

In Memory of EVELYN SHEETS

Evelyn Sheets was a remarkable woman. Her desire to learn, and to share what she learned, influenced many people. She was interested in history and natural science and social problems and relationships among people, and the list goes on.

Without much formal education beyond high school, she taught college classes and she wrote books. She researched and presented programs, resulting in the development of a vital interest among Grundy Countians in local history and genealogy.

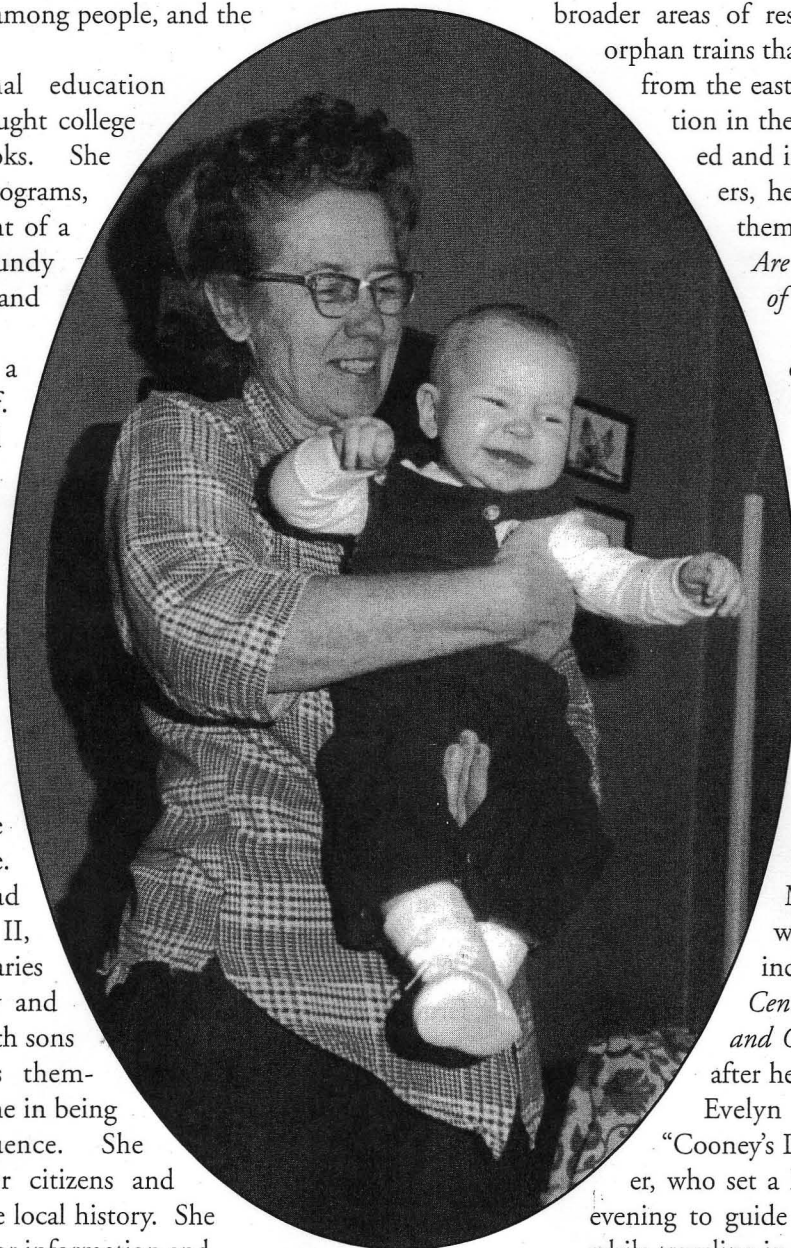
But she wasn't born a Grundy countian herself. The daughter of Reverend Louise Robert King and Hazel (Cowan) King, Evelyn was born December 10, 1919, in Calwood, Missouri, and graduated from high school at Higginsville. She came to Grundy County in 1948 with her husband, John Sheets, who had been transferred to Trenton to manage the Mattingly Brothers Store.

She and John had two sons, Robert and John II, who were primary beneficiaries of Evelyn's dynamic energy and love of learning. In fact, both sons became college professors themselves. But they weren't alone in being touched by Evelyn's influence. She organized groups of senior citizens and taught them how to preserve local history. She taught them how to search for information and record their findings, resulting in the collection of over 2,000 family files in the Grundy County-Jewett Norris Library. She had an early interest in

oral history and was responsible for a collection of tapes recorded by persons with decades of memories of what it was like to live in north Missouri. She became interested in broader areas of research as well, such as the orphan trains that brought neglected children from the eastern United States for relocation in the Middle West. She contacted and interviewed orphan train riders, helped organize a reunion for them and co-authored a book *We Are a Part of History: The Story of Orphan Trains*.

Evelyn Sheets was a dedicated volunteer when the local historical society was organized and when they opened the Grundy County Museum. And she was a founding member of the Grundy County Genealogical Society. Her contributions were recognized when the Board of Trustees of the Grundy County-Jewett Norris Library named the genealogy section of the library in her honor. Her work with the Missouri Folklore Society was commemorated by her inclusion in their booklet, *A Centennial Tribute to Founders and Collectors*, published 17 years after her untimely death in 1989.

Evelyn wrote a story called "Cooney's Light" about her grandmother, who set a lantern at a high place each evening to guide anyone who might be lost while traveling in the mountainous area where she lived. Evelyn herself provided her own special kind of light to those who were desirous of learning and couldn't find the way home.



*Evelyn Sheets with
granddaughter Erin Sheets*