

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennignton Writing to His Cousin Grace, June 19, 1946

Levi T. Pennington

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June 19, 1946.

Dear Cousin Grace:--

Somewhere I have heard that there is some rivalry between California and Florida. Of course it may be a base libel, with the accent on the first syllable. But in any case what I started out to tell you is that from these two states, on the same day, we got two letters from two of the best letter writers from whom we ever get letters.

The one from Florida was from a woman who used to be in Newberg; her mother was one of Rebecca's best friends while she lived; the woman who wrote this letter from Florida has been both a student and a teacher in Pacific College; she has a husband, a stepdaughter who is in college, three sons of her own, and is one of the best hostesses on the Atlantic coast for such folks as Levi and Rebecca.

We got only one letter from California that day, and that was from a woman who is not excelled as a hostess for such folks as the Penningtons by anybody in the United States or elsewhere; she has a tall son who is in so many ways taking the place of his fine father who is gone, though of course there are ways in which nobody can possibly take that place; she has two daughters, and a lot of fine grandsons -- I can't at the moment think of any granddaughters that she has, though she has two grand daughters. I said she was the ideal host^{ess} for such folks as Levi and Rebecca, but if I am any judge she'd be the ideal host^{ess} for anybody from President Hoover and his wife if she were living to the humblest Quaker in the United States. Maybe I've said enough. But I'm not going to tell the name of the person to whom I refer.

Yes, I admit that I am rambling on and on as if I did not have a thing to do but let my fingers wander about this keyboard. And I confess that I do feel a freedom from strain that I have not known for a good while. The past two weeks have been pretty strenuous, and now that Oregon Yearly Meeting has adjourned, and I have attended the last session, and the last board meeting, and have written the last news article for the Portland Oregonian and the Oregon Journal, and the long account for the Newberg Graphic, which they will greatly abbreviate, I am sure, I do feel a bit like a horse turned out to pasture.

The yearly meeting was for the most part very peaceful, on the surface, at least. Rebecca remarked that they ought to be agreeable, the element that is in the ascendancy in this yearly meeting, for they have everything that they want -- anybody can be agreeable when he is having his own way.

After four years of effort, much of it irregular, they today completed the job of deposing from the ministry Robert H. Dann (now on his way for a year's work in New Zealand and Australia under the English Friends Service Committee, I believe, but with the cooperation of the American Friends Service committee. The final ground on which he is deposed is that

"he has lost his gift in the ministry and is not in harmony with the beliefs of Oregon Yearly Meeting." There were some pretty bitter accusations made against him today, and if the thing had been done "decently and in order" there would have been much less to object to. But it is done now -- the second time in my life I have seen a minister deposed. (The other case was in California Yearly Meeting, and the man deposed was Bertram, who married my first cousin, Uncle John Pennington's daughter Alice, who now lives in Wilmington, California.)

The only other jarring note came up in connection with the epistolary correspondence of Oregon Yearly Meeting. Epistles were read from Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, Cuba, Jamaica and Bolivia, and a summary of the epistles from the yearly meetings in America was read. There was objection to the reading of anything from the Pacific Coast Association of Friends, and it spread to include New York, New England, Canada, Philadelphia and maybe one or two others, on the ground that they were associated or in organic union with the Hicksites. When the clerk finally asked to what yearly meetings he was to send the epistles, I suppose I was either naughty or truthful, and the latter is often far more objectionable than the former, for I said that if we sent only to those yearly meetings that were as good as we thought ourselves to be, we'd not need to send out any epistle at all. Well, a committee was appointed to pass on the question as to just what yearly meetings we are to correspond with in the future -- maybe it was left to the executive committee -- and presently we'll know who are the lily-white, simon-pure, dyed-in-the-wool yearly meetings. Do you think California will survive? You are associated with Hicksites in the work of the American Friends Service Committee. (We have avoided such contamination; we are only affiliated with the Civilian Public Service Section of the American Friends Service Committee, and if you can't see the difference, it is because your eyes see much as mine do. But we needed some sort of affiliation so as to get our young men into C.P.S. camps instead of prison or the armed services. And there were a considerable number of our men who went to C.P.S. camps, though there was not a pastor's son among them, nor a son of the general superintendent of the yearly meeting.)

Well, we are greatly enlarging our outpost work (and went into the red in that department last year); and in Bolivia we are buying a 1000 acre estate, to become a bible school for native workers and a mission farm. It is to cost \$22,000.00, and with the raising of \$11,000.00 for the purpose Sunday (in cash and pledges) there was \$17,500.00 in sight for the purchase. Two new missionaries are going there this year, and two former missionaries are returning, and two more are to go next year, after spending the coming year in preparation.

Guess that's enough about yearly meeting, except that I tried to get them to go back to the former time of the yearly meeting so as to end its sessions Sunday evening, instead of three days later, one of the reasons I offered being that it would give visitors a better chance to attend both Oregon and California Yearly Meetings. The matter was referred to the executive committee, who will decide the matter at their mid-year meeting in January.

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Wish I could set before you folks there a peck or so of our Governor Wood cherries. They are at their best now, with a whole tree full of them, cherries that are delicious to eat right off the tree, but are too soft and mushy when cooked -- what Rebecca calls "pusillanimous." We'll not can any of them, and so we are giving them to the neighbors, and to some of the folks who have been at yearly meeting, including our future pastor, Carl Byrd, and his family.

Now that yearly meeting is over, there are a lot of restful things that we'll have to do. We'll have Royal Ann and Montmorency cherries to can, and some peas to put up for winter. Then the hedge ought to be trimmed again, and both the vegetable garden in the next block and the grounds around here need a lot of attention, the roses need spraying again, and there are some other things that need doing. But some day in the sweet bye-and-bye, and we hope in the not too distant future, we hope to get out to the coast again, and to get some rest, write some more on the "autobiography" of Peter, and really catch some fish, as we did not do on our last two trips. (This last one Rebecca did not wet a line, and I caught seven fish which if laid end to end would not have measured four feet.)

Your letter was so full of news, and I have hardly referred to it.

We are so glad that Martha and her son are with you, and we hope that her husband will arrive in the proper time, and will be able to spend some time with you, so that you can get even better acquainted. What a lovely family reunion you are having. And Charles and Harriett would not be any "skeletons at the feast." I know that you must miss them, now that they are gone. We'll try not to think of the time when Martha and her family leave for the island.

Glad that you are to have good neighbors across the alley, though a vacant lot is a great convenience. There will probably need to be some more refuse burners constructed. A fine big house is being built across the street from us, to the west of Center street and just south of the house on the corner straight west of us. Construction is moving slowly, partly because of the difficulty in getting material, but in part also because the contractor has taken on so many jobs in proportion to his workers that none of the work is progressing rapidly. We want to build a parsonage, since we sold the other after moving it off the lot in preparation for building; but now we can't get a permit to build -- they tell us that the only way we could get such a permit would be to employ a G.I. as pastor, and there are relatively few of them that would appeal to me as exactly fitted to be Quaker pastors.

We are glad for those improvements to the house and furniture at 529 North Washington that make it appear that you are to be there for -- well, the rest of your life, we hope, except that we'd be very glad if you could come up to Oregon occasionally for a visit. And that goes for other folks than yourself in your family. (Why does not that English husband of Martha stop and see us on his way from Canada to California? Or is he just going to be around Toronto, and come from there to California so that the trip to Oregon would be a big detour?

Some day I hope that we can see Twenty-Nine Palms -- of course we've seen a lot more palms than that, but I'd like to see the place that bears that name, though a good many of the palms are gone, I understand. But I think I'd rather see it in January than in July, or even in June or May. But it would have to be plenty hot to keep me away if I had hay fever and believed that a stay there would do me good. Wish you never had to be bothered with it again.

So Donald is now a High School graduate. I'd like to have been there at his commencement. What next? Whittier, or Oxford, or Harvard, or M.I.T.? (I suppose it is a sign that a man is in his anecdotal age when he lets three letters remind him of a college chapel story -- there are a thousand of them. A speaker at Yale talked, much too long as the students thought, using the name of the college as an outline for his speech, Y for youth, A for ambition, L for loyalty, and E for enthusiasm. One of the students was grouching a bit about the length of the discourse, but another one remarked, "You ought to be thankful that this is not The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.")

I know that your dinners with Mellie Douglas mean much to her. Some day she will be gone, for lots of folks don't live a dozen years after they are 85.

Yes, if the Roosevelt Highway comes through Woods, it will "add to the confusion." I suppose it will some day, although I do not know whether there is any prospect of its being put through this year. And I'm not at all excited about gas and oil prospects, though I did tell my sisters that if they strike oil out there and I become a millionaire out of the oil on our 50X50 lot, I'll send them all some holly for Christmas, and mail it to each one of them separately.

Bertha May was home a week ago Sunday, and again Sunday, Father's Day. She still enjoys her work at the Old People's Home, and seems to be thriving on it.

Glad that Mary White is staying in the more comfortable quarters at Martha's home. But it would be "proper good" to see her. (I suspect that southern California would be rather hot for her, but you could bring her up to Oregon for a stay during the hottest weather.)

Tuesday night, while the Alumni banquet was in progress, Otis Knight Pennington arrived in Portland, and came on out to Newberg on the midnight stage. He is the only son of Otis I. Pennington, my brother Ainy's oldest son. (Oldest son of the oldest son of the oldest son of the oldest son -- I don't know how much farther back than that it goes.) He was here till Friday afternoon, and while we were not able to spend as much time with him as we wanted to, we did get to travel about this part of the valley a good deal, and went up the Columbia to Bonneville Dam and saw the biggest flow of water ever harnessed by man, and saw also Latourelle Falls, Sheppard's Dell, Wah-kee-nah Falls, Multnomah Falls, Oneonta Gorge, Horsetail Falls and the rest of the beauty spots along the Columbia Highway, though we did not get to spend a great deal of time at any one place.

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Well, those few lines are all I got written yesterday afternoon and evening; and now I am up at 4:00 A.M. (it is actually a little later than that right now, but nearer 4:00 than 5:00, and I've got a number of things done before sitting down to this ~~piece~~ -- I wrote piano and went to underscore it and forgot to use the shift key and banged 6's all over the word -- and I can hear a call to travel a block east, a call coming from the corn and the beans and the tomatoes and the Swiss chard and the spinach and the beets and the carrots and the parsnips and the mustard and the squashes and the pumpkins and the radishes and the lettuce and the peas and the potatoes and the cucumbers and the onions and the cabbage and the peppers and the iris and the glads and whatever else is down there. Guess I'll end this and get to work for a while.

With love to the White folks and all their kin, by marriage or "bornation",

Affectionately your cousin,

Mrs. David H. White,
529 North Washington Ave.,
Whittier, Calif.