

# Excerpts from *Of Such as These*

By Minnie Alice Rhoads, ca. 1975

[See entire book on line at <http://www.nemanfamily.org/tree/intrsect/macomber/osat/>]

*The author (née Minnie Alice Macomber) was the daughter of John Wesley Macomber, who had been the son of Samuel P. and Eliza Ann (Holland) Macomber. Samuel unfortunately died in 1864 while serving in the Union Army. Three years later, 1867, Eliza married Elza Martin (who himself had been twice widowed). Minnie, who was born in 1888, never knew her father's father, Samuel Macomber. Instead, the man she knew as "Grandfather" when she was young, was her father's stepfather, Elza Martin. Hence, Minnie has included in her book many clear memories of Elza and other members of the Martin family, including her aunt Ann Martin and uncle George Ellsworth Martin (technically her half-aunt and half-uncle).*



Minnie Alice Rhoads

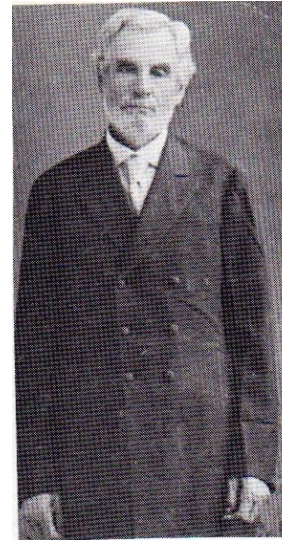
*Excerpted below are her most relevant passages concerning Elza and related Martins, with annotations provided by me. I have corrected obvious typos (such as "coulndn't" and "consumption") but have otherwise preserved Minnie's wording, sentence structure, capitalization, and punctuation. My annotations take two forms: bracketed inserts [ ], for short, simple clarifications to the text, and footnotes for additional background information (either, supporting, clarifying, or in some cases contradicting Minnie's narrative). Rows of asterisks ( \* \* \* ) indicate places where I have omitted one or more paragraphs that seemed to have little relevance to Martin history.*

—Peter Martin, Lakewood, Colorado, May 2018

[Pages 23–32]

ELZA MARTIN — I remember Grandfather, Elza Martin, as a tall and well built man with not an ounce of surplus weight. His eyes were blue and deep set, and he wore a short cropped iron grey beard. His hair, too, was iron grey with a soft curl. He looked for all the world like Abraham Lincoln although it made him furious to be told so. He greatly admired Lincoln. He told me that at one time he voted for a Democrat — the first time he voted — because he didn't know any better. His father-in-law had advised him thus. But the next election he voted for Lincoln and had voted Republican every time the rest of his life. He was 81 at that time.

His father, Isaac Martin, was a Circuit Rider starting in New York<sup>1</sup> and with his family worked his way West as he carried



Elza Martin

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<sup>1</sup> I have seen no evidence that Isaac Martin ever lived in New York. He was born and grew up in Ohio. He subsequently moved to Illinois, then Missouri, Iowa, and Nebraska.

the gospel to the frontiers on his way. The Isaac Martin family had reached eastern Illinois when Elza was eight years old, and had had about six weeks of schooling. One fall morning, Isaac took leave on his trusty pony, telling Elza that he was a man now and must look after the family. His mother, thinking that six weeks of school was ample time to give a boy to learn to read, said to Elza, “Elza, you are a man of the house now so you must read the scripture each morning for family worship.” Elza tried valiantly, but his schooling hadn’t prepared him to read the Bible. His mother was horrified that he hadn’t learned it. She, herself, never having had an opportunity to attend school didn’t realize the time such reading should require. She knew her Bible quite well but all from memory. She worried all day about Elza’s failure to read the Bible. That night she built an extra bright fire in the fireplace and placed her chair near with a keen little switch nearby in case of rebellion. Then she handed Elza a Bible (their only book), stood him by the fireplace and stating, “This winter you are going to learn to read.”

With only a memory to help her the lessons started and Elza did learn to read the Bible that winter. However she put the knowledge across, she never dulled his reverence for the Bible. I have heard many people read the Bible but never one who could read it with the love and understanding that Elza put into it.

I saw Elza’s Mother once when I was about ten.<sup>2</sup> She was very tiny with snowy hair that served to intensify the beauty and sparkle of her brown eyes. She must have been ninety years old,<sup>3</sup> but was alert, interesting and interested in everyone. It took courage and stamina to be a wife and mother in the home of a circuit rider in those pioneer days. Elza’s mother possessed all of the qualities needed. She had a small homemade rocker which she said was the one she rocked her babies in. That was during the 1830’s. I am fortunate enough to have that worn little rocker now well over 100 years old, but still in use. One time a little neighborhood girl seeing the aged look of the chair said to me, “Mrs. Rhoads, my Daddy would be very happy to haul that chair to the dump for you sometime.”



Mary Irwin Martin

Elza Martin’s first wife, Mary Stone of Iowa,<sup>4</sup> only lived six months after they were married, dying from an aborted pregnancy. He then married another Iowa girl named Sarah Morris. From her home in Fremont County, Iowa, they crossed the Missouri River at the Omaha crossing. Omaha was then the territorial capital of Nebraska Territory. The young couple was married, the first white couple married in the capital.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Minnie could not have been more than 6 years old when she met Mary Irwin Martin, as Mary died in 1894.

<sup>3</sup> Mary died at the age of 82.

<sup>4</sup> Elza had married Mary Stone 16 Jan 1853 in Sidney, Fremont County, Iowa.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Morris had lived in Page County, IA (not Fremont), but her family moved to Cass County, NE, a few months before her marriage. Elza came to Nebraska (Cass County, *not* Omaha) for the wedding, then took Sarah back to Iowa for a few months before they both settled into their own home in Cass County the following April. Their marriage, on 16 Nov 1854, was indeed the first marriage recorded in the files of Cass County, as noted in various county histories.

From Omaha the young couple went down the river to near Nebraska City where they procured a small holding of land. A log cabin, some homemade furniture, a fireplace for warmth, light and cooking were the essentials of housekeeping on a pioneer's homestead. A few years passed and the house was enlivened by four children — Hannibal, Milton, John and Emma.<sup>6</sup>

Elza helped establish what he believed was the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday School in Nebraska. With his trusty team of oxen and wagon, they attended the meetings until they froze out in the winter for there was no heat in the school house — an old log structure, where they met. Elza told of Elder Good,<sup>7</sup> one of the early stalwarts of the Methodist Church, and how he accepted hospitality and spent a day with him in his humble cabin. Elza said he was one of the best men he had ever known. On their way from the meeting to the Martin home, Elder Good remarked that, "Oxen are like Christians. When the going is hard they fall to their knees."

CALIFORNIA — While the family was still small, Elza and his wife, Sarah, decided to move to California where Sarah had relatives.<sup>8</sup> They traveled in a wagon train as most everyone did.

At one time the wagon train had stopped to camp for the night when they noticed Indians were lurking around. Realizing that they must move on to avoid an attack when night came, everyone was called together to prepare to move on. Milton and Emma, Elza's small children, could not be found. They called and searched frantically and in vain, but dark was almost upon them and it was imperative that they go. Then, just at that moment, Milton and Emma were sighted, trudging hand in hand across the plains. Milton, writing of it later, said he couldn't understand at that time why everyone hugged and kissed little Emma and he only got a spanking.<sup>9</sup>

Another incident of their journey occurred when the wagon train grew short of meat. Elza was made the hunter of the troop because his aim was true. As his train moved along he skirted the area for game. Not having a saddle horse of his own, he borrowed a mule from one of his fellow travelers. In his hunting he fell back a few miles. At last he had a chance to kill a fine antelope. He dressed it out while the mule grazed nearby. Ready to go, he picked up the meat and approached the mule to load it and start toward the rest of the travelers. As he lifted the meat to load it onto the mule, that wily beast moved out of his reach and began grazing again. A second time he lifted the meat and approached the mule, only to have a repeat performance. He kept trying, but always without avail until he was weary. Then he threw the load across his own

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<sup>6</sup> Only Hannibal and Milton were born in Nebraska (1855 and 1856, respectively); John and Emma were born in California (in 1858 and 1859).

<sup>7</sup> Probably [Rev. William Henry Goode](#).

<sup>8</sup> According to [Elza's bio in Andreas' History of the State of Nebraska](#), the family went to California in 1857 and returned to Iowa in 1864. They likely traveled with Sarah's parents and siblings who, according to the [California Historical Society Quarterly of March 1956](#) (p. 4), went to California that same year. The 1860 census shows the Martin and Morris families living side-by-side at St. Helena in Napa County, California.

<sup>9</sup> This story probably relates to the family's return trip to Iowa in 1864, as Milton was less than a year old and Emma hadn't been born yet when they went to California in 1857.

shoulders and headed for the caravan. He had to walk several miles to catch the wagon train. The mule never lost sight of him, but kept trudging after him. He was angry at the beast that he said had it been his mule he would have shot it. His temper was unwavering, but in later years he could laugh at the incident.

Once they were waylaid by Indians and felt that their time had come. Elza's wife, Sarah, had spent a year in Oklahoma with her parents when she was a child and had learned several Indian phrases. When the situation looked bad for the party, she stepped out and repeated as many of the words as she could remember. The Indians were so surprised and pleased that she could speak words they could understand that they wished the travelers well and sent them on their way.

They reached California safely but only stayed about ten years. Sarah developed consumption and wanted to go back to Iowa and her people before she died.<sup>10</sup> After her death Elza took the children to his former home in Fremont Co., Iowa and he again took up Circuit Riding.

THE CIRCUIT RIDER usually started out in the fall after he had harvested his little store of food and had chopped enough wood to provide the family with fuel and light. The homes they found as they moved so frequently were usually one room log cabins and if possible located where the children could go to school.

The Rider would set forth some fall morning with saddled pony and his clothes, a packet of the medications kept in any pioneer home and available at the little neighborhood grocery. His Bible was always carried under his arm and his other necessities were made into a pack and tied beneath his saddle. He had to depend on the goodness of the people along his route for food and lodging. Usually both were given willingly but were often of questionable value. The only bed a needy family might have to offer would be place in a hay loft with an old comforter or two for cover. Bugs, mice and sometimes rats were common bed fellows. A sturdy soul — the Circuit Rider — and he had to accept any hospitality where he could find a place to hold meetings and settle down to lectures for all who would come. He was usually gone from home about three months at one time.

In Elza Martin's Circuit Riding after the Civil War he met Eliza Ann, my Grandmother, widowed when Grandfather Samuel Parker Macomber died in the war. Elza said in all his travels he had never found anyone, man or woman, with as keen an intellect as was hers. He said she had a better conception of the many issues besetting the country after the war than most. Besides, she was a most ardent Methodist, so they were married in 1867. My father, John Wesley Macomber, was ten years old and sister, Mary Catherine, was 12 at that time.

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<sup>10</sup> According to the [California Historical Society Quarterly of March 1956](#) (p. 4), Sarah's parents had "retreated" to the banks of the Missouri (specifically eastern Kansas) in 1863. Elza probably felt comfortable going back to southwestern Iowa, where he had family, friends, and other contacts, but which would be close enough for occasional visits with the Morrises, a hundred miles or so downstream. An unpublished memoir by Sarah's brother John Milton Morris records that she died 3 Sept. 1865 at the home of her father-in-law, Isaac Martin, in Sidney, Iowa. The Morrises returned to Napa County, CA, in 1867.

One day a Clarinda, Iowa, minister, Brother Wallace, whom Eliza Ann knew, stopped at her home on his way home from Conference.<sup>11</sup> She asked him if he knew the new minister the Conference was sending to them. Brother Wallace said he couldn't tell them much but it was a man named Martin, but there were two by that name there, both very fine ministers.

He came — Elza Martin. He did have two brothers, John and Joe, both ministers in the Methodist Church. He boarded with the Thompsons, who were near the church. Before long Mrs. Thompson became ill, and the minister had to find a different place to stay. He came to Eliza Ann's, but before many days he became ill and Eliza Ann had to care for him.

Mary began to worry because she said that though she was a child, she could begin to see that the Rev. Martin and mother were becoming very friendly. She told her grandmother, Mary Burton, of her worries, but the older woman insisted that she was wrong. Soon there were two weddings to be performed some distance away. Eliza Ann went with the minister so Mary said to her Grandmother, "You see! What did I tell you?" But all Mary Burton said was, "Well, he is a nice man." Mary Catherine cried.

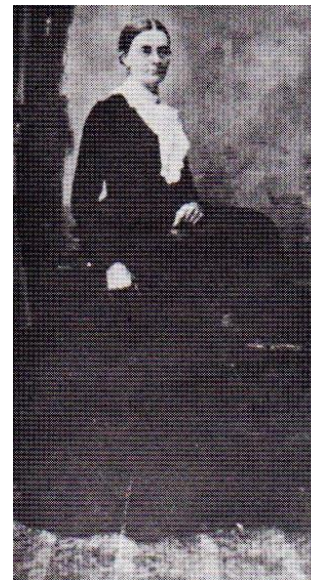
The next summer — on July 19, 1867, the grasshoppers came to that area — so numerous they darkened the sun like a cloud. When they came down to the ground they struck like wind blown hail and immediately began to eat. Mary Burton Holland Macomber said she would watch the flowers and Mary could attend the garden, but they accomplished nothing because when they shooed them off one place twice the number came to take their place.

Mary Burton hired a man to haul straw and put it over the garden and that was wonderful for the grasshoppers. They could be under the straw and in the shade to eat. She cut the cabbage and although it was early she made good kraut of it. Many neighbors came and bought it in the winter. One small corner of the flowers the grasshoppers left.

That fall, Eliza Ann and the minister, Elza Martin were married. The wedding was at Mary Burton and George Macomber's home on September 5, 1867. The relatives, and there were many in that section of Iowa made the wedding a big and gala affair. After the ceremony Mary Catherine kissed her mother and shook hands with the preacher and called him "Pa," then went out back of the house and cried. She cried so hard she didn't notice for a little while that Elza's oldest brother, John, was there and he was crying.

"What are you crying for little girl?" John asked.

"What are you crying for?" Mary answered.



Eliza Ann Holland Martin

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<sup>11</sup> Eliza then lived at Hawleyville, on the Page County–Taylor County line about 6 miles northeast of Clarinda, Iowa. "Brother Wallace" was probably Thomas Wallace, who had been pastor of the Clarinda church about 1857–58.

“I’m so worried,” said John. “Elza has had such bad luck with his women. His first wife, Mary Stone, only lived for a few months. She was an angel and I, too, Loved her although I was only 15 years old.” Mary was aghast, So! The preacher had already been married! But John continued, “Then his second wife Sarah Morris died about three years ago. I’m afraid things will go that way again.”

“Well, maybe not,” said Mary. “This is the third time and maybe it’s a charm.” So they both dried their tears and went inside again.

They were ready for the big wedding dinner. A famous negro cook, Lucy,<sup>12</sup> had been hired to prepare the food. The next day Mary watched her chance to ask her mother, “Did you know that the Preacher had been married before — twice?” Eliza Ann laughed and said, “Yes, I know all about that.” So Mary was a little more at ease.

Later she admitted that “that preacher” was a very fine father. With Eliza Ann’s two, Mary and John Wesley, and Elza’s four, John, Hannibal, Milton and Emma, all living in the house at one time there was sure to be arguments and misunderstandings. Elza patiently heard both sides of every argument, then reasoned with them until they reached a settlement. He never struck one of them and they got along reasonably well.

One thing Elza demanded of all of them was obedience. He would give orders to clean up to go with him to Sunday School. At a small creek they crossed on the way he always stopped and inspected the hands for cleanliness. If they were found a bit grubby they got a good scrubbing in the cold creek water with a corn cob and sand for soap and Elza to do the scrubbing. One lesson was enough.

Elza and Eliza Ann went to Fremont County, Iowa after the wedding to get his four children, and were gone two weeks. When they came home Elza had to start immediately on a revival meeting in another part of the County. Mary had been ailing all the last month of the summer. She didn’t want to play with the other children but hulled the last of the hazelnuts they had picked and finished her quilt blocks. Then she took very ill with typhoid fever. She had a great deal of fever for six long weeks. Elza came from the revival meeting to help Eliza Ann care for her. She was very weak for a long time and unable to walk until after Christmas.

They had never moved into the house that George<sup>13</sup> had built for them. When the doctor said Mary could be moved, she was carried on a couch by George and Elza to the new home she had so much wanted to live in. The doctor thought it safe to bring the other children home so they could start to school for the spring term, but Milton took the fever. He was only ill two weeks and was up and around while Mary was learning to walk. Mary lost all of her hair and Eliza Ann gave her a net cap to wear so she could go to school as soon as she was able. Mary made her grandmother, Mary Burton an apron for her 64<sup>th</sup> birthday in March [1868] and was able to spend the day with her.

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<sup>12</sup> See this [1916 interview](#) to learn about the remarkable life story of “Aunt” Lucy Brown.

<sup>13</sup> Refers to George Macomber, who was (1) the elder brother of Eliza Ann’s first husband and (2) Eliza Ann’s stepfather, as he had married her mother, Mary Burton Holland, in 1847 (even though he was 22 years younger than Mary).

That spring the grasshoppers were still there. Mary Burton didn't put in a garden, but did try to save some of the flowers by digging a trench around the beds and pouring it full of lime. Then with her chair under a tree and a long twig to brush with she saved a few nice blossoms.

In June the grasshoppers mysteriously left and crops could be planted. The season was good and most things did well so there was a fair harvest.

[In the summer of 1868] Elza's father wrote that he had purchased an 80 acre place for each of his three sons, Elza, John and Joe, south of Falls City, Nebr., on the edge of the Sac and Fox Indian Reservation which was up for sale by the government. He wanted Elza to come to see it, and see if he thought he could make a home there. Elza took his boys back to Fremont County, Iowa to his people to have them out of town during the summer, then he and Eliza Ann and their two daughters [Elza's Emma and Eliza Ann's Mary] went to Nebraska to see the land. Wesley stayed with George and his grandmother, Mary Burton.

They were gone two weeks, and when they came home Mary Burton was ill. "You just help me now and we'll save our flowers," she said, but she soon had a sinking spell and only lived nine days more.<sup>14</sup> The neighbors said she had just "overdriv'" herself trying to save her flowers. They gathered the flowers and Mary Burton's sister-in-law Mary Hannah, made a wreath and a floral spray to put on the casket.

Those were sad times for Mary Burton had been a person who made her influence felt with all who knew her. Whether or not her marriage to George Macomber was right, he did miss her very much. He was completely lost and refused to go back to their home again. He had his things moved to a room in his store-carpenter shop.

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It was the beginning of a new life for Eliza Ann and her children, Mary and Wes. They rented the little house that George built for them and at last she wasn't working for George with a good living but little pay. Elza moved the family to Nebraska and after putting in his crops they settled on a rented farm.<sup>15</sup>

Soon after that Elza's team of high spirited horses ran away as he and Eliza Ann were coming home from a Sunday night meeting. Both were thrown out of the buggy and Eliza Ann's leg was badly hurt. She didn't walk for a number of weeks. She was very fragile and that summer she gave birth to twins, Ann and Ashbury.<sup>16</sup> Ashbury was a husky baby and grew satisfactorily but Ann was a long time getting started.

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<sup>14</sup> Mary Burton Holland Macomber died 5 September 1868 and is buried in the Hawleyville Cemetery.

<sup>15</sup> Minnie seems to have conflated a couple of the family's moves. A careful reading of [notes by Minnie's Aunt Mary Macomber Crook](#) shows that Elza rented a farm *in Iowa* from George Macomber, and the family lived there for a year or so before moving to Nebraska in November 1869. It was while they lived there that Eliza Ann injured her leg and the twins were born.

<sup>16</sup> The twins were born 7 Jun 1869, and other accounts show their names as "Eliza Ann" and "Elza Asbury."

Emma, Elza's daughter, 12 years old and Mary Catherine, Eliza Ann's daughter, 14, did the housework with Mary Burton's advice.<sup>17</sup> After the twins came they had a "hired girl" for three weeks.

There was a school where all of the children went except Mary Catherine who stayed with her mother. The boys said they did learn but "Lickin" went with learning.

Elza never lost his determination. It was his custom to announce to Eliza Ann after breakfast that he planned to make a trip to town with the team and buggy and that if she wanted to go to be ready at a certain time. When that time came he would drive up to the gate, wait as much as five minutes and if Eliza Ann hadn't shown up he drove on with not a look back.

It was not only with his own family that he was so unyielding. Years later when George Martin moved his family to Kearney, Nebraska [1915], his daughter Kathryn had a kitten she loved very much. Elza kept it for her and promised to bring it to her at her new home. Elza boarded the train with the kitten safely in a small crate which he held on his lap. The conductor objected saying they didn't allow pets in the passenger coach. Elza was adamant and answered, "But I promised my granddaughter I would deliver this kitten safely and this is the way I propose to do it." No amount of coaxing could make him budge or let go of the kitten's crate. Finally his smile won and the conductor let him alone and there the kitten rode throughout the long day.

In his plan to move to Nebraska, Elza figured three full days for the horses and cattle to travel the 75 miles. He wanted to reach his parent's home by Saturday night so he planned to start on Thursday. Mary was much relieved that they didn't start on Friday because of a superstition that anything started on Friday was doomed to disaster.

They were to take two teams and wagons, Elza and Eliza Ann doing the driving. The cattle were driven by the four boys who took turns riding and walking. Eliza Ann's wagon was a covered one and a bed was made for the twins in the back. A dozen of her best Shanghai chickens were in a crate on the back of Elza's wagon.

By the end of the first day they had reached the home of a friend through the Methodist Church, Brother Michaels and his wife. The home was small so Eliza Ann, the twins, Mary Catherine and Emma slept in the house and Elza and the boys slept under the wagons.

The next day everything went smoothly and they arrived at the home of Elza's Aunt Lucinda and her husband Mose Vanness. The Vannesses lived a little more than a mile from the old Brownville Crossing on the Missouri River.<sup>18</sup> They had a fine night's

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<sup>17</sup> This probably should have said "with Eliza Ann's advice." (Mary Burton had died the previous year.)

<sup>18</sup> The 1870 Census (compiled a few months after Elza's move) showed Moses and Lucinda VanNess living in Lincoln Township of Nodaway County, Missouri, more than 25 miles from the Brownville Crossing. On the other hand, the same census shows a certain Robert McMichael and family living near the eastern end of the Brownville Crossing in Templeton Township of Atchison County, MO. This may be the man identified above as "Brother Michaels." (The fact that Robert later named one of his children Charles Wesley McMichael suggests at least that he was a good Methodist.) Thus it could be that Elza and his family stayed with his Aunt Lucinda on the first night of their trip and with "Brother Michaels" on the second night.



rest with the Vannesses — hot baths, good beds and excellent food and a comfortable Christian atmosphere. The twins were bathed and “greased” to prevent muscle soreness. What they used for grease is not known — surely none of the rose scented baby oils of today but probably just as efficient.

Breakfast over the next morning they started for the ferry boat crossing of the Missouri River. Even though they started on Thursday and not Friday a bit of disaster awaited them. The long, flat boat had ropes and cables to guide it, and was propelled by a rudder or a revolving paddle under the boat. The paddle was started by a rope wound around a big wheel on deck. The ferry man gave the rope a quick jerk which started the paddle.

Elza and the boys got everything on board, teams, wagons, cattle and family. The ferry man pulled the rope and the boat began to shake as the paddle started. It was all too much for the placid cows. They stampeded into the river and back to the Iowa [Missouri!] shore where there was heavy timber.

After much chasing they were again on board and started. Elza and the boys were grateful for the effortless ride across the river. From there on they had to urge the cattle every step of the way for they were weary and getting foot sore. When they were about five miles from their destination they let the cattle lie down and rest, going back after them the next morning.

It was about 10:00 P.M. when Elza’s family arrived at the home of his parents, Isaac and Mary Martin, one and one-half miles north of Falls City, Nebraska. After a few days rest they went to their own place some ten miles west of Falls City<sup>19</sup> where Elza had rented an improved farm joining his own land where they lived while he built a house.

Eliza Ann had brought roots, seedlings and seed of many kinds. Soon she had a good orchard started on their place as well as on the rented one which was appreciated by the owner when he married and moved there two years later.

There was a school nearby and all five of the children went. Mary was easily the head of the class and after a couple of years her teacher told her he was sure she could pass the examinations for teaching. She was delighted and so were Elza and Eliza Ann. She taught a term in the home school.

A term in those days was a two or three month session at some time in the year when the older boys were not needed on the farm. Wages ranged from \$15.00 to \$25.00 a month. Each student went at his own speed. If above average in learning and fortunate enough to have a teacher who was qualified, one could get help in learning Algebra, Latin and advanced History classes beyond the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level.

The first two years in Nebraska were good years and Elza’s crops did well but in 1871 there was sadness. Elza’s oldest son, John, had scarlet fever lightly and was soon

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<sup>19</sup> According to [Elza’s bio in Andreas’ \*History of the State of Nebraska\*](#), Elza’s land was in section 29 of Falls City Precinct, which is about 3 miles southwest of Falls City.

well. They tried to keep the twins away from him but he had always played with little Ashbury and the little fellow would slip into John's room when he could. Of course, he became ill with the fever and a doctor was called but from the beginning he said there was no help for the child. After three days husky, happy little Ashbury succumbed, and was buried in Falls Center Springfield Cemetery, not far from the old Falls School.<sup>20</sup>

In 1872 Elza and Eliza Ann Martin had another son named George Ellsworth. He was healthy and grew well from the start. That year was rather dry and 1873 was worse. By mid-summer the grasshoppers came — clouds of them — big and hungry and hitting the ground like hail. Elza managed to get some hay stacked and about 10 acres of corn was good enough to put away for cattle feed. Then he and his boys, John, Hannibal and Milton went to Iowa to find work for there was none in stricken Nebraska, and Wes stayed to help his mother. The grasshoppers stayed until 1876 and then left about mid summer as mysteriously as they had come. During these years there was little to eat except meat and turnips which grew quickly.

Elza and the boys came home bringing seed of many kinds, anything that would have a chance to mature they planted and managed a little feed for winter. The Government also, sent out seed to the farmers of the area which was deeply appreciated. The next year, 1877, nature really showed what she was capable of doing, barring drought and grasshoppers.

Soon the family was growing up and each seeking a niche in life. Elza's daughter, Emma, married Ben Foster, a good man and practical joker. He wore a full, black beard and had black hair. Sometimes he embarrassed Emma for she was a serious minded person but she laughed at his jokes. They had three children, Effie, a pretty hot tempered red head, who died many years ago. Ross, another red head, was tall and good natured, but he too passed away when rather young. Claire, the youngest, had dark hair like his father, Ben. He was a teacher and passed away in Falls City in 1970. All three had families.

Elza's sons all drifted back to California where John and Hannibal became Methodist Ministers and Milton was a writer.



Ann Martin

Ann and George, Eliza Ann's and Elza's two children, both started teaching at the age of 16. Ann finished her school days serving as principal of the Nebraska City Schools. She never married and took care of Elza through his late years. She was a good instructor and the students' name for her was "Old Ironsides," and she was as dependable and uncompromising in principle as was that old battleship. She was tall and very spare, what was often called a raw-boned person.

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<sup>20</sup> The Falls *City* Springfield Cemetery is better known as the "Nemaha Falls Cemetery." It is located about 2½ miles southwest of Falls City, about one-quarter mile north of 704 Road in a wooded area on the east side of 650 Blvd. This places it about two-thirds of a mile north of the "old Falls School" (whose location is described below in footnote #24.) As of 2018, the cemetery was not being maintained and was heavily overgrown.

Mary Catherine Macomber, Eliza Ann and Sam Macomber's daughter, married Jackson Crook, a member of one of the old families of Virginia.<sup>21</sup> They lived on a farm for many years then moved to Falls City where he was postmaster. They had five children, Anna, John, Elva, Asa and Miles.



Jackson and Mary Catherine Crook

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[Pages 48–51]

### PASSING DAYS

About the time Wes and Nellie Macomber moved to Falls City, Nebraska, Elza Martin's father, Isaac Martin, passed away.<sup>22</sup> His wife, Mary Irwin, went to live with her daughter, Sarah Laird,<sup>23</sup> and she wanted Elza and Eliza Ann to move to her farm. It was only one and one-half miles from Falls City where Elza was preaching. The old Martin house was a roomy, two-story house with attic, built about 1830. It wasn't elaborate but very livable with a big screen porch, always cool in the summer.



The Martin home, north of Falls City

Grandmother's yard had roses of every kind she could grow. She liked to tell me all about them — the Moss Rose had a pink blossom and the stems were covered with fine briar like hair, not prickly at all but covered with an invisible stickiness. They are native in Scotland. Also, the Rose Moss, a well known ground cover purslane-like herb that had rose-like blossoms. The true name was Portulacaceae and the seed is very small and said to be the most costly per ounce of any flower seed.

All among the roses in the yard were little brick walks, laid without rhyme or reason, where ever they led past a different rosebush. It was like threading one's way through a maze.

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<sup>21</sup> Jackson Crook was the younger brother of William R. Crook, who married Elza's sister, Lucinda Martin (another link between the Macomers and the Martins).

<sup>22</sup> Isaac died 3 April 1881.

<sup>23</sup> This would have been quite a trip for Mary, as Sarah Laird then lived in Siskiyou County, California. If Mary made that trip, she did not remain in California for more than a few years. The Nebraska state census of 1885 shows her in Falls City, living with her daughter Lucinda Crook, and [Mary's obituary](#), from 1894, records that she died "At her home two miles north of Falls City."

A special treat at Grandmother's was to go to the attic, a big sunny room with shelves of books. She would let us look at her scrap books when she was there. They were large and filled with choice clippings of literature from the best writers of that century. She liked good literature and saved a valuable collection of it. There were many good books and periodicals and I spent lots of happy days there, oblivious of the rest of the world.

There were feather beds as high and as smooth as a table in the second story. I couldn't climb upon them and Grandmother, Eliza Ann, would toss me into the middle of the soft feathers. It was such fun that we always had a good laugh about it. Then I would lie still and the old windmill would keep steady rhythm — a high key squeak, then a low key squeak, softly, softly, unhurriedly — I didn't remember any more until morning came and I came down stairs to sit on the bottom step until breakfast was ready.

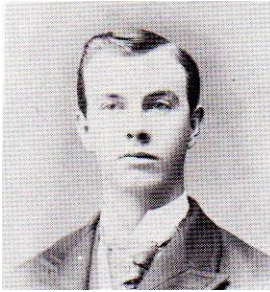
Just south of the kitchen only a few steps was the windmill and the milk house. They were focal points on a hot day for there was always quantities of cold water or milk. The windmill pumped constantly into a pipe which led to the tank in the milk house. The big wooden tank with boards like the cuts of a pie across the top of it where milk was put in bright cans and sunk into the water, each centered under a board to keep it from upsetting. To get one out one had to push the can down and out from under the board. An overflow pipe in the tank constantly ran a stream of fresh water down across the barn lot and into the pasture. There it ran into a small stream where the cattle and hogs had a supply of fresh water.

Two steps up from the flagstone platform that surrounded the windmill and milk house was the door to a small closed porch which led to the kitchen door. The kitchen was a long room serving as both cooking area and diningroom. The cooking area and pantry were on the west end of the room. There was a wash stand or shelf holding a wash basin, soap dish and a wooden pail for water. A dipper rested in the bucket and everyone drank from it. The east end of the room was the dining area and about midway in the room was a stairway to the upstairs with two steps coming out into the kitchen. It was a wonderful place to sit after coming down stairs in the morning, sleepy and lacking the push to get going.

Breakfast at Eliza Ann's was something to remember. The long table was usually laid with a yellow and white damask cloth, tealeaf china and bone handled steel cutlery. The sun, just up, shining through the east window sent rays of yellow gold to reflect on everything in its reach.

Elza, coming in from his morning chores, brought a pail of fresh, cold water to put on the stand. He took a hearty drink before he washed his face, hands and arms, drying them on the roller towel near by. He got a comb from the little case on the wall to comb his curly, iron grey hair.

He was an impressive figure, tall and thin, as he strode across the long kitchen to a book shelf in the corner near the table and took down his well worn Bible then seated himself and found the passages he planned to read. An emphatic, "Ahem!" was the signal for everyone to be seated for morning worship.



George Ellsworth  
Martin

GEORGE MARTIN, the youngest son of Eliza Ann and Elza, spent many summers with his parents, helping with the farming as Elza grew older and in those years I was spending much time there too, and became well acquainted with him and his family. He was a fine and memorable person, more than six feet tall and well built; noticeable in a crowd and equally tall in character.

In 1895, George married a southern girl, petite, lovely, Alice Kriger of Kentucky. She had a beautiful singing voice and said her singing could be heard across the wide Mississippi. They had four daughters, Inez, Ruth, Frances and Kathryn.

George was a good student, beginning his teaching career at age 16, and continuing his education as best he could until he held his doctorate and was considered one of the best on the lecture platform. He spent his summers on the farm with Elza and said it was his method of keeping in good condition physically.

Elza always raised fine watermelons and being so close to town they were a temptation to many a lad. He tried to watch the patch at night but somehow the boys always destroyed a lot of melons and Grandfather never caught them. One night George said, "You go to bed Dad, and I'll watch the patch." He fixed a place to hide close to the road and that night three boys came on their horses. One of them came into the patch rather close to where he was hiding and started cutting open melons and pulling the vines around. George yelled and startled the boy who ran for his horse but George caught him and knocked him down then got him by the ears and gave his head a good shaking and mauled it in the dirt. He helped him on his horse and gave him orders to never return. He didn't. The boy's name was Charles Heck but from that time on he was known as "Watermelon Heck."

George taught the Falls School<sup>24</sup> and my husband told me of going to school to George Martin two terms. The first morning when George arrived he had a fair sized bundle of right keen switches which he put in a hole in the foundation, dusted his hands but said nothing. He never did use one and had no trouble.



The Falls School

He taught in Dawson and Nebraska City for some time, then went to Kearney State College as President in 1919 during a revolt among the students.<sup>25</sup> The former president and several of the teachers had been driven out. The State Board asked him what he would

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<sup>24</sup> The Falls School (as shown on the 1915 edition of the U.S. Geological Survey's Falls City quadrangle map) was about 3 miles southwest of Falls City, on the eastern border of Section 29. Currently (2018), there are no visible remains of the old school, but Google Maps still shows a marker for "Falls Church" at this location, about a half-mile south of Road 704 on 650th Ave.

<sup>25</sup> George first took a position at the Kearney State Normal School in 1915. He was promoted to President in 1919.

do if faced with such a situation. He answered, “I don’t know, never having had anything like that happen to me, but I believe I would stand in the door and knock them down as long as I was able.”

The students soon found he was their best friend as long as they did their part. He often walked the streets of Kearney to solicit help for a worthy student. He introduced sports in the school for he loved a good clean contest. His one dislike was of a liar, and if he was ever lied to by a student, that one lost all his sympathy.

Inez, George’s oldest, loved to read and we spent many days together in Eliza Ann’s attic with the fabulous scrap books. She became a Social Worker on the west coast but died of cancer at an early age.

Ruth was quite different and we used to run and play in a very active way. Once I arrived for a few days stay and she met me at the door with her newest doll. I exclaimed over it and asked its name. She said, “Well, I’m sure it isn’t a very pretty name,” then added happily, “but I call her Minnie.” Children are so refreshingly truthful and delightfully loyal. Ruth was an exceptionally bright and likable child – the most beautiful of the four girls. She grew up to be such a wholesome, Christian girl that she seemed too fine for this world.

While they lived at Kearney she married a boy from that locality [John Nicholas] and when they were expecting their first child Ruth became more beautiful than ever. She did not live to enjoy her baby for she died at its birth [13 June 1921].

Frances was named Frances Wesna for my father, Wesley, because Alice liked him the best of all her in-laws. She said he was always so kind and gentle to her. She was witty and full of fun. She and Kathryn loved to visit me after I was married.

Kathryn, her husband gone now, lived happily in the mountains of Walla Walla, Washington, many years. They had two daughters Mary Alice, who passed away May 24, 1972 and Jeanne is married and lives near her mother.

George, Alice, Inez, Ruth and Frances are all gone now and Kathryn is in very poor health.

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[Pages 54–55]

During the later half of that first year in high school [1903] I spent some time with Ann Martin, my father’s half sister, who was caring for their mother, Eliza Ann who had fallen on an icy walk and broken her arm. She failed rapidly, developing pneumonia and passed away on March 1 [March 23!], 1904, at 64 [68!] years of age. No more happy days with Grandmother, looking at her lovely scrapbooks or wandering through the woods. No walks on her little paths to learn about the roses. No morning worship in Grandmother’s long sunny kitchen with Grandfather reading so beautifully the poetry of King James Version of God’s Word.

Grandfather gave up his preaching and there was a big stained glass window put in the Church at Falls City depicting Christ as the good shepherd which had Elza's name and an inscription suitable to him designed in it. He went to Nebraska City to live with Ann, his youngest daughter, and lived only a short distance from the little one room log cabin where Elza and his second wife, Sarah Morris, had begun housekeeping long ago. It was there that he established what is said to be the first Sunday School in Nebraska about 1850.

He wrote to me in 1912 that he was attending a Sunday School Class and that he had joined a group of octogenarians and was enjoying it very much. "Sometimes we oldsters get into a rousing argument over some passage of scripture. But I believe at our age such things are permissible," he wrote.

In his last illness Grandfather lay in a coma for two weeks. Suddenly he gained consciousness, sat up in bed and said, "To think that I, Elza Martin, should be ushered into the presence of my King," then laid back on his bed and breathed no more. His death came on June 20, 1916.

Ann lived until 1928 though she gave up teaching a few years earlier, and lived in an apartment in Nebraska City. After her funeral, relatives went to get the things she owned. The owner of the apartment had burned everything — even the fabulous scrapbooks which had belonged to her mother, Eliza Ann.