

A Circle of Friends

Thirteen Okemos graduates from the 1890's



By Sherrie Paty Barber, class of 1966

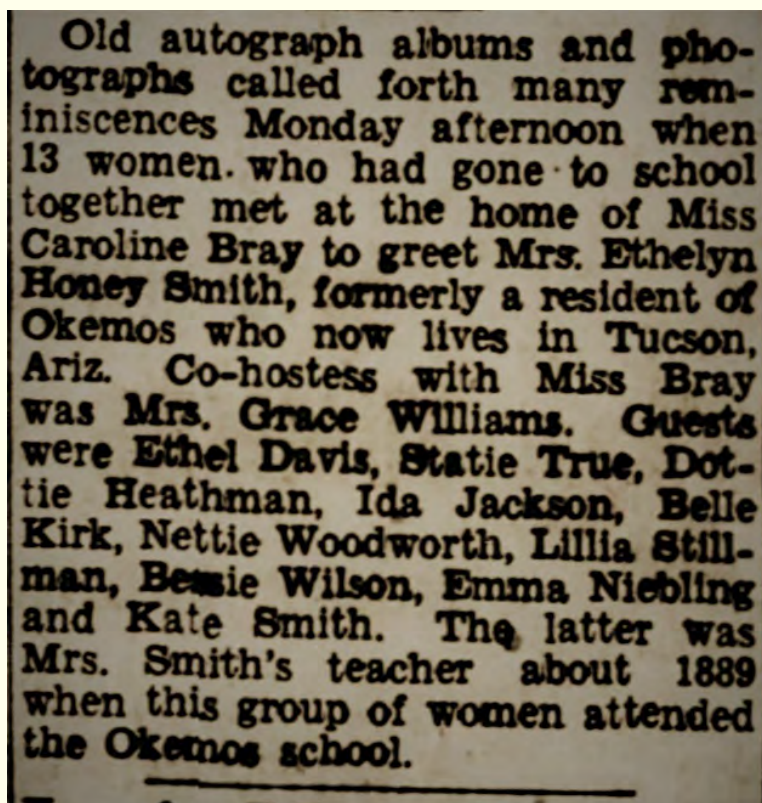
Old autograph albums and photographs called forth many reminiscences Monday afternoon when 13 women who had gone to school together met at the home of school Caroline Bray to greet Mrs. Ethelyn Honey Smith, formerly a resident of Okemos who now lives in Tucson, Ariz. Co-hostess with Miss Bray was Mrs. Grace Williams. Guests were Ethel Davis, Stacie True, Dot-tie Heathman, Ida Jackson, Belle Kirk, Nettie Woodworth, Lillia Still-man, Beanie Wilson, Emma Niebling and Kate Smith. The latter was Mrs. Smith's teacher about 1889 when this group of women attended the Okemos school.

Editor's note: Inspired by a 1951 newspaper notice of a gathering, Sherrie links biographies of 3rd generation families to the pioneers of Okemos. Rod Ellis '65

A Circle of Friends in Okemos, Michigan 1951

June 4th, 1951 was sunny with a high of 79 degrees. It was on this delightful Michigan summer day that 13 old friends gathered in an Okemos home to reminisce, laugh and enjoy their circle of friendship. It was a time

Lansing State Journal, Thursday, June 7, 1951



Old autograph albums and photographs called forth many reminiscences Monday afternoon when 13 women, who had gone to school together met at the home of Miss Caroline Bray to greet Mrs. Ethelyn Honey Smith, formerly a resident of Okemos who now lives in Tucson, Ariz. Co-hostess with Miss Bray was Mrs. Grace Williams. Guests were Ethel Davis, Statie True, Dottie Heathman, Ida Jackson, Belle Kirk, Nettie Woodworth, Lillia Stillman, Bessie Wilson, Emma Niebling and Kate Smith. The latter was Mrs. Smith's teacher about 1889 when this group of women attended the Okemos school.

to remember growing up in Meridian and Alaiedon Townships, attending the old two-story Okemos school and life before the dawn of the 20th century. Within a year the 13 would shrink to 12 and the circle would be broken forever but on that 4th of June the gathering would be a highlight of memories. So much had taken place in the lives of these 13 women during the last 7 decades.

Okemos was originally called Hamilton Village. Back in 1839 Freeman Bray, an ancestor to one of the 13 girlfriends, purchased 60 acres of land from the Chippewa Indian tribe for \$5.00 per acre. Later, realizing the need for a school in the village he, in 1850, surveyed out a half-acre of ground in the center of the village and sold it to the local school district for

\$15.00. Mr. Bray stipulated in the sale that if the property was not used for school purposes it was to revert back to him or his heirs. The school house built was a one-room structure. In 1873, with an increase in local population, a new two-room school building was constructed and furnished for the cost of about \$3,400.00. By 1880 an addition was completed making the building a two-story formation, 30 by 50 feet, and housing 8 grades. There were 120 students.

While growing up in the Okemos area during the later part of the 19th century, these 13 young women were just a small segment of an ever increasingly changing America, often referred to as the Gilded Age. Okemos was considered rural and the young friends mostly came out of farm families, several with a father who was a Civil War veteran. The Grange movement, National Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), rapid national economic growth, larger farms, improvement in farm equipment, education opportunities all expanded and grew during this period. It was a time of feminist leaders such as Catherine Beecher, Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who were highly active in promoting the education of woman as teachers. It was by their determined encouragement that doors opened for women into higher education and greater economic independence.

Of the 13 girlfriends, 5 never married. All the friends completed 8 grades at Okemos, several had 2 years of high school education and 3 became college graduates and teachers. Belle, who never married, was a career woman and worked as an auditor for the State of Michigan. Nettie, with 2 years of high school education, taught for a season but married and never worked outside the home again. Bess Wilson simply never left home and, with independent means, lived her life as a single. Many of the girls married into local farm families. Careers, whether as a wife, mother or as an independent woman, were obviously dictated by the times in which they lived.

And so it was in the 1880's and 1890's that a group of young women completed the 8 grades at Okemos school. Friendships were formed, cemented and as the decades passed connections remained. In 1951 the 13 were in all their 70's and, with a lifetime of experiences behind them, eager to reconnect.

The oldest in the circle of old friends was **Ida W. Phillips**. Ida, daughter of Abner (1847-?) and Catherine "Kate" Toolan (1852-1876) Phillips, was born 15 December 1875, Meridian Township, Ingham County. Ida's mother

died within a year of her birth and was interred St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery, Lansing, Ingham County. Her father married again in 1877. Ida was partially raised by her grandparents, John and Esther Phillips. Grandpa John Phillips was the local shoemaker in Okemos. Little is known of Ida's childhood other than she grew up in Okemos and also attended Okemos school probably to the 8th grade. On 28 January 1894 she married Elmurion Sylvester Harrington in Williamston, Ingham County but by 18 August 1896 she was filing for divorce. The divorce, for desertion, was granted her 6 April 1897, Ingham County. There were no children.

Ida then married George Lewis Jackson in Ontario Province, Canada 9 April 1897. George, born 23 August 1868, Ontario Province, and Ida lived in Okemos most of their married life. Briefly during the 1920's the couple lived in Morley, Mecosta County, Michigan. George, while living in Morley, was accused of violating state law regulating the offering and sale of securities.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Friday 12 September 1930

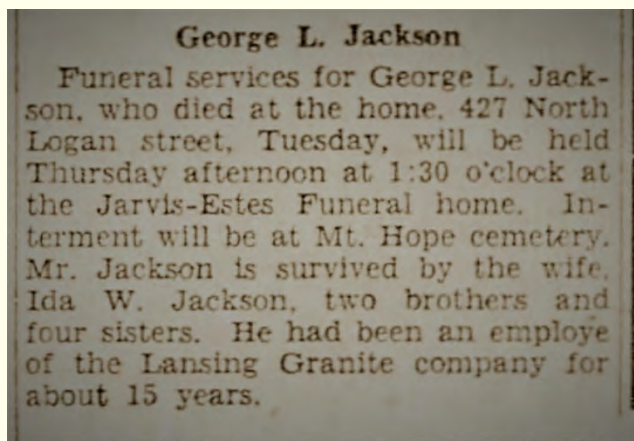
DISMISS CASE AGAINST FORMER LANSING MAN

George L. Jackson, former Lansing man from Morley, Mich., who was held a year ago for violation of the blue-sky law, charged with selling stock in the Jackson Fur Farm, Ind., of which he is president, has been freed. The case

was thrown out of court when it was indicated there was no violation of the law.

George worked for about 15 years for the Lansing Granite Company. He died at his home in Okemos 28 July 1931. Ida died 25 September 1962, Okemos. The couple was childless. The Jackson's were interred Mt. Hope

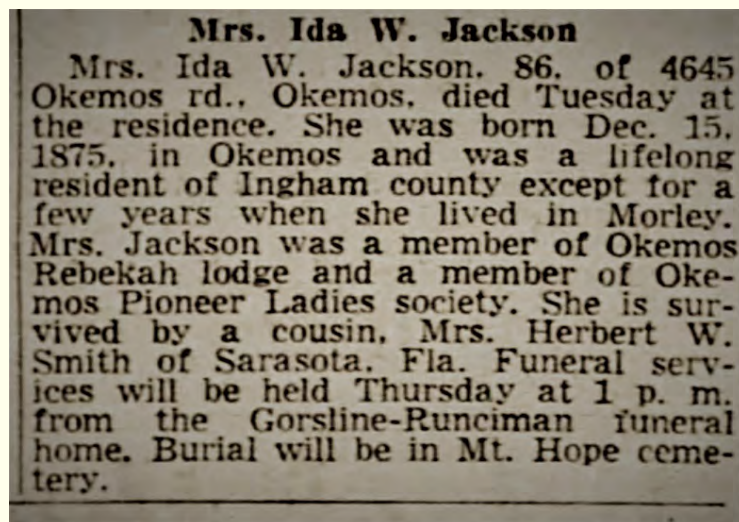
Cemetery, Lansing, Ingham County.



MRS. IDA W. JACKSON

Mrs. Ida W. Jackson, 86, of 4645 Okemos rd., Okemos, died Tuesday at the residence. She was born Dec. 15, 1875, in Okemos and was a lifelong resident of Ingham county except for a few years when she lived in Morley. Mrs. Jackson was a member of Okemos Rebekah lodge and a member of Okemos Pioneer Ladies society. She is

survived by a cousin, Mrs. Herbert W. Smith of Sarasota, Fla. Funeral services will be held Thursday at 1 p.m. from the Gorsline-Runciman funeral home. Burial will be in Mr. Hope cemetery.



Edna Belle "Belle" Kirk, daughter of Henry William (1841-1901) and Estella (Olin) (1857-1943) Kirk, was born 8 July 1876, Ingham County. Belle, as she was called by her friends, never married. Her father was a Civil War Union veteran having served as a Private with the Company H, 26th Michigan. After the war he settled in Okemos, married and had a daughter. Unfortunately, his young wife died. Henry married Estella Olin and Belle was their first-born child. Henry had been a farmer in the Okemos (Wheatfield) area before the war.

Belle attended the Okemos school house as a child. Her adult employment career started off with dressmaking but by 1910 she was employed in a Lansing bank. According to the 1920 US Federal Census Ingham County she was stenographer for the State of Michigan, later working as an auditor for the State. Belle took several years off, living in Florida, to care for her elderly, later ailing, mother who died in 1943, Pinellas County, Florida. Belle returned to Lansing and resumed her career with the State of Michigan. She lived at 1409 Sheldon, Lansing for many years.

Lansing State Journal, March 9, 1935

Deluge of Work Engulfs Licensing Division Of State Department as Deadline Draws Near



E. Belle Kirk, Office Supervisor, standing 2nd from the right.

Belle died 31 July 1972, Lansing and was interred Glendale Cemetery, Okemos.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Wednesday 2 August 1972

MISS E. BELLE KIRK

1409 SHELDON

Age 96, died July 31, 1972 at a local nursing home. Born July 8, 1876 in Ingham County, Miss Kirk had been a lifelong resident of Ingham County except during World War II. She was a former auditor with the Secretary of State office and active in Republicans Women's Club. She was a member of the First Church of Christ Scientist of Lansing, and the Mother Church in Boston, Mass. Surviving are nephews, nieces and cousins. Funeral services will be held Thursday, 11:30 a.m. at the Gorsline-Runciman Lansing Chapel with Herbert N. Barrett reader of the First Church of Christ Scientist officiating. Interment Glendale Cemetery.

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Emma Christina Niebling, daughter of Jacob Michael (1848 Germany - 1936) and Lizzie (Horning; *maiden surname spelling on her death certificate*) (1858-1940) Niebling, was born 20 January 1877, Washtenaw County, Michigan. Emma was a baby when her parents moved to Okemos and she received her first 8 years of education in the 2 story Okemos school. Emma went on to attend high school in Lansing and to graduate

Lansing State Journal, September 6, 1912

School will open Monday, Sept. 8, with R. A. Hickok as principal, R. M. Hardy intermediate and Miss Emma Niebling primary teacher.

from Michigan State Normal School with a teaching certificate in the 1890's.

Emma, who never married, taught within Ingham County in and around Okemos and Williamston for 40 plus years.

Lansing State Journal, August 18, 1949

Miss Emma Niebling is ill at her home on Hamilton road, Okemos. Miss Niebling is a retired public school elementary teacher, having taught in various local schools for about 40 years.

She died 8 April 1960, Okemos and was interred Glendale Cemetery, Okemos.

EX-TEACHER DIES AT 83

LONGTIME OKEMOS AREA RESIDENT BELIEVED STROKE VICTIM

Miss Emma Niebling, 83, the longest resident of the Okemos-Haslett area, died Friday at her Okemos home.

Miss Niebling, who was an Ingham county school teacher for more than 40 years, lived all but six weeks of her life in Ingham county. She was born in Washtenaw county.

She was found dead in her bed when neighbors noticed her home was without lights Friday night. Coroner Dorwin E. Hoffmeyer said she had been dead about 10 hours. He attributed death to a stroke.

The Okemos-Haslett Kiwanis club honored Miss Niebling during the Okemos Centennial last summer as the resident who had lived in the greatest number of years in the area.

Miss Niebling was a graduate of the Old Ypsilanti State Normal college. Her teaching assignments included Williamston and Okemos, where she retired 15 years ago.

She was a member of the Okemos Pioneer club and at the time of her death was financial secretary of Okemos Edwina Rebekah Lodge 20.

Rebekah services will be conducted at 1 p.m. Monday at the Gorsline-Runciman funeral home.

She is survived by a brother, William of Okemos and a niece, Mrs. Lucile Edwards of Lexington, Ky.

Burial will be in Glendale cemetery.

Ex-Teacher Dies at 83

Longtime Okemos Area Resident Believed Stroke Victim

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Burial will be in Glendale cemetery.

A fourth member of the Circle of Friends was **Grace Ann Wever**, daughter of William Nathan (1853-1907) and Fannie A. (Cogswell) (1859-1883) Wever. Grace was born 25 August 1879 in Okemos. Her father was a farmer in Meridian Township. Grace, at age 3, lost her mother to typhoid fever, March 1883. Her father married again in 1886 and Grace was raised by step-mother Sarah Elizabeth (Chapin) (1855-1934).

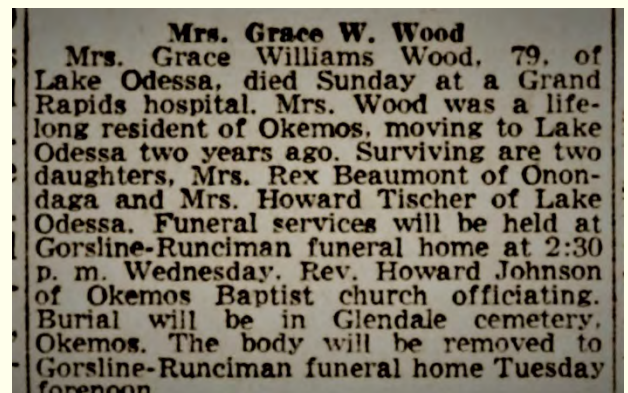
Grace attended the Okemos school house through the 8th grade and then attended, for 2 years, high school in Lansing. She married 4 October 1898, Lansing, Alfred Austin Williams. Alfred, born 22 November 1875, owned and operated a farm on Hagadorn Road, Okemos. The couple had 2 daughters, Fannie and Phebe, both of whom graduated from Okemos High School. Fannie graduated in 1928 and Phebe in 1934.

Alfred died 21 June 1940. Grace married widower George Lewis Wood, a retired school teacher, on 7 September 1952, Okemos. George, born 31 January 1874, died 31 January 1955, Ingham County. Grace died 31 May 1959, Grand Rapids, Kent County, Michigan. Grace and Alfred were interred Glendale Cemetery, Okemos. George was laid to rest with his first wife in Franklin Township Cemetery, Tipton, Lenawee County, Michigan.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Monday 1 June 1959

MRS. GRACE W. WOOD

Mrs. Grace Williams Wood, 79, of Lake Odessa, died Sunday at a Grand Rapids hospital. Mrs. Wood was a lifelong resident of Okemos, moving to Lake Odessa two years ago. Surviving are two daughters, Mrs. Rex Beaumont of Onondaga and Mrs. Howard Tischer of Lake Odessa. Funeral services will be held at Gorsline-Runciman funeral home at 2:30 p.m. Wednesday. Rev. Howard Johnson of Okemos Baptist church officiating. Burial will be in Glendale cemetery, Okemos. The body will be removed to Gorsline-Runciman funeral home Tuesday forenoon.



Mrs. Grace W. Wood
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Among the 13 friends was **Ethel A. Davis**, born 12 April 1880, Keene, Cheshire County, New Hampshire. She was the daughter of George Leonard (1848-1922) and Ida Mary (Davis) Davis. Her parents were married in the town of Keene in 1875 but by 1880 were living in Ingham County. Ethel attended all 8 grades at Okemos and then went into Lansing Central High School to complete her high school education. She was a 1904 graduate of Michigan State Normal School, now Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County. Ethel, who never married, began her teaching career in Lansing and became an elementary school principal for 30 years at the Foster Avenue School, Lansing.

Ethel died 21 June 1957, Lansing and was interred Mt. Hope Cemetery, Lansing.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Friday 21 June 1957

FORMER PRINCIPAL DIES HERE FRIDAY

Miss Ethel Davis Teacher Here for 45 Years

Miss Ethel A. Davis, 77, former principal of the Foster ave. school, died early Friday morning in a Lansing hospital.

Miss Davis was connected with the Lansing public schools for 45 years before retirement in 1949.

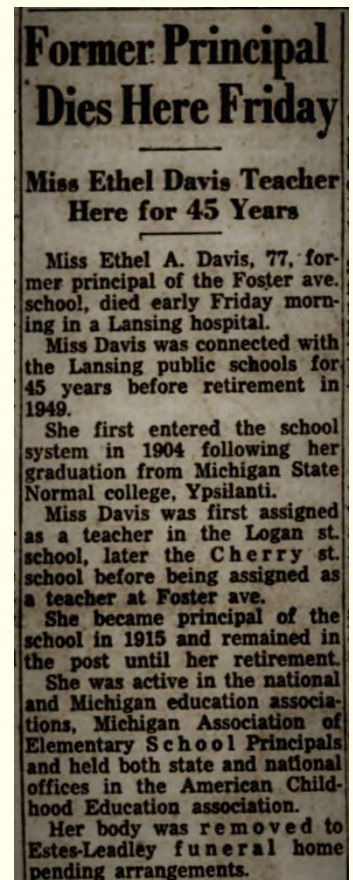
She first entered the school system in 1904 following her graduation from Michigan State Normal college, Ypsilanti.

Miss Davis was first assigned as a teacher in the Logan st. school, later the Cherry st. school before being assigned as a teacher at Foster ave.

She became principal of the school in 1915 and remained in the post until her retirement.

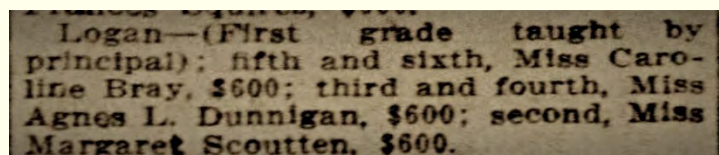
She was active in the national and Michigan education associations, Michigan Association of Elementary School Principals and held both state and national offices in the American Childhood Education association.

Her body was removed to Estes-Leadley funeral home pending arrangements.



In the midst of the 13 friends was **Caroline Belle Bray**, granddaughter of Freeman Bray who settled in "Hamilton," now Okemos, in 1839. Caroline, daughter of Mahlon Augustus (1851-1916) and Jennie May (Dieckman) (1862-1930) Bray, was born 3 August 1880 in Meridian Township, Ingham County. The Bray's owned and operated a working farm and Caroline, like her 3 siblings, helped her mother and father with chores and where a hand was needed on the farm. She attended Okemos school through the 8th grade and then went to Lansing Central High School where she graduated, a year ahead of schedule, in 1898. Caroline, who never married, was enumerated in the 1900 US Federal Census Ingham County as single, living with her parents and teaching school.

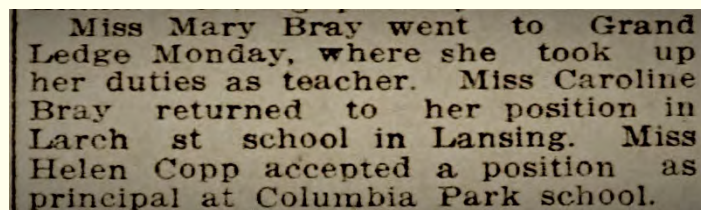
Lansing State Journal, April 23, 1912



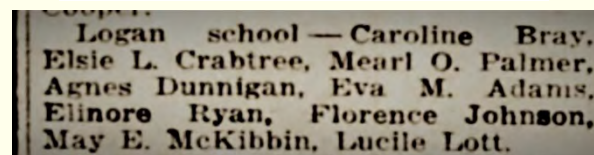
Logan—(First grade taught by principal); fifth and sixth, Miss Caroline Bray, \$600; third and fourth, Miss Agnes L. Dunnigan, \$600; second, Miss Margaret Scoutten, \$600.

Lansing State Journal, August 29, 1919

Lansing State Journal, September 6, 1912



Miss Mary Bray went to Grand Ledge Monday, where she took up her duties as teacher. Miss Caroline Bray returned to her position in Larch st school in Lansing. Miss Helen Copp accepted a position as principal at Columbia Park school.



Logan school — Caroline Bray, Elsie L. Crabtree, Mearl O. Palmer, Agnes Dunnigan, Eva M. Adams, Elinore Ryan, Florence Johnson, May E. McKibbin, Lucile Lott.

The 1930 US Federal Census enumerated Caroline living on Cedar Street, East Lansing and owning a home valued at \$8,000. No occupation was listed for her in either the 1930 or 1940 census. Caroline taught High School in the Lansing area well into the 1920's. The 1940 US Federal Census listed Caroline having 4 years of college education. She graduated from Michigan State College with a major in Home Economics. About the time of her mother's death, 1930, she seems to have retired from public school teaching and been a woman of independent means, active in community affairs.

Caroline died 1 December 1974, Grand Rapids, Kent County, Michigan and was interred Riverside Cemetery, Okemos.

The Incredible Account of Freeman Bray and Joseph Kilbourne, the Michigan Capitol and Okemos. (*Freeman Bray is the Great-grandfather of Caroline Bray*)

Lansing State Journal, December 11, 1949

By BIRT DARLING
(Journal Staff Writer)

Lansing's fate literally dangled at the end of a noose, one wintry day in 1838.

Joseph H. Kilbourne, a Canadian, had fought valiantly in Canada's "Patriot War." Now, on this sleet-curtained night, he and a comrade named Lount were fleeing for their lives, their cause smashed into rubble.

Suddenly, beyond the curtain of snow, they saw the ice-jammed Detroit river.

"Well," sighed Kilbourne, "this is the end of the road."

"What now?" asked Lount.

"Michigan. We can make it."

No man likes to leave his native soil—forever. But the king's soldiers were somewhere just behind them. There was no choice now.

Tests the Ice

Kilbourne tested the ice. It held. He shouted through the howling blizzard, and even as he called, there were shots. Now Lount was no longer alone on the river bank. There were a dozen dim figures up there, writhing and struggling.

Heroics wouldn't do any good at this point. Kilbourne dashed out across the ice, the whine of musket slugs in his ears. Several of the shadowy figures detached themselves from the struggle and raced out after him.

Kilbourne's lungs were being pierced by icy needles as he stumbled toward the far shore. He'd never make it!

Then he looked back, prepared to make a last stand.

His pursuers had stopped in mid-stream. Suddenly there were other figures, up ahead. American soldiers!

That was the end of the pursuit. Later there was talk in the taverns of Detroit about how a patriot army soldier named Lount had "danced at the end of one of the king's ropes."

Thankful for his own escape, Kilbourne now searched the village of Detroit for his brother-in-law, Freeman Bray, who had escaped by another route. There was great rejoicing when they were reunited.

Now they were in America. There was land in the interior of Michigan for the taking. It was unknown and untamed land. But they would have a look at it.

Pair Part

Bray and his family settled at Northville while Kilbourne followed the Grand River trail up toward mid-Michigan. After several days' travel he came to a narrow, winding

stream and an abandoned Indian village and nearby cornfields. It was good-looking land. It had belonged to an old chief named Okemos. But Okemos had ceded it to the United States government several years before, and now visited it infrequently, maintaining his headquarters downstream on the Grand river at a place known as Shimneccon Mission.

So Kilbourne took out land from his adopted government. He took it out in his brother-in-law's name, just why no one knows.

When Bray and Kilbourne brought their families and their worldly goods over the crude trail from Northville soon after, there was no settlement nearer than Ionia. of any consequence. "Mason City," later to become Mason, was just about beginning, as was "Jefferson City," a few miles north of Mason. The latter was to disappear from history by 1850, however. DeWitt was a cluster of cabins.

Sanford Marsh, reputedly the first settler of the Okemos area, was already there, in a house located on the south side of the Red Cedar river, on the west side of the Okemos-Mason trail (the house is still there.)

The two families built a log tavern, said to have been a bit south of the present-day Okemos Baptist church, and lodged the occasional surveyors, trappers, homesteaders and "land-lookers" (speculators). By 1839 they were making a fair living.

Lays Out Village

In that same year Bray laid out his village. A post office was established in the tavern very early, for Kilbourne was postmaster even before Bray had that job in 1842. Bray

Admiral

TELEVISION

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entertainment value!*

MAGIC MIRROR TELEVISION . . . guaranteed to outperform any set, anywhere, any time. Superpowered to assure dependable performance even in outlying areas. Big 10-in. picture tube has 52 sq. in. of viewing screen with clearest picture of them all.

was nominated by Pres. Tylor. The post office was known as "Sanford," and the tiny village was named "Hamilton" after the late Alexander Hamilton. The legislature was to change the name of the community to "Okemos" in 1857.

The brothers-in-law saw their town thrive, as a result of its timber and waterpower, but, when the gold rush of '49 came, they succumbed to the lure, going west in 1852. They didn't return until 1856, during which time their wives kept the tavern running and the post office going.

But, it was even before this that Kilbourne, an imposing figure throughout the county, was elected to the legislature in Detroit.

Kilbourne, it seemed, had been spared a hangman's noose in the "Patriot War", for a purpose—if you believe in fate.

It was during the legislative session of 1846 in Detroit that the issue of moving the capitol to a safer, inland site, came up. Kilbourne thought there was no place like central Michigan. There were two other men who thought so, too: James Seymour of New York state, who owned hundreds of acres around the "big bend" of the Grand river, west of Okemos, and his land agent, James Turner of Mason.

Kilbourne worked behind-the-scenes with these men as a score of towns wrangled and fought for the capitol site. He swung the legislature over to Seymour's land in the wilderness—the land known vaguely as "Lansing township," where there was only a stray hut or two.

So, in 1847, Lansing township became the capitol site, and a city was born. Truly, the fate of a city had dangled at the end of a noose—a noose that was never filled by the neck of the man it was intended for!

Return to Michigan

With the return of Bray and Kilbourne from California in 1856, the former built a sprawling frame home on a hill overlooking the little town he had settled. It is there today, modernized and changed, on the north side of the road that leads from highway US-16 to the village.

An infrequent visitor was John Okemos, son of Chief Okemos, who had died in 1859.

Miss Caroline Bray, 139 Cedar st., East Lansing, daughter of Mahlon Augustus Bray, and granddaughter of Freeman Bray, remembers John Okemos, last chief of the Okemos band, which is believed to have been a mixed band of Chippewas and Ottawas.

As late as around 1896, old John Okemos visited the Bray homestead. Miss Bray is sure of this, for she re-

Missouri Retells Dan Boone Story

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (INS)—

The Missouri division of resources and development has published an attractive 34-page picture pamphlet on the "Daniel Boone region of Missouri."

A frequently-copied painting by George Caleb Bigham is reproduced in color on the cover. It shows Daniel Boone and his family and other pioneers coming through the Cumberland Gap in 1775 on their way to Kentucky.

Huckster . . .

Concluded from Page 6

Therm devised a year-round use for their space heaters by designing a table top to make it a piece of furniture during the summer months. Students working out a campaign for United Trailers are building their campaign around a trailer that looks like a small home, and which they will promote as a low cost housing unit.

As their campaigns progress, students begin to feel more and more like they really have a project that will sell.

"Needless to say," McIntyre said, "these students are performing a notable service to Michigan industries—and who knows, maybe they will sell a complete campaign one of these days."

calls her mother telling the old Indian of Freeman Bray's death, which occurred in 1894.

In the still of a summer evening they could hear this, the last remnant of his tribe here, playing his flute along the Red Cedar, where he was camped on the south side, just east of the Mason-Okemos road.

This son of the great warrior-chief made a basket for the family. He was paid 50 cents for it—then got drunk on the proceeds. Soon after that he disappeared from the ken of the residents who had taken over the ancient lands of his father.

War Memorial

CANBERRA, Aus. (INS)—An appeal will be made throughout Australia next May for \$112,000 to build a memorial near Canberra to the part played by the United States in helping save Australia from Japanese invasion during World War II.

continued, *LSJ* December 11, 1949



Miss Caroline Bray, granddaughter of Freeman Bray, one of the area's first settlers, looks over an ancient newspaper telling of Lincoln's assassination. (State Journal photo)



Here, in this homestead on the west side of Okemos, a fugitive from Canada's "Patriot War" found refuge. Freeman Bray, the refugee, built it in 1856. His brother-in-law and fellow townsman, J. H. Kilbourne, as a legislator, was more responsible for having the capitol established here than anyone else. (State Journal photo)

Church 105 Years Old

Okemos Religious Group To Commemorate Event On Sunday

(Special to The State Journal)

OKEMOS, May 19 — The Okemos Community church will commemorate two events Sunday. One is the 105th anniversary of the forming of the first religious organization in the community. The other is the 75th anniversary of the building of the church. The present pastor of the church is Rev. Harold Jayne, who has served the parish for the past four years.

On Sunday morning an anniversary sermon "The Church at Its Best" will be given by Rev. Paul Boodagh, a former pastor, now pastor of the Mt. Hope Methodist church in Lansing. The other anniversary event will be a reception next Friday evening at 7:30 o'clock in the church parlors, followed by a service in the sanctuary at 8 o'clock. The speaker will be Dr. Spencer Owens, who has chosen for his subject "The Best Is Yet to Be."

The history of the church dates back to 1838 when the Freeman Bray and Joe Kilbourne families built a log tavern on the banks of the Cedar river in the area of what is now Okemos. Two years later they organized a religious society, becoming part of the Mapleton circuit of the Methodist church. The meetings were held at first in the homes of the original members: Mr. and Mrs. Kilbourne, Mrs. Phoebe Kilbourne, Mrs. Rebecca Bayard, Mrs. Marie Mathews, Mr. and Mrs. Freeman Bray and Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Soule. Later when the first school was built in 1846, services were held there. Later meetings were held in the building now used as the Okemos town hall, built originally by the Presbyterians in the early 1860's.

In 1869 the site of the present church was purchased from Mrs. Caroline Bray for \$200 and in the following year the present church building was built at a cost of \$2,400 by a membership of about 30 people. Many improvements have been made to the building over the years. These include new basement rooms, furnace, balcony, stained glass windows, social rooms and the redecoration of the sanctuary.

For many years the Okemos and Holt churches formed a charge with the pastor also serving the Island school, Leek school and the Alaledon Memorial churches. In 1929 the congregation reorganized as a federated church under the name of the Okemos Community church and today it has in its membership communicants of all leading denominations.

Lansing State Journal, January 8, 1950

In 1900 Mrs. Sarah Haslett donated the site of the present Haslett Rural Agricultural school to the district, and a two-room building was erected in that year, to replace the old one-room school building one mile east of Haslett. This building was so crowded that a branch school was opened in the village at the corner of Potter and Rich sts., now Lake Lansing dr.

Miss Caroline Bray of Okemos taught in the one room school in the winter of 1899 and 1900. At that time there were between 35 and 40 students and as many more attended the branch school, taught by Miss Alice Swan.

Lansing State Journal, May 27, 1953

OLD LANSING HIGH

Grads of 1898 Will Be Coming Back

* * * * *

55th Reunion Is Scheduled for June 4

Remember Lansing high school?

Maybe you don't. Maybe you don't even remember its successor, Central high school.

But numerous members of the class of 1898 do. More than 50 of them will be here June 5 for the class' 55th reunion.

Back in 1898, when Admiral Dewey was dealing sternly with aggressors at Manila Bay, it was "Lansing high school." It had been Lansing high school ever since 1876, and there seemed little reason to believe it would ever change. The city at that time had about 15,000 population, and old L. H. S., with its cupolas and mansard roof, located in the square between Capitol ave., Genessee st., Seymour ave., and Shiawassee st., looked big enough for many a generation.

But it wasn't, the men and women of 1898 recall. When Eastern high was built, Lansing high school became Central high school, in 1929. Some years later, with erection of Sexton high school on the west side, it became Technical high.

To the sentimentalists of 1898, though, it'll always be L. H. S.

Among those coming for the June 5 get-together at the home of Barrett Lyons, 915 Westlawn ave., are: Arthur Lyons of that address; Clarence Christopher, Petoskey; Mrs. Elizabeth Corby Mc-

Kibbin, Indianapolis; Mrs. Frances Farrand Dodge, Easton, Md.; Mrs. Zoe Freeman Stoup, Norwalk, O.; Mrs. Chloe Goodrich Carpenter, Grandville, O.; Miss Lena Leitzau, Blue Island, Ill.; Harry Whiteley, Dowagiac; Lee Watling, Mt. Pleasant; Mrs. Emma Glickman Mendelsohn, New York city; and the following Lansing area residents: Ernest Wickham, Mrs. Marion Losey Bolter, Mrs. Alice Hurd Gibbs, Mrs. May Rose, Mrs. Pearl Curry Doyle, Ervy LaRose, Arthur Dunnebacke, Claude Chamberlain, Merton Clark and Mrs. Mary D. Tower.

Miss Caroline Bray of East Lansing, who has kept records of the class as a hobby, will be there, too.

The group will spend the afternoon reminiscing, and there'll be letters from many an old grad who can't make it.

Some of those who won't be able to be there, but who want to be remembered are: Mrs. Kate M. Byers, Garden Grove, Cal.; Mrs. Madge Mason Rodenberger, Billingham, Wash.; Mrs. Mabel Harris Everett, DeRidder, La.; Mrs. Pauline Fisher Newmark, San Antonio, Tex.; Mrs. Harriet Farrand Cardoza, Tampa, Fla.; Mrs. Louise B. Trueman, Islington, Ont.; Mrs. Fanny Sly Lane, Los Angeles; Mrs. Helen Smith Wright, Wichita, Kan.; and Mrs. Olive Thorn Baskett, Big Timber, Mont.

Okemos Women Revive Memories of Plank Road

(Special to The State Journal)

OKEMOS, May 1—The old plank road, something most of us associate with the heyday of the six-gun, is one of the great legends of the country between here and Williamston.

There are still those who remember the Detroit-Howell-Lansing plank road which was built along the Grand River trail of the Indians before Lansing ever had a railroad.

Some of those who remember are members of the Pioneer Ladies society of Okemos.

Mrs. Ida Jackson, riding in a buggy over the plank road with her Grandfather Toolan at a tender age, remembers the toll gate just west of the present US-16 viaduct, and the Mr. Proctor who was its gate-keeper.

Proctor had lowered the plank bar of the gate as they drew nigh, obviously intended to exact toll. Instead, he smiled at the little girl.

"This little gal will be toll enough," he chuckled.

BALKY HORSES

Miss Caroline Bray of East Lansing, a descendant of the first settlers in the Okemos area, remembers the old plank road, too. Her father liked to use the road while breaking in his colts. He would take them from the farm home on the then western outskirts of Okemos, as far as "Toll Gate No. 2" (Proctor's). At the gate he would turn them around and return home.

After the team was broken sufficiently to drive, Mr. Bray would go through a trying period during which the horses were loath to go through the gate.

"No matter what kind of a rig

they were hitched to, the sight of a gate made them determined to turn around," she recalls.

It cost one cent per horse to travel from gate to gate. The trip to Detroit usually took a full day—barring breakdowns or other mishaps.

STAGE RIDE

Miss Martha Mullett, whose grandfather, John Mullett, Sr., was one of Michigan's most famous surveyors when the interior was first being mapped, is another of those who, as a child, watched and heard the thunder of hooves upon the oaken plank road through the forest. Her home was on the Red Cedar river near "Red Bridge," a post office stage stop at the present-day modern bridge between Okemos and Williamston, near Meridian rd.

These plank road memories were revived recently when the Pioneer Ladies met at the home of Mrs. Stillman on Dobie rd., and the hostess read an account of a stage ride over the road by the late Dr. Frank N. Turner of North Lansing in 1864.

Memories of the gone-but-not-forgotten plank road days were shared by Mrs. Minnie Grettenberger, Mrs. Louis Stillman, Mrs. Kate Smith, Miss Martha Mullett, Mrs. Ida Jackson and Miss Geneva Belknap.

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CAROLINE B. BRAY

FORMERLY OF 139 CEDAR ST.,

EAST LANSING

Miss Bray died Dec. 1, 1974 at Clark Memorial Home, Grand Rapids. Born Aug. 3, 1880 in Okemos. She was a lifelong resident of the East Lansing-Okemos area and taught school for 25 years. She was a member of Peoples Church, the Evening Service Guild, the Pinetum Club and the Senior Citizens Club and was a life member of the East Lansing Women's Club, the Okemos O.E.S. and the Pioneer Club of Okemos. She is survived by 2 nieces, Mrs. Allan (Jennie Becker) Barron of Wyandotte, Mrs. Neil O., (Esther) Barrick of Elkhart, Kansas; a nephew, Mahlon B. Hammond of California; 3 grand-nieces and 3 grand-nephews. Funeral services will be held Sat. at 11 a.m. from the Gorsline-Runciman East Chapel, East Lansing with Rev. Roy. J. Schramm officiating. Interment Riverside Cemetery, Okemos.

Lansing State Journal, August 30, 1982

Unique project saves graves from river

By JEAN MOORE
Staff Writer

A "one of a kind" project to save a 100-year-old cemetery in Okemos is nearing completion.

The \$103,000 project to stop soil erosion at Riverside Cemetery on Hamilton Road is a first for the area, said Cass Harbin, project engineer for AMAC Sales and Builders, a Detroit construction company handling the job. Work at the historic site will be finished in about three weeks, Harbin said.

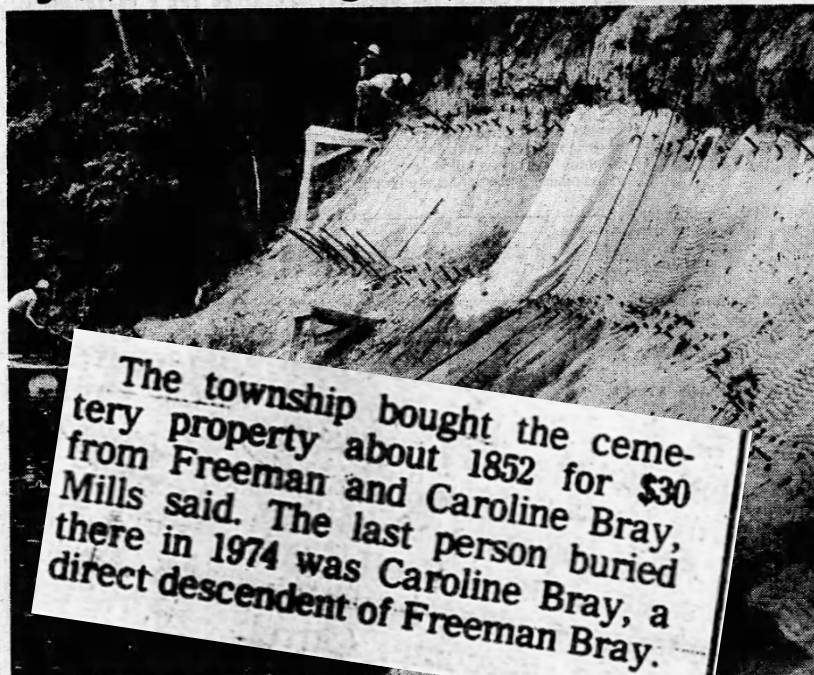
The project is a "one out of one" job for AMAC and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who planned and funded it, Harbin said. Without erosion control, the cemetery would probably wind up in the Red Cedar River, he said.

Riverside sits on a slope between Grand River Avenue and the Red Cedar. Surrounded by trees and overgrown with weeds, the cemetery has been plagued by soil erosion that threatened to uproot trees and topple gravestones into the river. Problems worsened during the 1975 flood.

No graves have been lost yet, although some gravestones were found in the river. They were probably thrown there by youngsters who think it's fun, said Jon Mills, Meridian Township engineering and public works director.

The township board found out about the erosion problem and decided to ask the Army Corps of Engineers for help, Mills said. After three years of planning, work began on the federally-funded project in June.

A 70-degree embankment that slopes to the river on one side of the cemetery is being shored up using a quilted fabric mattress filled with grout, a mixture of cement and sand. The mattress provides a strong, heavy cover for soil under-



MATTRESS COVER — An artificial riverbank constructed of a quilted fabric mattress filled with grout is spread over the hillside of Riverside Cemetery to stop erosion. The Army Corps of Engineers planned the project. — Staff Photo by NORRIS INGELLS

neath to stop the erosion, Mills said. Ivy will provide a green cover, he said.

The ground was cleared of trees and rocks and the land graded before placing the mattress. Two

large oak trees were saved at a cost of about \$11,000.

Several hundred tons of stone, or riprap, were placed in the Red Cedar at the base of the slope to hold the bank.

The township bought the cemetery property about 1852 for \$30 from Freeman and Caroline Bray, Mills said. The last person buried there in 1974 was Caroline Bray, a direct descendent of Freeman Bray.

Okemos Community Church marks log-cabin start 150 years ago

By SHEILA SCHIMPF
Lansing State Journal

Back in the swampy days of Chief Okemos, before Lansing became the capital, Methodists were meeting in log cabins in Meridian Township.

They still meet in Okemos today, in the Okemos Community Church, a direct descendant of the Methodist Society that was chartered more than 150 years ago.

The church is completing a year's sesquicentennial celebration as one of the Lansing area's oldest churches, and the Rev. Charles Grauer, its pastor, relishes the story of its beginnings.

"I think it's fascinating," he said.

As Grauer tells the story, it started in 1833, when Joseph Kilbourn, a merchant from Northville, came through Meridian Township exploring. He liked what he saw and stayed the winter with Sanford Marsh in a cabin on the bend of Red Cedar where Okemos and Mt. Hope roads meet now.

Kilbourn bought a chunk of land and returned in 1839 with his family. They started a new merchant business, they dammed the Red Cedar for a gristmill and they operated the post office.

And they started the Methodist

Church facts

The Okemos Community Church is celebrating its sesquicentennial. Here's more information:

- It's located at 4734 Okemos Road, Okemos.
- It was founded in 1840.
- The Methodist Society is its historical parent.
- In 1929, the Okemos Community Church was federated by Methodists and Baptists.
- Today, 854 people are members.
- Sunday services are 9:30 and 11 a.m.
- Charles D. Grauer is pastor.

Society in 1840.

"They really are just heroic figures in establishing this little town," Grauer said.

They started the Methodist Society in their homes and hooked up with a circuit riding minister from Maple Rapids. As soon as the

school was built in 1846, religious services were held in the school.

In 1869, the Methodist trustees bought a hilltop from Caroline Bray, Kilbourn's sister. A little country church was built in 1870 that lasted until 1967.

In the 1870s, the little town also had Presbyterians and Baptists, who frequently married the Methodists, Grauer said. The combined membership of all three churches was 76, Grauer said.

"We have delightful records," he said. "They all got together ecumenically and decided not to have their Christmas pageants on the same night so they could all attend each other's."

In 1927, the Methodists and the Baptists were each operating with only half-time ministers. In 1929 they formed one church, calling it the Okemos Community Church, but after only a year, some of the Baptists pulled out.

So the church has sailed through history as an interdenominational United Methodist Church, Grauer said. Every pastor has been appointed by the Methodist bishop.

In 1957 the present church was built, and the original building was razed in 1967.

Grauer said the church has always been known for its music, its

educational programs and its youth ministry. "There's an awful lot of learning and enrichment in this building in a week," said David Evans, pastor emeritus.

Grauer has been at the church for only two years. He ended an interim period that began when longtime Pastor John Cermak left.

"Some amazing financial things have been done the last two years," Evans said. After years of paying housing allowances, the church decided to buy two parsonages, both in Okemos. The church has been re-roofed, security lighting has been added and the interior was renovated.

A new associate pastor, the Rev. Pegg Ainslie, arrives Monday from Manchester.

Whether the church is the oldest in the area is subject to debate.

In 1987, as part of the Ingham County Sesquicentennial, a Registry of Religions was printed that shows two churches dating back before 1840: The Leslie United Methodist Church (1837) and the First United Methodist Church of Mason (1839).

The first Lansing church listed is the Lansing First United Methodist Church (1846).

"We enjoy this kind of history," Grauer said.

Dottie D. Allen's father was a Civil War veteran having served as a private in Company B, 23rd Ohio Infantry. George Wood Allen, in the years after the war, worked as a blacksmith. He met and married Alice L. Harrington and they raised 4 children together. George farmed and worked out as a laborer. Dottie was born 9 November 1880, Livingston County, Michigan. The family moved into the Alaiedon-Meridian Township area when Dottie was young. She attended all 8 grades at the Okemos school and also had 2 years of high school, presumably at Lansing Central.

The 1900 US Federal Census Ingham County enumerated Dottie employed as a "servant" for a local farm family named Dennis. On her marriage license in 1904 Dottie listed "none" as occupation. She married Walter James Heathman 4 October 1904 Alaiedon Township. The couple would celebrate 3 children and 61 years together.

Dottie died 2 February 1965, Mason, Ingham County. Walter, born 11 May 1878, Iowa, died 13 April 1968, Stockbridge, Ingham County. They were interred Maple Grove Cemetery, Mason.

Note the misspelling of Dottie's name in her obituary.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Wednesday
3 February 1965

MRS. HEATHMAN SUCCUMBS AT 84

Mrs. Dollie Heathman, 84, of 2086 Hamilton Road, Okemos, died Tuesday at Mason.

Born in Livingston County, she had been a resident of Okemos and vicinity most of her life. She was a member of Okemos Community Church and Okemos Lady's Pioneer Club.

Surviving are her husband, Walter; two sons, James of Mason and George of Lansing; one daughter, Mrs. Ruth Hubbard, Okemos; 13 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held Friday at 3 p.m. at the Gorsline-Runciman East Chapel. Graveside services will be at 2 p.m. at Maple Grove Cemetery, Mason.

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Surviving are her husband, Walter; two sons, James of Mason and George of Lansing; one daughter, Mrs. Ruth Hubbard, Okemos; 13 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held Friday at 3 p.m. at the Gorsline - Runciman East Chapel. Graveside services will be at 2 p.m. at Maple Grove Cemetery, - Mason.

The guest of honor at the 4th of June gathering was **Ethelyn Honey Smith**. Ethelyn, daughter of John (1845-1929) and Mary (McCurdy) (1862-1959) Honey, was born 17 May 1881, Ingham County. Ethelyn's father, John Honey, was born in New York State and with family settled on farm land in Alaiedon Township, Ingham County before 1860. In 1879 John married Mary in Holt, Ingham County. Ethelyn was the first born child. She attended Okemos School completing the 8th grade and then had one year of high school in Lansing.

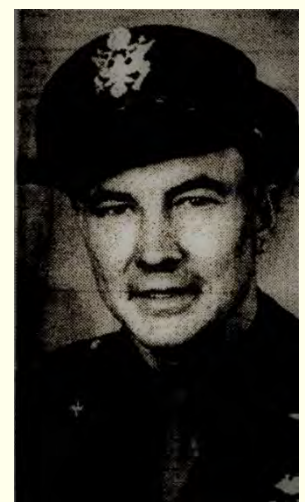
On 3 May 1908, Okemos, Ethelyn married Ora C. Emery. Little is known about Ora or the marriage but Ora, born 14 April 1871, died of pulmonary tuberculosis 29 July 1916 in a Wayne County, Michigan sanitarium. His occupation was listed as engineer. He was interred Pine Ridge Cemetery, Bay County, Michigan. Ethelyn must have had a divorce. She, using her maiden name of Honey, married Benjamin Alexis Smith on 29 August 1914, Bay City, Bay County. Benjamin recorded he was born in Missouri but was a merchant in Williams, Arizona.

Benjamin and Ethelyn were childless but did take in and unofficially adopt

Tucson Daily Citizen, December 20, 1945

Lt. Maurice E. Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin A. Smith, route 1, box 234, has recently returned from Okinawa where he served during the war with the seventh air force. He piloted a B-25 bomber on 28 missions over enemy held territory over Japan, the Marshall, and Gilbert islands. Lt. Smith is a graduate of the Tucson high school and has served in the Army since 1940 when he enlisted here as a private in the air corps. He is now on leave and visiting here with his wife, Marilyn. He was 18 months overseas before returning to the United States in November. (Photo by Reggie Russell.)

nephew, Maurice Edward Smith. Maurice, born in 1920, was enumerated living with his uncle and aunt in the 1940 US Federal Census Pima County. Maurice went on to become pilot of a 7th Army Air Force Mitchell bomber during World War II. He flew combat missions over Gilbert Island, Marshall and Caroline Islands and Japan. He graduated from Tucson Senior High School in 1939 and after the war married, became a



Stanford graduate and a successful lawyer in California.

In 1955 the Smith's moved to California. Ethelyn died 18 April 1966, Fresno County, California. Benjamin died 15 February 1970, Fresno County. They were interred Fowler Cemetery, Fresno County.

MRS. ETHELYN SMITH

Fowler - Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday in the Fowler Funeral Chapel for Mrs. Ethelyn Honey Smith of 411 Seventh St., Fowler, who died yesterday in a Fresno hospital.

Burial will be in the Fowler Cemetery.

Mrs. Smith, a native of Michigan, had lived in Fowler 11 years. She was a member of the Fowler Christian Church and the local Rebekah Lodge.

Surviving are her husband, Benjamin; a son, Maurice Smith, a Fresno attorney; and two grandchildren.

Mrs. Ethelyn Smith

FOWLER — Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday in the Fowler Funeral Chapel for Mrs. Ethelyn Honey Smith of 411 Seventh St., Fowler, who died yesterday in a Fresno hospital.

Burial will be in the Fowler Cemetery.

Mrs. Smith, a native of Michigan, had lived in Fowler 11 years. She was a member of the Fowler Christian Church and the local Rebekah Lodge.

Surviving are her husband, Benjamin; a son, Maurice Smith, a Fresno attorney; and two grandchildren.

Statira "Statie" Hammond was born 29 October 1881, Alaiedon Township Ingham County, to Upton J. (1848-1923) and Ada (Kinsman) (1854-1942). Ada was born and raised in Okemos. Upton, an Alaiedon Township, Ingham County farmer married Ada in 1875, Okemos. Statie was the couple's first born child.

As a child Statie was a member of Wilkins Memorial Church in Alaiedon Township, which was named after the pioneer Wilkins family. The church closed around 1920. Statie, probably before her marriage, moved her membership to Okemos Baptist Church, Meridian Township.

Statie attended Okemos School through the 8th grade. She married James Bernard True 1 January 1907, Ingham

County. James was a 2nd generation Michigander. His father, Orville and twin brother, Orrin, were the first white boys born in Rives Township, Jackson County, Michigan. Orville married in 1858 and bought farm land near Mason where he cut timber, sheared sheep and during the long

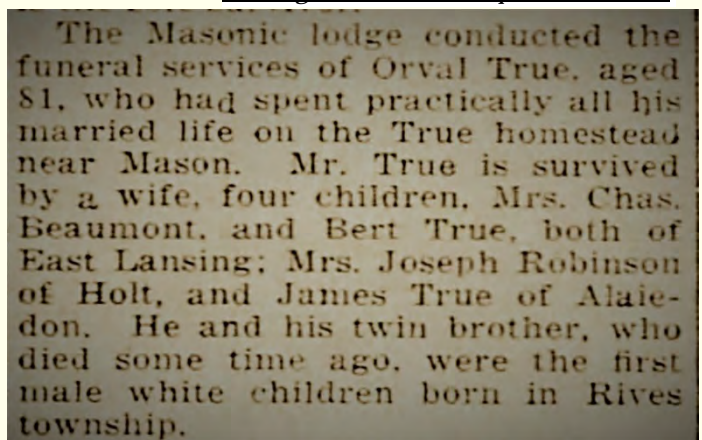
winters made axe handles. James was raised on that farm and when he married Statie he continued to farm for a number of years. James later worked for the Lansing City Engineering Department.

James and Statie had only one child, a daughter named Alice Maxine, born 5 September 1911. James died 11 October 1956. Statie died 25 May 1964. They were interred Summit Cemetery, Williamston.

Lansing State Journal, December 22, 1939



Lansing State Journal, September 4, 1918



Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Tuesday 26 May 1964

MRS. STATIRA TRUE, WILLIAMSTON, DIES

Mrs. Statira True, 82, 240 Sherwood Road, Williamston, died Monday at a local hospital. Born in Alaiedon Township, she had been a lifelong resident of Ingham County. She was a member of Okemos Baptist Church, the Pioneer Club of Okemos and a member of the Home Round-Up Club. She was the widow of James B. True.

Surviving are one daughter, Mrs. Paul Corbin of Williamston; one granddaughter and two great-grandchildren.

The body is at the Gorsline-Runciman East Chapel, East Lansing. Burial will be in Summit Cemetery, Williamston.

Lansing State Journal, May 28, 1964

TRUE, MRS. STATIRA

240 Sherwood Rd., R. 2, Williamston

Funeral services for Mrs. True will be held from the Gorsline-Runciman East Chapel, 1730 E. Grand River, East Lansing, Friday at 1 p.m. Rev. Howard Sugden of South Baptist Church will officiate. Interment in Summit Cemetery, Williamston. Pallbearers will be Wellington Moline, Robert Moline, Bill Wilkins, Starr Kessler, Floyd Rector and Norman Rector.

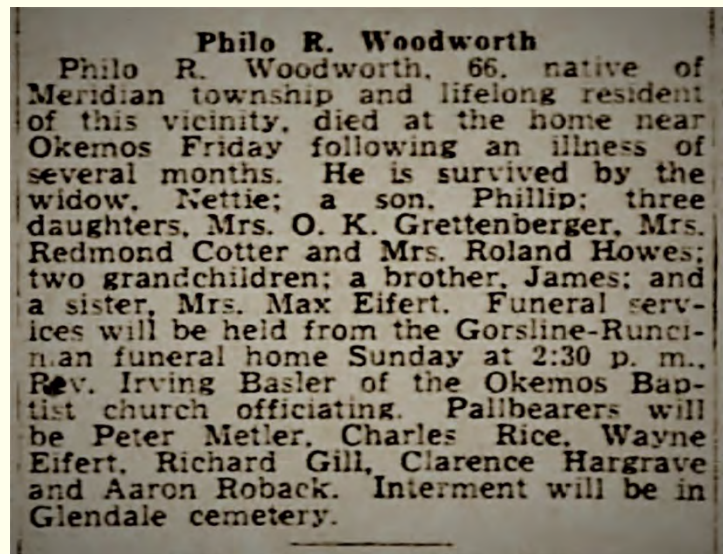
Another in the friendship circle was **Nettie Viola Spross**, daughter of Elias (1857-1924) and Louisa (Herre) (1860-1939) Spross. Nettie was born 14 December 1881, Okemos. Her father was by trade a mason and the two-story home he built still stands at 1738 Hamilton Road, Okemos. Nettie's



mother, Louisa, was born in Meridian Township and lived all her life in the Okemos locale. Nettie attended the Okemos school through eighth grade and went on to complete two years of high school in Lansing. The 1900 US Federal Census Ingham County enumerated Nettie living with her parents but employed as a school teacher.

Lansing State Journal, February 22, 1947

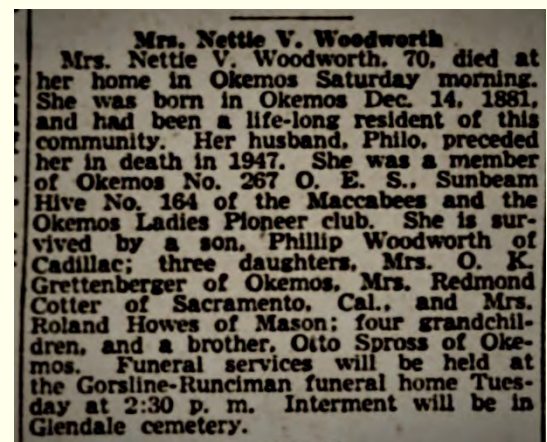
On 28 October 1903, Meridian Township, Nettie married Philo Rockwell Woodworth, a local farm boy. Philo was born 16 May 1880, Meridian Township and farmed all his life within the Okemos area. He and Nettie raised 4 children and celebrated 43 years of marriage before his death at home 21 February 1947. Nettie, first to break the circle of friends by death, passed away 10 May 1952, Okemos. Philo and Nettie were interred Glendale Cemetery, Okemos.



Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Saturday 10 May 1952

MRS. NETTIE V. WOODWORTH

Mrs. Nettie V. Woodworth, 70, died at her home in Okemos Saturday morning. She was born in Okemos Dec. 14, 1881 and had been a life-long resident of this community. Her husband, Philo, preceded her in death in 1947. She was a member of Okemos No. 267 O.E.S., Sunbeam Hive No. 164 of the Maccabees and the Okemos Ladies Pioneer club. She is survived by a son, Phillip Woodworth of Cadillac; three daughters, Mrs. O. K. Grettenberger of Okemos, Mrs. Redmond Cotter of Sacramento, Cal., and Mrs. Roland Howes of Mason; four grandchildren,



and a brother, Otto Spross of Okemos. Funeral services will be held at the Gorsline-Runciman funeral home Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. Interment will be in Glendale cemetery.



Lansing State Journal, May 19, 1985

Friends of Historic Meridian —
Will tour the restored Elias Spross
home, 1738 Hamilton Road, Ok-
emos, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday. 349-
1993.



Mary Bess Wilson was called "Bessie" or "Bess" by her friends. She was the only girl in a family with 7 boys; Charles Adelbert., Donald F., Ila C., Clarence William, James T., Clifton Otto, Lester Earl. Bess, daughter of William Osborne (1850-1925) and Elsie J. (Fulton) (1853-1941) Wilson, was born 17 January 1882, Alaiedon Township, Ingham County. Her parents were married in 1875 and were among the first congregants in the 1st Baptist Church of Okemos. Mrs. Wilson, born Alaiedon Township, was a lifelong resident of Ingham County.

Bess completed the 8 grades at Okemos School and then transferred to East Lansing High School where she graduated with the Class of 1899-1900. The same year she graduated saw great loss in the Wilson family. Bess' brother Ila, born 24 January 1881, was stricken and died 14 October of typhoid fever.

Lansing State Journal, October 24, 1925

Bess never left the family home nor was she ever employed. Her father owned, without mortgage, a large farm in Meridian Townships. Bess moved with her parents, about 1915, into East Lansing to a home at 127 Durand Street. Bess would live there until 1951. After her father's 1925 death, Bess busied herself with the care of her mother and was involved in civic and community affairs.

William O. Wilson
William O. Wilson, 75, died at the home in East Lansing Friday evening. He is survived by the widow, one sister, Mrs. Frances Hewett of East Lansing, six sons, Charles A., of Lansing, Donald F. of Utica, N. Y., Clarence W., of Milwaukee, Wis., James of Kenasha, Wis., and C. Otto and L. Earl of Saginaw, and one daughter, Bessie Wilson of East Lansing. Mr. Wilson had spent the greater part of his life at the old home in Okemos, coming to East Lansing 11 years ago. He was a member of the Baptist church of Okemos. Funeral services will be held at the Gorsline-Runciman funeral home Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Rev. Berry will officiate. Burial will be in Mt. Hope cemetery.

Insurance Agency

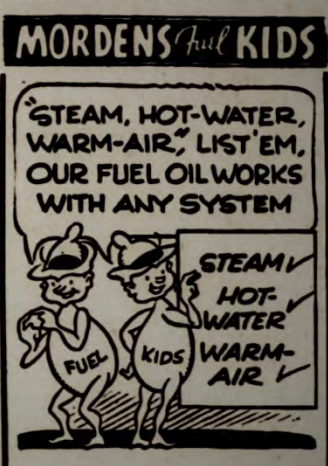
Plans for the erection of an office building at E. Grand River ave. and Durand st., East Lansing, were revealed last week by the Porter Realty company.

It was disclosed that the Merten Insurance agency has purchased the property at 935 E. Grand River ave., which formerly belonged to Miss Mary Bess Wilson of East Lansing, in whose family the property has been held for about 100 years. Mrs. Ella F. Merten, head of the agency, indicated plans for a new modern brick building on the site to house the insurance offices and provide other office space for rent as well. A two-story frame house now stands on the property.

The land has a frontage of 66 feet on Grand River ave., and extends along Durand st. for 165 feet to an alley. The Merten agency also owns a nearby lot, to be used for off-street parking.

Central Trust company acted for Miss Wilson, and William J. Porter, Jr., represented the Merten agency.

Buy Office Site



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In 1951

Bess, the full owner of the Durand Street house, sold the two-story dwelling and property to Merten Insurance Agency. It may have been at this time Bess moved to Grand Rapids, Kent County. Her residence was listed as Grand Rapids in her brother Clarence's 1957 obituary. Bess died 3 January 1968, Grand Rapids and was interred with her parents in Mt.

Lansing State Journal, June 3, 1951

Hope Cemetery, Lansing.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 4 January 1968

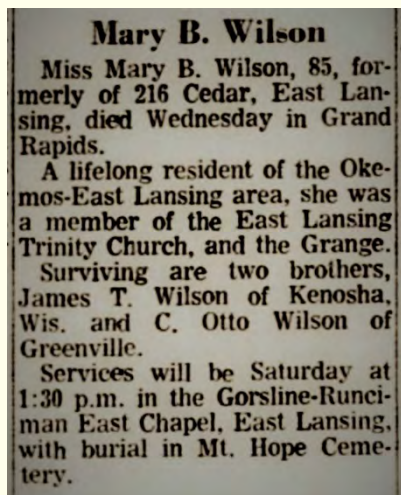
MARY B. WILSON

Miss Mary B. Wilson, 85, formerly of 216 Cedar, East Lansing, died Wednesday in Grand Rapids.

A lifelong resident of the Okemos-East Lansing area, she was a member of the East Lansing Trinity Church, and the Grange.

Surviving are two brothers, James t. Wilson of Kenosha, Wis. and C. Otto Wilson of Greenville.

Services will be Saturday at 1:30 p.m. in the Gorsline-Runciman Eat Chapel, East Lansing, with burial in Mr. Hope Cemetery.



Lillia M. Johnson was probably the youngest member in the group of friends. She was born 25 January 1883, Meridian Township, daughter of Arthur Milton (1846-1888) and Emma Mabel (Smith) (1858 Canada-1932) Johnson. Mr. Johnson was a Civil War veteran having served as a Private in E Company, 1st Regiment, Ohio Light Artillery. After the war and well into his 3rd decade of life, Arthur married Miss Emma Smith. The couple had two children, Lillia being the oldest. Arthur, working as a mechanic, was killed in an accident described as a "gas accident" in 1888. Emma applied and was given a death beneficiary pension for her husband's military service.

Lillia's youngest brother, Tracy Monroe Johnson, was described in US Federal Census and in a World War I Draft Registration as "physically and mentally helpless." He always lived with his devoted mother. Tracy, born 9 April 1884, died 10 February 1927 in Lillia's home, Okemos.

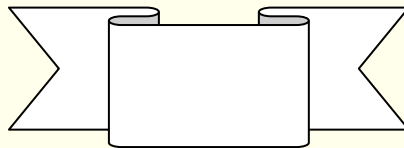
Lillia attended the Okemos school through 8th grade and then went 2 years to high school in Lansing. Lillia, her mother and brother lived in her maternal grandparents home and later, when Lillia married, the family was lived in the home Lillia's husband provided.

Lillia married Lloyd Stillman (no middle name) 5 October 1904, Okemos. Lloyd was born 24 July 1879 and raised on an area farm. Over the course of his adult employment career Lloyd worked numerous jobs; farming, bench worker at Reo Motor Car Company, laborer at odd jobs, janitor Okemos Consolidated School and Michigan State University Dairy Department employee. He and Lillia were childless.

Lillia died in November 1954. No obituary can be found in Lansing State Journal. Lloyd died 21 November 1958. They were interred in Glendale Cemetery, Okemos. Lillia parents and brother are also in Glendale Cemetery.

Last among the group was **Mrs. Kate Smith**. Nothing is known about Kate except she was schooled in Okemos, married and probably resided within Ingham County. She may have been the youngest of the group.

A circle of friendship that begun in the 1880's was broken by death when Nettie died less than a year after the reunion, 10 May 1952. In quick succession came the deaths of Lillia, 1954, Ethel, 1957 and Grace in 1959. The last one in the circle was probably Caroline who passed away in 1974, age 94.



"There is no friend like an old friend who has shared our morning days, no greeting like his welcome, no homage like his praise." Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.