

Who Was Charlie Baker of Alvarado, Texas?

The biggest mystery in my genealogy is the identity of my great-grandfather. My great aunt, Arzy Johnson Squyres, told me that his name was Charlie Baker. All I know about Charlie is that he was in or near Alvarado, Texas in 1892 where he met my great-grandmother Emma Lucinda Johnson. Charlie is shown in the adjacent photo. More about the photo later.

Emma was the 17 year old daughter of William M. (Bill) And Elizabeth (Bettie) Johnson. Emma's father, Bill Johnson, was born in Baker County, Georgia, born a Brown but later became a stepson of Benjamin Franklin Johnson. He grew to adulthood in Simpson County, Mississippi.

Elizabeth Johnson was from Wilcox County, Alabama, although she and Bill met in Florida.

My great aunt Arzy told me that she was in the Johnson kitchen at Alvarado when her father told her mother that they were moving to Louisiana.

Her mother asked, "Is Emma coming too?"

"Yes, Emma is coming, too!" replied Bill.



Charlie Baker, Alvarado, Texas

Clearly in Bettie's mind there was a reason for Emma to stay at Alvarado, and that reason was undoubtedly Charlie. The context seems to indicate that Bill knew about Charlie and that the move might have been in part to break them up. Bill Johnson had a violent temper and was called a "mean old man" by another member of the family.

Some time in late 1892 or early 1893, the Johnson family, including Emma, moved to De Soto Parish, Louisiana, near Marthasville, where my grandfather Franklin (Frank) John Johnson, Charlie's son, was born on May 15, 1893.

The Johnson family eventually settled in Angelina County, Texas in East Texas where Emma married a widower, Arthur Arrington in 1897. They lived in a big house in the small town of Burke where Arthur ran a small drug store.

One of the Emma's stepdaughters, Tellie Arrington Rush, told me that Frank's father (she did not know his name) visited Emma at their house at Burke about 1900 when she was a little girl. He asked for return of his rings. Emma in a fit of anger threw them at him. One rolled under the bed, and Tellie retrieved it.

I am told that multiple, interlocking rings were popular in the Nineteenth Century.

Why was Emma so angry with Charlie? Was it because he did not pursue her to Louisiana and challenged her father for her hand? Or were they secretly married, and his presence in her new husband's home exposed an embarrassing secret? (The Johnsons were not known for punctilious adherence to the letter of domestic law.) I suspect that Charlie might have been seeking more than his rings. Did he bring papers to sign for a divorce so he could marry someone else?

The photo of Charlie above has a interesting story. My great aunt told me that, "Emma kept his picture in her sewing kit all her life." (She lived to be 87).

My memories of Great Grandma Emma are of her sitting in her rocking chair and sewing cloth scraps together for quilt tops. Her sewing kit was a round holiday, fruit cake can. It was her inner sanctum where she kept her most prized possessions.

When Great Aunt Arzy told me about the photo, I remembered that we still had the can. I rushed home and retrieved the can from our storage shed. Inside I found Emma's needles, thimbles, eyeglasses, newspaper clippings and...a photograph of a young man nattily dressed in a three piece suit. The photo was taken by H. H. Austin, Photographer, Alvarado, Texas. I had found Charlie! But I still did not know who he was.

There is no doubt that Charlie was the love of my great grandmother's life.,

Charles Albert Baker of Corsicana, Texas?

Is Charles Albert Baker my Charlie Baker?

1. He was known as "Charlie Baker."
2. He lived two counties away from Johnson County.
3. In 1900 he was not in the Navarro County census.
4. If Charlie Baker had other children, his descendants would be my 2nd or 3rd cousins. So I have been looking for DNA matches at the 2nd and 3rd cousin level that do not fit any of my other ancestral families. In over 10 years of looking, I have never found anyone matching that criterion. Charles Albert Baker married Emma Lee Morris in 1907 (same name as my great grandmother) at age 32, and they never had any children. That explains the lack of DNA matches. It is also good negative evidence since childless marriages are fairly rare.



Charles Albert Baker and Emma Lee Morris Baker

5. Charlie Baker was nattily dressed in a three piece suit with a bow tie. In the photo of Charles Albert Baker on Ancestry, he is wearing a very nice suit with a bow tie. Bow ties are rare, and men who wear them are dedicated to them.
6. Charlie Baker's wearing a suit a such young age tells me he had resources and was not a farmer. He likely worked in town in what we today would call a white collar job. Charles Albert Baker spent his career as a bookkeeper at a furniture store.
7. Charles Albert Baker's parents, Little Berry Baker and Permelia Lemmon Baker, have the following family names in their ancestry: Baker, Hodges, Scobey, Keen and Warren. I have numerous distant DNA matches with these names. This is not conclusive but could suggest a connection.

I have searched for years for Charlie, including multiple DNA tests, but nothing definitive has shown up.

If you have any information that would help me establish the identity of "Charlie Baker", please contact me as below.

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