

4 Charles Wesley Carson letters

From the Jim Walsh Collection (courtesy Library of Congress)

undated letter

Dear Chick [*who is Chick?*]

During the past three years I have sent letters, cards, pictures, papers and lots of Japanese art work to many people of C[*ompany?*], but have never received a single word in return, except that the Review was kind enough to acknowledge the receipt of a card from Japan, as I notice by a cop[p]y that happened to stray my way.

Of course many will say that they did not know my address etc. etc. but I can not take that as a good excuse as most of the papers I sent bore my name in the hotel lists, and correspondence addressed to any of these would have found me in some part of Japan or China or again my New York address ought to be well known and the postal service is still quite up to date and letters have been known to encompass the globe several times to find their man.

Now I wish to state before going further that unless someone “makes good” I shall retaliate by striking the entire community from my writing list.

I will give you a sort of time table of my past [*movements*], also a general plan of prospective future movements so that you can see where I have been and likely to be. These are only the places in which I have had business and not the many interesting places I have visited on pleasure bent for [?] from one to 10 days such as Nikko, Miyanoshita, Kyoto, Nara, Kobe, Moji etc. in Japan - Canton, Macao, etc. in China.

You can see by refer[r]ing to the “time table” that I have had only one month out of fo[u]rty at home.

I expect to remain in Shanghai two or three months longer, then go to Tientsin. Will stop there for two or three months. During that time will of course visit Peking and Port Arthur. Will then make a second trip to Hongkong, where I will be “bu[i]sy” for about four months.

Will visit Manilla as I missed that on my first trip.

As for the next stand, I cannot say yet as that is looking too far ahead but hop[e] it will be in New York. There is some talk in my firm of extending our operations to India, but that is not decided yet at least for this expedition. When I have finished my work I will very likely return to N.Y. by way of the Suez [*Canal*] and Europe.

So with the two years I have already spent in England you will see that I have explored a fair portion of the globe.

As for my "job" I am collecting the local songs and music from all sorts of places for the disc Graphophone. The work is interesting and brings me in contact with some very queer people, but four years will be quite enough for one trip and I am anxious to tread American soil once more altho [= *although*] I am now immune to homesickness.

Of the Orient with which I am acquainted I like Japan the best, altho [*although*] China is very interesting. I spent four days in Canton, living in a Chinese hotel with [a] straw mat on a bench for a bed and a porcelain brick for a pillow at a time when the American boycott was at its height and a massacre of missionaries near Canton. It was then generally supposed to be unsafe for a white man, especially an American, to be seen in the native quarters [*of Canton*]. I was with a Chinese friend from Hongkong, was treated very pleasantly by all I met and enjoyed my novel experience immensely. It is a fact but not appreciated at home that one tenth of the foreigners that get in trouble here are entirely responsible especially the religious missionaries.

They get but little sympathy from the foreign residents who are acquainted with conditions here.

The mission might be divided into three branches: medical, educational and religious, the latter stirs up all the trouble and was responsible for the Boxer Uprising. Some of the members who represent this branch are perfect freaks, their very sight is repulsive and their ignorance gross. The church or whoever sent some of them out here committed a crime against mankind.

China will never be converted before she is educated. If the religious branch [*of the mission*] was eliminated, or if religion was administered only in very small doses in connection with the other two branches [*medical and educational*], conversion [= *conversion*] might follow in the natural course of events and our children would/could[?] spend the pennies for candy that now buys fireworks for the Chinese.

With regards to all my old friends I beg to remain, yours very truly,

(undated letter on stationery of the Imperial Hotel Limited, Tokio (Emil Flaig, Manager))

Hongkong, 22 Jan 1906

My Dearest Carson,

I have received your 4 letters with thanks and I am glad to hear your good health. I regret to say that I could not send you my as I have lose [= *lost*] your address.

But you are very kind[ness] to give me your letter again.

In your letter you say that “say what do you wish to have”, but I want nothing, but I require to see you as soon as possible. Please return as fast as you could.

Yours faithfully,

Miss Masu Onita

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Love letter?

Oct. 16, 1906

Mr. V. H. Emerson
57 West 26th st., N.Y.

Dear Mr. Emerson,

As to why I left China having full running expenses? I did nothing of the kind as I saw it then altho [= *although*] I had nothing definite, I had been fully led to believe that we [*Carson and Marker*] would return to Hongkong in two or 3 months at most.

I had a good house with a fully equipped plant for recording and electroplating, which I must leave behind. So the arrangement[s] I made with my people there was that I would pay no rent (\$90.00 per month) (~~Hongkong money \$45.00 gold[?] erased by Carson~~) while absent. But in case my return was delayed and the landlord could secure another tenant, my agent (Fong Foon) was to "give up" the house and store the outfit. But I could get no written contract to this effect.

The result was that after 6 months the landlord demanded full rent ((\$) 540), and Fong compromised on 200.00. If I could have returned to Hong[*Hongkong or Fong?*] in a reasonable time everything would have been ok and much time and expense(s) would have been saved. The only running expense I left was \$12.00 per month for caretaker ~~and a few~~ [*erased by Carson*] rent for the motor for the plating plant which I held as it would be great trouble and perhaps impossible to get another when we wanted it. These figures are in H. [= *Hongkong?*] money so that the total loss is only about 125.00 U. S. gold and I can only see it in the light of a speculation that promised good returns.

Shanghai, Jan. 4, 1907
Saturday

Mr. V. H. Emerson
57 West 26th St., N.Y.

Dear Mr. Emerson,

I left Japan Dec. 3, and Shanghai Dec. 11, located a shop two doors from my first quarters in Shanghai and had it fixed up in fine shape when [Harry] Marker arrived on the 19th [of December], that is with the exception of electric light. I had the wiring all finished but we haven't as yet been able to get the inspector around to have the current turned on, but he has promised sure to look us up tomorrow. Yesterday and today we had a full orchestra with singers making tests with very fair results. Made 6 tests to electroplate. Hope to "press up" Monday and if they turn out satisfactory will be ready to start business in full swing.

I did not go to Hongkong, as I had expected to, as I wanted more information as to our future movements before I went there. When I got to Shanghai I found that [that] there was a contract of some kind for Hongkong between Ullman and the [Columbia Phonograph] Co. pending. So I waited for Marker thinking that he might have some token advises [= advice(s)] on the subject. But as yet we know nothing more about it than we did before.

We are to make about 400 records for Ullman, but most of them in duplicate. Mr. Burns suggests to make 3 each of the important selections, but about ½ of this [= these] 400 selections are to be made in Shanghai, the other ½ in Tientsin. That is a place further north near Peking. The holidays for the Chinese New Year next month will "tie us up" for about 2 weeks. I may run down to Hongkong then.

I have been stud[d]ying the recording proposition and I have a theory but as I have no facilities for working it out I will make the suggestion to you and let you see if there is anything in it. In our recording we always looked first for "detail", from the "inside" looking toward the outer edge of the record. Now my idea is to make most of the "detail" if possible on the opposite side of the wall, so that you would have to look toward the centre to see it. For in playing[?] any record on any machine, the needle having a natural bent to run toward the centre bears more

firmly against [the] inner wall. So if the detail is mostly on the face of that wall there could be no loss. Of course it's natural to say that a recording point could cut a groove without making equal detail in the face of each wall. But I am not so [afraid?] of that. At any rate the principle of force applied to carry the recording needle is quite different to that of the reproducer and there is surely a loss to be overcome somewhere. I have had no time or facilities for experimenting as I have been able only to [attend to?] the reproduction side of a regular record.

I think you have been very unkind to me. We have an American Post Office in Shanghai and you might waste at least a two cent stamp on me once in a while. At any rate, if I don't hear from you for another six months I shall retaliate "alle same[?] fashion". I should like to hear what you thought about the five records I sent from Tokyo with a light touch of graphite. I asked you particularly to let me know also about that #44 wax that we have piled up in Hongkong.

Tientsin, April 2, 1907

Mr. Edward N. Burns
154 Nassau St, N.Y. City

Dear Mr. Burns,

Your favor of Feb 19 received and contents in re[f]ference to my expense report of Dec 8, 1906 carefully noted.

And I quite agree with you in what you say on the matter as it must natural[l]y appear to you in the ordinary run[?] of

But I beg you have patients [= *patience*] to allow me to explain my position and point of view.

You speak of my salary being paid in full while I was idle: altho [= *although*] my attacks of indisposition during my past three years in the Orient have been numerous, none were at all detrimental to business. And I can truthfully say that I have not lost a single day's work on that score.

Of course in shifting about and fitting up laboratories all over the Orient I have had no little enforced [= *enforced*] idleness over which I had no control. But with work once started at each stand I have worked steadily and faithfully day and night, holidays and Sundays, and if I had been drawing pay for overtime, as at home, my salary would have been almost doubled.

Mr. Marker and myself are still working on this plant [*or place*] but it is not so hard now and we are not complaining. But it was hard before Mr. Marker came, when single-handed I was doing the work that could only be reasonably expected of three men.

I had never expected to speak to you in this way and I do so now only to try to show you that I would not ask for such a small amount as \$16.90, if I did not believe I was fully entitled to it. I would say further that I have suffered there seferall [= *several*] attacks from a poisonous skin disease peculiar [= *peculiar*] to this country and many other ailments to which I would not be exposed in N.Y. or any civilized country.

But the most serious of all is a permanent and irreparable injury to one of my eyes by sulphur[at]ic acid received in connection with my work.

Still, if you can not see your way clear to allow this extendature [= *expenditure*] I will be content and have nothing further to say on the subject.

~~From Mar. 24 to date Apr. 2 we have made in Tientsin 151 records. Expect to finish and start for Peking not later than Apr. 9. [erased by Carson]~~

Yours very truly,

C. W. Carson

74 Rd.

As for news, we started recording in Tientsin Mar. 24.

Have made 151 records.

Expect to finish and start for Peking not later than Apr. 9.

Expect to make about 100 records there in one week.

That ought to make something/somewhere[?] near 700 records on J. U. Co.'s [= J. Ullmann Company's] contract.

This letter was written on stationary of Imperial Hotel, Ltd., Tokio (Manager: E. Flaig)

PHONOSCOPE

Carson came east in 1893

United States Phonograph Company (Newark)

With Universal Phonograph Company of New York since its organization

(from: *Phonoscope* of Nov 1898)

The Keating boys, Chas. Carson and a number of the Columbia employees are in Washington, D.C., on a pleasure trip. The Keating boys are the hosts.

(from: *Phonoscope* of Oct 1898)

C. W. Carson apparently spent two years in England (see undated (1906?)

letter) : “*So with the two years I have already spent in England you will see that I have explored a fair portion of the globe.*”

Letters in the Jim Walsh Collection:

MEXICO

28 Jan 1904

2 Feb 1904

6 Feb 1904

19 Feb 1904

2 Mar 1904

4 Mar 1904

7 Mar 1904

9 Mar 1904

15 Mar 1904

17 Mar 1904

21 Mar 1904

28 Mar 1904

29 Mar 1904

2 Apr 1904

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20 June 1904

CHINA

22 June 1904

6 Jan 1905

13 Mar 1905

22 Mar 1905 (*Carson is in Tokio, JAPAN*)

11 Apr 1905

19 Apr 1905

3 July 1905

29 July 1905

19 Aug 1905

29 Aug 1905

19 Sep 1905

22 Jan 1906 (*letter from a certain Miss Masu Onita*)

26 Feb 1906

5 Mar 1906

.. 1906 (*undated handwritten letter; transcription reproduced here*)

18 July 1906

29 July 1906 (*from Ezawa?*)

24 Sep 1906

16 Oct 1906 (*handwritten letter; transcription reproduced here*)

4 Jan 1907 (*handwritten letter; transcription reproduced here*)

19 Feb 1907

26 Feb 1907

12 Mar 1907

12 Mar 1907

25 Mar 1907

2 Apr 1907 (*handwritten letter; transcription reproduced here*)

10 Apr 1907

14 May 1907

8 June 1907

4 Sep 1907: *C. W. Carson leaves Yokohama (JAPAN) and arrives on 18 Sep 1907 at Victoria (B.C., CANADA) in transit to Seattle.*