

DOCUMENTS

New Information about Isabella Valancy Crawford and Her Family

by Alice Crawford

Isabella Valancy Crawford's real age has always been a question because there are different resources giving different ages. The 1861 Ontario census indicates that she was born around 1846, whereas all the later (1871, 1881) censuses show her birth year as being around 1850, the date given in her obituary in the 15 February 1887 issue of the *Toronto Globe*, which also states that she came to Canada when she was 5 years old. Most books and internet resources accept the 1850 birthdate. The matter can now be resolved in the light of newly discovered information about when she immigrated to Canada with her family by way of New York City, N.Y. in 1857.

The ship on which they travelled, the *R. Robinson*, left Liverpool, England and arrived in the Port of New York on 2 January 1857. At the head of the passenger manifest are the names and ages of all the Crawford family members, the reason being that they travelled first class in the house on deck. All the members of the family, with the exception of Emma, who was born in Wisconsin while the family was there 4 years earlier, were born in Ireland. Isabella's father, Stephen Dennis Crawford is listed as S.D. Crawford aged 45 and his wife as aged 39. Under her parents' names, Isabella is listed as 10 years old, Emma as 4, Stephen as 2, and, finally the mystery child, Charlott as 6. Since Isabella and Stephen were both born in December, they would have turned 10 years and 2 years of age respectively the week before the family landed in New York. The ages of Emma and Charlott look as if they were changed when the entries were made, in Emma's case a 6 was converted to a 4 and in Charlott's case, a 4 was converted to a 6.

Based on our family's knowledge, Charlott must have been the baby that travelled with the family to Wisconsin in or around 1851, only to return to Ireland after Emma was born. Family lore has it that Stephen Dennis Crawford travelled to Australia circa 1854-55 as another possible place to emigrate, that in his absence 7 of his then 10 children died, and that Stephen Walter was born prematurely after the deaths of these chil-

dren. It must be emphasized, however, that there is currently no proof of these claims beyond family tradition.

The record of Emma's baptism in the Rathmines Church in Dublin confirms that she was 4 when she travelled to North America on the R. Robinson. Nor is this the only information disclosed by the baptismal records in Rathmines Church. Emma and Stephen Walter were baptized not only in the same church, but also on the same day, 5 March 1855. At that time, the family was living at 134, Rathmines Road after returning from the United States. Emma's birth date is given as 8 July 8 1852, and Stephen Walter's as 24 December 1854. (Needless to say the latter fact destroys the myth that Stephen and Isabella were both born on Christmas Day.) Emma has always been known to be 6 years younger than Isabella, a supposition confirmed by Emma's baptism record and by Isabella's age on the ship passenger manifest.

Works Cited

- Ontario 1861 Census. Retrieved from <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/MQQ6-52F>
- Ontario 1871 Census. Retrieved from <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/M473-JPB>.
- Ontario 1881 Census. Retrieved from <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/MVF3-BT5>
- R. Robinson Ship Manifest, 2 January 1857. Retrieved from <http://www.ancestry.com>.
- Emma Naomi Crawford Baptism Record. Book number N/R, page 13, entry number N/R . Record_identifier DU-CI-BA-16091. Image file name d-545-2-1-013. Retrieved from <http://churchrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/details/a42e210016090>.
- Stephen Walter Crawford Baptism Record: Book number N/R, page 13, entry number N/R. Record_identifier DU-CI-BA-16092. Image file name d-545-2-1-013. Retrieved from <http://churchrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/details/b8005f0016091>.