

# WISCASSETT MILLS MONUMENT TO THE CANNON ENTERPRISE

## J. F. Cannon Beloved By All For His Generous Spirit Of Thoughtfulness and Kindness

Is One of Those Who Does Good by Stealth and the Extent of His Liberality Is Not Well Known Here

(By JAMES CRUIKSHANK)

To record the life and work of J. F. Cannon is to summarize the progress of Concord and Cabarrus, so closely has the growth of the city and county been identified with the Cannon family. To state definitely just what J. F. Cannon has done in a constructive, helpful way, is however, not so easy, because he is one of those men who do good by stealth. While a few of his benefactions are known, more because they could not be concealed than through any wish on his part to receive credit, the public spirited acts of Mr. Cannon are not so well known as they deserve to be. But as it is impossible to keep a good man down, as the old saying has it, so it is impossible for any man to consistently support every movement for community progress, no matter how quietly he goes about it, without the people becoming aware more or less of what is going on. Thus in Concord, Cabarrus and Stanly, it is recognized that no man has given more liberally of his substance and talents than J. F. Cannon, who has ever taken the lead in subscribing towards anything needing help.

### Behind the Fair.

The Cabarrus County Fair Association is a striking example of this, and owes its rapid and successful organization very largely to the liberality with which Mr. Cannon supported it, and to the influence he put behind the movement by giving his prestige and enthusiasm as liberally as he subscribed his money.

Mr. Cannon is one of those who believes in sharing his prosperity, and is noted for his breadth of view and liberality. He believes implicitly that Cabarrus and Stanly counties are among the most favored agricultural sections of the entire south, and capable of development, which in time will place them in the first rank as producers of wealth from the land.

While cotton has up until recently been a staple crop, the advance of the boll weevil has prompted Mr. Cannon to consider ways and means of inducing the farmers to diversify their crops. Mr. Cannon believes that as a livestock country, Cabarrus and Stanly counties are excellently adapted for the raising of livestock and their by-products in the form of butter and milk. With the building of good roads in all directions throughout this territory, the marketing of milk has become a much simpler problem, in his opinion, than was the case some years ago. With the development of Charlotte, Concord and other important cities of the Piedmont section, the demand for livestock products has increased, thus giving a steady market for a form of agricultural production, which is free from the risk attendant upon growing crops from weather conditions.

In order to give effect to his conviction that the future prosperity of the farmers of this section depend upon livestock, fruit and vegetable production rather than cotton and grain, Mr. Cannon threw himself heart and soul into the movement to promote a worthwhile fair, at which the farmers could, through observation and comparison, be convinced of the possibilities for the successful diversification of crops.

### A Friend in Need.

His interest in the county fair indicates in a general way the policy which has made Mr. Cannon one of the most successful business men in the state. He recognizes that to make money one has to spend money, and the Wiscassett Mills are a striking demonstration of the lengths to which he goes in carrying out this policy. There is not the vestige of a sign throughout the whole great property of neglect or decay. Every brick, every plank, and every piece of machinery, has the appearance of being practically new, where as a matter of fact, much of the machinery has been in constant use for many years. But today it is working at as nearly 100 per cent. efficiency as it is possible for human skill backed by abundant resources and the ambition to have things just right, can accomplish. There is no quibbling over expenses of upkeep at Wiscassett Mills. Everything has to be in perfect condition and everything is in perfect condition, for Mr. Cannon does not believe in trying to swell profits at the expense of the condition of the plant.

In Albemarle Mr. Cannon is recognized as showing the same public spirit there as he does in Concord. An example is afforded in the new Presbyterian Church there, to which Mr. Cannon contributed \$5,000. An equally kindly act which he could not conceal was performed recently when he was having all the mill cottages repainted. A small frame Baptist church located in the mill village was having somewhat of a financial struggle, and could not afford at the time to spend much money on paint.

Mr. Cannon noted its appearance and issued instructions to put the painters

to work, and almost before the congregation knew what was on foot, the church presented a bright new spick and span appearance. He also furnished a complete outfit of equipment for the Jackson Training School boys, as another practical form of his interest in the welfare of the county's institutions. But these are only a few of many similar acts of thoughtfulness and kindness, the most of which are scarcely known even among his friends. Naturally he is a popular favorite with all his employees, most of whom he knows by their first names. Every year he gives a big picnic for all employees, when watermelons and barbecue are enjoyed and a day spent in frolic and athletics. He was one of the promoters of the famous Wiscassett Band, which is a big feature of the social life of Albemarle and whose services go in demand far and wide. His interest in his employees is reflected in the high standard maintained in the mill village, whose houses, although rented at a nominal sum, compare favorably with the bungalows and homes of any high class city residential district.

### Mr. Cannon's Career.

Mr. Cannon was born in Concord and educated at the grammar school and high school here before going to the Virginia Military Institute. On leaving college he received his first mill experience in the Bala Mill, near Concord, a small mill, where he learned the textile business from the ground up, becoming manager. From that position he worked his way into the Cannon organization in Concord and became secretary and treasurer of the Wiscassett Mill, the enterprise which he was later destined to lead to such great achievements. At that time the Wiscassett Mill had 18,000 spindles, compared with 94,000 today, and was quite a small enterprise by contrast with the present state of development. Today the products of the Wiscassett Mill are sold all over the United States and exported to Brazil and the Argentine, being used in the principal weaving mills of the United States for making lace, underwear, and other woven fabrics.

Some of the latest improvements at the Wiscassett Mills, are the superintendent's office, a handsome two-story brick building, with splendidly equipped offices on the ground floor, laid out on the plan of a banking office, and with large storage rooms upstairs. Adjoining the office is a new cotton storage warehouse costing \$60,000, which has just been completed. It is five stories in height, and can hold 8,000 bales without piling. In addition ten miles of new concrete sidewalks are being built throughout the mill village.

## EXECUTIVE HEADS WITH WISCASSETT FOR MANY YEARS

## Mill Is Fortunate in Having Well Tried and Loyal Leaders.

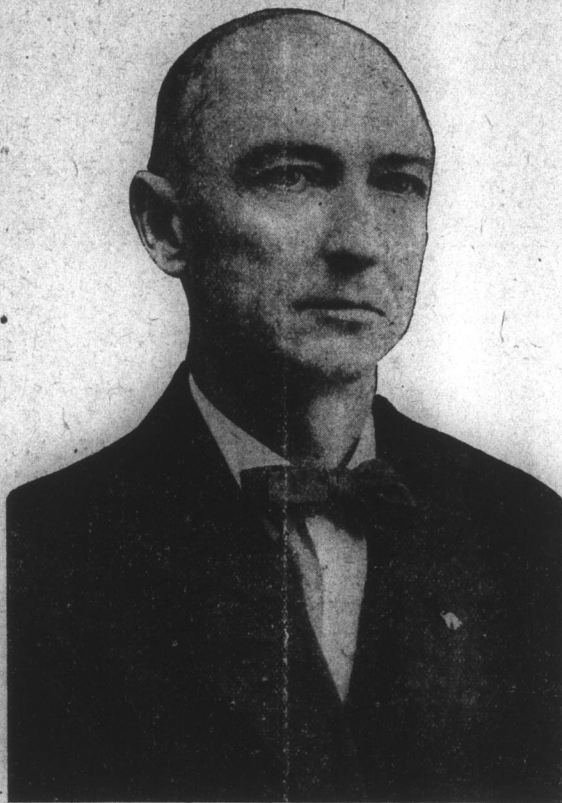
Striking evidence of the contented lot of employees of the Wiscassett Mills is afforded in the fact that most of the executive heads have been associated with J. F. Cannon for many years. Thus W. A. Smith, assistant to Mr. Cannon, has been with the mill for twenty years. He was born and brought up near Norwood, and after completing his education entered the mill as a shipping clerk and worked his way up through the organization to be the personal representative of the vice president and general manager, Mr. J. F. Cannon. Mr. Smith knows every man, woman and child in the village, and most of them by their first names.

M. A. Beger, the secretary, has been with the organization for 22 years. He was born and reared in Cabarrus county, and after completing his education taught school for six years. In 1901 he went with the mill as a bookkeeper, and gradually worked his way up to be secretary of the company.

T. M. Denning, the general superintendent, has been with the mill for 24 years, joining the organization soon after it was formed. He has been a textile mill worker all his life.

C. W. Gaddy, the superintendent and manager of the hosiery department, has also been with the Wiscassett organization for many years. The hosiery mill is a separate establishment, although under the same ownership and management as the spinning mills.

MR. J. F. CANNON



Vice President and General Manager of the Wiscassett Mills

## Wiscassett Mills Goes To Great Lengths To Provide Good Living Conditions

## Mill Village Homes of Models in Appearance, Architectural Design and Comfort—Other Benefits of Village Life.

It is in its relations to the employees that the spirit which permeates the Wiscassett Mills' policy is reflected at its best. A walk through the mill village is a liberal education in modern methods of creating happy industrial relations between employer and employee. That these relations are of the best is proved by the fact that the labor turnover in the mill is less than one per cent. a year, and that many employees have been with the mill since it was first founded in 1898, and are today living in the same mill houses they occupied when they first allied themselves with this great link in the Cannon textile chain.

With over 500 cottages, the management of the mill village is a large work in itself. For example, painting of the cottages has just been completed. Three carloads of paint were required, and a small army of workmen kept employed for many weeks.

### Comfortable, Attractive Homes.

The cottages are well built, carefully designed to contrast with one another, with the result that there is as much individuality, and perhaps more, in the appearance of Wiscassett mill homes, as there is in the average good residential street in any up-to-date city. An inspection was made by the writer of one of twenty new cottages just completed and not yet occupied. A wide front porch gave pleasant access to the front door, from which a wide spacious hall stretched to the rear of the house. On the left of the front hall was a large dining room with wainscoted and plastered walls, electric light fixtures and a fireplace with an attractive oak mantel. Across the hall was an equally pleasant living room. At its rear was a large bedroom, plastered and well finished. Two other bedrooms, and an extremely large kitchen with shelves, pantry and toilet adjoining, equipped with a Vogel frostproof water system completed the house. Throughout a good grade of rib pine flooring attested to the thoroughness with which the house was constructed. Storm sheathing between the walls, and double doors insure warmth and comfort. Twenty such homes have been built, and while they are all together not one looks alike, so well has the architect succeeded in giving each home its own individuality. The village surrounds the mill on three sides, and is beautifully situated on high ground overlooking the mills. Fine shade trees and a background of forest give the appearance to the village of an attractive residential district, which precisely it is. These homes are rented to mill employees for the nominal charge of 25 cents a room per month. If built in the ordinary way, the house which the writer inspected

would sell in the city for about \$5,000, not including the lot, and would rent from anywhere between \$35 and \$75 a month, depending on the city and district in which it was located.

Much street grading is being done in the mill village at present, the city of Albemarle undertaking the street work and the Wiscassett Mills building the cement sidewalks at a cost of about \$30,000. Nearly ten miles of sidewalks are being built, and a large part of the work has been completed.

### Close Personal Interest.

Illustrative of the personal interest which the management takes in the welfare of the employees, is an extract from the *Whidmire Watchman*, a magazine by and for the employees of the Knitting Department of the Wiscassett Mills Company. C. W. Gaddy, the superintendent of the Hosiery Department, is the editor. In a recent edition he wrote as follows:

"That the last decade has seen an alarming development of a lack of respect for law, order, and parental authority on the part of the child, is a fact that cannot be truthfully denied. And parents and not the children are responsible for this condition."

"A few years ago we wrote an editorial calling attention to the fact of having seen three boys, under 14 years, from the village, down the street, almost a mile away from home, after 10 o'clock at night, standing behind a billboard smoking cigarettes. We made it a point to see each one of these boys' fathers personally. And each one of them made it a point to point out to us that the other boy and his parents were responsible for the way his own boy was doing, and that his own boy was a good boy. Since that time we have helped to get those same boys out of jail and to keep them off the chain gang. Today, these boys, all under age, are away from home on account of conditions and circumstances highly uncomplimentary to them."

"Our father was far from a perfect man. We can recall many things he did that he should not have done. But the longer we live the more we realize that in one respect at least he was a great man. And that was in the fact that he ruled his boys with an iron hand. Not a brute by any means, but his 'moss' and 'yess' meant exactly what they implied, and we were handled on a basis of our own conduct and not that of the other fellow."

### Practical Service.

But the policy of the Wiscassett Mills towards its employees does not stop with (Continued on page four)

## Name Means The Home of A Good Man, And This Is Reflected In Liberal Policy Of Management

Important as is Wiscassett Mills They Are But One Great Link in a Gigantic Industrial Empire Founded by Late J. W. Cannon and Expanded by Descendants.

(By JAMES CRUIKSHANK)

Wiscassett, which in the Indian vernacular means "the Home of a Good Man," and in textile circles stands for the "mark of excellence," is fittingly named. Thousands who depend upon the Wiscassett Mills for their living, bear testimony to the fact that the mill is literally the business home of a good man, who has passed away leaving behind a monument to his industry and good management, and an industrial trust which his oldest son, J. F. Cannon, is devoting his life to extend.

It was in 1898 that J. W. Cannon established the Wiscassett Mills, buying property which at that time was merely a swamp. What a contrast is seen today when a magnificent sweep of semi-fireproof brick and steel textile buildings, filled with millions of dollars worth of the latest spinning machinery, greets the eye? While the late J. W. Cannon, of beloved memory, founded the mill, it was left to his widow and his son, J. F. Cannon, to carry on the great work which he began in Albemarle. Nothing is allowed to retard the development of the wonderful industrial property. Hard times make no difference in maintaining to the highest degree of perfection the plant, equipment, buildings and grounds of Wiscassett. There is a place for everything and everything in its place, at all times, so scrupulous is the care of the management in keeping Wiscassett up to the high standard of excellence, which is a cardinal principle of the policy of the mill.

### A Valuable Property.

Mill owners are reticent in regard to valuation of their property, but it is not far short of the mark to say that the Wiscassett property could not be replaced today without superhuman effort to such a tremendous extent has the great mill has been developed by the present active head, J. F. Cannon, the

vice president and general manager. Important as is the Wiscassett Mills, it is still but a link, although one of the most important links, in a family chain of textile mills, whose magnitude almost staggers the imagination. Like the Wiscassett Mills, the chain was first forged by the late J. W. Cannon, whose genius like his memory, lives after him, reflected in the whirling machinery and the belching smokestacks of upwards of twenty great mills throughout North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. Many thousands of employees today are working in these mills at Concord, China Grove, Salisbury, Mt. Pleasant, Kannapolis, Albemarle, Eatonton, York, Siluria, Thomasville, Statesville, Rockwell and other textile centres. Literally millions of dollars each year are required to buy the thousands of bales of cotton which are converted from the raw state into yarn, fabrics and hosiery marketed throughout the world. Many more millions are spent each year on wages, and still more on machinery, homes for employees, and in improving working conditions.

To Concord and Cabarrus county belongs the honor of having the parent mill in a textile enterprise which has spread throughout the South, and has caused the name of Cannon to be known throughout the world, as a textile manufacturer. The Cannon Manufacturing plant at Concord was the starting point in a march of progress of which no man can foretell the end, for while J. W. Cannon, who founded the present great empire, is dead, he left behind him sons, and other near relatives and business associates who have been carrying on from where he left off.

### The Future.

Who shall say that the end has been reached? The South has been termed by economists as the last "great west," overlooked for years in the rush of immigration lured to the plains, but now com-

ing into its own as the brightest jewel in the diadem of Nature. With great resources, plants equipped with most modern facilities; men trained from childhood in the management and intricate details of textile milling, the Cannon enterprises today are but on the eve of growth and accomplishment, which may well make the achievements of the last 25 years pale to insignificance.

In the Wiscassett Mill it is obvious there is no intention to rest upon the traditions of the past. There is a virile organization looking forward, constantly alert to adopt the latest inventions in textile spinning, and to put to productive practical uses, the researches of scientists. Mrs. J. W. Cannon, widow of the founder, is the president, although she exercises the responsibilities of her office entirely through her oldest son, J. F. Cannon, the vice president and general manager. He is assisted in the active management by W. A. Smith, his personal deputy at the mill office; by M. A. Beger, the secretary of the company; by T. M. Denning, the general superintendent of the spinning mills and by C. W. Gaddy, superintendent and manager of the hosiery mills, and in addition by some 1500 employees whose long and happy association with the Cannon family has banded together an organization founded on faith, trust and good will.

### A Gigantic Enterprise.

A gigantic enterprise is revealed in a summary of the activities of the Wiscassett Mills. With 94,000 producing spindles, it ranks as one of the six largest spinning mills in the South, and is only exceeded in production by a few of the largest mills of the New England States. Each year about 22,000 bales of cotton enter the Wiscassett in the raw stage, and during the year emerge in many forms of yarn and hosiery worth at retail price a sum which can hardly be calculated, so many forms of the weaving art are applied to producing fabrics from the yarns Wiscassett supplies. In the hosiery mills an estimate is more readily made, for here the production is 600,000 dozen pairs of women's and children's hose annually, which would retail for about \$3,500,000 in the stores.

Owning its own school; largely supporting a church; building concrete sidewalks in its own mill village, which more nearly resembles a small city than a village; providing nursing service and a day nursery for employees, and a fine recreation park for the public and employees, the Wiscassett Mills is a benefactor to Albemarle and to Stanly county.

But after all, the acid test of any industrial enterprise's relations with the employees is found in the records of the labor turnover, and in the case of the Wiscassett Mills, no more convincing testimony could be found than in the simple but eloquent statement that the turnover is less than 1 per cent. annually. Many of the families who started with the mill in 1898 are living today in the same mill houses as they occupied when first the mill started operations. That demonstrates better than words the attitude of the employees towards their employers.

A conspicuous feature of the Wiscassett Mills is the scrupulous cleanliness that prevails. Throughout the whole plant, with its thousands of square feet of floor space on which machinery hums the year round, there is an entire absence of dust, or rubbish. Humidifiers at strategic points on every floor, automatically scatter a thin spray of water to maintain the humidity at just the right degree, while the temperature is carefully regulated by means of the most modern system of ventilation. Working conditions might well be described as ideal, the mill being brightly lighted on all sides with large windows. Running water and toilets on all floors, contribute to the comfort of the employees. An example of the extensive scale of operations is afforded in the fact that twenty colored scrub women are employed the year round, constantly scrubbing the building, the floors of which are all hardwood, being of maple.

## Facts About the Great Wiscassett Mills

It is one of the important units in perhaps the greatest chain of mills in the South, comprising scores of mills in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

The Wiscassett Mills comprise eight modern textile mills.

Employees of the Wiscassett Mills number about 1,500.

The Wiscassett Mills annually use 22,000 bales of cotton.

With 94,000 producing spindles, the spinning mills have an annual production of about 8,500,000 pounds of yarn.

There are six spinning mills and two hosiery mills in the Wiscassett group.

The group has its own storage for 24,000 bales of cotton without piling, sufficient for about a year's operation.

A large machine shop enables the mill to do all its own repairs to plant.

The Wiscassett Mills group is one of the six largest in producing spindles in the whole of the South, and there are only a few in the North which are regarded as larger.

The mill owns its own fourteen-room school; largely supports a church; owns five hundred cottages of from three to ten rooms, with electric lights and water and sewerage; is building concrete sidewalks throughout the mill village at a cost of \$30,000; maintains an open air gymnasium for the use of the general public and mill employees.

Mill property comprises about 600 acres, of which the mill buildings occupy about 15 acres alone.

Free nursing service and free day nursery maintained by the mill.

Labor turnover less than one per cent.