



# **RESOLUTION No. 24-435**

## **OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF NEVADA**

### **RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE NEVADA CITY SANITARIUM, LOCATED AT FORMER 424 COYOTE STREET IN NEVADA CITY WHICH WAS DEMOLISHED FOR HIGHWAY 49, WITH A LANDMARK PLAQUE TO BE LOCATED AT 425 COYOTE STREET IN NEVADA CITY, AS NEVADA COUNTY HISTORICAL LANDMARK NEV 24-06**

WHEREAS, the Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission (NCHLC) was established in 1969 to promote the general welfare of Nevada County and its citizens through official recognition, recording, marking, preserving, and promoting the historical resources of Nevada County; and

WHEREAS, the NCHLC has since sustained an active program of cataloging and recommending for designation historical sites and structures throughout Nevada County; and

WHEREAS, the NCHLC accepts applications, processes and verifies applications for proposed historical landmark designation, and recommends said landmark designations for approval by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors supports the promotion of the public health, safety, and general welfare by providing for the identification, protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of improvements, buildings, structures, signs, objects, features, sites, places, districts, and areas within the County that reflect special elements of the County's architectural, artistic, cultural, engineering, aesthetic, historical, political, social, and other heritage, by allowing their registration as Nevada County Historical Landmarks for the following reasons:

1. Safeguarding Nevada County's heritage as embodied and reflected in the Nevada City Sanitarium, located at former 424 Coyote Street in Nevada City which was demolished for Highway 49, with a landmark plaque to be located at 425 Coyote Street in Nevada City, and its influence on Nevada County's cultural and social history, and commemorating the valuable role it played in the community; and
2. Encouraging public knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Nevada County's history as reflected in its heritage; and
3. Fostering civic and neighborhood pride and a sense of identity based upon the recognition and use of cultural resources; and
4. Preserving diverse and harmonious architectural styles and design innovations; and
5. Enhancing property values to increase economic and financial benefits to Nevada County and its inhabitants by preserving and promoting historical buildings; and

6. Protecting and enhancing Nevada County's attraction to tourists and visitors, thereby stimulating business and industry; and
7. Identifying as early as possible and resolving conflicts between the preservation of cultural resources and alternative land uses in a section of Nevada County that may see future population growth; and

WHEREAS, NCHLC applied, with consent of the current owner of the property where the proposed plaque will be located, Carolyn Ivey-Cone, on June 15, 2024, requesting that the Nevada City Sanitarium, located at former 424 Coyote Street in Nevada City which was demolished for Highway 49, with a landmark plaque to be located at 425 Coyote Street in Nevada City, be designated as a Nevada County Historical Landmark; and

WHEREAS, at its June 21, 2024, meeting, the NCHLC verified and unanimously approved the application and now recommends that the Board of Supervisors designate the property as a Nevada County Historical Landmark.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Nevada hereby accepts the NCHLC's recommendation and designates the Nevada City Sanitarium, located at former 424 Coyote Street in Nevada City which was demolished for Highway 49, with a landmark plaque to be located at 425 Coyote Street in Nevada City, as Nevada County Historical Landmark NEV 24-06.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the Board is hereby directed to record a certified copy of this Resolution with the Office of the Nevada County Clerk-Recorder within ten (10) days after the adoption hereof.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Nevada at a regular meeting of said Board, held on the 6th day of August 2024, by the following vote of said Board:

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Ayes:    | Supervisors Heidi Hall, Edward C. Scofield, Lisa Swarthout, Susan Hoek, and Hardy Bullock. |
| Noes:    | None.  |
| Absent:  | None.  |
| Abstain: | None.  |
| Recuse:  | None.  |

ATTEST:

TINE MATHIASSEN  
Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: CSM, Deputy COB

HB

Hardy Bullock, Chair

**Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission**  
**c/o Clerk of the Board**  
**950 Maidu Ave**  
**PO Box 599002**  
**Nevada City CA 95959-7902**  
**[info@nevadacountylandmarks.com](mailto:info@nevadacountylandmarks.com)**  
**530-264-0115**

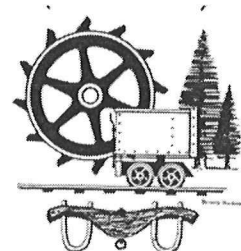
21 June 2024

Nevada County Board of Supervisors  
950 Maidu Avenue  
Nevada City, CA 95959

Honorable Chair and Board Members:

At today's meeting, the Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the Board that the application for landmark designation of the Nevada City Sanitarium be approved. The applicant is the Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission. The Sanitarium was located at 424 Coyote St. and was demolished to make way for the Highway 49 freeway. The freeway is state property and there is no APN number. The plaque will be installed across the street at 425 Coyote St. with the consent of the property owner, Carolyn Ivey-Cone. She has a personal connection to the Sanitarium, and her letter of support is attached. The landmark is to be designated as Nevada County Historical Landmark NEV 24-05, assuming the pending applications are approved first.

In 1910, Nurses Elizabeth McDonald Watson and Laura M Peterson, at the request of local doctors, established the City of Nevada's first hospital in a cottage at what was 424 Coyote Street. A particular claim to the Sanitarium's fame is its record of delivering around 3000 babies. It also had an excellent reputation for handling victims of mining and automobile accidents. The



Sanitarium operated as a hospital until 1946, when it was converted to a rest home. The rest home closed in 1953. The founders continued to live there with Peterson taking care of Watson until Watson died at age 90 on January 3, 1957. The Sanitarium was demolished in 1964 with the arrival of the Highway 49 freeway.

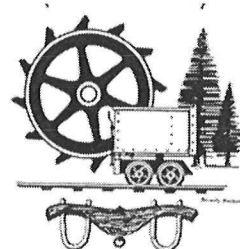
The research and documentation which accompanies the application has been reviewed by several Commissioners for historical accuracy. The application and supporting documentation is enclosed.

If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Yours truly,

  
Bernard Zimmerman, Chair

cc: Micah Cone w/o enc.





To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for this amazing opportunity to be part of honoring the sanitarium and those people who began it!

I have very fond memories of being walked across the street by my grandmother, Ruby Ivey, to visit at the sanitarium. The old gentleman would take my younger sister and me to the pond and stream in the back, and when the pears were ripe, he would pick us each one to eat. I can still feel that sun-warm pear in my hand, and taste the sweetness!

The truly astonishing thing about this for me is that the first baby Elizabeth McDonald Watson delivered was my grandmother's best friend from birth! Elaine Rossen, better known all her life as "Bubbles", was about two when her baby brother was born the same day as my grandmother Ruby; Valentines Day 1904, in North Bloomfield. "Bubbles" met Ruby within a few days of her birth, and they remained best friends all their long lives.

Thank you again on behalf of my siblings, my children, and myself for allowing us to display the commemorative plaque on our property!

Carolyn Ivey-Cone  
425 Coyote Street, Nevada City, CA

County of Nevada  
State of California

Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission  
Application for Registration of Historical Landmark

Name of proposed landmark: Nevada City Sanitarium Site

Location, including Assessor's Parcel Number: former 424 Coyote St., Nevada City, which is now part of the Hwy 49 freeway. The plaque will be on 425 Coyote St.

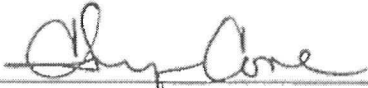
Name of applicant: Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission

Address: C/O Clerk of the Board, 950 Maidu Ave, PO Box 599002  
Nevada City CA 95959-7902

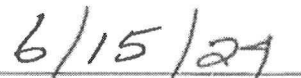
Home or work phone: [REDACTED] cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name and address of owner upon whose property proposed landmark  
is located, if owner is not applicant:

I consent to this application and authorize the placing of a plaque or marker on site.



Owner's signature



Date

Carolyn Ivey-Cone  
425 Coyote St.  
Nevada City, CA  
95959

## **Brief history and description of proposed landmark**

(attach additional sheets as necessary)

In 1910, Elizabeth McDonald Watson and Laura M Peterson established the City of Nevada's first hospital in a cottage at what was then 424 Coyote Street. The Sanitarium was demolished in 1964 to make way for the Highway 49 freeway. The property on which the Sanitarium was located is now owned partly by the State of California and partly by the City of Nevada. Because the property is largely fenced in, there is no appropriate place for a landmark plaque on the site. The Landmarks Commission proposes to erect a landmark plaque commemorating the hospital across the street from the site, on the property located at 425 Coyote St.

## **Historically significant aspects or properties of proposed landmark**

Elizabeth McDonald Watson was born in Scotland in 1867. She took up nursing in Scotland and then emigrated to the United States in 1896 where she continued her nursing studies. She moved to Nevada City in 1900. In 1905, she received her nursing diploma from the Chautauqua School in New York.

In 1910, Watson and nurse Laura M. Peterson, at the request of local doctors, established the City of Nevada's first hospital in a cottage at 424 Coyote Street on the banks of Manzanita Creek. Initially, they leased what had started as a miner's cottage from Dr. C. L. Muller. In 1914, Watson bought out Peterson, becoming the sole proprietor of the Sanitarium. In 1919, she purchased the property.

The building was located on a half acre of land "laid out with flowers, lawns and trees; it is a restful, picturesque spot, ideal for a sanitary. Originally containing eight patient rooms, Watson added a new wing containing a well equipped operating room."

A particular claim to the Sanitarium's fame is its record of delivering around 3000 babies. It also had an excellent reputation for handling victims of mining and automobile accidents. "In 1918, during the Spanish flu epidemic following World War I, the sanitarium did not lose a single patient. The hospital was taxed to the limit with beds in the hallways; no one was turned away."

The Sanitarium operated as a hospital until 1946, when it was converted to a rest home. The rest home closed in 1953. The founders continued to live there with Peterson taking care of Watson until Watson died at age 90 on January 3, 1957. The Sanitarium was demolished in 1964 with the arrival of the Highway 49 freeway.

### **How will the landmark be protected and maintained?**

By the Landmarks Commission in conjunction with the owners of 425 Coyote St.

**Bibliography.** Cite or attach available books, records, articles or other materials pertaining to the proposed landmark.

#### **Books and articles:**

Bernard Zimmerman, Elizabeth Watson and The Nevada City Sanitarium: Attachment 1

Chris Enss, Elizabeth McDonald Watson, Soldier of the Living: Attachment 2

Lardner, W.B. and Brock, M.J. (1924) History of Placer and Nevada Counties California, p.1155.

The following Union news stories are curated at the Sears Historical Library in Binder HC23, sleeves 103-110.

- Wycoff, Bob, The Union (July 3, 2008) 3,000 Babies: 1910-1946 Elizabeth McD. Watson and the Nevada City Sanitarium: A lifetime of public service.
- Fredericksen, Paul, The Union (Undated, probably March 30, 1951) Big Day: Elizabeth McDonald Watson Share Spotlight next Monday.
- Fredericksen, Paul, The Union (April 2, 1951) More About Miss Watson.
- The Union (April 6, 1951) Elizabeth McDonald Watson and George Calanan Toasted by 327 Friends and Neighbors.
- The Union (undated probably January 1947) Miss Watson announces closing of Nevada City Sanitarium.

**Historical or civil records:** (e.g., ownership, assessments etc.)

1950 Census record confirming address as 424 Coyote St. Attachment 3

Map of Coyote St. Attachment 4

**Other:** (e.g. photographs, prints or drawings. Please list and attach separately)

Photos of Watson: Attachment 5, 6

Photo of Sanitarium: Attachment 7

  
Applicant's signature

12 June 2024  
Date

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This completed form and all related documents shall be sent to the:

Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission  
Attention: Chairman  
P. O. Box 1014, Nevada City, Cal. 95959

Attachments and related documents may be submitted in electronic format to [info@nevadacountylandmarks.com](mailto:info@nevadacountylandmarks.com).

An application must be considered solely on its historic or architectural merits and not for commercial gain, political benefits, or other non historical reasons.

An individual Commissioner can advise and counsel an applicant, but all applications must be considered by the full Commission, meeting in regular session.



## **Elizabeth Watson and The Nevada City Sanitarium**

By Bernard Zimmerman

On April 2, 1951, over 300 of the County's leading citizens crowded into the old Elks Lodge to participate in a magnificent dinner. Sponsored by the Nevada County Historical Society, the purpose of the celebration was to honor two local citizens: George Calanan and Elizabeth Watson. Said the Union:

"the whole town joined in the party. The community sang for the two honored guests, told them how much they were loved, gave them huge bouquets of flowers and other gifts."<sup>1</sup> Mayor Taylor read messages from dignitaries including Governor Earl Warren. Watson and Calanan were named Citizens of the Year and the City Council proclaimed "Calanan-Watson Day."

So who were these two people? Most people know about George Calanan, a beloved city clerk, town trustee [council member], assessor and so on, often referred to as "Mr. Nevada City." Calanan Park, at the heart of Nevada City, is dedicated to him. Far fewer people know about Elizabeth Watson. Yet as Mr. Calanan told everyone that night, "I'm not in the same class with this rare little soul we honor here tonight." This is her story.

### **Elizabeth McDonald Watson**

Elizabeth McDonald Watson was born on October 13, 1865 in Craiglug, a small village in the parish of Durrus near Aberdeen, Scotland. Her father was Alexander Watson, a farmer, and her mother was Catherine Law Watson. As a young girl, she became interested in nursing, but was unable to pursue her vocation when her father became an invalid and she had to stay home to help her mother look after him.

In 1897, after her father died, she emigrated to the United States at age 32, to look after her terminally ill brother John who lived in Detroit, Michigan. After he died, she decided to move west. Asked why, in a 1951 interview with The Union, she replied: "From girlhood I had always been fascinated by the name San Juan. I wanted some day to see a San Juan and I guess that drew me west."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Union news stories consulted for this article are curated at the Sears Historical Library in Binder HC23, sleeves 103 -110. The Union (April 6, 1951) Elizabeth McDonald Watson and George Calanan Toasted by 327 Friends and Neighbors, HC 23:103.

<sup>2</sup> Fredericksen, Paul, The Union (April 2, 1951) More About Miss Watson. HC 23:108

But first she moved to Idaho and obtained a position at the Lemhi Indian Agency. Among other things, she taught cooking, laundry and housework to Indian children. She also began studying nursing with the Agency doctor, Hubert Dudley. From Lemhi she moved to the mining town of Butte, Montana. While there she received a letter from Dr. Dudley. He had visited an old classmate, Dr. Carl Muller, who lived in Nevada City. Intrigued by his glowing description of Nevada City, she purchased a railroad ticket and arrived in Nevada City on January 2, 1900. She never left.

She offered her nursing skills not only in Nevada City but travelled to other mining communities. Not surprisingly, she made her way to San Juan, though this one had a North in front of the name, courtesy of the US Post Office. Her arrival is vividly described by historian Chris Enss as follows:

"The sky over North San Juan, California, on April 10, 1904, was gravel gray. Large storm clouds had formed, blotting out the ash color of the sun. Anyone caught on the main thoroughfare of the small gold mining town when the rain began to fall scurried for cover. The wheels on the horse-drawn buggy traveling fast through the downpour rolled over puddles and patches of mud before coming to a stop in front of the Bradbury Hotel. Carrying a black, weathered medical bag, thirty-nine-year-old Elizabeth McDonald Watson leapt out of the vehicle and raced into the building. The Bradbury family, for whom the hotel was named, was suffering with a bacterial disease known as diphtheria. Two family members had already died from the illness, and, without medical attention, the others were destined for the same fate."<sup>3</sup>

Thanks to her nursing, the other Bradburys all recovered. She also had an affinity for delivering babies, then called confinement cases. She delivered her first baby, Elaine Rossen, later Mrs. Bradley Legg, at Relief Hill. Delivering babies would become a signature accomplishment of the Sanitarium. The last baby, Adiena Loway Sherwood, was born December 31, 1946.

## **The Sanitarium**

Watson resumed her nursing studies by correspondence and in 1905, received her diploma from the Chautauqua School of Nursing in Jamestown, New York. At some point she met another nursing student, Laura M. Peterson. In March 1910, at the urging of local doctors Muller and Alfred Tickell who pined for a hospital in Nevada City, Watson and Peterson opened the Nevada City Sanitarium, leasing the Emmons cottage at 424 Coyote St. from Dr. Muller. Originally a prospector's cabin, the cottage was located on a half acre of land on

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<sup>3</sup> Chris Enss, Elizabeth McDonald Watson, Soldier of the Living.

the banks of Manzanita Creek "laid out with flowers, lawns and trees; it is a restful, picturesque spot, ideal for a sanitarium. Initially it contained eight patient rooms."<sup>4</sup>

It was entirely fitting that Calanan and Watson were honored at the same time. He was one of the first patients in the Sanitarium, when in 1912 he underwent an operation after having a run-in with the City's fire truck. Watson administered the anesthetic during the operation. From that time, he remained her lifelong friend regularly repaying her kindness. Over the years, Calanan did a lot of repair work on the hospital and every Saturday morning took Watson shopping in his car.

In 1914, Watson bought out Peterson, becoming the sole proprietor of the Sanitarium; its Superintendent as she styled herself. Peterson continued to serve as a nurse, as well as Watson's assistant and companion. A cook was on staff, Mrs Clara Frances Poston until around 1945, followed by Mrs. Rosina Grant. Margaret Coughlin worked there as a nurse for 17 years. Caroline McCreary was another nurse. At some point, Watson's nephew, Alec C. Watson, a WWI veteran of the British Royal Air Force, began living in a cabin at the Sanitarium acting as a sort of groundskeeper and maintenance man.

At a time when anti-Chinese sentiment was rife, it was absent at the Sanitarium. Witness this notice placed in the Union by Hing Hong and Ah Gin.

"Extend Thanks. We desire to sincerely thank Dr. C. L. Muller and the Misses Watson and Peterson of the Nevada City Sanitarium for the skilled treatment given our wife and daughter."<sup>5</sup>

In 1919, Watson purchased the property. She added a new wing containing a well equipped operating room. She frequently advertised that the hospital was "open to all reputable physicians and surgeons,"<sup>6</sup> was "equipped to handle obstetrical, surgical, medicinal and x-ray cases" with "modern equipment"<sup>7</sup> and offered "tactful nursing" and "homelike comforts."<sup>8</sup> In turn, The Union regularly extolled the virtues of the Sanitarium, in pieces such as this: "Skillful nurses, a quiet home like place, in a part of the city that is not bothered with the noises of

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<sup>4</sup> Lardner, W.B. and Brock, M.J. (1924) History of Placer and Nevada Counties California, p.1155.

<sup>5</sup> The Union, March 4, 1917, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., The Union November 30, 1922, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> The Union, HC 23:104C.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., The Union, May 21, 1921, p. 4.

traffic make the Nevada City Sanitarium an ideal sanitarium for those who are unfortunate enough to be sick. Every want is attended to and convalescence is rapid amid such surroundings."<sup>9</sup>

In 1921, the American League of British Veterans selected the Nevada City Sanitarium as the place to which all members of the post needing medical treatment should be sent. The League was composed of those who served under the British flag before the United States entered the war, typically by enlisting in the Canadian army.<sup>10</sup> The Sanitarium was selected in part because of the County's "matchless climate" which would benefit those convalescing.

A particular claim to the Sanitarium's fame was its record of delivering around 3000 babies, and never losing a mother except for one who died from a pre-existing condition. Dr. Harry March, who had an office in the Sanitarium, delivered about half of them. Reportedly, each baby received a silver dollar. The hospital also had an excellent reputation for handling victims of mining and automobile accidents.<sup>11</sup> "In 1918, during the Spanish flu epidemic following World War I, the sanitarium did not lose a single patient. The hospital was taxed to the limit with beds in the hallways; no one was turned away."<sup>12</sup> While the sanitarium was a for-profit business, it had a reputation as being a haven for the poor. "Parents knew they would not be pressed by Miss Watson to pay their bills. The poorest ones knew they would never be expected to pay."<sup>13</sup>

Described as an "enterprising and successful business woman," Watson was active in the community, as a member of the Nevada City Chamber of Commerce and a member of the board of trustees of the First Methodist Church of Nevada City. She never married but did "adopt" three orphan children.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Union, April 21, 1922, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> The Union, October 13, 1921, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> The Searls Historical Library contains an extensive collection of documents and photographs about the Nevada City Sanitarium and Miss Watson. Readers interested in tracking down information about babies born there or patients who stayed there will be interested in the Sanitarium's annual journals, many of which the Searls has. See MM 05-17. In addition to such mundane matters as recording expenses for grocers, repairs and the like, there are entries for those born there, those hospitalized there and those convalescing, with information about fees charged and fees paid.

<sup>12</sup> Wycoff, Bob, The Union (July 3, 2008) 3,000 Babies: 1910-1946 Elizabeth McD. Watson and the Nevada City Sanitarium: A lifetime of public service. HC23:104C

<sup>13</sup> The Union (April 6, 1951) Elizabeth McDonald Watson and George Calanan Toasted by 327 Friends and Neighbors. HC23:106.

<sup>14</sup> HC 23:108.

The Sanitarium operated as a hospital until 1946, when it was converted to a rest home. In announcing her retirement at age 80, she stated: "I wish to take the opportunity of thanking, on behalf of the staff and myself, our many friends in Nevada and surrounding counties for their kind and loyal support during the 36 year tenure" of the Sanitarium.<sup>15</sup>

Her retirement drew this tribute from one of her former patients, Phebe Cartwright.

"I am one of your 3,000 or more mothers who salute you in this, your birthday. There are very few who would have had the fortitude and courage to do the many good and noble deeds which have been your daily routine of life. The grand noble spirit of service, which has called for far more than the line of duty has found a great and noble woman always on the fighting line of life, and each one who has had the privilege to enter your door has gone forth with a better understanding of the real call of a nurse and a friend.

I was one of the many who were taken to you in the labor of birth. There was no room ready, but you, grand soldier of the living, helped me through hours of pain and gave of your boundless mother-love to my small daughter, and a part of your noble soul to carry through all my life.

Six years later, I stood by the side of my child when her life was on the scales of life or death. Your steady hand and faithful care helped keep my baby here. Only one who has had to stand by the side of a dearly loved one and heard Dr. March say there may be a chance and has accepted 'Thy will be done, Oh, God, not mine', can realize the courage and faith of you, Elizabeth MacDonald [sic] Watson, standing like a promise of hope by a surgery table.

The silver dollar you have given to each one of your babies has been quite a material item alone. My daughter had her small bank account started as you requested. And this year she has decided to take her training necessary to care for the small helpless folk who come. I am very happy in her choice of her chosen work, and, perhaps when weary hours of fatigue make the going rough, she may remember a small hospital of hope nestled in a spot of beauty in the hills, and your memory may be a beacon of hope. For the love we give we receive back in thanks."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> HC 23:106.

<sup>16</sup> HC 23:106.



The rest home closed in 1953. The founders continued to live there with Petersen taking care of Watson until Watson died at age 90 on January 3, 1957. The Sanitarium was demolished in 1964 with the arrival of the Highway 49 freeway.

Her obituary in the Union noted that Watson "was beloved to all for great humanitarian work and unselfish interest in the community...and its people... Her affection for Nevada City and Nevada County...gave her a deep feeling for the needs of the people here and she kept her hospital for local patients almost exclusively."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> HC 23:104C.



## Attachment 2

Elizabeth McDonald Watson

### **Soldier of the Living**

"Many is the Californian living today whose mother traveled a long distance to Nevada City because she had heard that a baby could be born at Miss Watson's spic-and-span hospital in safety.

*The Union Newspaper, April 6, 1951*

The sky over North San Juan, California, on April 10, 1904, was gravel gray. Large storm clouds had formed, blotting out the ash color of the sun. Anyone caught on the main thoroughfare of the small gold mining town when the rain began to fall scurried for cover. The wheels on the horse-drawn buggy traveling fast through the downpour rolled over puddles and patches of mud before coming to a stop in front of the Bradbury Hotel. Carrying a black, weathered medical bag, thirty-nine-year-old Elizabeth McDonald Watson leapt out of the vehicle and raced into the building. The Bradbury family, for whom the hotel was named, was suffering with a bacterial disease known as diphtheria. Two family members had already died from the illness, and, without medical attention, the others were destined for the same fate.<sup>18</sup>

There weren't any doctors in North San Juan to call on the sick. The ailing relied on the help of the one woman in the area with nurse's training. Elizabeth had been nursing patients for more than twenty years prior to her arrival in Nevada County, California. Her practical experience in medicine, combined with her willingness to travel wherever her services were needed earned her the trust of everyone in the area. She read every book and article available on medicine and familiarized herself with afflictions and disorders from burns and rashes to measles and diphtheria. Elizabeth knew from the medical journals she'd acquired in 1890 that it was discovered that serum made from the blood of immunized animals contained an "antitoxin" which, when injected cured diphtheria. Elizabeth managed to get doses of the serum to administer to people who had the disease. The Bradbury

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<sup>18</sup> The Union, April 2, 1951, April 6, 1952, July 3, 2008

family's health improved after Nurse Watson gave them their shots, and she stayed with them until they were fully recovered.<sup>19</sup>

Born on October 13, 1865, in Durris, Kincardineshire, Scotland, to Catherine and Alexander Watson, Elizabeth never knew a time she didn't want to be a nurse. She left home at eighteen to attend school to learn about medicine and get a degree in the field she had dreamed of since childhood. No sooner had her studies begun when she was called home to help care for her mother, brothers, and her father who had become ill. Alexander died in 1896, and the following year Elizabeth traveled to the United States to be with her brother John who was in a hospital in Detroit, Michigan. John was a twenty-five-year-old carpenter who had contracted a disease of the spine. He passed away on January 25, 1897.<sup>20</sup>

Elizabeth decided to go west after her brother's death. She settled in eastern Idaho where she took a job teaching school at the Lemhi Indian Agency. In addition to educating children, she assisted a local physician with his practice. As a nurse in training, she continued to learn more about medicine. It reignited her passion to pursue a career in the profession.<sup>21</sup>

Elizabeth made several friends while working at the agency, including Dr. Herbert Dudley and his wife and family. Both Elizabeth and Dr. Dudley left Idaho in early 1899. The doctor relocated to Nome, Alaska, and Elizabeth moved to Butte, Montana. The two corresponded often. Dudley shared with Elizabeth that while en route to Alaska he stopped to visit a colleague in a scenic town in northern California called Nevada City. His description of the area was so complimentary she was convinced she had to see it for herself. Elizabeth traveled by train to the area in late December 1899 and arrived in Nevada City on January 2, 1900.<sup>22</sup>

Elizabeth was captivated by the mining town. The beautiful Sierra Mountain range that surrounded the community, the magnificent oak and pine trees that reached to the sky, the quaint houses, and generous people led her to believe she had moved to the most idyllic spot in the state. Fortunately for Elizabeth, Nevada County was in desperate need of nurses and doctors. She was called on to help tend to employees at the Empire Mine (the largest and richest mining operation in the West), logging

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.ancestry.com/Elizabeth McDonald Watson](https://www.ancestry.com/Elizabeth%20McDonald%20Watson), The Union, April 2, 1951, April 6, 1952, July 3, 2008

<sup>21</sup> The Union, April 2, 1951, April 6, 1952, July 3, 2008

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

companies, poultry farms, and ranches. When she wasn't working, she was focused on the nursing correspondence courses she was taking from the Chautauqua School in New York. She received her long-awaited diploma in 1905.<sup>23</sup>

Although Elizabeth was content with working as a private nurse, she recognized the county needed a hospital, and she was determined to see that residents had one. In 1910, she and another practicing nurse named Laura Mary Peterson opened the Nevada City Sanitarium. The modest medical facility had eight rooms for patients, a well-equipped operating room, reception area, and dining hall. The location of the sanitarium was conducive to patients requiring long-periods of rest. The half-acre where the sanitarium was located featured manicured lawns, shade trees, and an abundance of flowers. As the demand grew, so did the hospital, and, by 1920, a new wing was added to the building and was supplied with every convenience for the sick.<sup>24</sup>

For more than ten years Elizabeth's sanitarium was the only hospital in the county. Miners injured in explosions, wranglers kicked by horses, men and women hurt in automobile accidents, expectant mothers, and citizens who contracted the flu during the epidemic of 1918 were treated at the facility. The sanitarium attracted both patients and doctors within a fifty-mile radius. Physicians attending to patients at the hospital were impressed with the efficiency in which Elizabeth ran the business and the attention paid to cleanliness.<sup>25</sup>

There were many times when the hospital was filled to capacity, but that didn't mean anyone needing help was turned away. Babies were delivered in the hallways, and children who had to have stitches or broken bones set were tended to in Elizabeth's personal office. She was patient with those who could only pay their bills a little at a time and forgiving of those who had no money to pay at all.<sup>26</sup>

The Nevada City Sanitarium closed in 1946. After thirty-six years in business, Elizabeth decided it was time to retire. It was estimated that approximately three thousand children had been born at the hospital since it opened its doors. Besides births, there had been thousands of patients with

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

ailments ranging from slight injuries and major illnesses to major surgeries. "In announcing my retirement at this time, I wish to take the opportunity of thanking, on behalf of the staff and myself, our many friends in Nevada and surrounding counties for their kind and loyal support," Nurse Watson told a local newspaper reporter.<sup>27</sup>

The beloved health provider was the recipient of an outpouring of affection when the community learned she was leaving the job. For more than a month, letters from former patients expressing their gratitude for Elizabeth's work were printed in the Grass Valley, California, newspaper *The Union*.<sup>28</sup>

"Dear Sir," one of the letters about Elizabeth sent to the paper began. "Elizabeth MacDonald [sic] Watson – I am one of your 3,000 or more mothers who salute you in this, your birthday. There are very few who would have had the fortitude and courage to do the many good and noble deeds which have been your daily routine of life. The grand noble spirit of service, which has called for far more than the line of duty has found a great and noble woman always on the fighting line of life, and each one who has had the privilege to enter your door has gone forth with a better understanding of the real call of a nurse and a friend."<sup>29</sup>

"I was one of the many who were taken to you in the labor of birth. There was no room ready, but you, grand soldier of the living, helped me through hours of pain and gave of your boundless motherlove to my small daughter, and a part of your noble soul to carry through all my life."<sup>30</sup>

"Six years later, I stood by the side of my child when her life was on the scales of life or death. Your steady hand and faithful care helped keep my baby here. Only one who has had to stand by the side of a dearly loved on and heard Dr. March say there may be a chance and has accepted 'Thy will be done, Oh, God, not mine', can realize the courage and faith of you, Elizabeth MacDonald [sic] Watson, standing like a promise of hope by a surgery table."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> The Union, April 6, 1951

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

"The silver dollar you have given to each one of your babies has been quite a material item alone. My daughter had her small bank account started as you requested. And this year she has decided to take her training necessary to care for the small helpless folk who come. I am very happy in her choice of her chosen work, and, perhaps when weary hours of fatigue make the going rough, she may remember a small hospital of hope nestled in a spot of beauty in the hills, and your memory may be a beacon of hope. For the love we give we receive back in thanks."<sup>32</sup>

Elizabeth retired from the sanitarium but continued working as a nurse at the facility which was transformed into a rest home. Among the people she cared for was her business partner, Nurse Peterson. Elizabeth's nephew Alec Watson, a veteran with the Scottish forces in France during World War I, worked for his aunt maintaining the property inside and out.<sup>33</sup>

Elizabeth passed away on January 3, 1957, at her home in Nevada City. Her obituary read in part, "[She] was beloved to all for great humanitarian work and unselfish interest in the community...and its people.... Her affection for Nevada City and Nevada County...gave her a deep feeling for the needs of the people here, and she kept her hospital for local patients almost exclusively."<sup>34</sup>

Nurse Watson was ninety-one when she died.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> The Union, April 2, 1951, April 6, 1952, July 3, 2008

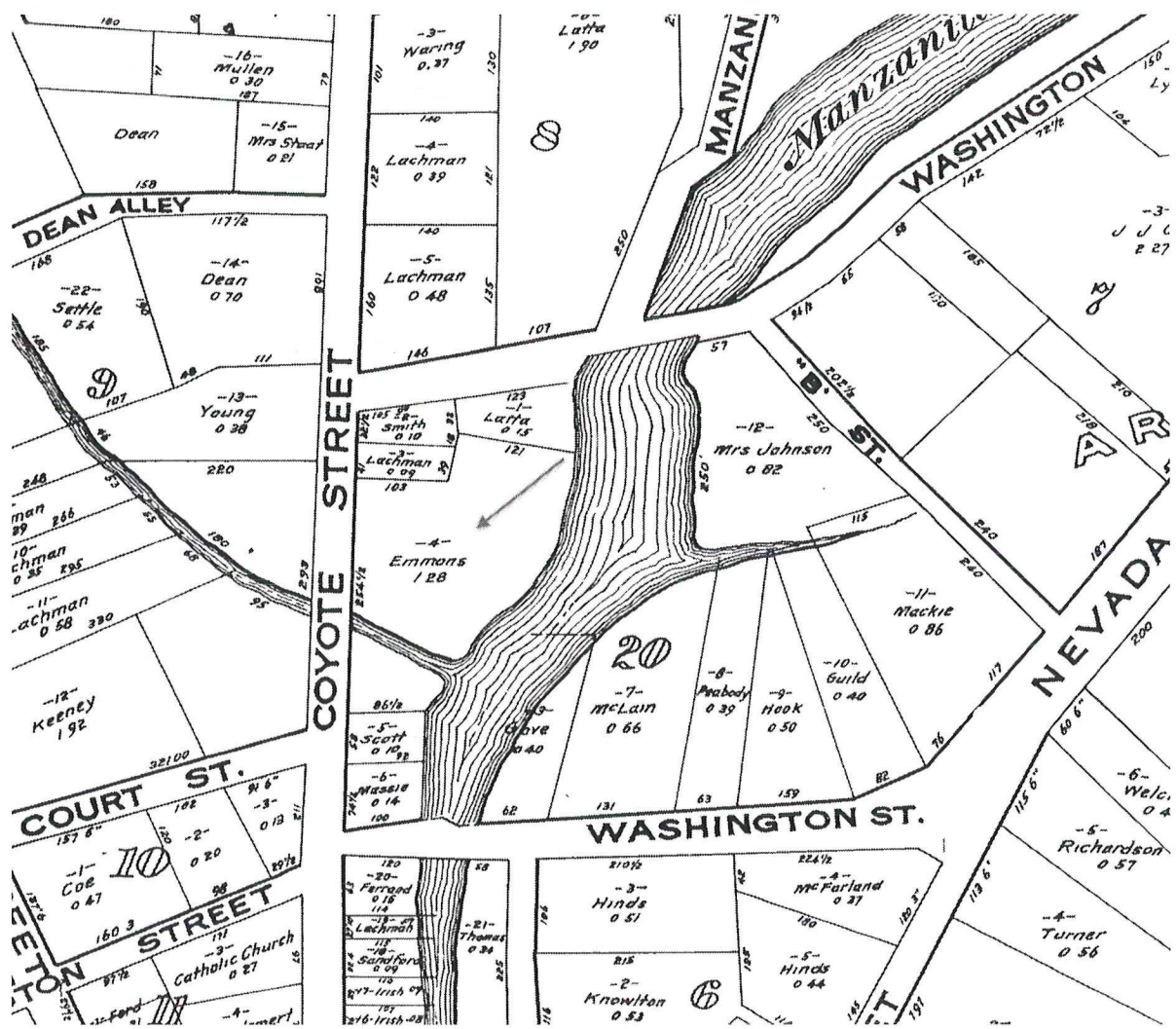
<sup>34</sup> The Union, January 5, 1957

## 2024 rev.

| FOR HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | FOR ALL PERSONS   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | FOR PERSONS 14 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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Attachment 4: Sanitarium located on Emmons property.



Attachment 5: Elizabeth Watson courtesy Judy Vargas



Attachment 6: Watson and Calanan honored courtesy The Union



Attachment 7: Sanitarium courtesy The Union

