

**George Washington Ingalls, submitted by Rochelle Sjolseth,
2nd Great-Granddaughter of Jedidiah Ingalls and
Great-Granddaughter of George Washington Ingalls**

In the early morning of August 19th, Peter Boulliard, (Ed. Note: Rouillard) who'd escaped the attacks on the stores at Yellow Medicine, fled along the river calling out, "Indians, Indians killing everybody at Yellow Medicine!"

Jedediah Hibbard Ingalls (b. Vermont 1823) heard the warning, roused his four children, Elizabeth (Jennie) 14, Amanda 12, George 9, and Lavina/Melvina 8, got his horses hitched to the wagon, loaded his children into it and headed for Fort Ridgely. They didn't get far before being overtaken by warring Dakota men.

The two older daughters managed to escape, presumably while Mr. Ingalls was struggling with the attackers, and made it to the Brown's house just in time to join in their flight, but were again overtaken by hostile warriors.

Mrs. Brown's family was fortunate to be taken to Little Crow's camp and later rescued by her step-father Chief Akipa, but Jenny and Amanda Ingalls along with Frances Wohler, were taken away by Cut Nose and his men. Jenny, Amanda, and Mrs. Wohler were freed six weeks later at Camp Release.

The two younger Ingalls children, George and Lavina (in some records Lavina is recorded as Melvina or Louvina), witnessed their father being killed and scalped before they were separated and held captive by two different bands. Lavina was taken south, eventually ending up in Missouri where she was held for nearly one year.

On June 5, 1863, an Indian named Crazy Dog rode into Fort Pierre, South Dakota with Lavina, saying he'd stolen her away from her captors whose camp was hundreds of miles away. Coincidentally, her brother George was freed on nearly the same day, though hundreds of miles north from where she'd been captive.

He'd been held by Little Crow's band as they fled into the Dakotas following the defeat at Wood Lake. They'd traveled west and north, staying for a time near Stone Lake and were at Devils Lake by mid-winter as Little Crow looked for support and supplies from other Sioux along the way.

George, two other captive boys (Jimmy Scott and John Schmerch (Ed. Note: Schurch) and Little Crow's entire band, struggled to survive a very cold, very hungry winter and spring on the run, eventually reaching Fort St. Joseph near the Canadian border.

By early summer, the priests at the fort became aware of the captive boys and began working for their freedom. Apparently acting independently of that group, a Father Germaine was successful at bargaining for their release. A letter from Father Germaine to a friend announcing his success at freeing the boys was dated June 3, only 2 days before Lavina's appearance at Fort Pierre. It was also exactly 30 days from the day Little Crow would be murdered (July 3, 1863) in front of his own son, and later scalped, just as Jedidiah had been.

George, who like most captives was told by his captors he was the only person in his family they hadn't killed, believed he had no one to look for and nowhere to go. He was kept by Father Germaine for over a year, but once he'd relearned English and was able to earn enough for a horse, gun, and knife from a nearby farmer; he lit out on his own. He was 12 years old.

It was several years before the siblings learned they'd all survived the attack, but its aftermath and their experiences as captives left a permanent pall between them. Communication and visits were rare, but their affection for each other is evident in the names of their own children.

Amanda, married Leander Sheldon. They lived in Metomen, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin as of 1900 and at some later point moved to Brandon, Wisconsin. They had three children; Benjamin, George and Julia.

The youngest child, Lavina, eventually married a man surnamed Clymer, possibly Virgil, and lived in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, with their one son.

The oldest child, Elizabeth, nicknamed Jenny, apparently died very young, possibly within a year of her captivity. The family has a few troubling stories about what happened to her, but nothing that can be substantiated.

For 10 or more years George had wandered the midwest, working a variety of jobs in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin where by at least one account his mother still lived. In 1876 he moved to Iowa and by 1883 (age 31), George had

saved enough to buy a small farm near Aurelia, Iowa. He married Florence Shorey that same year. They had eight children, two named for his sisters; Amanda and Lavina, though Lavina died as an infant. [in order of birth: Eva May, Lavina, (Jed) Judson Herbert, Amanda Alma, George Harrison (Harry), Ernest Lee, Edna Julia, and Ida Alice.]

George, who separated from Florence around 1915, lived his later years at the Terril, Iowa home of his youngest son, Ernest Lee Ingalls, with extended visits to his oldest son, Jed, who lived in South Dakota. He died after a brief illness (having chased Dr. Gusey, who his concerned son Ernest had fetched from town in the middle of a blizzard, down the stairs and out of the house the day before.) He died in his sleep in the home of Ernest and Ellen and their six living children on October 22, 1936. He was 84 years old.

Intriguing Ingalls Information:

- ❖ Jedidiah and Charles (Laura's 'Pa') were 1st cousins.
- ❖ George credited his red hair for saving his life due to his captors' fascination with it, and because red was a sacred color to them. He believed red-hair was lucky (even after learning his sisters hadn't actually been killed) for the rest of his life.
- ❖ The mysterious Mrs. Ingalls: Family records show Jedidiah's wife's name was Sadie Halmers, but no account of the events in 1862 mention her by her first name, and there are conflicting accounts about where or if she was there. She is listed as out of town visiting relatives in both the 1860 census and at least one written account of August 19, 1862, while other writings say Jedidiah and his wife were both killed that day, and adding further confusion there are also documents that show Jedidiah as a widower.

George told some family members he'd eventually gone to Wisconsin to find the woman he'd been told was his mother. He found her. She was remarried and rebuked him, saying she'd never had a red-haired son. Years later, when he received notice she was dying, he refused to go her deathbed or funeral.

To add yet another twist, he told at least one grandchild, Helen, his red-haired granddaughter (Ernest's daughter) whose family he lived with, a very

different story. One night as they played his favorite game, "Old Maid" (he couldn't keep a straight face when he picked up the old maid so the grandkids always knew when he had her) that his mother had just given birth to a baby boy when they got the warning to flee. She told Jedidiah to take the older children and get to the Fort leaving her there; that since she was Indian, they wouldn't hurt her or the baby. (As stated earlier, this settlement was primarily one of mixed blood families.)

Since George liked to take a tippie or two in his later years, as he had that night, we will never know if the drink brought out the truth, or just a liquor inspired tall-tale. But we do know that when Ernest was asked if the family had Indian blood, first by his own children, two of which were often made fun of for looking like Indians (Ruth and Marcella), and later by his favorite grandson Dick, Ernest would just walk away, refusing to either acknowledge or deny it. Included in this account is a picture of Ernest as a young man, so the reader can judge for themselves the possibility of mixed blood in the Ingalls family.

References Include:

"A Detailed Account of Massacre by the Dakota Indians of Minnesota in 1862," pg. 35.

"A Fate Worse than Death: Indian Captivities in the West, 1830-1885," Michno, pg. 226-30.

"South Dakota Historical Collections," Volume 5, South Dakota State Historical Society, pg. 304-5 footnotes.

"Dakota War Whoop," Harriet E. Bishop McConkey, pg. 308-309 and 316-320.

"A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians, in Minnesota," Bryant and Murch.

"Captured by the Indians; 15 Firsthand Accounts of, 1750-1870," Drimmer Oral and Written History of the George Washington Ingalls Family, specifically through his son Ernest and descendants, especially red-haired Helen (d. 1998) and her still driving & thriving 93 year old sister, Ruth.