



## The Kizer Family

An Integral Part of South Bend's History

**W**illiam L. Kizer (1844-1917) was one of our community's foremost business leaders. Born into a pioneer farming family with property on Portage Road in German Township, William grew up to be an expert on finance and investment. With his longtime friend Jacob Woolverton, he founded Kizer & Woolverton, a South Bend company that specialized in real estate, insurance, investments and loans. He was a primary investor and officer of the South Bend Malleable Range Company, and his other investments and projects included railroads, a timber company, a patent medicine company, and local real estate. He served as a South Bend City Commissioner (an appointed position, similar to serving on the City's Board of Public Works today) under Mayors William H. Longley (1889-92)

and David R. Leeper (1892-94), and was a director of St. Joseph Loan & Trust.

In 1870, William Kizer married Elizabeth Brick, whose brother, South Bend attorney Abraham Lincoln Brick, was a Republican member of Congress from 1899 until his death in 1908. Around the year 1887, the couple built their Romanesque Revival home at 803 W. Washington in South Bend—a full decade before the Oliver Mansion, located directly across the street, was constructed.

William and Elizabeth had three children: Horace (1874), Willomine (1877), and Ward (1884). Ward died in 1902 due to a congenital heart problem; Horace died in 1914 after suffering a stroke.

In 1904, Willomine married Thomas Enoch Morrison, who was originally from LaPorte and worked in insurance in South Bend. Their marriage ended in divorce in

1916; they had no children, and Morrison died in Logansport State Hospital in 1919.

Willomine was a sportswoman who had twice won the championship of the St. Joseph Valley Women's Golf league, and also was active in boating, fishing, hunting, and tennis. She had a cottage in the Sandy Beach section of Diamond Lake in Cassopolis, Michigan, where she maintained an elaborate miniature golf course created with flowers and shrubs.

When Willomine died of pneumonia in 1929, her estate was fiercely contested for years. There were two wills—one from 1919, one from 1929—and a large group of her relatives argued that she was *non compos mentis* when the later will was drawn. Finally, in 1937, an agreement was reached, and her \$750,000 estate (worth close to \$10 million in today's dollars) was divided among three major interests: Mrs. Anna M. Bingham, who, along with her husband Judge J. Fred Bingham, was a close friend of Willomine's; Miss Thaddeus Taylor of South Bend, another close friend; and a collection of more than 50 relatives. Her assets were divided so minutely that some of the claimants received shares as small as 1/480<sup>th</sup> of one third of the estate.

Anna Bingham received the Diamond Lake house, but it's less clear what happened to the family home on W. Washington. The house was maintained as a rental until it was purchased in 1941 by the Schmidt family, who converted it into apartments.

You can still see the Kizer name on the family mausoleum at Riverview Cemetery, located just north and east of the two large Chapel Mausoleums at the main entrance.

## Help Us Find Out More

An effort is currently underway to better understand and document the experience of the Kizer family. We're particularly interested in collecting and archiving any photographs, written records, or other memories of the Kizers and their home.

Below you'll find names of relatives and friends who were beneficiaries of Willomine Kizer Morrison's will. Recognize any? If you do, and have anything you can share, please email Todd Zeiger, director of the Northern Regional Office of Indiana Landmarks, at [tzeiger@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:tzeiger@indianalandmarks.org), or call him at (574) 232-4534. Thank you for helping us learn more about this historically significant family and the house that was their home.

### Beneficiaries of Willomine Kizer Morrison's will, determined in 1937:

Mrs. Anna M. Bingham, Mishawaka  
Miss Thaddeus Taylor, South Bend  
John Searles, chauffeur and houseman

### Relatives of Elizabeth Brick Kizer (mother):

Children of Mary Jane Brick Calvert (aunt):  
William B. Calvert (cousin)  
Children of Joseph B. Calvert (cousin):  
Ralph Calvert (2<sup>nd</sup> cousin)  
Hazel Calvert (2<sup>nd</sup> cousin)  
Mary Calvert Stutsman (2<sup>nd</sup> cousin)  
Children of Charles Brick (uncle):  
Edward Brick (cousin)  
Elizabeth Brick McLachlan Gordon (cousin)  
Children of Ruth Ann Brick Snoke (aunt):  
Elizabeth Snoke McEnderfer (cousin)  
John B. Snoke (cousin)  
Arthur C. Snoke (cousin)  
Schuyler Snoke (cousin)  
Mary Snoke Farlow (cousin)  
Children of Priscilla Brick Wilson (aunt):  
Jennie Wilson Marks (cousin)