

Bernice, Nevada: Once the Largest Town in Churchill County

Compiled from family narratives and other sources collected by
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Illustration of the quartz mill at Bernice by Fallon artist Victor Williams.

Casket. What a name for a mining town! Wallace W. Goodell, prospecting out in the wilds of Churchill County in 1881, was a 48 year old Civil War veteran who had made his way from New York state to the vast emptiness of Nevada. Not a rich man, he must have been very excited when he hit a ledge of quartz that looked promising. He located his mining claim, and, naming it for the unique shape of the ledge, promptly christened the camp Casket (sometimes known as Coffin), Nevada*.

Goodell worked at his claim for two years before he leased it to George W. Bothwell, a Nevada mining man of much experience. The lease included an option for Bothwell to purchase the claim and erect a ten-stamp quartz mill near the site. Hoping to strike it rich (most of the minerals in the mine were silver with a small percentage of gold), Bothwell took out some ore and milled it, but to his disappoint-

* Other historical sources say James Wardell was the first to find the quartz ledge.

ment he lost the quartz vein when he unknowingly ran his second mine tunnel in the wrong direction. Discouraged and thinking there was no more ore, Bothwell gave up his lease/purchase option and turned the claim back over to Goodell. By then Goodell had met Warren W. Williams and his half-brother, George Williams, who were willing to purchase some shares in the mine. In 1884, Goodell quickly sold one half of his claim to Warren and one fourth of his claim to George for \$10,000.

Pockets flush with cash, Goodell left the desolation of Nevada for the high life at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, California. For the next two years he enjoyed fine food, liquor, fancy clothing and upscale social contacts. He was having the most marvelous time of his life and, never regretting a moment of it, returned to Nevada destitute. Warren Williams gave him a job as his company bookkeeper, and Goodell settled back into a more staid lifestyle.

Who were these Williams men who could afford to put \$10,000 down to buy most of the shares in Goodell's mine? Warren Willard Williams, born on December 20, 1837, was raised and schooled in New Portland, Maine. When he was 19 years old he accompanied his cousin Alden W. Jackson on a sailing trip from New York to San Francisco in order to join his older brother Abram Williams. After arriving in San Francisco, Warren left for Virginia City, Nevada, to work in his brother's store located on the divide below the Nevada town. Warren's duties included bringing in supplies for the store with a pack train. He encountered some adventures on this job. During one trip he and a young helper were attacked by Indians near Mono Lake and lost their supplies, but saved themselves by hiding in the river under a cutbank.

Over the next two decades, Warren would move back and forth over the Sierras between Nevada and California, quenching his thirst for both adventure and fortune.

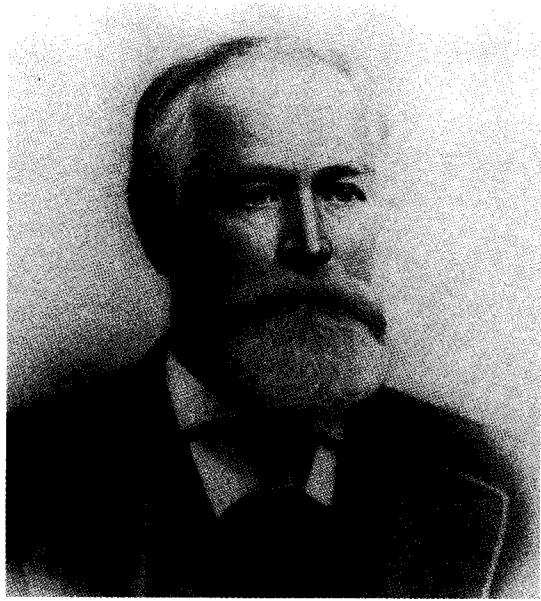
Years later, Warren's half-brother Eugene would write down many of the young man's Wild West escapades. These events give us insight into Warren Williams' character and give us clues as to how he had amassed much of his vast Nevada holdings by the time he became an investor in Bernice.

In the spring of 1861, five years after venturing west, Warren was among a number of men in a large prospecting party looking for ore in western Nevada. The expedition soon came to the Walker River. There was no easy means of crossing the river at this time except to have a volunteer from the party swim across the river and attach a strong rope firmly to an object on the further shore. Supplies and pack animals could then be guided along the rope for a safe crossing.

The leader of the party, a man of much intelligence and experience, called for volunteers to undertake the dangerous mission of carrying the rope across the river. Warren, 24 years old, a young man with grit and possessed of a powerful, 6'4" physique, was an expert swimmer and volunteered to do the deed. The foreman then suggested Warren be properly prepared for the chilly swim by removing his clothes. He then asked him to run up and down the bank of the river while cold water from the stream was thrown upon him. The young man ran back and forth for about fifteen minutes in order to change the temperature of his blood to better

enable him to resist the Walker River's frigid waters, composed mainly of melting snow from the Sierras.

This being done, a knot was tied in one end of the rope which Warren took between his teeth as he plunged forward into the icy waters. Heading across the river, he bravely battled against the swift current, finally reaching the opposite shore some distance downstream. Witnesses stated it required several attempts before he could regain his footing, his body was so numb from the cold, but presently he stood erect and held the rope high to the cheers of the party on the opposite bank. After tying off the guide rope, the rest of the party -- men, supplies and pack animals, safely crossed the river.



Warren Willard Williams. (Churchill County Museum & Archives Photograph Collection.)

Another interesting incident that Warren's half-brother Eugene recounted shows his older brother's strength of character. The event took place back in California in 1863, when Warren was in charge of the Markley racing stable, owned by the Markley Brothers in Shaw Flats. As Warren returned from a race meeting in the San Joaquin Valley near Stockton, California, he stopped in the little town of LaGrange. As he entered the town, riding his spirited race horse, he saw a frightened horse racing down the street dragging a young girl whose foot was caught in the stirrup of her saddle. Many townspeople looked on in horror at the spectacle, but were unwilling or unable to help.

Taking the lariat from his saddle, Warren started in pursuit of the runaway. The race was fast and furious, and when he reached a point about twenty feet behind the frightened animal, Warren raised up in the saddle, threw his lariat over the head of the running horse and took a few turns of his rope around his saddlehorn. Within seconds, both horses had been halted. To the great joy of her parents and the crowd which had quickly gathered, Warren quickly dismounted and extricated the frightened girl from the dangling stirrup. It is reported that later the girl sent a message to her hero expressing a desire to meet him to show her gratitude. Warren went to her home and received the fond thanks of her parents. He felt he had won the heart of the young girl, but being at the time without settled plans in life, and of little means but ambition to make a fortune, he distanced himself from any thoughts of matrimony.

Yet another story demonstrates that Warren could fully defend himself when the need arose. About the same time as he was racing horses, Warren was also

engaged in placer mining in the vicinity of Sonora on some of his own claims. A group of claim jumpers attempted to take possession of them by means of violence. When the young man resisted, two men threatened him with an old time six shooter loaded with powder and ball. Pointing the pistol at Warren's chest at very close range, one of the men pulled the trigger. Luckily, the gun did not discharge, and Warren lost no time in putting his only weapon, a miner's pick, into action. In a few minutes, the two ringleaders were laid out on the ground more dead than alive and the other men had fled the scene. The injured men recovered in time, but did not return. Thereafter, the young miner worked his claims without interference.

Warren soon sought different employment in California, driving freight teams at the sawmills in the summer and ox teams in logging regions in the winter. Driving ox teams in the logging camps was dangerous employment as the teams were compelled to run very fast down the steep places in the logging roads. Warren, running alongside them, was obliged to take a firm hold of the near oxbow and keep pace with his team. On many occasions he would lose his footing and the oxbow would become his life preserver.

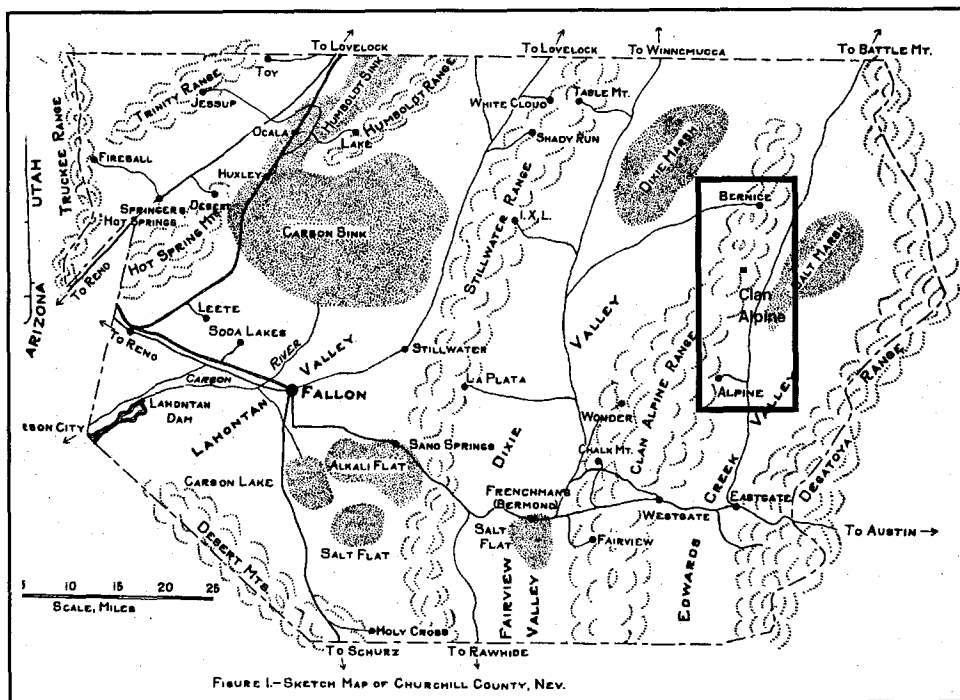
One more event in Warren's early life shows his allegiance to family members. In the winter of 1864, his younger brother Ward Spooner Williams was employed as a schoolteacher in a mining town called Copperopolis, not far from Sonora, California. After administering punishment to a misbehaving student, the boy's father, a hot-tempered southern man named Woodside, vowed to get even. North/South sentiments ran high all over the nation at the close of the Civil War and as Woodside loaded a sawed-off shotgun, he declared he was going to kill the "damn Yankee" on sight. Ward, hearing of Woodside's comment, closed the school and went into hiding for a few days. Warren heard of the threat upon his brother's life and secured a man to drive his freight team while he went to Ward's aid.

Once in Copperopolis, Warren went quietly from place to place seeking his brother's enemy, like a player in a western movie. Woodside was soon located in a local saloon and Warren, armed with a revolver and Bowie knife as was the western custom, entered the establishment. He took a position within striking distance of Woodside, looked him squarely in the eye and said, "damn you, the teacher is my brother." As he said this he drew his six shooter, and, using it as a bludgeon, struck his antagonist a blow on the head which rendered him unconscious. A few days later Warren sent a challenge to Woodside to a shootout in the street, but the man declined. Woodside soon sold his property and moved his family to another town. Peace was restored in Copperopolis.

Warren continued to drive freight teams for other companies for a number of years. Soon he had saved enough to buy his own team and began hauling supplies to the mining camps in Nevada. With a number of his brothers already in Nevada and the surrounding area, Warren wrote a letter back home asking his half-brother George Burell Williams to come to Nevada to operate one of the freight stations at Dead Horse Wells. George liked the idea and came out west straightaway.

After helping his half-brother in the freighting business for a few years, George joined Warren when he went into a sheep ranching partnership with Charles Kaiser. Kaiser and Williams brought 3,000 head from California and established ranches in Churchill County at Stillwater and at Clan Alpine. The Kaiser/Williams partnership dissolved in 1878 with Kaiser keeping the ranch at Stillwater and Williams the ranch at Clan Alpine. George and Warren Williams continued in the freighting business (which was sold in 1882), and also partnered in ranching, raising sheep and mining.

It was their mining ventures which bring us back to the story of the Casket claims, and Goodell's spending spree in San Francisco. Much had transpired in Casket during the two years that Goodell was away. In 1883, the forty-three year old, 6'4" Warren Williams brought his eighteen year old, 4'8" wife of four years to view the claims in Casket, which he hoped to soon own. Addie Mattison Williams was a very bright person, an expert rifle shot, could dance the Schottische and spoke several languages. Given her education and her strong Baptist beliefs, she may have been the one to state she was displeased with the little town's depressing name. Addie may have held four year old Lizzie Beth, the couple's first child, near as she turned to the Bible in search of a title with more grandeur for the camp. It is quite probable that Addie encouraged her husband to rename the area after Queen Bernice, wife of the Greek King Agripa (Acts 25: 13-23). The Williams family



The mining town of Bernice was located 92 road miles east of Fallon. Austin was 85 miles further east of the town. Bernice was 65 miles southeast of Lovelock. (This map is taken from the book Mines of Churchill and Mineral Counties by William O. Vanderburg.)



A jaunty George Williams and his favorite buggy team, taken c. 1884. (Churchill County Museum & Archives Photograph Collection.)

always pronounced the name “bur-niss,” possibly its biblical pronunciation, but either pronunciation means “bringer of victory.”

With the mining camp now properly named, there was great discussion as to what to call the William’s new mine located on the hillside above the town. Logic prevailed and the mine was christened the Golden Crown, a fitting “accessory” for Queen Bernice. (History reveals that naming mines after Kings and Queens was quite common. The Summit King and the Copper Queen mines are two Nevada examples.) Whatever the source, Bernice and the Golden Crown surely sounded better to the ear, and to the townspeople, than Casket.

What the Williams brothers and their families (George had just married Cora May Williamson) saw in 1884 when they looked down on the town of Bernice from their mine site 800 feet above the camp, was a place situated at the junction of Bernice Canyon and Bernice Creek, on a flat area of approximately five acres, ranging from ten to twenty feet above the canyon floor.

Good water, or lack of it, was always a concern in the deserts of Nevada. The water that flowed near the mill site was so full of arsenic it was undrinkable, but fortunately, two good water sources for the town were available. Bernice Creek’s water was tested and found to be good enough to water the town’s livestock. A few springs below the town provided drinking water during most of the year. If the springs froze or ceased to flow during cold weather months, residents drank water from melted snow.

Spring in the canyon was reflected in the large groves of cottonwood trees whose green leaves danced in the breezes. Watered by the creek, the wildflowers

bloomed and wild horses, deer, mountain lions and other wildlife were abundant. Winter in the area was another story. Located over a mile above sea level, the storms and cold temperatures in Bernice could be severe. The Cottonwood groves and pinon pine trees were toppled and sledged across the snow before being cut up and sacrificed to the "cast iron stove" to keep the townspeople from freezing.

The town's commercial buildings included the Hoyt hotel, a boarding house, two stores, saloons (including the Williams Saloon), an assay office with a canvas ceiling upon which the signs of the zodiac were painted, a livery stable, a ten stamp quartz mill, a blacksmith shop and stables and a Post Office (which operated from June 5, 1883 to June 5, 1894). There is no record of a church.

With a population of about 60 people (counting the Chinese and Native American population brought the number to 100) there was soon opportunity enough in Bernice for another Williams brother -- Eugene Lawrence Williams. Eugene was born in New Portland in 1858. Sixteen years younger than his half-brother Warren and four years younger than George, Eugene had farmed, taught school and received a law degree by the time he traveled to Nevada. Upon arriving in Bernice, Eugene took over the running of the Williams store and became bookkeeper for the mining company. The twenty-seven year old man also took time to write journal entries about the Williams' activities in and around Bernice. (These journals, probably written between 1915 and 1919, have been handed down through the family and have provided many of the historical insights included in this article.)

Eugene used his law degree on occasion in Bernice, as the camp was large enough to allow its official functions to be carried out in Justice Court by the Justice of the Peace or the Constable. The few children in town were taught at the District 5 School in nearby Clan Alpine, a six hour buggy ride away, where Warren Williams' sister, Mary Williams Young, was the teacher. Children in Bernice may have been sent to ranches in Edwards Creek Valley to be boarded so they could attend the seasonal school located there.

Warren Williams had a home in Bernice, near the Williams Boarding House, where he and his family stayed when they visited the mine. Mr. and Mrs. R.H. Parker, James Deveny and Constable W.P. Dennis also had homes in the area and cabins were scattered elsewhere around the landscape.

There were some connections to the outside world, as a buggy road, starting near the Curtis tunnel of the Golden Crown Mine, went over the mountain to Shoshone Springs and then down the valley to Clan Alpine. Mail came to the town from Lovelock three times a week -- during good weather. In the winter of 1884, a citizen of Bernice joked in a letter to the editor in Austin's *Reese River Reveille* that tri-weekly mail from Lovelock to Bernice, ". . . means get through one week and try to get back the next, but which ordinarily gets through on time."

Not only mail and citizens went to and fro from Bernice; all of the supplies for the mine and town residents had to be hauled in by freight wagons. The town's main trade center was Lovelock's Ranch (now Lovelock) on the Central Pacific Railroad. During part of the year when the roads were passable, weekly deliveries of three wagon trains were required to supply this bustling community. Total weight

**Supply List Required by the
Town of Bernice and the
Mines**

Lumber
 Quick Silver (Mercury) for the Mill
 Salt for the Mill
 Lubricants for the Mill
 Chemicals/retorts for Assay Office
 Iron, rods, bolts, nuts, rivets and charcoal for blacksmith shop
 Saddle soap and leather for tack
 Whiskey, beer and sarsaparilla for saloons
 Hay and grain for stock
 Black powder, fuses, candles, picks, shovels, crow bars and drill steel for mines
 Food, hardware and dry goods for stores: sacks of flour, table salt, sugar, tea, bars of laundry soap, rice, beans, tins of matches, coffee, maple syrup, macaroni, baking powder, crackers, wheels of cheese, bacon and hams.
 Other items: coal oil, brooms, guns and ammunition, stoves

Meat was butchered on the premises and hung in cold weather and in summer put down in brine and corned. Beef was available from the surrounding ranches. Lamb and pork was also procured nearby.

of the wagons was 20 tons, pulled by teams of from ten to twenty horses or mules. The round trip would take two weeks, one freight team coming into town meeting another on its way back to Lovelock.

Reliance on outside sources for every supply in town made Bernice residents very aware of the condition of their roads. In 1885, an angry Bernice resident sent a letter to the *The Reese River Reveille* and complained:

The roads from here to Lovelock are in bad condition and Churchill County Commissioners seem to think all they have to do is send out their Assessor and collect taxes and let us alone till they are due again, but the day will come when we will have the power, and they will feel how good it is to be in our place!

Apparently the Churchill County Commissioners got the message, for on July 5, 1886, they ordered that a Road District be established between the towns of Cottonwood and Bernice. Presumably this designation would provide more regular road repair.

The mining camp had its own Chinatown up Bernice Canyon, east of the mill. The men living in Chinatown were most likely laborers who had helped lay the tracks of the Central Pacific railroad over the

treacherous terrain of the High Sierra in the 1860s. These men were used to living in simple dwellings (in Bernice they were dugouts in the hills) and cooking their own meals of rice and fish, dried oysters, fruit, mushrooms and seaweed and, of course, tea.

The Chinese men living near Bernice were employed as cooks, laundrymen, and at least twenty-five of these men were employed by the mine owners to cut and stack pinon pine logs for the fires that roasted the crushed ore, as it contained arsenical iron, and roasting was the only way to get rid of the arsenic.

The Chinese developed an ingenious way of getting the logs from high up on the hillsides to the mill site below. Two posts would be driven into the ground in a

straight line on the side of the canyon, parallel to the canyon's floor and less than a log's width apart. A dozen cut logs would then be stacked behind these posts, which would hold them in place. A number of these stacks would be made all over the hillsides. When the wood was needed down at the mill, the two front posts would be knocked down, allowing the logs to roll to the bottom of the canyon to be hauled to the mill by horse teams with drag lines.

Chinese workers were later employed as miners, digging below the earth through the shale under neighboring Hoyt Canyon, one and one half miles north, driving a tunnel known as the Golden Crown Extension. The laborers entered the existing mine tunnel from the back, trying to locate a vein that had faulted. The tunnel they dug was beautifully done, five feet wide with a seven foot arched ceiling. It is rumored that these men found a small gold ledge, and, unbeknownst to the Williams brothers, kept the profits and supplemented their incomes by selling the gold at Lovelock's Ranch.

Other men often employed in and around the mines or at other jobs in the town were the local Native Americans. Even in these isolated areas of Churchill County, cultural diversity could be found.

From their humble beginnings as mine owners and leaseholders of the Bothwell quartz mill, the Williams brother's holdings in Bernice eventually encompassed a number of business sites -- and the town itself. The mine's main stables and blacksmith shop were located to the east of the stamp mill along a sandy shelf of land above Bernice Creek. The blacksmith shop was certainly essential for the operations of the mine. Horses and mules had to be shod and wagons repaired. Wagon wheels had to be replaced and tightened, steel drill bits sharpened and repairs made to the mill. In fact, because sharp tools were a must for efficient mining, there was a small building at the mouth of each tunnel of the Golden Crown Mine that contained a forge where the drills could be made sharp again on the spot.

The ore bin at the mine held ten tons, requiring three or four trips a day for the wagons hauling the ore to the mill to be processed. Once a wagon was loaded with ore up at the mine, it made the slow trip down the narrow, steep trail to the mill in the town below. For the first quarter mile of the downward trip, a trail left the mouth of a lower tunnel in the mine, at 6,289 feet elevation, by way of a very steep ridge. The trail itself was difficult to traverse, as often a boggy area was created by a natural spring. Wagons hitched with four horses or mules and loaded with ore continued to lumber down the 18% grade until they were about half a mile above the mill. Here they took a branch road, which was cut into the side of the canyon. If this was navigated safely, the wagons would arrive just above the mill so they could dump their loads of ore. The noise in and around the millsite must have been deafening. Ten huge, noisy stamps, powered by a large Scottish steam engine, methodically drummed up and down, crushing large rocks into smaller pieces that would release their precious minerals.

After emptying their loads, the ore wagons proceeded west down the main street, along the edge of the townsite and down a short grade to the canyon floor where they passed below the mill and above the tailings pond. At this point, team-

sters could go straight ahead to the stables to change teams to make the arduous trip back up the canyon to the mine.

The stable area was also full of activity. In addition to the blacksmith pounding away at his forge, horses and mules had to be cared for, watered and fed. About a dozen saddle horses and a few buckboard teams added to the workload. A milk cow or two to supply the boarding house completed the picture. All the stock would require at least four hundred tons of hay and grain to feed them each year. Fortunately, these goods could be purchased from the surrounding ranches, hauled to Bernice where the hay was stacked high near the feed corrals. Water for the animals was laboriously hauled from nearby Bernice Creek.

From June 1884 until July of 1885, Williams' wagons and teams made their way up and down the hillside from the mine to the mill. By July the brothers' lease on George Bothwell's one and two story wood frame quartz mill had expired, and Warren and George decided not renew it due to the low price of silver. The brothers did keep up work at the mine, however, contracting with the "Cornish boys" to develop three new tunnels deep in the earth: the Curtis (elev. 6,396 ft.), the Williams (elev. 6,289 ft.) and the Lower (elev. 6,093 ft.).

The expiration of the quartz mill lease allowed owner George Bothwell to take over again and custom operate his mill for the nearby Hoyt and Healy mines in the Bernice Mining District. Bothwell's mistake that year was to attempt to transport these ores over the private road constructed by the Williams Brothers to the Golden Crown Mine's dump site.

When Warren Williams heard of Bothwell's trespassing, he was not too concerned. At this point in his life he was experienced in handling minor problems at his ranches and at his mines. Because he did not live in Bernice year round, Warren had to hire mine superintendents and shift bosses to keep things running smoothly. At one time he had a problem with one of his mine shift bosses. It is assumed both men were involved in an angry exchange of words. Sometime later, while Warren was inspecting the mine, he stepped onto the treads of a ladder in one of the stopes and fell, badly cutting his cheek. Close inspection of the ladder treads revealed they had been sawn nearly in two and all evidence pointed to the shift boss. Warren asked one of his men to sew up his cheek with a needle and thread right there in the mine tunnel, and by the time he made his way out of the mine, the perpetrator had disappeared, never to be seen again. The scar left from this accident might explain why Warren Williams wore a full beard later in life.

Another business worry for the Williams brothers was Harry Runisdow, the first mining superintendent they hired. In 1884 the ore coming out of the Golden Crown Mine was yielding \$125 per ton at the mill. Upon hiring Runisdow, these yields began to drop. It was discovered that the new superintendent did not understand how to treat the ores successfully in the milling process. Special processing of the ore was necessary to allow the mine owners to save most of the metals, mainly silver carrying a small percentage of gold. Runisdow's lack of experience meant

that great quantity of the metals were going into the tailings pond and not into the owners' pockets. Jerry Downey, an old mill-man of much experience, soon joined the Golden Crown Mine as the new superintendent.

From the beginning, Downey obtained good results, and the company began shipping bullion to San Francisco. The greatest monthly shipment of bullion was in May of 1885, consisting of eighteen bars of silver, a net profit of ten thousand dollars to the owners. By now, Warren Williams had bought out Wallace Goodell's remaining 1/4 share of the mining claim, and profits from the mine were used to build up his ranching interests. Soon he was running more than 110,000 head of sheep on ranches from Churchill to Elko counties.

In the fall of 1885, Warren's brother George was forced to move to Sacramento, California. He had been living in Bernice with his new bride Cora for about 6 months, but it soon became clear that Cora's tuberculosis was worsening in the severe Nevada climate. She was also expecting their first child. Unfortunately, the move to California did not improve Cora's health. In January she gave birth to a baby girl and within a few weeks both mother and daughter died. The mother and her little babe were buried side by side in the cemetery of that city.

However, neither ranching nor sad family matters had dimmed much of Warren Williams' spirit when George Bothwell began to use the Golden Crown's Mining road for his own. As evidenced by Warren's adventures in his younger days, he was not easily intimidated! His brother Eugene Williams recorded the story of the battle over the quartz road in his journal, written about 1915-1919:

... Warren gave orders to his mine foreman to prevent such use by building a strong log fence across the road at a certain point, which when completed, was ordered by Mr. Bothwell to be set on fire by his foreman. Whereupon, Mr. Hiram Barton, foreman for Mr. Williams, placed more brush on the fire, adding fire to the flames, thus affecting a blockade much too warm for the passage of the ore-team employed by Mr. Bothwell. This gave Mr. Williams time to appear on the battleground with his attorney, the author of this book [Eugene], then a young man of little experience in court.

It happened that the owner of the ore team, employed by Mr. Bothwell to haul ore over the disputed quartz road, was in debt to Mr. Williams on a small promissory note. After consultation between attorney and client, it was decided that during the night a crew of men should drive a deep cut through the quartz road at a point on the Golden Crown mining claim, with the innocent purpose of following a lead or ore stringer into the side of the hill for development work on the mining ground. The men were at once set to work. In the mean time, an attachment was filed against the owner of the ore team on the note, all of which was accomplished during the night.

About two o'clock in the morning, after the complaint had been filed in the Court of the Justice of the Peace, James Ironsides, and proper attachment issued, and the writ and copy had been placed in the hands of a special constable appointed by the court for serving the papers, the officer went forth armed with the authority of the law, took possession of the quartz-wagon, removed the six mules from their warm stable in cold winter morning, tied them around the quartz-wagon, awakened the owner, who to this fond driver each animal was a pet of his and to him a human. He, being an old character of the desert mining regions of Nevada, the scene which followed was intensely humorous. He fumed and swore, then fed his affectionate animals with hay, and turning around shook his fists at the newly constituted special officer, he then drove the tines of his pitchfork into the ground half way acting a part worthy of the attention of the movies.

The next morning Mr. Bothwell not only awoke to find the quartz-team, of which he had boastfully declared the night before, would be driven on the quartz-road on the next day if he had to call in the United States Marshall, was in custody of the law at the hands of his opponent. A cut fifteen feet wide and



George Williams (left), unknown child and Eugene Williams, author of the Williams memoirs. (Churchill County Museum & Archives Photograph Collection.)

twelve feet long yawned in the quartz-road, and Mr. Bothwell after due reflection realized that he had been "out generated." To this day, the author recalls his legal experience of that night with special interest and enjoyment, and as having furnished one of the most humorous and interesting reminiscences of his law practice.

Apparently, the argument between Warren Williams and Bothwell over the quartz road did not last long. In the spring of 1886, overtures of peace were made to Warren, and he purchased the quartz mill and all of the other interests of Bothwell in the camp. Soon Bothwell deserted the town for other fields.

Even though the price of silver remained low, a considerable amount of development work was done in the Golden Crown Mine between 1886 until January of 1888. A shaft one hundred feet in depth was sunk on the ore between the Williams and Lower Tunnels. The workers drifted on the vein, taking considerable rock from the stopes and milling it.

New work in the mine brought changes in personnel. After having served as bookkeeper and storekeeper for his brothers for three years, Eugene Williams left Bernice in the fall of 1887, heading for Seattle, Washington. He may have seen the "writing on the wall," as, in spite of the fact that new ore was being milled, its sale did not bring in enough money to keep the mine open. The Golden Crown Mine was closed in 1888.

The town of Bernice, however, continued to operate during this time just like any other town. Many tragic, humorous and mundane events took place that were not directly related to the Williams' mining operations.

A shooting occurred in Bernice in October of 1884. The perpetrator of the crime was one Gottlieb Frank Wildley, employed in the stock business, who shot and killed Frank Lee, another employee. Wildley pleaded not guilty and the court proceedings are recorded in the White Rock Township Justice Court proceedings. Eye witnesses to the event said that Wildley had just returned from a visit to Chinatown (apparently the Chinese men provided meals and drink for the general public), when Lee confronted him and asked Wildley why he had not taken care of feeding their herd of horses before he had gone to the town to shoot off his pistol. Wildley said he would shoot his pistol off whenever he liked when he was out of town and said menacingly, "if you don't like it you can have some of it!" After this inflammatory remark, the two began to scuffle and shots were fired. Frank Lee was shot twice and died from his wounds. The jury accused Gottlieb Frank Wildley of the murder of Frank Lee. Curiously, his punishment for the crime has not been recorded.

Alcohol and guns have never made for peaceful combinations. An 1886 court case involved a D.J. Huntsman of Bernice who wanted to have Thomas Duffy arrested after Duffy had threatened to "wipe him off the face of the earth." Once in court, Duffy was undefended, but Eugene Williams served as council for the plaintiff, Huntsman.

According to Huntsman, his day had begun innocently enough. He had proceeded to the Williams' boarding house in the canyon for the purpose of getting

some butter. He sat down in the boarding house and began a conversation with Angel Garabaldi. Garabaldi mentioned that two eye witnesses, Jerry Downey and Robert Thomas, had been in the saloon one night and heard Duffy say, "give me twenty dollars, I want to go kill Huntsman." Later in the trial, Downey and Thomas both testified that this was true. Asked whether Duffy had been drunk when he had uttered this threat, Thomas replied, "I don't think he was beastly drunk nor do I think he was beastly sober." Whatever the case, Duffy certainly cared little for Huntsman. Their feud escalated so that at one point Huntsman drew his pistol and leveled it at Duffy. Fortunately, no shots were fired. As the court proceedings came to a conclusion, the reason for their hatred was never revealed. Duffy received a fine of \$300, was admonished to "keep the peace," and was turned over to the Sheriff of Churchill County.

During the same year, Garabaldi had his "day in court" when he accused Hiram George of drawing a deadly weapon upon his person in the saloon of H.J. Barton. The outcome of these court proceedings is not recorded.



Addie Mattison Williams with the couple's firstborn, Lizzie Beth c. 1883. (Churchill County Museum & Archives Photograph Collection.)

Tragedy for the Williams family came neither by gun nor drink on one of their visits to Bernice in 1887. It took only one instant for them to lose their firstborn little girl. Lizzie Beth, then a happy six year old, was run over by an ore wagon when she tried to climb aboard while it was in motion. Her attempt failed, and she fell into the path of the lumbering wagon, slipping beneath its front wheel. After the accident, Addie rode beside her husband with her daughter in her arms as Warren drove their buggy to the nearest doctor in Austin, but the child died before they reached their destination.

For years Lizzie's grave was tended in a little plot surrounded by a picket fence out behind the town. Her body was later moved to Fallon and placed in the Williams plot in the Fallon cemetery. Although the

four other Williams girls, Abby, Ada, Elizabeth and Cora lived to adulthood, it is believed that little Lizzie Beth's death resulted in major damage to Addie's nervous system as she suffered for the rest of her life from epilepsy. Years later, she also had to endure the early deaths of her 21 year old daughter Abby, in childbirth, and the 25 year old, recently-widowed Elizabeth, who was ill for several weeks at the family's Fallon home before she died in 1913. Each tragedy was another blow from which Addie found it difficult to recover.

These early violent and tragic events in Bernice faded from memory when the area's population drifted from the area as mining activity declined. The Golden Crown Mine had closed in 1888, because the main silver vein was just about worked out. The ground had faulted and the vein had been lost. Some mining continued nearby, however, and the Taverna Saloon became a neighborhood waterhole for the few remaining residents. Food, gas, oil and other supplies could be obtained there.

Bernice was barely alive and kicking at the turn of the 20th century yet Warren Williams still retained ownership of his Bernice property. He felt there was more quartz in the Golden Crown Mine, and during the years 1910-1913, he ordered more development work done. In December of 1913, workers drove a drift to the left just beyond the portal of the Lower Tunnel and found the quartz ledge from Goodell's original mining claim. By then they had burrowed fourteen hundred feet from the mouth of the tunnel. This ledge indicated to Warren that the Golden Crown was more valuable than ever. He had spent much thought, time and money on the mine in the belief that in depth there was an increase in quantity and value. This new find was a matter of great satisfaction to the seventy-six year old man. Just before he died the next year, Warren Williams advised his daughter Cora to reopen the mine when the price of silver got

**Warren Williams and
Addie Mattison Williams
Daughters:**

Lizzie Beth

b. October 28, 1881
d. October 11, 1887

Abby Craigin

b. October 22, 1882
d. February 6, 1904
*Married to John Earl
Danielson, died in
childbirth*

Ada Bernice

b. August 22, 1885
d. January 9, 1934
*Married to William Arthur
Keddie (Served as Nevada
State Senator, killed in July
of 1921 in an airplane crash
near Elko)
Married to D.F. Ezelle*

Elizabeth

b. October 1, 1887
d. June 28, 1913
*Married to Ernest (Ernie)
John Freeman*

Cora Estelle

b. November 12, 1889
d. June 17, 1964
*Married to Ernest Harold
Hursh*

over a dollar, or \$50 in today's market. This never occurred and the mine remained closed.

After Bernice declined, Warren kept busy overseeing a section of his ranch at the intersection of the roads from St. Clair to Stillwater. In 1901, he and Addie moved from their ranch at Clan Alpine to their newly acquired property -- the ranch of Mike Fallon. Warren laid out Fallon's streets with the help of John Oats and the dusty crossroads soon grew into a bustling community. The Williams family lived in the then-existing house on their new ranch at what is today 376 W. Williams Avenue.

Warren's involvement in the new town continued through his civic service as a banker, county commissioner, merchant and by serving eight years as a Nevada State Senator. He also donated land for the courthouse, jail, Baptist Church and the first district school building. Today, many of Fallon's streets are part of his legacy.

Warren W. Williams died in Fallon on January 27, 1914. Two years later his widow had a new house built on the site of the original ranch home and that house still stands today. Addie lived in the home for many years until she was laid to rest beside her husband at the Fallon Cemetery in 1940.

After the death of Warren Williams, the Williams Estate Company hired a watchman to help protect their property in Bernice. By 1932, following the stock market crash, the Company could no longer afford to pay a watchman. By then the road to Bernice was in very poor condition and it was difficult to get to the mine. Even so, unbeknownst to the family, the mill and other buildings were being torn down a piece at a time to become homes and farm buildings in Dixie Valley, which had opened to homesteading in 1916.

Other hardy souls out to make a buck braved the road as well. The old Scottish steam engine and a five-stamp mill were stolen during World War II and hauled off for scrap metal. Someone else sunk a shaft into the old mine's tailing pond and was paid compensation by the Navy for them to use the area as a gunnery range. The true owners of the property never received a dime from any of these illegal escapades!

Today, the old townsite of Bernice is still private property and is owned by Merton Domonoske (1/2), Ward Nichols (1/4) and his son, Ward Ryan Nichols (1/4). In 1994, local archaeologist Dr. William C. Davis received permission from Merton Domonoske to do an archaeological recording of the site of Bernice. A copy of his report indicates that, for the trained eye at least, evidence of the mining activity of the 20th century was visible up and down four of the five miles of Bernice Canyon. Once within the canyon's walls, tunnels, pits and prospects can be seen. What remains of a massive fireplace is barely visible in a hillside; glass shards, wrought iron pieces, cut nails and wood stove parts litter the area. A timberless drift contains decomposed explosives and chemicals. Remnants of the old Chinatown are there as well. Davis' report is filled with the bits and pieces of the lives left behind by the hardy people who once lived there.

Many who have read about Churchill County's mining history are likely to point out Fairview and Wonder as the two most important early mining sites, but the research unearthed by Merton Domonoske in preparing his source book on Bernice and the area surrounding shows that the mining activity there was certainly equal to, or may have even overshadowed, the aforementioned towns.

Warren Williams' Family Names Fallon Streets

Warren Williams and John Oats laid out the town of Fallon, Williams the west side of town, and Oats the east. After pacing off the townsite, Williams named the Fallon streets on his property after close friends of the family with the exception of one name, after his native state. Many of these street names are still with us today:

Williams Avenue - named after Warren Willard Williams

Maine Street - after Warren Williams' state of birth.

Bailey - after Joe Bailey who owned the Island Ranch and most of the Island District.

Allen - after Lt. Governor Lemuel Allen.

Russell - after George Russell of the Elko County Russell family.

Taylor - after John G. Taylor of Lovelock who was a wealthy Nevada sheepman.

Richards - after Jim Richards whose store at the corner of Williams and Maine Streets served as the center of Fallon.

LaVerne - after LaVerne Wildes, first white child born in Churchill County.

Ada - after Ada Williams Keddie, the William's third daughter.

Kaiser - after Senator Charles Kaiser.

Keddie - after Arthur Keddie, husband of Warren's daughter, Ada.

Carson - after Kit Carson.

Dalton - after William T. Dalton, former owner of Eastgate Ranch.

Grimes - after William C. Grimes whose ranch was located near present-day Grimes Point Petroglyph Site.

Bernice Events at a Glance

1881 - Wallace Goodell discovers quartz ledge, gets mining claim and names town Casket.

1883 - George Bothwell leases mining claim from Goodell with an option to purchase the same and erect a ten-stamp quartz mill.

1884 - Bothwell turns the claim back over to Goodell after losing quartz vein.

1884 - Goodell sells 3/4 of the claim to brothers Warren W. and George B. Williams. George buys 1/4 of the claim, Warren purchasing 1/2.

July 1, 1884 - The Williams' brothers and Goodell lease the quartz mill for one year and begin developing the mine.

1884 or 1885 - Warren Williams purchases the 1/4 quarter interest in the mine from Goodell. Warren now owns 3/4 interest in the Golden Crown mine and his brother George owns 1/4.

July 1, 1885 - The Williams brothers let their lease on the quartz mill expire due to the low price of silver.

1885-1887 - The brothers contract with the Cornish boys to develop three new tunnels deep in the mine, the Curtis (elev. 6,396 ft.), the Williams (elev. 6,289 ft.) and the Lower (elev. 6,093 ft.)

1886 - The Williams brothers purchased the quartz mill and all other interests in the camp from Bothwell.

January 1888 - The mine closes due to the low price of silver.

1910 -1913 - Some development work is done in the mine by driving a drift to the left just beyond the portal of the Lower Tunnel.

January 27, 1914 - Warren Williams dies.

1914 - Williams had advised his daughter Cora to reopen the mine when the price of silver got over a dollar. This did not happen, but the mine and the townsite of Bernice remains in the Warren family.

1914 - The Williams Estate Company hires watchman for their property. (In 1932 this practice ends.)

1932 - Unbeknownst to the family, the mill and other buildings in the town are carried away to become homes and farm buildings in Dixie Valley.

World War II - the old Scotch steam engine and a five-stamp mill are stolen and hauled off for scrap metal.

Today - The property of Bernice is owned by Merton E. Domonoske (1/2), Ward Nichols (1/4) and his son, Ward Ryan Nichols (1/4).

About the Author . . . Merton E. Domonoske

January 11, 1923:	Born in Berkeley, California Parents: Arthur Bouque Domonoske Gladys Eloise Boydstrum Domonoske
1929-1940:	Attended grade school at Stanford University; middle school at Mayfield; Graduated from Palo Alto, CA, high school
September 1940:	Entered University of Nevada at Reno
October 18, 1942:	Enlisted United States Army Infantry: Outfit - "Fighting Irish" (Pacific Service)
1947:	Graduated UNR with honors - B.S. Agricultural Economics
1947 and again in 1950:	Attended graduate schools: Washington State College at Pullman, WA and UNR
1948:	Accepted job with Farmer's Home Administration at Caliente, NV (Caliente and Fallon Offices)
1948:	Employed by Farmer's Home Administration in Fallon
August 19, 1950:	Married to Nadine Hursh [May 27, 1918 - July 18, 1995] Daughter of Ernest Harold and Cora Estelle Williams Hursh Granddaughter of Warren Willard and Addie Mattison Williams
July 4, 1952:	Resigned position with Farmer's Home Administration
August 1, 1952:	Joined E. H Hursh Insurance and Real Estate: began career in real estate and insurance
April 4, 1960:	Appointed to Fallon City Council: Served until 1971
June 11, 1971:	Elected Mayor of Fallon: Served until 1987
1995:	Retired to pursue hobbies: historical writing
1995:	Married Paula Prudler Coverston

An Amazing Story *as told by Merton E. Domonoske*

My father, Arthur Domonoske, was born on a ranch above German Town, Colusa County, California, on January 1, 1884. His mother died when he was ten years old. His younger sisters were sent to aunts in Oakland, California, but my father was old enough to stay on the ranch and was raised by the cook, "Sam Chinaman." He was apparently a very good cook and fed large harvest crews for my grandfather. After my father graduated from grade school, he too was sent down to his aunts, to go to high school and later graduate from the University of California with a degree in Mechanical Engineering.

My father had a friend at the university, Professor Boelter, who spoke Chinese. While the professor was on a trip to China he was hailed by a sick old man sitting beside the road. The man said, "I can tell you are an American. Do you come from California?" Boelter said that he did. "Do you know a man named Arthur Domonoske?" asked Sam Chinaman. "I have a friend at the university by that name," responded Boelter. "You tell him Sam Chinaman save enough to come home and buy a wife, but bandits have stolen everything and me now die. Arthur was a good boy. Tell him hello."

Upon returning home, Professor Boelter told my father of the meeting. My father was astounded and saddened to hear about his old friend, Sam Chinaman, and sorry that Sam could not have lived out his remaining years in peace.