

10. WILLIAM FRANCIS BAWDEN
1862-1932

William Francis Bawden, son of Richard Bawden and Ann Banfield Stone, was born in Bruggan, Parish of Grade, Cornwall, in 1862, and baptized in the parish's church on March 28, 1862.¹ William – age 9 – was living with his family (including his 69 year old grandmother Ann Stone) in Bruggan in 1871.² As mentioned in the previous chapter, the family had moved to the mining town of Camborne by 1881.³ William and two of his brothers were employed as tin miners in the area as can be seen in their census entries from that year. William next appears in the historical records in 1884 when he married Sarah Rosevear, age 24, of Rose Cottage, Camborne, on January 19th of that year.⁴ Sarah was the daughter of Charles Rosevear and Peggy Langdon.

William and Sarah had two sons: Francis John Bawden, born at Rosekear Fields (street), Camborne, on June 13, 1886; and William Bawden, born at Rosekear Fields (street), Camborne, on October 5, 1887.⁵ On his marriage certificate, and the birth certificates of both boys, William occupation is listed as “tin miner.” It is assumed that William emigrated to the U.S. between

¹ William Francis Bawden entry, “Parish Records for Grade, Church of England, Parish Church of Grade, Cornwall” (microfilm: batch no. C023131, source call no. 0226160), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

² Richard Bowden (*sic*) household, 1871 U.K. census, Parish of Grade, Cornwall, piece RG10/2306, folio 46, page 4, number of schedule 13.

³ Richard Bawden household, 1881 U.K. census, Parish of Camborne, Cornwall, piece RG11/2336, folio 57, page 5, number on schedule 25.

⁴ Marriage Certificate of William Francis Bawden and Sarah Rosevear (1886), General Register Office, Merseyside, U.K. Certified copy of original held by author.

⁵ Francis John Bawden, birth certificate (1886), General Register Office, Merseyside, U.K.; and, William Bawden, birth certificate (1887), General Register Office, Merseyside, U.K. Certified copies of originals held by author.

1887 and 1891: Sarah and the two boys appear on the 1891 U.K. census while William does not.⁶ Worth noting is the fact that William's parents lived in Camborne during this period.

It is at this point that the mysterious life of William, and the family legends about him, really begins. Family lore holds that he was a miner in the Mother Lode region of Grass Valley, California, during the latter part of the nineteenth century. One of William's grandsons, Francis Rosevear Bawden, wrote that William was known as "Pretty Bill" around Grass Valley and that William had a claim on the South Fork of the Yuba River.⁷ Nora Jones (nee Bawden), one of William's many great-grandchildren, confirms this story and states that William "worked in the mines in Grass Valley, California, and had a claim on the Yuba River."⁸ George Roger Bawden, another one of William's great-grandchildren, and his family have similar memories of their ancestor.⁹ George's father, Kenneth John Bawden, had this to say about his enigmatic grandfather:

My grandmother on my father's side was Sarah Rosevear. She married William [Francis] Bawden, only to learn later – to her regret, after some time of married life and three (*sic*) children – that that grandfather [William Francis] deserted the family and immigrated to the United States never to return. That's the only renegade I know of in the family. Of course, he came to an untimely end. Not untimely, perhaps. He was getting on in years. He was in a rest-home, or poor farm as they called it in those days, in Grass Valley, California. There in his dotage, he wandered off and died in the hills. The body was found a great deal of time later.¹⁰

⁶ Sarah Bawden household, 1891 U.K. census, Parish of Camborne, Cornwall, piece RG18/1850, folio 124, page 21, no. on schedule 134.

⁷ Francis Rosevear Bawden, manuscript, date unknown. Original held by Nora Jones (nee Bawden). Copy of the original held by the author.

⁸ Nora Jones (nee Bawden), "Grandpa Bawden," February 16, 2000, personal e-mail (February 16, 2000).

⁹ Jeri J. Bawden, "Bawden Family History," January 13, 2001, personal e-mail (January 13, 2001).

¹⁰ Interview with Kenneth John Bawden, conducted in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on January 24, 1984. Tape recorded copy held by the author.

But are these facts or merely legends? Did William emigrate to Grass Valley and continue his career as a miner? Did he have a mining claim on the Yuba River? And how did his life end?

Before we can answer those questions, we should ask: *why* would he move to Grass Valley? The mining district of Grass Valley, like numerous other places around the world, was the destination of many Cornish miners during the nineteenth century. The Cornish were renowned for their abilities as underground, hard-rock miners. Following the California Gold Rush in the late 1840s and early 1850s, many Cornishmen moved to Grass Valley to mine underground. In fact, the peak of Cornish emigration to Grass Valley occurred between 1880 and 1890, which of course is the same time period William appears to have emigrated.¹¹ By this time Grass Valley had become a well established town. While many historians have described the Cornish miners of this era as married men with rosy-cheeked wives, and living in snug cottages, research has discovered that the rate of single men remained high, and the Nevada County death records from this period show that many miners were single, divorced, or rather suspiciously labeled “unknown.”¹²

Whether or not William fits into the “unknown” category is not obvious, but what is apparent are the details about his mining activities in Grass Valley. William, along with William Treloar, had two different mining claims in Nevada County, both near Grass Valley. The first was the Mosquito Quartz Mine. William recorded the location of the Mosquito at the Nevada County land office on January 6, 1893. The location of the mine shaft is described as:

Situated about 1500 feet in a north-westerly direction from the forks of the Auburn and McCourtney roads and about 1¼ miles in a south-westerly direction from the town of

¹¹ Kathleen L. Bramall, “Cornish Miners of Grass Valley and Nevada City,” unpublished M.A. thesis (California State University, Chico, Fall 1972), 147-149.

¹² Bramall, “Cornish Miners,” 100-101.

Grass Valley and about 100 (700?) feet from the Hermosa Mine in the Grass Valley Mining District, Nevada County, California.¹³

William continued to work the Mosquito; on December 26, 1893 he was back in the land office to “declare that I in good faith intend to hold and work said [Mosquito Quartz Mine] claim,” and again on October 8, 1894 to record another “good faith” declaration.¹⁴

Is the Mosquito the mining claim on the Yuba River that has been described in family tales? A survey of an 1897 map of the Grass Valley mining district reveals the location of the Hermosa Mine specified in the 1893 document, along with the intersection of the Auburn and McCourtney roads.¹⁵ By comparing the description of the mine and the 1897 map with a modern topographical map, it is possible to determine the present-day location of the Mosquito: near the northwest corner of the Nevada County Fairgrounds in Grass Valley. A survey of the area was conducted by the author on March 15 and 16, 2005 after securing permission to access the site from Edward Scofield, Chief Executive Officer for the Nevada County Fairgrounds. When questioned about the possibility of an old mine on the fairgrounds’ property, Scofield stated that he didn’t know of any such mine, but he was sure that when Highway 20 – which forms the northern boundary of the fairgrounds – was expanded, that the construction crews had difficulties with flooding when they inadvertently unearthed an abandoned mine shaft.¹⁶ The author, using standard land navigation, followed the directions found in the land records to almost exactly the

¹³ “Mining Location of W.F. Bawden, et al,” *Mining Claims*, January 6, 1893, book 12, page 262, (Nevada County Recorder’s Office, Nevada City, California).

¹⁴ “Good Faith of Mosquito Mine,” *Mining Claims*, December 26, 1893, book 12, page 532 (Nevada County Recorder’s Office, Nevada City, California); and, “Good Faith of Mosquito Quartz Claim,” *Mining Claims*, book 13, page 41 (Nevada County Recorder’s Office, Nevada City, California).

¹⁵ Charles E. Uren, “Map of the Vicinity of Grass Valley and Nevada City, Nevada County, California,” 1897, map (Doris Foley Historic Library, Nevada City, California).

¹⁶ Personal interview with Edward Scofield, Chief Executive Officer of the Nevada County Fairgrounds, Grass Valley, California, March 15, 2005

location on Highway 20 that Scofield described. There was no remaining evidence of a mine or mining activities, although two large quartz boulders were observed on the fairgrounds about 300 feet southwest of the presumed location of the Mosquito. In any event, it's clear that this was not the mining claim on the Yuba River of family legend.

The second mining claim that William worked with was the Grand Central Quartz Mine. The first entry of the Grand Central that mentions William was recorded on March 29, 1893. William was working with William Treloar (the same Treloar from the Mosquito) along with Charles H. Mill. Interestingly, Mill was also one of the witnesses when William became a United States citizen on July 20, 1894.¹⁷ Also of interest are the improvements the miners made to their claim during 1892:

Charles H. Mill being first duly sworn disposes and says...that said owners have employed for the purpose of opening and developing said mines two miners for the period of 102 days at the rate of \$3.00 per day amounting to the sum of \$612.00; that the said owners have further expended in the work and development of said mining claims the sum of \$75.00 for lumber, and the sum of \$150.00 for timber and lagging for said mining claims, making in all the sum of \$837.00...for the operation and development of said Grand Central and Chance Mining Claims during the year of 1892...The owners of said Grand Central and Chance Mining Claims are your deponent, William Treloar and W. F. Bawden.¹⁸

A later entry, from February 14, 1894, establishes the mine's location and boundaries:

Commencing on the South West corner of the Jenny Lind Placer claim on Slate Creek running thence west 1500 feet to a stake marked W.N.W., thence running north 600 feet to a stake marked N.N.W., thence running east to the west line of said Jenny Lind Placer claim 1500 feet to a stake marked E.S.E, thence running south 600 feet to a post marked S.W. and the place of beginning.¹⁹

¹⁷ William F. Bawden entry, "Naturalization Records, no. 508-765," entry no. 559, July 20, 1894 (Searls Historic Library, Nevada City, California). The second witness was William Ninnis.

¹⁸ Grand Central entry, "Affidavit of Labor," *Mining Claims*, March 29, 1893, book 12, pages 338-339 (Nevada County Recorder's Office, Nevada City, California).

¹⁹ "Mining Location of W. F. Bawden," *Mining Claims*, February 14, 1894, book 12, pages 652-653 (Nevada County Recorder's Office, Nevada City, California).

In December of that same year, William makes a “good faith” declaration similar to the two he made for the Mosquito.²⁰ By 1895, William and Mill appear to have acquired the adjacent Jenny Lind mine, making the following improvements:

W. F. Bawden and Charles Mill being duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that at least four hundred dollars worth of labor or improvements was performed or made upon the Jennie (*sic*) Lind, Grand Central, and Godfrey Mining Claims...during the year ending December 31st, 1895.²¹

Finally, William seems to have become sole owner of the Grand Central and sells it to the remaining owners of the Jenny Lind in 1900 for a grand total of \$5.00 in gold coins!²² The deed indicates that William was a resident of Meaderville, Silver Bow County, Montana, at the time of the transfer of property.

So, is the Grand Central the mining claim from the Bawden family legend? Another look at the 1897 map of Grass Valley reveals the location of the Jenny Lind Mine and Slate Creek.²³ Slate Creek is a tributary of Deer Creek, which in turn flows into the Yuba River. A survey of the area of the presumed location of the Grand Central was attempted, but the area was in an isolated location and on private property with “No Trespassing” signs posted near the dirt road leading to the site. A survey of a modern USGS topographical map reveals the presences of tailings from mining in the area near the Grand Central site.²⁴

²⁰ “Good Faith of Grand Central Quartz Mining Claim,” *Mining Claims*, December 7, 1894, book 13, page 112, (Nevada County Recorder’s Office, Nevada City, California).

²¹ “Proof of Labor of Jennie (*sic*) Lind, Grand Central, and Godfrey Claims,” *Mining Claims*, January 20, 1896, book 13, page 705 (Nevada County Recorder’s Office, Nevada City, California).

²² “W. F. Bawden to Jenny Lind Mining Co.,” *Deeds*, November 2, 1900, book 93, pages 594-595 (Nevada County Recorder’s Office, Nevada City, California).

²³ Uren, “Map of the Vicinity of Grass Valley,” 1897.

²⁴ Grass Valley Quadrangle, 1995, USGS topographical map (Nevada County Public Library, Nevada City, California).

In any event, these records prove what had been mere family lore previously: William Francis Bawden did indeed live and work in the Grass Valley area from at least 1892 to around 1900. Additionally, he had many mining claims in the district, including the Grand Central Quartz Mine situated near Slate Creek, a stream in the Yuba River watershed. At last, family legend has been proven to be historical fact.

Of course, the mystery surrounding William's life doesn't end there. No entry can be found for William in any of the U.S. censuses (1890-1930). It would appear, however, that William remained in Montana after he sold his mining interests in Grass Valley. In fact, it seems that William and his youngest son (also named William) met *circa* 1910. This episode likely occurred in Montana since his son began living in that state beginning that year. Grandson Alfred Thomas Bawden recalled that his father (William) stated that the encounter was confrontational and physical.²⁵ No doubt William's son had some hard feelings towards his father for not returning home to the family in Cornwall.

But, what about the stories of William's death? Those oral traditions also seem to be rooted in facts, although William didn't die in Grass Valley but rather in nearby Nevada City. A series of newspaper articles in 1932 recorded the events. The first report states that:

William Bowden (*sic*), an old resident of Grass Valley who was admitted to the county hospital Friday afternoon, disappeared from the institution yesterday... This morning members of the American Legion will assemble at the hospital and a thorough search of the surrounding section will be made.²⁶

²⁵ David Thomas Bawden, "Bawden Mystery Photo," September 9, 2006, personal e-mail (September 9, 2006). David wrote that "in his anger, William punched his father and 'cleaned his clock'".

²⁶ "Wm. Bowden [*sic*] is missing; Quits co. hospital," *The Morning Union*, July 3, 1932, page 2.

The search continued for several more days but with no results.²⁷ Finally, about a week after he went missing, William's body was found:

The dead body of William Bawden, resident of Grass Valley, who disappeared from the County Hospital early last Saturday morning, was found just before dusk yesterday by Walter Jewett who has been engaged in a search for the body all this week...The old man fell exhausted in a brush covered gully about 1000 yards from the Tahoe-Ukiah Highway, the place where he was last seen on last Saturday morning...Bawden had been a resident of Grass Valley for many years, but little is known of his past life. It is believed he came to Grass Valley from Butte, Montana, where he is said to have a living son. [This, of course, is true.] He was aged about 70 years according to the hospital records.²⁸

The formal coroner's inquiry in William's death stated:

We, the jury, find that William F. Bawden came to his death about July 2, 1932, in the Manzanita Diggings, near Nevada City, California, having died from natural causes, after having wandered away in a dazed condition from the Nevada County hospital, where he had been receiving treatment.²⁹

Like everything concerning William, the mystery does not end there. William's death certificate contains so many errors that it would be difficult to identify it as his except for his name and date of death.³⁰ These errors are no doubt due to the fact that he has suffering from dementia immediately preceding his death.

William's gravesite is also proving difficult to find. Family lore again provides us with a few clues: William is supposedly buried in an unmarked "miner's graveyard."³¹ It is reported that indigent people who died at the Nevada County Hospital during this period were buried at

²⁷ "Wm. Bawden is still missing from hospital," *The Morning Union*, July 6, 1932, page 1; and, "New search for William Bawden is unavailing," *The Morning Union*, July 7, 1932, page 1.

²⁸ "Body of Wm. Bawden found in diggings; Grass Valley resident who left county hospital one week ago perished in heavy brush growth," *The Morning Union*, July 9, 1932, page 1.

²⁹ "Formal verdicts returned by jury in recent deaths," *The Morning Union*, July 16, 1932, page 5.

³⁰ William F. Bawden, death certificate (1932), State of California, Department of Health Services. Copy of original held by the author.

³¹ Nora Jones (nee Bawden), "Great-Grandpa's Gravesite in Grass Valley," December 30, 2000, personal e-mail (December 30, 2000). Nora writes that "my dad [Francis Rosevear Bawden] said he [William Francis Bawden] was buried in a 'miner's graveyard'...most were buried as 'John Does' with many unmarked graves."

the Willow Valley Cemetery on Lewis Road near Nevada City.³² This cemetery is about a quarter-mile north of the old county hospital on Willow Valley Road. Each of the graves was originally marked with a simple wooden stake with a metal plate nailed to it. Each plate has a number stamped on it. Later, crosses made of iron were placed alongside the wooden stakes. It is probably safe to posit that an index of the graves once existed for this cemetery which matched the number on the grave with its occupant, but this index is yet to be found.

Children of William Francis Bawden and Sarah Rosevear:

11. i. Francis John Bawden, born in Camborne, Cornwall, on June 13, 1886, and died in Camborne, Cornwall, on June 14, 1953
12. ii. William Bawden, born in Camborne, Cornwall, on October 5, 1887, and died in Walkerville, Montana, on March 31, 1936

³² Personal interview with Craig Thompson, employee of the Nevada County Cemetery District, Nevada City, California, Nevada City, August 9, 2004. This cemetery is sometimes confused with the one immediately next to the hospital.