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Levi Pennington

People

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8-24-1946

### Levi Pennington writing to His Brother Harold Hiller, August 24, 1946

Levi T. Pennington

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#### Recommended Citation

Pennington, Levi T., "Levi Pennington writing to His Brother Harold Hiller, August 24, 1946" (1946). *Levi Pennington*. 91.

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August 24, 1946.

Dear Brother!--

Today I went into the office of the Portland Gas Co. to talk things out with the manager about the possibility of getting gas heat into the house any time in the near future; and he had time to go into considerable details with me, to explain why it would be impossible to get gas heat into our house any time within the next year -- made it pretty clear that it would probably be the winter of 1948-49 before I or anybody else would have a chance for <sup>new installation of</sup> gas heat anywhere in the whole Pacific Northwest.

First of all, he explained to me what I already knew that there has been a great influx of population in the Pacific Northwest during the recent years. If you would go with me to Vanport I could show you where a city has grown up since 1941 bigger than Ionia and Hastings and I do not know how many other towns of somewhat similar size. And this in addition to the great increases in Portland, Vancouver, and all other cities with war plants, and that means practically all other cities, for even Newberg had two war plants, not big ones but real ones, nonetheless. The increase in the Portland population has been in six figures, and I do not know what the first one is. And other cities have increased in similar proportions.

In addition to this great increase in civilian population, there have been great army camps at Klamath Falls, Medford, Corvallis, etc. I don't know how many nor what soldier population it called for, but in the nearest one to us, Camp Adair, between here and Corvallis, there were 60,000 soldiers.

Now of course not all of these houses accommodating these hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians were ~~h~~ heated with gas; perhaps not any one of them. But many of them used gas for cooking, and the great increase in population, and in lines of manufacturing that use gas, have made it necessary for the gas company that supplies all this area to do something to maintain their ability to provide gas for their present customers.

Accordingly they have made a ruling that they will not make any conversions to gas heat for anybody under present conditions. They have not been able to increase their output, and present conditions make increase of their manufacturing plants impossible for the present.

As matters now stand, even if their manufacturing plants were adequate, they could not get the material with which to make the gas. They use crude oil, and with transportation what it is today, they cannot get this oil up from California in quantities that would justify any increase in the number of their customers.

In addition to all this, there are no gas furnaces or conversion units for wood or coal furnaces available. It



may be that some are being manufactured, but they are going to areas like Southern California, where there is plenty of gas, not only that furnished by the chambers of commerce but that which comes from the ground and that which is made from oil refuse, so that they can provide the fuel when the furnaces are put in.

I thought it might be easier to find a chance to put in an oil furnace, but was informed that the oil situation is even worse than the gas in this region. Right now the pumps -- is it pumps or fans or what is it that forces the oil into the furnace? -- are not obtainable. I got no encouragement at oil on the oil investigation.

The manager of the gas company assured me that some day they would not be turning away customers; that some day, possibly late in 1947, but more likely in 1948, they would be seeking additional business, instead of telling everybody that they can't even get on the list yet.

Prospects are getting darker in this section of the United States, as the enclosed picture will show. I am enclosing also the Oregonian Editorial on the subject.

##### This is Sunday morning, as I did not get this epistle finished last evening. Rebecca is going to church with me this morning, for the first time since yearly meeting, which ended June 19. Tomorrow we shall be plenty busy, with garden and probably the arrival of 140 bundles of shingles, which I must get into the back yard where they will not be quite so likely to be carted off -- shingles are hard to get and hard to keep hereabouts. Tuesday we go to Portland for a noon meal with some friends. Wednesday we may -- it's just possible, though I suspect not too probable -- get off to the coast. On the other hand the shinglers may arrive that day, in which case we'll probably put things off for a time while we clean up the ten thousand carloads or less of shingles, cedar and composition, which they will tear off of the old roof before they put on the new shingles.

Portland has been all agog -- going right from one big gog into another -- over the PGA golf tournament the past week. In half an hour Beltin' Ben Hogan and Porky Oliver will be teeing off for the finals of the tournament. Hogan and Lord Byron Nelson were the favorites at the beginning of the tournament. Ferrier tore all records to shreds in the medal qualifying rounds, but he was eliminated some days ago. Porky Oliver put both of the Gold Dust Twins out, Nelson first and later Jug McSpaden. It ought to be a corking match today, as both men have been making par look sick throughout the tournament.

Must end this and get ready for church. It's good to have Rebecca going with me for the first time in more than two months.

With love from us both to all of you,

Harold W. Hiler,  
3 Wagar Place,  
Ionia, Michigan.