

# The Herman and Mary Martin Family: Your Family Heritage

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*NOTE: In this article, we learn more about our family heritage. For my cousins and me, Herman and Mary Martin were our grandparents; for our children, the second cousin generation, they are their great grandparents. Here is some of what we know and recall about them.*

Herman Albert Martin was born April 28, 1870 in Council Bluffs, Iowa. He was the fifth of the eight children born to John and Julia Martin. The family later moved to eastern Nebraska where they homesteaded in Boone County, later lived in Washington County before moving to Bancroft, Nebraska in the northeast corner of the state. It was in the Bancroft area the Herman grew to manhood. We assume that Herman worked on his parents' farm as he was growing up. At some point he learned the blacksmith trade.

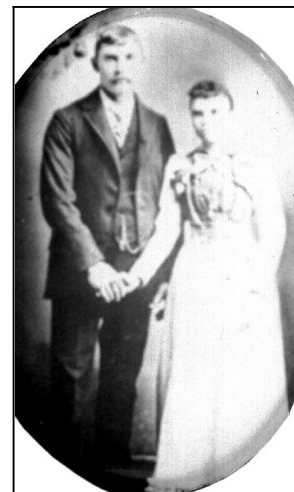
Jubilea Maria Christensen, who would later marry Herman, was also born in Council Bluffs, Iowa. She was born on March 31, 1877 to Hans and Margaret Christensen, both of whom had immigrated from Denmark. Her father Hans Englebret Christensen was born September 5, 1846 in Denmark. Her mother Margaret Jepsen was born February 26, 1853 in Denmark. Hans and Margaret were married about 1872. They had two children, daughter Jubilea Maria (later called "Mary") and son Albert. Their mother Margaret died in 1881, at the age of 28, in Council Bluffs when Mary was only four years old and Albert was two. The two children were cared for by an aunt while the Christensen family lived in Council Bluffs. Mary's family also moved to Bancroft, Nebraska. It is likely that the John Martin and Hans Christensen families knew each other in Council Bluffs and Bancroft. Hans Christensen might have worked at the blacksmith trade

On September 4, 1894, Herman Martin and Mary Christensen were married in Bancroft. He was 24 and she was 17 years of age. They lived in the Bancroft area for the next fourteen years, during which time they had eight children, one of whom, Herman Elgie, died at age six months just prior to their move from Bancroft. During Herman and Mary's years in Bancroft, we don't know for sure what Herman did for work, but it is likely that he combined his knowledge of farming with blacksmith skills he learned somewhere along the line, and was a blacksmith.

Herman and Mary moved to Dalton in March, 1908. We don't know specifically why they decided to leave Bancroft in the northeast portion of Nebraska and relocate to the fledgling town of Dalton at the opposite end of the state. Perhaps the newspaper advertisements of the time, which portrayed Cheyenne County and the town of Dalton as offering



Hans Englebret Christensen, 1846 - 1919. Picture circa 1902.



Herman Martin and Mary Christensen on their wedding day in Bancroft, Nebraska, September 4, 1894.

opportunity for farmer and businessman alike, were instrumental in their decision to move to Dalton. There were a number of other families from Bancroft which also moved to the Dalton area during this time period.

Herman Martin and his family probably traveled to Dalton from Bancroft by train. The use of the “immigrant” trains to relocate settlers from the east to the west was very common. The trains were relatively economical because the railroads were encouraging settlers and businessmen to move to western Nebraska in anticipation that they would be future customers of railroad services. Using the train would have enabled Herman to bring the heavy equipment necessary to set up and operate a blacksmith business. Soon upon his arrival in Dalton, Herman bought a house and established a blacksmith shop. The original shop was located on the north side of Main street, near where the current post office is situated. As his blacksmith business grew, Herman sold that property and in 1920 opened a new shop on the corner of Highway 385 and Park street.

When Herman and Mary arrived in Dalton, they had seven living children, all born in Bancroft, Nebraska. Their seven living children were: Mabel, Jesse (Kink), Harry (Dude), Margaret, Mary (Teenie), Elmer (Bud), and Chester (Chet). Soon after their arrival in Dalton, a daughter Clara (Alice) was born. She was considered to be the first child born inside the limits of the Dalton community. Four additional children were born in Dalton: Clarence, John Clifford (Cliff), George (who died at birth), and Glenwood.



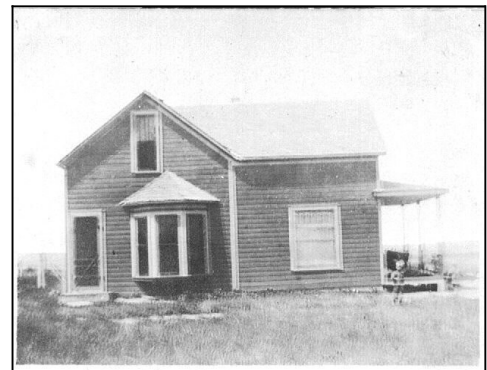
Herman and Mary Martin family soon after arriving in Dalton. Back row (L-R): Mabel, Dude, Kink; Front row (L-R): Margaret, father Herman with baby Alice on lap, Chet, Bud, mother Mary, and Teenie. Photo circa 1910.

Hans Christensen and his son Albert followed them to the Dalton area about 1910. Albert worked with his brother-in-law Herman in Herman's blacksmith shop for a short time, before moving to nearby Gurley, six miles south of Dalton, where he established his own blacksmith shop. Hans had a small variety store in Dalton for a while. He lived with Herman and Mary Martin and enjoyed entertaining his grandchildren by playing the violin. Hans died in Dalton on December 13, 1919 at the age of 73.

The Herman Martin family home was in the older part of Dalton on the west side of the highway near the Lutheran church. It became a pleasant neighborhood, with established trees. As a child, the house seemed big from the outside because it was two stories, but it was actually quite small, which was especially evident when inside. Looking back, one has to wonder how the house accommodated the entire family.



View of Dalton from the northwest. House in center foreground is the Herman and Mary Martin family house, with the Lutheran church nearby. Picture circa 1940.



Martin family house viewed from the west, circa 1913.

Herman's younger brother Ervin, his wife Effie, and their seven children arrived in Dalton in 1918 from Bancroft. When Erv's family first arrived, Erv also worked with Herman in the Blacksmith shop for a short time. Herman's sons also worked in the Blacksmith Shop from time-to-time over the years. We know that Kink and Cliff worked regularly in the shop with their father.

Eventually Herman's family consisted of eleven children and Ervin's family had nine children. That made for a lot of Martin children in the small town of Dalton. One of local residents, who grew up with many of the Martin children, still tells the story that when he was a



Mary and Herman Martin on the porch of their Dalton home, circa 1932-34.

boy in Dalton, there seemed to be Martins no matter which way you looked. He said his father used to say that if you kicked over any cow chip around town, a bunch of Martins would come flying out.

Herman was well liked and was involved in Dalton community affairs. Within a year of his arrival, he was selected as one of five citizens to travel to the county seat of Sidney to petition the Cheyenne County commissioners to grant a charter to formally establish the Village of Dalton. The request was granted and Herman was selected as one of the original five Dalton Village Trustees.

The Herman Martin family had a reputation as a good-natured and fun-loving bunch. No doubt their seven “Martin boys” were somewhat responsible for that. The family members seemed to have a lot of love and respect for each other. The family enjoyed music in the home. All of the family could play an instrument to some degree, and they all seemed to have “an ear” for music. Herman and his family established a town entertainment center in a building on Main street and later in the large room over the Drug Store. They showed movies and played live music for the townspeople on Friday and Saturday nights. One Dalton resident recalls that Herman Martin and his family furnished the music for the community with Dude on the drums, Herman on the violin, and Bud and Mary on the piano. Herman enjoyed his family and his grandchildren, and was known to them as “Grandpa,” as his father John had been known to his grandchildren.



Family of Herman and Mary Martin with their eleven living children in Dalton, Nebraska, 1927. Front Row (L-R): Clarence, John Clifford (Cliff), Jubilea Maria (Mary), Glenwood, Clara (Alice), Herman Albert; Back Row (L-R): Margaret, Harry (Dude), Jesse (Kink), Mabel, Chester (Chet), Elmer (Bud), Mary (Teenie).

Herman and Mary Martin celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on September 4, 1934. It was a festive affair with eighty guests and their eleven living children present. It was the first time in seven years that the entire family had been together. The *Dalton Delegate* newspaper commented that, "Mr. and Mrs. Martin have reared a family of fine energetic, honorable children. Mr. Martin has been Dalton's village smithy for many years, and their richest possessions come from the thought that their children have not been found wanting when the test came."



**Herman and Mary Martin 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with Family, Dalton, Nebraska, Sep 4, 1934.**  
Back Row: John Clifford (Cliff); Jesse McKinley (Kink); Glenwood; Clarence; Harry (Dude); Chester (Chet); Elmer (Bud); Front Row: Mabel; Alice; Herman; Mary; Margaret; Mary Gertrude (Teenie).

Herman Martin died about six weeks later at the age of 64 in Dalton on October 31, 1934, two days after suffering a heart attack at his home. All of his children were able to attend the funeral held in Dalton, except their oldest daughter Mabel, who lived quite a distance away in Iowa.

There was a front page article in *The Dalton Delegate* on Friday, November 9, 1934, concerning Herman Martin's death. It said, "The funeral was one of the most largely attended held in Dalton in recent years, friends of the family from every quarter of the Dalton table coming to pay their

respect to the memory of one whom they admired and respected.”

The newspaper article went on to say, “Mr. Martin had owned and operated a blacksmith shop in Dalton since moving here from eastern Nebraska, and he had built up a fine business through honorable dealings and a pleasing personality. Herman seldom complained and he was remarkably free from the common faults of mankind. His customers always felt that his charges for smith work were hardly enough, but Herman Martin was a man’s man and he believed in a live and let live policy. He never had a criticism for anyone, he was devoted to his family, and they to him. He will be missed not only as the village smithy, but as a high-type citizen.”

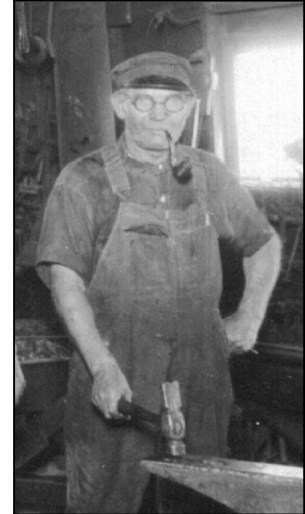
The foregoing character description of our grandfather Herman applied equally to his children. As they grew into adulthood, they were always honest, fair, and congenial in their business and personal dealings with others.

Herman’s son Cliff took over the operation of the Blacksmith shop upon the death of his father. He paid his mother a monthly income or amount towards purchase to enable her to meet living expenses over the years. Cliff was the Dalton blacksmith until he and his family moved from Dalton in 1945.

Few of us cousins knew Grandpa Herman Martin, as he died when many of us were very young or not yet born. Cousin Lois has good memories of staying at Grandpa and Grandma’s house now and then. She especially enjoyed listening to Grandpa Herman playing the fiddle. And, she recalls when all of her uncles (the Martin boys) would leave the house in the evening to go to play music for the dances, and they wouldn’t come back home until the early hours of the next morning.

Most of us do have fond memories of visiting Grandma Mary Martin. The house seemed pretty small for all of the activity that would go on with the grandchildren and their parents, who she always seemed happy to see. But, it was always warm and filled with Grandma’s love, and usually the aroma of freshly baked cookies. Grandma was a small woman, suffered with diabetes, and would sit in her rocking chair much of the time. But, she always found time to go out to the kitchen to fetch some cookies she had just made. Seems like she had always *just* baked some cookies in anticipation of a visit from some hungry grandchildren.

Cousin Donna recalls that when we cousins came to Grandma’s house during the winter, and especially around Christmas, Grandma would bring out a glass dish, lift the lid, and offer each of us some ribbon holiday candy. Then, we would want to go outside to play. In the process, our faces and mittens would become sticky from eating the candy. All too soon, we were sticky, cold, and finished playing. Grandma would have us come into the house, line up, and take our turn at



**Herman A. Martin**  
Dalton blacksmith, civic leader, and devoted family man. Picture circa 1920s.

having her wash our faces and hands. Grandma would sometimes express her love with a just a kind look and a wink.

Cousin Lloyd has fond memories of staying overnight with Grandma Martin when his parents were out of town. He slept on a rollaway bed in the dining room so she could keep her eye on him as he hadn't been feeling well. But, Lloyd suddenly regained a healthy appetite when he smelled Grandma's peanut butter cookies baking in the oven. Mmmmm, so good!

Cousin Esther, was born on the same day as Grandma Martin. Once when Grandma came to visit their house, the commotion of the five active Piller girls became a bit too much for Grandma. She singled out Esther and said, "Esther, if you don't behave, I'll have to change my birthday." Esther was crushed and claims she had no idea as to what she had done, but she has been behaving herself ever since.

Cousin Elaine recalls her best memory of being around Grandma was when Grandma came to visit her and parents Dude and Mary, about 1941, soon after they had moved to Denver.

Grandma Martin died on March 22, 1942, a few days before her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her children and many of her grandchildren attended her funeral. She had diabetes for many years, and her health had been deteriorating over the three years prior to her death. She suffered a stroke a few weeks before her death. She died in the Dalton hospital. Her funeral was held at the Dalton Presbyterian church and was attended by most of her children and grandchildren. The *Dalton Delegate* front page article concerning her death and funeral of March 27, 1942 concluded with this tribute: "Mrs. Martin carried a full share of responsibility in rearing a large family; she was a credit to them and they have been a credit to her. She was a good neighbor, a loyal friend."



Grandma Mary Martin at her home, Dalton, Nebraska, 1938.



The Martin boys always enjoyed getting together, even when it was for their mother's funeral, March 1942. Front (L-R): Cliff, Bud, Chet. Back (L-R): Dude, Clarence, Kink, Glenwood.

Grandma Mary Martin was buried in the Dalton cemetery near Herman, her husband of forty years, and her father, Hans Christensen.

A few days after Grandma Martin's funeral, her children and many grandchildren were at her house so her children could sort through some of the family belongings to get the home ready to sell, and to pass on family mementoes that Grandma had specified in a letter to her children. It was a gathering of Martin family members which was brought about as a result of Mary Martin's death, but, many of us grandchildren remember it as a fun time. As cousin Lloyd said, "It was more like a party than a work day. All of us cousins were there and we had a ball." With both Grandpa and Grandma Martin gone, there was no one living in the Martin family house. It was sold to a local Dalton family and remained in place until about 1999 when it was torn down so the lot could be used for a new home.

Many of us never knew our grandfather Herman Martin, and some of us didn't know Grandma Martin very well. But, we all believe that they left a very pervasive and positive mark on their Martin family descendants. They were both first generation to be born in this country. Herman the son of German immigrants, and Mary the daughter of Danish immigrants, both seemed to have lived and shared a congenial way of life which reflected a strong sense of traditional personal and family values, an honest work ethic, and down-to-earth qualities of personal and community responsibility. These characteristics were passed on to them by their parents, and Herman and Mary passed these qualities on to their children. We believe that these wholesome qualities were so basic in the upbringing of the Martin children, that they have, in turn, been passed on to the subsequent generations as a fundamental and integral part of the Herman and Mary Martin family heritage.

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Herman and Mary had thirteen children, nine sons and four daughters. One son, Herman Elgie, died at the age of six months and another son, George, died at birth. Their children were:

Mabel Edith, b.1895; d.1957 (age 62); married Chester Reinmuth.  
Jesse McKinley (Kink), b.1896; d. 1985 (age 89); married Eva Gustin; Adeline "Bunnie" Kirk.  
Harry Albert (Dude), b.1898; d. 1977 (age 78); married Mary Virginia Panabaker.  
Margaret Minnie, b.1899; d. 1977 (age 78); married Harold (Pete) Worth.  
Mary Gertrude (Teenie), b.1901; d. 1993 (age 91); married William Piller.  
Elmer Leroy (Bud), b.1903; d. 1982 (age 79); married Clara Eberl.  
Chester Frederick (Chet), born 1905; d.1957 (age 52); married Imogene Wood.  
Herman Elgie, b. 1907 (died at age 6 months).  
Clara Alice (Alice), b. in Dalton 1909; d. 1984 (age 75); married Raymond Graff.  
Clarence Dalton, b. in Dalton 1911; d. 1964 (age 52); married Neoma Arwilla (Arwilla) Brennan  
John Clifford (Cliff), b. in Dalton 1913; d. 1977 (age 64); married Edna Maude Ewing.  
George, b. in Dalton 1917 (died at birth).  
Glenwood Fern, b. in Dalton 1918; d. 1995 (age 76); married Doris Brandt.