

George Frederick Ellis & Flora Fitts Ellis  
News compiled by Ruth Ann Montgomery

Hello Ruth Ann,

My name is Lane R. Ellis and I am a family history researcher living in Duluth, Minnesota. My great great uncle George Frederick Ellis and his wife Flora (Fitts) Ellis lived in Evansville between 1900 and 1930, and my great great aunt Mary Ann (Ellis) Jordan and her husband Edwin T. Jordan as well, before 1925.

Last weekend I visited Evansville for the first time as part of a four day genealogy trip. I'm attaching a report of my trip for you to read. I was delighted with the city and especially with the wonderful local history room in the basement of the Eager public library. I could tell that a lot of time and effort has gone into the records kept and organized there, and imagine that you are to thank for that - so thank you!

In my short time there I was able to find many records, including the Maple Hill cemetery entries for Fred and Flora Ellis, plus their obituaries. I found the indexed surname books a wonderful treasure trove of information, especially about my Jordan relatives (including 101 year old Frank Jordan).

My Ellis ancestors were from Dayton in Green county, having come from Eckington, Derbyshire, England in 1850. Last September I went to Eckington and found the graves of my 4G and 5G grandparents and got to go into the houses where they lived. I've been working at genealogy for about 10 years, since I was 23 years old.

While I was in the Eager public library research room I uncovered some information that I didn't really get to look at closely until I got home, and now am looking for three obituary look ups, and wonder if you can help me out if you get a chance? The three obituaries I would very much like to have are for my great great aunt Mary Ann (Ellis) Jordan who died on February 8, 1925, her husband Edwin T. Jordan who died on June 19, 1902, and their daughter Beulah A. Jordan who died in Monroe on December 16, 1952. I don't know if there would be an obituary in the Evansville paper for Beulah.

I also wonder what you would recommend to me for getting copies of probate records in Rock county. I have two probate record file numbers copied from the surname books at the Eager public library, for "A George F. Ellis" and for Edwin T. Jordan, and just wonder what the best way to get copies of these probate records is in Rock county. In Green county I went to the courthouse in Monroe who directed me to Ekum Title and Abstract, where the old records are kept, and paid 25 cents per page for copies. On the Rock county web site it looks like they charge \$1.00 per page for copies, and just thought I'd ask an expert like yourself what you would recommend.

I would love to meet you some day, perhaps the next time I take a genealogy trip to Evansville. I think Evansville has benefited greatly because of your tremendous research and organization.

Best Regards,

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:<\*=> Lane R. Ellis <\*=>: Reggae Land Systems <\*=>:

: LELLIS@CP.DULUTH.MN.US : Vegetarian, Runner :  
: Athlon XP 1700+/100GB : Genealogist/Audiophile :  
: Amiga 1000/Commodore 64 : Truth Is A Pathless Land :  
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: 400HP '87 Cartech Supra Turbo/5-speed/37,000 miles :  
: 3" Cartech-Borla Exhaust/Cartech Wastegate/TEMS/ABS:  
: 14 PSI - Blue - Moonroof - K&N FIPK - Greddy TTimer:  
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All day Thursday at work I thought about my trip to southern Wisconsin which would begin that very evening. I was going to spend three days researching my Ellis family roots in Green County, Wisconsin – continuing on research I had done in August of 1998 on my first journey to the Dayton area north of Monroe. I was all packed and ready to go after work, with my genealogy printouts, plat maps and such. When the workday ended I headed up the hill to my house and freshened up a bit before starting out on the 380 mile drive to Monroe, Wisconsin, where I had a room lined up for two nights. I planned to camp out the third night if the weather cooperated, and had my camping gear along.

It was 6:30 PM when I left Duluth, and as I got into northern Wisconsin it quickly got dark. I stopped for gas about 150 miles along, and by the time I reached Eau Clair there was a misty rain falling, which would occasionally turn into a full fledged rain. I listened to good music on CD and enjoyed the drive, knowing it would be one of the last long trips in my 400 horsepower Toyota Supra turbo before the time came to put it away for the long northern Minnesota winter. Soon I was in Madison and followed my MapQuest directions along county roads into Green County and through New Glarus to Monroe at a quarter after midnight. I was tired and after laying out my plans for my first day of research, went to bed.

In the morning I had two little muffins and some orange juice in the hotel breakfast room and drove a short distance in the rain to downtown Monroe, where the huge old courthouse in the main town square quickly came into view – it's hard to miss from anywhere in downtown Monroe. It was raining hard and I used my umbrella walking to the courthouse. I first went to the probate office and I had a nice lady look for six probate files possibilities for me. Only two of the people I were searching for had probate records, but one of these had two separate probate numbers, which meant there would probably be a lot of material. The probate records themselves are stored in the basement of the Ekum Title & Abstract building kitty corner from the courthouse, so I again got out my umbrella and walked to the abstract company. There I gave a lady the probate record numbers and she brought me to a nice room with a large wooden table with pens and paper neatly arranged on top where I had a seat while she went into the basement to retrieve the files. The two people whose probate records I would be looking at both died before 1900, and are connected to the Ellis family. I heard the lady come up the stairs after about five minutes of searching, and she handed me three brown cardboard files, each roughly a foot long, five inches wide, and an inch or two thick and bound by red cloth tied in bows.

In the records I found original handwritten documents including wills, letters, receipts, auction results, beautiful U.S. tax stamps from the 1870s, ornate seals, and huge property deeds going back to 1854. One probate file was for a Green relative whose son became mayor of Topeka,

Kansas, and there were numerous handwritten letters from the son in Kansas that were interesting to read. I looked through all the records, fascinated at what each page contained. One of the best discoveries was several documents listing not only the names of roughly ten heirs, but their postal addresses as well! This information was all new to me and is just the sort of breakthrough that can help in finding census information. Once I had looked through all the documents I asked the lady for complete copies of all three probate files, which would probably amount to three hundred pages. While they began the copying I went back to the courthouse and to the county clerk's office, where I signed in and after a brief refresher on their record keeping system walked into their giant vault room containing all the original birth, marriage, death, land, military and other types of records. I worked for a several hours getting wonderful new information, and then went to pick up my probate copies at Ekum Abstract & Title. By this time I was hungry and got a bite to eat for lunch. After lunch I returned to "the vault" researched the rest of the afternoon until they closed up at 5:00 PM. In my time there that day I found 147 new records of my ancestors! I stopped off for a beer at the "Kourthouse" across the street and then returned to my hotel and relaxed, laying out my plans for the next day. I ordered pizza for dinner that evening and went to bed very happy with my first day of research.

When I awoke on Saturday morning and peeked out from behind the window curtains I saw a gorgeous sunny day! I headed out for Evansville, just across the county border in Rock County, Wisconsin. The 35 mile drive on nice windy roads was wonderful, with beautiful green rolling hills and endless scenic farmland. On my way into the city of Evansville itself I saw a sign for a garage sale and stopped, hoping to find some local history treasure. The sale did have some nice very old items, but I didn't find anything I needed to have and just enjoyed looking. Evansville seemed like a wonderful, orderly and proud little community. The houses were old, large, and well kept, the streets lined with giant trees, and the buildings on main street all looked to be well restored. The small town seemed to be bustling, and as I had a few minutes before the Eager Public Library opened at 9:30 AM, I decided to walk around town a bit, and enjoyed seeing some of the neighborhood just north of Main Street. I was delighted to find freshly fallen green walnuts on the ground by one house, and picked one up and put it in my pocket after savoring the smell, which I hadn't known since childhood.

At 9:30 AM I entered the pretty old brick library building, where I hoped to find some local history information and perhaps old city directories which might list my great great uncle George Frederick Ellis and his wife Flora, who I knew to have lived in Evansville. George Frederick Ellis, known as "Fred", was born in Eckington, Derbyshire, England in 1843 and came to America with his parents Mark and Mary Ellis in 1850. It was a beautiful library inside, but I became worried as I looked around throughout the building and didn't see any genealogy or local history books. After taking a second look around the library shelves without seeing any county history books or the like, I asked the young lady working behind the checkout counter if they had a local history section, to which she replied, "We have a whole local history room! It's in the basement down the stairs. We keep it locked up, but I'll unlock it for you." I told her I had hoped she would say that, and she grabbed her keys and led me down a set of stairs and to a door which she unlocked. Once the lights were turned on I saw a good sized room crammed full of all the things a genealogist loves : stacks of huge old leather-bound books, full-size newspaper volumes, dozens of filing boxes, a nice microfilm reader / printer, and piles of photographs and miscellaneous material. The librarian left me alone and I smiled as I laid out my notebooks and

other research items on the big table in the middle of the room and began seeing what sort of a collection the room had.

I could tell fairly soon that the material in the room had been lovingly taken care of by a genealogist or historian who cared deeply for the history of Evansville. I first looked at the original old leather-bound books and found them a treasure trove of handwritten records. I soon found my great great uncle and aunt listed as having paid money for a plot in the local cemetery in 1902! This was my first written evidence that they had in fact lived in Evansville. Researching further I found both of their death dates, burial dates, and obituaries. I found records showing which church they belonged to and even records of books she took out of the library in 1916. I used my digital camera outfitted with a 128MB memory card capable of storing over 1,100 pictures to photograph many documents, some plat books, and even a few photographs. It was one of the best genealogy days I've had in ten years of research, and it was quite efficient thanks to the organization and indexing the keeper of those records had done. I suspected that the work had been done by a lady named Ruth Ann Montgomery, who I was familiar with from her wonderful Internet web site about Evansville and the help she has given me and many others in copying news stories from Evansville newspapers. I asked the librarian if she knew Ruth Ann, and she said that she used to be the head librarian there. I worked from 9:30 AM until the library closed at 1:00 PM, and the time just flew by. I felt like I could have spent a year or more in that room researching, but I had to leave. I was ecstatic over my many finds there that day.

One of the things I learned from the records in the local history room at the Eager Library in Evansville was the exact address of the house where George Frederick and Flora Ellis lived. From census records I had known that they lived on South First Street, but the new records revealed that the address was 335 South First Street, just a few blocks south of the library which was on Main Street. My 96 year old cousin Everett Ellis Leibold had told me how pretty their house was, and on my walk before the library had opened I had tried to look for it based on his description. After learning the exact address I drove the few blocks and found the house, a pretty white two-story house surrounded by some nice trees. On the left of the house was an old-fashioned horse hitching post topped by a red iron horse head. I knocked on the door but nobody was at home, so I took a few pictures of the house where my great great uncle lived between 1900 and 1917 when he died.

I then drove to the Evansville Maple Hill Cemetery and using a cemetery map I'd copied in the local history research room quickly found the graves of my great great aunt and uncle, and another great great aunt and uncle as well. I took pictures and then drove back to Monroe where I had dinner and relaxed.

The next morning was to be my day to try to actually visit the people now living on the farms where my ancestors lived, and my picture taking day. I checked out of my hotel (I never did camp out) and drove to the tiny village of Dayton which is where the Ellis's were based between 1855 and 1902 – where my great great great grandparents Mark and Mary and their children had a farm. I visited their graves and felt a special feeling of peace as I touched the gravestone of Mark Ellis, my great great great grandfather who was born in Eckington, Derbyshire, England in 1803 and died in Dayton in 1878. The previous fall I had actually been to Eckington with my wife Julie on our honeymoon, and found the graves of Mark's parents and

grandparents, and gone to the houses where Mark lived. Like Mark Ellis I had made the journey from Eckington to Dayton, but without any of the hardships that Mark and his family would have had in 1850 when they did it.

I also visited another cemetery in Dayton before driving to the Mark Ellis farm. I had done extensive research using plat maps and satellite photographs to determine which farm I believed to be the Mark Ellis farm, and traced the ownership from pre-1855 until 1997, the date of the most recent plat book I owned. If my research was correct, a John Ryan would be the current owner of the farm. I got out of my car and took in the view. I was right there, on the old Ellis farm, next to a big red old barn and a white two story house with two very big oak trees in the yard. A nice big dog greeted me as I walked up to the door and knocked. Nobody answered after several attempts, and then I noticed the sound coming from one of the two silos on the other side of the barn, the sound of silage being moved, and I guessed that the farmer must be working. I waited around a bit and took a few pictures before deciding to leave and come back in a while.

I then drove to another cemetery and on to Exeter on a beautiful road, and then to the Exeter cemetery. About an hour later I returned to the Mark Ellis farm and this time I didn't hear the silo noise, and when I approached the door of the house I noticed the inside door was open. I knocked and took a big breath hoping I wasn't nuts for trying to connect with the person living on the farm where my great great great grandfather had lived in a different day and age. Immediately a mans voice said "Hello" and a man in his late fifties or early sixties came to the door. I said, "My name is Lane Ellis and my great great great grandfather lived on this farm between 1855 and 1900, and I just wondered if I could take a few pictures of the place." The man said "Sure", and we started talking. I told him what I knew about the place and hoped that I had the right farm. He said that he'd purchased the farm in 1970 from a Paul Schrepfer, which was the name in my records – this was indeed the Ellis farm! I asked if he'd like to see some of my records and I showed him many plat maps and my satellite photographs, all of which he found interesting. He raised corn and dairy cows, and when I asked him he said the land there was good. We went and looked in the barn which seemed very old. Inside he showed me an old hay moving device made from wood and rope, which he said he hadn't moved since he bought the farm 30 years ago. He also showed me a very old hay harvesting machine that was also on the farm when he moved in, a McCormick machine with big studded iron wheels! The last Ellis lived on the farm in 1900, and some of these things, especially the hay moving contraption, could have been used by my ancestors! I took a number of pictures, and found out that the mans name was indeed John Ryan, just like my plat map from 1997 had noted. John told me that he had interesting original land records from when he bought the farm, and that he remembered seeing the name Ellis amongst the papers. He said he'd have to dig up the papers but that I was welcome to see them, and asked how long I was staying. I told him that I had to head back to Duluth that day, but gave him my business card and told him I'd be in touch and that I'd be back next year. He said that he had something to show me by the bigger of the two trees in the yard, and led me over to the tree where he pointed out an old post that the tree had grown completely around. Only a few inches of the post was visible, and several old rusty pieces of fence wire. I noticed a loose barb on the wire and asked him if I could have it as a memento, and after some work managed to get it off. It was probably a fence put up by Mark Ellis over 124 years ago. I felt great having this small barb as a connection to my great great great grandfather. I thanked him for the tour of the farm and said goodbye. I was overjoyed at my family history finds of that

day and the previous two days, and headed out on the long journey back to Duluth where I would be able to spend many weeks going over the information I had gathered.

Lane, thank you for your nice comments. I'm glad the history room at Eager Free was so helpful to you. It was a great joy getting that room together for people who could research local and family history. Once people knew we had a place for their records, we received many donations of materials. The cemetery records came from City Hall and the notebooks from a wonderful lady named Marilyn Jones Bailey who I met just before she died of cancer about 10 years ago. She had been a member of the state Cemetery association for many years and had a special interest in Evansville, since she was born and raised here. She also knew about the creation of the local history room and wanted to donate her information. Her husband brought it to us after her death.

I will check with the Rock County Court house to see about getting copies of the probate records, but I suspect the \$1.00 per page is accurate. I believe all of the deed records and probate records are kept at the Rock County Court House.

I will continue to look for Ellis family newspaper articles as I do research on the community. Here are a few that I had related to homes in the area. I'm not sure if you are related to Matt Ellis, but he was a prominent businessman here for many years.

I had posted the obit of E. T. Jordan on the Roots Web Rock County board and here is the address:

<http://boards.ancestry.com/mbexec?htx=message&r=rw&p=localities.northam.usa.states.wisconsin.counties.rock&m=1877>

The Jug Prairie mentioned in the obit included an area in western Union township and eastern Green County (Brooklyn Township). I've never seen it listed on an official map, but it was certainly mentioned in many local news items. It was an area of rich farm land and a diverse group of settlers including many Irish immigrants. Albany, Brooklyn, and Evansville were all centers of trade and business for these people. Many retired farmers moved to Evansville because it was a large shopping center and a major shipping point livestock and produce for the Chicago and Northwestern railroad. The railroad also provided excellent passenger service well into the mid 1900s.

Here is the obit. For Beulah A. Jordan. It is interesting to note that her pallbearers were men who had grown up on Jug Prairie and were either neighbors or schoolmates (or both).

"Dayton" news: Fred Ellis has the most of his lumber drawn for his new house, which he intends building soon.

June 26, 1883, Enterprise, p. 4, col. 1, Evansville, Wisconsin

—Mr Fred Ellis, who lives near Dayton, had his barn struck by lightning, Saturday the 23d ult. and one of the corner posts badly shivered.

August 2, 1892, Evansville Review, p. 1, col. 2, Evansville, Wisconsin

Mrs. Jerome Bemis has sold her city residence to Mr. Fred Ellis of Belleville consideration two thousand dollars.

The Badger, p. 1, April 2, 1898, Evansville, Wisconsin

Mr. G. F. Ellis who recently purchased the Jerome Bemis residence is now settled and expects to make Evansville his future home.

April 23, 1898, The Badger

d y s. re of it. a it. in ed	good joke until invited to the <b>—Homer Pyne of Beloit, who shot his wife, son and her paramour and shot and killed himself in Beloit, once worked for Mr. Fred Ellis and Mr. John Wilson of this city, both of whom speak very highly of him. The wife, son and paramour Arthur Cady will recover; the latter is discharged from the shops where he worked, the other employees refusing to work with him and it is stated that he will have to leave the city entirely.</b> One of the worst storms of the sea-	th in te  st R sc n t p tl
Evansville, Wisconsin		March 12, 1901, Tribune, p. 3, col. 3,

s, in- -well their while Gov. lisres- k out	THAT SHOULD BE. <b>—Mr. Fred Ellis went to Chicago, Thursday to see his brother-in-law, Mr. Ned Jordan, who underwent a severe operation, Saturday, from which he seems to be recovering as well as could be expected. He is cheerful and sends his best respects to all friends.</b>	7:30—S 7:45—S 8:00—“ ganiz 8:20—“ Teac 8:40—“ The eve
May 14, 1901, p. 3, col. 5, The Tribune, Evansville, Wisconsin		



—Mr. Ed. Jordan returned from the Chicago hospital Saturday much improved but not entirely recovered which will be a matter of some time. His brother-in law, Mr. Fred Ellis went to Chicago on the 4 o'clock morning train after him and returned with him on the 12:15 p. m. train which was a very quick trip, Mr. Ellis taking both breakfast and dinner at his home in this city.

June 11, 1901, p. 3, col. 2, The

Tribune, Evansville, Wisconsin

Madison, Wis." —Following is a list of the guests entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ellis during the fair: Mr. DeWitt Stark, Shopire, Howard Willoughby and wife and daughter, Mrs. Mae Perkins, Willis Willoughby and wife and son Frank, Willie Oliver and wife, Nettie Smith of Belleville, Mary Green of Dayton, Ralph Bleasdale and wife and mother of Leyden, Clifford Pratt, wife and three sons of Oregon, Mrs. Louisa Wackman of Brooklyn, and Thomas Green and wife of Edgerton.

September 10, 1901, p. 3, col. 4,

Tribune, Evansville, Wisconsin

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Jackson, of Belleville, were guests of his nephew, Fred Ellis, the first of the week. Mr. and Mrs. Jackson were married Monday and came to Mr. Ellis on their wedding tour, taking their departure Wednesday morning for Janesville and Beloit where they have relatives and friends. Mr. Jackson has been a well-known prosperous miller at Belleville for some time.

November 18, 1902, The Tribune, p. 3, col. 5, Evansville, Wisconsin

Fred Ellis and wife left Tuesday morning for Jefferson, Iowa, where they will visit a brother of Mr. Ellis.

May 21, 1904, The Badger, p. 1, col. 2, Evansville, Wisconsin

G. F. Ellis has closed his home and with his wife has taken board in Janesville for a few weeks while he is receiving treatment for his eyes from Dr. Thorne. Mrs. Fitts, also a member of the household, is in Oregon.

January 14, 1905, The Badger, p.1, col. 3, Evansville, Wisconsin

—Fred Ellis and his mother-in-law Mrs. Fitts have gone to Michigan where Mrs. Fitts will remain with her daughter while Mr. Ellis returns and with his wife visits the Exposition in Portland and the National Park.

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August 11, 1905,

Enterprise, p. 3, col. 6, Evansville, Wisconsin

Fred Ellis and wife expect to start upon their western trip the first of next week. They will visit the Exposition in Portland, Oregon, before their return.

August 18, 1905, The Enterprise, p. 3, Evansville, Wisconsin

Fred Ellis and wife took their departure Sunday evening for their western trip intending to visit friends in Spokane, Seattle, Portland and several other western cities before their return.

August 25, 1905, The Enterprise, p. 3, Evansville, Wisconsin

Howard Willowby and wife of Belleville, are the guest of her cousin, Mrs. Fred Ellis, of this city.

February 27, 1906, The Tribune, p. 1, col. 3, Evansville, Wisconsin

--Fred Ellis has received the sad news that Mrs. Wm. Young died of heart failure at her home in Spokane, Wash. Thursday April 19, at 2:30 o'clock. The many friends of the deceased and her relatives are much grieved to hear of this, especially the writer and his wife who were so cordial and pleasantly entertained at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Young during our visit west last fall, Mrs. Young was then the very picture of good health and spared no possible pains whatever to make our stay welcome and profitable.

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April 23, 1906, The Tribune, p. 3,

Evansville, Wisconsin

### Another Old Settler Passed Away.

A dispatch from Cheyenne, Wyo., to Fred Ellis of this city Friday last, conveyed the sad intelligence of the death of his brother, Henry H. Ellis. This gentleman was one of the pioneer settlers of Rock county and for many years made Janesville his home where he was in business. On account of failing health, he went west hoping to find improvement, but without success.

Mr. Ellis is of English descent, and came with his parents to this country in his infancy. He leaves a wife, son and daughter of Cheyenne, besides a sister, Mrs. Mary Jordan of this city, two brothers, Thomas of Jefferson, Ia., and Fred of this city.

May 23, 1907, Evansville Review, p. 1, col. 1, Evansville, Wisconsin

W. F. Biglow has gone to South Dakota on a business and pleasure trip. He will return home Monday morning. During his absence, Fred Ellis has charge of his furniture store.

June 21, 1907, Enterprise, p. 3, col. 3, Evansville, Wisconsin

Fred Ellis and wife had as their guests Sunday Mr. and Mrs. Jasper Edwards, of Dayton.

November 24, 1909, The Enterprise and the Tribune, Evansville, Wisconsin

Fred Ellis and wife, of Evansville, were guests of A. B. Kildow's one day last week; also visited their niece Mrs. J. Eldread, of Exeter.

June 1, 1910, Enterprise & Tribune, "Dayton" news. Evansville, Wisconsin

Fred Ellis and wife have been entertaining the past week, Mr. and Mrs. Volney Ross, of South Haven, Mich. Mr. and Mrs. Perry Ellis, of Chatfield, Minn., and Frank White and wife, of Oregon, Wisconsin.

June 22, 1910, Enterprise & Tribune, p. 1, col. 2, Evansville, Wisconsin

## EIGHTY-NINTH BIRTHDAY

A number of relatives and friends gathered Monday evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. G. F. Ellis in honor of the eighty-ninth birthday of Mrs. Harriett Fitts. The occasion was a very pleasant one for all present. After meeting and congratulating Mrs. Fitts, the guests partook of a bountiful dinner. Those present from out of town were Mr. and Mrs. Lysaght, an old friend from Monroe, Mr. and Mrs. White, Shelby, Mich., Mr. and Mrs. Frank White, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Cline and son Burr of Oregon, S. M. Mallette, Red River, New Mex., and Mrs. Carrie Blanchard, Riverside, Cal. After wishing Mrs. Fitts many happy returns of the day, the guests departed, feeling the day had been one of pleasure.

October 16, 1913, Evansville Review, p. 1, col. 4, Evansville, Wisconsin

### RELIC OF "TIPPECANOE CLUB"

Mr. Fred Ellis visited the Review office yesterday and exhibited an old badge used in the political campaign of 1840, in New York state. On it were these words: "Ridgefield Tippecanoe club grand celebration in commemoration of raising the siege of Fort Meigs, May 8, 1813, held on the site of the fort, June 11, 1840."

The badge formerly belonged to Mrs. Fitts, and was worn by her husband during the campaign. It now is the property of her daughter, Mrs. Fred Ellis."

January 21, 1915, Evansville Review, p. 5, col. 4, Evansville, Wisconsin

For Rent: Fred Ellis dwelling on South First Street. Inquire of Ralph Smith.

February 26, 1931, Evansville Review