

Dr. Samuel Watkins

In 1828 one Dr. Samuel Watkins struck westward out of New York City and across central New York, eventually settling in a small community at the southern end of Seneca Lake - a gorgeous, deep glacial rift that stretched 38 miles to the north. At the time of his arrival the area was made up of four distinct communities, but by 1842 Dr. Watkins - widely held as the "founder" of Watkins Glen - had established a single community that was incorporated as either "Gardnerville," or "Jefferson," depending upon who you ask. After Dr. Watkins' death in 1852, the widow Watkins suggested the name of the town be changed to honor the many contributions her late husband had made to the community. So in 1861 a new charter was drawn up and the name changed to Watkins. But the town had still not found its full name. After the establishment of Watkins Glen State Park in 1906 brought a torrent of sightseers from as far away as Europe, confusion began to arise over the town's name as the thousands of visitors assumed the town shared the same name as the now-famous state park. Eventually, in 1926, the town's name was officially changed by the U.S. Postal Service to Watkins Glen, New York.

Reference: <http://www.downtowndifferent.com/watkinsglen/history.html>