

# The House on Lyons Street

**Evans Family Stories**

**By Thomas Evans**  
**10/27/2020**



## ***Acknowledgments***

If this book relied only on my memory, it would have been only a handful of pages. The brief anecdotes submitted by my sisters and cousins have made the content more interesting, personal, and insightful. Nearly all the family photos and assorted memorabilia came from Patti (Evans) Miller's collections. I used them as milestones to seek additional historical accounts from Internet searches of records of historical societies that I list in the reference section.

Patti's help included more than those submissions. She also read the stories several times and sent me corrections and contributions. At times, her memory for names surprised me. She also wrote a few of the chapters. This book became OUR stories of family history rather than just MY stories of family history.

I ended the remembrances of our genealogy and family life with when I and my sisters married and left home. Without a doubt, each of us has much more to contribute to a family history book past that date. My family with Sharyn and our sons, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren and each of my sister's family with husbands, children, and grandchildren have two generations of stories to tell. No way could I do justice with a continuation. Maybe each of us will supplement this book with additional chapters that tell those stories.

The last section delves into our life past leaving Monaldi Manor. We have seen changes in our life that are amazing and almost unbelievable. It is the kind of information that I would have liked to have learned from our parents and grandparents. They probably could have said the same, but we never had the forethought to ask them.

Patti and my sisters and cousins provided a lot more content than I was able to work into stories. I didn't want to leave any of it behind. The Appendices are my storage bins for Patti's treasure chest.

Lastly, my neighbor Shirley Wilson who is a professional genealogist talked me into supplying the Indices for this book. She said, "I know it is a LOT of work, but you and your family will thank me." Ugh, I hope so.



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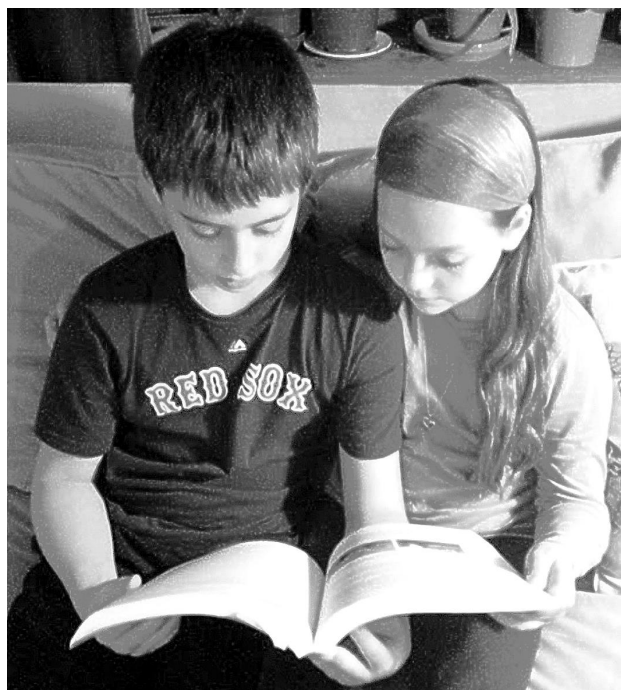
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## Preface

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**How far back can I really remember things?** Often, I try to test my earliest memories. How old was I? Are these thoughts real? I'll never know because the people who can confirm them are no longer around. My earliest recollections are more about places and events than about the people, not even my parents.



Sister Shari inspired me to record what I can remember after over three-quarters of a century when she said, **“Why aren’t you writing down our history?”**

She was preparing to move back to Hendersonville around June 2020. She surprised me to hear those comments from her because of all my four younger sisters, her footsteps were the shallowest. The others had dug deep roots into their separate and often adopted home towns, mostly in the south Chicago area of northern Illinois and Indiana. In her nearly seventy years, she had many temporary residences in many places from Alaska to Florida.

I replied, “We have the Evans family trees compiled by Sheila and Buddy Evans. We have the research by the Hunter clan who included a Klusmeier branch. It had a trunk that extended back to 17<sup>th</sup> century Holland. Much of this info is on my website.”

**Evanscenter.com** also has a compilation of Sharyn Fagen’s Family tree and included the results of her Ancestry.com DNA test.

Not deterred, she said, “I am not interested in family trees. I want to read stories.”

She added, “I heard that our Whites came over on the Mayflower.”

“No, they didn’t. I traced their lineage back to early nineteenth-century England.” I continued, “Compiling the family story was sister Patti’s job.”

Patti paid the greatest attention to the family. She had gathered up and squirreled away most of the family memorabilia. She would claim it as “just her inquisitive nature.”

Patti could rattle off the names of most of our relatives. Likewise, she would have her version of whatever I wrote. She would take delight in saying, “Don’t you remember?”

Of course, I didn’t.

As I considered Shari's comments, it became immediately evident I couldn't tell just one story, I would have an anthology. Many people, places, and things might be interesting. Each would have its own story.

My narrative would be highly subjective based on my sole recollection and value judgment as to the significance of each topic. The reader shouldn't expect too many of those "don't you remember topics."

Even before Shari asked for a Family History, **I had thought about writing about the almost unimaginable number of changes that my generation had witnessed** in the last three-quarters of a century. The world has changed dramatically. Stories tracing major events, styles, and attitudes are both educational and entertaining. Was life back in the "old days" much simpler? Reflection is always a fun but self-engaging exercise.

No way could our grandchildren relate to our experiences, especially to what we took for granted when we were kids. No doubt our parents and grandparents had stories about the changes they lived through. I would have loved to have listened to their stories.

**Unfortunately, our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents passed before we had an opportunity to compile their treasures. Sadly, we know little about them. They're gone and so are their many stories. The best we can do now is just hearsay.**

Grandma Bonnie Evans definitely had some stories to tell. Her husband Thomas died in 1931. Alone, she raised a family during the Great Depression. Imagine the fear and apprehension which our parents and grandparents must have felt during the Second World War. They all had service members absent in the military. We can visualize them huddled around a short-wave radio in the evening anxiously seeking any news.

The augmented **Genealogy section satisfies Shari's request** for stories about family history. I started with what little I could remember and asked for help. I salted my stories with memorabilia that my sisters saved and let the stories go where they chose. They took me on an unexpected adventure. I met family members whom I never knew existed. I learned about their life and where they lived. I learned about the history of where I lived as a kid.

We share inherited genetics along with experiences from a common family environment. Surely, everyone has noticed these traits exhibited in our children and grandchildren. We passed on traits, idiosyncrasies, fears, dreams, and foibles to our progeny and influenced people we contacted. Unfortunately, I can't say my sisters are just like their mother. I never paid that much attention to mom's personality traits. My family was private, quiet, cerebral, and reserved. I have, however, noticed sibling similarities. I have also heard, "She's an Evans." As I have gotten older and have paid more attention, I understand what that might imply.

To assess how much was nature and how much was nurture, I have included a **23andMe** genetic analysis that reports on potentially inherited personality traits. These traits are likely inherited by my sisters and progeny. I don't doubt that as we age we become more like our parents.

History is a great teacher and an incomparable bard. **We aren't as unique as we think.** Stories of trends, habits, and cycles, which early in life seemed very personal, are more common than anticipated. Family history offers past insights to avoid mistakes and leverage strengths. Such gems may lie anywhere -- best to mine for those jewels while they are available.

Although I can't tell my ancestor's intimate stories, **I can tell my story** and that of my hometown, even though no one has asked for it. That makes up the **Childhood** section of this book. It was quite a challenge to think as far back as possible. My sisters and I are probably the only ones who benefit from this section of the book. I have included any story they were willing to share.

The final section **Changes** provides a broad sweep of what my sisters and I experienced in our three-quarters of a century. It doesn't have much personal content, but I wanted to include it because so much has come and gone and the rate of technological change seems to be accelerating. As a young adult, I was able to keep up with the "happenings" by reading my weekly Time or Newsweek magazines. I have not determined if the changes are that much faster or if my ability to comprehend that much slower. Reading this section might provide insight.

The **23andMe** contribution tells about our family from 275,000 years ago until the late nineteenth century. The **Genealogy** section gets a little more personal with stories about our ancestors from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century. The **Childhood** section gets real personal with stories in the late twentieth century. Nevertheless,

**our shared family life has been fairly vanilla – a gift that none of us should desire to change. It's not great fodder for an engaging read. Nevertheless, Shari here is your book. Don't expect any great confession. After all, I too am an Evans**

# What Would Everyone Like to Learn?

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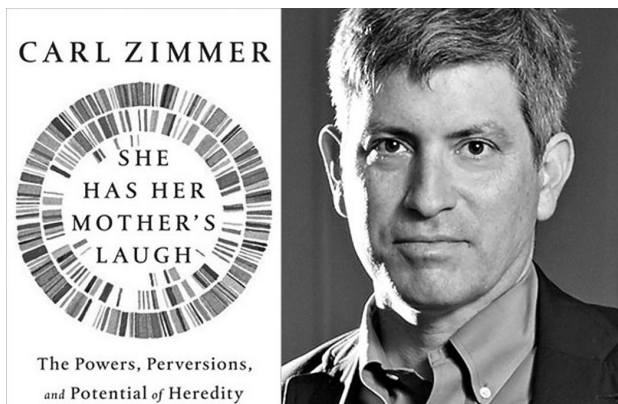
*“WHY AREN’T YOU WRITING DOWN OUR FAMILY HISTORY?” SHARI ASKED.*

Shari’s request seems like a pretty broad order. I am not sure what to put in a family history book. Just what would everyone like to know? To whom they are related? What we did as kids and where we did it? Or maybe they want to know about the events that transpired during our brief time on earth?

Usually, when one asks for a family history book, he is interested in heredity. Who begat whom, when, and maybe a short story about what the person was like. I am sure in the back of his or her mind is the thought, “Am I related to anybody significant -- a king or a queen or a murderer?”

The answer to that question is – “Yes, they are.”

Most likely, buried in our genes is a sampling of the genes of just about any type of person who walked the planet. If they have European ancestry, they can expect to have as much as 2% Neanderthal genes.



Carl Zimmer wrote in his book, *She Has Her Mother's Laugh*, that passed about five generations, our great, great, great grandparents, the gene pool is so mixed that it is meaningless to search any deeper.

*“Yes,” he says, “We all are very likely related to Charlemagne.”*

Deciding what to include in a Family History book depends on who is likely to want to read the stories and what they want to read. The genealogy websites, like **Ancestry.com**, provide the structural format and the records for digging into one’s heritage for whatever value that has. However, do they really care to find out that great aunt Mable had a nervous twitch in her left eye? Furthermore, **Ancestry-type family trees are like reading telephone books**, they lack personal insight and life stories.

**Nevertheless, a review of our heritage seems like the most obvious place to start a “family storybook.”**

The question then becomes, “How far back into our family’s past should I go? Or even more important how far back can I go?”

That all depends upon what records can I find. The other consideration is, “How broad of a scope should I go?” It can quickly get out of hand.

We (my sisters and I) have two parents (circa 1920), four grandparents (circa 1900), eight great-grandparents (circa 1880), and sixteen great-great-grandparents (circa 1860). Add into that mix a couple of hundred aunts, uncles, and cousins and dozens of surnames. Very likely anyone who reads this book will have no interest in distant family members in that tribe. So we’ll limit our research only to the direct bloodline and take it as far back in time as reasonable.

The family story also gets rapidly complex as I look forward from my generation. Siblings have families of their own who in turn have families with intersecting bloodlines, such a Foegen, Miller, Buchanan, and Wojcik. Each of our married children has intersecting bloodlines for their children. In 2020 our combined horizons stretched to include fourteen grandchildren. I am sure these grandkids would like to see their “family story” carried to them. That will be the job of their parents and grand-parents. They can personalize this book by adding chapters of their own. That task is way outside my purview.

**I have done “the heavy lifting.” My contribution to “the Family Story” ends with my sisters and me.**

This Family Story is divided into three sections:

- **Our Family Before We’re Born** (aka **Our Genealogy**),
- **Our Family Life as Kids** (aka **Our Childhood**), and the
- **Major Changes** we have experienced.

For the Genealogy Section, several family members have already prepared **Ancestry.com** type trees dating from our great-great-grandparents (1860) to our grandchildren (2000). They were excellent references for this book and can assist family members in preparation for Supplements. I have made them available in the Appendices.

On my father’s side of the family, **Sheila Evans** put together two: one for Evans and a second for White. The **Evans Tree** branches disappeared in Wales, the **White Tree** in England, both around the middle of the nineteenth century.

On my mother’s side of the family, **Barbara Hunter** has done an extensive study which includes a branch for grandpa **Klusmeier**. Her compendium went a couple of generations further back before it disappeared into Europe. I was unable to trace the Klusmeier. By accident, I found a **Kilnowitz Tree** on the Internet. I was unable to trace the Kilnowitz surname any further back than 1860 and not back to Europe.

- - **What would everyone like to learn**

Once we got beyond the “great-great” generation, the family tree had become so diffused that it was meaningless.

My objective with this book was not to draw trees but to tell family stories and, where possible, to add personality to each name. **Patti**, fortunately, had archived a lot of family memorabilia. The narrative in the Genealogy section relied heavily on her treasurers. She provided most of the old-time family photos. “*A picture is worth a thousand words.*”

I also spent hundreds of hours searching the Internet digging into historical archives for Lansing, Hammond, the Calumet Region, Bevier, and Wales. That was about as close as I could come to telling the story of our parents and grandparents. None of the words in the Genealogy section came from the mouths of whom the story was told.

These folks had passed, taking with them hundreds of hours of personal accounts of survival, anxiety, and stress: about emigrating to and setting up new homes in America, about the First and Second World Wars, about Prohibition, and about the Great Depression.

### **Oh, what stories they could have told. Why did we miss that chance?**

Our **Genealogy stories** start around 1840, give or take twenty years, and end in 1946, give or take a few years. Our autobiography or **Childhood** brings the book to 1966 for me and a few years later for my sisters. It is about our life when we were kids – some of it, what we can remember and think might be worth telling.

**This family story ends around 1966** but obviously, our family life didn’t end then. It continued in many different directions. Each sister, I, and our spouses have additional family stories to tell in Supplement books each of us may write. The kids and grandkids have their stories to tell.

### **As Jeff Goins said, “Everyone has a Story to Tell.”**

*My dad introduced me to storytelling. When I was a kid, every night he would tell me an anecdote from his childhood. I was fascinated with the tales of him and his friend Marty, causing some kind of mischief.*

*I remember saying at one point, “Dad, you have some great stories. I’ll **never** have stories as good as yours.”*

*But he would laugh and then reply confidently, “Sure you will. You’ll have even **better** stories that you’ll tell **your** son.” He reminded me that **everyone has a story to tell**; they just don’t always realize it.*

*I wondered if it could be true, that I would one day have stories **better** than my dad’s. With his tales of UFO sightings and Walter Payton autographs, it seemed unlikely.*

- - **What would everyone like to learn**



The last section of the book, **Changes**, was the most interesting for me. I had a chance to reflect on the spectacular number of **Changes** in technology, sociology, and culture we experienced from shortly after the end of the Second World War until today. Our grandchildren certainly can't perceive how different their life is from what ours was. Much of it is really hard to believe – stuff our grandkids now take for granted is stuff we would have considered as being science fiction when we were kids.

We always laughed when our grandparents claimed they walked five miles to school in snow up to their fannies. It became the family joke. When I thought back to what we had to do as kids, I found plenty of reason to believe them. It was no joke to them. Their childhood was probably as different from ours as ours is different from that of our grandkids. The changes we have experienced are profound.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

*“WHEN WORDS BECOME UNCLEAR, I SHALL FOCUS WITH PHOTOGRAPHS.”*

— ANSEL ADAMS

The best stories are those told with pictures. The book is heavily endowed with period photos, family photos, maps, and illustrations. Included are contributions from Bevier Historical Society, Taylor's book, Lansing Historical Society, Hammond Historical Society, Calumet City Historical Society, Instagram, Google Streets, Google Archives, Wikipedia, and Family Albums and Memorabilia, just to name a few. I spent hundreds of hours on Internet searches.

Patti provided virtually all the family photographs from her extensive collection. She had stuff near the turn of the twentieth century. She was even able to identify most of the people in her picture collection. I have displayed many of the extra pictures not embedded in the text in the book's Appendices.

## APPENDICES

While gathering content for the book, we uncovered many interesting artifacts that didn't fit the story format, but they were useful background material, such as the family trees, World War II memorabilia, birthday and wedding photos, maps, newspaper clippings, etc. Patti had piles of stuff worth sharing. Instead of relegating her treasures to obscurity in a box somewhere in her attic, I have posted many pieces in the appendices.

- - **What would everyone like to learn**

## 23ANDME

*“THE INVENTION OF THE YEAR.”*

— **2008 TIME MAGAZINE**

In July 2020, we purchased an ancestry version and the health component of the 23andMe direct-to-consumer genetic testing offering.

With 23andMe, customers provide a saliva testing sample that is partially single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) genotyped and results are posted online. The DNA is extracted and tens of thousands of DNA variants are tested out of the 10 to 30 million located in the entire genome. These matches are then compiled into a customer report showing if variants associated with certain diseases, such as Parkinson's, celiac, and Alzheimer's, are present in their genome.

The genealogical DNA test results provide online access to a **relative-matching database**. We can view our **maternal haplogroup** (mitochondrial) and, as a male, the **paternal haplogroup** (Y chromosome). We have online access to an assessment of **inherited traits and genetic disorder risks**.

Its ancestry reporting tells people what country they are from, not just what region.

## SUPPLEMENT

The Supplement is a separate book and not included with this book. Except for the **Changes Section**, the content of this book is limited to family history up to the time when my sisters and I married and left home. After completing this book, I plan to continue with my storytelling starting when Sharyn became part of my family history.