

John Evans - SC Summary
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John Evans was a dynamic man who valued education and he was also a good businessman. That allowed him to donate to various institutions and causes. Everywhere he went, he left evidence of his genius. Evans was born in Waynesville, OH just south of Dayton. He took his medical training in Cincinnati.

He moved to Indianapolis and founded the first mental hospital in Indiana – Central State. He was the first superintendent of Central State Hospital. It was involved in custodial care for the mentally ill. The Old Pathology Building houses the IN Medical History Museum.

In 1848, he moved to Chicago where he taught at Rush Medical College. He taught OB, GYN and Pediatrics. At that time, he argued that Cholera was an infectious disease, a concept not yet shared by most physicians. Later, it led to quarantines of infected individuals. It was in Indiana that he became a Methodist and vowed to be a steward of people, especially in education.

The first public high school in Chicago was founded by John Evans. He also helped found Northwestern College, which is located in Evanston, a city named for him. He was Board Chairman for the next 45 years. In addition, he helped begin a medical journal. Through his efforts, the Chicago Medical Society was begun. He made many wise investments in land and rail roads, which he wanted to go to the east. The first railroad went to Ft. Wayne, then to Ohio and PA. Evans owned the land under City Hall, the Post Office, and the Chicago Tribune. He helped found the Illinois Republican Party because of his anti-slavery views. He knew Abraham Lincoln, who appointed Evans as Colorado Territory Governor in 1862. At that time, there were only about several thousand people in Denver.

Evans helped found the University of Denver in 1864; he served as its president for 15 years. As Governor of the Territory, he wanted to grow the population and finances. Denver was a commercial center and mining region. The Transcontinental Railroad came through Denver. There were problems with the Native Americans. Evans wanted to educate them and guide them to a pastoral way of life. Evans authorized the attack on the Indians at Sand Creek, leading to a massacre of 150 people. This blot on Evans character is so unusual because of all the good that he did for others. This massacre is being reviewed by the colleges that he helped support.

Evans had nine children born of two women. His first wife died of tuberculosis. The children were leaders, too. They were involved in business and civic affairs for many years in Colorado, which reached Statehood in 1876. Evanston, IL, Evans CO, and Evanston, WY are all named for this pioneer, as is Mt. Evans (14,000 feet) in Colorado. He is buried in Riverside Cemetery in Denver.