

Special Recognition Tribute | Miss Lillian Evans, First Daughter in Pennsylvania

Donegal Chapter DAR Organizer

Friday, April 21, 2017

**10:30 AM Mount Bethel
Cemetery**

**11:00 AM Caretakers
Cottage Memorabilia Display**

As the first woman in the Commonwealth to join the NSDAR in 1890, Miss Lillian Slaymaker Evans zealously walked into history. "She has served our Society faithfully, efficiently and wholeheartedly; her ceaseless, conscientious work and successful accomplishments and her quiet, gracious personality winning the admiration and affectionate regard of all who knew her," wrote the resolution committee of the Donegal Chapter at the time of her death in 1943. Miss Lilly never hesitated to align her patriotic interests with those of her ancestors whom she wished to follow proudly.

Patriotic Roots

Born in Columbia, Pennsylvania, November 5, 1861, she was the daughter of attorney Samuel Evans, a Captain in the War Between the States, Justice of the Peace, Commissary of Subsistence, and contributing founder of the initial Lancaster Historical Society. Her mother was Mary Shoch whom together with her daughter was very active in the Iris Club of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Her paternal grandmother was the daughter of Congressman Amos Slaymaker of Old Leacock Township, a member of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania and the U.S. Congress. Additional distinguished personages include Colonel Evan Evans, commanding the Chester County Militia at the Battle of Brandywine, his son Samuel Evans, major of the 6th Battalion, also from Chester County, member of the General

Assembly of Pennsylvania, and judge of the Chester County Courts, his wife Frances Lowrey, daughter of Alexander Lowrey of Donegal, one of the framers of the Constitution, colonel of several battalions from 1776 to 1783, State Senator, and Indian Commissioner.

NSDAR Charter Member

Once the NSDAR was founded at our nation's capital by four far-sighted women in 1890, Miss Lilly stepped up to serve becoming the 41st of the 818 charter members enrolled during that first year. Within two years, Pennsylvania had its first State Regent, Mrs. Julia K. Hogg, of Pittsburgh, who directed Miss Lilly to organize a Lancaster chapter. It was called DONEGAL and became the fourth chapter in the state and the 15th in the United States. Starting with a membership of 13, the chapter grew to 212 within 5 years! Miss Lilly had served continuously as its regent and after stepping down, she was made honorary regent.

Founding Witness Tree Chapter

Miss Lilly had more on her mind than a good rest, however. She resigned from Donegal Chapter along with 13 other members and in mid-December 1897 met at a member's home in Columbia to organize a new chapter! Adopting the name Witness Tree Chapter, the chapter was chartered in January 1898 with plans to meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

Monument to Those that Served

The Witness Tree Chapter's first project was to raise money for a battle monument to commemorate those who served during the Revolutionary War. With a jubilant response, the new Witness Tree Chapter, DAR, made plans to dedicate the monument less than one year later on October 4, 1899, on the grounds of the Donegal Presbyterian Church. True to Lillian Evans' word, the monument honored all of those who served, including those who gave their lives.

Good Citizenship

Apart from this tangible structure that is a formidable reminder of Miss Lilly's legacy, she also put just as much energy into a different pursuit of patriotic development in the minds and hearts of citizens - especially the young. While still at Donegal, she started a prize essay contest for high school seniors which is still carried out. A student loan program was also instituted. Once she was in the Witness Tree Chapter, she founded and financed the annual chapter Essay Contest on Good Citizenship in the Columbia and Marietta schools. She also provided a commencement award at the Columbia High School in the name of the Witness Tree Chapter. To

the chapter's surprise, Miss Lilly bequeathed a sum of money to enable the DAR essay contest to continue indefinitely - which it has!

Until the End

Miss Lilly remained active with the Witness Tree Chapter until her death at her home, May 4, 1943. She was cared about and enjoyed by individuals throughout the community. Telegrams, tributes and eulogies hailed her for her "lofty ideals" and said, "such an influence continues to live for all time." A chair was placed in her honor in Constitution Hall at National Headquarters in Washington, DC and the Witness Tree Chapter placed a bronze DAR insignia at her grave in Mount Bethel Cemetery, Columbia.