

FAMILY CHRONICLE WRITTEN BY JOHN Q. CANNON
FOR GEORGE Q. CANNON'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
JANUARY 11th, 1903

On this, as on the last occasion of this chronicle, our festivities will necessarily be tempered with tears because of the recent removal from us of that beloved presence and personality in whose honor these celebrations have been held. That in spirit he is with us, we may, however, well believe; and that great soul of his will continue to rejoice in our joys, sympathize in our sorrows and watch over our struggles in the battle of life with fatherly solicitude.

No man ever thought of his family with a deeper and profounder love than did he; and rarely if ever has there been a man who was prouder of and more grateful for his family. A glance at his diary for some years past reveals the pleasure that these occasions have given him in the display of the regard and almost adoration in which his loved ones held him; and on more than one occasion when cares and trials such as none of us can comprehend appeared to forbid any thought of gayety or rejoicing on his part, he nevertheless testifies that these gatherings have given him cheer and gladness and their influence have lifted his spirit out of its harassments and sorrows. This thought has caused us to desire to continue the observance of his anniversary, even though he cannot be with us; to the end that on at least one day in the year the hearts of all of us, no matter where we may be, shall be turned toward him and toward each other, that love may continue to exist and increase among us, and that from the spirit of the occasion we may seize new courage and resolution in living so as to be worthy of our lineage and to carry out the mighty aims and hopes which he entertained for us.

Of course the first observance of the day was with a much smaller audience and under far different circumstances than those which we behold today. It occurred in a little home in Liverpool, England, seventy six years ago, and it is improbable that there is today a single surviving witness of the occasion. The main performers were his sainted mother, whose remains later found a burial place in the waves of the Atlantic, and himself, whose mortal part now rests peacefully in the city of the dead.

When he first began to keep a journal I do not know and only his older sisters and perhaps Uncle Angus can tell whether in his youth there were observances of the day. The first diary I find was kept in a small notebook in which he has written on the title page that it was a present to him from his Aunt Leonora Taylor on his birthday January 11, 1846, and in which he gives a brief biographical sketch of himself. As this was the year of the exodus of the Saints and they were wandering about the prairies of Iowa, it is not likely that there was any birthday party or festivity of any kind. We have all heard him tell, however, of a party which was given him on one birthday, probably that of the year 1848 when he was 21. The people had been forced to live on short rations, none of them had enough to eat, and he, like growing boys everywhere, was always hungry. He had made up his mind that on this occasion, a generous spread for those days having been provided, he would eat until he was fully satisfied, and he made great calculations on the amount of food he would consume. But behold, he discovered when he came to attack the meal, that he could not eat much if any more than usual. His stomach had become so contracted by long abstinence that when he had the opportunity for a square meal, he had no place to put it, and in consequence, he was as hungry again in a short time as he had been before.

During the following years until December, 1854, he was away from home in California and on the islands and early in 1855 and until the summer of 1858 he was again absent on the Coast. By this time, however, he had become a man of family, and it is more than likely that some slight observance of the day was had. Until 1864 he was almost all the time absent on missions, though I recall having heard that a birthday party was given him during one of those years in 42 Islington, Liverpool. After his return and while living in the Ivins' house in the 14th Ward, he was similarly honored at least once, when Apostles Lyman and Rich were boarding with us while attending the Territorial Legislature. Pres. Young and Uncle Taylor among others were present. While in the Cannon house and after moving to the farm, various members of his family no doubt entertained him on the anniversary and the last of these, which may be called private functions, was given by Aunt Garlie in 1894, to which his Associates in the 1st Presidency and his married sons and daughters, Uncle Angus, Brother Wileken and a few others were invited. On that occasion and I think once before at Aunt Sarah Jane's, there was some attempt at a program, tho it was more or less informal and of course it was not printed.

With the year 1895 began the celebration of the day as it has ever since been observed to which all the members of the family invited, somewhat elaborate preparations made, committees appointed and programs printed and performed. It was not held until the 7th of February, he being absent in the East on his birthday. There were addresses, music, and the younger children and grand children represented a bouquet each one reciting an appropriate verse, and George J. as the oldest grandson presenting at the close a beautiful bouquet of flowers. This celebration was held at the farm house, as was also the one next year January 11, 1896. On this occasion Abram was master of ceremonies. Each house on the farm has had the honor of furnishing the scene of at least one of these festive gatherings, the last one which Father attended being at Aunt Martha's, some two or three weeks after the 11th, and deferred because of his absence on the Sandwich Islands, and probably the most elaborate one being that at Aunt Sarah Jane's the previous year.

As to changes in the family to be noted as having occurred since last year, I may mention that of the ten children absent then, Frank, Sylvester, Rosannah and Amelia are this time with us, while two who were then present are now away, Willard in Holland and Preston in Germany, these making with Hugh, Emily, Mark, Joseph, Tracy and Karl eight whom we miss while remembering them. We have gained two brothers during the year by the marriage of Hester to Daniel B. Richards and Vera to Heber Sharp; one sister by Preston's marriage of Mabel Harker and another sister one degree further removed by George J's marriage of Lutie Grant. We cannot expect much further increase in brothers in this way, awaiting only now the efforts of Grace and Anne. As to sisters, however, our possibilities are still bright, with Aunt Martha's family, led by the veteran Brig, promising abundant results in time. Children have been born to Lewis and Mattie, Reed and Ada, Willard and Carol, Hugh and May, William and Adah, Alonzo and Dorothy--four boys and two girls. When our army of grand children begin the task of fulfilling the measure of their creation, the keeping of this Chronicle will be no child's play. During the year we have had little sickness and no deaths.