

Emma Augusta Gardner Anderson Becker



Lifespan: 85 years, 1878-1963. Born in Cabrey, IL on 01/06/1878. Died on February 7, 1963 in Grant, NE. She is buried in the cemetery at Sutherland, NE.

Locations: Cabrey, IL (1878); Wallace, NE (1884)) North Platte, NE (@1892); Eureka Twp (1916); Plankinton (@1923); Sutherland, NE (1961).

Spouse: William Oliver Anderson, 1867-1940. Married 08/10/1896 in North Platte, NE; divorced in 1910. John A Becker, 1896-1948. Married in Aurora County 09/26/1917, divorced in 1923. Both husbands worked as farmers.

Emma Becker Profile: Emma Becker's childhood experiences gave her a "feisty" spirit that helped her succeed as an independent business woman and make friends with some famous people! Taking advantage of homesteading laws, Emma's family moved to Nebraska when she was six years old. Her father Gustav filed a claim south and west close to Wallace, Nebraska, while his twin brother Adolph moved to South Dakota. The years between 1885 and 1901 were extremely hard for the family. Their home was built of sod with no floor and very few windows. Once a wooden floor was put down, the neighbors would gather to dance on Saturday evenings while Gustav played violin and Emma the guitar. The walls were whitewashed and the ceiling was unfinished, only the rafters were showing. It was heated with a kitchen stove, using corn cobs for fuel when there was a crop. The standby source of fuel was buffalo chips and twist of buffalo grass, since it was buffalo country. Farming in Nebraska proved unsuccessful for Gustav's family so they moved, without Emma, to South Dakota in 1901 and farmed with Gustav's twin brother Adolph in Eureka and Cooper townships.

Emma left home at an early age to find work and earn her own way. The work she found was in North Platte, Nebraska as a housekeeper for Buffalo Bill Cody, who was considered quite important and used to dance the schottish with her at dances. It was here that Emma met and married William Oscar Anderson, in 1896, and her four sons were born; Clarence, Hugh, Howard and Bert. She divorced William in 1910. Six years later, Emma and her sons moved to South Dakota to be with her family. The boys attended the newly built Gardner School in Eureka township. She then married John Becker in 1917, and in the next three years, gave birth to daughter Marie and son Melvin. Emma and John divorced in 1923.

Seven years later, Emma opened a restaurant in Plankinton called "Becker's Café. In an era where few women owned and ran businesses, Emma proved to be a very successful independent businessperson. One of her most famous customers was a candy salesman who stopped every week for a cheese sandwich and a glass of milk. She knew him as Lawrence and we all know him as the famous Lawrence Welk! In 1948, she sold the business, and, nine years later, she sold the building. Prior to the sale of the business, Emma purchased a house about one block east of Main Street. On this plot of land, she put in a very large garden, planting the seeds in small containers in the winter and moving them to whichever window had the most sunlight. Emma suffered a stroke and was moved to Nebraska to be closer to her two sons in the winter of 1961. She died two years later.

Roles/Talent: Wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother; business owner; talented gardener; musician; cooking; sewing; crocheting

Parents/Ethnicity: Gustav Gaertner, German, and Mary Ann Laupitz, immigrant, but origin unknown. Gustav and his twin brother Adolph sailed on the ship "Donau" from Hamburg, Germany, to New York, arriving on August 31, 1864. In Illinois, the Gaertner's became citizens, Americanizing their names to Gardner and Gartner.

Children: 6 children born 1897-1920. **Clarence; Hugh** (Lucille Hockett); **Howard** (Clara Lee); and **Bert Anderson** (Bernice Hill). **Marie** (Nick Marette – married Ward Brotzman after Nick's death), and **Melvin Becker** (Lois Tastad). Emma became the guardian of three granddaughters after the death of their parents, Bert and Berniece Anderson; **Virginia, LaVerta**, and **Wilma**, born 1929-1932.

Sisters: Bertha Keen, Minnie, Clara (died as infant), Edith Woodman

Brothers: Paul, William, Henry (Hank), Herman, Frederick

Education:

Work Experience: housekeeper, businesswoman

Church, Clubs/Organizations: Methodist affiliated

Family Connections: Eventually, all Emma's children moved to different states. Her daughter, Marie, raised her two children in Plankinton. They also moved away, but later returned. By 2021, those grandchildren, Jack (Deb) Marette and Rosalie Brink both resided in Plankinton; Also living in Plankinton are granddaughter Rosalie's two daughters, two granddaughters, and three great-grandchildren, those being Rosalie's daughter Kathy (Curt Guindon), Kathy's daughter Kyanna (Ryan Huff), and Kyanna's children, Jenalee, Lilyanna and Tyson, and also Rosalie's daughter Leah (Chris Schleuning) and her daughter Peyton Brink. Kyanna's children are Emma's great-great-great grandchildren. Ironically, Kathy's family purchased the house that Emma bought in 1957, so on that parcel of land, 6 generations have lived – Emma, Marie, Rosalie, Kathy, Kyanna and Lilyanna. Emma's brothers Paul and Hank lived out there lives in Plankinton, with Hank living in the Sweep Hotel for many years.

Time in Aurora County: 45 years

Physical Appearance: Small in stature - feisty, 4'7" reddish brown haired woman with piercing blue eyes

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Submitter: Rosalie Brink, granddaughter, Plankinton.



Becker's Café – Main Street Plankinton, SD

Emma Augusta Gardner – approximate age 13

Emma and her children – front (left to right) Mel, Emma, Marie; back (left to right) Clarence, Hugh, Howard, Bert