

Elizabeth Jane later married John Zimmerman, and had a total of sixteen children and stepchildren. Emma's stepfather John was a farmer, who was able to utilize his large family to help in the fields. From most accounts, Emma was not close to her stepfather.

Elias first saw Emma Smeltzer at church in the early spring of 1924. He was smitten from the first, and thought Emma was exceptionally beautiful. It took Elias four months to summon the courage to see her home from church. Their courtship was not totally idyllic; even Elias' parents accepted the prevailing "holier than thou" attitude toward illegitimate children. However, Elias and Emma persevered with their love, and were married two years later on December 5, 1925. Both were young by today's standard, Elias being just 21 and Emma just 16.



The Newlyweds in 1926

Elias and Emma stayed in the county for about ten years after their marriage. Eli built a small, two room home for his family just a short distance from his birthplace. This house is still standing today, and is pictured in Chapter 2.

While in Deep Creek Valley, Emma and Elias had four children:

Harry Alvin
Ruth (who died in childbirth)

born 1926
born 1928

Arlene
born July 10, 1930

Joan
born Dec.31,
1932



Emma and Elias with Betty, Joan, Harry, and Arlene

During these years, Elias was not overly successful as a farmer and a miner, and at age 31 finally yielded to the "call" of ministry. After speaking with a supportive mentor in the local church hierarchy, Elias, Emma, and their three children left his job in a strip-mining operation for study at Shenandoah Junior

College in Dayton, Virginia. For housing and a small income, Elias worked part-time