
Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to Mrs. Mildred Marshall Burck, February 27, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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February 27, 1948.

Dear Cousin:--

(Guess I can call you that, even if the relationship is not close enough so that you'd have to be responsible for any of my misdeeds.) It was good to get your letter dated today and mailed yesterday, though I may as well confess that at first the name Burck did not tell me much for a moment, even with the "Mildred Marshall" before it. I've known Mildreds and Marshalls all over the United States and a part of Oregon, and I did not right at first remember that the ones I am most interested in live in California except for one or two that are now living in Oregon. Now that you are at Monmouth, don't let it be too long till you and Clarence see us again in Newberg.

Cousin Grace White had told me that your father and mother -- and some other members of the family?-- had moved into Whittier and are living there and taking care of your grandfather, which I am sure is fine for him. I did not realize that you had made such an extensive "Christmas" visit down there. I'd certainly like to make a trip to that part of the country again.

I wish I could tell you of my own ancestry back of the Josiah and Deborah Pennington who were my great-grandparents. I know that that Josiah had a number of brothers, and that they came to Ohio in the migration of Quakers from North Carolina because of slavery. I am Levi, the son of Josiah, the son of Levi, the son of Josiah, but back of that I cannot go. Always intended to look the matter up, but never got it done.

I could give you a pretty fair genealogy of the Penningtons since that Great-grandfather's day. Josiah and "Aunt" Deborah the preacher, whose home was Spiceland, Indiana, had only two sons, Levi T. and John P. I do not remember how many daughters, but one of them, Mary, married Jesse White, as you say; one, Susannah, married David Edwards; and I think I could tell you of another one or two, but I'd not be sure of my facts. I know most of the Edwards family, for a guess. There were Lindley and Levi and Henry and Nathaniel and David W., and a sister Lida who married a Saint, with all their descendants, but that is not in the White Line. Of the two sons, one, John P., followed his mother "Aunt" Deborah as a minister, and became quite a noted Friends preacher -- I could tell you some interesting stories about him, but he is not in the White Line, either. He had only one son, Levi T., who had three sons, Elgar, Everett and Leslie, and one daughter who is now in Florida, with a double-jointed German name that I do not recall; and one daughter, who married a man named Dix, who died maybe half a century ago. The other son of Josiah and Deborah was Levi T., my grandfather, and I could tell you a lot about his descendants -- and there are some things that I'd rather not tell about some of them, though so far as I know none of them has added to the population of prisons, insane hospitals, homes for the feeble minded, alms houses -- or to Congress, for that matter, though I could name one or two who have run for that office.

Turning to the White family, in which you naturally are most interested, I did not know Jesse nor Mary, though my father did, and I have heard him tell about them. The cousins, White and Pennington, when they were too small to talk plain, used to speak of "Gabbity Fite" and "Gabbity Pennety", which was as close as they could come to "Grandmother White" and "Grandmother Pennington."

I never met Susannah White, who married Elijah Fellow. The same mail which brought your letter brought me one from Henry Coffin Fellow, now living at 1323 North Webster St., Portland, Oregon, at the age of 92.

I met Addison White when I was a boy, and the Pennington family had a high regard for him. As I remember him, he looked like a fine picture of a biblical patriarch, and used to visit families, a practice which has very largely disappeared among Friends, to their loss, when it was rightly done.

When we were in Michigan we had at least one visit from Gamaliel, and I rather think two. I do not know the name of the woman he married, nor did I learn anything about him till I talked with David some years ago.

Alfred was also a visitor to us in Michigan, more than once if I rightly remember. He used to "declaim", and furnished us and the community no little entertainment.

But it was Josiah P. White whom we knew best, and loved very dearly, the whole Pennington family. He and my father were about the same age, and I doubt if father ever had a dearer friend than "Jo" White. (As boys together in Indiana, and with both bearing the same name, one became Jo White and the other Si Pennington.) Josiah White was, as you say, a minister, long the superintendent of Long Lake Quarterly Meeting. His home was near Maple City, a place with a name far more ambitious than the little hamlet would justify. He had one of the earliest orchards in that part of the state, and I can still dream of the delight it used to be to get some of his apples and plums -- as a matter of fact, I have dreamed of that orchard I don't know how many times. He was a man of the fine character which a king could be proud of if he had it in the line of his ancestry, unless the king wanted pride and arrogance and tyranny in the line of his ancestry. (It was Josiah White who first proposed that I leave the city editorship of the leading daily in the best town in Northern Michigan and become pastor of a little country church in Indiana, in a community where nothing happened every day in the week. And that's one other thing for which I am grateful to this first cousin once removed.)

Well, I could write a book about Josiah P. White. He had three daughters and a son. (His wife's name was Elizabeth, "Aunt Lizzie" we called her, I do not know her maiden name.) Ola, the oldest daughter, married a man named Ellsworth Ryker. She has long been gone, and I believe he is some years ago. I do not know their children nor their grandchildren. Laura, the second daughter, married a man Holcomb, and he is gone years ago, I believe, and I think she is. The youngest daughter, Juliet, married a man named Hinshaw, and she lives at Rose Hill, Kansas. One of her children, Kelsey Hinshaw, with his family, lives in Newberg, and until this year was a teacher in

Pacific College. He might know things about his relatives that I do not know. Certainly he could tell you more than I can about some of his relatives.

I am sure that David White knew the order in which his father and his uncles and his aunt came, and I think he told me once, but I do not remember it if he did.

I see that I forgot to tell you of the son of Josiah P. White. He was the youngest of the family. His name is Arthur, and he was my best student in the first country school I ever taught, in 1892-3. For years he has been in the postal service at Traverse City, Michigan.

Who could give you further information about the Whites? Well, maybe this Arthur could; maybe Juliet White (not Juliet, but Julia) Hinshaw, Rose Hill, Kansas, could. Maybe you could get information from Kelsey Hinshaw, who could be addressed in care of Pacific College, since his wife is the office secretary there. If Henry Fellow were a quarter of a century younger I'd suggest him, but he is nearly blind, and from some things he has written me about our common relations I am sure he might get things confused, as he has in some of our correspondence. (And if he should write to you, you'd have difficulty in reading it. I've read a lot of pretty difficult chirography in my time, but one has to guess at a good many things in his letters these days, for he does not write much better than I'd do if I were as near blind as he is.)

I could tell you much more about the Penningtons if you should want that. It would be more fun to have you come and study what little I have in the way of records, but if you can not get here as soon as you want to, and want me to give you some facts about Emma, Ainslie, Inez, Juliet, Willis, Levi, Parker, Isaac, Lorena, Hannah, Deborah, Frank, Charles, Eva, Alice, Fred, Ethel, Emma, Luther, Alva, and all the rest of that generation, with their descendants to at least the third and fourth generation -- well, I'd have to do some investigating myself for some of it, but I could give you a lot, perhaps more than you'd need.

Well, if all this is of any help to you, I shall be grateful. But if you'll come and see us you can ask questions and get answers face to face, and perhaps that will be a great deal better. At any rate, it would be more fun.

With the hope that we may see you soon, I am

Your cousin,

Mrs. Mildred Marshall Burck,
Route 1,
Monmouth, Oregon.