

LETTER FROM GEORGE L. Y. CANNON TO WM. W. CANNON
TO BE READ AT THE 1/10/66 FAMILY REUNION.

8 January 1966

Mr. William W. Cannon
c/o Salt Lake Stamp Company
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Bill:

Because I am unable to be with you tonight, I thought I might jot down a few things I remember from my youth.

Because I was so much younger than the rest of the boys, my recollections of what went on at the farm are minor. However, as the youngest, I often traveled with Father and Mother. I have a very clear recollection of Father which has been added to in thinking over on my recollections of him and by things which I have heard about him in the years since then.

One of the stories which I remember, Uncle David told me shortly before he died. Father, on his mission in the Hawaiian Islands, translated the Book of Mormon into Hawaiian. After he was home and had married Aunt Elizabeth, he was called to San Francisco to print the Hawaiian Book of Mormon and to edit a little paper called the Western Standard. He took Aunt Elizabeth and his baby with him and also Uncle David, who then must have been about 14 or 15. Uncle David said that Father went to his office many a morning with nothing to eat and leaving nothing in the house for his wife and baby to eat, but he had been called to do this work and he was determined to do it cost what it might.

One day whether by chance or whether the man had looked Father up I do not know, but Father met one of the wealthy planters from the Islands whom he had known while he was there. Inquiring about Father's condition and finding out how poor Father was, this man gave Father \$3,000.00 in cash. Uncle David said Father looked at the money a long time and finally decided the Church in Salt Lake needed it more than he did, so he sent every penny of it to Salt Lake. Uncle David later sat in Brigham Young's office and heard President Young tell Father that that money had saved the Church; that they had decided they must give up and go back East when the money came and proved to be their salvation.

This determination, and stubbornness if you will, also were illustrated by Father's reaction when with Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Sara Jane and their babies they were returning from down South (I suppose at the time of the exodus because of Johnston's army) when Father was intercepted in Payson and told that Brigham Young wanted him immediately in Salt Lake. He left his wives and babies there to get home as best they could, and getting a horse rode into Salt Lake as fast as he could come.

This devotion to the Church of course was wonderful in those days but I feel sure in our day for a man to abandon his wives and children and leave them to fend for themselves under such conditions would be considered greatly irresponsible.

I remember that my Mother often asked my Father not to make her go with him on some of his trips because it meant leaving a household full of children and was tiresome for her. But Father was obdurate in this as in so many other things. My wife's grandmother, Elizabeth Romney was a very good friend of Aunt Elizabeth. My mother-in-law told me that she often heard her mother say, "If Brother Cannon had not been so stubborn in insisting that his wife and the children travel with him across the plains, the fatalities among the children would not have been so great."

This determination apparently dated back to his childhood. Aunt Mary Alice told me that Father as a boy was so stubborn that one day when he came in and threw his cap on the floor and his mother told him to pick it up, he said he wouldn't. She took him by the shoulder and forced him to pick up his cap but he closed his eyes in order not to see himself conquered.

Another time he announced one morning that he was not going to school. His mother said, "Oh, yes you are," and he answered, "If you make me go to school I shall tell Papa about the money you have in the sugar bowl." He did not go to school that day.

This trait of stubbornness I'm sure pervades the family, because I have heard many daughter's-in-law say that the outstanding characteristic of their husbands was stubbornness.

Father was very handsome, I think handsomer than any son he had. One time while I was living in California, I met a man who had lived in Salt Lake many years and was connected with the Salt Lake Tribune. He knew John Q. and Frank J., Preston, William, all the older boys. He told me he had never in his life seen a group of such handsome men as there were in the Cannon family.

This relates back to our past because I understand that the first George Cannon, Father's grandfather, when he was in his early teens left home to go to the north part of the Isle of Man because he was so jealous of his younger brother, Hugh, who was so very handsome and over whom his mother made such a fuss.

As an aftermath to this, when some three or four years had passed, he came back to the farm and as he came to the garden fence and saw his mother working in the garden, he said to her, "Be thee Nell Addy? I be thy son George."

Father, of course, was held up to us as an example of perfection; a person whom all who knew him revered greatly.

I find in thinking back, that he was also a person of whims and other perfectly normal human responses. He was very faddy about many things such as forbidding us at one time to eat sugar. This did not last long but was sternly carried out for a short time.

Another fad of his was to take ice baths for which Rad and ~~Earl~~ had to bring ice and pack him in the bathtub. This also did not last.

I remember a book he read called "The Water Cure" and this he tried but it did not last.

Father could be very stern, too stern I think, but this was the patriarchal ruling of one's family. I refer particularly to the time he whipped Eps and Frank Q. for running away to Ogden, and made me uncomfortable afterwards when he gave me the 10¢ rawhide whip he had used.

He could also be unduly lenient, as I well remember, because I lied to him one time, and I know he knew I was lying. I have never forgiven him for letting it pass and not correcting me and making me see that this conduct was not proper.

I remember one time when Wilf called him a dirty pig because Father insisted that Wilf wear his overcoat to school and Wilf said he wouldn't. Father was eating breakfast and immediately got up and chased Wilf around the table, flipping his napkin at Wilf and insisting that Wilf obey. Anne and I sat on the couch giggling and enjoying it immensely until Mother, with a smile, sent us out of the room.

It was delightful to travel with Father because he was full of information, took great care to explain to me about places where we were, about people we met; and we met many of his friends in New York, Washington and in the Hawaiian Islands. I considered the trip to the Hawaiian Islands a great privilege to see how the Hawaiians loved Father and see his love for the people there. I was particularly impressed when the Ex-Queen knelt to him and asked for his blessing.

I remember when we were in the Hawaiian Islands on the Island of Maui, Father saying to Mother "This is the Place." Father also told me on this trip that he had seen and talked with the Savior, and I think this is what he meant when he told Mother "This is the Place."

One thing that delighted Anne and me was how Father ate fried eggs. He always ate the white away and then balanced the yolk on his knife and popped it into his mouth. When we were going to California for his last sickness, we were having breakfast in the High Sierras, and as he balanced the yolk of his egg on his knife and had it almost in his mouth, the train lurched, and of course the yolk broke and ran all down the white vest he always wore.

I have a clearer picture now of the relationship between Father and me since there is exactly the same difference in age between me and my oldest grandson that there was between Father and me. Father had a gentle and playful attitude towards me. Often, when watching him shave I got a dab of shaving cream smeared on my face. When we were in bed, he would play games with me and tell me about some of the other members of the family when they were children.

Father was frightened to death of mice, which seems so strange to me in a man so stalwart and with such physical courage. I remember one family meeting when Father sat in his chair in front of the family, facing us in his usual patriarchal manner, and two little mice played under his chair to the great but silent delight of the family.

One thing stands out in my memory about our meals at the school house. It was the custom for us all to kneel in family prayers. Father would call on various ones to pray. One time he called on my Mother who was extremely shy. Mother made no response. Father said, "Carlie, I asked you to pray." No answer. Father looked up over the back of his chair and said, "Carlie, I asked you to pray." Without a word Mother got up and walked out with me after her. This has always pleased me that Mother could defy Father, that her shyness was greater than her fear of him.

As children, Anne and I got to know Aunt Mary Alice well because often, when Father and Mother were on trips, she came to the house and took care of us. We loved her dearly because she was a warm gentle, very intelligent person. She told us many things about their early life.

Father had come into the valley in 1847, leaving the children to come with John Taylor and his wife, Leanora, who was Father's aunt, and also with Aunt Mary Alice and her husband, Charles Lambert, whom she had married at fifteen, with the understanding that he would help take care of the younger children. Father was here two years before the others arrived. In the meantime he had acquired a garden plot in the old 14th Ward. Just before they were supposed to arrive, he was called to California with Charles C. Rich to mine gold and to truck between San Bernardino and other settlements. When Aunt Mary Alice and the rest of the children got there, the garden was planted and everything had been taken care of to provide for their welfare that winter before Father left. Father at this time was twenty-two. Being the oldest in the family he always assumed the leadership and looked out for the younger children. I am sure from talking to Aunt Mary Alice, Uncle Angus and others, that they thought there never was such a brother as Father was.

My early life, of course, was filled with stories of the pioneer days, of the days of the underground; such stories as when Father hid in the water tank in the attic of the Farm House up to his chin in water while the United States Marshal searched for him. He

pointed out the place where he fell off the train at Gogorza and was accused of jumping off the train.

I have often pondered the fact that my childhood was spent in the close aftermath of the pioneer period and my adult life in the tremendous swirl of ideas and happenings of this century. I think there must be few who have had the experience of such contrasts.

Two things mitigated against my sharing a lot of the experiences that the other boys had at the farm. First of all, I was subject to serious earaches and in the winter time particularly, was not allowed out of doors any more than was necessary, because exposure to the cold always induced these earaches. Secondly, being four years younger than the youngest of the boys, I was never part of the gang. I was allowed to trot along following them. I listened in to many conversations in the ice house, some of which I could repeat verbally today, where the older boys talked of things that all adolescent boys talk about. I had a pretty good education in the physical side of life at a very early age.

Collie more than any of the others seemed to be interested in Anne and me but I think mainly to tease us and play tricks on us. I remember being taken out in the middle of the pond on the raft and being pushed off, having to wade back to shore. Anne and I were putty in Collie's hands and were completely fascinated by him. I remember after we moved to town, if I could get 10¢ for carfare to go down to the farm to visit Collie, that was the supreme way to spend the day. This, despite the four years difference between us. Collie was always so full of stories, so full of life and so full of worldliness that I just drank in everything he told me.

Collie was always up to something. I remember the bonfires he used to build in the field back of his mother's house where we cooked potatoes which we had brought from home. When finished, the skins to the potatoes were scorched and the potatoes when opened, got full of ashes but they tasted heavenly.

Collie was also the source of all the scandal in the family, which added, of course, to his delightful company.

I remember the boys with their cows. Ed with Duchess, who always had to give the same amount of milk every time even though the pail might have to be filled out with water. Rad with his cow, Jeanie, which had a curly tail reminding him of one of his girl friend's hair, Claws with Minne and Whitie, and most of all I remember my own cow which I had to learn to milk. I always thought it was unkind to give that cow to me as a starter because she had a split teat which squirted milk over me while I was milking her. But this is the fortune of the youngest boy.

I have often thought of Father's wives as being very lonely women. They were marooned at the farm, no social life with Father and with

only the occasional visitors who came down to see them. I think we were all aware of the visitors. Aunt Jane Simons who came to visit Aunt Eliza, Auntie Daniels who came to visit Aunt Martha and others. But there may have been a deeper bond between these women than was apparent on the surface. Shortly before Aunt Martha and Aunt Sara Jane died, they told me in almost identical words that had Mother been their own sister, they couldn't have loved her more. I think this affection must have been mutual with all of them because certainly we were never aware of any discord in the family.

I think we have to view Father's life against the background of the Church to which he has so completely devoted and to whose progress and welfare he was willing to sacrifice himself and all else in his life, to further what he felt was a divine command. This certainty gave him great serenity. On the last trip to California I remember his lying down and resting in the state room talking to us about his complete faith and trust in what would follow after death.

In going over some of Father's papers and discussing him with Mark, Joseph and Mona's son, we were struck by the increasing egotism which Father developed in the last part of his life. This was a normal reaction to the tremendous adulation and respect which he encountered everywhere he went. Human like the rest of us, he loved attention and the seal that it put on a life well and honorably spent with great accomplishments.

Because of Father's devotion to the Church, I am sure his hope was that all of his children would be equally devoted to the Church. This has not proved to be the case but I think Father would not be ashamed of any of us could he see how our lives have turned out. For myself, I have no words to say how wonderful it has been to be the youngest of twenty-one brothers, such as the men in the family have been. I think of Mamie, Zannie, Emily, Grace and Anne with so much warmth and affection. They were wonderful women.

I should like to tell the nieces and nephews of the family and the others who are now coming up, how proud I am of all of them and how grateful I am for them because when they add luster to the Cannon name, we all share it.

Please give my warmest regards to all of the members of the family and tell them how wonderful it is to bear the name of Cannon.

Affectionately,

Georgius Y. Cannon