

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington Writing to Lura Miles, February 14, 1947

Levi T. Pennington

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Mrs. Lura C. Miles,
Pleasant Hill, Ohio.

February 14, 1947.

Dear Friend:--

For a good while -- I don't know just how long -- I've been intending to get another letter written to you, but we are scandalously busy for folks who have retired and have nothing to do. I'll not go into ancient history, but just tell you about yesterday. Right after breakfast I drove to Portland, taking President Gulley with me. We spent two hours in the office of the Portland Council for Overseas Relief, where they had asked me to come for consultation in regard to united publicity for the various relief agencies in the state. Then we went to the office of Dr. Burt Brown Barker, to consult with him about the organization of a Herbert Hoover Memorial Association, to take over the Hoover House and make a rather big thing out of it. Then to the home of Mrs. George T. Gerlinger on the same mission. Then back to the Y.M.C.A. for a meeting of the Organization Committee for the American Friends Service Committee, Peace Section. Then home -- a pretty busy day for an idle man.

Well, I did not intend to tell you all this before saying how very sorry we are to learn of the accident to Mrs. Beery. We do hope that she may be getting along well by this time, and that she may surprise everybody by the speed and the completeness of her recovery. How sad it was that she had to wait so long before she could have the surgical care that she needed so desperately. I am writing a letter to her, and will enclose it with this, asking you to complete the address on it and forward it to her. I do not know just where the hospital is in which she is being cared for -- or is she back at home, with those two lovely daughters, and two fine sons, and a sister (you'd blush with pride if we told what we think of her) to care for her?

And you did not tell us how you are standing all this, along with everything else that has come your way -- well, sometimes you go out of your way to take on responsibilities that somebody needs to assume and nobody else will. When you get time -- don't know just how you ever will unless you can get some extra hours added to the customary 24 that make a day -- tell us more about yourself. How are you feeling? How are you standing all the strains that are on you? If we could do it, we'd drive over and talk to you face to face, and ask you these and a lot of other questions, but it's "a right smart piece" to drive at this season of the year.

How we'd like to be present at Earlham's centennial! But I suppose it can't be done. Perhaps we ought to be present at this session of Oregon Yearly Meeting -- maybe it is more important this year than usual.

If you are interested in the way things have been going this month, let me tell you of the meetings and conferences I have been in since the first of this month, which is not quite half done. An address on Heifers-for-Relief at the Methodist church; a Farmers' Day at the Chamber of Commerce; a visit to

the McMinnville Kiwanis Club in the interests of Heifers-for-Relief; a conference with the chairman of the county committee on the same project; Newberg Monthly Meeting; state Heifers-for-Relief committee meeting in Portland; Newberg quarterly meeting morning and afternoon; memorial service for little Jackie Priedeaux; another Chamber of Commerce meeting; some writing for the American Friend; a Rotary Club luncheon at which I was supposed to speak on Heifers-for-Relief but they did not have time and I am to present the matter next week; then yesterday these four conferences. Don't you think I deserve a fishing trip to the coast after steelheads? Well, if you'll turn off the water, I'll do it. It rains and rains, as it sometimes does in Oregon in February.

I mentioned this Hoover Memorial Association. The college, as I think you know, bought the house in which Herbert Hoover lived with his uncle when he was a boy here. We had to buy it with the understanding that the father of the woman from we bought should be allowed to live there as long as he lived or at least as long as he desired to live there. He died some time ago, and now the house is the property of the college, with \$6,500.00 in the treasury to restore it, refurnish it, make it a sort of national shrine, museum, etc., and endow it. But you know that such a sum is by no means adequate. Whether the college is either able or willing to do an adequate thing in making this what it ought to be as a memorial to Hoover is questionable. At any rate, there is a feeling that it ought to be in the hands of an organization that has that for its sole aim, and so it was proposed at the last meeting of the college board that the property and funds be turned over to a special organization to finance and make the enterprise what it ought to be, in a big way. The board seemed to feel favorably inclined to the proposition, and a non-profit corporation is to be formed to take over, if approved by the college board, and it was on that matter that President Gulley and I saw Dr. Burt Brown Barker and Mrs. Gerlinger yesterday.

The proposition is to incorporate, accept the property and money from the college, and then make plans for the larger enterprise. The plan just now is a corporation with the following as incorporators:

Dr. Burt Brown Barker, president. He is vice president of the University of Oregon, a boyhood friend and great admirer of Hoover, the man who made the first \$500.00 gift to the fund to purchase the Hoover House, and a man widely known throughout the state. He will see both Herbert Hoover in New York and his son Allen in California, within the next few weeks.

Mrs. George T. Gerlinger, vice president. She has long been much interested in the college, is still a vice president of the institution (at a salary of a dollar a year), has led in community chest campaigns, campaigns for hospitals, colleges, etc., and is a leader of Pro-America.

Mrs. Laura Hammer Paulsen, secretary. She is a first cousin of Herber Hoover, a teacher in the Portland schools, a graduate of Pacific College, formerly a member of the college board, one of the Pacific College graduates who went to Europe in the relief work of the American Friends Service Committee, and more than once raised money for the college in the east.

Frank C. Colcord, treasurer. He is a member of the college board, a near-graduate of the college, mayor of Newberg, secretary of the Newberg branch of the Portland General Electric Co., and one of Newberg's leading business men.

Allen Hoover, younger son of Herbert Hoover, and the one through whom half the \$10,000.00 raised for this project was secured. He believes in his father, which does not seem at all strange to me.

Hervey M. Hoskins. You know him, and he is now president of the college board, in addition to being county judge.

Emmett W. Gulley. You have met the gentleman, indeed I have seen a picture in which you are standing between Emmett and another chap who is a pretty good sized man physically except when he is with this man Gulley.

Levi T. Pennington. I need not tell you anything about him. Indeed I suspect that he might remind you, as he does me, of the story of the Swede who was out on a sleighride with his girl. He had not intended to propose, for he was not sure that he wanted to marry. But the moonlight and the lovely night and the close proximity of the girl and whatever else it is that leads to such proposals quite over came Ole (I hope they did not break him in two, as that word overcame was broken) and he says, "Olga, will you marry me?" Olga had apparently been considering the matter before she was thus addressed, for she replied at once, "Yes, Ole." Well, Ole was a bit taken aback, for he really had not intended to say just that. He did not stop the horse to kiss Olga -- indeed he just drove on down the road in silence. Presently Olga said, "Ole, vy don'd you say somet'ing?" Ole replied, "Ay tank dere bane too much said a'ready." Well, "Ay tank dere bane too much said a'ready" about this last man on the list of incorporators.

Well, I did not intend to become so frivolous. And all the time I have been writing this foolishness, I've been thinking of that sister of yours suffering from this sad accident, and of the anxiety of the entire family, for her and for you. Do hope you may both come through this trial in better condition than either of you was at the beginning of it.

How hard it is for folks to take good care of themselves -- some folks, that is. People who are generous and in love with the human family, their own and all the rest, are inclined to pour themselves out in service to others -- do you have an inkling of my meaning? Do try to take care of yourself, and last for decades yet, with the blessing of your loving heart and hands going out to others, but in such measure that they may long continue to bless. If you could only learn to loaf and take things easy, as I do.

Now don't smile. I am not utterly idle, for as lazy as I am that would be hard work. But I am not tied to a desk and a time schedule. I can refuse any invitation to do something if I do not feel that I ought to undertake it. And I can to some extent make others who want my help conform to my schedule. I just had a call from a Junior High School student who is doing some sort of theme on Oregon History who wants to interview me

on some matters of the past 35 years in the state. You may be sure that I shall be delighted to give him any help I can, but I had to tell him that I could not see him this afternoon nor tomorrow, and he cannot well see me on Saturday nor Sunday. So he is to come Monday and see me. And so for all sorts of other things. If I don't feel that I ought to undertake a certain job, I just don't do it. The new hospital organization wants somebody to raise \$200,000.00 for the enterprise, and I am not going to do it -- maybe Gulley will undertake it, but I doubt it, though they've asked him to.

I know of two colleges that are seeking his services; I know of a business opportunity in Newberg at twice the salary the college has paid him and half the profits of the business; and there are plenty of other opportunities before him, including a chance to work in South America under the American Friends Service Committee. If I were going to guess where he'd land, I'd guess it would be in one of these two Quaker colleges. (I was not told that any of this information was in confidence, but my guess is that it would be as well not to mention it till we are informed what he is going to do. I don't mean that either you or I need to be too close-mouthed about it, you especially. I'll tell nobody here, but I'm sure it would not hurt for members of your family there to know about it.)

You knew, I think, of the little acreage we owned at the top of Rex Hill. If I could care for it properly, or if I had a house and well on the place, we'd have held it. But there came an opportunity a few days ago to sell it for \$600.00 more than we paid for it, and we've sold it, or it is in the process now, with an earnest payment of \$160.00 and an agreement to buy as soon as the abstract is brought up to date, which ought to be in a very few days. This will enable us to get out of the way a number of debts that we have not yet caught up on, and it will be a real relief.

(Did you ever hear of the old Indiana farmer who had scrimped and pinched all his life, buying another forty from time to time till at last, in his sixties, he sold for \$60,000.00? (That was before the days of the Raw Deal when \$60,000.00 was real money.) One of his friends said to him, "Well, Uncle Billy, what do you intend to do with all that money?" The old man replied, "Wall, I don't know jest w'at I'll do with all of it, but I lay I'll have me one good knife." I've got a good knife, got it some years ago; but I lay I'll have me one new nightshirt or something -- if I can find it.)

But it is nearly time for the noon meal, and I must end this, for I have some other letters to write, and I am leaving after lunch for this trip to the coast. We may find it too wet and the water too high for fishing, but we'll have a nice drive in good company, President Gulley, Prof. Lewis and Prof. Skene, and we may get some fish. Mrs. VanBlaricom is to stay with Rebecca tonight.

With love from both of us to all of you,

Sincerely your friend,