

Autobiography of Constant Joseph Carmichael

Written in his 86th year (1919)

[Transcribed by Gary T. Panell (2008), wife of Marlene Panell, who's mother's maiden name was Carmichael and great grandchild of Constant Joseph Carmichael. This autobiography is given in the hopes that it will be a blessing to Joseph's relatives and all those who read it.]

At the request of my grandsons, Oak and Ray Davis, I will write a short sketch of my life.

In the old family Bible, printed over one hundred years ago, I find recorded Archibald Carmichael, born November 23, 1801; Martha Pennington, born January 27, 1803. United in marriage August 5, 1824, in Surry County, North Carolina, near the Pilot Mountain. They immigrated to Indiana in the early part of 1825 and located in Monroe County.

To this union nine children were born, of which I was the middle one. Their names follow: Augustine, Elizabeth, Stacy Ann, Martha Jane, Constant Joseph, Josephine, Starling, Archibald and Henry.

My grandfather, Archibald Carmichael, was born in Scotland and came to America in the early days. He settled in North Carolina, Surry County. My grandmother, Elizabeth Nix, was also born in Scotland and came across the great ocean in a sail ship and located in Surry County, North Carolina, where she and grandfather became acquainted and were united in marriage.

To this union were born eight children, five sons and three daughters: Starling, Richard, Alexander, Joseph and Archibald; the daughters were Sarah, Elizabeth and Jane. All lived to an old age.

Grandfather served seven years in the war of the Revolution. None but God and the men who walked and fell by his side knew the suffering endured. In recounting the sad events of the long war, he would often repeat the incident of the Indian that took seventeen deliberate shots at close range at General Washington and then said that he could not be killed with a bullet.

My grandfather Joseph Pennington, and his wife came from Ireland over the mighty deep and selected a beautiful home on Ranch Creek, Surry County, North Carolina. He was a miller by profession, yet farmed some. He lived happily to a good old age.

Grandmother Pennington was noted for piety and industry in rearing and caring for her family. She spent many days and years at the spinning wheel and loom. She was the mother of ten children, four sons and six daughters. All lived to raise large families.

My wife's grandparents, John Hosteter and Catherine Sidle, were born in Germany. They came to America when young and settled in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. He was a cooper [one who makes or repairs wooden tubs and casks [barrel] by trade.] She was a seamstress and was also at the loom and wheel very much. They had three sons and two daughters; namely, John, George, Jacob, Mary and Elizabeth. All lived exemplary lives.

On her mother's side, grandfather Mathias Birchfield and Gertrude, his wife, were also born in Germany. They were married in America, moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio, where they lived and died in Tuscarawas County.

He was a local preacher in the United Brethren denomination. He was a devoted, self-denial man, going at his own expense and laboring with his own hands that he might not be a burden to anyone. It is reported of him that he died happily, giving the glory to God. They had a large family and all lived to a great age.

Our family settled in Indiana in the early days when it was but little improved. It was a heavily timbered country, including tall oak, black walnut, yellow poplar, hickory, beech and sugar tree.

These had to be cleared away to give place to build a cabin, plant corn, sow wheat and other crops. Plenty of deer, wild turkey, some bears, wild cats and large gray wolves. I have often heard my mother tell of driving the deer out of the wheat field and the wild turkeys out of the garden.

Many times, especially in autumn, my father would take his trusty rifle at early twilight or coming day, get in the thick timber where the turkeys were accustomed to roost, then take from his pocket what he called a 'turkey caller' which he shaped from the large bone in a turkey's leg, place to his mouth and call. It would so completely imitate the turkey's voice that the large bird would answer at once, then with the unerring aim of the hunter, the large gobbler would fall, and give plenty of meat for twenty-four hours.

In like manner when he wanted venison, his steady aim never missed the mark. Sometimes the deer was so large that he would have to carry one-half at a time to get it home. Although poor in the world's goods, we lived happily.

There were no schools to speak of in those days. I was compelled to work hard, cut down the tall trees, then cut them into logs fourteen to fifteen feet in length and roll them into heaps or piles to burn. I selected the best splitting logs, oak, hickory, walnut and poplar and split them into rails for fence building.

I grubbed the small underbrush and green briars, and thus pave the way for crops, so I obtained but little knowledge of books. My first schooling or lessons was by subscription. By this I mean we had no public school system. Anyone who could teach spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic (and was so disposed) could circulate a subscription paper; that is, he would go to his neighbors and say, "If you will give me \$2.00 per scholar, I will teach a three months term at a certain place."

There were few schoolhouses in those days. I well remember my first teacher, and also I remember the schoolhouse. It was built of logs. At the proper height for a window they left out one log on one side of the house and inserted narrow slats or boards at intervals, say about two feet apart, and then pasted thin white paper on these. There was no glass.

Seats were made by splitting slabs from logs, ten inches or a foot wide. Holes were bored in these and pins for legs were inserted. There were no backs to the seats; they did not sit the 'easiest,' but the world moved on just the same.

We had elementary spelling books, McGuffey's reader, sometimes the life of Washington and Marion, for readers. They were not bad books and would be good for some people to read now. Later on the state adopted the public school system, but my school privileges were very limited.

In those days we sowed flax seed. When it grew up and ripened we pulled it up by the roots and spread it swathes. When it was dry we bound it into bundles, removed the seed and spread it on the ground. When bleached so the lint would leave the stalk, it was broken and swingle dressed ready for use.

It was then spun and woven into cloth for pants, shirts, dresses and grain sacks. That and the wool from the lamb's back, spun and woven at home, comprised the wearing apparel those days.

The good old mothers and their obedient and loving daughters all seemed happy when sitting by the spinning wheel drawing out beautiful, fine thread, or walking back and forth by the big spinning wheel reducing the soft rolls of wool to long threads of yarn which went into the loom and finest flannels and coverlets were made for the use of the beds and coverings for the body.

And may I not forget the beautiful little fields of golden grain. We saw the fathers and sometimes the mothers, with reaphooks or sickles in hand, march into the field and side by side remove the wheat and put into the shocks and, when thoroughly dry, bring it to a clean place or into the barn, if any.

It was sometimes laid in circles and the horses driven over it, thus crushing out the grain. Then two strong men or women with large sheets would winnow the chaff from the wheat. In later years fanning mills and machinery were invented. I have cut acres with the scythe and cradle. Now the binder and header do the work.

But there came a time in my life of which I wish to speak. It was a morning in May, 1854; I was going on horse back to a little village. I met and passed a group of people, a middle-aged man and some members of his family, among them was a young lady, whom you now call Grandma.

She had on a sunbonnet, but I saw the face under it. I said to myself, '[You are mine.](#)' Of course, I had to make many visits. It was the home of John and Magdalene Hosteter who had moved from Stark county, Ohio, a short time before.

We made our arrangements and were married October 18, 1855. I had bought a piece of land, which had a log house, a small orchard and a spring. Some of the land had been cleared and ready to cultivate. The house was comprised of one room, 24X24, with a stick and clay chimney.

We had no cook stove, they were scarce in those days. We cooked by the fireplace, baked bread on the hearth in a skillet, yet we enjoyed life. It was in this house that our first-born came to gladden our home.

In all [nine children were born to us](#). Five of them are living and four have passed into the great beyond. I will here give their names and date of birth as a matter of record. Martha Magdalene, born June 21, 1857; Samuel Albert, born May 8, 1859, drowned in a tub of water April 3, 1861; John Archibald, born December 24, 1861, died November 7, 1867; Daniel Voorheese, born August 11, 1864, died March 2, 1881; Rachael E., born March 22, 1867; Joseph D., born July 17, 1869; Jacob, born August 7, 1872; Isaac, born May 6, 1875; Mary Ellen, born July 28, 1878, died August 9, 1893.

As we chronicle these events in our home life we wish to leave the impression upon the mind of the reader that we have living testimony that the Lord has blessed the living and the dead. So we feel comforted in the hope that their ashes will be gathered from the different states and that by and by we shall meet them and all the redeemed of the Lord in that home where death is unknown.

In the early years of our married life we both became deeply interested [in regard to our condition as sinners](#) before God and in the early spring of 1859 were brought out in a hope which we feel has been precious to us all these years.

We united with the Baptist church on June 3, 1859 and enjoyed the fellowship and kindness of the membership of the church. Both of us had good voices to sing, and visited much among the churches.

But those days of happiness turned to gloom and sorrow. The Civil War came on. I was drafted. I hired a young man to go in my place, this cost us over one thousand dollars. We had to sell our home. Then it came into our minds to move to Missouri. We fixed up a two-horse wagon, bows and sheets for covering and with a party of five other families started in the early part of April 1865. We were twenty-eight days on the road, a journey of about six hundred miles. We camped out and slept in the wagon at night. Much rain fell, making the mud very deep and we sometimes had to hitch four and six horses on a two-horse load.

One incident in this journey I wish to mention. In our caravan or company was a precious neighbor woman who had become somewhat deranged in mind. We had traveled all day in a slow, drizzling rain. We were all wet and tired. We had mired in the mud many times [got stuck in the mud].

This was in Illinois between Bloomington and Peoria. We had camped on a little stream in the timber and had gathered sticks and brush for a fire, cooked our supper and at a late hour fixed to

sleep. About one o'clock, all in death-like stillness, that demented sister got up by the camp-fire and began to sing a beautiful old hymn. It seemed more like an angel's voice than a human being.

The long and tedious journey finally ended. We reached our destination. After one or two days' rest, we set about to plow and plant to provide a living. Many poor folks, like us, had to labor hard. Prairies had to be broken in order to plant and sow. In the spring of 1866 seed corn sold for \$1.00 per bushel and flour for \$7.00 per hundred. We struggled along, made a few short moves but finally got settled in a home of our own.

In all this time we held our church relations the most sacred of all things. My mind seemed to be exercised in regard to public duty and I was unrelenting in my rebellion. The Lord had given us more children in our home and He had removed two by death. In my pleading for that burden of mind to be removed, I thought I could truly plead, as we were poor and I had no education, knew nothing of books and that such a poor creature as I never could face or meet a proud and giddy [foolish] world.

Finally, one evening I came in from the field, my wife had supper ready, I sat down to the table but could not eat. I left the table, went through the doorway into the bedroom, saying as I went, "I will die before I will do that." I felt I went into death.

I saw at once my wife and children and all my anxiety to accumulate wealth pass from me. When I came out of that state of feeling I was willing to try to tell of the love of Jesus. Thus I have been trying to tell it for over fifty years.

The first text I ever used or tried to talk about is in the second chapter of Daniel, 44 th verse. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed:

"and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

That was long before I was ordained. We then had three churches and soon had five. Some in Iowa and some in Missouri. [My] wife had a hard struggle to raise the children and keep them at work. I was among the churches much.

Our home was in the beautiful valley of the Nodaway river. I recall that one year we had a large field of corn. It had been plowed the second time. On Saturday morning before the second Sunday in June, I started on horseback to one of the churches.

I looked over that beautiful field and thought what a wonderful crop it would make, but alas on Sunday morning about ten o'clock it began to rain grasshoppers or they dropped down from the clouds and when I got in sight of the field on Sunday evening there were only stubs of stalks standing. Well, such was our life, many sorrows, but much sunlight as the years came and went.

After our children grew up, some went to Nebraska. We finally moved to that state, too. We started in the early part of October, 1887, had three teams and wagons and thirty head of cattle. We camped out at nights. Everything went well until we passed Red Cloud, Nebraska.

We came to a place where the wagon road and railroad were parallel for a short distance. The Denver express came dashing by, frightening the team, which my wife and the two youngest children were driving. She was thrown out of the wagon. Her collar bone and two ribs were broken. Then suffering and expense began.

Our oldest daughter came, and when her mother got better, took her to her home in Holbrook. After long suffering she was able to do some work, but never fully recovered.

After we had lived in Nebraska for a time we organized a church with seven members and soon had twenty-seven. Then came to us one of the dark days of our life. It pleased the Lord to take our youngest child from us. A stroke which seemed unbearable.

I broke down in health. We decided to move to Stark County, Ohio, where my wife was born and reared. We soon formed a large acquaintance among the churches. I traveled a great deal in serving the churches and worked on the farm when at home.

We remained in Ohio about seventeen years, then disposed of our little home, bid farewell to the dear people of the Buckeye state and came back to Pickering, Missouri, to be buried beside our parents, all of which sleep in the State Line cemetery. Also some of our dear children are buried there.

I have tried to tell the story of the Cross and of Christ crucified, in eleven states of this Union. I now feel some regrets that I did not begin in early life to keep a sketch of my ramblings, baptisms, marriages, funerals, and miles traveled, but it is too late now.

We have been members of the church fifty-nine years last June. We are confident that we cannot stay here much longer, hence we leave this sketch for our beloved kindred and friends.

We regret in a way that we have no earthly treasures to leave as a legacy to our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, but we leave as a wish and prayer, if it be God's holy will, that [we may all meet in the sunlight of God's eternal mercy.](#)

**"We ask not a stone to be sculptured in verse,
We ask not that fame should our merits rehearse,
But we ask as above, when we give up the Ghost,
That loved ones may know that we died at our post."**

C. J. and Mary A. Carmichael

For more information: bible-christian.org

