

Becoming Dr. Cannon

By Jordan Monson Wright

(Based on a true story)

Sixteen-year-old Mattie Hughes was thrilled when she heard about what the prophet had said. Becoming a doctor was her dream. And now President Brigham Young was actually encouraging women to become doctors!

Mattie knew that some medical schools were finally letting women in. Of course, she would have to get a college degree before she could go to medical school. And she would have to save a lot of money. It would take a lot of time and a lot of hard work. She knew that.

But Mattie thought of her little sister, Annie, who had died on the wagon trip to Utah. There had been no doctor to help her when she got sick. Then Mattie's father had died. Here in Salt Lake City, Mattie knew lots of people who were sick or hurt. If Mattie became a doctor, she could help them.

Mattie decided to have faith. The prophet had said women should train to be doctors, and she wanted to be one of them! God would help her find a way to go to medical school.

Mattie worked hard to save money. She got a job as a typesetter for a newspaper. She had to carefully arrange



every letter of every word in the right order so the newspaper could be printed. After work, Mattie went to classes at the university to get ready for medical school.

Between home, work, and school, Mattie walked six miles (10 km) every day! She wore heavy men's boots



because her regular shoes weren't tough enough to trudge through the mud. She wished she could ride in the mule-drawn streetcar instead of walking, but she was saving every penny for school.

Mattie worried that she wouldn't be able to save enough money. She knew her mother and stepfather would try to help her, but they had other children to take care of. What else could she do?

Mattie decided to hold a fundraiser and ask friends and ward members to share whatever money they could spare. They were happy to help. Mattie was only the third woman to try to follow President Young's call to become a doctor, and they wanted her to succeed.

After the fundraisers, Mattie had enough to go to medical school! She traveled across the country to a university and studied hard.

Two years later, Mattie held her head high and marched onto the graduation platform to receive her diploma. She was finally a doctor! She had never felt so excited.

Mattie looked into the cheering crowd of strangers. None of her family or friends from home could be there, but she knew they were proud of her. Soon she would return home to care for them and teach them what she had learned.

After going back to Utah, Mattie worked at the Relief Society's hospital in Salt Lake City. She loved her job as a doctor. She helped treat diseases, heal injuries, and even teach classes on how to deliver babies.

Becoming a doctor had been hard work. But Heavenly Father had helped her. Now Mattie would spend the rest of her life helping others. ●

The author lives in Michigan, USA.



Martha "Mattie" Hughes Cannon (1857–1932) was a pioneer, doctor, and politician. She was the first woman in the United States to be elected state senator. She worked hard to make life better for others.