

Levi Pennington

People

3-17-1948

Pennington to Joseph Reece, March 17, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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Recommended Citation

Pennington, Levi T., "Pennington to Joseph Reece, March 17, 1948" (1948). *Levi Pennington*. 245.
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March 17, 1948.

Joseph G. Reece,
2904 N. E. 80th. Ave.,
Portland 13, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

In a conversation last evening with President Gervas A. Carey I was informed that the attorney for Elbridge A. Stuart told you that Pacific College might just as well have had \$250,000.00 as \$25,000.00 if we had only asked for it. I have no reason to question the honesty of this attorney, but his statement could hardly have been less accurate. Perhaps he has had no means of knowing of the efforts of perhaps every Quaker college in America to secure big gifts from Mr. Stuart; certainly he must not have known of the campaign of Pacific College to get big help from him, a campaign which began before I came to Oregon and continued up to the time of his death.

The first solicitation of which I personally know was that made by Ezra H. Woodward, who was a classmate of the boy Elbridge Stuart at Spiceland Academy in Indiana. This was for help in the erection of Wood-Mar Hall.

I do not distinctly remember all the times that I solicited him, alone or with others. There were at least two times during our first endowment campaign, which covered 1912-14. Two visits were made with Robert E. Pretlow, pastor of the meeting in Seattle, I think during this campaign. Another visit was made in 1917, when we were planning to start a campaign for another \$100,000.00. We arrived in Seattle on the day that diplomatic relations were broken off with Germany, and that campaign was immediately abandoned. I believe a strong appeal was made to him during the campaign of 1919-21, but I was in the Forward Movement work during that time and if I participated in the appeal it was by correspondence. I was raising more than \$50,000.00 in the east during that campaign. When Stacy McCracken was secured as field secretary for the college and we were seeking enough endowment to standardize the college, he and I did our best to get Mr. Stuart to do a big thing for us. When, after Stacy McCracken's departure we renewed our effort to raise the necessary endowment for standardization, the appeal to Mr. Stuart was renewed. When E. C. Newberry was field secretary, he visited Mr. Stuart, who had now removed to California, and made another appeal to him for a big gift. When Eric V. Hauser led in our efforts to put on a \$100,000.00 banquet, Mr. Hauser and I made our appeal again to Mr. Stuart. Vergil Hinshaw and I made another appeal to him while Vergil was our field secretary.

Not all these appeals were entirely in vain. We secured gifts of \$500.00, \$1,000.00, \$2,500.00 and the \$25,000.00 of which you know. (You may recall that a number of other Quaker colleges, perhaps all of them, received similar gifts. In proportion to our student enrollment we fared better than most of them perhaps better than any of the others.)

My later efforts were specifically for a big gift, with a quarter of a million dollars mentioned as the minimum of my hope for his gift to the college. I pointed out to him the great need of the college for a great big gift, that would put us on the list of colleges recognized by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools, one that would stimulate other gifts which would enable the college to do an adequate educational job.

In my efforts to secure a big gift from him, I urged him, if he did not feel that he could do it during his life, to put the college in his will for a big sum. He always received me kindly-- on both of my last two visits he treated me as if I had been a long lost son, sitting for a long time and holding my hand while tears fell from his almost sightless eyes and from mine, as he talked about intimate things of his family life, the loss of his wife and other members of his family -- his sister was a member of the church where I was last pastor.

After his gift of \$25,000.00 I kept him informed as to how the income was spent, what students received the assistance which his gift provided, and all that sort of thing, always hoping that he could be induced to do a big thing in his will, since by this time it was evident that he was not going to do a big thing for any Quaker college during his life. But I never succeeded in getting him to do it, nor did Newberry, Woodward, Pretlow, Hauser, McCracken, Hinshaw and others who tried it. And I think you ought to know some of the reasons why we failed.

In the first place, Mr. Stuart had long ceased to be a Friend, and the denomination of which he was a member for nearly fifty years for a guess, made its demands on him for all its various activities, including the educational. All that he gave to Friends was "for old time's sake." The gift that he and Sam Hill and Hervey Lindley gave in Seattle was because of the associations of earlier days.

In the second place, other Quaker colleges in America were after him for big money. He felt that if he gave to one in a big way, he would be in hot water from the rest. If he gave \$250,000.00 to Pacific College, other colleges with four or five times our student body would think they should have a million each.

But Pacific College is located in the Pacific Northwest, and we felt that we had a special claim on him. For a long time I did not know just why he was averse to helping us in a large way. I found after a while that the reason was simple. Oregon Yearly Meeting had not gained his confidence; he was not satisfied with either the aims or the methods of this yearly meeting. Perhaps the incidents which brought about that attitude were not of sufficient importance so that they should have had such an influence, but they had it, just the same.

The only time, so far as I know, when Mr. Stuart visited Newberg was before I came. He and Sam Hill and Hervey Lindley came at yearly meeting time, to attend the Sunday service. There were some rather notable visiting Quaker ministers in attendance that year, and naturally these men expected to hear one of them. (I have seen enough discourtesy to visiting Friends in this yearly meeting so that I have no doubt of the accuracy of this account.) None of these visiting Friends was asked to speak that day. There

was a child evangelist in this section at that time, and she was given the preaching assignment. She made a highly emotional speech, repeating over and over catch expressions that she had learned, and giving what seemed to these men and to many Oregon Yearly Meeting Friends a far different service from that which the occasion demanded. It is not too much to say that all three of these visitors left the yearly meeting grounds more than a little disgusted.

You perhaps have become familiar with the affairs in the Seattle area. You know of the reports which were circulated by Dorothy Lee against Robert E. Pretlow, who was then pastor of Seattle meeting and largely supported by the Stuart-Hill-Lindley trio; of the complaint against her made to the monthly meeting; of her disownment; of her appeal to the quarterly meeting; of the support given her by the superintendent of Oregon Yearly Meeting (he told me himself that the "packed" committee that was to report in Dorothy's favor could have reported at the next quarterly meeting, but that was held in Seattle where they feared that Robert had too many friends, and they stated that they were not ready to report, and waited till the quarterly meeting was held in Tacoma, where they thought Dorothy's friends would be in majority); of the decision of the Quarterly Meeting to set aside the action of the monthly meeting; of the appeal of the monthly meeting to the yearly meeting; of Dorothy Lee's resignation and its acceptance; of her reception into membership in Portland, and her recording as a minister in the shortest possible time; of Oregon Yearly Meeting's promise to Indiana Yearly Meeting to stay out of that territory; of the later organization of another monthly meeting in Seattle, with Dorothy Lee as its leading spirit; of the later service of this former Oregon Yearly Meeting superintendent ^{as pastor} of this meeting; of the never-ending trouble until the laying down of that meeting, the disownment of Dorothy Lee, and all that. Well, that whole incident would probably have shaken the faith of Mr. Stuart in Oregon Yearly Meeting, if he had had any.

There were other things that affected him unfavorably. Perhaps I ought to mention one more, the attacks made on the college and its administration by the same element that drove Emmett W. Gulley out of the presidency and lost the college another chance for a gift of from a quarter to a half million dollars. Mr. Stuart did not like this sort of thing, especially attacks on his old schoolmate, Ezra H. Woodward, in whom he believed.

Since you told President Carey of this statement by Mr. Stuart's attorney, I thought you ought to know these facts that I have related. So far from our not asking, there has been a campaign of nearly or quite a third of a century to secure help in a big way from him, during the latter part of his life the effort being to secure at least \$250,000.00. Always there was this wall of lack of confidence in Oregon Yearly Meeting, which I never succeeded in breaking down, though I tried hard and often.

Sincerely your friend,

cc: Gervas A. Carey
Walter P. Lee.

Levi T. Pennington.