

Her Quintuplets Starved to Death 40 Years Ago!

78-Year-Old Mother Tells How Her Brood of Five Arrived—Way Back in '96

By MARSHALL SMITH
PADUCHA, Ky., Nov. 26.—In a white, three-room farm-house on the Olmstead Ferry Road, 17 miles north of Paducah, Ky., lives a 78-year-old, gray-haired woman who was the wonder of the 19th century—the mother of the Mayfield quintuplets.

Spry, active and adventurously inclined Mrs. Elizabeth Lyon looked out over the brown, terraced flanks of the fields, and turned back the years to recall her five baby boys, who lived from four to 14 days. She believes they would have lived if they had had the same medical attention and scientific aid that the Dionne babies have had.

It was nearly 40 years ago, the night of April 29, 1896, that Mrs. Lyon became the mother of the



Time has wrinkled the brow and whitened the hair of 78-year-old widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Lyon, who on the night of April 29, 1896 gave birth to five boys. The quintuplets were born in a small frame house on a tobacco farm near Mayfield, Ky.

she still has her own teeth, no store-bought teeth for her—and laughed at the next question.

"Pain?" she smiled. "No, I didn't have any trouble. The doctor left about midnight. The babies were born between 9 and 10 o'clock. I was all right. Dr. Mathews went back to Mayfield and told 'em all about it."

"The next morning the people began to come in to see my babies. We had their picture made that first day. We had to borrow enough long dresses to go around, but we put the babies in a rocking chair and pulled it up to the door for the picture. That's why they all had their eyes shut."

"I named them like I dreamed their names, Mathew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul—but I was the only one who could tell them apart. Three had brown hair and dark eyes and two had light hair and blue eyes."

A question about feeding so many babies made Mrs. Lyon pinch her lips together.

"My babies starved?" "That's one reason they didn't live," declared the 78-year-old woman, as she relived those days of 39 years ago.

"My babies starved to death. We couldn't feed 'em. A woman came over to help me, but that wasn't enough. The people sent me all kinds of milk and the druggists sent me bottles, but they wouldn't let me use them. Nobody thought much of using bottles in those days."

"My babies were all fully developed, but they just starved to death—between 9 and 10 o'clock the night of April 29, 1896, on a tobacco farm near Mayfield, Ky. The babies were named Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul. They lived from four to 14 days. This photograph was taken 38 years ago, the morning after the children were born. They were placed in a rocking chair and pulled up to a door so that the photographer could take this picture.



These are the Mayfield quintuplets, the five baby boys who were born to Mrs. Elizabeth Lyon between 9 and 10 o'clock the night of April 29, 1896, on a tobacco farm near Mayfield, Ky. The babies were named Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul. They lived from four to 14 days. This photograph was taken 38 years ago, the morning after the children were born. They were placed in a rocking chair and pulled up to a door so that the photographer could take this picture.

On May 4, at 3:20 p. m., the smallest child died, living four days, 17 hours and 20 minutes; May 11, at 6:30 a. m., the second died, living 11 days, eight hours and 30 minutes; May 12, at 11:30 p. m., the third died, living 13 days and two hours; May 13, at 2:30 p. m., the fourth died, living 13 days, 17 hours and 30 minutes, and May 14, at 12:30 p. m., the fifth died, living 14 days, two hours and 30 minutes.

Mrs. Lyon was in bed only eight days.

One of Mrs. Lyon's unfulfilled desires has been to go to Corbell, Ont., to see Mrs. Dionne and her five daughters.

Mrs. Lyon now has an 87-year-old sister, four sons, a daughter, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Natural Color Quin Pictures

PICTURES of the Dionne quintuplets in natural colors, and pictures of other famous babies in rotogravure, will be in a special section of The Herald-Post Thursday.

The Quins, Shirley Temple, Our Gang tots, Baby Lark, and all these and more are coming to visit you in this elaborate picture section.

Mayfield quintuplets. This happened years before Mama Elzire and Papa Oliva Dionne were born and the event perplexed the medical profession of the 19th century.

Mrs. Lyon and her husband, Oscar Lyon, were living with their six other children on a 30-acre tobacco farm in Graves County, just out of Mayfield, Ky.

Prophetic Vision

Just before the babies came Mrs. Lyon had a dream while sitting before the open fire in her little Kentucky home. She had to sleep sitting up. When Mrs. Lyon had her dream it was at a time when men worried about the effects of comets on crops, the medical clergy compound were accepted and supernatural interpretations were often given to physical phenomena.

"I dreamed I was going to have five or six babies," said Mrs. Lyon as she sat in a rocking chair before the coal stove of her son's modest home.

"I even dreamed their names—Mathew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul. The day before they arrived I had a letter from my sister saying she and my brother also had a strange dream about me having a number of babies and asking if I was all right."

Mrs. Lyon brushed back the curly gray bobbed hair with her hand and went on.

"That night, I sent Claude—he was my oldest boy—for the doctor. That was Dr. Mathews. His initials were S. J. He lived in Mayfield. Pretty soon I heard Dr. Mathews come galloping up on his horse. He brought his saddle bags in with him. Others worried; she didn't."

"The doctor was worried, but I wasn't. I had sent for a neighbor, a Mrs. Richardson, a Mrs. Fanny Richardson, but she didn't get there until after the second baby was born."

"Dr. Mathews asked me what he was going to do with 'em. He and Mr. Lyon were scared. I just laughed at them. I said, 'Give 'em to me.' They would rub each baby with olive oil and pass 'em over to me. I remember it was cold enough to have a fire going in the fireplace."

"There were five boys weighing from four to five pounds. I knew there would be five of 'em. I wasn't surprised at all."

Mrs. Lyon stopped chewing gum—

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