

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To Paul Smith, December 6, 1965

Levi T. Pennington
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December 6, 1965.

Prest. Paul Smith,
Whittier College,
Whittier, California.

Dear Friend:--

Not long ago a Friend asked me the names of the Quaker Colleges in the United States, and I started with the names of Whittier College, George Fox College, Friends University, Earlham College -- and I did not get through the list, as I remember, until I was informed that Whittier College was no longer a Quaker College; that it had severed its connection with the Friends Church; and that anyhow -- and you may be able to guess where it went from there, though I did not encourage this Friend to go into details.

For my own enlightenment and for the possible enlightenment of others, I wonder if you would be willing to tell me to what extent Whittier is a Quaker college? This might include its organic connection with the Friends church, especially California Yearly Meeting; its relation to the basic things of the Christian faith; and its relationship to those things that are peculiarly Quakerly in life and teachings -- the doctrine of peace, for instance.

I am not blind to the fact that no college could possibly satisfy all Friends, or all Friends of any one yearly meeting, or all Friends of a single meeting. There are those who would insist on their own shibboleths, and insist on the proper emphasis on the h in the pronunciation of the word; there are those who would rule a college out of the Quaker ranks on account of its attitude on dancing, smoking, card playing, theater attendance, its attitude toward sex, or toward United States politics or world conditions, its support of the American Friends Service Committee or the former Five Years Meeting, now Friends United Meeting, and all that sort of thing. But you can tell me, and I hope you will, to what extent Whittier College is a Quaker college, committed to Quaker ideals, so that it would be properly included in a list of Quaker colleges. (There are those who would limit that title to one institution, and some who would limit the number still further.)

With best wishes to you and the college which you serve,

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.