

Unearthed Rare Tintype Photos of Famous Outlaws are a Potential Windfall for Michigan Family

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Cathlene Klug, a fourth-generation farmer and mother, has unearthed a treasure trove of historical significance during home renovations. Her new book, "The Discovery of Five Outlaw Tintypes in Michigan," chronicles her discovery of rare tintype photographs featuring some of the most notorious outlaws and gangsters in American history.

During renovations, Klug discovered tintype photos wrapped in an old boot. These photos include rare images of Billy The Kid, Richard "Dick" Brewer,

and Josiah G. Scurlock, known as the "Three Regulators." Additionally, she found photos of Frank and Jesse James, four Chicago gangster leaders—Al Capone, John Torrio, Terry Druggan, and Charles Dean O'Banion—and members of the "Wild Bunch," Butch Cassidy and Kid Curry. Each of the eleven outlaws posing for thirteen images on five tintypes were individually authenticated by two different experts in the field for both composition and ID matching.

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Cathlene Klug



Rare Collection of Tintypes Found in Michigan

Klug's discovery is not only a historical gem but also a potential financial windfall. "We know that similar photos have sold from \$10,000 to \$40,000 in the past," Klug explains. "The only known authenticated Billy the Kid tintype, despite being appraised in the \$40,000 range, sold for \$2.3 million dollars." Klug says the unpredictable nature of the collectors' market makes these photos particularly intriguing and valuable.

Among the discovered photos, the “Three Regulators” image stands out as the oldest and possibly the rarest. Dated from 1878, it features the elusive Billy The Kid. The historical context adds to its rarity, as it captures a moment from the Lincoln County War, a deeply personal conflict for Billy The Kid.

Equally unique is the “Chicago Gangster Leaders” photo featuring the infamous Al Capone, which shows powerful rivals from Chicago's 1920 Prohibition Wars in a unified setting. "History books record a meeting that Torrio called to get the feuding leaders to agree on a 'Gang borders map' to stop the fights and focus on money making, but no picture of such an event has ever been seen," Klug reveals. The mystery of the tintypes deepens with the background canvas used in the photo, which is almost identical to the “Regulators” group photo from 42 years prior.

Klug is eager to shed light on these historical images. "These tintypes have literally been kept in the dark over 100 years and we think it's time for the light to be shed on this group of Americana historical images," she says. She hopes to collaborate with museums or experts to further explore the historical significance of these photographs.

Klug's knack for discovering hidden treasures is not new. In her book, she recounts previous finds at auctions, where she acquired valuable items for very little money. Despite the right to keep these items, she chose to return them. “I had the internal tussle of whether to keep them or not,” says Klug. “Even though a person has every right to keep things sold ‘as is’ at auctions, I ended up giving them back to the auctioneers. As a woman of faith, I was compelled to apply the Golden Rule in those situations.”

The journey to authenticate and understand the photos was extensive. Klug utilized resources like Ancestry.com, historical sites, and university experts. "It was time-consuming, but it was also fun detective work," she admits.

Encouraged by friend and author Dr. Delron Shirley, Klug decided to share her story with the world. Her book not only presents historical and scientific findings but also paints a vivid picture of the interconnected lives of the people behind the photos.

Klug says readers will be intrigued by the identity of the “Depositor” who left the pictures behind—a very unlikely person of that era in 1921. The book also delves into the vibrant life of a community filled with contrasting extremes, from dangerous outlaws to conservative, faith-filled individuals.

Klug says she understands the importance of these unearthed photographs.

“I think this collection is so historically unique because it contains such a variety of notorious figures from across so many different decades of our country's infamous outlaws,” says Klug. “It was quite an irreplaceable grouping even 100 years ago, and even more so today.”

About the Author:

Cathlene Klug is an active mother and 4th generation farmer in Southwest Michigan. For over three decades, her family has grown produce for local customers such as those at Farmer's Markets in nearby Chicagoland and South Bend, Indiana. They also became growers/ suppliers to area Whole Foods stores. They successfully turned their focus back to a less intensive, family farming model, and she assisted in office management with off-farm employment. Her January 2023 discovery of the tintypes led to a year-long research project and to sharing her findings in the book, "The Discovery of Five Outlaw Tintypes in Michigan."

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