

A 20th Century Marshville boy's interest in the life of California Bill Garlock (1827 to 1922)

When I was a small boy growing up at Marshville, NY, my grandfather, Benjamin J Garlock (1877 to 1971), often spoke of a distant relative, William Garlock (1827 to 1922) who went from Marshville to the California gold rush. Grandpa knew him and my mother Margaret Garlock Barshied (1906 to 1987) also remembered him as a very old man. She spoke of William coming to the county school to tell of his trips to California and showing some gold nuggets he carried in a small bag. Grandpa, who was one of my favorite people, seemed particularly interested in the gold rush. Like any boy, what interested grandpa made a great impression on me. I wanted to see those gold nuggets. As it happened just across the road from where I often stayed with uncle Elmer and aunt Mary Countryman there was a country store that belonged to Bayard Taylor Garlock (1871 to 1958) and his son Bill. B.T., as Bayard was called, was California Bill's son. About 1936, when I was 6 years old, I decided to go over there and ask BT about the gold rush.

I found him painting the building. When I asked about the gold rush he held out his paint-stained hand and said: "You see that ring, my father had that made for my mother from gold quartz." Sometime the stone had become cracked and I can remember to this day seeing how the paint had run down into the crack. He also showed me a small box containing a necktie stick pin bearing a gold nugget about the size of a pea. Cufflinks with nuggets and some loose nuggets. For some unknown reason I had become a collector of things that amused me even before that young age. I wanted one of those small real gold nuggets. As I remember I asked to see those great treasures several times and they were brought out to stir my imagination. BT told me that his father had gone to California twice by water. It was not until many years later that I found out when the trips were made. The conversation with Bayard T Garlock the prospector's son laid the groundwork for my lifetime search to fill in the blanks about an interesting area gold hunter.

It was about the same time that I first saw the gold nuggets that I became aware that a German itinerant folk artist once roamed our area. This is his drawing of William Garlock's farm in 1894. I saw one drawing by Fritz Vogt (? to 1900). For that same William Garlock family Vogt drew several homes and farms surrounding Marshville.

California Bill's farm was no exception. Several drawings were done of the William Garlock farm in the fall of 1894. Two of them were in the Marshville store building. The Nathan Garlock farm next door to William's was also drawn. I worked as a boy on the Nathan Garlock farm. It seems that all of the Garlocks including my mother's family, were cousins.

I will now return to my quest for information about William Garlock's California adventures. We know from existing letters William received from his sister and brothers on his first trip to the gold fields in the early 1850s and a diary entry from August 1878 he was in Pine Grove, California in 1852. Sometime in 1851 he headed for California and gold. William was unmarried and 24 years old when he left. Only a limited amount is known about his first stay on his first trip to the gold fields. He had eight brothers and sisters at that time.