

Mary J. Bray was the granddaughter of Freeman Bray who settled in Okemos, in 1839. Freeman was the first to plat the area in 1841 and named it "Hamilton". By 1859, settlers renamed the area "Okemos" to honor the local band of Chippewa Chief O-Ge-mah. Mary, daughter of Mahlon Augustus (1851-1916) and Jennie May (Dieckman) (1862-1930) Bray, was born 8 November 1886 in Okemos, Meridian Township, Ingham County. The Bray's owned and



operated a working farm and Mary, like her siblings, Caroline Belle, Nellie and Charles Henry, helped with chores and where a hand was needed on the farm. She attended Okemos school through the 8th grade in 1899 and then probably went to Lansing Central High School where she graduated about 1902-1903. The highest-grade level at Okemos in 1899 was 8th grade. Mary went on to further her education at Michigan Agricultural College (now Michigan State University), receiving a teaching certificate in 1905.

Mary applied and was accepted as a teacher East Lansing, later Dansville and then in 1909 was employed by the Grand Ledge school district. Her reason for applying to Grand Ledge was two-fold; good salary and good train service. Mary was paid \$450.00 for the school term and could come home to Okemos via train on weekends.

[*Lansing State Journal, September 6, 1912*](#)

Miss Mary Bray went to Grand Ledge Monday, where she took up her duties as teacher. Miss Caroline Bray returned to her position in Larch st school in Lansing. Miss

As a single teacher Mary taught from 1906 until 1910 when she married, in her parent's Meridian Township home, Robert Adam Hammond on 11 November 1914. Robert, born 20 March 1889, was a farmer. The couple settled into farm life and soon welcomed a son, Mahlon, 12 June 1917.

[*Lansing State Journal, June 15, 1917*](#)

A son, Mahlon Bray, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hammond of East Lansing, June 12.

Lansing State Journal, December 6, 1917

SEEK MOTHER OF MAN KILLED IN AUTO WRECK

Efforts to notify the mother of Frank Champe, one of the two men killed Wednesday at Trowbridge crossing, just south of the college when the automobile in which they were riding was hit by a west bound Grand Trunk passenger train, have so far been unavailing. Mrs. Champe is in the south spending the winter with relatives.

The other body has been identified as that of Robert Hammond, a farmer whose home was just across the road from the Champe farm. Hammond leaves a wife and six-month-old baby.

The two men were returning from a trip south of East Lansing where they had arranged to have some beans threshed. It is thought that the slope of the road, where it meets the crossing, and the frozen surface prevented the brakes from holding the car from the railroad tracks.

Robert was killed in an accident 11 November 1917. Robert was riding with fellow farmer and friend, Frank Champe, when their vehicle was hit by a Grand Trunk railroad train. Both men were killed. Mary, left with a 6-month-old son, soon returned to the classroom and resumed her teaching career. She would go on and teach for 43 years in the Grand Ledge school system.

Robert and Mary's son had a distinguished military career. Mahlon graduated from Grand Ledge high school and furthered his education

with a 1939 graduation from Michigan State College. He entered the United States Army Air Corps (later the United States Air Force) in 1941 and served in World War II, the Korean Conflict and Vietnam. He retired with the rank of Colonel. Mahlon died 18 March 2009.

Lansing State Journal, April 25, 1956

Mary retired from the Grand Ledge school system in 1956. She remained very active in her home, keeping up with most the her nearly 2,000 students that she had taught throughout the years.



AN APPLE FOR THE TEACHER — Mrs. Mary Bray Hammond, who will retire in June after nearly a half century of teaching, mostly in Grand

Ledge, receives "an apple for the teacher" from Romaine Martin and Diane Phillips, two of her third grade students at the Neff school, (Journal photo)

Seven Arreste
For Beer in

Mary died 5 March 1968 and was laid to rest by Robert in Glendale Cemetery, Okemos.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Wednesday 6 March 1968

RETIRED EDUCATOR SUCCUMBS

Grand Ledge - Mrs. Mary Bray Hammond, 83, of 728 Jenne Street, Grand Ledge, died in a Lansing hospital Tuesday afternoon.

Lansing State Journal, April 25, 1956

Mrs. Hammond retired from teaching in 1956 after

having taught since the spring of 1906, beginning at Marble School, East Lansing. In the fall of that year she went to Dansville school for three years, then to Grand Ledge in 1909.

She made a hobby of keeping in touch with the almost 2,000 pupils she taught.

Okemos was her birthplace and she was with the 1905 class at Michigan Agriculture College. In a short history she wrote of her teaching years, Mrs. Hammond said she applied to teach in the Grand Ledge school system, because there was good train service between there, and her home and she could go home weekends. She also recorded that her beginning salary in Grand Ledge was \$450 for the school term of nine and a half months. She began teaching here in the Greenwood Elementary school and later served as principal.

Teacher, About to Retire, Has Record of All Pupils

By KENNETH HARKNESS
(Journal Staff Writer)

GRAND LEDGE, April 25—An old school notebook, a bit frayed around the edges from use, and containing a list of about 1,200 names, will provide many fond memories for a retiring Grand Ledge school teacher.

The notebook represents a list of all the students ever taught by Mrs. Mary Bray Hammond during nearly a half century of teaching.

Mrs. Hammond has been a teacher in the Grand Ledge system for 43 years. Now a third grade teacher at the Neff school, she will retire in June.

It is said that Mrs. Hammond has become such a tradition in the school system here that parents have requested their children be taught by the same teacher that taught them.

STARTED 50 YEARS AGO

She began teaching just 50 years ago at the one-room Marble school east of East Lansing. At that time the school had nine pupils. She taught there only three months at a salary of \$25 a month.

She then taught at Dansville for three years and came here in the fall of 1909, for the "huge" salary of \$47.36 a month.

"That was quite a lot of money for those days, though," she says.

She recalls that when she came to the Grand Ledge system, she was the only teacher with a degree. It was obtained from the Michigan Agricultural college, now Michigan State university.

"A degree was quite unusual at that time, even for high school teachers," she points out.

There was a lapse in her teaching career when, after five years in the Grand Ledge school system, she married and became a

farmer's wife, but when her husband was killed by a train after four years of happy married life, she returned to teaching.

TO HELP OTHERS

She has one son, Mahlon, a colonel in the air force in Hawaii.

She recalls that in those days there were no married teachers, and so she was called the "teacher with the baby."

In 43 years of teaching here, she has worked for only three superintendents — F. J. Hendershot for one year; Jonas Sawdon for 32 years and Kenneth Beagle for 10 years.

She plans after retirement to enjoy her home on Jenne st.; reading a lot, possibly traveling a bit, and "do many things to make other people happy."

Ex-Kalamazoo Resident Dies

(Special to The State Journal)

GRAND LEDGE, April 25 — Aldo G. Wilcox, 94, a former Kalamazoo restaurant operator, died Tuesday at the home of his daughter here, Mrs. Martha Ayers.

Born Jan. 31, 1862, in New York state, he had resided in Grand Ledge only seven years.

In addition to Mrs. Ayers, he is survived by two other daughters, Mrs. Irene Leonard and Mrs. Ines Spillman of Kalamazoo, and 23 grandchildren.

Private services will be held Friday at 1 p. m. at the Teman funeral home, Rev. Carl Hart of Grand Ledge Baptist church officiating. Burial will be in Prospect Hill cemetery, Paw Paw.

Ionia to Honor

Active in civic work, Order of the Eastern Star and as a member of Grand Ledge First Methodist Church, she was a recipient of a Michigan week award for outstanding citizenship and excellence of civic service in 1965.

Lansing State Journal, November 10, 1963

Mrs. Hammond's son Mahlon, of Chatsworth, Calif., retired two years ago with the rank of Colonel in the U.S. Air Force, and has been with Lockheed Aircraft Co. of California since.

The body is at the Peters and Murray Funeral Home, Grand Ledge. Funeral arrangements are incomplete.



GRAND LEDGE—Hardanger Norwegian embroidery has been one of Mrs. Mary Bray Hammond's hobbies for nearly 60 years. Here Mrs. Hammond is pictured with some examples of this fine embroidery and with Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls which she makes for Christmas giving.