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

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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.

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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.

![Closeup of the 1840 US Census](image)

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.

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 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).”

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).
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 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 lead to building a sawmill, a cabinet shop and in 1859, the Walker Flour Mill.

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.
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 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).

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

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

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

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.

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


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 descendant 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.

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 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.

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.
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.

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

Lottie passed away 26 October 1968. Irvin and Lottie were interred Leek Cemetery, Okemos.
George Lester, the oldest Wilkins child, born 8 May 1904, graduated from Mason High School, Mason, Ingham County in 1919.

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.
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.

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.

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.

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.

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 Maybelle Cook became the bride of Ralph Glenn Wilkins with the Rev. M. E. Hoyt reading the vows.

The bride and groom were married by a special appointment between two young people who met when young. The wedding was held at the church, where the ceremony was performed in a simple, romantic manner.

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.


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.

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.

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.
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.
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”

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

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.

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

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 then John and Naomi?
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 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.
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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