

Wilda Bates Carter was born in Rising-sun, Ohio, on October 24, 1912. She was the oldest child of William and Tessie Walters Bates. Her sister, Frances Bates Cunningham, was born when the family lived for a brief time in Fremont, Ohio, and her brothers Don, Mac, and Bob were born in Carey, Ohio.

In 1925 the family moved to Fostoria, where her father opened the Dawn Donut bakery behind their home at 725 North County Line Street. Here Wilda began her first year of high school, an adjustment she often said was one of the most difficult she ever made. Nevertheless, she graduated in 1930 as the valedictorian of her class.

With the help and encouragement of her Aunt Tressie Bates, Wilda attended what was then called Bowling Green State Teachers' College to earn her teaching certificate. She first worked in the Fostoria school system as a teachers' aide, and was later assigned to her own first grade classroom at Crocker Street School.

During this period, she began to notice the younger brother of her best friend, Elizabeth Carter; and so began a romance that was destined to last more than sixty years. Wilda became the wife of James W. Carter on July 3, 1938. A year after their marriage, on July 15, 1939, their first daughter, Nancy Jill was born, and their second daughter, Diana Lynn, was born on June 11, 1943.



1936

Early in their marriage, Wilda and Jim had the dream of building a house. They purchased a hillside lot at 525 Summit Street in Fostoria, and in January, 1951, they moved into a passive solar house that they had helped to design. Wilda gradually furnished the house with designer furniture in the Modern style.

Wilda was an active member of The First Methodist Church of Fostoria, where she and Jim had been married. As a young adult, she served as the District President of the Epworth League, the youth group of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

She helped direct the Children's Church when her own children were young, and held various offices in the Women's Society of Christian Service, culminating in the position of District President at the time of the merger of the Methodist and United Brethren churches. She has also served on many committees, among them the building committee that planned the new church building, now known as Wesley United Methodist Church.



1963

Combining her skills as a teacher with her Christian concerns, she was active during the 1950s and 1960s in the Religious Education program in the Fostoria public schools. She has taught English as a second language to several refugee families sponsored by the church. For ten years she led a group that studied the entire Bible. Recently she donated to the church the collection of banners that she had designed and made.

Needlework and reading were Wilda's primary hobbies. When Jill and Diana were young, she sewed most of their clothing and much of her own. Later she became interested in quilt making, presenting quilts to each of her grandchildren when they graduated from high school and when they were married. She knitted many sweaters and several wall hangings, and crocheted two large bedspreads.

Travel was another interest. Wilda had participated in educational tours before her marriage, and in 1947, when she and Jim acquired their first new car, they started a tradition of summer vacation trips to various historical and scenic destinations. After Jim's retirement in 1972, they traveled more extensively, often driving cross-country. Wilda's special interest was visiting the homes of U.S. Presidents. Wilda and Jim traveled to Canada, Mexico, and Europe several times, and in 1996, they journeyed to Japan to participate in the Kyoto Prize ceremony at which their son-in-law, Don Knuth, was honored.

Wilda and Jim's family now consists of Jill and Don Knuth of Stanford, California, and Diana Baxter of Indianapolis, Indiana. Their grandchildren are John Knuth of Menlo Park, California; Jennifer Knuth Tucker of Oxford, England; Trudy Baxter Numan of Sterling, Virginia; and Richard Baxter of Houston, Texas. They also have four great-grandsons: Rees and Kadin Tucker, Carter and Kevin Knuth.



1988

Wilda died at home on March 4, 2001. A service to celebrate her life was held March 10, 2001, at Wesley United Methodist Church, 1200 Van Buren Street, Fostoria, OH 44830. Contributions in her memory may be made to the church or to Community Hospice Care, 182 Saint Francis Avenue, Tiffin, OH 44883.