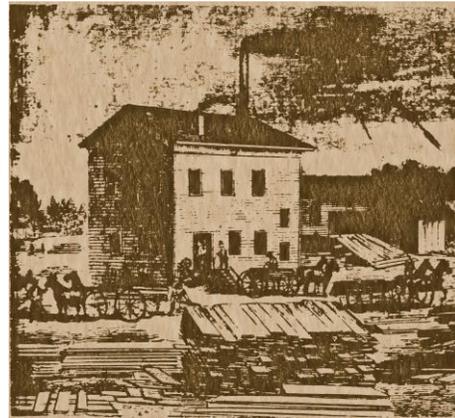




A TREE GROWS IN OKEMOS

The Pioneer Family



But the aged Red Cedar River continues to flow along the banks of Meridian township and the old Indian name of Okemos is still spoken

Sherrie Paty Barber
Class of 1966



Forward

The summer of 1872 came early in Ingham County. A gathering on the front steps of the Mason Court House arrived to convene the organizational meeting of the Ingham County Pioneer Society. It was May 28 of that year when the last surviving founder of Okemos, the Honorable Joseph H. Kilbourne, was named to prepare a history of Meridian Township.

One year later, the first annual meeting was held on May 27, 1873. Reports were received and presentations transcribed, carefully detailing every episode of settling the wilderness of the Michigan Territory. Year after year these meetings of the Pioneer Society recounted encounters with wolves, bears, inclement weather, sickness, hunger and death. Many stories were gruesome, daring or heroic. Through it all, they persevered. If not for "the Record" and taking the time to read it, we would have no idea today, what it took to get where we are.

At the second annual meeting on May 26, 1874, the Honorable O.M. Barnes was the speaker of the day. Barnes was one of the earliest settlers in the Mason area and by now, an elder statesman and fine orator. "The founders of States are justly held in grateful remembrance. These Ingham county pioneers were founders of new communities, communities which are now prosperous municipalities." He continued, "The first of every nation occupies a very conspicuous, and in some respects a very fortunate place in history. The mind delights to trace things to their beginnings, and to dwell on the causes and actors that are connected with beginnings." These words ring with wisdom as we look to the founding of Okemos and the family lineage that followed.

Although we are following the "first families of Okemos", there are many others. For it was at the 3rd Annual meeting on May 25, 1875 that "A resolution was presented and adopted, which designated pioneers as those having lived in Michigan thirty years and in Ingham county twenty-five years." As such, there are many Pioneers with us today and we hope to inspire their own story.

This project came about when I noticed the "John Whitmyer" signed in to the OkemosAlumni.org website. In his Profile, he listed several relatives that went to Okemos and I knew Mary Wilkins Clausen and Chuck Clausen living down the street in Forest Hills. But I was particularly struck that John was in the class of 1951! First thinking that he might help us collect old yearbooks, I emailed him in Mason, and he had several including his mother's from 1928, the first Tomahawk issued for Okemos Consolidated Schools. Always known as "Jack", he invited me down to Mason to see what else he had collected over the years. I invited Bill Breckenfeld along as my "go to Okemos historian" and consulted with Sky Tribell who knows more about Okemos relationships by far. "Breck" and I dropped in for a couple of hours (that lasted 8) and left with our mind spinning that the Whitmyers and the Wilkins are related to Kilbourne and Bray, the founding Pioneers of Okemos!

Jack has since moved to Arizona, and I hate to admit that it took 1 ½ years to finish this project! You can contact Jack through the Okemos Alumni website. This book is dedicated to the Whitmyer/Wilkins families.

This report was researched and written by Sherrie Paty Barber, an Okemos graduate from the class of 1966. We are forever grateful for the enormous task she undertook, voluntarily. Also, thank you to "me" for the hours of cutting/pasting, design and layout and even burning out my computer from overuse! And, of course, thank you to Jack Whitmyer for the genealogy, pictures, and yearbooks to get us started.

Rod Ellis, Class of 1965 and President of the Okemos Alumni Association



Hint for Reading

<<Click on the Maps, Charts and Census to view full sized. Just enlarge the newspaper articles to read.>>

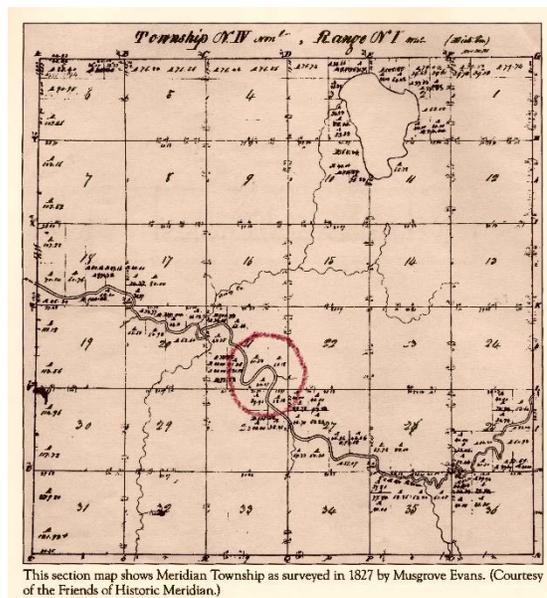
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Pioneer Families: A Tree Grows in Okemos

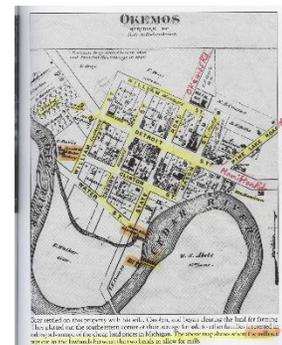
The **Freeman Bray** and **Joseph Kilbourne** families were among the first arrivals to permanently settle during the late 1830's in the tiny central Michigan settlement of what soon would be called Hamilton, Michigan. The following chronology will follow these families through 8 successive generations of Okemos residents, students and teachers. The lineage of Okemos pioneers portrays tough, independent farmers and entrepreneurs. The adventurer Kilbourne first staked out the settlement site for Bray and family...and the legacy began.

Michigan had gained statehood in 1837 and with the 1825 opening of the Erie Canal an eager migration of New Englanders, speculators and immigrants all seeking farmland began trickling and then pouring westward in the area of the Great Lakes. In 1818 the first steamboat from Buffalo to Detroit commenced, taking passengers on the 2 1/2-day route with a fare of \$15. "The traveler William Darby, writing from Detroit in August, 1818, says that during more than a month in which he had been traveling between Geneva, New York, and Detroit, he had seen hundreds going west, but 'not one in fifty with the intention of settling in Michigan Territory.' (Darby, 1819) For the time being the tide of immigration turned aside from Michigan with its "interminable swamp" and "sand hills" and favored Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois." (Fuller, 1915) Soon a 15-day steamer passage from Boston to Detroit opened up. Unfortunately, the road system during that era in Michigan was considered deplorable or nonexistent. In most cases, if stage lines operated, it was not unusual for passengers to have to dismount and walk, climb and slog their way beside the horse drawn coach towards their destination. Some had to yoke oxen to drive through the dense forests and even build a boat to finish the journey from Dexter to Lansing.

Originally from the Canada Province of Ontario, both the Bray and Kilbourne families sought good farmland, a water source and a place to prosper and grow families. Joseph Henry Kilbourne (also spelled Kilbourn and Kilborn) was a Canadian military veteran who first settled in the Monroe County area but moved on with his established family to the tiny enclave, later named Hamilton, about 1839.



This section map shows Meridian Township as surveyed in 1827 by Musgrove Evans. (Courtesy of the Friends of Historic Meridian.)



In 1827 Meridian Township was surveyed into 36 Sections. There were no settlements noted on the Range Map as the land in Meridian was not for sale until October 1830 (Kestenbaum, 1981). Land speculator Eli Prince buys large parts of Section 21 from the territorial government in 1832. May 13, 1833, Sanford Marsh buys land [click read citation](#) on and adjacent to an Indian clearing at a bend in the Cedar River. (Adams, 1923) Marsh moves to the area in 1939 becoming the first settler. Joseph Kilbourne scouts the area and buys 61 acres, Cedar River north, for \$225 from Marsh on October 15, 1839. Kilbourne returns to Northville, sells the land to his brother-in-law, Freeman Bray, for \$300 on February 8, 1840 and both families return to settle the new territory. The Kilbourne and Bray families sheltered with Sanford Marsh while Bray engaged the county surveyor, Anson Jackson to lay out a village on this property. Bray named the village Hamilton, but the future residents changed it to "Okemos" by legislation approved February 12, 1859. (Meridian Township Historic District Study Committee, 1972)[click read citation](#)

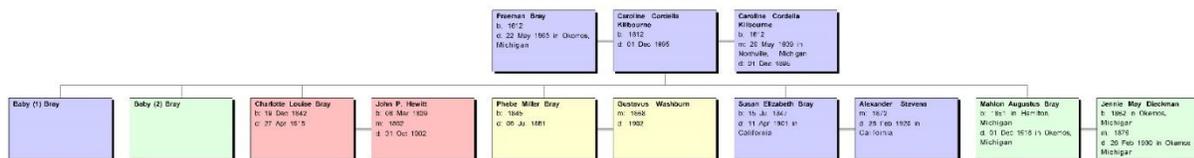
Joseph and his first wife, **Susan Hughes Kilbourne**, would assist in exploring and settlement of Meridian Township, later helping rename Hamilton to Okemos. Along the way Susan (1812-1846) bore at least 8 children, 5 living to adulthood.

The U. S. Census of 1840

Closeup of the 1840 US Census shows the Kilbourne, Bray and Marsh family count. [Click to view the full page.](#)

Names of Heads of Families.	FREE WHITE PERSONS, INCLUDING HEADS OF FAMILIES.																								
	MALES												FEMALES												
	Under 5	5 under 10	10 under 15	15 under 20	20 under 30	30 under 40	40 under 50	50 under 60	60 under 70	70 under 80	80 under 90	90 under 100	100 and upwards	Under 5	5 under 10	10 under 15	15 under 20	20 under 30	30 under 40	40 under 50	50 under 60	60 under 70	70 under 80		
Joseph H. Kilborn	1	2				2													1						
Susan Bray	3	2				2												1							
Samuel Marsh					1													2						1	
John Matthews	1	2												1				1							
Robert Paul																		1							
Samuel Matthews																								1	
William Davis																								1	

The 1840 entry for "Joseph H. Kilborn" probably was recorded incorrectly as he was 31 and there were no other males that age with them. His wife, Susannah, could have been age 25 to 30, but they also had Joseph's mother, Phebe Adams Kilbourne, with them. The five children have been correctly accounted for.



[<Click the Chart to Enlarge>](#) This first Chart will show Phebe Kilbourne down to her grandchildren. All lived or grew up in "Okemos".

Joseph was prominent locally, was instrumental with development of the area and was the first elected supervisor of Meridian Township. He was also the first elected State Representative from Ingham County and proposed Lansing as the permanent Capital of the State of Michigan (Adams, 1923). He married 3 more times after Susan's death, spent several years speculating in California and died 1 November 1891, Ingham County.

Joseph and Susan's children did not remain in Okemos or Meridian Township. William Vincent Kilbourne, born 17 February 1833, Canada, followed his father to California, seemingly never married, and died in Potter Valley, Mendocino County, California, 19 January 1923. Daughter Caroline, born 18 July 1836, Canada, married F. A. Jefferies and died in December 1862. She had one son who died 1889. Joseph Henry Jr., born 18 July 1836, Canada, died Big Rapids, Mecosta County, Michigan, 10 June 1913.

Samuel L. Kilbourne, born 1838, Canada, died 11 June 1925, Kalamazoo County, Michigan. Samuel was known as a leading member of the Lansing bar by the 1870's with business before the Michigan Supreme Court (Kestenbaum, 1981). Additionally, in 1875, he was elected to the Michigan State Legislature, House of Representatives from Ingham County (Durant, 1880). The youngest child, Emily Kilbourne, born 28 November 1844 in Michigan, was a schoolteacher and never married. Schoolteachers were expected to resign if engaged and attend to the farm and family. She died 13 November 1906, Ingham County.

The U. S. Census of 1850

By the 1850 Census, both the Kilbourne and Bray families had moved out the Sanford Marsh settlement. Both families had their own property and were greatly involved in the community and State development.

SCHEDULE I.—Free Inhabitants in the Township of Meridian in the County of Ingham State of Michigan enumerated by me, on the 29th day of Augt. 1850. John H. Williams Ass't Marshal

Family numbered in the order of visitation.		The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate owned.	PLACE OF BIRTH. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.			
1	2		Age.	Sex.	Whether colored.				10	11	12	13
1	1	Wm. Harris	44	M		Farmer	1200	N.Y.				
		Mary E. "	39	F								
		Robert S. "	14	M								
		James E. "	11	M				Mich.				
		Edgar B. "	7	M				do				
2	2	Geo. Proctor	66	M		Farmer	400	Mass.				
		Olivia do	61	F				do				
		Joseph M. "	15	M		School teacher		Vt.				
		Charles H. "	13	M				Ohio				
3	3	Orville Proctor	33	M		Farmer	500	Vt.				
		Jane Proctor	19	F				N.Y.				
		Margaret do	12	F				Mich.				
4	4	Alonzo Proctor	35	M		Farmer	200	Vt.				
		Sarah do	20	F				do				
		Isa M. "	1	M				Mich.				
5	5	William D. Gray	42	M		Carpenter	160	N.Y.				
		Harriet Gray	34	F				do				
		Benja. "	16	F				Mich.				
		Jeddy H. "	10	M				do				
		Lydia "	12	F				do				
		Lyphian "	10	F				do				
		Maryella "	8	F				do				
		Connie "	6	M				do				
		Wm. D. "	3	M				do				
6	6	Freeman Bray	38	M		Inn keeper	2500	Canada				
		Caroline C. "	16	F				do				
		Charlotte "	8	F				Mich.				
		Phoebe M. "	5	F				do				
		Isaac E. "	3	M				do				
		Thomas Duffin	22	M		Laborer		N.Y.				
		Colet Vanderford	22	M		do		do				
		Caroline C. Kilborne	16	F				Canada				
		Mary J. Doyle	16	F				do				
		Mary J. McBrady	17	F				N.Y.				
7	7	Sanford Marsh	44	M		Farmer	2000	Vt.				
		Beneth do	40	F				Vt.				
		Samy Waffel	9	F				Mich.				
		Thomas Wank	7	M				do				
8	8	Amos Veldersly	38	M		Farmer	200	N.Y.				
		Mary A. do	33	F				do				
		John M. do	14	M				do				
		Miranda "	11	F				do				

A page from the 1850 US Census. Notice, 18-year-old Joseph Proctor, "School Teacher" at Hamilton (Okemos). A handwritten notation in the first column under Freeman Bray calls their residence "Hotel" and his occupation "Inn Keeper", with a property value of \$2,500. Also living in the Hotel is "Caroline C Kilborne" the 16-year-old daughter of Joseph Kilbourne. Caroline indicates that she attended school this last year and living "in town" with the Bray's would make it possible to attend school.

The Kilbourne clan did not take root and thrive in Okemos like the Bray family did. Freeman Bray too was a Canadian. He married **Caroline Cordelia Kilbourne** 20 January 1839, Northville, Wayne County, Michigan. Caroline was a sister to

Joseph Kilbourne. Freeman, like his brother-in-law, not only had a zest for pushing on into new ventures but too had an entrepreneurial spirit. Freeman and his new bride brought their meager possessions into the heavily forested area of what is now Okemos where only one other known couple, Sanford and Asenath Marsh, were hacking out a livelihood.

“As told in his own biography, Kilbourne, in 1839, followed the Grand River Trail through the wilds of Mid-Michigan until he came to the planting ground and one-time headquarters of Chief Okemos and his band of followers.

When he returned to Northville, he purchased in October 1839 the fraction of the west half of the southeast quarter of Section 21 lying north of the Cedar River and containing approximately 61 acres. Joseph Kilbourne took out the land in the name of his brother-in-law – just why he used Freeman Bray’s name no one now knows.

When Kilbourne and Bray brought their families and possessions over the rough, heavily forested trail from Northville to what is now Okemos – Kilbourne in 1839 and Bray in January of 1840 – there was no settlement of any consequence until one reached Ionia to the west and north. Mason to the south was just beginning and Jefferson City, a few miles north of Mason never developed (by 1850 it had disappeared).”



Freeman Bray, How Okemos Began: A Short History 1956 updated by Ruth Stillman

Sanford and Asenath Marsh were living on the south bank of the Cedar River in their log cabin situated on the northwest corner of what is now the intersection of Mt. Hope and Okemos Roads when Mr. Kilbourne came looking for land in 1839. It was the Marshes who gave the Kilbourne’s and Brays shelter in their log cabin.

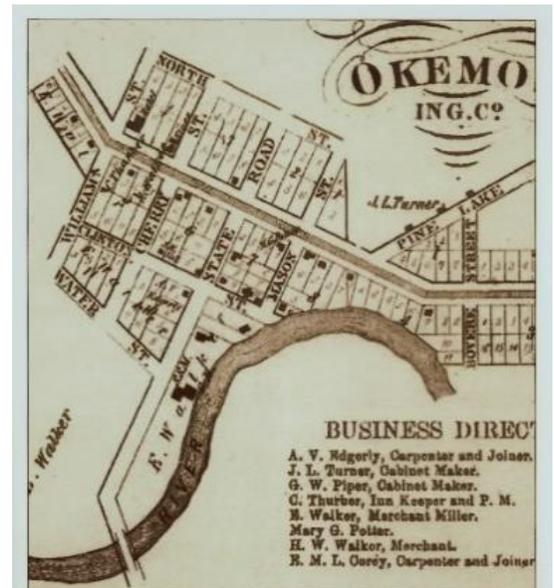
It was fortuitous that the Kilbourne’s and Brays encountered Sanford and Asenath as the Marsh’s had established a respectful relationship with Chief O-Ge-mah. The Chief, who’s band encamped, farmed, hunted and fished that bend area of the Cedar River, always called himself “Okemos”. Earlier in life, Chief Okemos was

known for his leadership and ferocity in the battle of Sandusky in 1803 and as Chief of the Chippewa. His tribe had been decimated by smallpox in about 1840. His surviving tribe scattered and the

“once so bold and fierce, became peace-loving, depending on the generosity of the pioneers for the greater part of his living”.

The generosity that Sanford and Asenath afforded Chief Okemos was likewise extended to the Kilbourne and Bray families. It was here that the Marsh’s sheltered both the Bray and Kilbourne families until they could begin to fell trees and erect cabins of their own.

Freeman and Joseph partnered in building a trading post that exchanged goods with local Indians, occasional land speculators, surveyors, trappers and eventually other homesteaders. In 1839-40, they built a large log house at the East end of Clinton St. that was known as “Hotel” (Unknown, 1945 abt).

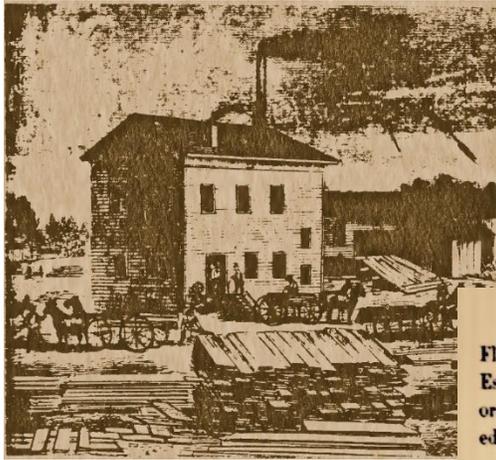


One of the reasons for the need for hospitality in Okemos was the construction of a modern wooden road through the heart of the village. The plank road was built to speed travel between the capital city of Lansing to the original capital site of Detroit. The trip decreased from three to six days along rutted or muddy dirt roads down to 10 to 12 hours along the plank road.

In 1841, Freeman Bray platted the area north of the Cedar River and named it Hamilton. Nevertheless, residents in the plat called it Okemos. Freeman became the official postmaster in 1842, receiving

The Lansing State Republican, Sep 16, 1863

mail weekly. The mail delivery stop was officially referred to as Sanford, named in honor of the local pioneer, Sanford Marsh. Freeman Bray would remain in this capacity off and on until the Civil War.



Freeman also noted the fine water supply and erected a dam across the (Red) Cedar river, which in turn led to building a sawmill, a cabinet shop and in 1859, the Walker Flour Mill.

OKEMOS FLOURING MILL. — The new Flouring Mill at Okemos, erected by E. Walker Esq., is now in complete and successful running order. The flour, which we have tried and proved, is of the first quality.

The mill gearing was made by Thompkins & Co., of Lansing, and was put up and set in running order by W. D. Brown, of Grand Ledge.— Lansing housekeepers will find this Mill of great convenience to them.

FIRE AT OKEMOS. — We learned, but too late for our last issue, that the saw and grist mill of E. Walker, Esq., at Okemos, was destroyed by fire on Wednesday morning last. The fire is supposed to have been accidental, although the usual precautions of looking over the mill was taken before retiring for the night. It is attributed to the sparks from the smoke smoke, falling in the saw dust, and smouldering until the breaking out of the flames, about 5 o'clock in the morning. The mill was an excellent one, and was of incalculable benefit to the section of country in which it was located, and also to this community, being one of the sources of our supply of flour. The loss falls heavily on Mr. Walker, being his chief means of gaining a livelihood. The loss is estimated at from \$6,000 to \$7,000, with no insurance.

This was a hard-time era for both Kilbourne and Bray families. Survival was difficult and there were few to no conveniences. Freeman and Caroline lost their first two babies to fever, probably diphtheria. The first child to survive was **Charlotte Louise**, followed in birth order by **Phebe Miller**, **Susan Elizabeth** and last in 1851 a son, **Mahlon Augustus**.

By the time of Mahlon's birth, a new era had dawned. Trading was well established, the road system had improved, good land had been and was being cleared, waterpower was in plenty supply and the community of Hamilton had been recognized. Freeman Bray was the postmaster, inn and tavern-keeper, overseer of roads in District No. 4, had sold land for homes, a cemetery, and a school, and had established a large well-built home of their own, no longer living with the Marsh's.

It was the 1849 California gold rush which spurred Freeman Bray to dream of speculations on the west coast. Freeman, having already sold his flour mill, joined with Joseph Kilbourne and left family and friends heading west in 1852. Caroline was left to take hold of the reins and step into Freeman's shoes. She would capably manage the family property and businesses for the next several years, all the while caring for the 4 growing children. Additionally, she purchased an 80-acre lot off Hamilton Rd., West of the Hamilton plat.

Freeman returned from prospecting gold in 1856 and built a large new residence for the family and began expanding his farmland on the 80-acre lot at 2270 Hamilton Rd.



Freeman Bray home, built 1856, Picture by Okemos Historical Society, Walking Tour June...2018

In 1859 the hamlet of Hamilton was renamed Okemos. In 1862 the Post Office followed suit with its name change. The following year marked the death of the First Citizen of Okemos, Sanford Marsh.

The Lansing State Republican, June 4, 1862

CHANGE OF NAME—The name of the Post Office at Okemos has been changed from "Sanford" to "Okemos."

The Lansing State Republican, Feb 15, 1859

The House then adjourned.
 Saturday, February 5.
 PETITIONS.
 For a new representative district; for the division of Berrien county; for the registration of births, deaths and marriages; for women suffrage; to change the name of the village of Hamilton to Okemos; against the chartering of cities in Calhoun county; to repeal the charter of the Pontiac and Groveland plank road company.

The Lansing State Republican, May 20, 1863

DIED.
 In Okemos, on the 16th inst., SANFORD MARSH, aged about 60 years.
 He was among the earliest settlers of the town, and was much respected as a citizen.

The Lansing State Republican, Aug 17, 1864

A DOUBLE RUNAWAY AND SERIOUS ACCIDENT.—On Monday forenoon, while Mr. Noah Phelps, who resides near Okemos, was unloading from his wagon some bags of wheat at the depot of the Railroad, the platform on which they were placed gave way, thereby frightening the horses. Mr. Phelps seized the near horse by the bits, but being unable to hold them both, they broke away, leaving him on the ground, and one of his legs was broken by the wagon wheels running over it. The horses, thus liberated, started up Franklin Street at full speed. Coming down the street was the Reform School team, under the care of an inmate named James Chaffee, about twenty years old. He drove quite out to the side of the street to avoid a collision with the fugitive horses, but these last were bent on mischief, and evidently took pains to run into them. In the melee which followed, the wagon tongue of the Reform School team fell to the ground and was broken, and the horses, which are strong and very spirited, made a desperate effort to release themselves from the wagon. The end of the broken wagon tongue struck into the ground, and the forward wheels were raised into the air, throwing up the driver some ten feet high. The horses escaped from the wagon and followed the other fugitives as far as the Seymour House, where both span were secured, apparently but little injured. James Chaffee, the driver of the Reform School team, was taken up for dead, and carried home, but soon began to revive. No bones appear to be broken, and the physician thinks he will do well, as soon as a reaction of the system sets in, so as to overcome the stunning effects of the fall. No blame is attributed to him, as he did as well as any one could have done under the same circumstances.

The Bray children grew up. Charlotte, the oldest, married in 1862 John P. Hewitt. Phebe wed Gustavus Washburn in 1868. Susan and Alexander Stevens tied the knot in 1872. And the youngest, Mahlon, married Jennie Dieckman in 1879.

Freeman Bray died of heart failure, 22 May 1895 and **Caroline** followed in death, by typhoid fever, a few months later, 1 December 1895. They lived to carve out a community from wilderness and died leaving their creation in the capable hands of future generations. Freeman and Caroline were interred Riverside Cemetery,

Okemos.

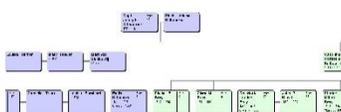
Their daughter, **Charlotte Bray**, born 19 December 1842, and husband, John Hewitt, remained living in Okemos.

Charlotte and John would successfully raise 3 children on their Alaiedon Township farm: J. Merritt (1863-1943), Archie Lee (1867-1960) and Edith C. (1870-1940).

The Lansing State Republican, May 16, 1866

OKEMOS.—F. Herre on Saturday raised a building to be used as a wagon shop, and in this connection we have to record a sad accident, which occurred while in the act of raising one of the bents the foot of the post gave way letting it down and crushing J. H. Winn to the ground. His injuries are internal, consequently the result we know not. It is hoped by a large circle of friends that they will not prove dangerous. At the time of writing he is quite easy.
 Collins Thurber of this place has entered into co-partnership with Jewitt Chatterton, for the purpose of carrying on the dry goods and grocery trade. Okemos with its five stores is trying to do something for the farming community if they have no mills, and it is hoped the day is not far distant that we can boast of them and also a Railroad.

Charlotte also took in and raised her deceased sister's daughter, **Lottie Washburn**. Lottie often used the **Hewitt** surname instead of Washburn.



Phebe Bray and Gustavus were the parents of 5 children: Flora, Lottie, Freeman, Clyde and Carrie (Burns).

11 OCT 1947 ORIGINAL

1. NAME OF DECEASED—LAST—FIRST—MIDDLE (Print or type) McNULTY, THOMAS PETER		APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE OR MARKER (See attached instructions. Complete and submit original and duplicate)	
2. ENLISTMENT DATE (Month, Day, Year) 4-16-1918		11. CHECK TYPE REQUIRED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHRISTIAN (Latin Cross) <input type="checkbox"/> HEBREW (Star of David) <input type="checkbox"/> NONE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FLAT GRANITE MARKER	
3. DISCHARGE DATE (Month, Day, Year) 9-30-1921		12. SHIP TO (Name and address of person who will transport stone to cemetery) Suplt. Arrangements, Michigan, Mich. Grand Lawn Cemetery	
4. SERVICE NO. PROVISIONAL 1337934		13. FREIGHT STATION Union Dept	
5. PENSION OR VA CLAIM NO.		14. NAME AND LOCATION OF CEMETERY (City and State) Grand Lawn Cemetery - 23501 Grand River Detroit 17, Michigan	
6. STATE MICHIGAN	7. GRADE Sea 20	15. I CERTIFY THIS APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED FOR A STONE OR MARKER FOR THE UNMARKED GRAVE OF A DECEASED MEMBER OR FORMER MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES, SOLDIERS OF UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES OF THE CIVIL WAR. I HEREBY AGREE TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROPERLY PLACING THE STONE OR MARKER AT THE GRAVE AT NO EXPENSE TO THE GOVERNMENT.	
8. MEDALS		SIGNATURE Karry A. Turner	
9. BRANCH OF SERVICE, COMPANY, REGIMENT, AND DIVISION OR SHIP U.S. NAVAL RESERVE FORCE NORTH NAVAL DISTRICT		DATE 10-4-1954	
10. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) 2-28-1897		11. DATE OF DEATH (Month, Day, Year) 9-16-1954	
DO NOT WRITE HERE			
RECEIVED OCT 7 - 1954		18. NAME AND ADDRESS OF APPLICANT (Print or type) MRS. RUTH McNULTY - 2006 SEWARD - DETROIT 14, MICHIGAN	
VERIFIED NOV 5 1954		19. I CERTIFY THE APPLICANT FOR THIS STONE OR MARKER HAS MADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO TRANSPORT SAME TO THE CEMETERY.	
BILL NO. WY 3906228		SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT Mrs Ruth McNulty	
ORDERED COLUMBUS MARKET WORKS COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI		DATE 10-4-54	

69C FORM 13 OCT 52 646 REPLACES COMD FORM 42, 8 FEB 40 WHICH MAY BE USED

Flora was deaf and mute. She married in 1893 Peter McNulty who also was deaf and mute.

The couple had one son, **Thomas Peter**, a World War I naval veteran. Flora died in 1966 and was interred Leek Cemetery. The remains of her husband, Peter McNulty, who died in 1943, were interred in Detroit. Thomas the son was interred Grand Lawn Cemetery, Wayne County, Michigan.

McNULTY—Thomas P., of 2006 Seward; husband of Ruth; stepfather of Mrs. Robert Bradford, James and Philip Daigneau; son of Mrs. Lora McNulty. Services at Schmalzriedt Sons Funeral Home, 16625 Grand River, Saturday at 3 p. m.

State File No. 28217250

Local File No. 579

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Bureau of Records and Statistics

1. FULL NAME
Peter W. McNulty

2. PLACE OF DEATH
County: **Wayne**
City or village: **Dearborn**
Street no.: **13617-12th St**
City and state: **Dearborn, Mich**

3. USUAL RESIDENCE OF DECEASED
State: **Michigan**
County: **Wayne**

4. MEDICAL CERTIFICATION
Date of death: **May 9 1943**
I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from **Oct 20 1942** to **May 9 1943**. I last saw him alive on **May 9 1943**. Death is said to have occurred on the date stated above at **2:15 P.M.**
Immediate cause of death: **Bronchopneumonia**
48 hours
Diagnosis: **Myocarditis**
2 years

5. NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE
Name: **Flora**
Age: **77** months
Date of death: **May 7 1864**
Cause of death: **Unknown**

6. USUAL OCCUPATION
Name: **Thomas**
Address: **Dearborn**
Maiden name: **Mary**
Address: **P. Meadows Dearborn**

7. INDEMNITY
Name: **L. Love**
Address: **Dearborn**

8. PLACE OF BURIAL
Name: **St. Mary's**
Address: **Dearborn**

9. GENERAL DISPOSITION OF REMAINS
Name: **J. K. Gubler**
Address: **Dearborn**

10. SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR
J. K. Gubler

11. FILED
5-9-43

Death of Clyde Washburn, grandson of Freeman Bray. Lansing State Journal, Feb 22, 1944

Kin Learn of Death Of Ex-Ingham Man

Word has been received by relatives here of the death of Clyde G. Washburn, 70, at the home in Azusa, Cal., February 10.

Mr. Washburn was born in Alaeidon township and spent his early years within a few miles of his birthplace. He was a grandson of Freeman Bray who laid out the village of Okemos. In early manhood, he left this locality to work in the lumber woods of northern Michigan and Wisconsin. He finally settled in California where he became a successful orange grower.

Besides the widow, Jessie, he is survived by two sons, Archie of Riverside, Cal., and Robert, in the United States navy somewhere in the Pacific; one daughter, Mrs. Ruth Crew of Glendora, Cal., a sister, Mrs. Carrie Burns of Santa Ana, Cal., a half-sister, Mrs. Mel Rhodes of Atascadero, Cal., and six grandchildren; two sisters and a half-sister in Michigan, Mrs. Flora McNulty of Detroit, Mrs. Irvin Wilkins of Mason, and Mrs. Joseph Curtiss of Saginaw, and a number of cousins in both states.

Mr. and Mrs. Washburn visited Michigan relatives and friends during the summer of 1930.

Lottie Washburn, after her mother's death, 6 July 1881, went to live with her Aunt Charlotte Hewitt. Gustavus Washburn later remarried and moved to Saginaw County where he died in 1902. Both Washburn sons moved to California where they died. Freeman died in 1933 and Clyde in 1944.

Susan Bray and husband Alexander Stevens moved to California between 1880-1900. The 1880 Ingham County U. S. Census ([insert link](#)) enumerated them farming in Alaiedon Township but by 1900 they were residents of Orange County, California. The couple raised 5 children, all who remained on the west coast. Susan, born 15 July 1847, died 11 April 1901. She was 53. Alexander, age 75, died 28 February 1920. They were interred

The Los Angeles Times, Apr 13, 1901

Savannah Memorial Park Cemetery, Rosemead, Los Angeles County, California.

SANTA ANA BREVITIES.
Susan E. Stevens, aged 53, died today at Tustin. The remains will be shipped Sunday morning to Savannah for interment.

Santa Ana Register, Mar 1, 1920

STEVENS—In Santa Ana, Cal., Feb. 28, 1920, at his home, 631 North Parton street, Alexander Stevens, aged 75 years.

Funeral services were held this afternoon at 1 o'clock from Smith & Tuthill's chapel. Interment in Savannah cemetery.

Detroit Free Press, Sep 7, 1906

M. A. Bray & Sons, of Okemos, had a lot of Duroc Jersey swine on show and captured ten firsts, seven seconds, three sweepstakes and the grand champion prize. Also grand champion on free for all.

Mahlon Bray, like his father Freeman before him, had an entrepreneurial business mind. He and wife Jennie May (1862-1930) worked hard and built an excellent crop and livestock farm in Okemos. His Duroc Jersey Swine, a very hardy, orangish to red colored domestic pig, produced large liters and was an excellent table meat. Mahlon also had Shropshire sheep and Shorthorn cattle stock.

The True Northerner, Mar 8, 1901

Lansing Man Robbed.

Lansing, Mich., March 5.—M. A. Bray of Okemos, who was a candidate for the democratic nomination for sheriff last fall, yielded up \$80 in cash to a couple of bunco men in Chicago last Saturday. He was halted on the street by an individual who claimed acquaintance with a couple of prominent Lansing men, who, he said, were about to order some clothes made in Chicago and wanted to see samples of the goods. Bray agreed to be accommodating to the extent of packing the samples to Lansing and accompanied the stranger to a room to procure the package. While in the room he was attacked by three men and robbed.

Lansing State Journal, Aug 11, 1913

SECOND STORM DUPLICATES PREVIOUS NIGHT

A severe electrical storm swept over the city Saturday night and practically duplicated another which wrought extensive damage through this section of the state 24 hours previously. The second storm, while of less duration, undid much of the wire repairs which had been made during the day and crippled additional telephones and lighting service.

Thought College Burning.

Immediately after the storm four fires, caused by lightning, could be counted around the city. Two near Okemos, one of which was the barns of Mahlon Bray, lighted up the eastern sky for miles about the countryside and gave rise to disturbing rumors in the business district that one of the buildings at M. A. C. had been struck.

Another barn fire was discerned northward at a distance of about five miles from the city, while another, apparently at a much greater distance could be seen to the west. Hail accompanied Saturday night's storm, though not as heavily as on Friday evening. Considerable damage was suffered by sewer contractors whose excavations were caved in by the heavy rainfall of two consecutive nights.

Lansing State Journal, Apr 8, 1915

Jay M. Smith, county superintendent of the poor, is receiving requests for the abandoned baby that was left this week at the Mahlon Bray home near Okemos. The child, however, already has been found a home by the county agent.

Mahlon died 1 December 1916, age 65. He and Jennie were interred Riverside Cemetery, Okemos.

MAHLON A. BRAY OF OKEMOS IS DEAD

Owned Big Farm, Including Cemetery, and Lived Near Lansing for 66 Years.

Mahlon A. Bray, Michigan pioneer, died at his home Saturday morning at the age of 66 years. Mr. Bray owns the Bray estate commonly known "Pioneer Farm." The farm comprises 176 acres of land at Okemos and includes the Okemos cemetery in which he will be buried.

Mr. Bray is survived by his widow, one son, Charles Bray, who lives on the farm, and three daughters, Mrs. Mary Hammond, Okemos, Mrs. J. Mecker, Okemos, and Miss Caroline Bray, school teacher in Logan street school in Lansing.

Mr. Bray was born in Okemos in 1851. He was educated and has lived in this vicinity for 66 years. His death is believed to have been the result of peritonitis. He was an Odd Fellow and a Mason and these lodges will take part in his funeral Monday at 1 o'clock in the Okemos Methodist church.

AUCTION SALE

To settle the estate of the late Mahlon A. Bray, the administrator will sell at Public Auction on

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

on the Pioneer Farm, just west of the village of Okemos, 6 miles east of Lansing, beginning at 9.00 a. m., the following:

36 Head of Cattle—17 head of steers, 4 bull calves short horns, can be reg. 3 heifer calves short horns, can be reg. 2 grade heifer calves, 1 grade heifer 1 year old, 3 grade Durham cows, 5 pure bred short horn cows, 1 registered white Short Horn bull 1 year old.

19 Head Pure Bred Duroc Jersey Hogs—5 boars weight 100 to 150 pounds, 15 sows due to farrow soon, 20 fall pigs, boars and sows.

Hay and Grain—10 tons timothy hay, 20 tons mixed hay, 125 tons silage, 400 bushels of oats.

21 Head of Horses and Colts—1 Percheron stallion "Ingomar" 18 years old, 1 Percheron stallion "Black Joe" 2 years past, 9 reg. Percheron mares 2 to 10 years old, 1 brown driving mare 20 years old, 1 brown mare 4 years old, weight 1200, 1 gelding 4 years old, grandson of Dan Patch, 1 bay gelding 3 years old, 3 grey geldings 2 years old, 3 colts coming one year old.

36 Head Shropshire Sheep, most all registered.

FARM TOOLS—McCormick grain binder, Deering corn binder, Dain mower, Dayton side rake, Keystone hay loader, Osborne dump rake, land roller, disc harrow, 6 plows, 6 harrows, weeder, bean puller, silage cutter, 3 wagons, 3 buggies, 2 carts, cutters, 3 gasoline engines, DeLaval cream separator, forks, shovels, hoes, bags and numerous other articles.

NOTICE: Everything in this sale will be sold; there will be nothing bid in.

TERMS OF SALE: Cash or acceptable note at 6 per cent interest for six months' or one year's time.

MAHLON A. BRAY ESTATE

PER CHAS. BRAY, ADMINISTRATOR.

Mahlon and Jennie had had 4 children: **Caroline Belle, Charles, Mary Jane and Nellie Edith.** Both Caroline (1880-1974), who never married, and Mary Jane (1886-1968), who married Robert Hammond (1889-1917) and was widowed early, were for a time teacher's in the Okemos school.

*Lansing State Journal, Feb 27, 1930,
(Jennie May is Mahlon Brays widow.)*

Nellie (1888-1971) married a Meridian Township farmer, Oscar Becker (1888-1977).

Lansing State Journal, Oct 27, 1971

Nellie E. Becker

Mrs. Nellie E. Becker, 83, of 4777 Powell Rd., Okemos, died in her home today.

A lifelong resident of Okemos, she was a member of the Okemos Pioneer Society.

She is survived by her husband, O. J.; two daughters, Mrs. Allan Barron of Wyandotte and Mrs. Neil O. Barrick of Keyes, Okla.; four grandchildren and a sister, Miss Caroline Bray of Grand Rapids.

Services will be Friday at 2:30 p.m. in the Gorsline-Runciman East Chapel, East Lansing, with burial in Glendale Cemetery.

Lansing State Journal, Oct 24, 1977

BECKER, O.J.

Formerly of
4777 Powell Rd.
Okemos

Age 89, died Oct. 21, 1977. Born January 1, 1888 in Ingham County. Mr. Becker had been a life long resident of the Okemos area and was a retired farmer. He was a member of the North Street Church of Nazarene. Mr. Becker was preceded in death by his wife Nellie and daughter Jennie Barron. Surviving are a daughter and son-in-law, Neil O. (Esther E.) Barrick of Elkhart Kansas, 1 sister Mrs. Leata Hoskins of Gaines Michigan, son-in-law Allan E. Barron of Dearborn, 4 grandchildren. Funeral services will be held Tuesday 10 a.m. at the Gorsline-Runciman East Chapel, East Lansing with the Rev. H.L. Woods of the Metropolitan Church of the Nazarene officiating. Interment will be at Glendale Cemetery. Pallbearers will be; John Quisenberry, Jacob Stauffer, Lawrence Powell, Ray Snow, Kenneth Mayes, and James Potier.

Mrs. Jennie May Bray
Mrs. Jennie May Bray, widow of the late Mahlon Bray, died Wednesday at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Nellie Becker, near Okemos. She was born at Okemos and had been a lifelong resident of the vicinity. She is survived by one son, Charles, of Dansville; three daughters, Caroline Bray, East Lansing, Mrs. Mary Hammond, of Grand Ledge, and Mrs. Nellie Becker, Okemos; three grandchildren; two sisters, Mrs. Lizzie Dingman, Ypsilanti, and Mrs. Mary Haney, Lansing; and two brothers, August Dickman, Okemos, and Carl Dickman, of Mason. Funeral services will be held from the home of the daughter, Mrs. Nellie Becker, Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Interment will be in the Okemos cemetery.

Mary Jane and Nellie were interred Glendale Cemetery, Okemos. **Caroline (insert link)** was buried at Riverside, Okemos with her parents.

Charles "Charlie" Bray, Mahlon's only son, was born 23 June 1881, and was the last living direct descendent from Freeman Bray to carry the surname. Charlie was plagued by a life of unfortunate events, such as "running the Governor off the road"!

Charlie, a hog farmer in Wheatland Township, Ingham County, did not marry until 1932. He and wife had no children.

Lansing State Journal, Oct 18, 1936

MISHAP PERILS GOV. FITZGERALD

**Executive Uninjured When
Machines Collide Near
Fowlerville**

FOWLERVILLE, Oct. 17 (UP) — Gov. Frank D. Fitzgerald was uninjured Saturday when the automobile in which he was riding to the state rally of the National Union for Social Justice at the Detroit fair grounds collided with another machine on US-16, west of here.

Governor Fitzgerald's car was driven by Corp. Verne C. Dagen of the Michigan state police. It crashed with one driven by Charles Bray of Williamston as Bray attempted to make a left turn off the highway.

The impact forced the governor's machine from the pavement. It climbed half way up a road shoulder and traveled at a perilous angle for more than 30 yards before it could be halted. Neither machine was seriously damaged.

Riding with the governor was H. O. Weitschat, his secretary, and Murl H. Dafoe, editor of the Charlotte Republican Tribune. Bray was accompanied by his wife and their niece.

Lansing State Journal, Mar 12, 1954

Charlie H. Bray, 70, Dies in Car

**Prominent Hog Farmer Was
Returning from Owosso**

(Special to The State Journal)

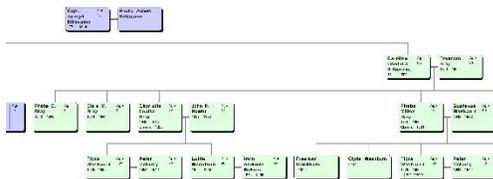
WILLIAMSTON, March 12 — Charlie H. Bray, 70, prominent Wheatfield township hog farmer, died unexpectedly Thursday afternoon while returning home from Owosso.

Mr. Bray died in his car near Perry after he had stopped his car to remove a bottle from the road. With him at the time was his wife, Martha.

He was the son of a pioneer family in the Okemos area. Besides the widow, survivors include two stepsons, Frank H. Marble of Williamston and Glen Marble of Kansas City, Kan., and three sisters, Miss Caroline Bray of East Lansing, Mrs. Nellie Beck of Okemos and Mrs. Mary Hammond of Grand Ledge.

Funeral services will be held at Gorsline Brothers funeral home Sunday at 2 p. m. Rev. Harold Reese of the Williamston Baptist church will officiate. Burial will be in Glendale cemetery.

Charlie died 11 March 1954 and was interred Glendale Cemetery, Okemos.



What began as one small twig on the Bray family tree sprouted further generations. **Lottie Althea Washburn**, granddaughter of Freeman Bray, was born 24 April 1878 and lost her mother when she was 3. Uncle John and Aunt Charlotte (Bray) Hewitt took the little girl in and raised her on the Hewitt farm.

Lottie graduated from Mason High School, Mason, Michigan in 1898 and married Irvin Wilkins 19 March 1903, in the Hewitt home, Alaiedon Township.

Lottie's husband, **Irvin Amhurst Wilkins**, son of Edward Nathaniel and Aroline Elissa (Crane) Wilkins, was born 31 October 1876, Alaiedon Township. He was named for his Uncle Irven (spelling on tombstone) who died as a small child. Irvin's father, Edward, was enumerated as a 12-year-old boy, born Ohio, living in Alaiedon

Lansing State Republican, Oct 5, 1864

Geo. Kling,	Austin Rigg,
Everett Beardsley,	Wm. F. Stephens,
Andrew Tallman,	Wm. Cady,
Reuben Every,	John L. Kent,
Earnest Dell,	David V. Smith,
Dantforth Button,	Stephen'n Polehmus,
John E. Barnhart,	Jacob A. Smith,
Geo. W. Brown,	Nathan A. Bennett,
Orville S. Rathbun,	Orville True,
Henry S. Every,	Levi Rowell,
Otis C. Fall,	James Pierce,
Wm. D. Strickland,	Edward N. Wilkins,
Israel Eseltine,	Henry E. Gibson.

Township during the 1850 Ingham County, Michigan U. S. Federal Census. In 1864 Edward was drafted into the Civil War out of Alaiedon Township.

Irvin would be a 3rd generation to farm the township land. A 1914 Ingham County Indexed County

Land Ownership Map recorded Irvin owning 60 acres of property. His brother, Clair Elden Wilkins was recorded having at least 120 acres nearby.

Irvin and Lottie would celebrate 55 years and 6 children together. Sadly their 2nd infant son died at 4 days of age in 1907. He was interred at Leek Cemetery, Okemos.

Lottie bore 5 other children, George Lester, Naomi, Rex Owen, Dale Elwin and Ralph Glen.

Lansing State Journal, Apr 28, 1915

Mrs. Charlotte Hewitt, of Okemos, died at the home of her son, J. M. Hewitt, 132 Allen st., Tuesday evening, after an illness of six weeks. Besides the son at whose home she died, she is survived by a son, A. L. Hewitt, of Henderson, Mich., and two daughters, Mrs. Howard Moore, of Haslett, and Miss Lottie Wilkins, of Mason. She also leaves 12 grandchildren. Mrs. Hewitt was born at Okemos in 1843, and with the exception of five years spent at Muskegon, lived there all her life. There will be a prayer service at the house Thursday at 12:30 o'clock, after which the body will be taken to Okemos, where the funeral will be held from the M. E. church at 2 o'clock.

Lottie would be there to bury her beloved Uncle John Hewitt, born 8 March 1839, dying 31 October 1902. His death would be attributed to exhaustion and "disseminated spinal sclerosis."

Aunt Charlotte Hewitt would succumb to liver and heart problems, 27 April 1915, at her son J. Merritt's home in Lansing. John and Charlotte were interred together, Leek Cemetery, Okemos.

Citizens Telephone Co.

See this space tomorrow for a cut of the wonderful machine that is used to operate the Automatic Telephone or better still, visit the Electrical Show and see the machine in operation. It is this apparatus that has given Lansing its marvelous telephone service.

Telephones installed in Oct. 1914

- 19—3L IS Aldred Yerks.
- 2164 M. F. Hughes.
- 2842 Grange Life Insurance Association.
- 2844 F. M. Loftus.
- 2851 Mrs. E. A. Bartram.
- 2861 W. Phil Walters.
- 2864 Bert Allshouse.
- 2959 Dr. M. L. Howell.
- 3055 J. L. Putman.
- 3581 Gen'l Accident Fire and Life Assur. Co.
- 3813 John Hewitt.
- 7209 C. S. Langdon.
- 7221 E. S. Burden.
- 7223 George Klotz.
- 7247 L. C. Emmons,
- 7276 J. T. Gill.
- 7319 Mrs. Ellen Ivory.
- 7409 A. K. Chittenden.
- 7606 Carroll G. Clay.
- 7648 Maurice F. Johnson.
- 7671 Pearl Bishop.
- 7949 M. M. McCool.
- 7990 E. J. Mellott.
- 8033 D. W. Rowley.
- 8044 Dr. A. F. Gordon.
- 8265 Dr. C. A. Griffin.
- 8822 Carl Dewey.
- 8862 Henry Seemiller.
- 8959 Claud B. Randall.
- 8971 William C. Friegal.
- 9115 Archie A. Fowler.
- 9509 Aurean Society.
- 9576 Eugene Parker.
- 9594 Mrs. W. L. Smith.
- 8313 Earl C. Kiefer.
- 8314 A. A. Griffin.
- 8321 Rev. B. L. Post.
- 8322 Allen B. Howard.
- 8415 John Build.
- 8416 Clarence H. Reed.
- 8423 John M. Manning.

The Irvin and Lottie Wilkins farm thrived. Not only was there a new yield of nurtured children in the farmhouse but cash crops and swine were cultivated on the land. The children grew, married and the grandchildren abounded.

Lansing State Journal, Mar 20, 1947

Farms in Original Pioneer Families

(Special to The State Journal)

OKEMOS, March 20—The Centennial celebration in Lansing brings many early facts to the minds of the residents of this vicinity, particularly from those families which are classed as pioneer. At the time of the coming of the capital to Lansing township, Ingham county had a number of settlements such as the one at Okemos. Three farms south of the village are still owned by the families who received the deeds from the government over 100 years ago. The Dobie farm, owned and lived on by Don Dobie, on Dobie road; the Stillman farm on the same road, owned by Mrs. Roy Stillman, and the Wilkins farm on the Okemos-Mason road, owned and operated by Irvin Wilkins, all date back to the years of 1839-41. The fifth generations are now living on the last two.

Lansing State Journal, Oct 28, 1968

Lottie A. Wilkins

Mrs. Lottie A. Wilkins, 90, formerly of 2976 Okemos Road, died Sunday in a local hospital after a long illness.

She was a member of the Okemos Community Church and Okemos Pioneer Ladies. She lived in Ingham County all her life.

Surviving are a daughter, Mrs. John F. Whitmyer of Williamston; four sons, George L. of Jackson, Rex O. of Grand Rapids, Dale E. of R. 4, Mason, and Ralph Glen of Okemos; 15 grandchildren; and 21 great-grandchildren.

Services will be Wednesday at 11 a.m. in the Ball Dunn Funeral Home, Mason, with burial in Leek Cemetery, Alaiedon Township.

Lottie passed away 26 October 1968. Irvin and Lottie were interred Leek Cemetery, Okemos.

Lansing State Journal, Mar 24, 1943

OBSERVE ANNIVERSARY (Special to The State Journal)

OKEMOS, March 24 — Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Wilkins observed their 40th wedding anniversary Sunday, March 21, as honor guests at an open house at their home. Thirty members of their family were present and five people who were present at their marriage ceremony, the latter Mrs. Mary Bray Hammond, Mrs. Nelle Bray Becker, Charles Bray and Mr. and Mrs. Merritt Hewitt. The couple were married at the Hewitt home, one mile west of where they live now, by the former Reverend Wilson of Mason.

Lansing State Journal, Oct 31, 1951

Family Dinner Held Honoring Man's Birthday

(Special to The State Journal)

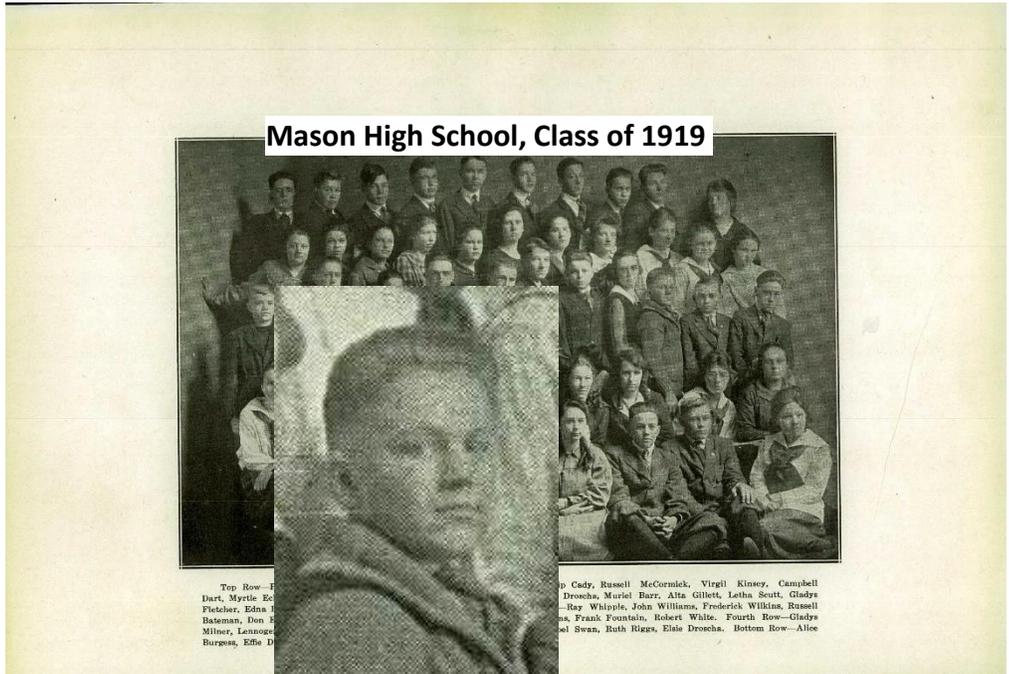
OKEMOS, Oct. 31—Twenty-four members of the Irvin Wilkins family sat down to a 75th birthday dinner in his honor Sunday at the home of his daughter and family, the John Whitmyers, south of Okemos. All his children and grandchildren except the newest member, four-day-old Keith Kelley Wilkins, and the baby's mother, Mrs. Rex Wilkins, were present. This baby is the 14th grandchild.

One of the older grandsons, David, son of Lester Wilkins, who is a high school senior at Jackson, showed colored slides he took this summer while en route to and attending the International Scout jamboree in Austria. The trip took the delegates, via Algiers, Africa and Italy, to the convention country.

Mr. Wilkins is a lifelong resident of the community, where he lives on the pioneer family farm on Sandhill and Okemos roads, the farm being one of the first to be settled in Alaiedon township in the late 1830s.

Irvin died 30 May 1958. He and Lottie had celebrated 55 years together the preceding March.

George Lester, the oldest Wilkins child, born 8 May 1904, graduated from Mason High School, Mason, Ingham County in 1919.



Mason High School, Class of 1919

Top Row - E. Dart, Myrtle E. Fischer, Edna I. Bateman, Don E. Milner, Lennoe Burgess, Edna D.

... Cady, Russell McCormick, Virgil Kinsey, Campbell Droscha, Muriel Barr, Alta Gillett, Letha Scott, Gladys Ray Wainale, John Williams, Frederick Wilkins, Russell ... Frank Fountain, Robert White. Fourth Row - Gladys ... el Swan, Ruth Riggs, Elsie Droscha. Bottom Row - Alice



George Lester Wilkins

Lansing State Journal, Aug 13, 1923

Charles White, who has been enjoying a trip through the western states has returned to his home in Mason. He and Lester Wilkins left Mason several weeks ago to go to Dakota. There they worked in the grain fields for a short time and then Charles and another friend went on west. They visited the Yellowstone National Park, Glacier National Park and several other points of interest. Lester has not yet returned to his home here.

No. 7560 **Marriage License** 1926
 Ionia County, Michigan 34 187

To any person legally authorized to solemnize marriage,
Greeting:
 Marriage May Be Solemnized Between

Mr. George L. Wilkins and Miss Dorothy A. Snyder
 affidavit having been filed in this office, as provided by Public Act No. 123, Laws of 1887, as amended, by which it appears that said

George L. Wilkins 22 years of age,
 color is White, residence is Ionia, Mich., and birthplace was Mason, Mich., occupation is Caregiver, father's name Irvin A. Wilkins, and mother's maiden name was Lottie A. Hewitt
 has been previously married no time 0; and that said Dorothy A. Snyder
 is 23 years of age, color is White, residence is Toledo, Ohio, and birthplace was Detroit, Mich., occupation is Technician, father's name Harmon H. Snyder, and mother's maiden name was Lola Knapp
 and who has been previously married no time 0, and whose maiden name was no, and whose consent, in case she has not attained the age of eighteen years, has been filed in my office.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto attached my hand and the seal of Ionia County, Michigan, this 15th day of August, A. D. 1926
Doris M. Kelley
 Deputy County Clerk

Certificate of Marriage
 Between Mr. George L. Wilkins and Miss Dorothy A. Snyder
 I hereby certify that, in accordance with the above license, the persons herein mentioned were joined in marriage by me, at Lansing County of Ingham, Michigan, on the twenty-first day of August, A. D. 1926, in the presence of Lois E. Snyder of Mason, Mich. and Lottie A. Wilkins of Mason, Mich. as witnesses.
Wm. Malcolm Young
 Name of Magistrate or Clergyman.
 Clergyman
 Official Title.

This copy to be retained by the County Clerk until the original is returned; when it is to be completed by endorsement and forwarded at the first of the following month to the Michigan Department of Health.

He married Dorothy A. Snyder, 15 August 1926, Ionia County, Michigan, and went on to have a long career with Consumer Power Company of Michigan. He and Dorothy had two children. Cynthia and David celebrated 69 years of marriage. The couple moved from Michigan to Kerr County, Texas in their retirement years. Dorothy, born 8 July 1903, died 25 May 1996, Kerr County. George Lester died 14 September 1999, Kerr County. George and Dorothy were interred Leek Cemetery, Okemos.

The Kerrville Times, Sep 16, 1999



GRIMES
Funeral Chapels

GEORGE L. WILKINS
 Interment in Mason
KERRVILLE - Mr. George L. Wilkins, 95, of Kerrville, passed away Tuesday, Sept. 14, 1999, at a Kerrville nursing center. Mr. Wilkins was born May 8, 1904, in Mason, Mich., to Irving Wilkins and Lottie Hewitt Wilkins.

He married Dorothy Watson on Aug. 21, 1926, in Michigan. She preceded him in death on May 25, 1996.

Mr. Wilkins was a retired manager of Consumers Power Company.

Survivors include one daughter, Mrs. Cynthia Youse of Wyomissing, Penn.; one son, Mr. Dave Wilkins of Bridgeport, Conn.; five grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Mr. Wilkins was cremated with interment to follow at Mason, Mich.

Funeral arrangements are under the direction of Grimes Funeral Chapels of Kerrville.

Lansing State Journal, Sep 29, 1938

Kelley-Wilkins Nuptials Marked

Special to The State Journal:
 OKEMOS, Sept. 29 — An autumn wedding of interest to Okemos people was that Saturday evening, September 24, of Miss Ethel Kelley and Rex Wilkins, both well-known young people of Okemos.

The marriage took place at the home of Mrs. Ida Kelley with the Rev. M. E. Hoyt reading the vows. Miss Theima Whiting and Richard Wever attended the bridal couple.

Both are graduates of the Okemos high school, the bride the graduate of a Lansing business school and employed in Lansing, and the bridegroom a graduate of Michigan State college, in forestry work, in which activity he is now engaged.

Rex Owen Wilkins was born 23 August 1913. He graduated from Okemos High School in 1931 and went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in forestry from Michigan State College.

Lansing State Journal, Sep 17, 1946

TREE TRIMMERS — For utility line clearance work. Permanent year around employment. Must be 18 to 30 years of age. Michigan Shade Tree Co. Call or see our local foreman, Rex Wilkins, 4708 N. Okemos Rd., Okemos, after 6 p. m. Phone 87693.

He married **Ethel May Kelley** 24 September 1938, Ingham County. Ethel was a 1933 graduate of Okemos High and furthered her education with a graduation from Acme Business College, Lansing.

Lansing State Journal, Jun 11, 1957

Okemos
 (Special to The State Journal)
 OKEMOS, June 11 — Robert Darragh and Rex Wilkins were elected to the Okemos school board Monday.
 Maurice Beck was the unsuccessful candidate.
 Wilkins was an incumbent.
 Maynard Eberly did not seek reelection.

Board of Education

1956 Tomahawk



C. A. Gunn, Trustee; John Whitmyer, Treasurer; Herman Jason, President; Rex Wilkins, Secretary. Not pictured: Maynard Eberly, Trustee.

The Board of Education is a group of men who have dedicated hours of work to the education of the community's youth. It is their planning which gives us the necessary improvements in our schools, the new buildings as they are needed, and an administration and faculty to carry out the philosophy of the Okemos school.

These men play an important role by giving generously of their time throughout the year to carry out plans for our benefit and to help us attain our ideals.

Rex, during the 1950's, was a member of the Okemos School board and later president of

the board.

He was active in many Meridian Township activities over the years including with the Okemos Community Church as the 1956 Building Committee Chairman when the new church's sanctuary and social hall was erected.

Rex and Ethel had 3 children, **Kim, Mary and Keith**, all who graduated from Okemos.

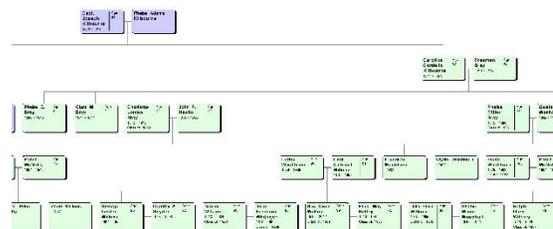
Lansing State Journal, Oct 1, 1991

Cheboygan

Age 75, died Sunday, September 29, 1991 in Petoskey. She was born January 5, 1916 in Farwell; attended Okemos schools, graduating in 1933, and Acme Business College in Lansing. She lived in Okemos most of her life, residing a few years in Grand Rapids prior to moving to Cheboygan in 1978. She was married for 53 years to Rex O. Wilkins. She was loved and admired by her husband, family and friends for her love of people and her uplifting attitude toward life. She is survived by

Wilkins and wife Mary Jean; grandchildren, Kelley and James; son, Keith Wilkins and wife Ingrid; grandchildren, Stephanie and Natalie; daughter, Mary Clausen; grandchildren, Gregg and Eric; 1 sister, Margaret Eno; several nieces and nephews. Memorial services will be held 11 a.m. Thursday, October 3, at the Okemos Community Church with Rev. David Evans officiating. The family asks that those wishing to give memorials remember the American Cancer Society or the Okemos Community Church.

Ethel, born 5 January 1916, passed away 29 September 1991, right after their 53rd wedding anniversary. Rex died 11 November 2012, age 99. Rex and Ethel were interred Leek Cemetery, Okemos.



Dale Elwin Wilkins was born 18 April 1915 and graduated from Okemos High School in 1935. Dale was still working on the family centennial farm when he married Miss Gladys Marie Woodhull, 2 March 1940.

Lansing State Journal, Mar 7, 1940

Shaftsburg Girl Weds Mason Man

Miss Gladys Marie Woodhull, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dan Woodhull of Shaftsburg, became the bride of Dale E. Wilkins, son of Mr. and Mrs. Orvin A. Wilkins of Mason, Saturday evening at services performed at the home of her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Floyd F. Curtis on North Capitol avenue.

The Rev. Mr. Myron E. Hoyt of Okemos Methodist church read the service before members of the immediate families and a few close friends.

The bride chose a floor-length gown of light blue crepe for her wedding, and she carried a bouquet of blue iris and pink sweet peas. Miss Esther Whitmyer of Okemos, her only attendant, wore aqua blue, and her bouquet was of spring flowers in shades of yellow. Wesley C. Woodhull, brother of the bride, acted as groomsman.

Mixed spring flowers and palms decorated the living room and dining room of the Curtis home, and refreshments were served at tables in the dining room. After a short wedding trip, the bride and groom will make their home near Mason.

Gladys, born 25 June 1916, would have 3 children, Leota, Daniel and Michael, and celebrate 55 years of marriage with Dale before she died 11 March 1995. Dale retired in 1978 from employment with Michigan State University and would pass away soon after Gladys, 4 December 1995. Dale and Gladys were interred East Lawn Memory Gardens, Okemos.

Lansing State Journal, Oct 17, 1939

Announce Marriage Of Okemos Couple

(Special to The State Journal)

OKEMOS, Oct. 17 — A wedding, lovely in its simplicity of appointments, occurred at the Community church Saturday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock when Miss Laura Maybeth Cook became the bride of Ralph Glenn Wilkins with the Rev. M. E. Hoyt reading the vows.

Preceding the ceremony Miss Margaret Kelley played a piano prelude, and Mrs. Genevieve Van Eppe sang "O, Promise Me."

The bridal party was made up of two little three-year-old girls, Nancy Whitmeyer dressed in blue and Christene Holly dressed in pink, preceding the bride who came in on the arm of her father Martin Cook. Her sister, Miss Pearl Cook, gowned in yellow, was her bridesmaid while Dale Wilkins, brother of the bridegroom, was best man. The dainty pastel colors of the attendants' dresses set off the white gown and veil of the bride as the party stood before the church altar.

After the ceremony the guests retired to the church parlors where at daintily decorated tables a lunch was served to 62 guests from central Michigan.

Mrs. Wilkins is the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Cook, near Shaftsburg, and she has been a student at the Haslett schools. She chose her 18th birthday as her wedding day, October 14.

Mr. Wilkins is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Wilkins, south of Okemos, and is a graduate of the Okemos school. As an employe in electrical work for the Consumers Power company, he is stationed at Grand Ledge, where for the present the young couple will live.

Youngest child, **Ralph Glen Wilkins**, was born 12 July 1918 and graduated in 1937 from Okemos High School. Ralph married 18-year-old Laura Maybelle Cook on her birthday, 14 October 1939, Okemos. Ralph joined the US Navy during World War II. He was listed as Ingham County draft registrant number 3384 in the Lansing State Journal newspaper dated 31 October 1940.

Lansing State Journal, Oct 23, 1955

Ralph and Laura were very involved with the Eastern Star organization. Ralph was also engaged with the Masonic Lodge and American Legion. Ralph, an electrician, and Laura had 3 children, Diane, Walter and Gary (1944-2003), during their 56 years of marriage.



MRS. LAURA WILKINS
Worthy Matron



RALPH G. WILKINS
Worthy Patron

Laura died 4 July 1996, Michigan. Ralph passed away soon after Laura, 22 July 1996. Their ashes were placed at Hi Jolly Cemetery, Quartzsite, La Pas County, Arizona.

Lansing State Journal, Jul 6, 1996

WILKINS, LAURA MAYBELLE

Morrice

Age 74, died Thursday, July 4th at home. Born in Barryton, MI on October 14, 1921, the child of Martin and Pauline (Sandusky) Cook. Laura attended Haslett schools and resided in the Haslett area most of her life. She was married to Ralph Wilkins on October 14, 1939 at the Okemos Community Church. She was affiliated with the Shaftsbury United Methodist Church and active in PTA; Past Matron of Okemos Eastern Star; member of the Methodist Women's Society; taught Sunday school and sang in the choir. She was a homemaker who also enjoyed rock collecting, cooking and sewing. Survived by her husband; 3 children, Diane (David) Colister of Morrice, Walter (Kit) of Haslett and Gary of Lansing; 9 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; 2 sisters, Pearl (Don) Lewis of Indian Lake and Pauline (Bill) Coffey of Florida; also many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by 2 brothers, Sherwood and Martin "Mike" Cook and 1 sister, Margaret Totten. Memorial services will be held at **Okemos Masonic Temple - 2175 Hamilton Rd., Okemos on Thursday, July 11, at 5 p.m.** Pastor Carrol Fowler officiating. There will be no visitation. Memorials may be made to the Hospice or United Methodist Church of Shaftsbury. Arrangements by the Nelson House Funeral Homes, Perry.

Lansing State Journal, Jul 27, 1996

WILKINS, RALPH GLEN

Morrice

Age 78, died Monday, July 22, 1996 at his home. He was born in Mason, MI on July 12, 1918 the son of Irvin A. and Lottie (Bray) Wilkins. He graduated from Okemos High School and had spent most of his life in Haslett and Arizona. He married Laura M. Cook at the Okemos Community Church on October 14, 1939 and she predeceased him on July 4, 1996. He was a member of the Shaftsbury United Methodist Church, active in many church activities including Sunday School Teacher and choir member. He was a past patron of Okemos Eastern Star Lodge and past Master of Masonic Lodge, member of the American Legion, Lansing Chapter of the SPEBSOSA, member and past President of the QIA. Mr. Wilkins also enjoyed working on silver jewelry and rock collecting. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and was an electrician and member of I.B.E.W. for 57 years. He is survived by 3 children, Diane (David) Colister of Morrice, Walter (Kit) of Haslett and Gary of Lansing; 9 grandchildren; 13 great grandchildren; 1 sister, Naomi (John) Whitmyer; and 2 brothers, Lester and Rex Wilkins. Preceded in death by his wife and 1 brother, Dale. Funeral services will be held **5 p.m. Monday, July 29, 1996 at the Okemos Masonic Temple, 2175 Hamilton Rd., Okemos** with Pastor Carroll Fowler officiating. There will be no visitation. Memorials may be made to Hospice of Owosso, Shaftsbury United Methodist Church and/or the Masonic Temple. Arrangements by the Nelson-House Funeral Home, Perry.

Naomi, born 22 December 1910, was the only Wilkins daughter. She graduated from Okemos High School in 1928 and married fellow class of '28 Okemos graduate **John Freeman Whitmyer** 29 March 1932, Ingham County.

1928 was the first year that Okemos published a yearbook. Click the school picture below to look at Naomi Wilkins yearbook "*The Tomahawk* Volume I Okemos Consolidated School 1928"



Lansing State Journal, Mar 30, 1932

Announce Marriage

Mr. and Mrs. I. A. Wilkins announce the marriage of their daughter, Naomi, to John F. Whitmyer, son of Mr. and Mrs. F. F. Whitmyer of Okemos. The ceremony took place at the home of the bride's parents, March 19.

John, born 9 August 1910, began management of the Okemos Elevator on Okemos Road, next to the railroad track, in 1939, later becoming sole owner.

After a devastating 1947 fire, John rebuilt the elevator, operating it until it's closing in 1965.

Lansing State Journal, Mar 8, 1942

THE recreation park at Okemos is built on a picturesque spot on the Red Cedar, on the south edge of the village. It is known as Ferguson park, in honor of the late John R. Ferguson, a former township supervisor who lost his life by drowning when a boat in which he was riding capsized on Lake Superior some years ago. The park proves to be a popular place in summer. It is equipped with picnic tables, and facilities for outdoor cooking. Clear, cold water is available from a flowing pipe. It is maintained by the county highway commission.

The Okemos Men's club, a luncheon group, meets once each month and provides a social outlet, as well as an important organization for carrying on the village community activities. Walter Southworth is president of the club and LeRoy Bell is secretary.

The Wonch Battery company, manufacturer of storage batteries is owned by Leslie G. Wonch of Lansing and has E. K. Kiger of Okemos as plant manager. The Okemos Elevator company is managed by John Whitmyer.

Unincorporated, Okemos is governed by the Meridian township officers, John Green, Haslett, supervisor, and C. B. Robinson as clerk, William Donley, treasurer.

Rev. Harold Jayne is pastor of the Methodist church and Rev. F. L. Curry is pastor of the Baptist church.

Mildred Schoch Hagberg, whose Studio House at Okemos is a mecca for hundreds interested in weaving and metal work, has developed a little institution that is unique in this section. An old barn has been transformed into an artistic studio home, where Mrs. Hagberg produces masterpieces of copper, pewter, silver and brass objects of great workmanship. She also excels in weaving and pottery making.

Okemos has two physicians, Dr. Roy O. Webb and Dr. D. W. Roberts.

Lansing State Journal, Oct 17, 1947

Okemos Elevator Granted \$18,000

Damages Assessed Against Consumers Power

A circuit court jury Thursday afternoon assessed \$18,000 damages against the Consumers Power company, in favor of the Okemos Elevator company, whose building was destroyed by fire last March because of a defective high voltage wire of the power firm.

Less than two hours of deliberation was taken by the jury before returning its verdict in favor of the elevator company.

The firm had charged Consumers Power with negligence in failing to repair a broken power line carrying 4,400 volts of electricity, that fell on two primary wires leading to the elevator causing the fire.

Consumers were accused of failing to send a repair crew to the elevator after having been informed of the break in the power line. The power firm conceded from the outset of the trial that the broken wire had caused the fire but denied negligence for the break.

The elevator, located south of Okemos near the New York Central railroad tracks, was completely demolished by fire on the afternoon of March 25. The building and equipment was valued at \$21,000 and its inventory comprising seed and feed which was also lost in the fire, was valued at \$12,000. John Whitmyer is manager of the firm.

Fred C. Newman, Lansing attorney, represented the firm in the suit, while Clayton F. Jennings, another local attorney, was counsel for Consumers Power company.



41485

John and Naomi operated the rebuilt Elevator together until they closed it in 1965. Naomi did all the bookkeeping.



Lansing State Journal, Press Photo's 1947

Okemos Grain Elevator Yields to Urbanization

By WILLIAM J. DUCHAINE
Journal Staff Writer

Urbanization of the one-time rural Okemos area is threatening a familiar landmark from the local scene.

The Okemos Elevator Co. is going out of business. Linn, John F. Whitmyer, owner,

manager, will leave Monday for Caseville, where he will become manager of one of the two dozen elevators in the Wallace & Morley chain.

He's leaving a week before the public auction of fertilizers, feeds and the rest of the inventory to be held on Saturday, July 17.

His son, Jack, 32, will be around, however, to witness the

closing of a business that has been in the Whitmyer family 45 years.

Jack suffered a back injury

at MSU in the fall.

Beginning about 1960, the farm acreage due to the urban sprawl,

the Whitmyers explained, grain crops have been reduced because of government restrictions.

"We don't need grain elevators in subdivisions," Jack quipped.

"Since 1960 we've catered mostly to the suburban trade with lawn fertilizers, insecticides and pet foods, which became more important than the rural trade."

The elevator's grain business was 12,500 bushels.

The decline of the Okemos elevator's grain business was

quite sudden. "We had our top years in 1959 and 1960," said John F. Whitmyer. "We shipped more than 80 carloads of wheat, corn and oats in each of those two years. But in 1963 we shipped only 12 carloads and dropped to 11 last year."

What will be done with the elevator and its adjoining 30-by-60-foot storage building?

The Whitmyers are going to

renting it for storage purposes.

"We'll try this for a year or so and if this doesn't work out we'll probably tear it down," said Jack.

If this happens, the Okemos elevator will go into oblivion like another familiar landmark of this one-time rural community—the C & O Railroad depot.

The 1947 elevator fire scorched the paint on the depot, which was then located just across the tracks.

Several years later, the railroad petitioned to abandon the Okemos station.

"We protested the closing of the depot," said the elder Whitmyer. "But the railroad knew we were really just trying to

keep them about our need for 11 last year."

TO TRY RENTAL

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keep them about our need for 11 last year."

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Vacation Safety Tips Given

Systematic Travel Plan Recommended By MSU Authority

Family vacation travels need a systematic safety program, advises Louis F. Twardzik, park and recreation specialist at Michigan State University.

Safety devices on cars and roads can be meaningless if parents don't plan for a safe trip, he declared, especially if children are along.

And, by making safety a part of family participation and fun, he adds, a safety program need not detract from travel pleasure.

Twardzik makes these suggestions:

—While traveling, one member of the family should be assigned to keep the driver "company," so he won't doze.

—The "buddy system" of water safety fame should apply to families when visiting strange places. Members of the family should pair off and be responsible for each other's whereabouts. This system works as well in crowded city parks as it does in wilderness areas.

—Assign a member of the



Eight Hurt In Lansing Accidents

Eight persons were injured in Lansing traffic accidents late Thursday.

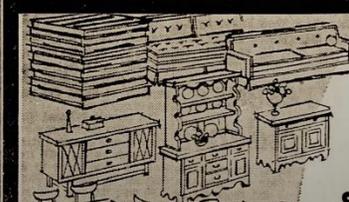
Paul A. Woodford, 19, of 1610 Downey St., was taken to St. Lawrence Hospital Thursday night with a possible fractured left foot, head cuts and bruises.

He was injured in a car-motorcycle collision at Washington Avenue and Lenawee Street about 10 p.m. Police said he was driving the motorcycle when it collided with a car driven by James K. Hansen, 3420 W. Main St.

Mrs. Joanne Dwyer, 401 Leslie Ave., was treated at Lansing General Hospital Thursday night for neck injuries after a car police said was driven by her husband, Raymond, collided with



A FAREWELL LOOK — John F. Whitmyer, owner-manager of the Okemos Elevator Co., stands in front of the elevator along the C&O railroad tracks. A former Meridian Township treasurer and member of the Okemos Board of Education, Whitmyer will leave Monday to become a manager of the Caseville elevator of the Wallace & Morley Co. The Okemos elevator, which has been in the Whitmyer family 45 years, will go out of business next week. (State Journal Photo)



WORLD WIDE'S
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EAST LANSING STATE BANK
3 Locations to Serve All Your Banking Needs
● OKEMOS ● EAST LANSING ● HASLETT
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Seek Re-election

All incumbents are expected to seek re-election in Meridian township, according to word Friday, with the exception of John Whitmyer, treasurer. He said, however, that his wife would run to succeed him. Other township officers whose terms expire in the suburban district are: C. O. Wilkins, supervisor; C. B. Robinson, clerk; Gaylord Smith and A. W. Dunn, justices of the peace; Percy Aldrich, board of review; Arnold Tomilson, highway commissioner, and Frank Carn, constable. Three other constable posts, now vacant, must also be filled, according to the clerk. All candidates are Republicans.

Lansing State Journal, Jan 5, 1951

John was also very involved in Meridian Township affairs. He was the township treasurer from 1947-1951, passing on the office to wife Naomi in 1951.

Lansing State Journal, Apr 7, 1953

Naomi was the first woman to be elected 1953 (Republican ticket) and hold the position of township treasurer in the history of Meridian township. She would repeat in 1955.

Incumbent township treasurer, Mrs. Naomi Whitmyer, of Okemos, was named to her third term by defeating Mrs. Esther M. Marshall by 1,536 votes to 999.

Lansing State Journal, Apr 5, 1955

Meridian

Republicans walked off with most of the honors in Meridian township, winning the supervisor, clerk, treasurer and four trustee positions on the township board. Supr. C. O. Wilkins won over E. B. Waite, his Democratic opponent, 1,152 to 711, losing in only one precinct, No. 3. Clerk C. B. Robinson won over Esther Marshall, a Democrat, 1,173 to 678 while Mrs. Naomi Whitmyer, G. O. P. treasurer, defeated Ermen L. Good, Democrat, 1,117 to 737. All returns are unofficial.

1955 OHS Tomahawk

OUR SCHOOL BOARD



John Whitmyer, Treasurer; Walter Sheldon, Secretary; Maynard Eberly, President; H. M. Jason, Trustee; Rex Wilkins, Trustee

1954 OHS Tomahawk



JOHN WHITMYER
Treasurer

For several years, 1951-1956, John was on the Okemos Board of Education and was their elected treasurer.

Lansing State Journal, Aug 29, 2004

**Whitmyer, Naomi W.
Okemos and Williamston, MI**



Age 93, died August 23, 2004. Born December 22, 1910 in Alaedon Township, MI. Mrs. Whitmyer was the first female elected officer, Treasurer, of Meridian Township, 1951-1955.

She volunteered for Ingham Medical Extended Care Facility and Sparrow Hospital through her sewing and knitting skills. She was preceded in death by her husband of 67 years, John F.; daughter, Nancy C. Bengston; grandson, Jeffrey D. Whitmyer and great-great-granddaughter, Jaden Knechtges. Surviving are 3 sons, John I. (Jack) of Lake (formerly of Okemos), Donald of Southfield and Kenneth G. (Karen) of Haslett; 11 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; 3 great-great grandchildren; 1 brother, Rex O. Wilkins of Topinabee. **A memorial service will be held Saturday, September 18, 11:00 a.m. at the Williamston United Methodist Church, 211 S. Putnam, Williamston** with the Rev. Dean N. Prentiss, Pastor, officiating. The family will receive friends at the Church 1 hour prior to the service. In lieu of flowers, those desiring may make contributions to the WSF/Senior Benefit Fund, c/o Williamston Area Sr. Center, 201 School St., Williamston, MI 48895 or Marsh Pointe Senior Apartments, 5895 Marsh Road, Haslett, MI 48840 in memory of Mrs. Whitmyer. The family is being served by the Gorsline-Runciman Co. Williamston Chapel.

Lansing State Journal, May 2, 1990

And, another golden anniversary

It seems that 50th anniversary celebrations are rather commonplace in the **Irvin and Lottie Wilkins** family.

Irvin and Lottie celebrated their 55th anniversary before Irvin's death in 1958. And their children are following suit.

George and Dorothy Wilkins of Texas marked their 50th in 1976; **John and Naomi Whitmyer** of Williamston in 1982; **Rex and Ethel Wilkins** of Cheboygan in 1988; and **Ralph and Laura Wilkins** of Arizona in 1989.

Sunday, **Dale and Gladys Wilkins** of Williamston will celebrate their 50th with a family dinner at McNeil's Country House. Dale is the last of the five Wilkins children to achieve this milestone.

Lansing State Journal, Mar 16, 1997



The Whitmyers

John and Naomi Whitmyer of Williamston will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary with a family dinner 1 p.m. Saturday at Brookshire Inn, Williamston.

He retired from D.R. Briggs & Associates in 1974. She is a former Meridian Township treasurer.

The couple, married March 19, 1932, have four children, 11 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The Whitmyer's raised 4 children, **Nancy, John "Jack", Donald and Kenneth**, all Okemos High School graduates, and celebrated 66 years together. John died 17 March 1999 and Naomi passed away 23 August 2004. They were interred Leek Cemetery.

As one can imagine, John and Naomi witnessed a lot of Okemos history. 50 years after Naomi was largely responsible for the first issue of The Tomahawk, Okemos High School published its Golden Anniversary Tomahawk, Volume Fifty. Who better to advise on history than John and Naomi?

Pages from the 1978 Okemos Tomahawk, Vol 50

Our Thanks To:



1928 Graduates

John and Naomi with their grandson, Joe Whitmyer, class of 1978



McDonalds for providing nourishment during those long, late deadlines.

Mr. and Mrs. John Whitmyer, 1928 graduates, who served as historical consultants.

Mr. Roland Gifford and staff of Okemos Studio of Photography for their generosity and unfailing dependability.

Mr. Robert Weir of Taylor Publishing Company for serving as our 1978 guardian angel.

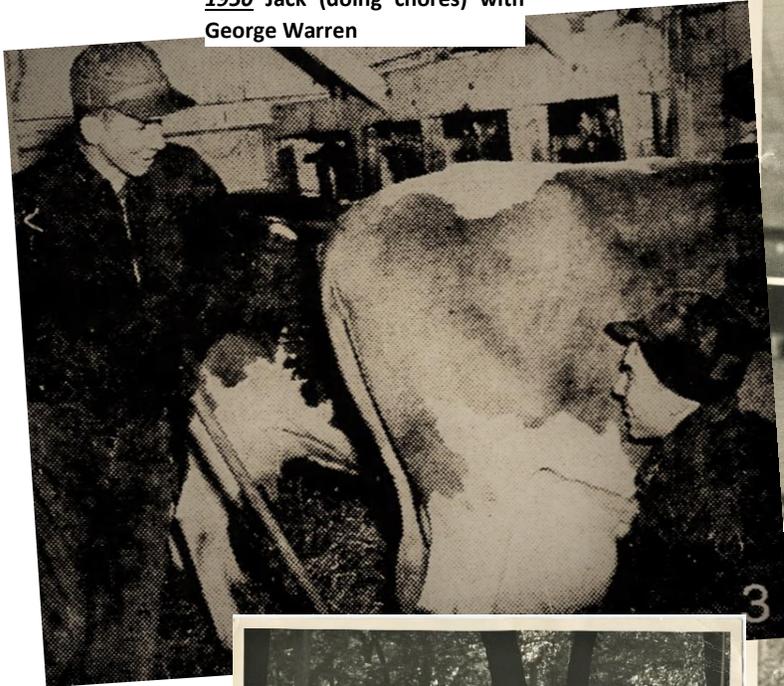
In addition, our appreciation goes to the administration, secretaries Rene Pamerleau and Delores Zimmer, and all faculty and students who contributed to this year's Pure Gold Edition.

Another well-known local family member was **John "Jack" Irvin Whitmyer**, who graduated from Okemos High in 1951. Jack was one of four Whitmyer children. His brother, Donald, graduated in 1953 while Nancy Carolyn (1936-2002) graduated in 1954 and Kenneth Gordon in 1962.

Jack with "Daughter of Empress" 1946



Lansing State Journal, Dec 24, 1950 Jack (doing chores) with George Warren



Jack with champion "Annie" 1946

Jack Whitmyer (Okemos Camelback Bridge painting over his shoulder) Apr 2019





ola Whitmyer

November, 1973

is married and is veteran of both World War II and the Korean War and has been active in Community Chest campaigns.

JOHN I. WHITMYER, 37, of 2371 Hulett, Okemos, has been township clerk for three and one-half years and is also a member of the Meridian Charter Commission, which wrote the proposed city charter.



Jack married, in November 1955, another Okemos alumni, **Beverly Kathryn Bell**, class of 1954. Beverly became Postmaster of Haslett in 1979. She had a long career with the US Postal Service. Jack was elected Meridian Township Clerk 1966-1976 and was deeply involved with township growth and expansion. He also served on the Meridian Charter Commission. In 1972, Jack challenged a 48-year incumbent for the Republican nomination for County Clerk. Jack won both the nomination and the fall election for Ingham County Clerk.

Beverly, after 44 years of marriage and 3 sons, passed away 5 October 2000 in Arizona. She was interred at Wilcox Cemetery, Barry County, Michigan. All three sons, John, Jeffrey (1963-1989) and Joseph, are alumni of Okemos High.

Courthouse legend

Clerk had opponentss, not enemies

By HUGH LEACH
Staff Writer

Staff writer Hugh Leach has been covering the Ingham County area since 1969 and was a close friend of C. Ross Hilliard, former Ingham County clerk.

held a note of humor, but it also contained many words of wisdom.

It was ironic that a man born into a staunch Democratic family in Delhi Township in 1894 would become known as "Mr. Republican" in Ingham County.

But it was typical of C. Ross Hilliard. Once he made up his mind what he wanted to do or what he believed in, he would stick to it.

ONE OF the hardest stories I have ever had to write was the one that told of Hilliard's first and only election defeat in nearly half a century. It happened on Aug. 8, 1972. It was C. Ross Hilliard's 78th birthday. It was a primary election night and Hilliard was being challenged for the Republican nomination by John Whitmyer, who was not even born until Hilliard had served 10 years as county clerk.

Ross Hilliard... capabilities more than made up for physical shortcomings. His eyes, magnified by thick-lensed glasses, were sharp and piercing.

THE GRAVELLY voice usually

To C. Ross Hilliard, serving the people of Ingham County was more than just a job he did and did well. For 48 years it was almost his whole life.

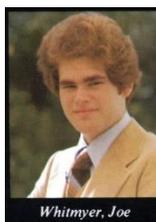


Whitmyer, John

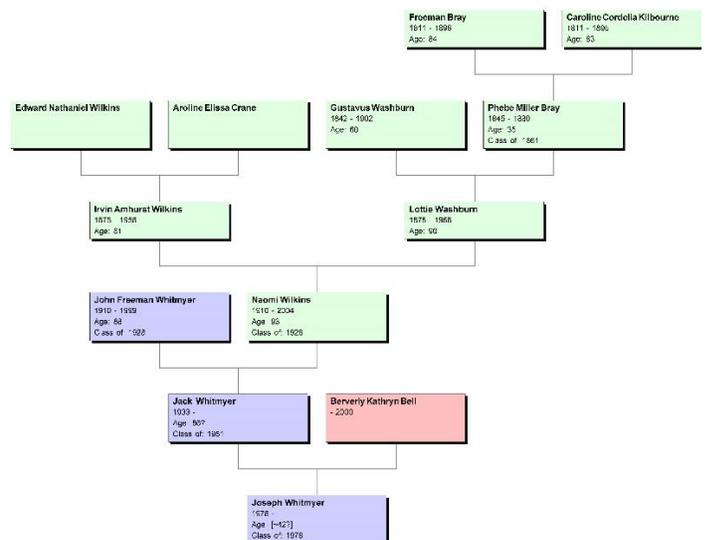
Class of 1977



Jeffery Dee Whitmyer,
Class of 1982

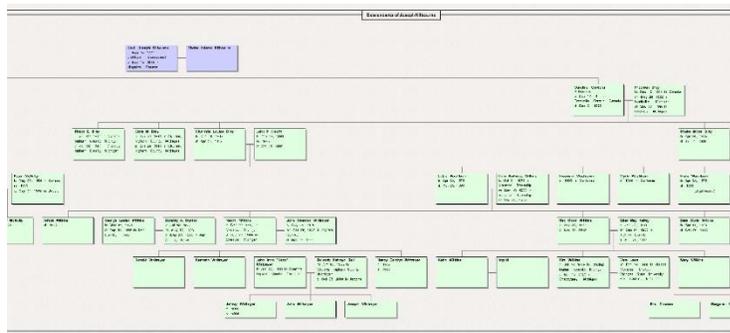


Class of 1978





On April 14, 2019, Rod Ellis and Bill Breckenfeld met with Jack Whitmyer in Mason prior to his move to Arizona. That is when Jack showed us his family connection to the Pioneers of Okemos.



Multiple generations since the Bray's and Kilbourne's homesteaded near the banks of the Red Cedar have come, gone, lived and toiled in and around Okemos. Surnames have died out but remnants of the basic root stock from the 1830's and 40's has continued to grow. Wars, depressions, prosperity and modernization has impacted each generation from the 19th century into the 21st century. What was an Indian respite with a few settlers hacking out a meager living has now become a growing, thriving bedroom community with thousands of homes and a massive educational university looming nearby? But the aged Red Cedar River continues to flow along the banks of Meridian township and the old Indian name of Okemos is still spoken. And the old families continue on.

There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of human, are created, strengthened and maintained.

– **Winston Churchill**

Sherrie Paty Barber

April 10, 2020



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OKEMOS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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