

Jesse Fant Evans

(1890 – 15 Jan 1966)

The GW and Foggy Bottom Historical Encyclopedia

Jesse DuBois Fant Evans (1890-1966) was the first woman to serve on George Washington University's Board of Trustees (1924-66). Evans was born to Joseph Nicholas and Mariana Beach (Mears)



Fant in Fort Hall, Idaho, which was part of the Ross Forks Indian Reservation. She was a descendant of Richard Bennett, governor of Colonial Virginia (1652-1665). As a girl, Evans learned to speak Shoshone before English. Her family moved to Utah and then to Washington, D.C. following the death of her father, where she graduated first in her class from Wilson Normal School in 1903.

Evans was a school teacher at her old high school from 1903-1909 (which became Wilson Teachers College), and then enrolled at GW. Evans received her A.B. and Teacher's Diploma in 1913 (with distinction) and an honorary Doctor of Education in 1932, both from GW. She married Joshua Evans, Jr. in 1914. Ms. Evans was also noted for her twenty-five years as a columnist for the *Washington Star*, writing on the history of Washington, especially the Foggy Bottom area. In 1935 the GW Alumni Association republished some of those articles for the university. They included, in booklet form, *Hamburg: The Colonial Town that Became the Seat of The George Washington University*.

Evans was an active member of Columbian Women, and helped raise money for the

hospital built on Washington Circle in 1948. She received a Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award in 1938 and a citation from the General Alumni Association in 1954 for "outstanding contributions as an alumna to the development of The George Washington University, the furtherance of its interests and the support of its faculty, students and graduates." In 1971 Joshua Evans Jr., recognizing his wife's distinguished record and service to the University, established the Jesse Fant Evans Prize. The prize is awarded annually to an outstanding senior student in a contemporary history course.

The Evening Star, August 1, 1940, p. 14

Mrs. Joshua Evans Back From Visit To Camp Hanoum

Mrs. Joshua Evans has returned from a week's visit to Camp Hanoum, Chelford, N.H. where her debutante daughter, Miss Marianna Evans is a counselor in riding. Mr. and Mrs. Evans expect to remain in Washington for most of the summer.

Camp Hanoum is very popular with Washington girls. Among the mothers visiting while Mrs. Evans was there was Mrs. J.L. Houghteling, who had come East from Chicago to attend the funeral of Mrs. Dora Forbes, the President's aunt. Mrs. Houghteling's youngest daughter, Miss Louise Houghteling, is enrolled at Camp Hanoum.

Others there include Miss Aurette de Sieyes and Miss Betty Lee. The latter is the daughter of Mrs. Clarence Aspinwall, who with her husband has just arrived in Banff on a tour of Canada.

Evans, Jessie Fant. On Saturday January 15, 1966, at Tucson, Arizona; Jessie Fant Evans, of 3405 Lowell st. wife of Joshua Evans, Jr, and mother of Capt. Philip Evans, USN and Mrs. Mariana Evans Creel. She is also survived by five grandchildren. Friends may call at Joseph Gawler's Sons, Wisconsin ave. at Harrison st. n.w. (parking on premises) between 2-4 and 7-9 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday. Services will be held at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Massachusetts and Wisconsin aves. n.w., on Friday, January 21 at 11 a.m. Interment Congressional Cemetery, in lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Columbian Women's Scholarship Fund, George Washington University.

The Evening Star, January 17, 1966, p. 29

Mrs. Joshua Evans Jr., Writer, GW Aide, Dies

Mrs. Joshua Evans Jr., writer, teacher and first woman trustee of George Washington University, died Saturday in Tucson, Ariz., during a vacation there with her husband, a retired Washington banker.

Mrs. Evans contributed feature articles to The Star during the 1930s and 40s. Using the name Jessie Fant Evans she wrote on the history of the District. She also wrote on her travels, including a series on a trip along the west coast of South America in 1939.

In 1946 she wrote an article for The Star on a trip West to her birthplace at Fort Hall Indian Reservation, Idaho. Her father taught the Indians on the reservation and she learned Shoshone Indian dialects before she learned English.

Moved to District

At the age of 13 she moved to Washington with her mother after her father died. She was graduated from Eastern High School here and Wilson Teachers College.

Mrs. Evans received a bachelor of education degree from George Washington University in 1913. She organized the history department at the Wilson Normal School – now D.C. Teachers College – and taught both history and psychology there from 1909 to 1914.

She taught at Wilson until she married Joshua Evans Jr., now a retired vice president of National Bank of Washington. They lived at 3405 Lowell St. N.W.

Mrs. Evans also wrote a pamphlet on the history of George Washington University.

She also did a series of articles titled "Wartime Washington," about the city during World War II.

Mrs. Evans served on the university's board of trustees from 1924 until 1958. In 1932 she became the first alumna of the university to be awarded an honorary doctorate. She was honored for her work in education.

In Historical Society

She was elected a member of the American Historical Society in 1938 for her "outstanding work in the field of local history centering around the Nation's Capital."

Mrs. Evans was a member of President Herbert Hoover's inaugural commission in 1929.

She served also as a member of the executive board of the American Newspaper Women's Club and was active in both the Columbian Women and the Community Chest.

She served as vice president of the American Association of University Women, and as vice president of the 20th Century Club.

One of the original incorporators of Group Hospitalization, Inc., she served as the organization's first secretary. She was also active in the work of the Women's Safety Committee of the American Automobile Association.

Besides her husband, she leaves a son, Navy Capt. Philip W. Evans of 7418 Ridgeway Ave., Chevy Chase; a daughter, Mrs. Robert Creel of Munich, Germany, and five grandchildren.

The Washington Post, January 18, 1966, p. C4

Jessie Evans Dies on Vacation, Writer, Educator, Civil Leader Here

Jesse DuBois Wharton Evans, Jr., journalist, civic leader and educator, died in Tucson, Ariz., Saturday while vacationing with her husband, Joshua Evans a retired Washington banker.

Mrs. Evans wrote on local history for the Washington Star under the name, Jessie Fant Evans during the 1930s and '40s. She was the first woman member of the George Washington University board of trustees and was a strong advocate of scholarships for women. She also was the first George Washington U. alumna to win an honorary degree from that institution, a doctorate in education in 1932.

Mrs. Evans was the first white child born at Ft. Hall Indian Reservation, Idaho, and learned the Shoshone tongue before learning English. While she was still young her family moved to Ogden, Utah where her father was associated with the Union Pacific Railway. When her father died her mother brought the family to Washington and she attended Eastern High School before entering Wilson Normal School, now D.C. Teacher's College, from which she was graduated first in her class in 1903.

She taught at Wilson until 1909 and was named professor of history and psychology. In 1913 she was awarded a bachelor of arts degree from George Washington U. In 1914 she married Joshua Evans who was for many years vice president of the Hamilton Bank of Washington and the National Bank of Washington which succeeded it.

Following her marriage Mrs. Evans turned to writing and in addition to her articles wrote a book on the history of George Washington University and one describing life in Washington during World War II.

She was a member of the American Historical Association and active in Mortar Board, Pi Gamma Mu and Phi Delta Gamma. She was a trustee of Group Hospitalization Inc. from 1933 to 1942.

Mrs. Evans worked with the Community Chest, Society to Aid Crippled Children, Cathedral Heights Citizen's Association and belonged to the Twentieth Century Club, Women's City Club, Woman's National Press Club, and the American Newspaper Women's Club.

Besides her husband of 3405 Lowell st. nw. she is survived by a son, Capt. Philip W. (USN), Chevy Chase, a daughter, Mrs. Robert C. Creel of Munich, Germany, and five grandchildren.

She was born to Joseph Nicholas and Mariana Beach (Mears) Fant in Fort Hall, Idaho, which was part of the Ross Forks Indian Reservation. She was a descendant of Richard Bennett, governor of Colonial Virginia (1652-1665).