



### **2017 – A 50 Year Anniversary Message about Mrs. Emma L Wilson King**

For a mother, observances and celebrations are often festive occasions. It is these special events; a mother takes time to prep and prepare for the day at hand. The year 2017 marks many occasions. It's the 500th anniversary of the reformation movement. Closer to home it's the 100th anniversary of the East St. Louis Race Riots explored further in this brochure. It also marks the 50th anniversary of two special periods for Mrs. Emma L Wilson King.

Over the past few years we have explored some of the more challenging phases of Mrs. King's life. The spring and summer of 1967 were indeed a stretch of wonderful joy and excitement for Mrs. King.

By 1967 four of her children had graduated from Washington Elementary, Hughes-Quinn Junior High and Lincoln Senior High Schools. In April she would give birth to a healthy baby girl, her twelfth and final child.

As preparations were being made for the newborn, Mrs. King was making arrangements to spruce up the old homestead. She was always particular about ensuring a comfortable and clean home. She had years of experience with readying the place for the earlier broods but for her last child, this was a special birth.

A new French provincial bedroom suite was purchased along with a "Warm Morning" gas radiant heater for her bedroom. Mrs. King would even arrange for a stylish portrait setting several months before giving birth with her hair soft and gently styled lending a nice balance to the photograph. This child would be doted upon, and for the remaining decades of Mrs. King's life, be always referred to as her "baby." A mother's love endures.

During this same period, Mrs. King was also up and about planning for the first ever large scale wedding for her third child, a daughter. Years later she would remark, "I had never planned for anything like that before." That April immediately following her return home from Christian Welfare Hospital, only three months were left to ensure the old family house was up to standards to receive the large number of guest anticipated at the large church wedding. This would be one of the last weddings at the old Mount Zion Church on Tudor Avenue just two blocks from home.

Fresh new wall paper was ordered and prepared for the rooms at the Colas Avenue dwelling. The four main twelve-by-twelve square foot rooms would all have new linoleum floors installed for the July occasion. The living room walls were adorned with an impressive new window treatment featuring an L-shaped floor-to-ceiling green chenille drapery stretching from wall to wall even though the actual windows were only two small openings at the old shotgun house.

Yes, she was a proud Mom. As a mother, each child was a unique celebration. Even though times may have been tough, she wanted to ensure her children were afforded an opportunity to experience the

best life can offer. The wedding was truly regal as those exiting the church would queue up in their vehicles lead by a white stretch limousine for the parade that would include the new family 1967 first generation canary-yellow Dodge Charger.

1967 was indeed a good year for Mrs. King. As the years would pass, she would see all twelve children matriculate through each of those East St. Louis Public Schools cited above and all go onto University. In her heart, she was always preparing for that next occasion. Her opinion was, if you do not plan for life, then something truly could be lost. Hence, her maintenance of insurance policies on all of her children way into their adulthood.

She would keep numerous photographs of that new born taken at different ages up through the child's maturity. The July 1967 wedding was professionally photographed by one coined with the phrase the "Master of Photography." Over the decades, that same photographer would capture each official King Family portrait until his retirement.

As a mother, Mrs. King saw in her children a wonderful future, when grounded in love knows no boundaries. Herein lies her grit so characteristic of family life in East St. Louis, Illinois.