

Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to Gervas Carey, May 20, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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May 20, 1948.

Dr. Gervas A. Carey, Pres.,
Pacific College,
Newberg, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

Your letter in regard to the proposed change of name for Pacific College was awaiting me on my return last evening from a day's absence.

I suppose I have suffered as much from the embarrassment caused by our confusion of names with Pacific University as anybody else, and yet I suspect that I realize as clearly as anybody else the disadvantages of changing the name of an institution that is more than half a century old. It can be done, as Linfield College can testify; but it inevitably will involve some disadvantages that ought to be faced before final action is taken.

You perhaps do not know of the determination of Pacific University some forty years ago to change the name of their institution to Pacific College. They are not a University, never have been and possibly -- I should say probably -- never will be. They have wanted to change their name to Pacific College off and on for a long time. They have repeatedly suggested a combination of the two institutions, taking the name Pacific College. If we abandon that name, my guess is that they will take it, for the word "university" in their name is as embarrassing to them as the confusion of names is to us. So if we give up the name "Pacific College", my guess is that they will take it.

Then there will still be "Pacific College." And this might not be a thing that would ever involve us in difficulties. But I know of wills that have been written making bequests to Pacific College, and I suspect there are others of which I do not know. Of course if we changed the name, and then informed all these folks to change their wills accordingly, all might be well; and even if the wills were not changed we might be able to prove to the courts that the gifts were intended for us rather than for Pacific University.

I'd think it might be advisable to have some correspondence with William Penn College before a change was made, if one is to be made. Even a change from Penn College to William Penn College involved some difficulty, some loss of prestige, and some legal complications -- we'd not become involved in any questionable financial complications as they did, I am sure.

If a change is made, I hope narrow prejudices will be laid aside and a name chosen that will mean something not only now but in the future. And there are some names that I do hope we shall not make the mistake of selecting.

"Newberg Friends College" is one of them that I'd personally object to. I love the Friends church, but this sort of name has numerous disadvantages. First it has part of the name of another Quaker college, and if the Pacific name is objection-

able because other colleges have it, the word Friends in the name is objectionable on the same ground. Then to put the denominational name into the name of the college would narrow its influence and appeal very decidedly. "Forest Grove Congregational College" is a name that I'm sure Pacific University would never select. "Oskaloosa Friends College", "Central City Friends College" -- let's avoid that one, in any case. And there is another big reason. While one does not anticipate any change in the location of the college, institutions do sometimes move, and the handle of the name of a small town is a handicap -- ask Albany College, now Lewis and Clark.

Chehalis is a beautiful name, though it would always be mispronounced by half the folks who used it -- I've even heard people pronounce the name of the Windy City so that the name began, as they pronounced it, just as if they were starting to say chicken. Of course we'd not be naming the college from a muddy creek that goes dry in the summer, but from a mountain that in one spot reaches the lordly height of 1,000 feet above sea level. But who knows Chehalis, and just what would the name mean? I'm not for that one.

Northwest Friends College has the objections that I have urged against Newberg Friends College, and the additional objection that the Northwest Territory name has permanently made that term mean for most folks some other part of the earth. Northwestern University is correctly named, according to most of the folks in the United States.

My first choice for a name would be Herbert Hoover College, or Hoover College, if the whole name seemed too long. (John Greenleaf Whittier College seems to me less suitable than Whittier College -- nobody doubts what Whittier is meant, and I suspect that nobody would suppose that Hoover College was named after the leader of the G-men or the long-time head usher at the White House or even the manufacturer of carpet sweepers.) Pacific College did honor Herbert Hoover with the first (and thus far the only) honorary degree it ever granted, and it delighted him and still more, I believe, his wife. He is not only the most distinguished man ever connected with the institution but the most distinguished man we are ever likely to have. His service to humanity was such as no other man ever gave, such as no other man before him had ever had the opportunity to give, and though the need after this war has been greater, there has been no man to measure up to the responsibility of it. His name would mean more to the institution than any other name that could be given, in my judgment. Financially it might prove most advantageous, although the selection of a name merely for financial considerations would not be justified. Herbert's sons would be interested; he has wealthy and influential friends who would be favorably inclined by this honor to a man whom they consider the greatest world hero to come out of World War I., with no one to compare with him coming out of World War II. It has long been my hope that if the name ever was changed, the Hoover name might be selected.

My second choice would be George Fox College. It would be regarded by some as a bit presumptuous for so small a college to take the name of the founder of the denomination, and outside of Friends the name would not mean anything like what

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the Hoover name would mean. But it would be my second choice of the names that have been suggested.

With best wishes to you and the college,

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.