William Penn Watson

Pioneer of 1849

compiled by Stephenie Flora
oregonpioneers.com

William Penn Watson
b. 18 Dec 1828 Morgan County, Illinois
d. 14 Apr 1910 Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California
buried Sunnyside Cemetery, Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California
s/o John Watson and Mary Johnson

m. 04 Jan 1852 Lafayette, Yamhill County, Oregon
Priscilla Patton [Pioneer of 1847]
b. 06 Apr 1833
d. 07 Oct 1924 Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California
buried Sunnyside Cemetery, Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California
d/o Matthew Patton and Polly Ann Grimes

1850: Yamhill County, Oregon Territory, November 9, 1850; Albert S. Alderman, 26, NY; Mary J., 20, IL; Priscilla Greenwood, 22, KY; Warren N. Vaugn, 28, NY; Wm P. Watson, 22, carpenter, IL

1860: Hillsboro PO, Washington County, Oregon, August 10, 1860; Watson [sic-William] P. Watson, 33, farmer, $6888 $500, IL; Priscilla, 27, IN; Mathew, 7, OR; John, 6, OR; Jane 4, OR

1870: Forest Grove PO, Washington County, Oregon, no date; Wm. P. Watson, 40, farmer, $8,000 $2,500, IL; Priscilla, 36, keeping house, IN; M. P., 17, attending school, OR; John W., 15, attending school, OR; Jane A., 14, attending school, OR; Thomas J., 9, at home, OR; Unitha G., 6, at home, OR

1880: Dalles Pct, Wasco County, Oregon, June 24, 1880; W. P. Watson, 51, head, farmer, IL KY KY; Priscilla, 46, wife, keeping house, IN MD MD; Matthew P., 27, son, farmer, OR IL IN; John W., 24, son, farmer, OR IL IN; Jane A., 22, dau, at home, OR IL IN; Thomas J., 17, son, OR IL IN; Unity G., 17, at home, OR IL IN

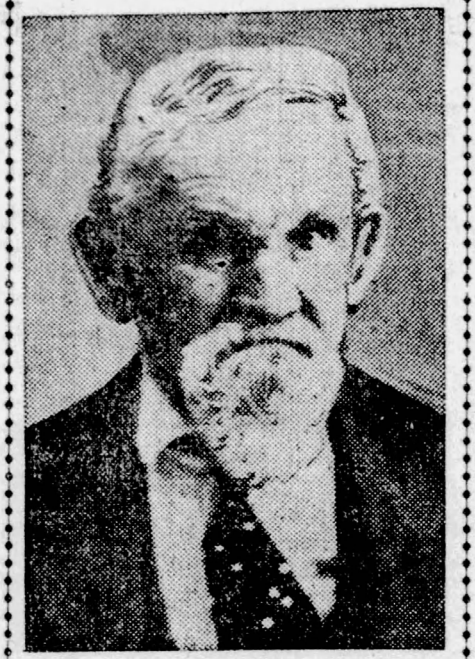
1900: Twp 3, Wasco County, Oregon, June 8, 1900; William P. Watson, Dec 1828, 71, m-49 yrs, IL KY KY, farmer; Priscilla, wife, Apr 1833, 67, m'd 19 yrs, 6-5 children, IN VA MD

WILLIAM P. WATSON DIES

Pioneer of Hood River Fails to Recover From Operation.

William Penn Watson, one of the early pioneers of Hood River and Portland, and said to have been the original orchardist of the Hood River Valley, died at his late residence in Long Beach, Cal., Thursday. He was 83 years old.

Mr. Watson never recovered from the shock of a serious operation which, about three months ago, was resorted to in an effort to prolong his life. Mr. and Mrs. Watson celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary January 4 last. Mrs. Watson is the daughter of the late Matthew



William Penn Watson, Pioneer Orchardist of Hood River, Who Died in California on Thursday.

Patton, who gave the land on which the Patton Home and the Patton Methodist Church now stand.

Mr. Watson is survived by his widow and the following children: Mrs. R. R. Erwin, M. P. Watson and T. J. Watson, of California, and Mrs. E. W. Rowe and John W. Watson, of Portland. There are 13 grand-children and a great-grandson.

[The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, Saturday, April 16, 1910, p. 14]

WM. PENN WATSON CALLED BY DEATH

Former Resident of Portland Dies at Ripe Age at Long Beach, Cal.

William Penn Watson, one of Oregon's most prominent citizens 20 years ago, died at Long Beach, Cal., yesterday from the effects of an operation which he was unable to stand at his advanced age. Mr. Watson was 84 years of age and was prominent in politics and in fair circles in this state. He was president of the state fair board a number of years.

Mr. Watson's death is the first one in the Watson family. Although married 60 years and the head of a family of 5 children, his death is the first bit of sorrow that his family has ever had. Besides his wife, five children, 13 grandchildren and one great grandchild survive him. He was a remarkably hale and healthy man all his life, being fond of outdoor life.

Up till four years ago Mr. Watson resided in Portland. He was born in Illinois, coming to Portland in 1847 with his wife. Here his family was raised. His children were John Watson of the Loewenberg & Going company, of Portlaind, Mrs. E. W. Rowe of Portland; Jesse Watson, Matthew Watson and Mrs. R. R. Irwin of Long Beach, Cal.

[The Oregon Daily Journal, Portland, Oregon, Friday, April 15, 1910, p. 12]

W. PENN WATSON DIES IN CALIFORNIA

William Penn Watson, one of Oregon's most prominent citizens 20 years ago, died at Long Beach, Cal., yesterday from the effects of an operation which he was unable to stand a his advanced age. Mr. Watson was 84 years of age and was prominent in politics and in fair circles in this state. He was president of the state fair board a number of years.

Mr. Watson was well-known to all the old residents of Hood River and he had one of the very first apple orchards in the Hood River valley. He was recognized as one of the foremost horticulurists in the United States and was an exponent of dry farming. He was born in Morgan county Illinois.

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[The Hood River Glacier, Hood River, Oregon, Thursday, April 21, 1910, p. 4]

Pioneer, Who Came to Coast in 1847, Dies in Long Beach

Mrs. Watson Rode Horseback Across Plains With Parents to Portland.

Mrs. Priscilla Watson, aged 92, died last night at her home, 1155 Chestnut Avenue, after a residence of nineteen years in Long Beach. She was the widow of William Penn Watson, prominent in this city, who died in 1910. Mrs. Watson was born in Lafayette, Indiana, in 1832, and with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Catton, started across the plains in a covered wagon to Portland, Oregon, in 1847. It took eight months to make the journey and most of the way she rode horseback to help her father drive sheep and cattle.

The family settled near Portland, which had not then been built, and in 1851 Mr. and Mrs. Watson were married, moving to California in 1905, and settling in Long Beach, where they became large property owners. Mr. Watson owned a small farm near this city and was well known in this vicinity as he sold many vegetables and fruit to residents here.

Mrs. Watson was a member of the Methodist Church. She was remarkably energetic, even moving about the room yesterday morning. Her death was unexpected by members of her family. Last June the family returned to Long Beach from Fresno, where they lived for six months, and since that time Mrs. Watson had done a large amount of sewing, embroidering and knitting, including more than forty yards of lace and nine pillow cases which she had made, embroidered and trimmed with the lace knit by herself.

Surviving relatives are two daughters, Mrs. Jane Anna Erwin, with whom she made her home, and Mrs. Eunice Howe, both of this city; three sons, Matthew of Oceanside, John of Portland, and P. J. Watson of Los Angeles, as well as twelve grandchildren and thirteen great grandchildren.

Services will be held at the chapel of Holton & Son tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock, with Dr. J. Frank Roach officiating. Interment will be in Sunnyside cemetery.

[Press-Telegram, Long Beach, California, Wednesday, October 8, 1924, p. 14]

Children of William Penn Watson and Priscilla Patton:

1. Matthew Paul Watson

b. 1853 Yamhill County, Oregon

d. 16 Jul 1934 Alameda County, California

buried Chapel of the Chimes Memorial Park, Hayward, Alameda County, California
m. Margaret Louise Swim 1890

2. John William Watson
b. Feb 1856 Yamhill County, Oregon
d. 12 Jun 1926 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
buried Mount Calvary Cemetery, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
m. Carolyn M. Williams

3. Jane Anna Watson
b. 1858 Yamhill County, Oregon
d. 16 Mar 1950 Santa Clara County, California
buried Mission City Memorial Park, Santa Clara, Santa Clara County, California
m. Robert R. Erwin 1881

4. Thomas Jesse Watson
b. 25 May 1861 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
d. 04 May 1926 Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California
buried Sunnyside Cemetery, Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California
m. Mary G. Quinlan 12 Mar 1885 San Francisco, San Francisco County, California

5. Unity G. Watson
b. 1865 Yamhill County, Oregon
d. 08 Nov 1955 California
buried Sunnyside Cemetery, Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California
note: Headstone lists her as Eunice
m. Edgar W. Rowe

"WM. PENN WATSON -- Of those who came to the Pacific Northwest in pioneer days and settled within its boundaries, and closely identified themselves with its material, social and political welfare, the exemplary citizen named above took a very active and foremost part. He was born December 18, 1828, in Morgan county, Illinois. When he was only three weeks old, his mother closed her eyes in death; and the infant left behind was confided to the care of foster parents, Allen Q. Lindsey and wife, who gave the orphan boy the best of attention and one of the best of homes. In those days the advantages for securing an education were extremely limited ; but with application and diligent study at his adopted mother's knee, and during the three months' term of school in the old log schoolhouse, he mastered enough of learning to enable him at the age of nineteen to begin teaching on bis own account. This avocation he followed during the winter months, devoting the rest of the time to the improvement of the farm and home of those who had reared him.

In 1848 some of the neighbors conceived the idea of emigrating to Oregon and determined to start during the spring of the following year. Our subject caught the fever of exodus himself; but being without funds his dreams of accompanying the others savored of nothing except disappointment for him until a Mr. John C. Dennis, who knew his worth, volunteered to assist him This offer was gladly accepted; and, his outfit being completed, he bid adieu to the scenes of his childhood, and with L. B. Lindsey and Samuel Green left for St. Joe, Missouri. On arriving there they joined a party of nineteen others, from Springfield, Illinois, who were under the leadership of a Captain Baker. This was a small party to undertake the long and dangerous trip across the plains; but, being well equipped with arms, and brave-hearted, they headed their oxen towards the setting sun, and after a wearisome journey of one hundred and twenty days reached the far-off Oregon. The trip was fraught with many

incidents that would be interesting reading; but the space allotted for biographies forbids herein a resume of what took place. Mr. Watson, however, kept a journal of what transpired on the trip, and after his arrival gave in letters to friends left behind his reminiscences of the journey, which were published in some of the Eastern papers. These not only created a desire among others to emigrate, but also contained valuable in-formation to such, as well as amusing details.

He first located in Oregon City - the capital of Provisional Oregon; and after a brief period, together with L.B. Lindsey and Isaac Constant, his comrades 'the plains across,' he secured a contract to furnish Lot Whitcomb, of pioneer steamboat fame, with a hundred thousand shingles and sixty thousand feet of square timber. The compensation for the shingles was to be five dollars per thousand, and for the square timber ten cents per lineal foot, all of which Mr. Whitcomb shipped to San Fran-cisco and sold at fancy prices. While thus employed, our subject, true to the confidence reposed in him by Mr. Dennis, began at once to save from his earnings the amount sufficient to reimburse that gentleman for the sum expended by him in the equipment furnished; and it was not long before our subject had the requisite number of dollars, nor yet much longer before they were in the hands of his patron.

In the spring of 1850 he received a letter from l\Ir. Dennis that the latter intended removing to Oregon, and wished him to select him a location, build him a house and prepare for the coming of a large band of stock; and he at once set about in this interest by going to the " classic shades of Yamhill" county, where he built a house in Lafayette, rented two farms and planted them extensively with grain. About the time he expected Mr. Dennis to arrive, another letter came announcing a change of mind, and that he was not coming. Thereupon our subject dosed out the enterprises and went to Polk county, locating a homestead of three hundred and twenty acres. He removed his young bride thereto, he having been married previously, while in Lafayette, to Miss Priscilla Patton of Yamhill county. After proving up on this claim he removed to Washington county, where he settled and began fruit culture, but met with poor success, as his orchard got frozen out. This disgusted him for the time being in that business; and he invested in beaver dam land at Beaverton.

After reclaiming this he disposed of it at a handsome profit, and removed to Hood River in 1871, and there undertook again the raising of choice fruits, especial attention being given to peach growing. After a fine success for a time, the blight of 1875 destroyed the orchard; and he was compelled to abandon the enterprise. In conjunction with this fruit farm, he also established near The Dalles another orchard on a large scale; but the climate, not being suitable to the growing of the various fruits, he bad only indifferent success. Finding that there was nothing to be made in fruit culture, he engaged in the stock business in Pleasant Home valley, Klickitat county.

Receiving sufficient inducements to sell, he disposed of this ranch and removed to Yaquina Bay, where he intended to take life easy; but, at the earnest solicitation of his father-in-law, he removed to Albina. Here he thought of quiet and rest; but it could not be so. An active brain would not admit of idleness; and he engaged in the real-estate business in Albina, Portland and suburban property, and is meeting with fine success. In this avocation he ought to succeed; for he knows from what he has seen where people miss great opportunities in not investing in realty in growing cities. He can look back thirty years and see himself out gunning on a spot near where the Mechanics Pavilion now stands, and where soon afterwards he was at the door of a rudely constructed woodsman's cabin, without door, shutter or window, with the dirt floor for a fire-place. About the only culinary utensil to be seen or had in those days was a frying pan; and the bill of fare was "Oregon slab," or in other words sliced bacon, potatoes, and black molasses for dessert. Cedar blocks took the place of chairs; and two poles placed in the cracks of the cabin and covered with moss answered for lounge and bed.

In contrast with these views the many palatial residences now to be seen miles beyond the rural and forest scene, or step inside, inspect and find them grandly finished and furnished, the table loaded with all and every delicacy the markets of the world produce. In a word, a forest almost then, and now a city which counts its population and houses by the tens of thousands, riches by the mil-lion, streets and street-car lines by the mile, and has institutions of learning, churches, manufactories, railroads, steamers, etc., of vast number, and with new enterprises constantly springing up on every hand. The story of the pioneer is a most irresistible argument; and they who do not act upon his opinion relative to what a decade will bring forth for Portlanders will in time often remember his advice and regret that they did not invest.

Mr. Watson has never been known to any great extent in the way of grasping for the " loaves and fishes " of office, the bent of his mind being for the material welfare of the commonwealth through non-party means. The most prominent feature of Oregon's advancement for many years has been the State Agricultural Society; and with this association he has been identified for many years, serving as its president for four terms. During such time more of an interest was awakened among the people than ever before to advance, in the way of the obtainment and culture of better stock, grains, fruits, etc., than what had previously been their habit to raise; and the world at large gained a better knowledge of Oregon, her industries, advantages and opportunities. The society, appreciating his efforts and success, at the close of his term of office, presented him with a handsome gold watch, a token much more honorable than one gained in the field of politics. He has also been a member of various societies of like nature ever since 1860, when the first one in the state was organized, such being the Horticultural Society of Clackamas county; and of this one he served as president for two years. Mr. Watson has always been a promoter of education and morality, and an earnest worker against the evils of liquor and tobacco and justly prides him-self that he does not use them in any form; and to his credit it can be said that his three sons, now reared to man's estate, "touch, taste nor handle not." Such men as he are state-builders in every sense of the term; and the voice of Oregon will be, when this nobleman among her number gives over to the sleep that knows no waking, "Well clone, thou good and faithful servant."

The maiden name of our subject's estimable wife was Patton, her father being Hon. Mathew Patton, now of Albina, Oregon. She was born in Lafayette, Indiana, and emigrated to Oregon with her parents in 1847. She became the wife of our subject in Lafayette, Oregon, January 4, 1851. The fruits of this union have been five children, two daughters and three sons, all of whom are living, and are counterparts of their parents in morality, integrity, respectability and kindness of heart." [History of the Pacific Northwest – Oregon and Washington, Volume 2, p. 622-4]