

Sketch: The Evans Family of Virginia - Stories of Doctors and Horses

An interesting account of the Evans Family in America is found in the "Commemorative Biographical Record of the Counties of Rock, Green, Grant, Iowa and Lafayette, Wisconsin":

The Evans ancestors came from Montgomeryshire, Wales, part of the family in 1694, and others in 1722, settling at Uwchland, Chester Co, Pennsylvania, about twenty miles west of Philadelphia; the old farm first tilled by Evan Evans, the pioneer, is still owned by some of his descendants. John Evans, the Colonial governor of Pennsylvania, 1704-09, was a relative of Evan Evans, the pioneer. Other members of the family became prominent in the business and official affairs of the Colony. John Evans, of the third generation, was one of the judges of the Supreme Court at the close of the Revolutionary war. Dr. George Evans, a brother of the Judge, was surgeon of Col. Bailor's regiment, in Gen. Anthony Wayne's division; he was severely wounded in a bayonet charge, in a fight with the British near Tappan, NY. After the war Dr. George and Richard Evans moved to Virginia, and from them are descended many of the Virginia Evanses, some of whom subsequently settled in South Carolina and became prominent in that State. John Evans was governor of the State in 1895-96.



18th Century Surgical Instruments

We follow, with interest, Dr George Evans, who came to Virginia. A brief announcement, at the time of his death, indicates that he came to the state before his Revolutionary War wounds had healed, so we might assume that he settled in Virginia 1775-1780. It is unknown where he and his wife, Mary Peyton, were married, but it was probably in Virginia. He reared his family in his Chesterfield county Virginia home known as "Oakland". It was located in the vicinity of Petersburg.

On the 14th of January 1812 a deed was filed in Chesterfield county Virginia which named George Evans, his wife Mary, and six children: Mary who was the wife of William R Johnson, Elizabeth who was the wife of George Markham, George Evans Jr, Margaret Evans, Sydianna Evans and Jane Maria Evans.

Announcements in various Virginia newspapers give a few added details to the family of Dr George Evans and Mary Peyton:

Married on Thursday the 8th inst Mr William Johnson merchant of Petersburg, to Miss Mary Evans, daughter of Dr George Evans of Chesterfield co, Va.

[source] Virginia Argus; 17 September 1803.

Married On Thursday the 9th inst Mr George Markham to Miss Eliza Evans, daughter of Dr Evans, all of Chesterfield. note - The Richmond Argus gives May 8th as the date of marriage. [source] Petersburg Intelligencer; 17 May 1805.

Died in Fredericksburg, on Wed, Lt George Evans late of the US Army, son of Dr George Evans of Chesterfield co. Interred in the burial ground of the Masonic Lodge No 4. [source] Virginia Herald (Fredricksburg Virginia); 13 January 1816.

Died - Dr George Evans, on Thurs Jun 27th at his residence in Chesterfield county, in the 67th year of his age. A native of Pennsylvania, he served in the Rev War as a surgeon in Baylor's. Wounded in New Jersey, he came to Virginia before his wounds had healed and stayed in the state. [source] Richmond Enquirer; 5 July 1822.

The story of Dr George Evan's daughter, Elizabeth or Eliza Evans, is mingled with that of her husband, George Markham, in this database. More about his daughter, Mary Evans who married William R Johnson, is found below. The other children of Dr George Evans have not been followed here.

Mary Evans, daughter of George Evans and Mary Peyton, married William Ransom Johnson on the 8th of September 1803 in Chesterfield county Virginia. A variety of interesting resources have been found on the worldwide web,

related to William Ransom Johnson. His story is an interesting one! William Ransom Johnson was born about 1782 in Warrenton, Warren county North Carolina. He was the son of Marmaduke Johnson and Drucilla Ransom. The connection between George Evans and William R Johnson probably came through horses. Both were avid horsemen.

Marmaduke Johnson operated a stable in Warrenton, Warren county North Carolina and was involved in the popular horse-racing circuit of the time. His son, William R

Johnson, followed in suit. Not long after his marriage to Mary Evans, he was stabling his famous horse, Sir Archy, at his father-in-law's Oakland plantation. Eventually he ran his own operation outside of Petersburg, Virginia. He came into possession of George Evan's "Oakland" property after his death in 1822. Sir Archy ranked among the premier horses of the North Carolina -Virginia circuit. He made William R Johnson a very wealthy man. To many, Johnson was known as "Napoleon" Johnson as his horses had won 61 of 63 races they had entered in the years 1807-1808.



Sir Archie

This delightful story is told about a horse race:

In 1823, Southern Colonel William Ransom Johnson issued a \$20,000 challenge, a monstrous sum at the time, to Northern horsemen. Johnson chose a North Carolina chestnut, Henry, to represent the South. Henry, bred in Halifax, N.C., was the son of Sir Archie, another Virginia-Carolina horse and the equine superstar of his day. Sir Archie's son Henry faced the North's horse, Eclipse, on May 27, 1823, in Long Island, New York. Sixty thousand people turned out more than the population of New York City at the time. The horses ran three heats of four miles each... Henry took the first heat. Then Eclipse's manager decided to change jockeys, giving the reins to Samuel Purdy, a 38-year old retired jockey who had merely been at the race as a spectator. Eclipse then won the second heat. Fulghum says Henry's manager Colonel Johnson overindulged on lobsters the night before the race and got so sick that he couldn't make it to the track. Johnson's substitute manager decided to replace Henry's jockey "the white boy John Walden" with Johnson's head trainer, Arthur Taylor, for the third and final heat. Eclipse took heat three, along with Johnson's \$20,000, leaving many to lament "that a plate of lobsters had cost the South the championship of the turf.

[source] Horsepower Heaven, by Jason Smith; published on the Endeavors Blog of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; <http://endeavors.unc.edu/spr2002/fulghum.html>.

According to family tradition William Ransom Johnson and Mary Evans were the parents of a son, William Ransom Johnson Jr born 1822. They also had a daughter, Virginia Johnson. She was born in 1818 and married James West Pegram. It is unknown if they had other children. The dates of birth for these children do not compare well with information found at FindAGrave on the Oakland Plantation (Johnson) Cemetery in Chesterfield county Virginia. Family records give the death of Mary Evans Johnson in 1843.

The Johnson gravestones appear to give the dates:

William R Johnson; 1782; 10 February 1849 Mary Evans Johnson; 1 Oct 1781; 17 Dec 1815

The Virginia Historical Society holds the Johnson Family Papers. The description indicates: Primarily the papers of William Ransom Johnson (1782-1849) of Petersburg and Oakland, Chesterfield co, Va; William Ransom Johnson (1822-1889) of Petersburg; and James West Pegram of Richmond. Mostly horses and horseracing.

Do you want to know more?

[Link for George Evans](#)

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Sir Archie, famous American thoroughbred stallion; from Frank Forester's Horse and Horsemanship of the United States, published 1857; artist – JC Buttre; public domain; located at Wikimedia commons.

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