

# *The Photo Album Mystery*

by Rebecca Richardson

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I am writing this article, hoping that someone can help solve a mystery. In the 1990s, my father inherited a velvet-red photo album from his mother, who had inherited it from her aunt, Mary Elizabeth (Griffith) Crawford. Mary grew up in Almena, Van Buren, MI, and she is the subject of at least two of the photos, but I don't think the album originally belonged to her. It is possible she inherited the album from her grandmother, but I haven't been able to determine its origins yet or the identity of the people in most of the photos. The photo album has 28 photos, printed on cardboard, from the late 19th & early 20th centuries, the most recent taken in 1914 or 1915 of Mary (Griffith) and Ernest Crawford's son Everet, who died in January 1915 at the age of 6 months.

In the following pages, I will lay out the clues which the album provides, and see if anyone can shed some light on its possible origins, as well as, the names of the people in the photos. I am placing the photos in the order in which they appear in the photo album currently, however, I know that the photos of Mary are not in chronological order.

Most of the photos were taken in Nebraska, but at least three were taken in Michigan of people who lived in SW Michigan, which is why this mystery is applicable to this website.

The first photo in the album has: "Mrs Reed" written on the back, however, I do not think that this woman is Mrs Reed, because the same writing is on a baby's photo. I surmise that the person who wrote on the back of the photos was designating who the photo was to be given to.

The second photo, of the five children, is blank on the back, but as you can see, it was taken in the same studio as the first photo, and I would assume, they are mother and children. 1





3

The third photo was originally blank on the back, but later someone wrote on the front of the picture, and then it was erased. Another person then tried to decipher the erased writing, and wrote on the back: "Car? Hamilton." By using a magnifying glass, I can also make out the same writing, however, we don't know when it was written or by whom. If you zoom the page, you can see what you think.

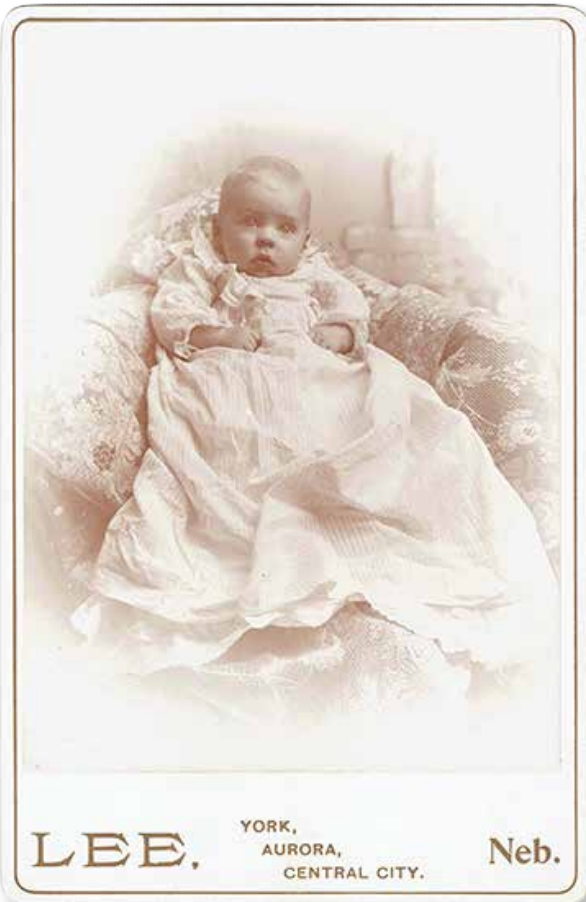
The fourth photo, of this cute little baby, has original writing on the back that says: "John Wesley Hamilton - 2mo old."

Searching on familysearch.com reveals many men named John Wesley Hamilton in this timeframe, so we need a way to narrow down the search.

The next eight photos are blank on the back, so I will just display them without comment.



4



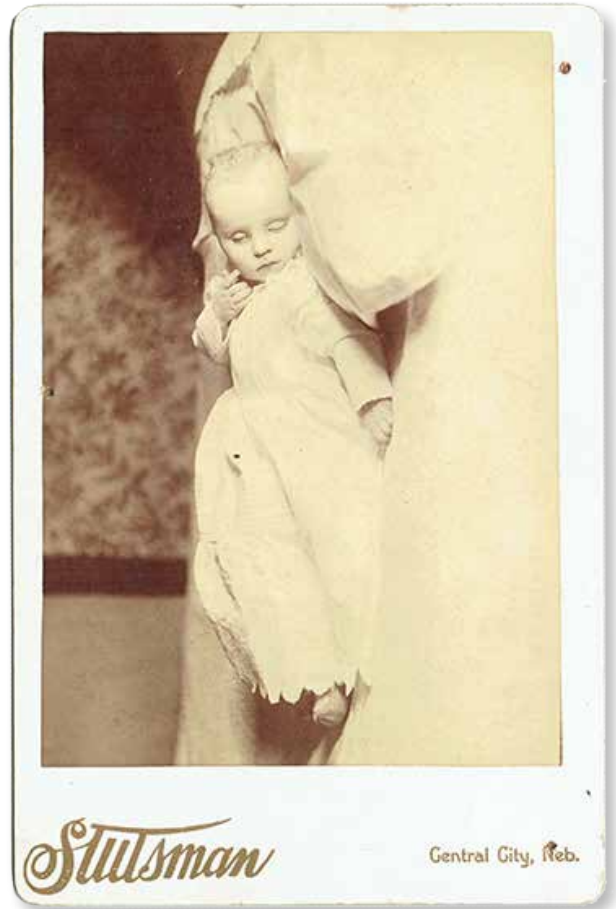




9

*Howard*

FULLERTON,  
NEB.



10

*Stultsman*

Central City, Neb.



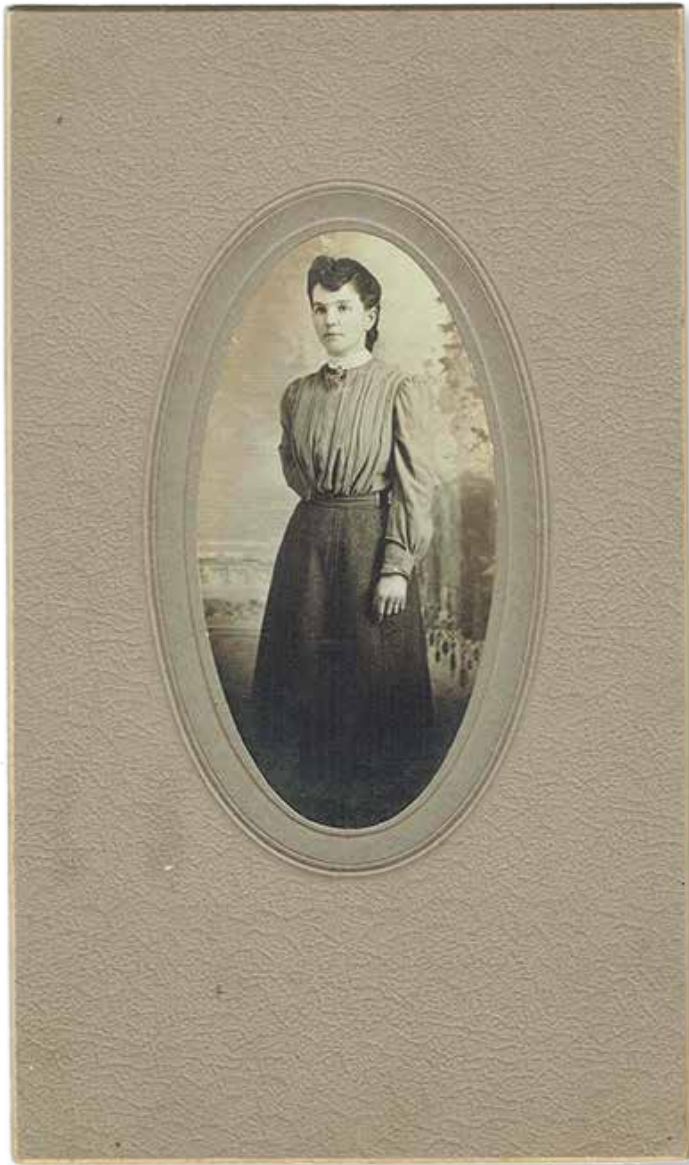
11



12

H. F. LEE.

CENTRAL CITY,  
NEB.



13

The thirteenth photo has handwriting on the back says: Mary Griffith - 1906. She would have been about 21 years old, as she was born in 1885. She also would have been living in Almena at this time. I'm not certain that the hand writing is original, however.

The fourteenth photo could also be Mary at an earlier age, but, as there is no writing on the back, I can not be certain.

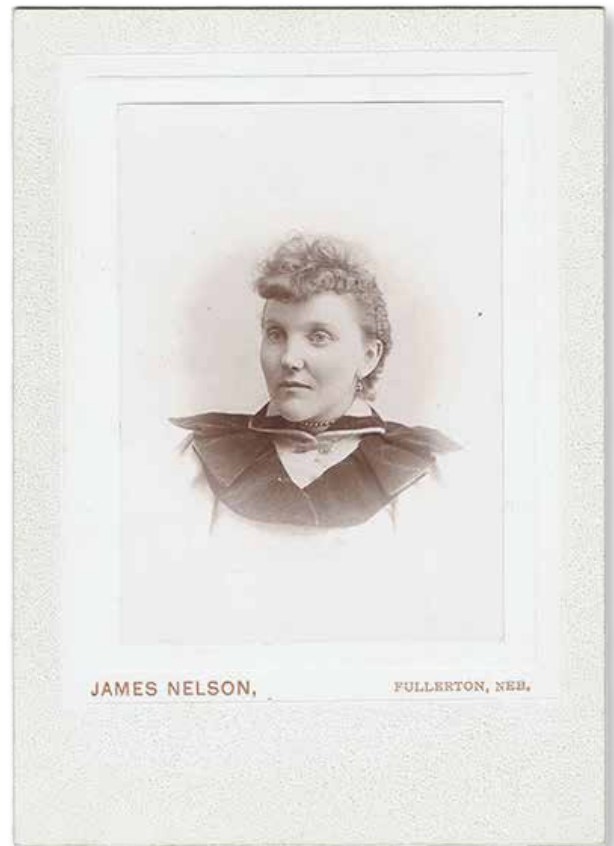


14

15



16



The two above photos are blank on the back.

The seventeenth photo fascinated me, because the gentleman in the Odd Fellows uniform looks very much like a younger Charles Augustus Griffith, the father of Mary Griffith. I only have photos of him when he was older, but there is a very good likeness.

I did a little on-line research and found that the photo studio, Gillett, was only located at 55 W. Bridge St, Grand Rapids between 1892 and 1896. This fits the age for Charles Griffith as he was born in 1848, making him between 44 and 48 at the time the photo was taken.

I plan to research whether or not he was a member of the Odd Fellows. If he was, then it is almost certain that this is a picture of Charles Griffith.

17

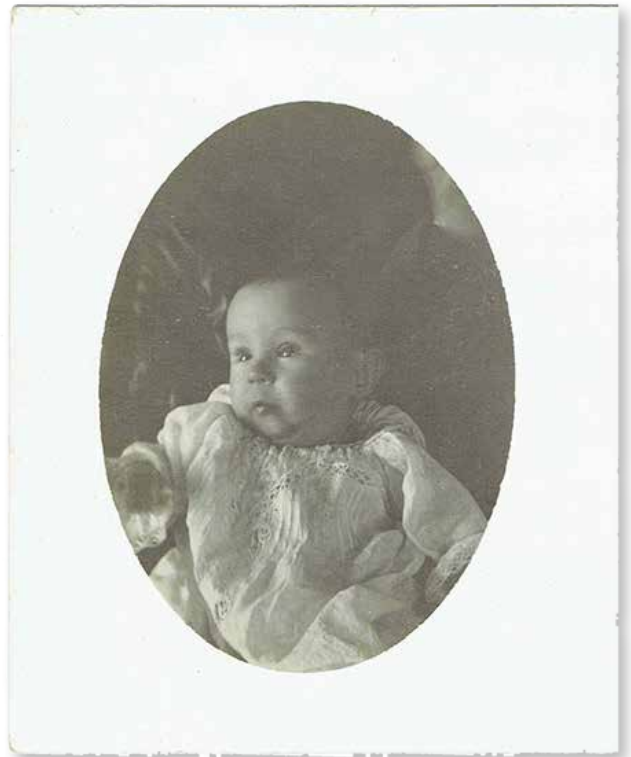






18

EDGAR  
1887  
Drapers  
CENTRAL CITY, NEB.



19

The eighteenth photo, in the upper left, is the other photo with "Mrs Reed" written on the back. The nineteenth photo is the only one that is printed on postcard paper. There is no writing but, as I have other photos of him, I know that this baby is Everet Ernest Crawford, son of Mary (Griffith) and Ernest Crawford. He died in 1915.

The two photos below are blank on the back. Number 21 is the only photo taken in Iowa.



20

Stutsman & Co. Central City, NEB.



21

South of Post-Office, Gillett, FAIRFIELD, IOWA.

22



This little girl, in the twenty-second photo, was originally identified on the back, but when the photo was trimmed to fit in the photo album, some of her name was cut off. What is readable now is: “?ale Lucile Taylor”

Photos 23 through 27 are blank on the back.

23



24



Nelson

FULLERTON  
NEBR.

Nelson

FULLERTON  
NEBR.





25

JAS. NELSON, - Fullerton, Neb.



26

*Seibird & Dow.*

CENTRAL CITY, NEB.



27

*Lee*

YORK,  
AURORA,  
Central City.

Neb.

28



This last photo, taken in Lawton, Van Buren, MI, has writing on the back that says: “From Mary to Grandma,” in a child’s handwriting. Mary was born in 1885, so this photo was taken between 1890 and 1895. The photo is the very last photo in the album, but there is at least one, and possibly two, photos of Mary earlier in the album at an older age. Because of this, I don’t put too much stock in the order of the photos.

Because of this last photo, I have developed a theory that Mary sent her photo to her grandmother, who put it in this album along with photos of her other children and grandchildren, and after the grandmother’s death, one of Mary’s parents inherited the album. The question is, which grandmother did this photo album belong to?

First, there is her grandmother, Marrilla (Taylor) Griffith (1828-1916), mother of Charles Augustus Griffith; and second, there is her grandmother, Margaret Ann (Thompson) Heaston (1827-1911), mother of Christina Ellen Heaston. Both of Mary’s grandfathers had passed away by the time the photo was taken, so that would explain why the photo was only addressed to her grandmother.

If the picture of the gentleman in the Odd Fellows uniform is Charles Augustus Griffith, then that would mean it was his mother’s album, because I doubt he would have sent a picture of himself to his mother-in-law. That is the direction that I am leaning, but it still has to be proven, and after that, the question will be, “who are all the other people in the album?” I have found no connection for Marrilla Griffith to Nebraska, and we have to deal with the fact that two of the photos have Mrs. Reed written on the back.

If you think you have an answer, please email me at: [rebeccarichardson@heritagedesignsllc.com](mailto:rebeccarichardson@heritagedesignsllc.com).