

Investigating an Old Tintype Photo

By Rusty Edwards



“These people lived a hard life and are a typical part of the American story of hardship, disease, death, and religion.” Michael J. Shanahan

In 2020, I purchased this 19th century tintype photograph of a hard-scrabble family from the post-Civil War period. The central figure is a young boy who likely held a significant place in his parents' lives. The man's face reflects the hardships he endured to make ends meet, evident from his worn-out shoes and tattered clothing. His stoic wife, wearing a self-made dress and a possibly inherited brooch, completes the scene. The young boy bears a resemblance to a youthful version of Huck Finn.

During October 2022, I received an email from a man who identified the woman in the tintype as the sister of his second Great-Grandfather. He had seen the same image in an old photograph album that was divided up and sold on eBay. He provided me with the names of the people in the photograph, which I subsequently researched on Ancestry.com. Here's what I discovered:

The man in the photograph is Henry Crawford, born on August 22, 1843, in Indiana. He married China J. Hendrix on January 25, 1865, in Jasper, Marion County, Tenn. They had three children, all of whom died in infancy. Their fourth child, Cadden James Crawford, was born in Missouri in 1870 and is the shoeless boy in the photograph. Tragically, he passed away at the age of six for reasons unknown. Given that he appears to be around five in the photo, it is likely that the photograph was taken in 1875 in Lehigh, Iowa, where the family was residing at the time.

Lehigh was founded in 1855 along the western bank of the Des Moines River in central Iowa. Its early residents established a steam sawmill on the site. Originally called "Slabtown," the settlement earned this name due to the predominant use of slab wood to construct the town. In 1871, W. C. Wilson opened a coal mine here and subsequently formed the Crooked Creek Railroad and Coal Company. By 1878, this enterprise had successfully shipped 5,640 tons of coal. Because of the limited employment opportunities in the area, it's likely that Mr. Crawford worked as a coal miner. He passed away in 1883 due to Consumption, the disorder we now call Tuberculosis. His weathered headstone is shown below. His wife, China, remarried James Ingalls, a Civil War veteran in 1883. She passed away on April 17, 1931, in Lehigh. Here's her obituary.



Henry Crawford's Headstone

**MRS. INGALLS
PASSES HERE
LAST FRIDAY**

**Services Held at the Lehigh
United Brethren Church
Sunday Afternoon**

Mrs. China Ingalls, Lehigh, died at her home here last Friday after an illness of several weeks. Mrs. Ingalls, of old pioneer stock and the widow of James Ingalls, a Civil war veteran, was 85 years, five months and twelve days old at her death.

Burial services were held at the Lehigh United Brethren church Sunday afternoon, conducted by the pastor, Rev. G. B. Munns. The Lehigh Rebekah lodge took part in the services. Interment was in the Border Plains cemetery.

China Hendricks was born in Marion county, Tenn., Nov. 5, 1854. She moved with her parents to Missouri at the age of six years and at the age of 20 she was married to Henry Crawford.

To this union were born four children, all having died in infancy. Mr Crawford died in the year 1875.

Three years later she came to Iowa, where she met James B. Ingalls, a veteran of the Civil war, to whom she was married in 1883. Having no children of their own they adopted Winnifred Brim, now Mrs. George Drain of Lehigh.

Mr. Ingalls died in April 1917. Since then Mrs. Ingalls has lived alone and kept up her home until very recently. She was baptised in the church and has been a faithful member to the time of her death. She was a good woman and lived her religious life at home and among her friends.

Mrs. Ingalls leaves to mourn her death her daughter, Mrs. George Drain and family and some distant relatives, with a host of friends and neighbors.

Relatives from out of town who attended the services for Mrs. Ingalls were Mr. and Mrs. William Ingalls and Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Ingalls all of Fraser, Mr. and Mrs. Art Ingalls and children of Webster City, Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Cavanaugh and Mrs. Beale Brown, all of Fort Dodge.