

Watson, Josiah Ogden ^[1]

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14 Sept. 1784–12 June 1852



Photograph of the belltower and steeple on historic Christ Church, Edenton Street, Raleigh, NC. Photograph by Kelly Agan, 2014. In his will Josiah Watson provided for the building of the church steeple.

Josiah Ogden Watson, army surgeon, politician, and planter of immense wealth, was a son of John Watson of Pineville in [Johnston County](#) ^[2]. About 1815 he married Penninah Tartt (1790–30 Jan. 1848), the daughter of Elnathan and Obedience Thomas Tartt of [Edgecombe](#) ^[3] (now [Wilson](#) ^[4]) County. Their only child, Elizabeth Obedience, died in Wilmington on 3 Dec. 1839 at age twenty.

As early as 1802 Watson studied under Dr. William Haywood of Tarboro before attending the Medical College at Philadelphia. In 1807 he sold two lots in Tarboro and moved to Charleston, S.C., where he "enjoyed the friendship of the family of Gov. Alston" as well as a "lucrative practice." During the [War of 1812](#) ^[5] he became a surgeon in the U.S. Army under General [Andrew Jackson](#) ^[6] and "attracted the warm regards and friendship of that great man, which he retained in full force until his death."

Having returned to Johnston County after the war, Watson served as its representative in the [General Assembly](#) ^[7] of 17 Nov. 1828–10 Jan. 1829. He was a member of the Electoral College of 1836 and ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Congress in 1841. For many years he was chairman of the Johnston County Court and of the [Democratic](#) ^[8] state central committee; he was numbered among the distinguished men under Governor [John Motley Morehead](#) ^[9] "to superintend on behalf of the State works of public utility."

In addition to his medical practice, Watson engaged in numerous land transactions in Wake, Johnston, and Edgecombe counties and in the states of Alabama and Mississippi. He owned a wool factory in Raleigh, the Neuse River Mill and 40

shares of North Carolina Railroad Company ^[10] stock; he was also the enslaver of about 350 people. He died at his Sharon plantation near Raleigh leaving a lengthy will in which he divided his great wealth among friends and kinsmen after providing money for "a steeple or tower to the new church edifice" and annually "a teacher for the Parish School of Christ Church."

References:

Johnston County Wills (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh).

Raleigh Register, 14 Dec. 1839, 2 Feb. 1848, 15 June 1852.

Image Credit:

"Belltower and steeple, Christ Church, Raleigh, NC." Photograph. March 20, 2014. Kelly Agan.

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Johnston, Hugh B., Jr. ^[15]

Origin - location:

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Pineville ^[17]

Wake County ^[18]

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press. ^[20]

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