

The Disappearance of Earl Tobias

"... too many mouths to feed and was getting in debt."

The Principals

Earl Tobias (Great Grandfather of the author)

1865–1923

BIRTH 19 MAR 1865 • Burlington, Calhoun, Michigan

DEATH 3 OCT 1923 • St Louis, Missouri

George Warren Tobias (Earl's Father)

1835–1911

BIRTH 23 APR 1835 • Ithaca, Tompkins, New York

DEATH 14 JUL 1911 • Marshall, Clark, Illinois

Maryette Huggins (Earl's Mother)

1845–1923

BIRTH 24 JUL 1845 • Genesee County, New York

DEATH 8 DEC 1923 • Terre Haute, Vigo, Indiana

Sarah M Bauswell (Earl's 1st Wife and Great Grandmother of the author)

1869–1944

BIRTH 15 DEC 1869 • Lexington, Lafayette, Missouri

DEATH 24 JAN 1944 • Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas

Clairetta Elizabeth "Clara" Tobias (Grandmother of the author)

1890–1922

BIRTH 30 APR 1890 • Kansas City, Jackson, Missouri

DEATH 26 FEB 1922 • Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas

Sarah Katherine "Kate" Priester (Earl's 2nd Wife)

1851–1915

BIRTH ABT. MAR 1851 • Jefferson County, Missouri

DEATH 1 APR 1915 • St Louis, Missouri

Anna "Annie" "Winnie" Lottmann (Earl's 3rd Wife)

1875–1957

BIRTH 22 JAN 1875 • St Louis, Missouri

DEATH 17 FEB 1957 • St Louis, Missouri

Background - pre disappearance

The parents of Earl, George and Maryette (nee Huggins) Tobias, married in August, 1860 in St. Joseph County, Michigan. Together, they had seven children, with each birth spaced by about three years. This was a well ordered family. Earl was their first born, in 1865. The Tobias family seems to have been somewhat wealthy, buying selling large tracts of land in St Joseph and Calhoun counties of Michigan (south of Kalamazoo and Battle Creek). In late 1861, the Tobias' sold their farm in Calhoun County, MI and moved to farm property in Clark County, IL - just outside of Marshall, IL.

Earl, for reasons as yet unknown, left Clark County, IL and his family in the late 1880's and made his way to Kansas City, MO. There, he met Sarah Bauswell. Earl and Sarah married Mar 15, 1890.

No 3431

MARRIAGE LICENSE.

Office of **RECORDER OF DEEDS, JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI, AT KANSAS CITY.**

State of Missouri, }
County of Jackson. } This License authorizes any Judge, Justice of the Peace, Licensed or Ordained
Minister of the Gospel, or other person authorized under the laws of this State, to solemnize Marriage between
Earl Tobias of the County of Jackson
and State of Missouri who is born the age of Twenty-one Years and
Sarah Bauswell of the County of Jackson
and State of Missouri who is born the age of Eighteen Years

Witness my hand as Recorder, with the seal of office hereto affixed, at my office in the City of Kansas,
Missouri, this 15th day of March 1890

[Seal] J. H. Smith Recorder.
J. O. Smith Deputy Recorder.

State of Missouri, }
County of Jackson } This is to certify that the undersigned, a
Justice of the Peace did, in said County and State, on the 15th day of
March A. D. 1890 solemnize the marriage of the above named persons.

Filed for record and duly recorded in my office this 22nd day of March A. D. 1890

John H. Smith Recorder.
John C. McGary Deputy Recorder.

Sarah gave birth to Clairetta Elizabeth Tobias on April 30, 1890, about six weeks after they married. In residence records of 1891 and 1893, the Tobias family were living in the downtown area of Kansas City, MO and Earl's occupations were labourer and driver, possibly employed by the Santa Fe railroad company. In August 1894 a son, John, was born to Earl and Sarah.

Abandonment

On or about Dec 15, 1894 Earl Tobias deserted his family. They were living on south 14th St in Kansas City, KS. It was a significant enough event that a local newspaper covered the story.

Mrs. Earl Tobias, 921 south 14th street, has been deserted by her husband. He left her with two children to care for, penniless and without food or coal. Tobias was an employee of the Santa Fe at Argentine. He drew his pay last Saturday and failed to go home. He wrote to his wife from Kansas City, Mo., that he had too many mouths to feed and was getting in debt.

Sarah waited a few months to see if Earl would return. He did not. So, in Sep 1895 Sarah filed for divorce - likely with the financial help and guidance of her parents. In this matter, she hired one of the best lawyers in Kansas City at that time, Junius W Jenkins.

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PUBLICATION NOTICE.

In the District Court of Wyandotte County,
State of Kansas.

Sarah M. Tobias, Plaintiff,
vs.
Earl Tobias, Defendant.

To the above named defendant, Earl Tobias:

You are hereby notified that you have
been sued by the above named plaintiff,
Sarah M. Tobias, in the District Court of
Wyandotte county, Kansas, and that un-
less you answer the plaintiff's petition therein
filed on or before

the 9th day of November, 1895,

The same will be taken as true and a
judgment rendered against you in said case
in favor of the plaintiff divorcing the plain-
tiff from you and restoring plaintiff's maiden
name of Sarah M. Bauswell, and also award-
ing to the plaintiff the care, custody and
control of plaintiff's children, Clairretta
Tobias and John Tobias.

SARAH M. TOBIAS, Plaintiff.

By Junius W. Jenkins, Att'y. for Pl'ff.

First pub. Sept. 20th, 1895.

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The above referenced newspaper notice was published regularly until Nov 1895. Earl never responded and could not be located. Reasons for a divorce were detailed in her petition:

...she married the defendant, and from that time until the defendant abandoned her, as hereinafter set forth, she acted towards and treated him as a dutiful and affectionate wife, and she has been at all times since their said marriage, faithful towards him in all respects, but that the defendant, regardless of his marital [sic] duties and obligations to the plaintiff, has been guilty of Extreme cruelty to her, in this, to-wit:

- On the ____ day of November, 1894, (the exact day is not now remembered) the defendant falsely accused the plaintiff of having had illicit intercourse with other men, and cursed and threatened to beat her. That he often cursed her and called her a damned fool, and falsely accused her of being illegitimate.
- That at all times since their said marriage he has failed and refused to support plaintiff and her two children (hereinafter named), and refused to buy clothing for them, and the plaintiff has been compelled to take in washing for other people in order to support and clothe herself and children, while the defendant was able to, and was at work and earning good wages which he refused to use for the benefit of his said family.
- That when the plaintiff would ask him for money to buy clothing and other necessities for herself and children, he told her to obtain money by having illicit intercourse with other men.

- That on the 15th day of December, 1894, the defendant left and abandoned the plaintiff, without any fault on her part, and she has not seen him since that time, but two days afterwards she received a letter from him saying that he hated her and never intended to live with her again.
- That by reason of said cruel treatment on the part of the defendant towards her, she has been greatly grieved, and her health has been impaired by reason thereof.

Additionally stated in the Petition was the following:

- That the said defendant Earl Tobias resides out of the state of Kansas, and that his residence is unknown to the plaintiff and cannot be ascertained by any means within the control of the plaintiff and that the service of a summons cannot be made on the said defendant Earl Tobias.

A Divorce Decree was granted by the Kansas District Court in Wyandotte County, KS on July 1, 1896, granting Sarah custody of their two children, Clairetta and John, and Sarah's maiden name restored: Bauswell. She moved in with her parents, Albert and Ellen Bauswell, in Kansas City, KS.

Sarah Bauswell remarried three more times (Lemuel Hopper, Clarence Morton, Albert Anderson). Son, John Tobias, disappeared from public records before 1900. Sarah birthed three Hopper male children between 1905 and 1910, all of which disappeared from public records before 1915. She birthed one more son, Roy L Hopper, in 1912. He disappeared from public records after 1920. Daughter, Clairetta died in 1922.

Meanwhile, Earl Tobias had also disappeared from public records.

Where are you, Earl Tobias?

After deserting his family in Kansas City in 1894, where did Earl go? He not only cut off all communication with his former wife and children, he also had cut ties with his own family.

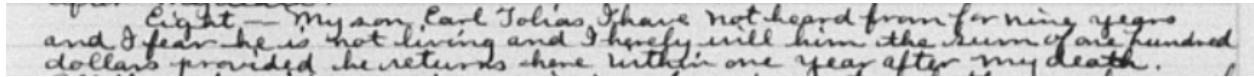
My sister and I spent considerable time looking though public records for Earl Tobias in and around the Saint Louis, MO area, between 1895 and 1930, particularly census records. These efforts were fruitless. In Mar, 2020, I contracted with a genealogy research company, Legacy Tree, to seek a resolution to Earl's disappearance. The following goals were established:

- 1) What happened to Earl after he abandoned his family in 1894? Where did he reside?
- 2) Did Earl remarry?
- 3) Did Earl father more children?
- 4) When and where did he die?

Legacy Tree Clues:

Earl's brother, Frank, reported in 1910 that Earl had visited him in Marshall, IL and that he had been absent from home for more than 15 years. Additionally, Frank reported that Earl was living in Saint Louis, MO.

Earl's father, George W Tobias, in his 1911 Will, included Earl as an heir, with the following stipulation:



"My son, Earl Tobias I have not heard from for nine years and I fear he is not living and I hereby will him the sum of one hundred dollars provided he returns home within one year after my death."

Another clue was that Earl was the informant on the 1910 Death Certificate of his sister, Viola Tobias-Blue in Springfield, MO. The address given for Earl was Saint Louis, MO.

Legacy Tree Conclusion - Sep 2020:

*"Research on Earl Tobias spread over several decades, states, and record types—with results consisting primarily of finding Earl and Sarah's divorce record, several mentions in various newspapers, and his appearance in his father's will. While none of these records explained where Earl had been during his missing years, information that was found supported the idea that **Earl may have used an alias name** during the years in which he can't be traced and that he likely didn't want to be found during those years.*

It is quite a rare occurrence to be alive and in the United States but missing from all these censuses unless someone was on the move or unwilling to be counted."

So, after six months of research and about \$2300, Legacy Tree genealogists were unable to achieve the stated goals of the project. We still did not know what happened to Earl Tobias.

Earl Tobias - Found!

I maintain a family tree on WikiTree: <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Baldwin-14205#Ancestors>. Knowing that the multitude of volunteer genealogy sleuths there might be interested in this mystery, I placed a request to find Earl. Within a few hours, a gentleman named Eddie K, found Earl. Here's what he did, searching federal census records:

"1900 Fed census, St. Louis, first name Earl marked exact - no surname, birth March 1865 Michigan - all marked exact. Earl Smith came up, looked for other info, found death cert and mom Huggins."

Earl Tobias - aka Earl Smith

Following the desertion of his family in Kansas City, Earl was actively pursued for child support and alimony. In response, he fled Kansas City for Saint Louis and, apparently, changed his last name to Smith to cover his tracks.

In the Federal 1900 census for Saint Louis, Earl Tobias aka Smith, reportedly, was married to Sarah Koch (nee Priester) - apparently, for a reported five years, about 1895 (though no other marriage record found). If so, Earl was likely married to both Sarah Koch and Sarah Bauswell in the mid 1890's. There's no evidence that Earl and Sarah Koch had any children. A stepson was living with them in the 1900 census - Benjamin Koch (from a previous marriage of Sarah Koch). Earl and Sarah reportedly lived alone in the 1910 census at 4115 Second St.

Sarah Smith-Koch died in 1915. Earl then married (though no marriage record found) Anna Wamhoff (nee Lottmann) about 1915-1916. Again, no evidence that they had any children. Earl and Anna reportedly lived alone in the 1920 census at 3830 Parnell St. They remained married until Earl's death in 1923.

Knowing his residence addresses from the 1900, 1910, 1920 census, I found numerous public residence/directory records. One would think, why change the surname Tobias to a common name like Smith? And, why not change the date and location of birth as well as the last name? But, checking, there were dozens of Earl Smiths living in Saint Louis at that time (even a famous Earl Smith who played for the Saint Louis Browns baseball team). So, Earl was able to hide in plain sight (hide, probably, from paying child support/alimony in Kansas City) among the many other Earl Smiths, and, all the while, using his actual birth date and birth location.

Following the abandonment of his Kansas City family, Earl seems to have led a rather conventional, if not mundane, life in Saint Louis. Reported occupations included: woodworker, iron worker, shipping clerk.

I found little evidence that he actually married Sarah or Anna. So, marriage may have been a great fear of his, one that he shunned. And, an actual legal marriage would likely have exposed that his birth name was Tobias - not Smith.

There is one oddity regarding his death certificate (which was a key document in determining his identity). The informant, his wife, Anna Lottman-Smith, stated she "Don't Know" the name of Earl's father. But, she knew the maiden name of his mother - Huggins. How could she know the name of his mother without knowing the name of his father? It seems to me that she did know the names of his parents and choose to reveal only part of Earl's birth family, and thus, preserve and perpetuate the lie that his name was Smith, not Tobias. It took 100+ years to learn the truth.

As for Anna Lottmann-Smith, it should be noted that her first husband, Henry John Wamhoff, disappeared in Oct, 1910, never to be seen again. She reported the

disappearance in January, 1911. Did Henry John Wamhoff abandon his family, flee the St. Louis area, and live under an assumed name? Or, was he murdered? I did extensive newspaper, obituary, and public records research to try to locate Henry John Wamhoff and found nothing of consequence. Interestingly, Anna, from that time forward, referred to herself as Anna Wamhoff Smith, using her first husband's last name as her middle name.

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