

All That Glitters

Alice Maude Lund Watson ... William Watson
1869 – 1964 1847 - 1921

When a Michigan based Canadian family up and leaves to the rugged west in search of gold, you know there's more than a few stories to pass down to their children. This particular story will tell of Robert and Saphrona Lund's youngest daughter Alice and her husband William Watson.

Soon after the Lund family would arrive in the gold mining town of White Oaks, New Mexico (1886) their daughter Alice (Maude Lund) would meet and marry local attorney William Watson. This is their story.

The story of William Watson was filled with tragic losses and golden opportunities. A successful man by anyone's standards, he would live a life of huge peaks and deep valleys. It has been said that in times of tragedy a silver lining can often be found; you just have to look for it. This surely must have been the case for William Watson, one of the original pioneers of White Oaks, New Mexico.

When Alice Maud Lund moved to White Oaks at the young age of 17, her soon to be husband William Watson had already endured the loss of a wife and child. Just four years earlier his first son died during childbirth, ten days later his wife Sarah also died. The baby boy and Sarah Watson (Mrs. Wm. Watson) were laid to rest in White Oaks historic Cedarvale Cemetery.

William Watson was also a single father. He and his first wife Sarah had a seven-year-old daughter named Adda Mary Watson. The Lund family has no memories of Adda living in White Oaks when they got there so we assume that she was sent to live with relatives after her mother's death.

William Watson was an attorney who worked out of a small building in White Oaks. The building was built out of bricks and mortar brought in by wagon at a considerable cost. Originally built by Watson, it would later be shared with William's in laws Robert E. Lund and Fletcher Marsh Lund. Robert E. Lund was a judge and a reverend, his son Fletcher was a mining engineer and assayer. On the front of the office hung a wood sign that read "Watson Lund" and their office always simply known as the Watson Lund building.

Watson and the Lunds would use their office building as a place to hang their hats and to do legitimate business by trade, however these men, along with the rest of the town were there looking for the gold rumored to be hidden in the hills of White Oaks.

The Lund family consisted of three brothers, Fletcher, Albert and Robert, their parents Robert and Saphrona and two sisters Alice and Sarah. The men mined for gold and never found any, however Alice's husband William Watson would be one of the few to strike it rich.

Watson along with two other attorneys John Y. Hewitt, Harvey B. Fergusson and Watson's nephew Matthew Watson Hoyle (also called Andy or Watt) would purchase the rights to the southern stake of the Old Abe mine when its original group of owners let their lease lapse. This golden opportunity would lead William Watson and the others to their riches. In total about twenty million dollars in gold and minerals was pulled out of the mountains of White oaks, the Old Abe mine produced over a million and a half dollars of gold.

This was a great time in White Oaks and in William Watson's life. The Old Abe mine was able to employ many men and the town was booming. Of all the many mining operations, the Old Abe Mine was the largest, employing forty workers yielding between forty-five to fifty tons of gold per day.

However in March of 1895 as often seemed to be the case in William's life, tragedy would strike unexpectedly when a fire in the Old Abe mine took the lives of nine men. This was a devastating blow to the mine's owners who knew all of the men that died as well as their families. Watson and the other Old Abe mine owners were devastated by this tragic event, as was the entire town.

Of the nine that died in the mine, only eight were buried in White Oaks as one man was sent to his hometown to be buried. The town's people gathered on the streets and bowed their heads as the eight coffins were carried to the Cedarvale Cemetery on buckboards. For the first time in a long time, the booming little town lay silent.

The mine continued to operate until shortly after the turn of the century when the deposits became less profitable. When the mine developed a problem with the timbers in the shaft, it was finally shut down for good.

In 1904 William Watson and the others he had partnered with were sued by the mine's previous owners. The lawsuit however found that Watson and his partners were the rightful owners of the mine and it's gold.

With its precious minerals depleted and the railroad having bypassed the settlement in favor of nearby Carrizozo, the town declined dramatically. By 1910, White Oaks had only about 200 residents and William and Alice (Lund) Watson were among them.

William Watson and his wife Alice would have two sons, Roy and Kenneth both born in White Oaks. Roy would go on to marry and have children of his own. Kenneth never married or had children; instead, he would join the Navy. Sadly, Kenneth Watson lost his life in WWI when the Navy ship he was on caught fire at sea.

William Watson continued to mine for gold for as long as his health would allow him to. On Christmas Day 1921, William died from a heart attack. He was recorded as a beloved community member who was said to have been "one of the most cheerful men; in charity more liberal than his means would warrant; in loyalty, abiding, and in friendship true." He was buried in Cedarvale Cemetery in White Oaks, New Mexico, with his body facing the mountain where he spent so much of his life prospecting for gold."

Alice moved to Los Angeles, California to live near her son Roy and his family. Her life was blessed with grandchildren and great grandchildren that filled her life with love. She lived to the bright old age of be ninety-six.

Alice's Great Granddaughter Mary (Watson) Bowers shares that everyone called Alice Maude "Mimi." We are not sure if the name Mimi was given to her by her friends or her grandbabies, but it is certainly a wonderful name for our dear Aunt Alice of the golden age.

Story By: **Donna Kout Ikard** from family notes and oral history

Credits: Carrizozo Newspaper (Obituaries)

- The lawsuit filed in 1904 against Watson and his partners is made it all the way to the Supreme Court and is still used as a guide in many lawsuits.
- The Watson Lund building is still standing as of 2009. The building is now owned by a man named Tony Marsh (no relation) and is called the ***No Scum Allowed Saloon***.

The address of the old Watson Lund building is:
933 White Oaks Ave
White Oaks, New Mexico
575-648-5583



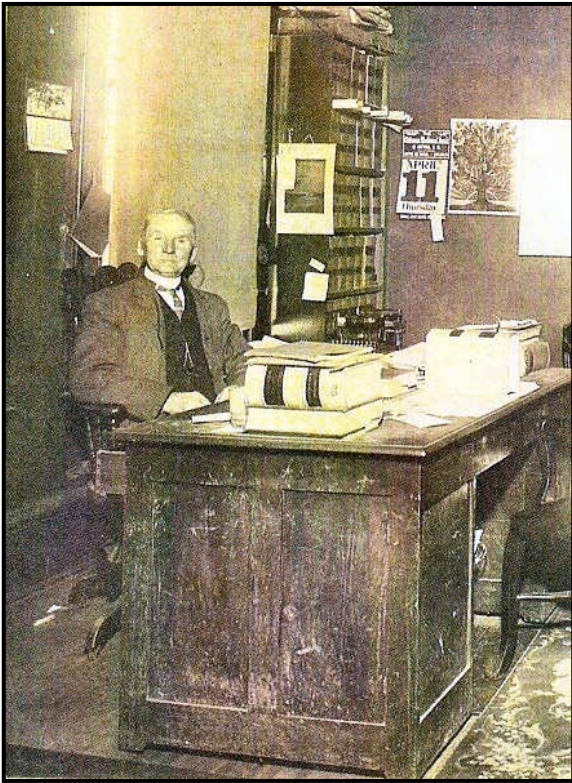
Alice Maude Lund Watson
1869 – 1964



Kenneth Robert Watson (age 2)
Roy Lund Watson (age 5)



Watson Lund Building
(Date unknown)



William Watson – shown in the
Watson Lund Building
Circa late 1880s to early 1890s