

1991

Introduction

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Recommended Citation

Beebe, Ralph, "Introduction" (1991). *A Heritage to Honor, A Future to Fulfill : George Fox College 1891-1991*. Paper 4.
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Introduction

WILLIAM HOBSON, an Iowan, sought a Northwest site for a Quaker community. After studying the area of Newberg, Oregon, in “the grubby end of the Chehalem Valley,” he recorded on May 26, 1876:

“I have been impressed... that some settlements of Friends ought to [be] formed in these parts.... In the Providences of God... this selection is made.... I hope now Our dear friends... will... form a settlement here and make it a garden of the Lord.”

Many adventurous Friends (Quakers) answered the call. They soon initiated home meetings for worship and the next year established “Chehalem Monthly Meeting of Friends” (later renamed Newberg Friends Church). Concern for their children soon led to “first day Sabbath school” and public elementary education. They launched Friends Pacific Academy in 1885 and added Pacific College (renamed George Fox College in 1949) six years later. In 1929 they decided to discontinue the Academy.

Today approximately 8,000 of the 300,000 Quakers worldwide comprise Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends Church, George Fox College’s sponsoring body. By 1991, nearly 3,400 men and women had graduated from the College founded by Quakers in 1891.

Strong religious convictions led to the Friends movement in England three centuries ago. (See Appendix.) They still influence the College. Today the school represents historic Quakerism as modified by American frontier revivalism, twentieth-century religious fundamentalism, and the post-World War II North American neo-evangelical movement.

Today about half the faculty and over 80 percent of the students extend beyond the Quaker nucleus, representing Wesleyans, Baptists, and at least a score of other evangelical Christian persuasions.

George Fox College’s central characteristic remains its spirituality. The school emulates Jesus Christ, with all trustees, all administrators, all faculty, all staff, and most students—however disparate in individual heritage and political persuasion—sharing a common personal commitment to His lordship.

The Quaker conscience leavens the College, providing depth in devotion and breadth in human concern. The variety of other evangelical constituents promotes healthy diversity. Its unique blending of spiritual integrity and academic viability makes the Newberg institution attractive and distinctive.

With recent upgrading of faculty, library, curriculum, and equipment, the school has become an effective academic institution, an excellent learning environment. National recognition as one of “America’s Best Colleges” and as one of the nation’s foremost “character building colleges” suggests that the reputation matches the reality.

George Fox College has always been small, its enrollment never having exceeded 1,000 until 1990. The institution’s influence, however, clearly exceeds its numbers. For the students, for Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends Church, for evangelicalism generally, and for the Kingdom of God, the College has been highly significant.

A century and a half ago, in arguing before the Supreme Court the case of his alma mater, Dartmouth College, Daniel Webster asserted: “It is . . . a small college and yet there are those who love it.”

There are those who love George Fox College, too. A century of successes and failures have prepared it for second century challenges. At age 100, GFC stands ready for extended ministry.