

of the local antique shops. The woman behind the counter pleasantly commented, "Wouldn't it be something to find someone you knew." And behold! As she said that, I turned over a photo to find Emma and Emil looking out at me from their wedding portrait. For one dollar, I purchased an original copy of that picture to take home and study many times over.

As I studied the photograph, my first thoughts were of Emma's appearance. Through a magnifying glass, I noted her rounded face, shortened in appearance by some curly wisps of a pompadour that dips down over her forehead. Emma's dark hair is pulled back from her face and seems secured at the nape of her neck. I guess that her tresses were long. Her dark eyes seem to be looking directly at me. (Had she been instructed to look directly into the camera?) The gaze is intense: the eyes have the largeness of youth. Emma has the look of a little girl here. *How old was she when she married?*

Emil seems fairer of hair and eyes, too, by comparison with his bride. His eyes are set closer together than Emma's, and his mouth is fuller. He looks older, perhaps by a few years, but still of Emma's generation. *Was he?*

Emil's hands are darker than his face and appear roughened. Veins stand out. His work was, no doubt, physical and out-of-doors. Yet his fingernails are almost as light as Emma's gloves.

The groom's highly polished shoes show dust in their creases. His suit does not fit him as well as Emma's dress fits her—the pants drape over his instep and heel; the crease is off-center.

Emma's dress has a high lace-edged collar and leg-o'-mutton sleeves. Just beneath the blouson bodice, Emma's waist is narrow and well-defined. She must have been wearing a corset. *Was she wearing her mother's wedding dress?*

A painted backdrop is behind the couple. I reasoned that the photograph was made by a photographer because only they owned backdrops of this type. But I could find no photographer's name or location on the photo; none is embossed on the poster board on which the picture is mounted. At first I thought that the picture was made in a studio. But some pieces of evidence within the picture itself contradict that assumption: the toe of Emil's shoe has cast a shadow directly beneath it. Emma's dress is so bleached by light that details are imperceptible. And little tufts of something

appear at the backdrop's base. Some viewers think it's grass. I think that it's the fringed edge of a carpet. Maybe the backdrop was hung from a porch framework and the picture taken out-of-doors. Or perhaps the couple is standing on a rug in a studio. *Who was the photographer? Where was the portrait made? When was it made—on the Beckmanns' wedding day or at some other time? What about a celebration—did they have one? Was their wedding like any I knew? What happened on that day?*

Countless questions begged for answers. The evidence I collected in search of those answers is contained in this chapter's "Portfolio of Evidence." Each piece holds a clue—sometimes several clues—to Emma and Emil Beckmann's wedding day and the person who was Emma, the subject of this search, the central character of this real-life story.

The "Emma's Story . . ." section of this chapter offers an imaginative description of Emma's wedding day, reconstructed from the clues of my collected evidence.

Portfolio of Evidence



HE marriage license and certificate for Emma and Emil Beckmann was found in the Gillespie County records of marriages. These records are housed in the County Clerk's Office in the courthouse that stands on the public square in Fredericksburg. The record shows Emma's maiden name to be Mayer. The license was issued on December 9, 1907, by Herman Usener, then county clerk. The couple was united in marriage the next day, December 10, 1907, by M. Heinrich, who held the title of Pastor of Albert, Texas.

Someone, perhaps Pastor Heinrich, apparently made a trip to Fredericksburg on December 19 of that year and carried the Beckmann marriage certificate to the Gillespie County Clerk's office for filing. Sixteen miles was no small distance to travel by horse and buggy, so perhaps Pastor Heinrich waited to make the trip until he had several records to file or other business in town. It took Herman Usener three months to record the marriage; it was entered on March 1, 1908. (Paperwork at the courthouse