

# Preservation Update!

Newsletter of Historic Pella Trust, Inc.

Preserving yesterday with a vision for tomorrow!

Volume 13 - Fall 2011

## Holiday Edition!

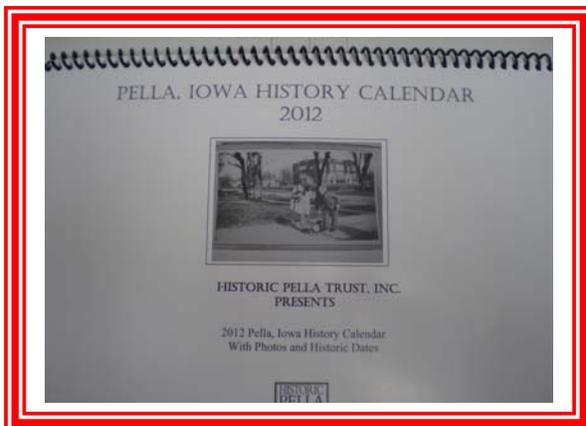
With the holiday season nipping at our heels, it is a perfect time to relax and reflect on our many blessings. Childhood memories, mixed with the remembrance of delightful traditions shared with friends and family, enhances the experience of Christmas in Pella.

This edition of Historic Pella Trust's Newsletter will highlight 1911 Pella, with stories of what was going on in our town one-hundred years ago.

The articles are funny, poignant and clearly bring to the forefront how important it is for us in 2011 to connect with Pella's past. As you read some of the articles it becomes apparent what a lively American town Pella was and continues to be today. So enjoy this trip among the memories of 1911.

**NEW - 2012 HISTORY CALENDAR.  
GREAT GIFT FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY!**

**Historic Pella Trust 2012 History Calendar is available in local stores, as well as at our office, for \$10.00 each. Historic photos along with dates and events from Pella's past are featured each month. These calendars are available at the following stores:**



1911 Photo of the west side of the square.



South Main St looking from the corner of Franklin and Main... You can see the tower of Third Reformed Church.

- Pella Hometown Variety
- Branches Book Store
- Jaarsma Bakery
- Embellish
- Topaz Hair Salon
- Vermeer Windmill Gift Shop
- Scholte Museum Gift Shop
- Simple Treasures
- Historic Pella Trust Office

**Please support Historic Pella Trust with the purchase of the 2012 History Calendar. THANK YOU!**

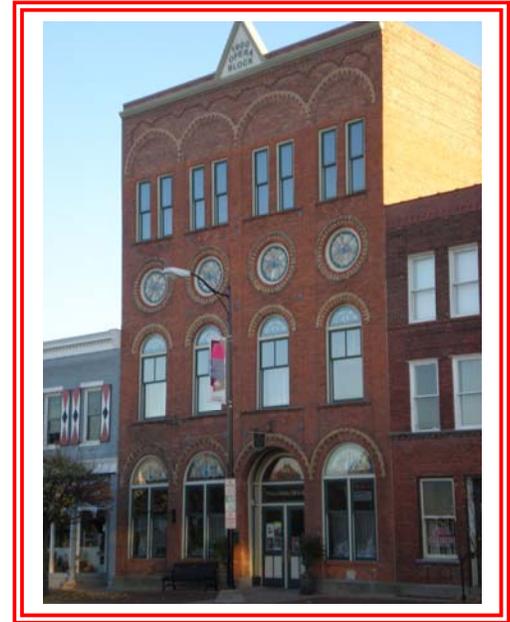
## 1900 PELLA OPERA HOUSE

One of Pella's most beautiful buildings is the Opera House at 611 Franklin Street. In 1900 the present structure was built to house an elegant theater. Above the theater on the fourth floor were two beautifully decorated rooms designed for receptions and banquets. Both rooms were covered with thick Brussels's carpet along with new plush drapes that adorned each window.

On the evening of November 16, 1900 the Opera House opened with a premier showing of, *What Happened to Jones*. As the evening guests approached the Opera House they were greeted by the warm glow of hundreds of incandescent lights that softly illuminated the interior. Entering through two handsome front doors the guest stepped into a stylish lobby with a grand staircase leading up to the second floor theater, lavishly decorated with plush seats and a beautiful stage. Unfortunately the new heating system was not operating properly, and the play not as good as anticipated, but according to the newspaper "all who attended enjoyed the evening despite a few flaws".

Following the opening play in 1900 there were weekly theater productions and musical performances, that were well attended by many from Pella and surrounding areas.

The Opera House has a history of 'many lives'. The following is a time-line of events and businesses that made their home in this building since 1900.



Pella's Opera House listed on the National Register of Historic Places

- 1906 - Silent movies were added to the list of theatre entertainment. Along with the movie, a pop making machine was added that made all kinds of flavored pop, as well as ginger ale, soda, seltzer water and birch beer.
- 1906 - Mr. Gladstone, the owner of the Opera House encouraged local talent to use the theater and in the spring the high school put on the play, *By the Enemy Hands*.
- 1907 - A local Democrat Convention was held at the Opera House.
- 1908 - A roller skating party was hosted by Laura Kramer and Madge Vander Zyl, where, "a jolly good time was enjoyed by all."
- 1909 - One of the most famous owners, John Harrah of Las Vegas produced a variety of entertainment for over eight years.
- 1910 - Mr. J.F. Burns opened an office and supply room on the first floor.
- 1915 - The Women's Federated Club inspected the rooms and decided to rent them for a year. They papered and painted the ground floor and converted it into a 'rest room', that was used as a lounge where travelers and shoppers could, "rest" for awhile. This venture proved to be very popular. Also, women could leave their children in the care of Miss Grace Visser for 10 cents an hour. The building was then known as the Federated Club Building.
- 1918 - Harrah sold the building to Mr. B. VerMeer who owned the White Way Auto Company and made plans to convert the building into: "one of the most up-to-date service stations in the country". This never happened and three months later he sold the building to the Farmers Produce Company.
- 1918 - 1925 The Farmers Produce Company bought and sold pigeons, chickens, eggs, milk, and cream. An ad in the Pella Chronicle advertised, "Sergeant's Feed was one of the items sold here".
- 1926 - Dr. W.C. VerPloeg, Veterinarian, occupied a space in the Opera Building.
- 1926 - The Farmers Union Co-op, purchased the building. Throughout the 1930's and 1940's many Pella families traded at this combination produce house and grocery store.
- 1937 - The Farmers Union co-op had a cold storage locker plant available. Farmers would butcher on the farm and bring the meat to the Co-op and there they would finish processing the meat into smaller cuts. Eggs, chicken and garden products were also delivered. After leaving their product the farmers would park at the south end of the building and then go around to the grocery store and purchase supplies.\*
- 1930 - Long time resident, Bob Klein told of people gathering on the fourth floor to listen to radio broadcasts of Central college basketball games.
- 1957 - Herman Swank and Neal Leyden purchased the building. They created a social hall and small kitchen on the second floor to be rented out for meetings. During the years the Swanks owned the building it also housed the following: Antique storage; Bowling alley; skating rink; a lumber yard, (where the Molengracht is now located). A gas station built by the Farmer's Union where the Vermeer windmill now stands.
- 1967 - The first floor was the Gambles hardware store for seventeen years.
- 1975 - A recreation teen center was opened.
- 1987 - The Pella Historical Society purchased the Opera House.

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\*NOTE: "Every year the Farmers Union Co-op had a picnic in Grundman's Grove. Large crowds always attended this much anticipated event. People brought food, sharing in a huge potluck meal, accompanied by free coffee, made in a large tank. Temporary restrooms were erected that "opened to the sky". Kids would climb up into the trees that overlook the outhouses below, which caused some hollering and merriment. Home talent was arranged as entertainment. Baseball, races and other games were played. Speakers would be invited to talk about agricultural related subjects. People arrived early in the morning. Some would go home and do their chores, and then return for the night events, staying until ten or eleven o'clock. At night lights were strung between the trees which added a magical touch to a great day of fun."

## Happenings of One-Hundred Years Ago in Pella From the archives of the Pella Chronicle 1911 Newspapers

On September 21, 1911 the Pella Chronicle printed the following:

### Aeroplane at Pella Fair

An attempt is being made by those interested in the Pella fair to have an aeroplane on the ground and give exhibition flights. This would certainly be a drawing card and we should not lose the opportunity to secure one when it can be had at a very reasonable figure. One day last week at the Henry County Fair held at Winfield, Iowa, the aeroplane flights drew a crowd of then thousand people.

We understand that the fair directors have contracted for amusements to the limit of their appropriation for that purpose and that further expenditures by them is impossible.. Under those conditions we believe the merchants and citizens are interested enough in the Fair to subscribe enough to secure this attraction.

The Chronicle is ready to boost in this matter with more than a "hot-air spiel". We will start the list with a \$5 donation. Now come on booster friends,



A week later - October 5, 1911 Pella Chronicle this article was printed.

### "Airship Destroyed"

The airship that was to make flights at the Pella Fair was destroyed by a cyclone at What Cheer last Thursday evening. The Fair committee is putting forth every effort within their power to secure another aviator in time for this fair. it would be well for the fair association to take the money that was subscribed for that purpose and enlarge the race track.

This ad appeared in the October 5, 1911 Pella Chronicle advertising the coming fair.

**In the October 12, 1911 issue of the Pella Chronicle this review of the fair appeared on the front page.**

### PELLA HAD A GOOD FAIR

The Exceptionally Large Exhibits in all Departments Win Words of Praise

In most respects the twenty fourth Annual Lake Prairie District Fair, held here October 3, 4, 5, and 6 was the best exhibition held for a number of years past, and but for the inclement weather which prevailed during the week previous records for attendance would have been broken.

As it was, over 5000 people ignored the down pour of rain, the mud and the chilling wind to visit the fair. All who did so felt amply repaid for the inconvenience they suffered.

#### THE ART HALL

The art hall was well filled with exhibits of needle work, fresh and canned fruit, jellies, preserves and many other beautiful and good things which showed the hard work of the fair sex.

#### THE POULTRY HOUSE

A visit to the poultry house was worth while because there was an excellent showing of the various breeds and some fine birds were exhibited.



The above picture is of an aeroplane demonstration at a fair in Illinois in 1911. It would be this type of plane that the Pella Fair organizers were attempting to solicit for their October 3,4,5,& 6, 1911 fair.

Article on the 1911 October Fair as printed in the Pella Chronicle (continued)

#### THE MACHINERY

Near the floral Hall, Soetens and Kool had a nice exhibit of farm machinery and they are thoroughly convinced that it pays to advertise by exhibiting at the Pella fair as their salesmen there took orders for 2-gang plows, 2 riding cultivators, 2 disks with tongue trucks, 1 manure spreader and 1 steel wheel wagon.

Another display was that made by the Pella Pipe and Tank Factory, with the sticky gasoline engines

#### THE STOCK

The large exhibit of horses, cattle, sheep and hogs was a happy surprise to many and was of unusual interest to the farmers and stock men who visited the fair this year.

#### THE ATTRACTIONS

The free attractions were O.K. and did not fail to please. The failure of the aviators to put in an appearance was a sore disappointment to all. But as the fulfilling of the contract was unavoidable on their part the matter caused no ill feeling.

#### THE RACE

The races were good-i.e. with one exception – the exception was the “fake auto race”. It was generally known that the race would be fake, but it was so blamed “fakey” that it would do credit to a school boys circus rather than to the work of grown up men. Bum truck that race.

#### \$700 IN THE HOLE

Although the results of this year's fair will show something like \$700 on the wrong side of the credit sheet there was a kinder feeling existing for the fair and its future than there has been for years past. The board of directors will meet this afternoon to settle up the business of this year's fair and lay some plans for the future. Now is the time to prepare for the fair of 1912. Let every public spirited citizen in the community put a shoulder to the wheel and help push.

*Note: The location of the 1911 fair was on land where Pella's Hy-Vee Market is located on Oskaloosa Street.*

*Article by Ellie Gosselink*

## HPT IS LOOKING FOR YOUR OLD FAMILY PHOTOS!

Historic Pella Trust has embarked upon a Photographic Archival Project thanks to a grant from the Pella Community Foundation. We will scan your photos of Pella's past into our file. If you have old photos of buildings, street scenes, family photos or farm scenes that highlight Pella since our town was settled in 1847, please share them with us.

Contact Ellie Gosselink at our office 628-8003 or email Historic Pella Trust at [historicpellatrust@yahoo.com](mailto:historicpellatrust@yahoo.com)

We will return your photos once we have scanned them into our archival file.

**It is time to become a member, or renew your membership with Historic Pella Trust!**

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**Support HPT by buying a history calendar for friends and relatives while supplies last!**

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT!

*Our home is our safe haven. As children we knew we could always go home from school or play to a safe haven. As young adults we knew we could return to our parent’s and the safe haven of a home we knew. As mature adults we tried to create a safe haven in a home for our own families.*

*When thinking about our forefathers who braved the unknown, leaving the safety of their own homes in the Netherlands to travel thousands of miles into a world they knew little about, they had to experience uncertainty and fear in the loss of a safe haven. Many of them were responsible for young families. Possessing fortitude and ambition, they found a location here in Iowa and recreated their safe havens by building homes and a community.*

*Hard work and patience made Pella what it is today and Historic Pella Trust has a mission to save and restore this history for the present and the future generations to appreciate. The Trust has observed, directed, and actively participated in the restoration of many properties. It has also offered assistance to those who are maintaining their safe havens within historic structures here in Pella.*

*We invite you to join our effort through your support in order that preservation will continue. By taking action on these historically significant locations, we believe we will be raising our visibility and inspiring others to join in our cause.*

*The homes of Pella are symbols of both the accounts of history and those dwellings which created a safe haven when Pella was founded. Today they are still the symbols of home.*

*Liz Epperly, President  
Historic Pella Trust*

This item appeared in the Pella Chronicle January 12, 1911 Front Page

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“Mr. B. Vander Ploeg one of Pella’s pioneer citizens suffered an attack of ‘automobiliousness’ this week. Mr. H. P. Van Gorp, manager of Star Auto Co., prescribed a 1911 model Overland and the patient has fully recovered and is rejoicing in his new found joy.”

The following notes were printed in the Pella Chronicle Thursday, June 22, 1911 Edition:

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Just for the sake of another queer style, Pella girls are borrowing mother’s towels to make hats of.

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The Pella baseball team felt quite honored to be invited to play the initial game with the salaried Newton team...  
Costly errors and a little touch of stupid base running lost the game with Pella by the score of 5 to 4....

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**RASPBERRIES**

Orders are now booked for raspberries at the Oak Grove nursery. If in need of any call up 108 green.

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Out at the city limits of Kilduff is a sign to autoists which reads: “City Limits—Go to it.”

## Pella 1911 to 2011 A Hundred Years of Change!

The holidays in Pella are a special part of living here. As the holidays approach, our unique Dutch architecture that showcaseS homes and businesses in Pella is a destination for many visitors from around Iowa and other states.

For those of us who live in Pella we enjoy the year's four seasons which start with Tulip Time in May and culminate with the beautiful December Holiday season, where Pella sparkles with beautiful decorations and holiday lights.

The preservation of Pella's architectural heritage is Historic Pella Trust's main focus. In 1996 a group of concerned citizens were dismayed to see structures slowly be torn down and disappear from our landscape as our unique Dutch architectural heritage slowly eroded. Historic Pella Trust was organized and we have been able to preserve our precious heritage by saving buildings and homes over the years for the present and future generations to enjoy.

Now is the time of year to become a member, or renew your membership with Historic Pella Trust.

Please fill out the back page of this newsletter and mail to Historic Pella Trust

PO Box 1 - Pella, Iowa 50219

*Happy Holidays*

Historic Pella Trust Preservation Projects  
**Currently Historic Pella Trust is working on 1110 W. Washington that was the location of the first general store in Pella, probably built around 1848. It is in very poor condition. Funds are needed so we can start working on a list of improvements required to bring it up to code. This property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and thus available for tax benefits. It is for sale.**

***It is through the generous contributions from our members that enable this work to go forward. Your funds helped us to get this building placed on the National Register of Historic Homes.***

***Another of our preservation successes is 'Simple Treasures'. A home built in 1853 that was scheduled to be torn down. We were able to save it through membership funds and restore it to where it was marketable. Today it is one of Pella's thriving businesses.***

### **NEW! Historic Pella Trust 2012 History Calendar**

**All proceeds go to support our preservation programs.**

**Calendars are available at the following locations:**

**Branches Christian Book Store  
 Pella Hometown Variety  
 Embellish  
 Jaarsma Bakery  
 Simple Treasures  
 Topaz Hair Styling Salon  
 Vermeer Windmill Gift Shop  
 Scholte House Museum Gift  
 Historic Pella Trust Office**

*A great holiday gift for friends and family members who love Pella, or have left Pella and would like to have a, "little taste of Pella", to enjoy each month in 2012!*

**\$10.00 ea.**



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