

# Sophie Becker Ott



Sophie is the oldest child of Johannes Becker and Elisabeth Friedrichs Becker. She was born in Flint, Michigan on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, 1855. Her father, Johannes Becker, was born in Copershoten Germany in 1824. Johannes Becker came to America in 1950 from Westphalia, Germany. Johannes was the son of Nicholas and Magdalena Becker, who also came with their children to Detroit.



**Johannes Becker**



**Elisabeth Friedrichs Becker**

Her dad fought in the civil war, was wounded at Gettysburg and then made barrels and casks for the Union Army effort for the rest of the war.

Sophie's mother, Elizabeth Friedrich came to Detroit, Michigan prior to May of 1855, having emigrated from Germany with her parents shortly before 1855. Sophie's parents, Elisabeth Friedrichs and Johannes Becker lived 2 blocks apart at the time they were married. It is not known whether Elisabeth and Johannes met in the neighborhood in 1855 or whether the Friedrichs and Becker families emigrated together from Germany. There was no official paper work in any of the Friedrichs documents showing where in Germany they lived prior to coming to Detroit.

Shortly after coming to Detroit, we were in danger of losing the whole Friedrichs and Becker family tree when a cholera epidemic broke out in Detroit in the early 1850s. The Friedrichs and the Becker families sprinkled lime around their house as recommended by the Detroit Board of Health in an effort to break the epidemic. They were safe and never became ill from this plague despite the fact that many other fellow Detroiters succumbed to this deadly disease.

Sophie grew up in an apartment her father owned above his Cooper shop. Johannes Becker and his father Nicholas ran a very profitable cooper shop at 483 Gratiot from 1853 until Johannes' death in 1905.

Sophie was an excellent seamstress and often castigated her grandchildren when their stitches were not uniform and small. Sophie broke her leg in her later years when she was riding on a streetcar. The driver made a sudden stop and she was thrown to the floor of the streetcar. After that she always had a hard time walking.

Sophia Becker was living in the apartment her father owned above his Cooper shop when she met her future husband, Wilhelm Ott. It appears that Wilhelm Ott was visiting one of his Knapp cousins who lived down the street from the Becker family on Gratiot, when he met Sophia Ott. Sophia was running a seamstress shop out of her father's store on 493 Gratiot the year she met Wilhelm Ott. Perhaps he had brought in some article of clothing to be mended when he met Sophie. It was not a good fate for Sophia Becker when she met and married Wilhelm Ott for he was a man of melancholy moods and he ruled the home with an iron hand and often had a cruel, mean streak in him. It will never be known if he was always mean and cruel or whether he turned that way when he was dying of a terminal lung disease. Sophie was never happy after marrying Wilhelm. Toward the end of his life in 1892 and 1893, he often called Sophia rotten names and often told her how she did not at all measure up to his first wife, Elizabeth Braun. He used to

write rotten things about her on the wall of their bedroom at 460 Moran. In the last few weeks of his life, Wilhelm became so enraged over some trivial thing that his wife Sophie had done that he dragged himself out of bed and so severely beat her that she could not get out of bed for a week. The Doctor who came by to care for Wilhelm was so appalled when he saw Sophie's condition that he said that he would have Wilhelm put in jail for this had he not been terminally ill. He also severely beat Elizabeth in his last days so that Elizabeth was sick for a whole week also.

Sophie Becker married our great grandfather, Wilhelm Ott in 1878. They had 3 children, Elisabeth, Agnes and Ann. Sophie's husband, Wilhelm went to work for his cousins, Charles and David Knapp in their stone yard on Atwater Street as a stone cutter together with his Knapp cousins. Wilhelm's lungs were destroyed by the "stone lung disease" from inhaling stone dust for years. He passed way in 1893 after suffering horribly from this. Most of his cousins bled to death from the stone dust destroying their lungs and causing them to succumb to severe hemorrhage.



**Wilhelm Ott**  
**Father of Elizabeth Ott Bender**

Wilhelm made good money cutting stone which gave his second wife Sophie sufficient income to live out her life in comfort to her death in 1926.

Our grandmother Elisabeth Ott was born on August 19, 1879 in either her Grandmother Eva Ott's house or in Saginaw, Michigan according to two different records. Soon after Elizabeth Ott Bender was born, in 1883, Sophie and Wilhelm Ott moved out of the house they shared with his mother and sister at 514 Alfred St in Detroit and moved to 622 Chene St. in Detroit. Wilhelm's mother, Eva Knapp Ott continued to live at 514 Alfred Street. Apparently, Wilhelm Ott was paying for the upkeep of both homes. Sophie and Wilhelm Ott moved to 460 Moran, near the Grand Blvd in Detroit and lived there for many, many years. When Wilhelm Ott moved out of the home at 622 Chene Street, his sister now occupied the upper flat there and continued to live there after her brother moved to 460 Moran.



Elisabeth Ott Bender



**Beatrice & Norman Bender, Sophie Becker Ott**

**1917**

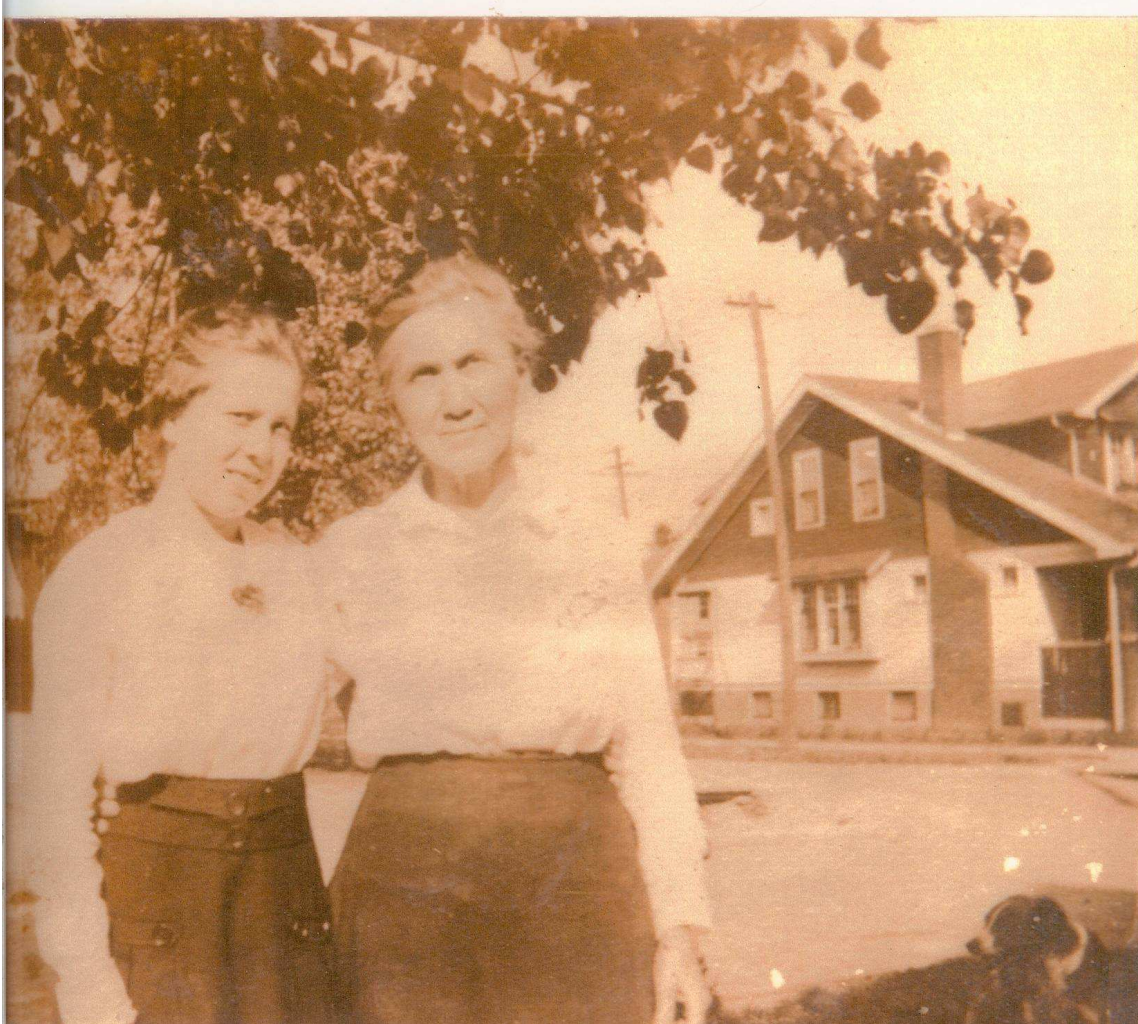
Here is a picture of Beatrice Bender Gamache on the left, Norman Bender in center and Sophie Becker Ott on right. They are standing in front of the Bender house at Maxwell and Lambert streets in Detroit.



**Norman Bender, Stuart Neff, Sophie Becker Ott, Bruce Neff**

**1917**

Here is a picture of Sophie Becker Ott holding her great grandchild, Bruce Neff. At her feet, the older child at left is our Uncle Norman John Bender, and the young child on the right in the grass is Stuart Neff, the adopted son of Harold and Mildred Neff. This picture was taken in front of the Bender house on Maxwell and Lambert Streets in Detroit, in 1917.



**Mildred Bender Neff and Sophie Becker Ott Mother of Elizabeth Ott Bender**

This is a picture of Mildred Bender Neff on the left and her grandmother Sophie Becker Ott on the right.

Elizabeth's sister, Agnes Koch, lost her husband, William, to pneumonia around 1920. William had a lucrative trucking company established in which he trucked for the Gold Medal Flour Company. Agnes did not wish to lose this business and did not know how to run it by herself. She took a liking to Henry McDermitt, whom she called Harry, and before anyone realized it she and Harry were married. Harry was prone towards moods of melancholia and was known to drink too heavily on occasion. Harry and Agnes moved in with Sophie Ott and ran the trucking business out of her home. Sophie was old, tired, suffering from a bad heart and felt that she really didn't have too much say in the matter. All Sophie

wanted was rest and peace. But there was precious little of that in her little house on 460 Moran. Agnes had two more children, Henry Jr., born in 1923, and JoAnn, born in 1925. Henry drank incessantly after marrying Agnes and he and Agnes fought constantly. Harry was a very poor businessman and in a few short years he ran William's business into the ground. He lost both the business and Sophie's house that William had purchased for her in 1890. Sophie had had enough of this earth, and on the 1st of March, 1926 she quietly passed away.

Sophie's passing created a new furor in the family. Sophie's body was taken to DeSantis funeral home and DeSantis refused to bury her until the family paid for the funeral in cash. Neither Agnes nor Elizabeth had that kind of money. Elizabeth was so sad over this situation. Elizabeth loved her mother so much and missed her desperately. Now her mother's body would have no peace until they found the money to bury her. Elizabeth and Agnes turned to John H. Becker, Sophie's brother, for help. John H. Becker agreed to pay the funeral bill. The bill was paid by John, the priest said the prayers over Sophie's remains and she was peacefully laid to rest beside her Wilhelm in Mt. Elliott cemetery. The mourners filed one by one out of the cemetery and returned home, each to remember Sophie in their own way with each suffering their own private loss over Sophie's passing.





This event was the biggest shocker our family had ever experienced. Elizabeth Ott Bender's sister, Agnes Ott Koch suffered the loss of her first husband to pneumonia, leaving her with his Gold Medal trucking company to run. She solved the problem by marrying her late husband's manager. However, the manager, Henry Mc Dermott turned out to be a heavy drinker and he ended up suffering from the DTs in which he saw snakes, bugs, etc. Agnes made arrangements to have him committed to dry out. He found out, bought a new car, put his wife and their children in it, leaving her children by a previous husband home He then drove to the foot of Parker St and sunk the new car into 13 feet of water in the Detroit River. All family members, including him, were drowned It was one of the biggest funerals that Detroit had seen at that time. People lined up for blocks to stream through the funeral parlor to view the 4 caskets. The family buried him with the family he had just drowned.



Here is the Detroit newspaper account of the drowning of Elizabeth Ott Bender's sister Agnes Ott Koch Mc Dermott and her 2nd family by her 2nd husband, Henry Mc Dermott. Henry insisted on taking only his children for a car ride in his new car, making sure all Agnes' children by her first marriage remained behind. Henry was suffering badly from the DTs from his heavy drinking and he was livid with anger when he learned that his wife was about to commit him to dry him out.

Edward Paul Bender said he was getting out of work from the midnight shift and as always he bought a Detroit Free Press on his way home. When he read the headlines that Agnes Ott Mc Dermott had been drowned, he ran home and when he saw his mom's face he knew it was his Aunt Aggie.

Aunt Agnes had a tragedy happen to her a few years earlier, in 1918. Her son by her first husband, Harry Jr. was on his bike in order to deliver papers on his route when a street car came up behind him and ran right up his back, splitting the entire length of his back wide open. Harry was the same age as Edward and was a really sharp kid so Edward Bender could not figure out how he could have not gotten out of the way of the streetcar in time.

Several more tragedies happened in the Koch family the year after Agnes and her family were drowned. Agnes' youngest son from her first marriage, Jackie had killed himself. Also, Anne Ott gave birth to a baby girl who died 4 months later and then a few years later she succumbed to uterine cancer and died.



**Agnes Ott Koch, Jackie, Harry, William Sr, Lillian, William Jr, Marvin  
1914**

Here is a family portrait of Agnes Ott Koch With her first husband, William Koch and their children. William was not the one who drowned her. He was a diligent, kind upright man. He established and ran a flourishing trucking company, Gold Medal. His family from left to right are: Agnes Ott Koch Mc Dermott, Jackie Koch (sitting), Harry Koch (who was run over by a streetcar at age 10), William Koch Sr., Lillian Koch, William Koch Jr. and Marvin Koch. William Jr. was Bill Sr's adopted son born before he married Agnes. Edward Bender said these boys were a lively bunch. Edward said he had been struck by a car on Gratiot and had his leg set at Receiving Hospital. Then his dad Hank took him to the Koch home on their way Home. Dad hobbled in with his leg in a cast, went into a dark kitchen and the boys came jumping off the refrigerator and cabinets and onto him smashing him and his broken leg to the ground.



Here is a picture of little Henry (Harry) Mc Dermott, Jr. at age 3. He is the son of Agnes Ott Koch Mc Dermott and Henry Mc Dermott. It was a blessing that he had no inkling of what faced him and his family in 3 short years. In 3 short years he went from 1st grade into a horrifying watery death.



**William Koch Sr. and his sister and brother**

Here is a teenage picture of William Koch Sr., on the left and his sister and brother. This picture was taken about 1904. William was a decent honorable husband and father and he would have been horrified to know what happened to his family after his death from pneumonia. It was a sorry day indeed for the Koch family the day that William Koch Sr. hired Henry Mc Dermott as a manager in his company.