

George Q. Cannon in Hawaii

Excerpts from a report by Alice Cannon Hicken (granddaughter)

A Mission in Hawaii

In 1850, Elder Charles C. Rich, of the Council of Twelve, and President Young's representative in the Pacific Coast area, called George Q. Cannon and nine other men (GQC being the youngest) to fill a mission in the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii]. He set them apart and gave them special blessings to fill missions and preach the gospel in Hawaii. They arrived in Honolulu on December 12, 1850. Steerage passage on sailing vessels at that time provided the worst of accommodations, and besides the dirt, grime, and foul smells of the long voyage, GQC also always suffered from seasickness. It must have been glorious for them to set foot in the strange new land of great beauty.

Early in the morning of December 14, these elders walked up Nuuanu Valley to the beautiful King's Falls.... At the falls they bathed, their first real bath in a month, and then hiked another mile up the valley. In a secluded place about a thousand feet above sea level, in an area now called Pacific Heights, they built a stone altar about three feet high and three feet around. Together they sang hymns and prayed. After sharing their feelings about their mission, they knelt together as President Clark offered a prayer dedicating Hawaii to the preaching of the gospel.

Elder Cannon wrote: "One of the Elders spoke in tongues and uttered many comforting promises, and another interpreted. The Spirit of the Lord rested powerfully upon us, and we were filled with exceeding great joy."

Miracles on Maui

Lahaina

George Q. Cannon would arrive in Lahaina each time he returned to Maui from trips to Honolulu or other islands. It was where the missionaries assigned to Maui first arrived, where they discovered the work among the whites would be unsuccessful and where Elder Cannon was inspired to know that his labors were to be among the natives. It was here also that he received a revelation that the Hawaiian people are of the House of Israel.

Several weeks after their arrival, most of the missionaries decided to return home and the mission president tried to convince them to follow him on to the Marquesas. George Q. Cannon felt he could not leave this field of labor without being *condemned*. He wrote:

Our position, just then was a peculiar one. Here was our president, the man who had been appointed to counsel and guide us, proposing to us to leave the field to which we had been appointed.... What were we to do? How far did the obedience which we owed to him require us to go? This was an important question. To disobey a man in the rightful exercise of authority, was an act from which we naturally recoiled...

Since it would take too long to resolve the matter through correspondence to Church headquarters and back in those early days, Elder George Q. Cannon took his problem to a higher authority. The Lord answered his prayers and he was satisfied that he should remain in the Sandwich Islands.

As described by one writer:

The history of the Sandwich Islands Mission reads like a romance with the young Elder Cannon as its central figure. His eloquence charmed the natives and overpowered his opponents. His personal traits won the hearts of hundreds. From village to village and from island to island he passed, kindling in the hearts of thousands of the simple, honest and affectionate islanders, faith in the Gospel, a remarkable and contagious religious zeal and an unbounded and undying affection for himself.

In his journal George Q. Cannon wrote:

When I prayed I could go unto God in faith. He listened to my prayers; He gave me great comfort and joy; He revealed Himself to me as He never had done before, and told me that if I would persevere, I should be blessed, be the means of bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, and be spared to return home after having done a good work.

Many things were revealed to me, during those days, when He was the only Friend we had to lean upon, which were afterwards fulfilled. A friendship was there established between our Father and myself, which, I trust, will never be broken nor diminished, and which I hope has continued to grow stronger from those days to these.

It was also about this time, three weeks after their arrival in Lahaina, that he received the gift of tongues.

My desire to learn to speak was very strong: it was present with me night and day.... One evening, while sitting on the mats visiting with some neighbors I felt an uncommonly great desire to understand what they said. All at once I felt a peculiar sensation in my ears; I jumped to my feet with my hands at the sides of my head and exclaimed that I believed I had received the gift of interpretation! And it was so.

This gift did not leave him, but from that time forward, he was able to understand the language, and within five weeks he was able to converse reasonably fluently, to the amazement of all. He later was able to translate the Book of Mormon into the Hawaiian language.

Poi was the staple food of the natives, but it was detestable to most non-native people. GQC described his reaction:

Before leaving Lahaina, I had tasted a teaspoonful of poi but the smell of it and the calabash in which it was contained was so much like that of a book-binder's old, sour, paste-pot that when I put it to my mouth I gagged at it, and would have vomited had I swallowed it.

Traveling among the people he found that if he did not eat poi it would be a great inconvenience to the people. He recorded:

I determined to learn to live on their food, and, that I might do so, I asked the Lord to make it sweet to me. My prayer was heard and answered; the next time I tasted it, I ate a bowlful, and positively liked it....It may sound strange, yet it is true, that I have sat down to a table on which bread was placed, and though I had not tasted the latter for months, I took the poi in preference to the bread; it was sweeter to me than any food I had ever eaten.

Wailuku & the Iao Valley

GQC's meeting with Jonatana Napela

During poor weather one day in the area of Wailuku, he fell into a stream and got all wet. He was tempted to return to Lahaina, but the Spirit told him to remain. As he passed the churchyard, two half-white women came from a hut and called to the men inside, "E ka Haole," meaning "Oh, the white man!" They repeated this two or three times; and it was unusual since white men passed their home occasionally — but they seemed to be expecting this one. Three men came out in response to their calls and invited him to stay. GQC wrote:

The moment I entered into the house of this native and saw him and his two friends, I felt convinced that I had met the man for whom I had been looking.

The man was Jonatana Napela, the friend it had been made known to him that he would find in Wailuku. Napela was a great man, a prominent member of the community, and a judge. He became George Q. Cannon's dearest friend and a great Church stalwart in Maui. It was in Napela's home and with his help that much of the translation of the Book of Mormon was done by GQC.

[Brother Napela's wife was later stricken with leprosy and banished to the island of Molokai and he chose to go with her. The ship in those days didn't dare go into shore, so the victims of this dreaded disease had to leap from the ship some distance out and swim or wade into their new home. Brother Napela contracted the disease and died before his beloved wife.]

Keanae

The road winds along the coast at the foot of Haleakala volcano through sugarcane fields and taro farms around Keanae. Elder Cannon and Elder Keeler worked in the area. They split up to proselyte. Elder Keeler hadn't been as blessed in acquiring the language and had asked George Q. to help him teach the natives who seemed interested in his message. GQC describes his trip to that village through a narrow trail through dense forest and tropical beauty that touched his heart. He had never seen such profusion or beauty of vegetation. As he and Elder K. pushed their way through the tangled jungle underbrush and tropical plants, they had to lead their horse instead of riding. "Whatever the people who lived in the villages on that side of the island needed, they either carried in on their backs, or brought around in boats." There were well received there and during the time from Wednesday until the following Monday, one hundred and thirty people were baptized.

Of one experience in Keanae, Joseph J. Cannon wrote about GQC.

On this occasion as Elder Cannon related to members of his family the faces of the people appeared white to him as he spoke to them. Words were given to him. He hardly knew what he said, but the people told him afterward that he set forth the principles of the gospel in great plainness and convincing power.

GQC writes of his first visit to Keanae:

The Spirit of the Lord was powerfully poured out; I never enjoyed myself so well before in my life."

Pulehu

On the slope of Haleakala is the little village of Pulehu, where a small frame church stands on private grounds with a sign indicating: LDS PULEHU CHAPEL. There is a monument on the grounds at the Pulehu chapel that reads:

ERECTED BY
THE L.D.S. HAWAIIAN MISSION IN
GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH
IN HAWAII
NEAR THIS SPOT THE FIRST
BAPTISM WAS PERFORMED
AND THE FIRST BRANCH OF THE
CHURCH ORGANIZED IN 1851
BY
GEORGE Q. CANNON
AND
JAMES KEELER

In 1921, Hugh J. Cannon accompanied President David O. McKay on his famous tour of the missions around the world. They had an exceptional experience on this spot. As Hugh J. Cannon wrote:

I felt that I was treading on holy ground, that the veil between me and my father was very thin. Indeed, I felt that there was no intervening veil. The brethren partook of the same feeling. We had prayers under a tree back of the building and Brother Keola Kailai says that while we prayed he saw two men shaking hands. He thought I was shaking hands with Brother Hurst and was surprised when he opened his eyes to see me standing with my hands at my sides. I do not know the significance of what he saw but I do know that Father and Pres. Joseph F. Smith were there" (Personal Journal of Hugh J. Cannon, 1921)

He described the significance of this hallowed site.

Where George Q. Cannon and Brother Napela preached with such power that 97 of the 100 people who came to hear them were converted. The tradition is that Brother Cannon was not standing on the ground on this occasion, but was in the air and that a great light shone about him. Under a beautiful tree on the lot where this occurred and

where the church now has a neat little chapel, the visiting brethren engaged in prayer. It was an occasion which none of them will ever forget, for they stood almost in the visible presence of celestial beings. In looking back on the trip after the lapse of several years, there are few, if any, experiences which are more impressive than this" (Hugh J. Cannon, Trip Around the World Journal)

In 1955, D. Arthur Haycock, then President of the Hawaiian Mission, accompanied President McKay and his party to this sacred spot and President McKay recounted and reenacted the scene he and Hugh J. Cannon had experienced under the old pepper tree in 1921. Brother Haycock dropped to one knee and on the other propped his notebook and pencil and wrote down Pres. McKay's words as he recounted that spiritual event.

Pres. McKay reminisced in some detail about the experience and repeated what he had said after being informed of Brother Kailimai's vision:

We walked a few steps farther, and I said, "Brother Kailimai, I do not understand the significance of our vision, but I do know that the veil between us and those former missionaries [George Q. Cannon and Pres. Joseph F. Smith] was very thin." Brother Hugh J. Cannon, who was by my side, with tears rolling down his cheeks, said, "Brother McKay, there was no veil."

On November 4, 1889, Grandfather wrote in his journal, speaking of a testimony he bore at a conference in Cardston, Alberta, Canada:

I testified that the Lord Jesus lived, for I had seen Him and heard His voice.

In General Conference in October, 1896, he testified:

I know that God lives. I know that Jesus lives, for I have seen Him. I know that this is the Church of God and that it is founded on Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. I testify to you of these things as one that knows — as one of the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ that can bear witness to you today in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ that He lives and that He will live and will come to reign on the earth, to sway an undisputed sceptre."

Long-time church members on Maui tell stories of George Q. Cannon walking and conversing with a heavenly being. One account is as follows:

Many years ago on the island of Maui, George Q. Cannon came as a missionary for the Church. He came along and was the first missionary of the Church on the Island of Maui... Brother Cannon was observed walking about and speaking aloud as if he had a companion at his side. They even could hear another voice speaking, but could not see anyone. Through the conversations with his unseen companion, Brother Cannon learned the language in a very short time.

On another occasion, Brother Cannon was visiting in the Iao Valley where many people lived then. One middle-aged couple invited him into their home, to spend a few days. When it came time to leave he asked them if he could give them a blessing, but the

couple replied that all their needs were fulfilled. Bro. Cannon knew that deep in their hearts they always prayed for children and had never had any. So Bro. Cannon said that he desired to bless them — and he did. He told them that they would have as many children as the Christ had disciples. The following year their greatest wish was fulfilled. In time they had their twelve children plus two more.

The Iao Valley is still peopled with this couple's descendants.

In Hugh J. Cannon's journal, *Trip Around the World*, he refers to the importance of the island of Maui to the Church, and also something of his father's labors there beginning in December 1850, and then continues:

Fifty years later, and but a few months before his death, he again visited the Islands, at the great Jubilee which was held in the fall of 1900. After his return to Salt Lake, he met with his family and related some experiences of his life and particularly of his recent trip. His impressive words were those of an honest man who knew his earthly days were numbered and who desired to leave final testimony as a legacy to his posterity.

After relating many details of his visit and the memories awakened, he wrote:

We were riding in a carriage with President Samuel E. Woolley when we came to a spot which to me was very sacred. Leaving the others behind and with the request that I should not be disturbed, I walked into a garden among the banyan and banana trees and stood on the spot where I, as a young and inexperienced man beset by problems which I myself could not solve, had pled with the Lord for guidance, promising Him I would do His will if He would but reveal it to me. There in that garden, the Lord talked with me as one man talks to another, telling me I should remain, for a great work was to be done among that people.

NOTE: Years later, Elder Spencer W. Kimball, while speaking in a zone conference in Brazil, referred to three modern apostles who had seen the Savior. He mentioned Melvin J. Ballard, George Q. Cannon, and George F. Richards.]

From Lavina Fielding Anderson's research quoting President David O. McKay's journal and the experience with Hugh J. Cannon in Pulehu in 1921:

It seemed to me...that we were treading on sacred ground; for surely the Lord was the close companion and guide of that intrepid and faithful missionary.... I shall never forget the emotions that stirred Brother [Hugh J.] Cannon's heart as we neared the island [Maui] on which his father had translated the Book of Mormon. Brother Cannon told me about some confidences that his father had given him, his son, which had never been printed. I had never heard them before...when George Q. Cannon, crushed and discouraged, heard the voice of the Lord.

In the little chapel in Pulehu, Brother David Keala, spoke in hushed tones and with tears in his eyes as he told how the saints used to gather there and watch for George Q.

Cannon to come down from a short distance up the slopes of Haleakala where he was living. As they watched for him they saw him walking with someone and when he arrived he was alone and the knew that his companion was a heavenly being.

Another account is from his daughter Rosannah, whom he had chastised once, then later feeling concern over hurting her feelings, he invited her to sit down for a talk. He said, "Zanny, I want you to hear this from my own lips." He then told her of the time when, as a young missionary, he had been discouraged and the Savior appeared to him and "walked and talked" with him as one man to another and that the landlady had seen them walking along the beach and inquired about the identity of the other person.

NOTE: No one knows the exact location where this occurred, but George Q. Cannon had referred to his *experience in that garden*, and also this reference to *walking along the beach*. Others tell of a hillside location. In any case, the story that he had walked with a *heavenly personage* and had been seen by others, has been repeated by local Church members in the area of Pulehu over the years.

Pres. Lorenzo Snow's near drowning in Hawaii

When Church authorities were on a boat coming into Maui to visit the missionaries and Church members there, there was an accident involving the near drowning of President Lorenzo Snow. Elder Ezra T. Benson (the pioneer apostle ancestor of Pres. E. T. Benson), Elder A. L. Smith, and W. W. Cluff, were also present and helped save him, along with a native woman who nursed President Snow back to health.

"The accident occurred by the capsizing of a boat when trying to land while a heavy surf was running in the harbor. The captain of the vessel, Elders Benson, Snow, Cluff and A. L. Smith were all in the boat when it capsized. Elder Joseph F. Smith had refused to accompany the other brethren in the effort to land, being convinced that it was a most dangerous undertaking. Natives from the shore, who witnessed the disaster, rescued the unfortunate men, but it was 20 minutes before Lorenzo Snow gave any signs of life after being taken from the water." His restoration to life followed the ministrations of the brethren. (B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church, Vol. 5, Ch. 126, p. 100 - p. 101.)

In a park in Laie, Oahu, is a statue of *Nalimani* [in Alice Hicken's story, she gives the name of *MaMamhuu*]. This was the woman who was given credit for nursing President Snow back to health.

Diamond Jubilee

In 1900, when George Q. Cannon visited the islands for the Hawaiian Mission Jubilee, he received a magnificent greeting. He was crowned with the yellow lei, the emblem of royalty. Several prominent people in the government, past and present, waited upon him.

During his Jubilee visit, GQC prophesied that a temple would be built in Hawaii and this was fulfilled 19 years later.

Ex-Queen Liliuokalani attended a meeting at which he spoke half an hour in Hawaiian, which he was able to recall in a surprising manner. He wrote in his journal on December 17:

The ex-queen Liliuokalani sent me word that she would like to see me at one o'clock today as she expects to sail for Hilo.... She welcomed me very cordially and expressed the pleasure it gave her at meeting me. She also dwelt on the good my visit had done and would do, how the people's feelings had been aroused and their love awakened and strengthened by my visit. Many more remarks of this character were made by her, and when I arose to bid her good-bye, she said she would like me to give her a blessing; then she led the way to another room. Before I was aware of what she was doing, she was on her knees at my feet to receive the blessing. I felt very free in blessing her, and the Spirit rested upon us both. (Gospel Truth, Biographical Sketch)

NOTE: See painting of Queen Liliuokalani in the Iolani Palace in Honolulu. She was the queen who composed the beautiful Hawaiian song "Aloha Oe." She had also had to abdicate the throne ending the Hawaiian Monarchy in 1895. Prior to that she had been imprisoned briefly for *treasonable acts* because of her attempt to retain the monarchy. As a baptized Church member, even during her imprisonment she had her visiting and home teachers visit her regularly.

Of all the experiences in the intervening years there are none more dear to my memory than the blessed experiences of those years upon the Islands, where I saw the miracles of the Gospel repeated in the healing of the sick, by faith and the laying on of hands; where I grew strong in my own duties and certain of the divine help of God; where the sowing of the seed brought so bountiful a harvest.

July 29, 1854: GQC and four faithful elders who remained with him in the Islands, sailed for home, carrying with them the love, almost adoration, of literally thousands of people who had believed their words and been baptized. (Gospel Truth, Biographical Sketch)

Tributes in memory of GOC

Bryant S. Hinckley, from *The Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers*: George Q. Cannon attained a fame that spread far beyond the confines of the community in which he was one of the most illustrious leaders, being reckoned among America's greatest statesmen and holding even an international prominence in reputation....His seat was indisputably among the mighty. (A picture exhibition in Berlin on Unter den Linden displayed photos of noted men from different nations who died during 1901. The only Americans included were George Q. Cannon and President McKinley.)

Hugh J. Cannon (son of GOC), January 8, 1902, journal entry: Apostle Francis M. Lyman, bore a magnificent testimony in regard to Father's life, among other things saying the George Q. Cannon accomplished more in the 74 years of his life than any other man in the church.

Orson F. Whitney: President Cannon was a man of varied gifts and wide experience. A natural counselor, his eminence and influence as such were well warranted. As an orator he shone among the brightest, and almost equal to his powers as a speaker were his abilities as a writer....No man in Utah, after the passing of President Brigham Young wielded with all classes so great an influence as Pres. George Q. Cannon, and this influence was felt up to the very close of his life.

Heber J. Grant: There has been no other man in Utah who has shown such marked ability in so many different ways as has he....The broad educational views held by Pres. Cannon entitled him to be ranked as one of the foremost men, from an educational standpoint, that Utah has ever produced...speaking of the esteem in which Pres. Cannon was held in the world...I was informed upon one occasion, when a number of leading statesmen were discussing different men and were endeavoring to decide as to who were the eight brightest minds in America, Pres. Cannon was named as one of the eight....One thing with aided Pres. Cannon very greatly was his marvelous memory. Never had I come in contact with a man possessed of such a remarkable capacity to remember faces and incidents and family relationships....It seems as one stops to think of all that he has accomplished...that figuratively speaking during his lifetime he removed mountains....When the records of achievement and life's labors of the prophets of this dispensation shall be made up, the record by Pres. George Q. Cannon shall stand out as one of the brightest.

Joseph F. Smith: He was a mighty man...a man remarkable in many ways, whose actions inspired confidence in those with whom he was associated. Something about him won the love and confidence of all who met him.

Editorial, *Juvenile Instructor*: Pres. Cannon in intellectual gifts was richly endowed beyond the great majority of his fellows. In faith, few were his equals. As a servant of the Most High, he was among that favored few who saw the face of the Lord while in the flesh and heard the Divine voice, and yet remained in mortality.

Speaking for himself

George Q. Cannon, while serving as a territorial delegate to Congress:

I am here without a man who is in sympathy with me: but I have a Friend more powerful than they all. In this I rejoice. I feel there are angels with me, and as one of old said, "They that are for us are more than they who are against us." When I pray, I feel comforted and filled with joy. Of myself, I feel very weak; but in my Lord I feel strong.

George Q. Cannon article in the *Young Women's Journal*: "Did you ask how I got my testimony...why I never got one....The reason I never received one was because I did not need to get one. It was born within me."

On his mission to Hawaii: "Dreams, visions, and revelations were given to me and the communion of the Spirit was most sweet and delicious."

(This was the little boy who would cry in the dark because he hadn't lived in the time of the Savior and couldn't associate with Him as the apostles did. As he grew older he knew the Lord as a Friend and believed in Him implicitly.)

Visited others after his death

Hugh J. Cannon, September 26, 1901 journal entry: "President Lyman...told me that he had received a very pleasant visit from Father and Apostle Franklin D. Richards, who came from the other side and expressed their approval of this work."

Pres. George Albert Smith explained that George Q. Cannon had appeared to him and asked him to please do all he could to encourage his family to be faithful and active in the Church. This so impressed him that he attended Cannon Family Reunions at the Lion House for a couple of years to address the Cannon family members and repeat the message from their ancestor. Pres. Smith also stopped one of George Q.'s son on the temple grounds one day and told him about the visitation by George Q. and the great love he had for his family and the fact that he is concerned about our welfare in this mortal probation.

Aunt Zan (Rosannah Cannon), biographical writings:

My earliest and most impressive recollection of my father is his gathering his children together and explaining to us the principles of the Gospel. In those frequent meetings are exemplified his two outstanding characteristics: first, his love for the Gospel, for which he would willingly have given his life, and what was even more important, for which he suffered privation, indignities, and persecution; and second, his love for his family.

She also describes him as:

A genuine family man, a tender, loving father and husband, who was most content when he could be at home with his family and who taught them by precept and example. He was an expert at utilizing teaching moments, always in love, and sometimes with a twinkle in his blue eyes as he displayed a delightful sense of humor.

In spite of his exceptional intelligence, his faith was simple and childlike. Service to the Savior through His Church was the great purpose of his life. His trust in the Lord was unassailable. Prayer was his comfort and security. He taught his family to pray continually. "Make a friend of your Heavenly Father," he often said to his children. "Tell Him how much you appreciate His blessings and go to Him with your troubles. He is always ready to help those who seek Him."

Although he was zealous for our spiritual growth and welfare, that doesn't mean that he was forever preaching. In spite of his deep nature and the serious responsibilities of his Church work, he had a keen sense of humor and joy of living....He was jovial, but without losing dignity.

Father was a strict disciplinarian, and at the same time, an indulgent parent. He seldom if ever punished one of his children. Our punishment was in our hearts at causing him displeasure. His methods of exacting obedience were so tactful and his requirements so reasonably and always for a good purpose that it was usually a pleasure to obey....A word or a look from him was sufficient.

It is a sweet remembrance to his children, and is often expressed in his memoirs that the comfort of his happy family relations relieved his mental strain, and that his burdens seemed to fall away as he came in sight of home.

George Q. Cannon once reported that it had been made known to him at an early age that he would someday become an apostle. He told no one about it until later in his life when he explained that he had pled with the Lord that if he could gain his salvation and exaltation without that great responsibility he would be grateful. As a young man he was extremely timid and shy, and always a humble man; but his pleas were not granted, and he served in that Church capacity for more than 40 years.