

ELIZABETH HOAGLAND CANNON

Born November 3, 1835

Died January 25, 1882

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By Annie Wells Cannon

Early in the 19th century, a New Jersey youth, Abraham Hoagland, blacksmith apprentice, answered the call of the West for new settlers. The West in those days extended beyond the Mississippi River and constituted a portion of the Northwest Territory, peopled largely by Indians. The group from New Jersey journeyed into the forests bordering the great northern lakes, and settled in that part of the territory which became the State of Michigan.

Such ventures require high courage, muscular strength, and strong hearts. Young Abraham possessed these qualities and more. He was descended from the early Dutch who crossed the seas in 1614, and settled along the Atlantic Coast; founders of the great States of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. He had in his veins the brawn and the courage of those ancestors, also caution and wisdom, enough to go unburdened with family ties until he was assured the venture was for the best. He shod his own horses, and built his own wagon. This he loaded with necessary provisions and well-sharpened tools, and departed on his long and hazardous journey.

At home he left his betrothed -- Margaret Quick, a charming girl, who, like himself, was of Dutch descent. Her family was of equal courage, being in direct line from Captain Peter Quick, a soldier of the American Revolution. Abraham promised to return for her in a year should the new country prove as they hoped. This promise he kept, and in a rude cabin in the Michigan clearing these two began their married life. The frontier settlement was named Royal Oaks. It was here November 3, 1835 Elizabeth was born. She was the third child of a family of six, three sons and three daughters. Elizabeth grew tall and lithe and fair. She loved the

great trees of the nearby forests, was not afraid of the Indians or foreign settlers, and enjoyed nothing more than to join groups of young people to gather hickory nuts or go into the marshes in search of red, crisp cranberries.

In the hospitable Hoagland home a simple faith in divine guidance prevailed, and here elders of the Restored Gospel, found a welcome, for here dwelt those known as "the honest in heart." They heard the testimony of the elders, and without doubt accepted their teachings. Baptism almost immediately followed conversion, and soon the family migrated to Nauvoo; the gathering place of the saints, where under the inspiration of the Prophet Joseph Smith they too, might help build up the Church.

In Nauvoo Abraham Hoagland became a Bishop, a position held with honor all the years of his life; presiding over one of the four Wards at Winter Quarters, assistant to Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter in the early pioneer days, and the first Bishop of the 14th Ward in Salt Lake City. Through the dark days of Nauvoo following the martyrdom of the Prophet, the Hoagland family, like others, endured heroically the hardships and the persecutions. They were among the first to leave in that ever memorable exodus from Nauvoo, crossing the frozen Mississippi and wending their way over the Iowa prairies to the banks of the Missouri where Winter Quarters was established for a temporary resting and outfitting post.

Elizabeth was at this time eleven years old, large for her age, and of great help to her mother in the care of her brothers and sisters. She walked nearly all the way across the plains, to lighten the load for the oxen, and much of the way helped her father drive.

John Taylor of the Council of the Twelve was in charge of the company of which the Hoagland family were a part. With him was his nephew, George Q. Cannon, a young man of nineteen, who frequently found occasion to

help Elizabeth in some of her tasks along the way. Naturally, a strong friendship was awakened. In referring to the journey in after years, it was always in a spirit of pleasure, never hardship. She would tell of the gatherings around the campfires at night, of the songs and the dances, of the games they played and the plans they made for a time when the journey would be ended, until one almost felt those days around which we have woven so much of travail and of sorrow, were full of gayety and joy and laughter. She was light-hearted, young, and on the verge of life's great adventure, though scarcely conscious of the fact. They arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in September 1847, the first company following the original pioneers. Her father built a log and mud cabin in the "Old Fort" on what is now known as Pioneer Square (Pioneer Park), but early moved to his allotted acre and a half on the corner of Second South and First West Street, where he built a more commodious log and adobe house. Around this corner Bishop Hoagland, with the help of his children, planted Honey Locust seeds from which grew, with the years, large and beautiful shade trees. These were the first trees of that kind in the valley, and only within recent years were they removed to make way for modern improvements. In days of scarcity when nearly everyone lived on rations, Elizabeth proved her resourcefulness by hunting along the banks of the Jordan River for cresses, or weeds, and roots, out of which she made a sort of vegetable greens which was both palatable and somewhat nourishing.

The romance begun on the plains proved to be a real love affair, and the young couple became engaged to be married. In 1849 George Q. Cannon was called, with some other young men, to go to California and engage in gold mining for the Church; so they parted, to be reunited only after a period of four years, for the mission of George Q. Cannon to the

Hawaiian Islands, as told by himself in the charming little classic "My First Mission," prolonged the separation.

During these waiting years Elizabeth taught a school in the 14th Ward, and engaged as other young pioneer maidens, in the many homely domestic arts -- drying fruits, soap making, spinning, carding and weaving; also taking part in popular amusements, dances, amateur theatricals, sleigh riding, skating, candy pulls, spelling bees, etc.

In those days letters were most infrequent but though the time seemed long, they were, from both sides, full of encouragement, with never a word of despair or impatience. A remarkable instance, and one which clearly shows the faith of Elizabeth, is told in a now faded letter, written in 1851, where Brother Cannon reminds her of what she said at their parting. To his statement, "Elizabeth, I am only called for a year to California. Would you prefer that I went, for perhaps three years, to France?" She replied, "I would rather you went to save souls than to find gold, even though the time be longer." That this preference proved the way of the Lord for them is amply verified in the marvelous result of the mission that followed.

December 11, 1854, Elizabeth Hoagland became the wife of George Q. Cannon. The marriage occurred very shortly after his return from this long mission. In later and more prosperous years they would relate the simplicity and absence of all outward display of the usual adornment on such occasions, and with much laughter describe the grotesque figure of the bridegroom at the wedding supper in an ill-fitting costume borrowed from friends. Notwithstanding absence of worldly wealth, they were young, strong, industrious, and not afraid to face the future, whatever it might portend.

Nearly all the first ten years of their married life were spent in missionary work, sometimes parted, sometimes together. Early in 1855 the young people set out on a mission to California, where George Q. Cannon was to assist Elder Charles C. Rich in the presidency of that mission, establish a newspaper in San Francisco - "The Western Standard" - in the interest of the much maligned Mormon people, and publish his translation of "The Book of Mormon" into the Hawaiian language.

The small company for this mission in which Elizabeth Cannon was making her wedding tour took the southern route. From Salt Lake City to Fillmore they were accompanied by President Brigham Young and a party of Church officials who were holding conferences in the southern part of Utah Territory. After attending the conference in Fillmore, the company continued their way westward, with the blessing of President Young and promises of a safe journey.

This journey was far more perilous than crossing the plains. On the Nevada desert they almost perished for want of water, and a long delay caused by the illness of both men and their animals seemed as foreboding as the fate of the Donner Party, but faith and administrations gave them hope and courage. Elizabeth stood this ordeal better than the men. After reaching the Mormon settlement at San Bernardino, where the party was assisted both materially and spiritually, they proceeded to the coast and continued the journey by water from San Pedro to San Francisco.

The two-year mission in San Francisco was fraught with hardship, inconvenience and sorrow. Poor, as all Latter-day Saints were in those Pioneer days, Elizabeth had many heartaches. She knew scarcely anyone - she was preparing for the arrival of her first child, and she had the

upkeep and care of the mission home on her hands. Two of the printers of the newspaper, poor as themselves, lived with them. Here again, her resourcefulness was manifest. Her husband often told of those days, that when he left for work in the morning with comparatively nothing in the house to eat and no money, he returned at evening time to find her smiling and happy with a tempting dinner awaiting him. Perhaps it was the training through this necessity that made her so efficient in household arts, for never in all the years of their married life did he have cause for embarrassment over inviting friends or strangers home to share a meal with him. The excellence of her housekeeping and cookery was proverbial and a matter of great family pride.

During this mission two children were born to them: The first, George Q. Jr., so eagerly anticipated but permitted to remain on earth only a few weeks; the second, John Q., born in the spring of 1857. In September of this year the news of the invasion of President Buchanan's Army upon the people of Utah caused the calling-in of all the scattered outposts of the Church. Bother Cannon remained to dispose of his printing plant, pay his debts, and close up the affairs of the mission, but his young wife and little son (in charge of his brother, David) started on the homeward journey. It was winter time and the baby's feet were so frosted on the way that for many years of childhood, it was necessary for him to wear fur-lined shoes during the cold weather. Elizabeth was not willing to leave the little body of her first-born in a far-away land, so in the wagon was the metal casket with its precious contents. Her fortitude and courage during that journey was sometimes told by her husband's brother, David H. Cannon, but seldom if ever related by herself was the sad, heart-breaking experience.

Almost immediately following the reunion of the family in Salt Lake City, and before a suitable home could be established, the people were called upon to move south awaiting the result of entrance of Johnston's Army into the City.

The Cannon family moved to Fillmore; Brother Cannon taking with him the Deseret News printing press, and he published the paper there.

On his return northward from the "move," while at Payson unhitching the teams for noon, a messenger from President Young drove up bearing a letter. The contents of this letter was a call to a mission to the Eastern States, with the word that the company with which he was to travel were awaiting his arrival. In the eyes of George Q. Cannon, a message from President Young was a divine call, and when an hour later the messenger returned, he was ready to start on another mission, bidding his family farewell on the roadside. A few weeks later, March 12, 1859, a third son, Abraham H., was born, while the father was in Philadelphia on this mission. For these two years Elizabeth supported herself and the little ones with such work as was available. Shortly after the end of this mission, her husband was ordained an apostle and became a member of the Council of the Twelve. It now seemed that the home life for which Elizabeth Cannon had so longed was to be her blessing and reward. This, however, was not to be her lot. In a few weeks she bade good-bye to her two little boys, and departed with her husband for England, where he had been called to preside over the European Mission and edit the Millennial Star. She remained there three years - from 1860 to 1863, during which time she traveled extensively with her husband, visiting the several branches of the Church in England, on the continent, and in the Scandinavian countries. She was much beloved by the elders and saints for

her kindness and benevolence, her efficient care of the mission home, and her sympathetic assistance where there was sickness or sorrow.

She had two lovely children born in England - Georgianna, her first daughter, and a son, George Hoagland. With these two children and an adopted daughter, a little English orphan, named Rosina, aged 10, she left England for home, with a party of Mormon emigrants; her husband having to remain a year longer until his successor in the mission presidency should arrive.

On the ship (there were no floating palaces in those days) there were many inconveniences. This proved another long and weary journey. The party were detained six weeks at Florence, Nebraska, where there was an epidemic of whooping cough. The beautiful little girl, Georgianna, died on the plains at Sweetwater. The mother refused to bury the child there, and so a crude casket was made from such material as they had with them. Soon after arriving home the little boy, George H., succumbed to the dread disease. Only from the letters interchanged at this painful period can one learn the agony of these days to both parents. Two other little girls, Elizabeth and Lillian, died in infancy, both born (and one died) while the father was far from home engaged in missionary service.

These events, so sorrowful in their nature, were borne with her customary fortitude. President Joseph F. Smith, who knew her perhaps as well as anyone, spoke of Elizabeth Cannon, as a woman of patience, faithful endurance, and unquestionable integrity.

The main desire and ambition of Elizabeth Cannon's life was to build a real home and make it the most desirable place in all the world for her husband and children to enjoy; a mecca of delight for them and their friends. With the return of her husband from this four-year mission, his high calling

in the Church and his intense and active interest in all public affairs that would tend to strengthen the Church or build up the State seemed to bring to her this longed-for opportunity. At first in a humble way, later in more prosperous days, more auspicious, she was permitted to satisfy her desires; but, whether in the old log house of her father's or in the more pretentious habitation, she was always the same - the perfect lady to the manor born. Never at any time was she unequal to the occasion, whether at official dinners and receptions in the nation's capitol, at homes of distinguished people in the large cities, or entertaining some of the most noted people in the world, her dignified and easy manner gave one in her presence a feeling of ease and security. The quiet family life, however, was not to be entirely her lot. Her husband's active career compelled her to accompany him on many of his journeys. Naturally when he represented the Territory as Utah's delegate to Congress, it was imperative for her to set up a temporary home in Washington. Always, she had with her on these occasions during the long session, her smallest children.

So home-loving a woman naturally shrank from the publicity of political life, but she sustained her husband, and in her quiet steadfast way was a support and comfort through his marvelous career, as long as she lived.

When at last it seemed as though there might be years of unmolested, prosperous home life, her health began to fail. Her two oldest sons, John Q. and Abram, were married and performing missions in foreign lands when the last call came for her January 25, 1882.

When she bade John Q. good-bye as he left for his mission, she said, "My son, this is our last farewell, you will never see me again in life. God bless you."

Characteristic of her courage to the end, with these two sons thousands of miles away, and her devoted husband in Washington making a desperate defense for his people against the passage of the Edmund's Bill, she dictated between wavering breaths the following telegram to him, "Remain at your post. God can raise me up, if it is His will, in answer to your prayers there, as well as if you were here. All is being done for me that can be done." Later in the day she had her four little children brought to her bedside - Mary Alice, 14; David H., 10; Emily, 7; and Sylvester, 4; kissed them and blessed them; then to the eldest, Mary Alice, consigned to her special care her baby brother, Sylvester.

At this writing* only two of the six children surviving their mother, are living: Sylvester Q., the present Presiding Bishop of the Church, and Mrs. Emily Cannon Willey, gracious and home-loving like her noble mother. David, the little child of ten, performed a remarkable mission in East Prussia, where he died in 1893. He refused to use the means sent from home and traveled without purse or script. The money was used later, to emigrate his many converts. Abraham H. became a member of the Council of the Twelve. He died in 1896 leaving a large and fine family. John Q., the oldest son, was a brilliant author and journalist. At the time of his death in 1931, he was editor of the Deseret News and President of the George Q. Cannon Family Association. Mary Alice, the oldest daughter, fulfilled her mother's request, and young as she was, proved herself a mother and guide to her younger brothers and sisters. She died like her mother, in the prime of life, 1911, leaving a family of six young children.

It would be hard to select among the Proverbs given for an ideal of womanhood one particular verse for Elizabeth Hoagland Cannon; she exemplified them all; still the benediction in the last verse is fitting, "Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

*The exact date of this history is not known, but it was written sometime between 1931 and 1938.