall River.

The 1910 and 1920 censuses show Amey living in Fall River with Joseph and Rosetta Turner.

Amey Ann (Place) (Watson) (Henrys) Briggs died in Fall River in 1927. She is [buried](#) in Oak Grove Cemetery in Fall River, MA.

Joseph Turner died in December 1936. Rosetta passed away a few months later, in February 1937. She was [laid to rest](#) with Joseph in Oak Grove Cemetery, where Rosetta's mother's name is included on their [shared headstone](#) (photo by Find a Grave member “me pac”).

George Perry Watson (~1839-1915)

George Perry Watson was born in West Greenwich, RI. Given that he was eleven years old when enumerated in 1850, he probably was born circa 1839. Subsequent records mostly show him getting older and older over time, making it impossible to confirm his year of birth.

Our first glimpse of George Perry Watson is in 1849, when the town of West Greenwich, RI, appointed Allen Ellis as guardian to him and some of his siblings. That guardianship document refers to him as Perry, telling us he went by his middle name. In all census records but one (1900), he is listed as George P. Watson.

In the 1850 census, 11-year-old Perry was living in the West Greenwich household of Robert and Phebe Hall.

Perry was, in fact, *farmed out*: The Hall family hosted Perry less to provide him with a decent home (and a proper education), more to benefit from his labor on their farm. Perhaps it was better than life in West Greenwich's Poor House/Town Farm where Perry, his siblings, and their father were taken in 1843. The downside was that he was separated from his family. (Brothers Henry and Riley were placed together in a different household.)

In 1860, Perry must have been on the move, because we don't find him anywhere in that year's census.

Yes, we've seen the 1860 listing for 20-year-old George Watson living in Phebe Sherman's Providence, RI, boardinghouse. *That* George Watson worked as a clerk. George Perry Watson worked as a farm laborer pretty much his whole life. We doubt he ever took a job requiring clerical skills.

On January 6, 1861, in Glocester, RI, Perry married Harriet Ann (BROMLEY) REED. At the time of their marriage, Perry was a resident of East Greenwich, RI; Harriet was living in Lisbon, CT.

Harriet was born in Preston, CT, in June 1832, the daughter of Joseph Bromley (1805-1883) and his wife Abigail Wright (1811-1870). She also was the widow of William REED (1828-?), whom she married in Griswold, CT, on April 9, 1848. Harriet and William Reed had at least one surviving child, daughter Sarah J. Reed (1849-aft 1920), who married Mr. PIERCE.

George and Harriet Watson had four children together:

1. **George Oliver Watson**, born January 1862 in Connecticut; died March 8, 1935, in Voluntown, CT. Around 1880, George O. married Ida A. FENNER (Dec. 1855 – Feb. 20, 1903). Ida was born in Sterling, CT, the daughter of Jeremiah Lillibridge Barber Fenner (1829-1899) and his wife Polly Ann Brown (1838-1875). George and Ida had two children, Daisy Ann Watson (March 30, 1884 – July 31, 1973) and John Willet Watson (January 31, 1886 – January 15, 1897). More about them later.

2. **Francis R. "Frank" Watson** (April 1864 – 3 March 1937).

Per census records: By 1900, Frank was married and had been so for ten years – but no wife is living with him. In 1910 Frank was listed as divorced; by 1920, he was single. In

1930 he was listed as widowed. We still don't know who Frank married, or if he had children.

3. **John W. Watson** (1866-1958), born in Woodstock, CT. (We're guessing the W stands for Willet.) On May 31, 1886, John married Mary MAHER (1862-1954), an immigrant from Tipperary, Ireland. John and Mary had no biological children; but sometime in or after 1900, they adopted Mary's niece, Adella Shea (1891-1965) and gave her their name. [Adella](#) married Caleb Vinton Benjamin (1891-1977) of South Windsor, CT, where the Watsons were living.

4. **Angenette (or Ann Jeanette) L. Watson** (1868-1877) appears in the 1870 census at age 2, living with her family in Woodstock, CT. A brief [transcription](#) of a record of her death in Woodstock in 1877 is found at FamilySearch.org.

In 1870, Perry, Harriet, and their family were living in Woodstock, CT, where Perry worked as a farm laborer. He had no real-estate valuation in that census year, but his personal estate was valued at \$100.

This marriage fell apart after 1870. It's possible that the death of their only daughter in 1877 contributed to the breakup.

Perry married again. On June 18, 1879, in North Kingstown, RI, George *Pery* Watson wed Abby Jane GREENE. Abby was born circa 1852 in Exeter, RI, the daughter of Alexander Greene.

The record of this marriage confirms for us that this is, indeed, George Perry Watson: The groom was born in West Greenwich, RI, to John & Betsy Watson. Both Perry and Abby were residents of North Kingstown at the time.

In 1880, Perry was enumerated in Ledyard, CT, where he worked as a farm laborer and resided in the household of George W. Hurlbutt. Perry was listed as married, but Abby wasn't with him. We can't find Abby anywhere.

The very next year, Perry was living in Norwich, CT – working as a “farm hand” and boarding in the section of town called East Great Plain, per the 1881 Norwich city directory.

Perry got married a third time. On January 1, 1882, in Norwich, CT, he wed Sarah Ann (CASWELL) CUSHING (1839-1896).

Sarah was born in 1839 in Preston, CT, the daughter of Joshua Caswell and his wife Abby Brown. Circa 1857 Sarah married Frederick Cushing and bore him at least four children. By 1870 Sarah and her children were living with Sarah's mother Abby. The record of Sarah's marriage to Perry says she was a widow.

This marriage was short-lived.

On April 17, 1886, in Groton, CT, Sarah *Cushing* married Robert Reuben WILKINSON (1835-1919). (We see from other people's research that Reuben may have been Sarah's first cousin.)

Sarah (Caswell) (Cushing) (Watson) Wilkinson died in Great Barrington, MA, on July 24, 1896. She was [laid to rest](#) in Elm Grove Cemetery in Mystic, Stonington, CT.

Reuben [joined her there](#) in 1919.

Sarah's gravestone bears this inscription:

In Loving Memory of
Sarah Ann Caswell
wife of
Reuben Wilkinson
Formerly Wife of
Frederick Cushing
1839 – 1896

Sarah's idea of resting in peace did not involve the name Watson.

In 1900 we find Perry living alone in Voluntown, CT. His occupation was "day laborer on [a] farm." We suspect someone other than Perry himself supplied the info when the census taker came calling:

Perry was listed as 68 years old (the enumerator writing 1832 as Perry's year of birth, which we believe is wrong). In the box where Perry's birth month should have been written, the enumerator simply drew a line. Whoever talked to the enumerator also said that Perry was a married man.

All this, combined with the fact that he was listed as Perry, not as George P., supports the notion that Perry didn't provide his own info to the enumerator.

By 1910, Perry was living in the household of Horace E. and Elizabeth Young in Sterling, CT. He was listed as a hired man, still working as a farm laborer – probably for Horace Young. Perry's marital status was noted as widowed.

George Perry Watson died in Sterling, CT, on March 16, 1915. We do not know where he was buried.

The other half of this story naturally involves Harriet, Perry's first wife. Harriet married again after she and Perry split up. We find their sons living with her in various census years.

On April 26, 1880, Harriet Ann *Reed* and William R. COLE, both residents of Voluntown, CT, got married in Hopkinton, RI. The record of this marriage notes that this was a third marriage for William – and only the *second* for Harriet, which we know isn't true. But she chose to

revert to her first husband's surname on this occasion. (This marriage record incorrectly gives William the middle initial B.)

William R. Cole (1826-1905) was born in Sterling, CT, the son of [Ephraim Cole](#) and his wife [Anna](#) (whose maiden name *may have been* Guile).

William's 1st wife was [Lucy B. Popple](#) (~1830-1858), whom he married on July 4, 1847, in Sterling, CT.

William's 2nd wife was [Ann Maria Peirg](#) (~1839-1876), whom he married circa 1859. They had two sons – Lloyd E. and Charles.

In 1880, William and Harriet were living in Voluntown, CT. Their household included William's 8-year-old son Charles from his second marriage. In 1885, William, Harriet, and Charles were residents of Richmond, RI.

The 1900 census shows William and Harriet, now empty-nesters, living in Griswold, CT.

William R. Cole died on April 1, 1905, in Voluntown, CT. He is [buried](#) in Robbins Cemetery in Voluntown.

Harriet was still in Voluntown in 1910. Her sons Frank (divorced) and George (widowed) lived with her. This census reveals something remarkable: Harriet had given birth to eleven children, five of whom were alive in 1910.

We can name four of those living children: Sarah J. (Reed) Pierce, Harriet's daughter from her first marriage; and Harriet's three sons with Perry Watson – George O., Frank R., and John W.

Who was Harriet's fifth surviving child in 1910? Charles Cole was Harriet's stepson. Either she counted him by accident; or she had another living child, unknown to us, from her first marriage to William Reed.

In 1920 we find Harriet living in Milford, CT, in the household of her youngest son, John W. Watson. Harriet died in Milford, CT, on November 17, 1920. Per her obituary in the *Norwich Bulletin*, Harriet was buried in Robbins Cemetery in Voluntown. We are guessing she was laid to rest with her third husband, William R. Cole.

Perry and Harriet have biological descendants through their son George O. Watson and his wife, Ida A. Fenner.

The 1880 census tells us something interesting about Ida Fenner: Both she and her brother [James](#) were deaf. This was noted on their record in the 1880 population schedule as well as on a supplemental schedule listing people who were "deaf-mutes."

George and Ida had two children, daughter Daisy A. and son John Willet Watson. We don't know if either of them were hearing-impaired. Only Daisy lived long enough to marry and have a child.

George and Ida's son John died just a couple of weeks shy of his eleventh birthday. He is [buried](#) in Gallup Cemetery in Sterling, CT. We [wrote about](#) John's burial in Part 3 of *The Watson Family of West Greenwich, Rhode Island*:

Records in the Sterling, CT, Town Hall tell us that John Willet Watson was born in Sterling on January 31, 1886 – which differs by one day with what John's gravestone says (Feb. 1, 1886). The date of death on John's gravestone agrees with the record of his death in Sterling – Jan. 15, 1897, at age 10.”

The medical examiner's report tells us that young John was “found dead” in Sterling on January 15, 1897. Nathaniel Gallup, a neighbor, is named as the “person giving notice.” John's cause of death was described as “strangulation by getting caught between a box and limb of a tree while playing, being accidental.” (John may have been *in* that box, sliding down a snowy hill dotted with trees.)

Ida (Fenner) Watson died in Sterling on February 20, 1903. George O. Watson died March 8, 1935, in Voluntown, CT. We don't know where they are buried; but we hope it was in Gallup Cemetery with their son.

On April 12, 1906, in Stafford, CT, George and Ida's daughter Daisy Ann married Louis Napoleon “Poley” LANAGAN (February 1874 – January 9, 1950). Napoleon was the son of Canadian-born Albert Lanagan (1852-1900) and his wife Jane Sorel (1851-1941).

Napoleon and Daisy made their home in Stafford Springs, CT. They had one child, son [Albert George Lanagan](#) (1907-1966). Albert G. Lanagan married [Mary Rose BONNEAU](#) (1910-1993) with whom he had three sons and three daughters, some of whom are still living.

Napoleon died on January 9, 1950, in Stafford Springs, CT. He was [buried](#) in Stafford Springs Cemetery in Stafford Springs.

On May 12, 1956, in Stafford, CT, Daisy (Watson) Lanagan married [Walter Martin McHale](#) (1891-1964).

Daisy Ann (Watson) (Lanagan) McHale passed away in Stafford Springs on July 31, 1973. She was [laid to rest](#) with her first husband, Louis Napoleon Lanagan, in Stafford Springs Cemetery in Stafford Springs, CT.

James Riley Watson (1840-1915)

James Riley Watson was born in Connecticut, probably in Voluntown, likely in May 1840. His mother Betsey *may have* died giving birth to him. In most census records, he is listed as James R. Watson.

Our first glimpse of James Riley is in 1849, when the town of West Greenwich, RI, appointed Allen Ellis as guardian to him and some of his siblings. That guardianship document refers to him as Riley, telling us he went by his middle name.

The 1850 census shows Riley, age 9, living in the West Greenwich household of Benjamin R. Hoxsie, “manufacturer” – the person who petitioned for the Watson children’s guardianship. Riley’s older brother Charles Henry also lived there.

By 1860, Riley was out of Rhode Island and back in Connecticut. He was 19 years old, a laborer, listed in that year’s census as living in the Voluntown household of Mary (Willcox) Sweet.

Civil War

Riley was still living in Voluntown when he enlisted on September 3, 1861. He joined Company F, [8th Connecticut Infantry Regiment](#), which was encamped at Hartford, CT, for a time before heading south. Private James R. Watson was formally mustered in on September 23, 1861.

Riley had a relative in Company F – Benjamin G. Watson of Griswold, CT, whose name appears as Benjamin *J.* in his service record. Benjamin was the son of [Alice Watson](#) (Hazzard Watson’s sister) and a first cousin to John Willet Watson, Riley’s father.

Riley named his only son Benjamin. We wonder if this was in honor of his 1st-cousin-once-removed comrade-in-arms.

The 8th Connecticut Regiment fought at the Battle of Antietam in Sharpsburg, MD, on September 17, 1862 – “the single bloodiest day in the history of the United States,” according to the National Park Service’s [overview](#) of this battle. Riley was injured in the line of duty that day – “wounded in the arm” – and taken prisoner by the Confederate forces.

Riley’s service record says he was paroled on October 6, 1862. That date might not be accurate. On September 26, 1862 – ten days ahead of Riley’s service record parole date – the *Hartford Courant* published an “Official List of the Casualties in the 8th, 11th, and 16th Regiments at the battle of Antietam Creek.” That list included James R. Watson of Co. F, 8th Regiment, who was wounded in the arm, “taken prisoner *and paroled.*”

Company F—Sergeant James Kilbourne, wrist, severely; Corporal Henry O. S. Soulding, head, slightly; Corp Andrew J. Kimball, shoulder, slightly; John Gently, ankle, severely; George Baldwin, arm, slightly, taken prisoner and paroled; Nelson Hemis, leg, slightly; Lewis P. Card, arm, severely; Isaac Culver, slightly, taken prisoner and paroled; Samuel Lewis, shoulder, severely; Ash Mann, leg, slightly; Wm Moffatt, ankle, severely; John O'Neil, cheek, slightly; Edward Parkhurst, arm, slightly; A. Dennison Thompson, foot, slightly; George Young, leg, slightly; Wm. Clark, leg, slightly; **James R. Watson, arm, taken prisoner and paroled.**

– *Hartford Courant*, Hartford, CT; September 26, 1862, page 2

According to Battlefields.org's glossary of Civil War terms, [parole](http://Battlefields.org) means:

“A pledge by a prisoner of war or a defeated soldier not to bear arms. When prisoners were returned to their own side during the War (in exchange for men their side had captured) the parole was no longer in effect and they were allowed to pick up their weapons and fight.”

Though we don't have the details on when Riley was returned to duty, we know that he re-enlisted on December 23, 1863.

The Civil War ended on April 9, 1865. Riley was mustered out on December 12, 1865, at Lynchburg, VA.

“The Eighth [Regiment] was with the 24th Corps, Army of the James in its final advance on Richmond in the spring of 1865. After Gen. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the Eighth moved to Lynchburg, Virginia, where it performed police and provost duties until it was mustered out of service December 12, 1865, serving a longer term than all but two other Connecticut regiments.” ([8th Connecticut Infantry Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8th_Connecticut_Infantry_Regiment), Wikipedia)

Post-War

Instead of returning to Connecticut, Riley Watson left Lynchburg and went to Georgia. (We find this extraordinary. Perhaps he didn't have anyone or anything waiting for him back in the Northeast.)

Four months and three days after his discharge from the Army, Riley got married.

His bride was Sarah J. (FREEMAN) NORTON (1835-1894), the widow of [William T. Norton](http://www.findagrave.com/entry/14484481) (1827-1863). Sarah, born in Wilkinson county, GA, on July 14, 1835, was the daughter of Jacob and Clarissa FREEMAN.

Riley and Sarah tied the knot in Dougherty county, GA, on April 15, 1866.

We'd guess they got married in the city of Albany, the county seat for Dougherty county, GA. It's where Sarah was living in 1860 with her first husband and family. Albany is about 500 miles southwest of Lynchburg. We're impressed by how quickly Riley accomplished all of this.

Of the four children Sarah had with her first husband, three of them survived to adulthood: Clara Louise (1855-1932); William (1856 – after 1880); and Samuel J. Norton (1862-1938).

Riley and Sarah had two children:

1. **Ellen Idella “Della” Watson** was born November 6, 1870, in Florida. She died December 25, 1936, in Nashville, TN. Della is [buried](#) in Willow Mount Cemetery in Nashville, Davidson co., TN.

On December 27, 1888, in Titusville, Brevard co., FL, Della married William R. EDWARDS (1859-?). They had one child, daughter Cora Virginia Edwards, born in July 1889; died December 24, 1928. Cora married James Edgar BLESSING (1866-1948).

We don't know what became of William R. Edwards.

On January 24, 1895, in Titusville, Brevard co., FL, Ellen Idella *Edwards* married William Thomas LINDSEY (May 5, 1871 – November 24, 1926). William was the son of James Erwin Lindsey (1842-1926) and his wife Martha Elizabeth Austin (1839-1920).

Della and William Lindsey had five children:

Edwin Earl Lindsey (1897-1974);
Sallie Lorene Lindsey (1899-1991);
James Paul Lindsey (1901-1918);
Clara Mae Lindsey (1905-?);
and Thomas Odell Lindsey (1909-1985).

2. **Benjamin Wilson Watson** was born May 24, 1876, probably in Titusville, Brevard co., FL. He died November 15, 1932, in Lynchburg, Campbell co., VA. Benjamin is [buried](#) in Longwood Cemetery in Bedford, Bedford co., VA.

Benjamin W. Watson was a veteran of the Spanish-American War, serving in Co. I, 3rd Regiment Volunteer Infantry. He was pensioned afterwards; and resided at a National Soldiers Home in Elizabeth City county, VA, between July 1923 and June 1931. (He had a number of health issues and disabilities at that time.)

Though Benjamin was noted in a Soldiers Home document as being single, the 1930 census recorded him as being widowed.

Benjamin's obituary in Lynchburg, VA, newspaper *News & Advance* said that he died at home. It named his surviving family as his wife Mrs. Annie Watson (about whom we know nothing); his sister Mrs. Della Lindsey; his half-sister Mrs. Clara Faber; and a half-brother erroneously named as S. J. Martin. That half-brother was Samuel J. *Norton*. It appears that Benjamin had no children.

Life in Florida

On August 10, 1870, the federal census taker found *James Watson*, farmer, and his family living in Welaka Precinct of Putnam county, FL. Living with Riley were his wife Sarah and his stepsons William and Samuel. Stepdaughter Clara was living in Volusia co., FL, in that census year.

This census noted that Riley couldn't read or write. This supports our notion that Riley's childhood guardian didn't bother to send him to school.

Riley Watson took advantage of the [Homestead Act of 1862](#) by applying for land in Florida. Records pertaining to [Riley's claim](#) can be found at the website of the General Land Office Records, which is associated with the US Dept. of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management.

On May 8, 1875, Riley was granted 80.26 acres in Brevard county, specifically "the south half of the north-west quarter of section four, in township twenty-two south of range thirty-five east of Tallahassee Meridian, in Florida, containing eighty acres and twenty-six hundredths of an acre."

Those acres were located in Titusville, less than a mile west of the Indian River and roughly where present-day Rock Pit Rd. meets South Street. For Riley and his family, this was a move of about eighty miles southeast of their previous residence in Welaka.

In 1880, Riley and his family were enumerated in Brevard co., FL, in the "district east of [the] St. Johns River." Given that the Homestead Act required one to live on and improve the land in order to claim title to it, they must have been living in Titusville.

At home with Riley and Sarah were stepson William Norton and children Della and Benjamin Watson. Riley's occupation was described in this census as "horticulturist."

On August 25, 1882, homestead certificate #1999 was issued to James R. Watson by the US federal government, under the authority of President Chester A. Arthur. Legally, that land now belonged to James Riley Watson.

The 1885 Florida state census finally and definitively places this Watson family in Titusville, Brevard co., FL. The head of the family is listed as F. A. Watson. This has to be James Riley Watson, because his household consisted of wife Sarah, children Della and Benjamin, and stepson Samuel Norton.

In this state census, Riley's occupation is noted as "Fruit G." That letter G almost certainly stands for *Grower*.

Riley's wife Sarah J. (Freeman) (Norton) Watson passed away on July 24, 1894. She was [laid to rest](#) in Oaklawn Memorial Gardens in Titusville, Brevard co., FL.

The notice of Sarah's death, published in the *East Coast Advocate* newspaper on July 27, 1894, said this (*italics* ours):

"—Died, on Tuesday, at 1:00 p.m., *at Sunbeam*, Mrs. J. R. Watson, one of the old settlers of this section, aged 60. Deceased's remains were interred at the Titusville Cemetery on Wednesday afternoon. The late Mrs. Watson was the mother of Mr. Sam Norton and Mrs. Lawrence Faber, and sister of Mrs. Robt. Morrow."

At first we thought Sarah died in the *Sunbeam* neighborhood of Jacksonville, Duval co., FL – which caused us to wonder what she was doing 125 miles north of Titusville. Then we found a local news item in a Titusville newspaper mentioning Riley (*italics* ours):

"Mr. J. R. Watson, *of Sunbeam*, unearthed a liveoak [sic] root this week that resembled very closely the back and neck of a goose, it being about a foot long and seven inches in diameter, and brought same into our office for inspection Wednesday. The root was found growing just below the surface of the ground."

— *The Florida Star*, Titusville, FL; 31

January 1902, pg. 1, column entitled "Current Local Laconics." (Here is a [link](#) to that page at the Library of Congress website.)

Mr. J. R. Watson, of Sunbeam, unearthed a liveoak root this week that resembled very closely the back and neck of a goose, it being about a foot long and seven inches in diameter, and brought same into our office for inspection Wednesday. The root was found growing just below the surface of the ground.

If it makes the front page of a Titusville newspaper, it has to be *very local* news.

A heartfelt eulogy for Sarah Watson, a transcription of which is posted at her [Find a Grave memorial page](#), was written by Minor S. Jones of Titusville, FL, and published in *The Florida Star* on July 27, 1894. Mr. Jones included these words: "To the writer the deceased was a devoted and constant friend."

We located Minor S. Jones in census records for Titusville. And we found another local item mentioning "Judge and Mrs. Minor S. Jones, Sunbeam" (*The Florida Star*, Titusville, FL; 21 June 1901, pg.1). The Joneses and the Watsons both lived in Sunbeam.

Serenaded Bride and Groom.
Indian River band tendered a serenade to Mr. John C. Jones and bride Tuesday night at the residence of Judge and Mrs. Minor S. Jones, Sunbeam, eleven of the band driving out about 8 o'clock to the judge's home. There they rendered a few of their choicest selections and were invited to partake of several kinds of cake, also several brands of fine wine and cigars. The affair was a most thoroughly enjoyable one to all present. The members of the band returned home about 10 o'clock.

We submit that Titusville once had a neighborhood known as Sunbeam, though we find no trace of it on any map. That's where Riley Watson's wife Sarah died.

On August 1, 1888, Riley filed his application for an invalid pension based on his Civil War service. He was granted a pension (certificate #879503) and received regular payments from the federal government for the remainder of his life.

In 1900, Riley Watson was retired and living with his stepson Samuel Norton and family in Titusville. By 1910, Samuel Norton was wifeless (it looks less to us like his spouse Jessie died; more like she went elsewhere). Samuel was making his living by running a pool room and taking in boarders. One of those boarders was his stepfather, "John" R. Watson.

James Riley Watson died in Titusville on August 13, 1915. On August 15th he was [buried](#) with his wife Sarah in Oaklawn Memorial Gardens in Titusville, Brevard co., FL.

Contributor Shawn Riley, who created the Find a Grave memorial pages for both James Riley Watson and his wife Sarah, posted an image of Riley Watson's death notice, published in the *East Coast Advocate* newspaper on August 27, 1915.

"DEATH OF MR. WATSON

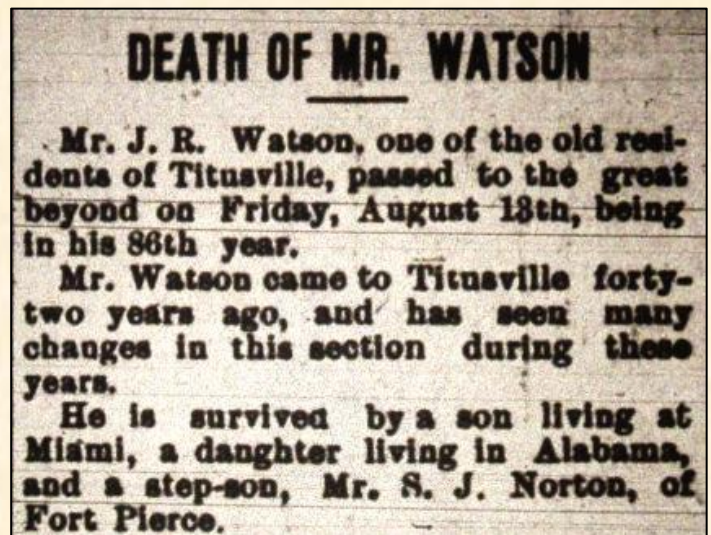
"Mr. J. R. Watson, one of the old residents of Titusville, passed to the great beyond on Friday, August 13th, being in his 86th year.

"Mr. Watson came to Titusville forty-two years ago, and has seen many changes in this section during those years.

"He is survived by a son living at Miami, a daughter living in Alabama, and a step-son, Mr. S. J. Norton, of Fort Pierce."

The remarks about when Riley came to Titusville suggest he settled there in 1873.

We are not surprised to find Riley's age at death inflated by a decade. We think he was born in 1840, as we described earlier. Riley's age as noted in censuses after 1860 have him getting older and older. By the time he died, Riley himself may have believed he was an octogenarian. In fact, Riley was 75 years old when he passed away.



Per his death certificate, Riley died of cerebral apoplexy brought on by heart failure. (Riley's death certificate has a lot of items left blank, including the *day* of his death. At least it tells us when he was buried.)

The dates of birth and death on James Riley Watson's gravestone – "1830 – 1900" – are both wrong. It should read "1840 – 1915." That said, we appreciate that someone honored Riley with a grave marker of his own.

We wish to acknowledge the work of Shawn Riley, both at [Find a Grave](#) and at [Ancestry.com](#); and the [Smith-Pufahl family tree](#) at Ancestry.com. These fellow family historians, having shared their research online, made our task of putting together the story of James Riley Watson a lot easier and more fun.

Information about James Riley Watson's Civil War service was obtained from:

State of Connecticut, Adjutant General's Office, and AGs Smith, Camp, and Barbour, and AAG White, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the Army and Navy of the United States during the War of the Rebellion*, Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood, and Brainard Company, 1889.

Report of Major Ward 8th CT Inf: Sept 22, 1862. See: [Maj J. Edward Ward's Official Report](#) online at Antietam on the Web (which also offers a [page for James Riley Watson](#)).

Resources

Ancestry.com <https://www.ancestry.com/>, our favorite source for census records.

Thomas R. Hazard, *Report on The Poor and Insane in Rhode Island; Made to the General Assembly at its January Session, 1851*, Providence: Joseph Knowles, State Printer, 1851.

On April 4, 2007, we found a transcription of Thomas R. Hazard's report and downloaded the PDF version from the Raytheon Employees Wildlife Habitat Committee (REWHC) website: http://rewhc.org/townfarmpai_docs.shtml. The links to this transcribed report still exist on that webpage but, sadly, are broken. However ...

A digital scanned copy of the report's publication is both available and downloadable at the website of the Rhode Island Secretary of State:

https://sosri.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/io_2c66e388-b35c-424d-9428-a539b730c3b2/

More on Thomas R. Hazard, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Robinson_Hazard:

"Owing to his extensive record as an outspoken champion of the rights of the 'insane poor,' Hazard was appointed by the state to conduct a survey of Rhode Island's poor houses and insane asylums. The *Report on the Poor and Insane in Rhode Island: Made to the General Assembly at its January Session, 1851* provided a detailed census of 'insane paupers' at thirty-three local facilities. The abuse of disabled Rhode Islanders in rural localities exposed in the report helped abolish state policies which treated mental illness as a crime."

We find reference to Thomas R. Hazard (1797-1886) in a *Rhode Island History* article about the anti-gallows movement in Rhode Island. In February 1852 the state succeeded in passing legislation abolishing capital punishment after years of heated debate. One of the champions of this campaign was Thomas Robinson Hazard, “not to be confused with pro-gallows Thomas Tillinghast Hazard who fought reform in the Senate.” Pro-gallows Thomas Tillinghast Hazard of West Greenwich was the same man who had [Benjamin Watson](#) incarcerated in 1821, allegedly for uttering threats against him.

“‘The Result May Be Glorious’—Anti-Gallows Movement in Rhode Island, 1838-1852,” by Philip English Mackey; *Rhode Island History*, Vol. 33: 1 (February 1974), published by the Rhode Island Historical Society, 110 Benevolent St, Providence, RI 02906.

A PDF version of this issue of *Rhode Island History* may be downloaded at this webpage: https://www.rihs.org/history_journal/rhode-island-history-journal-vol-33-february-1974/

West Greenwich Town Council Book # 7, page 131: Entry for September 20, 1829, regarding town assistance rendered to “Amey” Watson.

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

Rhode Island General Assembly – Prisoner/Judicial Petitions, Committee on, 1829-1862, ID: 01/13/C#00165, Rhode Island State Archives, 33 Broad St., Providence, RI 02903 (petition of Elizabeth [Betsey Corey] Watson).

Henry Bowen (1785-1867?) was RI Secretary of State from 1819 to 1849, per the website of the Rhode Island Historical Society – “[Bowen Family Papers](#).”

Benjamin Tinkham Marshall, *A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut* (New York City: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1922), Vol. 3, pg. 299.

"Rhode Island, Town Clerk, Vital and Town Records, 1630-1945," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QG1N-VBHM> : accessed 26 July 2021), **George Pery Watson and Abby Jane Greene**, 18 Jun 1879; citing **Marriage**, North Kingstown, Washington, Rhode Island, United States, Rhode Island State Archive, Providence City Archives, city and town clerk offices; FHL microfilm.

Willet Hazzard Watson’s and Jane (Pittsley) Watson’s dates of birth were calculated from their ages at death as given on their Massachusetts death records, using the utility at this website: <http://www.searchforancestors.com/utility/birthday.html>

Entries for Hazzard Watson and John W. Watson – sons of Willet & Betsey Watson – were found at the New Bedford Whaling Museum’s online searchable [Whaling Crew List Database](#).