

# CHARLIE'S CONFECTIONERY:

## A SWEET SUCCESS STORY



By: Kenneth C. Wukasch

Dedicated to my father Martin C. Wukasz (1915-1978)

“Instead of saying that man is the creature of circumstances,  
say that man is the architect of circumstances.”

Thomas Carlyle

## CHARLIE'S CONFECTIONERY: A SWEET SUCCESS STORY

Charles George Wukasch was born January 29, 1875, near Serbin, Texas in Lee County. He was the first and only child born to the marriage of George W. Wukasch and Marie Knippa. When his mother died two weeks later, Charles was raised by an aunt, Teresa Knippa.

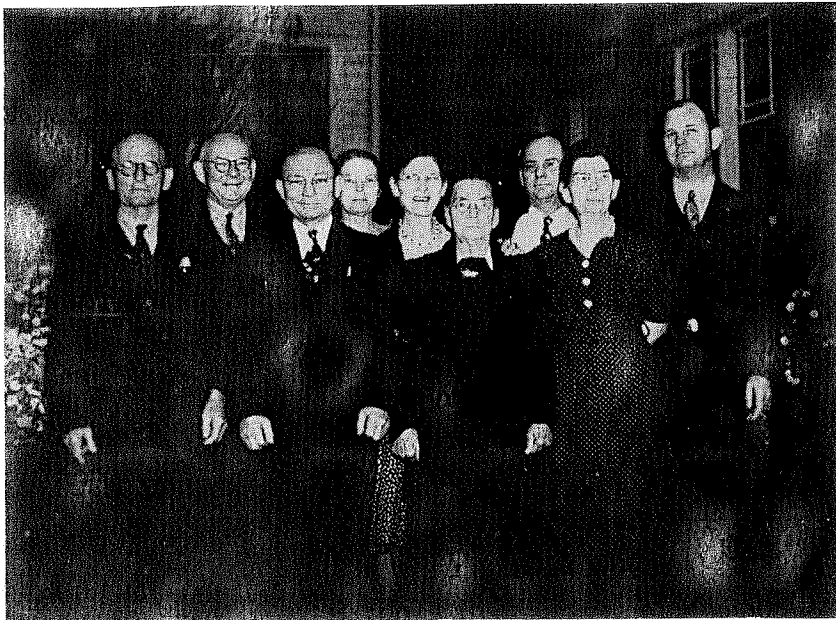


Theresa Knippa, sister of Marie



Marie Knippa, mother of C.G. Wukasch

Within a few years, George remarried and had eight more children; Gerhardt (Jerry), Martha, Louise, Selma, Frieda, August, Joe and Otto with his new wife, Marie Pilack who was affectionately called "Mutter."



C.G. Wukasch at age 2.

Charles & the children born to George W. Wukasch & Marie Pilack:  
Left to Right- Charles, Jerry, Joe, Frieda, Louise, Marie (Mutter),  
August, Martha & Otto

As Charles grew to manhood he found life to be hard on the Wukasch farm near Serbin. His grandfather, Matthias had purchased 85.25 acres of the so-called Delaplain League in the 1860's for 50 cents per acre. <sup>1</sup> It was probably a typical Wendish farm consisting of a cabin built out of small logs directly on the ground with a few furnishings and comforts. Livestock such as chickens, ducks, geese and a 'milch cow' provided food, down and dairy products for the family. <sup>2</sup>



Charles' confirmation photo. July, 1894



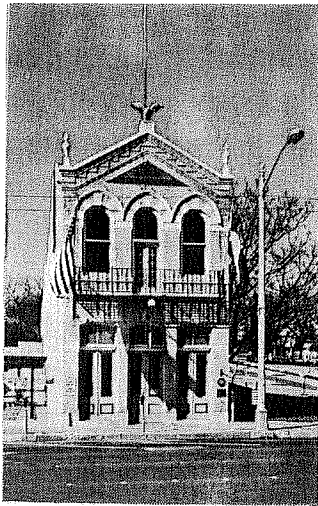
Charles Wukasch, Feb. 14, 1896

The years between 1875 and 1898 must have been extremely difficult for Charles and the other Wendish settlers. "Severe drought and low productivity of the soil prevented the dense settlement of a Wendish colony, and just as in Australia, the Wends scattered in search of more farm land or for jobs in the city." <sup>3</sup> It was in the city that Charles saw his future and in 1898 moved to Austin.



Private C.G. Wukasch, Spanish American War, 1898.

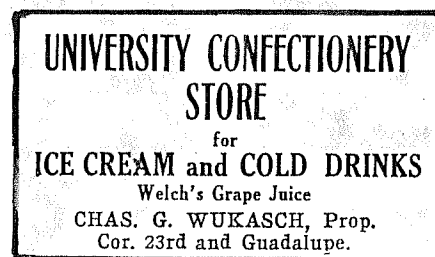
In April, 1898, the United States declared war on Spain and Charles immediately enlisted at Camp Mabry with Troop G of the 1st Texas Volunteers. Most of his enlistment involved routine marching and drilling: "Discipline was very strict; if soldiers didn't behave and follow orders they would be forced to carry rocks." <sup>4</sup>



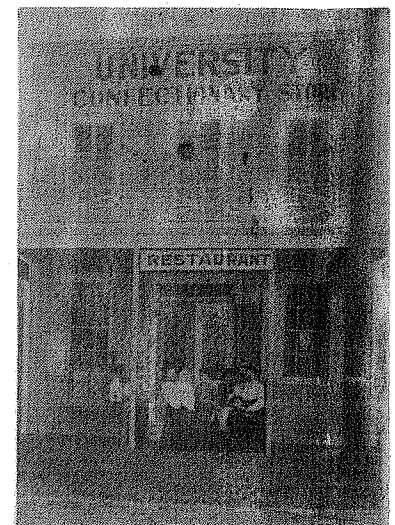
Old Lundberg Bakery & Emporium  
at 11th & Congress Ave.

With the end of the war in August, 1898, Charles began his search for work in Austin. He found a job that paid \$4.00 per month including room and board but later recalled how his third grade education severely limited his job opportunities. Soon however, he was offered work by Henry Maerki who managed the Lundberg Bakery on Congress Avenue. Here Charles worked long hours learning those skills that would one day be necessary to successfully operate his own business. He was also careful to save his money. "Thrift was a trait the Wend knew in Europe and it enabled him to exist in Texas. They improved themselves not only through hard work but through frugality and self-denial." <sup>5</sup> By 1902, Charles had saved and borrowed over \$300.00 and felt ready for self-enterprise. But what type of enterprise and where should it be located?

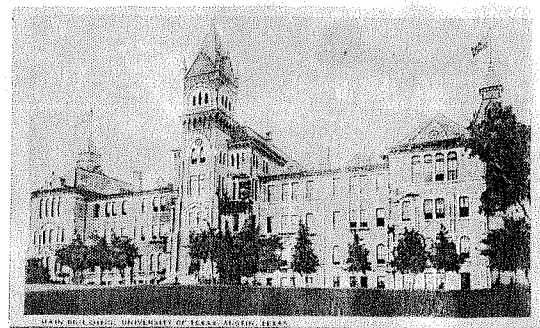
The population of Austin in 1900 had grown to 22,258; almost double of what it had been in 1890. The University of Texas now had an astounding attendance of 986. <sup>6</sup> It was here that Charles had a vision of a growing and dynamic university community so in 1902 he opened a sweet shop, Charlie's Confectionery at 24th Guadalupe Street. Within two years however his business was relocated when he purchased the corner of 23rd and Guadalupe. Charles' son Walter recalled how his father made this important decision: "When given the opportunity to either purchase the corner of 24th and Guadalupe for \$2000.00 or the corner of 23rd and Guadalupe for \$1000.00, he chose the less expensive property." <sup>7</sup> Charlie's University confectionery store became the first eating establishment located in the University area and the third business to open on "The Drag." (The other two businesses were a saloon and bank) Charles recalled that "when he first went into business here, the University physical plant consisted of one building." <sup>8</sup> (University of Texas Main Building) There was only one paved street in Austin, Congress Avenue, and the cost for riding a street car pulled by a horse from 1st street to the capitol was 5 cents.



Advertisement for Charles' first store.  
The Texan, newspaper, April 22, 1908.



Charles' first store at 23rd Guadalupe.  
University Confectionery Store-1904.



Main Building, University of Texas

With his business now firmly established Charles returned to Serbin and married Emma Helen Hannusch of Winchester on August 10, 1903, in the Serbin Community Lutheran Church. His best man and ushers were Henry and Jerry Wukasch of Austin and John Hannusch of Winchester. Her matron-of-honor was Mrs. Henry Schmidt of Winchester and bridesmaids Martha and Louise Wukasch of Austin. 9 The couple returned immediately to 2218 Guadalupe to begin their lives in business together.



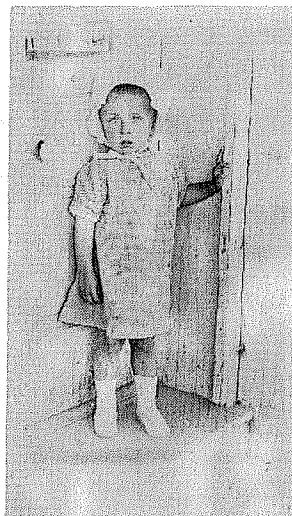
Charles & Emma's wedding photo-1903.



John Hannusch, brother of Emma, & Charles enjoying their horses on family farm near Winchester.

On July 11, 1904, Charles and Emma were blessed with a daughter, Edna Adeline; on July 24, 1908, a son was born, Walter Charles, and on February 20, 1915, the family was completed with the birth of Martin Charles. All three children were born in the upstairs portion of the business at 2218 Guadalupe that served as the family residence until 1919.

Although successful in business Charles never forgot his family in Serbin. Between 1904-1920 Charles provided a job and a place to live for his brothers, sisters and cousins. At times, Joe, August, Otto, Martha, Louise, Frieda and Pauline worked and lived at the confectionery. By 1910, they had even been able to move their mother Marie (Mary) Wukasch from Serbin to Austin where she lived at 405 E. 17th Street.



Martin Wukasch, age 2, at front door of original confectionery store.



Walter Wukasch, 1908.



Charles, Emma, Edna, "Mutter", (in middle) Walter (in front of Emma & Martin (child) at bottom (circa 1918)

Being in business meant long hours and hard work: cleaning, mopping, washing, cooking and serving customers left little spare time for family and pleasure. "The economy in those days was different too, with an eating establishment actually making its own ice cream, pies, candies, chili or anything else it offered for sale." 10

Now the University Confectionery Store was enlarged and actually divided into two separate businesses. Joe rented space from Charles and opened the Joe Wukasch Grocery at 2220 Guadalupe, while Charles and Emma maintained their confectionery and restaurant at 2218 Guadalupe. Walter remembered that "there was a door that led to the grocery from the confectionery." 11 Upstairs a porch and balcony were added where Walter and Bill Eihlers enjoyed "dropping peas onto the heads of pedestrians on Guadalupe St." 12 Within a few years Charles brought brothers August and Otto into his business and renamed the store, Wukasch Bros. Ice cream, Confectionery & Restaurant.

The years before and during the First World War were difficult for all Austin businessmen and residents. A city of 30,000 was trying to grow with barely 150 hotel rooms. Among those things Austin badly needed were more paved streets, pure water, sewage disposal, new roads and highways, recreation and flood prevention. 13 But a different kind of problem now had to be faced by those Austin citizens of German



Interior of remodeled store at 2218 Guadalupe. Charles, Emma, Walter, Edna behind counter. Bertha Yenke, waitress (1911)

## CHAS. G. WUKASCH

FOR ALL KINDS OF REFRESHMENTS AND LUNCHEES, CIGARS,  
CIGARETTES, FRUIT AND CANDIES.

2218-20 Guadalupe Street.
AUSTIN, TEXAS.

Old Phone 1071.

Advertisement for Charles G. Wukasch that appeared in The Comet (Yearbook for Stephen F. Austin High School) May, 1912.



Balcony and porch above the confectionery-looking east toward the main building, U.T. (1918)

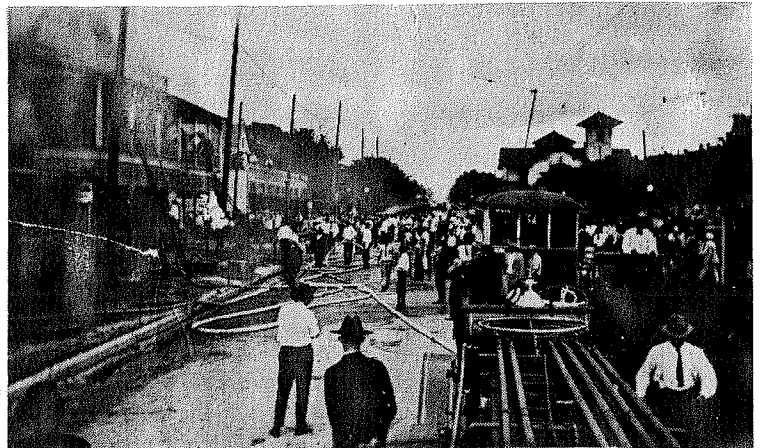
and Wendish descent: A wave of anti-German sentiment and prejudice swept across Austin after the war. (1918) It was so intense that Edna, Walter and Martin were even forbidden by their parents to speak German. But in spite of these problems Charles and Emma still managed to earn a living, support and raise a family, hire more employees and in 1919 buy a home at 611 W. 23rd St.\*



Home of Charles & Emma from 1919-1964 at 611 W. 23rd & Rio Grande

As it turned out, the timing of their home purchase proved to be quite fortuitous. In June, 1920, a devastating fire roared through the 23rd block of Guadalupe destroying many of the businesses including Charlie's Confectionery. The following accounts of the fire damage were published in the Statesman on June 4th and 5th:

\* The home at 611 W. 23rd St. was purchased by C.G. Wukasch from a widow, Leila Patrick and then sold in 1978 to Robert and Betty Phillips who moved it to 915 W. 23rd and restored it. today, the home is used as apartments for university students. (Austin Citizen, Tuesday, February 19, 1980.)



Frenzied scene on Guadalupe Street as Charlie's Confectionery burns. (1920)

June 4, 1920

## FIRE ON GUADALUPE, OPPOSITE UNIVERSITY, CREATES UNEASINESS Adjoining Property and shacks on campus Imperilled by the Flames

Business and residence property valued at many thousands of dollars was endangered by fire which broke out shortly before 3'o'clock this afternoon in the Wukasch grocery store and confectionery at the corner of Guadalupe and twenty-third street.

Fifteen minutes after the fire was discovered the grocery and confectionery was practically destroyed with a loss estimated at \$5000.00.

At 3:30 the fire had not been brought completely under control, but other property in the neighborhood was not believed to be in any great danger.

Being located just opposite the University the fire created considerable excitement and much uneasiness lest the flames spread to shacks on the campus just across the street. To prevent this firemen were directing their best efforts. The origin of the fire had not been determined. At 4 o'clock the fire was under control. 14

June 5, 1920

### GUADALUPE ST. FIRE NEAR THE UNIVERSITY

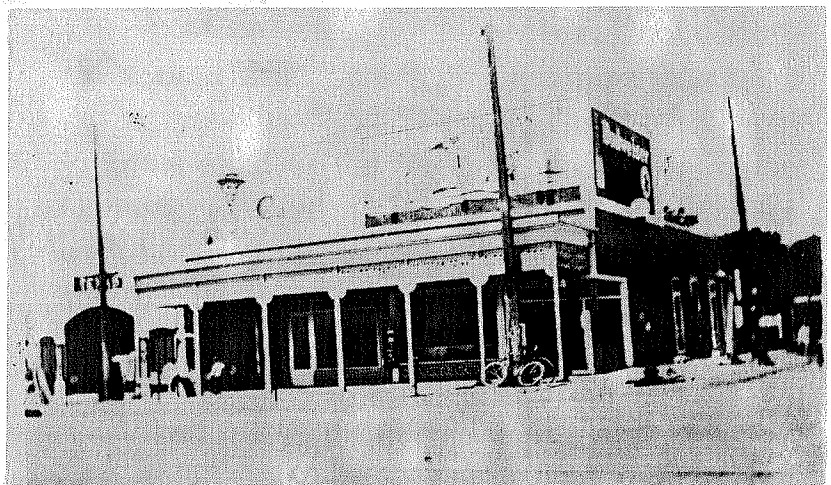
Fire completely destroyed the shop of the University cleaners and Dyers, 2214 Guadalupe Street, directly across from the University of Texas campus, when a gas stove exploded in the drying room Friday afternoon.

The fire swept up the block, practically ruining the Club Pressing shop next door, burning away the roof and demolishing the second story of the Wukasch Bros. Cafe and the Joe Wukasch Grocery Store, subjecting the stock and goods of each to severe damage by water.

The Wukasch cafe, familiarly termed "Charley's Place" in University circles, and an old landmark and rendezvous of students, presented closed doors Friday night for the first time in years. 15

Following the 1920 fire, Charles & Emma, Joe, Otto and August were faced with a number of difficult financial and business decisions: rebuild or relocate? Joe decided to relocate by moving south to 2000 Guadalupe St. and opening a new grocery store, Otto and August meanwhile moved next to their brother Joe and opened Wukasch Bros. Cafe at 2002 Guadalupe. Charles and Emma rebuilt and opened a new Charlie's Confectionery at the corner of 2220 Guadalupe.

This new store was quite bright and modern: The back dining area was two steps higher than the front with tables and chairs for eating and studying. In the front a long, glass and marble cigar and cigarette counter held the cash register and "more cigars than anyone could possibly smoke." 16



New Charlie's Confectionery Store at 2220 Guadalupe St.  
(Early 1920's)



Charlies Confectionery (late 1920's)

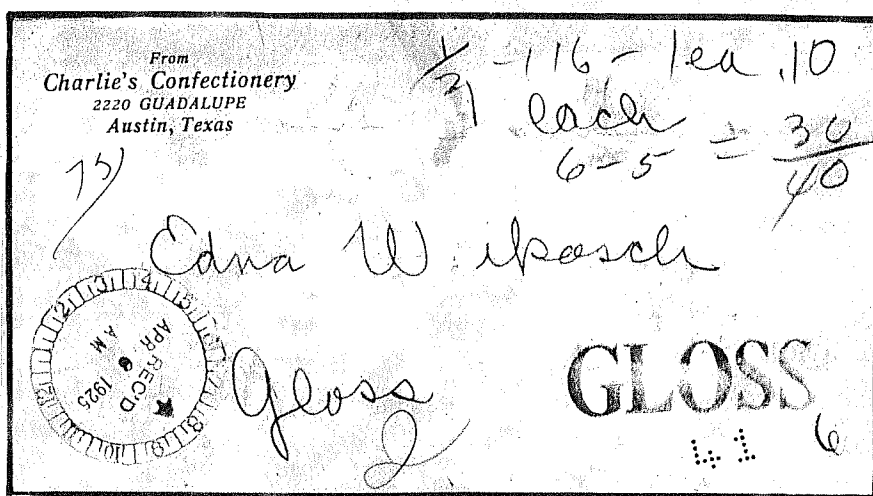
A white-marbled soda fountain served thirsty students cold drinks, ice cream and malts behind which a door led to the kitchen and storage area. Ceiling fans cooled customers on hot, summer days. Walter remembered that on one particular day something got spilled on a lady customer's dress: "Dad was threatened with a lawsuit and had to hire a lawyer. He finally woundup having to buy her a new dress." 17



Interior of new confectionery with Charles behind counter. (circa 1927)

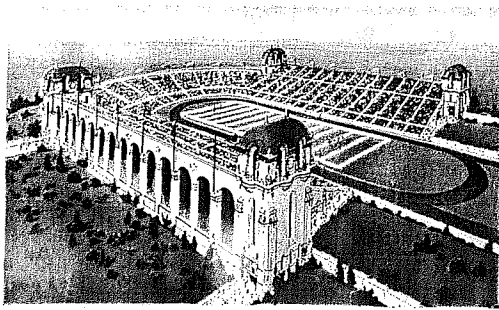


Wukash auto next to Charlie's Confectionery - (1920)



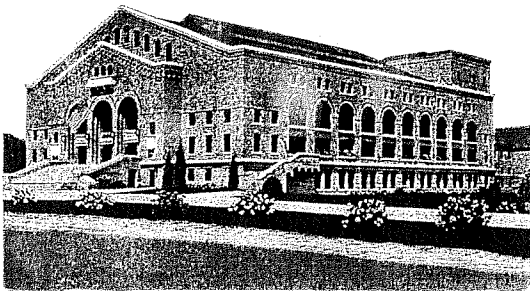
Advertising envelope for Charlie's Confectionery. (April, 1925)

Always involved in community affairs, Charles was an active member of the Chamber of Commerce and Retail Merchant's Association. In 1921, there was a serious attempt to relocate the University of Texas on the Brackenridge tract along the lake which would have damaged the trend of growth in the university neighborhood. Also, several Texas cities made offers to attract the University. "The Chamber intervened and secured options to purchase and furnish additional land adjoining the campus for expansion of the University on its present site...this definitely ended the constant threat of removing the University of Texas from Austin." 18



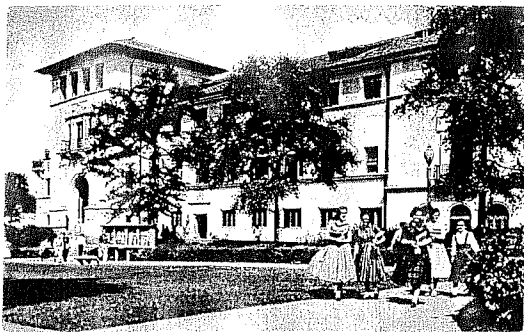
Memorial Stadium. University of Texas. (1920's)

Charles also donated generously and helped solicit financial contributions for the construction of Memorial Stadium, Gregory Gymnasium, The Union Building and other University expansion projects. 19 In 1926, Charles aided in the securing of a campus site for a Missouri Synod Lutheran College-Concordia.



Gregory Gymnasium. University of Texas. (1920's)

Throughout the 1920's, Charlie's Confectionery became a study hall, meeting place and social center for university students. "During the week, library dates were popular. When the lights blinked at 8:45 p.m., students closed their books and, with their dates, walked the Perip, the twelve blocks around the original Forty acres. Students might munch apples or popcorn as they walked, or if the boy was feeling affluent he would take his girl to Charlie's Confectionery at 23rd for a thick chocolate malted milk." 20 But this was more than just a business to Charles and Emma. They actually got to know most of the students who attended the University between 1902-1929. Many of them were not only hired in part-time jobs, some were able to complete their education through this indirect aid.



Union Building. University of Texas. (1950's)

The whole C.G. Wukasch family worked to make the confectionery successful. While attending parochial and public schools the three children cleaned, cooked and

waited tables. The family always owned a newer model automobile. Walter remembered that it was a Buick that in those days offered few luxuries. "When it was very cold Dad would heat bricks, wrap and then set them in the car-there was no heater." 21

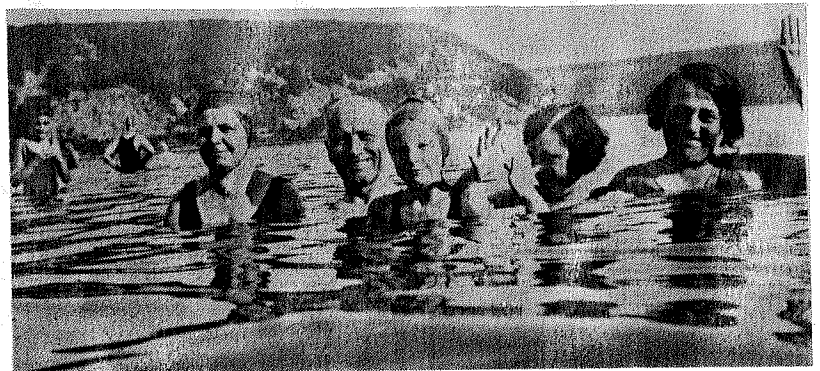


Emma in front of family car  
amused at canine passenger (1920's)

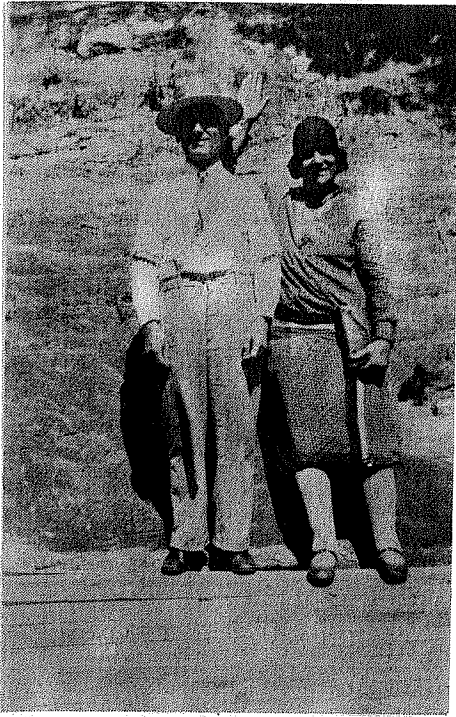
With only a limited formal education it was Charles and Emma's dream to see their children obtain college diplomas. In 1925, Edna became the third woman to receive a degree from the U.T. School of Architectural Engineering, Walter received a B.B.A. degree in 1929, and Martin received his degree in Chemical Engineering in 1941. Since Walter had earned his degree in Business Administration, Charles decided to turn the management responsibilities of Charles over to him. Walter remembered his dad being told by one of his customers: "You don't need a bookkeeper, let Walter do it - let him take over the business." 22

The 1930's saw the effects of the Great Depression on Texas and the whole country. Business and bank failures came to symbolize America during the decade. However, Austin was one of the bright spots among cities with the worst effects of the Depression never really hitting the city. "University money helped the Austin economy, along with Roosevelt administration work funds. It would bring an expansive building program, including completion of the University Tower in 1937." 23

Charles and Emma especially enjoyed sharing time with their children in spite of the heavy demands of business. Vacations were often spent taking outings to Lake Travis, traveling to visit relatives or on picnics with their growing family.



Charles & Emma with friends at Lake Travis.

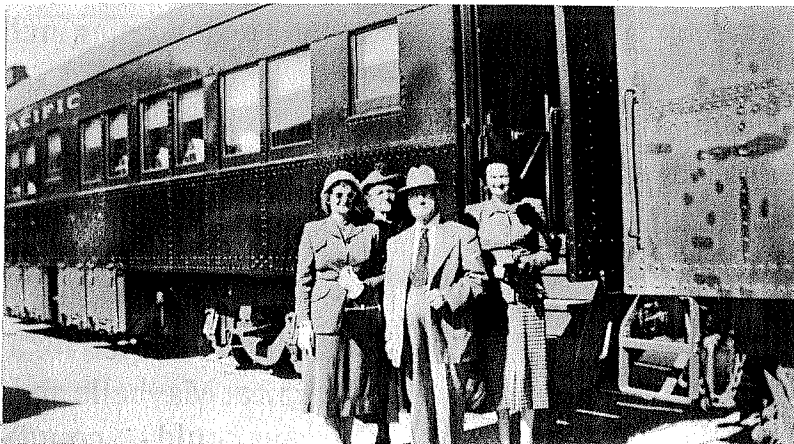


Charles & Emma on vacation



Emma. "Just returned from Chicago. Among the hedges in Edna & Alvin's yard." (1930)

In 1925, their oldest daughter Edna married Alvin Swiedom of Austin, in 1933 Walter was married to Billye Teykl of Austin and in 1937 Martin married Ruth Faubion of Leander. They were especially proud each time another grandchild was born: Arlene(1930), Connie(1936), Don(1937), Barry(1939), Charles(1940), Ken(1942), and Jim and Jan(1954). By 1938, Charles and Emma were ready for retirement and closed Charlie's Confectionery for good.



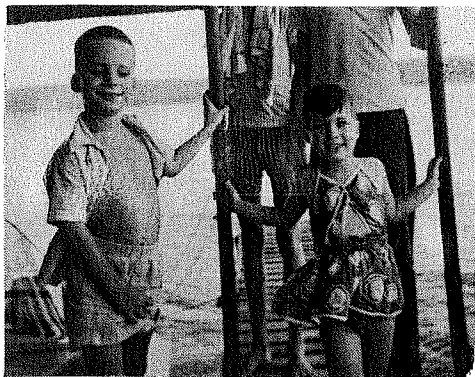
Charles & Emma's new daughter-in-laws: Billye Teykl & Ruth Faubion



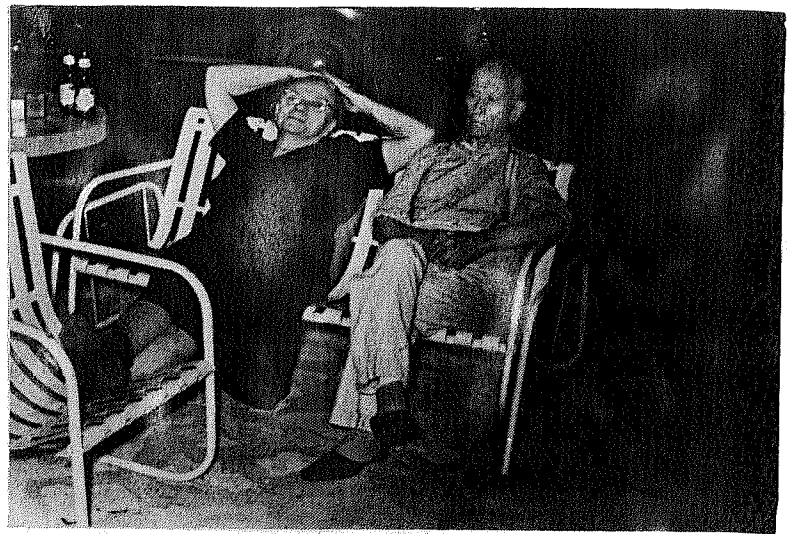
Charles & Emma with son-in-law Alvin Swiedom & daughter Connie.



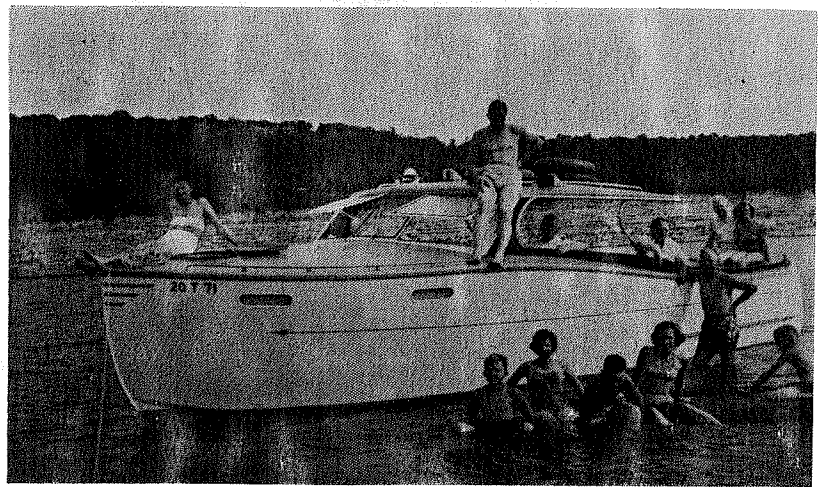
Grandchildren of Charles & Emma:  
Left to Right- Barry, Arlene, Charles,  
Don, Ken, Connie (1945)



Grandchildren of Charles & Emma-  
Jim & Jan (1958)



Charles & Emma relaxing and enjoying retirement.

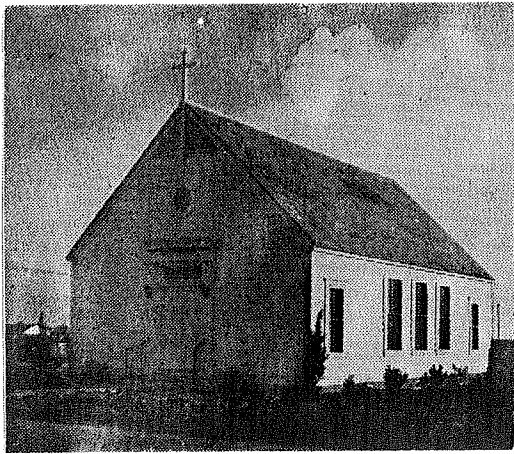


Charles & Emma with the whole family in Walter's boat,  
"Dixie Belle", at Lake Travis. (1950's)

Always very active church members, they now helped organize a new congregation in Austin. As a member of St. Paul Lutheran since 1898, Charles was always interested in expanding membership and participating in church work while Emma was active in the Women's Missionary League and Ladies Aid Society. Both were charter members of Trinity Lutheran Church that was dedicated on October 2, 1938. After the original property had been secured for Trinity, Charles donated the land on which the school now stands, one lot in 1941 and one lot in 1944. His brother Otto donated the parking lot on West 45th in 1943. <sup>24</sup>

By 1952, the congregation had grown to 575 members creating the need for a new church. The church was completed and dedicated on July 20, 1952 at Maybelle and 45th street with the total cost at \$136,000. <sup>25</sup> Charles and Emma always could be counted on by the congregation: the candlesticks were donated in gratitude to Rev. Arthur E. Graf for faithful service to the Lord and Emma later donated the choir handbells. The work of the

Lord and the congregation was very important and special to both of them.



First Trinity Lutheran Church in Austin. (1938)

Probably the highlight of Charles and Emma's retirement was the celebration of their golden wedding anniversary on August 9, 1953. An open house was held at the home of Walter and Billye Wukasch at 719 Carolyn Avenue. On display was Emma's wedding veil and the veil her daughter Edna had worn 28 years earlier along with pictures of both weddings. There was also a reunion of the majority of the wedding party who witnessed the marriage of Charles and Emma in the Serbin Community Lutheran Church in 1903. 26



New Trinity Lutheran Church. Built in 1952.



Proud moment for Charles & Emma with children at their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1953.  
Left to Right- Walter, Emma, Charles, Edna, Martin

## UT FRIEND CHARLIE WUKASCH DIES AT HOME; RITES PENDING

Headlines of Charles' death announcement in the Austin Statesman, March 23, 1954.

Early on the morning of Tuesday, March 23, 1954, Charles George Wukasch peacefully died at his home. The funeral was arranged by Hytlin-Manor Funeral Home. 27 Relatives came throughout the day to pay their respects and remember Charles. Trinity Lutheran Church was filled to capacity with people of all ages and professions who had known or whose lives had somehow been touched by his. The silver casket was covered by an American flag in recognition of his service during the Spanish-American War and he was buried with full military honors in Oakwood Cemetery.



Emma's brother (at her left)  
John Hannusch of Winchester.  
(1954)

Emma remained active in business, family and church activities. Soon after Charles' death she moved her brother John Hannusch to live with her. She looked after and cared for him until his death in 1964. Emma especially enjoyed visiting older friends and relatives, reliving and talking about the early days in Serbin and Austin. She was a very caring and generous friend and grandmother. In spite of her strong will and determination to remain active her health was beginning to fail due to her diabetes and high blood pressure. And after her brother's death she seemed to feel that her life's work was complete. On April 1, 1964, Emma Helen Hannusch Wukasch was found dead in bed by her grandson Charles. On Friday, April 3, at 2 p.m. funeral services were held at Trinity Lutheran Church with Pastor Martin Ramming officiating. Emma was buried next to Charles in Oakwood Cemetery. 28

## Mrs. Wukasch, 80, Dies; Rites Friday

Headlines of Emma's death announcement in the Austin American, April 2, 1964.

Grow old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made;  
Our times are in his hand who saith,  
“A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God; See all,  
nor be afraid!”

Robert Browning