

## Mary Gertrude “Teenie” and William Piller Family



Mary Gertrude “Teenie” Martin about age 9, circa 1910 soon after moving to Dalton.

Mary Gertrude Martin was the fifth child of Herman and Mary Martin. She was born on September 13, 1901 in Bancroft, Nebraska. She was the third daughter in the family. Her older sister Margaret was fondly called “Babe” by her parents and two older brothers. They soon began to affectionately refer to Mary as the “teenie babe.” Before long Mary’s nickname “Teenie” was well established. The family moved to Dalton in 1908, where Teenie attended school through the ninth grade. She started the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, but soon began working full time in the Dalton Cash Grocery store owned by William Piller. In the *Dalton Delegate* newspaper during 1919 and 1920, he advertised his grocery as “The Little Store of Little Prices,” where he promised his customers would “Save the Pennies.”

Wilhelm (William) Frederick Piller was born on March 22, 1889 in David City, Nebraska where his father operated a grocery and general store. William had an exceptional talent for music and began playing the piano when he was four years old. While the piano was his primary instrument, he also was skilled with the violin and harmonica. He composed many beautiful pieces and his music was always a source of inner strength for him and an inspirational comfort to his family. As a child he advanced quickly in school but was encouraged to quit school while in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, as his teachers felt he had mastered all they could offer. He liked to read and write and continued a self-taught education. Willie, as he came to be known, was a deeply religious man and sought to exemplify the Christian life and inspired others to follow. He had married at a young age, had a child, but then lost his wife and child during childbirth. The first child died soon thereafter.

Teenie enjoyed going to the dances above the drug store where the Martin family and other Dalton musicians played on Saturday nights. She continued to work at the grocery store, and soon she and the recently widowed William Piller were to be married. They were married in Dalton on January 5, 1921. Teenie was nineteen and William was thirty-two.



Mary “Teenie” Piller at age 26 in 1927.

Following their marriage, they lived in various Nebraska towns where William managed different grocery and general stores. They lived in Chappell, about twenty-five miles east of Sidney, for many years, where William worked in a variety of jobs. They moved to Ogallala in 1954, and during their time there, Teenie worked for a local company which manufactured and assembled electronic components for the government. She worked on the assembly line and as a quality control inspector. By 1964, William and Teenie retired and moved to the Colorado Lutheran Home for Senior Citizens in Arvada, Colorado. After several months of declining health, William died on December 19, 1976 at the age of 87. Teenie continued to live at the Senior Citizens home for a number of years and kept active with volunteer work assisting other residents.

Teenie was 91 when she died in Cozad, Nebraska on March 8, 1993. William and Mary Piller are buried in the Dalton cemetery. William and Mary had six children: a son Martin and five daughters Lois, Marjorie, Esther, Delores, and Leah.



William and Mary "Teenie" Piller on their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, January 1961.