

Mary Bess Wilson was called "Bessie" or "Bess" by her friends. She was the only girl in a family with 7 boys; Charles

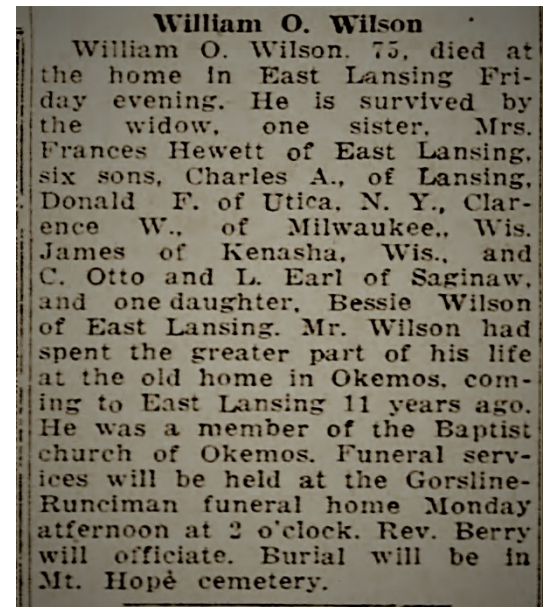
Adelbert., Donald F., Ila C., Clarence William, James T., Clifton Otto, Lester Earl. Bessie, daughter of William Osborne (1850-1925) and Elsie J. (Fulton) (1853-1941) Wilson, was born 17 January 1882, Alaiedon Township, Ingham County. Her parents were married in 1875 and were among the first congregants in the 1st Baptist Church of Okemos. Mrs. Wilson, born Alaiedon Township, was a lifelong resident of Ingham County.

Bessie completed the 8 grades at Okemos School and then transferred to East Lansing High School where she graduated with the Class of 1900. The highest-grade level at Okemos in this particular year was 8th grade and was considered graduation. Because of her January 17 birthday, we believe she started 1st grade in 1887. Thus, Bessie Wilson graduated at age 14 and is in the Okemos Class of 1896. Bessie stayed close with her Okemos classmates. [One such gathering was featured in the *Lansing State Journal*, June 7, 1951. <click this area to read "The Circle of Friends">](#)

The same year she graduated from East Lansing saw great loss in the Wilson family. Bess' brother Ila, born 24 January 1881, was stricken and died 14 October of typhoid fever.

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

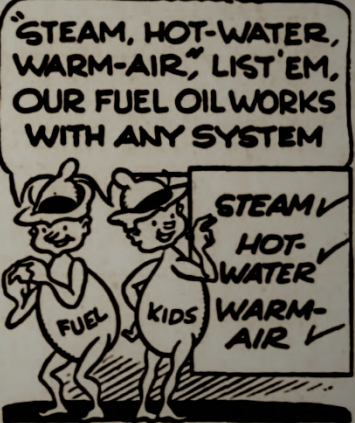
Lansing State Journal, October 24, 1925



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

In 1951 Bess, the full owner of the Durand Street house, sold the two-story

Lansing State Journal, June 3, 1951

<h2>Insurance Agency</h2> <p>Plans for the erection of an office building at E. Grand River ave. and Durand st., East Lansing, were revealed last week by the Porter Realty company.</p> <p>It was disclosed that the Merten Insurance agency has purchased the property at 935 E. Grand River ave., which formerly belonged to Miss Mary Bess Wilson of East Lansing, in whose family the property has been held for about 100 years. Mrs. Ella F. Merten, head of the agency, indicated plans for a new modern brick building on the site to house the insurance offices and provide other office space for rent as well. A two-story frame house now stands on the property.</p> <p>The land has a frontage of 66 feet on Grand River ave., and extends along Durand st. for 165 feet to an alley. The Merten agency also owns a nearby lot, to be used for off-street parking.</p> <p>Central Trust company acted for Miss Wilson, and William J. Por-</p>	<h2>Buys Office Site</h2> <p>ter, Jr., represented the Merten agency.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"><h3>MORDENS <i>fuel</i> KIDS</h3><p>"STEAM, HOT-WATER, WARM-AIR, LIST 'EM, OUR FUEL OIL WORKS WITH ANY SYSTEM"</p><p>You get full value out of every drop, when</p></div>
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dwelling and property to Merten Insurance Agency. It may have been at this time Bess moved to Grand Rapids, Kent County. Her residence was listed as Grand Rapids in her brother Clarence's 1957 obituary. Bess died 3 January 1968, Grand Rapids and was interred with parents Mt. Hope Cemetery, Lansing.

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

MARY B. WILSON

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

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

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

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

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