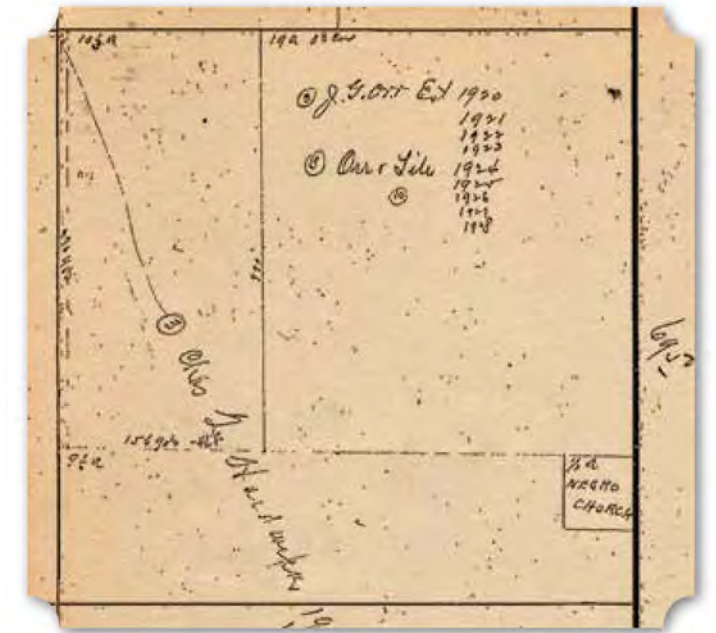




(Left) Post Card of Family on Wilder Place, Circa 1930 (Morgan County Archives, Decatur, Alabama) **(Bottom Left)** Photograph of Lelia Seton Wilder with Brief Biography (Morgan County Archives, Decatur, Alabama) **(Below)** "Wilder Place, Decatur Ala." Label from 1930 Census **(Right)** Plat Map of Mullen Addition of Wilder Place, 1921 (Morgan County Archives, Decatur, Alabama)



African American schools in churches before the county desegregated. The school is only labeled on maps from the 1930s. An aerial view of the location retains evidence of a road and the location of a structure. However, the school and church are gone, surrounded by fields, and taken over by trees.



(Above) Portion of the Morgan County Land Book from 1920-1928 of Township 7 South, Range 5 West, Section 29, Showing the Zion Church and School (Morgan County Archives, Decatur, Alabama) **(Below)** 1936 USGS Topographic Map, Danville Quadrangle



57 ■ Wilder Place

The Wilder Place was an old plantation initially owned by Henry W. Rhodes. Land patents record Rhodes as the original patent holder (no. 4134 and 4135) in mid-1833, of the southeast quarter of Section 21, Township 5 South, Range 4 West – where the Wilder-Edmondson residence was later located.

The plantation became famous once Lelia Seton Edmondson (1861-1949) purchased the property. Known as a local pioneer of Decatur, Edmondson moved to the area as a child. She married Charles Wilder, the owner of the 1,700-acre Wilder Plantation – land he purchased from Rhodes. Unfortunately, Mr. Wilder died soon thereafter and Mrs. Wilder became the lady of the Wilder Place. Although she remarried in 1912, she outlived Col. W.B. Edmondson as well, who died in 1938.

Mrs. Edmondson was keen on politics and economics. She tightly controlled her land and its cotton production for the benefits of the community. Unlike Ms. Lilian Ray Nelson and the Cedar Lake Colony that

sold land to many African American farmers south of Decatur, Mrs. Edmondson used the Wilder Place to rent land to many poor African American and white tenant farmers.

Although Mrs. Edmondson was reticent about breaking up her lands, by the 1930s, much of the large estate was beginning to be developed into the subdivisions that are known today.

58 ■ Zion Church and School*

The only evidence of the Zion Church found is in the 1920-1928 Morgan County Land Books, where it is simply labeled, "Negro Church." On the 1936 topographic map, the Zion School is in approximately the same location, as it was not uncommon to have

