

Levi Pennington

People

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## Pennington to Sam Grathwell April 1946

Levi T. Pennington

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April 2, 1946.

Mr. Sam Grathwell,  
Extension Division,  
University of Kansas,  
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Friend:--

A letter just received from Walter C. Cook tells me that you are now in the Extension Division of the University there, but tells little more about you. He did enclose a University of Minnesota publication about the G. Mar. I read with interest the comments on your platform work, and was glad to note that with all your other subjects you still let folks hear from you on occasion about "Getting Past Your Hoodoo."

I suppose Walter Cook told you anything that you wished to know about me. I retired from the presidency of the college in 1941, after thirty years. I had not got all done that I had hoped to do, but had kept the college going and had raised about half a million dollars for it, about \$300,000.00 in permanent endowment. Since my retirement I have served the college in a good many ways, raising between \$4,000.00 and \$5,000.00 in "living endowment" one year (gifts of so much a year for a term of five years), teaching for members of the faculty who had to be absent from the college because of illness or other duties, etc. Two gifts have come to the college as a result of my solicitation before my retirement, one of which is producing more than 6% on \$12,000.00 and the other more than 6% on \$40,000.00. And there is another gift in prospect that would make both of these look small -- but don't mention it, for it is in the form of a will, and they can be changed.

My wife and I got back eight weeks ago yesterday from a trip almost around the United States, an auto drive of more than 11,000 miles. We did not get into New England, but did get as far as New York, then south to Florida, and home by way of Southern California. Had a great trip, though I find that a lot of folks doubted the wisdom of it, and my brother remarked tactfully that I was a jackass if I tried it. But we both got back in better health than when we left.

I suppose there was doubt of the advisability of the trip, though we did not start on it without medical advice. It was just a year ago yesterday that I put my clothes on and spent the day out of bed, after an illness of more than five months, with such suffering as I had never known before. Polyneuritis the doctors called it, an infection of the entire nervous system which gives excruciating pain wherever one has either brain or nerves. Making no claim about brain, but I have lots of nerves, and with all of them hurting like a tooth-ache, there was lots of pain. Torture day and night for months, and toward the close of the long stretch such emotional upsets as you'd not believe. I wondered if I were headed for the "booby-hatch", but the Portland neurologist who was treating me assured me that there was nothing to worry about, as the emotional upsets were simply the result of the complete nervous exhaustion resulting from the months of intense pain. He assured

me that with the passing of the pain the emotional upsets would end, and he was right. Indeed the emotional upsets ended before the pain did, though the intensity of it had abated considerably.

I still walk as if I were trying to do something funny for the movies, but I do not even carry a cane now. (For a good while after I got out of bed I hobbled about on two crutches, then one crutch and a cane; then one crutch, then a cane, and then without any artificial aid.)

I still love to fish, and still get more fishing talked than enacted. I was to have gone with President Guiley and Louis Hulit to Oregon City after salmon today, but I had another flare-up of a week-old cold yesterday, and decided to be a good boy and stay in today. I am much better than I was yesterday, and it might not have hurt me to go, but I don't take as many chances now as I would have done in 1911 -- though even then I turned down my opportunity to fish because I thought I ought to work for the college. And once I was offered \$175.00 or maybe it was \$275.00 for a commencement address, and I turned it down because we had arranged for a lot of us to push a financial campaign for the college at that time. When the time came for the address, I was the only man, woman or child that was working on that campaign. What I could do with that \$175.00 -- or was it \$275.00? -- if I had it today.

My wife and I do expect to get out to our little cottage at the coast ~~two~~ weeks from now, and be there when the regular trout fishing season opens April 20. One can fish in tidewater before that, and they have been catching some fine trout on the fly there of late -- wish I were there now.

I've been busy the last two weeks as head of a committee to raise \$4,000.00 from Newberg for the relief of the sufferers in Europe. I have raised nearly a quarter of that sum in the Friends church here -- it was \$940.00 yesterday, and I intend to see that it goes into the four figures before we stop. I do not know just how the thing is going in other churches and civic organizations.

I'm hoping that things are going happily with you these days. Maybe some day we shall meet again. If you are ever out here, don't fail to look us up.

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.