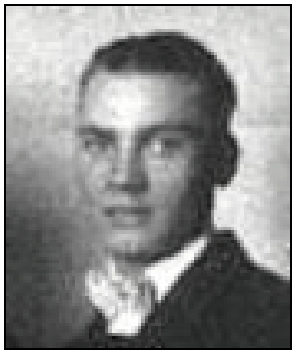
Elmer "Bud" and Clara Martin Family

In addition to the material contained in this article, other details concerning Bud and Clara and the Martin's Mercantile store may be found in two companion articles written by Donna [Martin] Heid: " Martin's Dry Goods and Shoes" *and* "The Stetson Hat."

Elmer LeRoy Martin about age 6 soon after moving to Dalton.

Elmer LeRoy Martin was the sixth child of Herman and Mary Martin. He was born in Bancroft, Nebraska in 1903, about five years before the family moved to Dalton. "Bud," as Elmer was known, began his schooling in a one-room stone school just west of town. Soon, a new school was built within Dalton and Bud continued his education there. Bud graduated from high school in 1921 and had the distinction of being the first male to do so. He was one of four 1921 graduates, the others were women–one of whom was Clara Eberl who Bud would marry four years later.

Clara Eleanor Eberl was born in 1904 in Omaha, Nebraska, and she moved to Dalton in 1918 with her parents John and Maud Eberl. She attended high school in Dalton and graduated when she was only sixteen. During the summer of 1921, she attended teachers' college at Kearney, Nebraska and became qualified to teach in a rural school. She began her teaching career in a country school near Dalton that year. For her salary of $90 per month, she was responsible for building the fire to heat the school, cleaning the school, and teaching all eight grades, if there were pupils. She initially had sixteen students, one of whom was in the eighth grade and only four months younger than Clara. She usually commuted to school on horseback. She was recognized for her outstanding abilities and was selected to teach at Dalton school in 1924 and, while teaching in Dalton, was honored as one of the top three teachers in the state of Nebraska.



Elmer "Bud" Martin about age 24 in 1927.

Bud and Clara had been sweethearts during high school and their romance continued. Bud, jokingly recalled that he always felt he had to be on especially good behavior around Clara's father as he was the Dalton town constable. Bud and Clara were married in Dalton in June, 1925. In those days, it was not acceptable for a teacher in the Dalton school to be married. So, Clara was sent to a nearby rural school and eventually to the Gurley school six miles south, where she taught upper grades for six years before she was invited back to teach in the Dalton school.

Bud had worked for Mr. Woolsey, who owned Dalton's first general store, where he learned a great deal about running a mercantile store. He later worked for Mr. Walford in his general merchandise and grocery store. Mr. Walford was so impressed with Bud that, on a handshake, he loaned Bud the money which enabled him to

"Bud" Martin about age 40 in 1943.

establish his own dry goods and shoe store in an adjoining part of the building. Bud and Clara's Martin's Dry Good and Shoes–or Martin's Mercantile--was an essential feature of the Dalton scene. Both Bud and Clara were very active in the Presbyterian church where Bud served as an elder and was its treasurer for more than 15 years. He participated in many church projects including the building of communion racks on the pews which are still in place today. Bud's religious faith was strong and firm. He lived it in the way he conducted his business and in his dealings with all whom he encountered. With the end of World War II and signs of change which were not favorable to the small town merchant, Bud and Clara departed Dalton in 1945 and opened another mercantile store in Boulder, Colorado.

In February, 1940, Bud and Clara adopted five year old Donna Becker, whose parents had died in a tragic fire at their home in Gurley, six miles south of Dalton. Donna quickly adjusted to being a member of the Martin family, and enjoyed her cousins during her years in Dalton. Donna attended college in Colorado and had a rewarding career as a teacher. She and her husband Pete Heid have two children, Patricia and Brian. Donna and Pete now reside in San Diego, California.

Bud and Clara retired from their Boulder business and moved to Mesa, Arizona. In 1971, they were able to attend their 50th Dalton high school reunion with the other two graduates. Bud died at age 79 in November, 1982 and Clara died May, 1996.

Clara and Elmer "Bud" Martin attending their 50th Dalton high school class reunion, June 1971.