

Levin Wilson Bacon

Levin "L W" Wilson Bacon was born 28 April 1838 in Laurel, Sussex, Delaware. He was the sixth of nine children of Henry Bacon and Mary K Hearn. His father had three wives, so Levin had multiple half-siblings. His father was a farmer with seven children in 1850.¹ By 1860 Levin was a miner living in Cottonwood Township, Siskiyou, California.² Levin was a pioneer to the Florence and Northern Idaho mining region.³ His name is listed on the IRS tax assessments for activities as a retail dealer with a class B license in Central City, Gilpin, and Clear Creek County in Colorado Territory in 1863-1864. This was the area of the 1859 Colorado gold rush.⁴

Levin then moved to Lewiston, Nez Perce, Idaho Territory⁵ where he was a prominent businessman. He served as the first county assessor and was the only Democrat to serve in the first Territory Legislature.⁶ He was the hangman at the execution of the murderers of Lloyd Magruder and his party in 1864, a case that captivated the nation.

James Romaine, Daniel Howard, and Christopher Lowery offered themselves as guards to pack train operator Magruder and four of his men as they carried cargo to Virginia City, Idaho (now in Montana). They planned to steal the gold dust received as payment. Lowery killed Magruder with an ax while he slept and then helped his accomplices kill the other four. The bodies were dumped over a cliff. Magruder's friend Hill Beachey, proprietor of Lewiston's pioneer Luna House hotel, had a dream of the murder and investigated. He found Magruder's saddle and other evidence of foul play.⁷

The murderers succeeded in taking the stolen gold dust to Portland and boarded a ship to San Francisco. Beachey swore in as a deputy sheriff, secured a warrant for the arrest of the fugitives, and tracked them to San Francisco, where they were waiting for the stolen gold dust to be coined at the United States Mint. Beachey arrested them and brought them back to Lewiston. Eight weeks later, Idaho's first legal executions took place.⁸ Levin spoke often of the events, as he was an acquaintance of one of the convicted men and felt bad about the role he was about to play in his death. However, the condemned criminal had turned to him and said, "Go ahead. Somebody has to do it."⁹

In 1870, Levin was a saloon keeper with a Chinese cook living in Battle Mountain, Humboldt, Nevada.¹⁰ He married Celia Clara White about 1876 in Utah Territory¹¹ and moved to Dry Canyon, Tooele, Utah Territory.¹² In 1880, the couple was living in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory, where Levin was a miner.¹³ Their second child was born in Silver Reef. In 1881 they moved to Eureka, Juab, Utah Territory, where they both lived until their deaths.¹⁴

¹ United States Census, 1850.

² United States Census, 1860.

³ *Idaho World*, 17 June 1869, p. 2.

⁴ US IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1862-1918.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Idaho World*, 3 December 1864, p. 3; *Familysearch.org*

⁷ *Idaho Statesman*, 25 April 2006.

⁸ *Ibid*; This Bloody Deed: The Magruder Incident," by Ladd Hamilton, 1994, at worldhistory.us/american-history/the-murder-of-lloyd-magruder-the-western-gold-rush-made-thieves-and-murderers-out-of-common-men.php

⁹ *Idaho World*, 3 December 1864, p. 3; *Familysearch.org*

¹⁰ United States Census, 1870.

¹¹ Utah Select Marriages, 1887-1966; *Daily Herald*, 3 November 1939, p. 7.

¹² *Daily Herald*, 3 November 1939, p. 7.

¹³ United States Census, 1880.

¹⁴ *Daily Herald*, 3 November 1939, p. 7.

In 1890, Levin was involved in protesting the application for a townsite patent for Tintic which included his mining claim.¹⁵ Two years later, he met with a painful accident in a mining tunnel in Eureka. A spark from his candlestick set off a box of giant caps, which exploded, inflicting cuts, bruises and lacerations on his hand, face, head and body, disfiguring him.¹⁶ In 1894, he brought suit against John and Noah McChrystal to recover the sum of \$1,200 paid in a land sale. Judgment was rendered against the McChrystals for \$1,500 but the case went to the supreme court which affirmed the decision of the lower court.¹⁷

Levin died in 1896 and was buried in the city cemetery.¹⁸ In 1900, Celia was living with her living four children in Eureka. Her oldest son was a silver miner; she owned her home free of mortgage.¹⁹ By 1910, her three sons were quartz miners and her daughter was a schoolteacher. Celia was living on her "own income".²⁰ Perhaps her income was from selling the Lucky Chief mine in Tintic when her husband died²¹ or the mining stock she still held in 1902.²² In 1920, she was living with her daughter's family in San Antonio, Los Angeles, California,²³ and back with her son in Eureka in 1930.²⁴ Celia died 2 November 1939 in Eureka and was buried in the city cemetery.²⁵

Research by Elaine Young, Silver Reef Foundation historian, November 2019

Please email eyoung@youngzones.org for additions and corrections

¹⁵ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 November 1890, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 January 1892, p. 5; 30 January 1892, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 May 1892, p. 5; *Salt Lake Herald*, 26 June 1894, p. 5; 28 October 1893, p. 5; *Tintic Miner*, 3 August 1894, p. 4.

¹⁸ Utah Cemetery Inventory, 1847-2000; *Findagrave.com*; *BillionGraves.com*

¹⁹ United States Census, 1900.

²⁰ United States Census, 1910.

²¹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 6 December 1896, p. 3.

²² *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 November 1902, p. 6.

²³ United States Census, 1920.

²⁴ United States Census, 1930.

²⁵ Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964; Utah Death and Military Death Certificates, 1904-1961; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 November 1939, p. 26; *Deseret News*, 3 November 1939, p. 22; *BillionGraves.com*