

Living Long Lives Not Unusual in Green County

I think I've been intrigued by elderly people all of my adult life, especially people who are 90 and older. Green County has had an abundance of those people for more than a century. I remember going to a family gathering when I was in high school where Dad told me that "Aunt Mary" Shook was going to be in attendance. Dad explained that she wasn't a relative but had been married to a relative. I later found out that she was the widow of my great-grandfather's first cousin and she was born in 1867, which meant that she was already in her mid-90s. I remember realizing that she was born only two years after the end of the Civil War and that definitely impressed me then. However, I was not old enough to realize that I should ask her so many questions. I've been amazed at how many people in Monroe are living into their 90s and still sharp and active. As I've read the newspapers, I find out that this is not new to the area.

It was announced in the October 24, 1888 issue of the Monroe Sentinel that Enoch Evans was to turn 100 years old that week. The paper reported that he was still able to read without "spectacles," converse in a lively manner, and wanted to vote for Benjamin Harrison in the November election. He had already voted in 18 presidential elections at the time of his birthday. He thought that voting was a great duty and privilege that every American citizen should prize. He cast his first vote for president with a ballot for James Madison.

At the time Mr. Evans was living with his son, William and his wife. When asked to what he attributed his present good health and comfort, he replied "to the tender and constant care and watchfulness" of his daughter-in-law. He concluded that no better woman, no more faithful daughter ever lived.

The birthday was celebrated at William's house in Brodhead on Saturday with many of the old settlers of the vicinity present. Mr. Evans was in good spirits and welcomed his guests cordially. His memory was very good, remembering back to the death of George Washington when Evans was a young man. Enoch was the father of three boys and nine girls. His sons Elijah and William were at the celebration, but Elisha was at his home in Charleston, Virginia. There was no mention as to whether the daughters were living or present at the celebration.

The guests included 36 old settlers and others totaling upwards of 85 people. The next oldest of the early settlers was Nathaniel Treat, who was 90. Other recognizable names present included Arabut Ludlow, 72, Brooks Dunwiddie, 70, and Norman Churchill, 63. The average age of those early settlers, which included his sons, Elijah, 68, William, 58, and William's wife, 56, was 69 years. One hundred years of age then must have been almost unimaginable!

A dinner of oysters and more was served to the guests. After the meal Judge Dunwiddie delivered a few appropriate remarks about the occasion before presenting Mr. Evans with a purse containing \$50, a gift from all of those present. This was followed by singing and a prayer by Rev. Benson of the Methodist Church. Then Mr. Copeland photographed the gentleman, including a photo of the centenarian in a four-generation family photo. Mr. Evans was in the center with Elijah and William on the right and Mrs. William Prisk and son and Mrs. H. La Fleur on the left. The Monroe Cornet Band surprised the gathering about 4 o'clock by showing up to serenade Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans withstood the excitement of the occasion remarkably well. The Sentinel stated that he "bids fair to add several more years to the number that has already over-reached the allotted three score and ten." His obituary appeared in the Sentinel the following year on October 30.

The journey for Mr. Evans to get to Green County was a long one. He was born in North Carolina and moved to Kentucky with his parents and family and some sixty other families in 1793. There were no trains at that time so the journey was a tedious one full of difficulties and dangers. The whole party spent that winter quartered in log forts. Mr. Evans was married in 1808 to Elizabeth in Garret County, Kentucky. They crossed the Ohio River eight years later and settled in Jennings County, Indiana. The family again moved 20 miles west to Paris in 1832 for eight years before coming to Green County in 1840. With the exception of living in West Virginia from 1868 until 1872, he has lived here ever since. He had farmed in Clarno township before moving to Monroe by 1860. Mrs. Evans passed away in July 1875 and Mr. Evans moved to Brodhead to live with William and Sarah and their son. He lived with them the rest of his life.

I dedicate this column to the three women in Monroe who reached the century milestone during April while under quarantine. Eleanor Klemm turned 100 at St. Clare Friedensheim on April 10, Helen

Johnson at Aster Assisted Living on April 13, and Edna Kramer at Pleasant View later in April. I wonder if there is another area in our country that has a larger per capita group of healthy, sharp people who are 90 years of age and older.