

311 West Pierce  
Mangum, Oklahoma 73554  
July 16, 1980

Dear Tom:

I have been a Stanley Pennell enthusiast since I stumbled upon Rome Hanks in high school. I spent 1962-1963 as assistant museum director at the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. At that time, the attitude there toward Pennell was quite hostile. I was refused permission to do an article about him for the Quarterly because (quote) he had "not been accepted by the grass roots." And as I'm sure you know, there is still some hostility in Junction City.

However, while I was at the Historical Society, the photographer and I did spend a worth while day in Junction City taking pictures. We photographed the "house on Third Street" (228 West Fourth) from every angle and we were allowed inside and took some good shots there. We also got good pictures of the Universalist Church where J.J. Pennell's funeral, described so well in Nora Beckham took place in 1922. I sent prints to Pennell and received a thoughtful letter. This was shortly before his death, and I took considerable kidding that my photos brought back bad memories of the house and of "Nora" and thereby hastened that sad event.

I discovered a KU student directory for 1921-1922 and Stanley's address is listed as 721 Mississippi. This, therefore, is "845 Manila" the "Kranz house" in Nora Beckham. I went there (last week) and it is exactly as described in Nora including the oval glass in the front door. Stanley's room is easily identified by the bay window. A young couple lives there and they had a "sense" of history and allowed me to go through the entire house.

I can't agree that Nora Beckham is inferior to Rome Hanks although it is certainly different! Pennell's Civil War scenes are magnificent but they should'nt prevent us from seeing his very considerable achievement elsewhere. Nora has its own style and poignancy and is, of course, very important for anyone interested in Pennell. The KU scenes, the train ride back to "Fork City," J.J. Pennell's death and funeral all contain superb writing. The lengthy descriptions of the rooms in the "house on Third Street" might put off some readers but I personally liked them. It took courage to do that, too! Nora Beckham aroused my interest in ### Stanley as a person and as a writer more so than Rome.

I am a graduate of the University of Oklahoma and presently teach English and creative writing at El Reno, Oklahoma high school. However this will be my last year in this part of the country, Pennell or no Pennell. I can't take this damn heat and dryness! It depresses me so much that I can't work. I spent 12 years in Virginia and intend to go back to that part of the country if it means pumping gas in a service station. I would like to do a full length biography of Pennell but the difficulties are formidable. I'm glad he is finally getting some recognition through your project. Thanks for the offer to see your material---more later.

Best

  
John Mitchell