

Farm

Altus, Okl. Oct. 28 / 34

Dear Warner,

Yours of 22 carefully noted. Your course for this term is a strong, a strong contrast with my finishing course - Ray's 3-part arithmetic and geography. Starting with a class in the middle of Butler's grammar, a principal grammar, a while in Rhetoric-1 and a short while in elementary algebra, perhaps went through it - for three years previously had not been in school - except one six weeks in a summer vacation school.

The years I should have been in school were spent as a field hand. They were war days. My father died when I was just past 9, in 1858. The Civil War came on in 1861. I was oldest boy in a family of 7; my only brother 5 years old.

Those were pioneer days, and for 4 years we were in the South cut off from the world. Cloth was made from raw cotton and wool, carded by hand, spun by hand wheel and spindle, and woven on homemade hand looms.

I became farmer, stock trader, wood hauler and chopper, firemaker and handy man, milker, etc. - and family protector in a rough age. No one to stand between me and the world. It seems to me that those winters were colder than of later years, that they were filled with rain and snow and sleet and that I was out in it all.

I left home to work in a general store at 18 at \$15.00 per month, board and washing and I sent 10% per month to my mother. I furnished the cloth and she made my clothing. I slept in store, swept out, dusted and arranged stock, sold yard goods, collected and kept the books at nights.

In six months had a raise to \$20.00, had established a Sunday School, and was superintendant, in a county seat (Hillsboro) that had not had a Sunday School for 13 years.

The town was hard but I had friends among all classes and I learned that there were warm-hearted, generous men among gamblers, saloon keepers, and men who are deemed bad characters. they have contempt for cowards and hypocrits but respect merit. This early knowledge of men has been confirmed by a large experience. I could easily have made my way through school and college and have secured a professional education. Had liberal offers. But my mother and her family would have suffered hardships. They needed all I could earn in my early years. I may also say that there were always young men out of employment, but that I have found work and reasonable remuneration.

I never watched the clock or was afraid that I might do service in excess of contract.

Maybe I have been too liberal in my suggestions, but I do approve your working spirit, and I again suggest that a knowledge of the lives and spirit of working people may be a great asset for future success, in business and in public life.

Gov. Jim Hog's career is the finest example of latter years. He was truly in sympathy with the plain people, was sincere and honest, and was invincible. No man was ever stronger among the masses.

Gov. Ferguson with many faults and I think a demagogue, has great strength among the plain and middle class. He understands and knows how to win them. He's undisputably the best politician in Texas. It's to the plain people he appeals.

You did not tell me how Baylor came out in the Louisville, Kentucky, debating tourney. I believe that Dick was on the Baylor team.

I shall write and ask William and John to give you letters to their friends at Austin. I spoke to them a good while ago.

John Mitchell is making a bicycle tour of Germany and Joe tells me that he's having a great time. I've no late word of Jimmie Kone.

It's very dry here, am afraid fall sown sheat dies out.

Was told yesterday that this Jackson county had ginned about 3,000 bales of cotton, one to two thousand more perhaps to come against near 100,000 bale average crop. Our county agricultural department in August published estimate of 35% of full crop - say 35,000 bales and this month put it at 15,000 bales.

It's strange that officials publish such preposterous reports.

Weather fine. We make a small amount of maize heads for feed and still add a few cans of sundry eatables to our winter stock.

Glad of your good report of folks at Sherman and trust the future. You and Robert stick to your guns.

Your grandpa

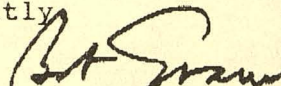
J. F. Evans

When I was 24 the man I sold out to broke and fled the county (during the panic of 1873) owing me \$6,500.00 and left me in debt \$3,000.00.

Without a dollar I started out with \$3,000.00 notes against me and one of the worst panics of history, my mother and sisters still on my hands. I know what it is. I went to St. Louis and started traveling on commission.

This is a transcript of a letter dated October 28, 1934 from my grandfather, John Fleming Evans, to my brother Warner Evans, when he was a graduate student in the law school at Baylor University.

Grandfather Evans was long since retired and a widower, living on a farm in western Oklahoma near Altus. This letter was written when he was approximately 85 years of age. Shortly afterwards, he wa hit by a speeding automobile while crossing the highway next to the farm on a foggy morning and died instantly.

  
Robert Y. Evans

Farm

Altus, Okl  
R. 2

Dec 16 34

Dear Warner  
Baylor University  
Waco, Tex.

Very much interested in your late letter. No doubt that you and Dick will make fine showing this debate season. Do credit to Baylor and honor yourselves.

Your teaching will be good for yourself and learning to pay your way will be the best lesson of your life.

Though I should like if could make it easier for you. Have fought my own way since I was a boy. Though am under obligation for encouragement & help, little cash but chance to work & opportunity to earn. I always found work to do, roads opened.

Boys who never watch the clock nor complain of overtime are in demand.

When in 1873, the greatest panic year of my 85 years, broken & in debt, and I must have been a green young man, with a good deal of western experience but little education or of culture that is supposed to recommend one to the city.

I applied in St. Louis for a place as a traveling man in Texas.

I was offered a salary all too small (of course, a trial test.) I said, "Give me the percent attached to pay, travel and salary, and credit me when goods are sold."

For near 8 years I represented that house in Texas until I quit the road of my own accord. And objecting to an adjuster in my territory, dealing with my customers. They were my friends.

I was made adjuster for Texas at additional pay. In any large territory there will be delayed payments and mercantile failures.

A new partner as Financial Manager, coming into the firm, instructed me to attend a creditors meeting at Palestine, Texas, "But to accept no settlement until after reporting to the firm & having it approved."

I replied that I would go to Palestine but should not report for approval, and that my settlements must be final & unquestioned, or the house should send someone else to represent them. The reply was, "You are hereby appointed Minister Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary to represent us in this and all other settlements."

These may give you insight into the struggles and character of your grandfather, as a young man. He did not shrink from work or from responsibility.

Nor submitted to humiliating conditions. Neither rewards (large ones have been offered him) nor threats have influenced him. He has suffered severe financial punishment & has at times carried his life in his hand & never wavered from his convictions. I could go over life again and give less provocation, nor live with greater probity.

At your request there is somewhere among my belongings a geneological record of my family from the date when King James knighted an ancestor and bestowed on him a glorious coat of arms. It comes down to our colonial history. when two brothers came to America, one of which became treasurer of Colonial Virginia, our people were in Colonial Indian Wars.

Letter, J. F. Evans to Warner Evans, Dec 18 34 (cont'd)

Belan(?) whom I think married Pocahontas & Coln. Fleming whose name remains(?) in our family of whom I am a direct descendant on a maternal side, was in Colonial Indian Wars; as captain in Washington's army, was wounded fighting the British at battle of Brandywine (Creek) & carried to Valley Forge, recuperated there that terrible winter. Was promoted to Lieutenant Coln. & in the first considerable battle in the spring was wounded and left in the field when American troops retreated. Was carried to a farm house, where he died from his wounds. The Fleming in my name is after him. The name has been retained in the family. My grandfather came from Virginia to East Tennessee & had but one son, William L. Evans (several daughters; they married. One, Collie of Knoxville, Tenn & raised quite a family and a daughter who died at Commerce, Texas left children.)

My mother was a Veal. Her people were Holland Dutch from some seaport, I think, Amsterdam. To Philadelphia thence to Virginia & with the drift of settlement out to the southwest following the valleys between the Blue Ridge Mountains & Cumberland Mountains, through the Cumberland Gap to the rich valleys of the head waters of the Tennessee River, which drained the country west of the mountains into the Mississippi.

That territory was then a part of the Colony of North Carolina, which extended west over the unknown to the setting sun, but was unapproachable from the East over mountain barriers.

My mother's ancestors were of Sevier's(?) Colony years before the American Revolution. Of the first colony I have no exact date, but of 360 odd more than 2/3 were killed by Indians. Their wars were waged for years with the Cherokee and Creeks, and most powerful Southern Indian tribes. The ranks of settlers were constantly recruited by hardy settlers from Virginia.

Cut off from the World, Kentucky & Tennessee fought their own Indian Wars without government aid.

Kentucky finally organized their state government, and but few know that there was for two years a State of Franklin.

Sevier's(?) Colony had no aid and from necessity organized the State of Franklin, that part of the Colony west of the mountains, and administered a state government.

My mother's family were of these people and from Colonial they have been a part in all wars of this country.

But I did not start to write history.

I will try to find my copy of family genealogy. I think that Alma has a copy, and think the genealogy of the Peytons of Kentucky. Your Grandmother Evans' mother was a Peyton, a proud family.

I have paid little attention to genealogies, but I believe in blood. When you marry be sure beyond a question that your wife is of good blood. No strain of poor blood in her veins to curse progeny.

Your Grandpa

I expect to spend Christmas with the family of your Uncle John at Breckenridge.

Your Grandpa

J. F. Evans

Letter, J. F. Evans to Warner Evans, Dec 18 34 (cont'd)

A Peyton, a cousin of your Grandmother Evans, and one of Morgan's Men, than whom no more gallant commander led Souther troops. The boy, Peyton, fell resisting a Federal charge, with his emptied six-shooter in his hand (a pearl-handled gun presented by admiring friends).

Helpless, he placed his gun beneath his body while vandals turned his pockets out and left upon the field. He was taken to a farm house to die, from which he returned the empty gun to those who gave it. He had not betrayed their trust. Her people and mine bled on many a Southern battlefield.

NOTE: In this letter, Grandfather refers to "my 85 years". Perhaps this might be the last letter he ever wrote. It is dated December 16, 1934; the envelope is postmarked December 18, 1934. He was struck by a car and killed instantly on January 11, 1935, less than four weeks after this letter was written.