

EVANS DREAMED OF SERVING AREA ~

The Life of Dr. Walter Myles Evans –

as told *by Linda Hill*

The Berkeley Democrat, Wednesday, February 24, 1988

Sometime in the later 1800's on Pawley Plantation, located along River Road, Henry J. Evans lived with his mother, who worked in the plantation house. Henry J. was able to gain an education because he sat with the white children as they were being taught.

Henry became a farmer in Cordesville and was successful in building a fine house across from Pawley Plantation.

On September 23, 1891, a son was born to Henry and his wife, Lavinia Jones Evans. The child was named Walter Myles Evans, and he would be no ordinary youngster in his parents' eyes. At a very early age, Walter showed signs of intelligence with his quick responses to learning. It was for this reason that Walter was enrolled in the Morris Street Public School in Charleston, South Carolina. Walter lived with his aunt while his parents paid for their son's room and board.

After completing elementary school, Evans entered Claflin College in Orangeburg, where he finished high school and his college training. Doubting he would have sufficient funds for medical school, Evans studied architecture.

Later, Evans was able to save the money that he had earned by working as a porter for a northern railway company. With some financial assistance from his father, he entered Boston University Medical School. He graduated with honors on June 16, 1920.

He completed his internship and residency in the Massachusetts area. Evans saw opportunities in the north for wealth and prestige, but he chose to return to his family and the people of Cordesville. This, Evans became the first black physician to practice medicine in Berkeley County, and the only black physician in the county for 48 years.

Dr. Evans married Venezuela Stephen, whom he met while they were in college. They had postponed their marriage because they both knew the importance of a good education. They were married on September 27, 1921. From this marriage there were two children, Walter M. Evans, Jr. and Virgie Evans Shokes. They resided in the house that Henry Evans had built. Mrs. Evans taught school, while Dr. Evans

practiced from an office in the house as well as another office located on East Main Street in Moncks Corner.

In spite of the many obstacles that stood before him, with hard work, faith, and determination, Evans established a reputation as a fine doctor and treated people of all races and economic levels.

During the Depression years, Dr. Evans often times received commodities in lieu of money from his patients. He never refused anyone medical attention, and he was extremely proud of the diagnosis and successful treatment of a young white girl who was the first known case in Berkeley County to develop spinal meningitis.

Dr. Evans was a strong supporter of the March of Dimes and volunteered his time to fight polio and birth defects. A certificate of appreciation from Franklin D. Roosevelt was awarded to Evans for his ten years of outstanding service in the fight against Infantile Paralysis, noting his efforts toward increasing chapter accomplishments as well as adding his scientific knowledge to the effort.

Due to his work and abilities, Dr. Fishbourne recommended Dr. Evans to serve as physician for federal, state, and county programs. Evans was selected and served as physician for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). He examined recruits for military service during World War II, for which he received a Citation from the President of the United States. He was attending physician for maternal and child health clinics county-wide, which was staffed with both black and white nurses.

In addition to his accomplishments in the medical field, Dr. Evans was a civic and religious leader as well.

He was a lay delegate to the General Conference of the A.M.E Church from 1936 to 1964. His fraternal and professional affiliations were numerous and included: The Palmetto Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association; Mu Alpha Chapter, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Charleston; Shriners Chapter, Columbia; Moncks Corner Lodge 323 F.A.A.M.; chapter member of Berkeley County Teachers Association; honorary member of the Allen University; Benedict College and South Carolina State College Alumni Clubs of Berkeley County; and member of the N.A.A.C.P.

His awards and citations are so numerous, his daughter-in-law states that the attic of their house is full of boxes with the awards, and no one is quite sure just how many there are.

With all of his many accomplishments during his lifetime, Evans was never permitted to practice medicine in the Moncks Corner Hospital (*Berkeley County Hospital*), which was located on West Main Street.

A man of great insight, Evans foresaw the turbulence of the 60's and predicted the soaring cost of a college education in years to come.

Evans loved azaleas and all varieties of flowers. They were grown and cared for around the house his father built. Today, the house still stands with several additions to the original. There are still signs of the former occupant in the backyard, where the shingled roofed smoke house stands, having been designed and built by Dr. Evans in 1925.

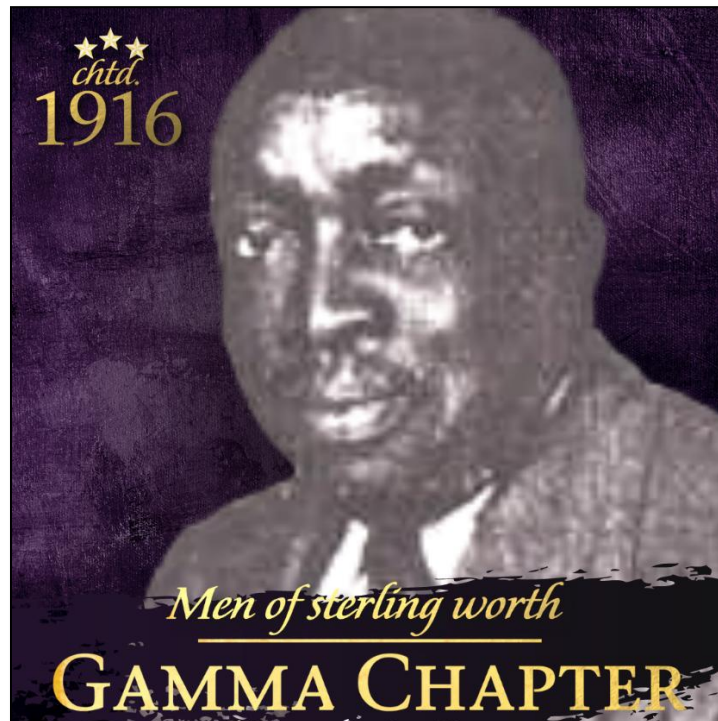
Sadley, on January 2, 1967, Dr. Walter Myles Evans departed this life.

From his father's dream of building a fine house like the plantation house where he grew up, to a small boy who dreamed of serving the people of Berkeley County, the dream came true for both father and son.



Home of Dr. Walter Myles Evans

Walter M. Evans, Architect, Henry J. Evans, Builder, 1904.
The building having been occupied by heirs of H.J. Evans for five generations.



Dr. Walter Myles Evans
Graduated with honors from Boston College, June 16, 1920.

Photo courtesy of <https://gamma1916.com>

Road Named After Dr. Evans ~ an article from *The Berkeley Independent*, April 28, 1993.

If you're paying attention to the street signs as you drive through Cordesville, you may notice *River Road* has a new name. It is now *Dr. Walter Evans Road*.

The change was prompted by the county's preparation for adopting the 911 emergency dialing system. Every road in the county had to have a name, and those with duplicate names would have to be changed. Since there were a couple of "River Roads" in the county, all but one had to have their names changed.

When Walter M. Evans, Jr., learned about this, he suggested the Cordesville road be named after his father, Dr. Walter M. Evans, the first and only black medical doctor in Berkeley County for forty-six years.

To have the name of the road changed, Evans had to get a petition signed by most of the fifty-four property owners along the eight-mile road, also known as State Road 44. Forty-four property owners signed the petition, and this spring the change became official.

Evans said his father graduated from the Boston College School of Medicine in 1920 and turned down lucrative offers to practice in large metropolitan areas for one he felt more challenging and in dire need of his services.

He opened his office in Berkeley County in 1921, and accepted patients of both races. His first years in practice were difficult because medical facilities were few, wages were low, and many were skeptical of using the services of a black physician.

During the depression of the 1930's, he often accepted corn, chickens, and hogs as payment for services rendered.

He was selected to serve as the physician for federal, state, and county programs, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and examiner of recruits for military in World War II, for which he received a citation from the President of the United States. He was also active in many civic, church, and professional organizations.

Dr. Walter Myles Evans died in 1967, and many county residents respected and remembered him fondly.

Edited by Keith Gourdin