



A NEWSLETTER FROM PELLA PRESERVATION TRUST

PRESERVE PELLA

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: STORIES, STEWARDS, AND PRESERVATION IN PELLA

It was a full house on Thursday night, September 25, as friends and members of the Pella Preservation Trust gathered in the Great Hall of the historic Pella Opera House. Fittingly, the Opera House itself is celebrating a milestone — 125 years since its grand opening — and the hall seemed to hum with the memories of all the performances, speeches, and celebrations that have filled it over the decades.

The crowd was lively, and the evening began on a light note with a few rounds of Pella history trivia. "Did you know," one question began, "that there was once a circus lion buried in Central Park?" Sure enough, in 1878, when the *Great London Show* came through town, one of its lions died and was buried right in the park. Three days later, a taxidermist from Ottumwa arrived to dig it up, and as one newspaper wrote, "*the perfume around the vicinity of the square was of the kind not generally retailed in stores, yet it managed to draw a good crowd.*"

From there, the stories only grew richer. Over the years, the Opera House has been home to more than just the arts — a soda pop factory once bubbled away in the basement; an early concrete block, or "cement building stone," factory operated there for several years; and even a

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Trust President Bruce Boertje explained that the meeting's purpose is centered around the Trust's Mission Statement - the reason we exist.



Tuttle Cabin before it was relocated to the back of the property in 1972.

IF THESE LOGS COULD TALK

If the Tuttle Cabin could speak, it would tell stories of generations who called it home — of laughter and loss, of everyday lives unfolding on what was once the edge of the frontier, and of the growing town of Pella itself. Today, the cabin stands quietly along the Learning Walk, linking our present with the past — a rare survivor that reminds us how close we came to losing it, and how much we continue to learn from it.

Many people in Pella have toured the Tuttle Cabin or heard the story of its rescue. But as new research has shown, its roots run even deeper than we realized. Each layer of ownership reveals not just who lived within its walls, but how Pella itself evolved from a pioneer settlement to a thriving community.

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A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: STORIES, STEWARDS, AND PRESERVATION IN PELLA

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mattress manufacturer called it home for a time. It's a fine reminder that buildings, like people, live many lives.

After a warm welcome, we introduced the Trust's Board of Directors — a group of dedicated volunteers who keep preservation in motion year-round. Together, we revisited why the Trust was founded 31 years ago: to safeguard Pella's historic character, one building, and one story, at a time.

We shared updates on some of this year's initiatives — including our newly created Conservation Easement brochure, which allows owners of historic properties to permanently protect their buildings from demolition or neglect. This brochure highlights how this works in simple terms. (See page 4 to learn more.)



Andy Dykstra and her husband Jonathan (not pictured) gave the evening's feature presentation, "The Journey."

We also unveiled the first in a planned series of Historic Plaques, funded through the Marion County Community Foundation. The inaugural plaque marks the original location of Scholte's Church at 705 West First Street — a fitting start for a program that will help tell Pella's story, building by building.

Of course, preservation is as much about people as it is about places, and we were proud to honor several outstanding examples of stewardship with our Historic Preservation Awards. See the back cover for photos of the preservation award properties.

- Kevin and Michelle Jones received recognition for their remarkable work at 512 Franklin Street. They restored the building's front façade to its original appearance, removing a plate-glass window and replacing deteriorated brick with period-correct material salvaged locally.
- Jeff and Stephanie Lenderink were honored for their home at 811 West Third Street, where they've lovingly preserved original wood siding and scrollwork. The Lenderinks went a step further by placing a conservation easement on the property, ensuring its protection for generations to come.
- Karen TeRonde was recognized for her thoughtful restoration of 606 East First Street, which includes Pella's only remaining Romeo and Juliet balcony. Instead of removing it, as one recommendation suggested, she chose the harder route — to repair and restore it, returning a bit of architectural poetry to the street.

We also presented a Century Award to the Van Zante family for their home at 508 Liberty Street, which has remained in the same family for 100 years — a rare and wonderful achievement in Pella's history.

With the awards presented, it was time for the evening's featured program. Andi and Jonathan Dykstra took the stage to share the remarkable story of their ongoing renovation of the Prins/Kuyper/Van Houweling House at 906 Independence Street — a property the Trust, working with Central College, helped transfer to them last year. Their presentation, titled "The Journey," perfectly captured what preservation is all about: patience, discovery, and respect for history.

For seventy years, the home served as a family residence before Central College used it as student housing. The college placed a large dorm addition on the back that increased student capacity to 30. When a burst pipe caused severe water damage, demolition loomed — but the college chose another path. They donated the property to the Trust, who in turn sought new stewards to bring it back to life. The Dykstras accepted the challenge.

They've uncovered treasures and surprises along the way — clothing walled up inside, old student papers, even beer cans from dorm days past. They restored hidden pocket doors, recreated custom interior doors from an attic original, and added a secret staircase to the attic, which once served as a children's playroom in the 1950s and '60s. Today, the home is well on its way to being a family residence once again — a living example of what preservation can achieve when vision meets determination.

As one attendee put it, "It's good to see history breathing again."

The evening ended with warm applause and a reminder of what the Pella Preservation Trust stands for. Preservation isn't just about keeping old buildings standing — it's about keeping our community's stories alive, honoring the hands that built Pella, and ensuring that future generations can still walk these streets and feel a sense of connection.

If you couldn't join us this year, we invite you to watch the full meeting video on our Facebook page, and, even better, come to next year's gathering. Bring a story, a question, or a love of old buildings — and be part of keeping Pella's past alive. ❖



A large and appreciative crowd attended the Trust's annual meeting at the Pella Opera House.

GREETINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Gerae Kelly

The first year of any job can be somewhat overwhelming but it is worth it when you are doing something you love. I genuinely love the work we do and the reason we do it. And, as you have read in this newsletter, a lot has been accomplished in 2025!

Within weeks of joining the Trust this spring, Tulip Time was upon us. We opened the Tuttle Cabin to a steady stream of visitors from whom we heard so many interesting stories, some by relatives of early Cabin residents and Michiel Van Diggelen, author of the fabulous new book, *The Exodus of Hendrik Peter Scholte*.

This summer, we helped to bring awareness to preservation in Pella while exhibiting at the Marion County Pioneer Day event and Thursday Nights in Pella's Wild West night in Central Park, where our board members were able to talk to people about preservation and share information about the Trust, while the kids participated in our Tuttle Cabin coloring contest to win a log cabin toy set. We also held a drawing for the adults to win a beautiful hand-blown log cabin Christmas ornament.

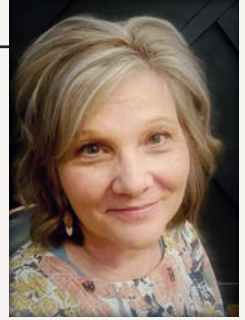
This fall, our 2025 Annual Meeting was packed with compelling stories of preservation journeys, and of the bravery, passion, patience, and persistence of people along those paths. We also took part in the Pella Community Foundation's Nonprofit Showcase, connecting with other organizations that help our community continue to be a high-quality, caring, and thriving place to live and work. The Showcase was held at the historic Pella Opera House, which celebrated its 125th anniversary in November.

We also worked to refine the look and feel of our printed materials by selecting a set of preferred colors, fonts, graphics, and photo styles to be used consistently across

any new materials. Our purpose is to strengthen our visual identity to improve its alignment with who we are and why we exist, as well as to help people more effectively recognize and distinguish the Trust from among the other organizations in the community. These changes will also more accurately represent our commitment to the use of colors and architectural elements appropriate to the original time period and styles of our historic homes and structures. We've already applied this new look and feel to our recently released Conservation Easements brochure, business stationery, event signage, and our 2025 Annual Meeting materials.

This winter and spring, I'll be working to redesign a new website (pellapreservationtrust.org) for anticipated launch next summer. The website will have our updated colors and style but more importantly, board members Jordan and Annie Vande Kamp will be teaming up with me to provide the site with streamlined functionality, user-friendly navigation, and reorganized content-making it faster and easier for users to find information and resources.

I hope you enjoy all the stories found in this newsletter! Our stories tie us together, and there are more stories waiting to be told, as we identify more of Pella's historic homes and buildings at risk of inappropriate alteration or, at worst, demolition. We are entirely dependent on the generosity and support of our members, friends, and community. There is much to do and we hope you will continue to help us bring awareness to others and to inspire future generations to continue the protection and preservation of our valuable heritage. ❖



PELLA PRESERVATION TRUST BOARD

The Trust currently has 13 board members. Over the years, 50 individuals have graced the board. One of these, Duane Rempe, has the distinction of having served continuously on the board since the founding of the organization more than 30 years ago.

Board Members: (from front, left to right)

Row 1 - Dody Boat, Shawn Thomas, Mary Van Wyk.

Row 2 - Lila Turnbull (Vice President), Susie Winegardner, Ann Summit, Bob Zylstra, Annie Vande Kamp (Secretary).

Row 3 - Matt McCulla (Treasurer), Duane Rempe, Bruce Boertje (President), Wayne Steinstra, Jordan Vande Kamp. ❖



CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

PARTNERING FOR PRESERVATION: HELPING BUILDINGS ENDURE FOR GENERATIONS

By Shawn Thomas

The Trust is pleased to report the successful protection of two more historic homes through new conservation easements. One home was donated to the Pella Preservation Trust and awarded to a new family, while the other received its easement in exchange for a grant to help fund major renovation work — ensuring that this home will stand for generations to come.

With these productive years behind us, we've also been working hard to lay the groundwork for future successes.

First, a new brochure was created in-house by our Executive Director, Gerae Kelly, who did a fabulous job producing an informative and visually appealing piece. It's a great resource for

prospective preservationists interested in learning how they can help protect Pella's historic homes and buildings.

Next came the formation of the Conservation Grant Committee, consisting of Bruce Boertje, Bob Zylstra, and myself. Our task was to establish a clear framework for how conservation easements and related grants are awarded — including eligibility, criteria, and policy. At our most recent board meeting, we presented the policies Bruce drafted, and they were approved unanimously. With these guidelines now in place, the process is more streamlined and the path forward clearer than ever.

Historically, with few exceptions, our conservation easements have

been placed at the time of transfer on properties deemed at risk of demolition — a reactive process that has nonetheless yielded excellent results. Now, we're working to be more proactive. Our goal is to offer grants to responsible homeowners who wish to protect their properties for future generations. A conservation easement remains one of the most effective tools for achieving that.

This shift in approach comes at an important time. Property values in Pella continue to rise — good news in many ways, but also a factor that sometimes tempts buyers to demolish historic homes for new construction. Rising values also make preservation investments more financially sensible, though they come with higher renovation costs. That's where the Trust can help. By providing targeted grants — for example, toward a new roof, structural repair, or other essential work — we can partner with homeowners who, in return, agree to place conservation easements on their properties. These collaborations not only help maintain the charm of our community, but also preserve the integrity and value of its historic character.

I look forward to meeting more homeowners who share our vision of maintaining Pella's unique architecture and the enduring legacy left to us by past generations. Together, we can ensure that Pella's next generation inherits a town as strong — or stronger — than the one we've been privileged to enjoy.

That's no small goal, but it's exactly what the Pella Preservation Trust stands for. Thank you for your continued friendship, commitment, and enthusiasm. Here's to many more years of preserving Pella's heritage together!

Happy Holidays! ♦



IF THESE LOGS COULD TALK

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When Dominie Hendrik Scholte and his followers — known collectively as “the Association” — arrived from the Netherlands to found Pella in 1847, they were nearly out of funds. Scholte stepped forward personally, purchasing some of the pioneers’ land claims with his own money. For that reason, every deed and abstract in Pella’s early history begins with Scholte’s name.

Interestingly, the lot that holds the Tuttle Cabin — named for the first pioneers to settle on what became Pella — once stood just beyond the town’s limits. What is now Lincoln Street marked Pella’s northern edge. Lot 17 of Block 21 in North Pella, where the Tuttle Cabin still stands today, was sold by Scholte on October 16, 1865, for fifty dollars to Jan Steenhoek, a local butcher who ran a meat-packing business on East Franklin Street. Steenhoek and his family were among those early settlers who worked hard and quietly helped lay the foundations of the town we cherish today. After the Steenhoeks, the record goes silent for several years — one of those frustrating gaps that preservation research so often uncovers.

By the 1880s or early 1890s, the property belonged to Jan and Nellie Van der Meyde. Jan worked as a huckster — a traveling vendor selling goods from a wagon. The family’s time in the cabin was marked by both daily work and sorrow: Nellie died there in 1895. Within a few years, illness forced Jan to move to Milwaukee to live with his daughter, Anna, who later inherited the cabin after his death in 1897.

Anna then rented the property to tenants, including one who went by the name “L. Smith.” In January 1899, disaster struck when a fire destroyed the cabin’s barn, hog pen, and chicken house. At that time, the lot extended east to the corner of Houston Street, where the outbuildings once stood.

Anna sold the property in 1908 to Abram Van Dyke, a retired farmer. By 1920, it belonged to Gerrit and Lily Sneller, another retired couple. In the

1925 tax records, the property was valued at \$500 — modest even then, but full of memories. Lily died there in 1926 at the age of 80, and Gerrit followed three years later.

Their son John and his wife Peetje, known affectionately as “Pady,” inherited the home. But the 1930s brought hard times. Following John’s death in 1932, Pady was forced to sell off the eastern fifty feet of the lot to pay taxes. The garden she once tended was lost, replaced in 1938 by a small new house on the corner. Still, she held onto the cabin itself, living there for nearly four more decades until her death in 1971 at the age of 91.

What happened next could easily have spelled the end of the Tuttle Cabin. When the property went up for sale, Bob Van Vark purchased it intending to tear down the aging structure and build anew. By then, the cabin’s original logs were hidden beneath layers of siding — unsightly to some, but ironically that siding had protected the logs from decay.

Then came a moment of quiet heroism. Bob’s daughter, Gail, saw beyond the worn boards and rough edges. She was captivated by the rustic charm of the exposed logs and convinced her father to save the old home. Even more, she wanted to live in it herself.

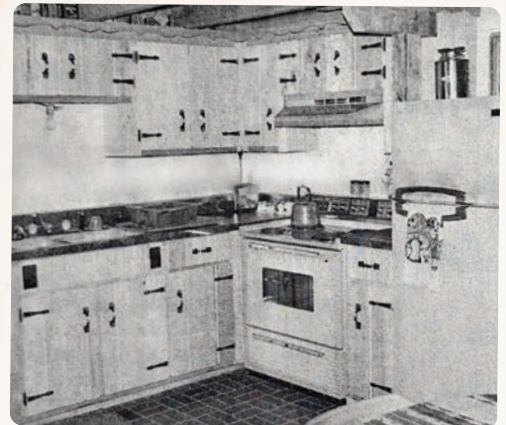
To make that possible, the cabin was carefully dismantled and reassembled on a new foundation set farther back on the lot. Modern comforts were added in the basement — plumbing, a kitchen, heating and cooling, and best of all, an indoor bathroom with a shower — yet the historic integrity of the log structure remained intact. Where once a ladder led to the attic, a proper stairway was built. Where a small stove once provided heat, a fireplace now stands in its place.

For a time, Gail and her husband, Monte, made their home there. Later, the cabin was rented out to others, before Gail reclaimed it as her art studio — a creative space inspired by, and echoing, the hand-hewn craftsmanship of its builders.

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Gail Van Vark Kirby in the Tuttle Cabin. The brick fireplace replaced the original coal stove.



This modern kitchen was added in the new basement when the cabin was moved back on the property in 1972.



The inviting interior of the Tuttle Cabin today.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: WHY GENEROSITY MATTERS IN PRESERVATION

Recently, board member Shawn Thomas and I were invited to partner with three Central College students for a class titled *Communication & Character*. It's a wonderful course where students explore "Moral, Civic, Intellectual, and Performance Character Traits." Each group works with a local nonprofit organization and focuses on one particular asset. Ours was Altruism, Generosity, and Perspective-Taking — a fitting combination for a preservation group.

In her first note to the Trust, Professor Shelley Bradfield wrote: "We believe your organization exhibits this trait through your work identifying and registering historic districts, and preserving historical architecture—particularly the educational research and writing of local building histories that you share on Facebook. As a volunteer organization with little self-interest, you invite the community to take on a preservation perspective, giving generously of your time, research, and expertise for the benefit of future generations."

Shawn and I spent an hour being interviewed by three bright, curious students. As often happens in those situations, we probably learned as much as they did. In talking with them, I realized just how deeply generosity runs through everything the Trust does.

By the time our interview ended, the students had gone from inquisitive to enthusiastic—not just about the Trust, but about Pella itself. They told us they wanted to visit the places we'd talked about and see history for themselves. They left with a new perspective on preservation, and we finished with our own sense of renewal. It was a reminder that generosity doesn't just sustain old buildings—it passes on appreciation, curiosity, and care to a new generation.

As an organization, the Trust depends almost entirely on generosity. Our funding comes from members, friends, and grants—all freely given. Every board member donates their time and talent. The only paid position is our part-time executive director, who herself contributes many unpaid hours out of sheer commitment. Our mission is to promote and protect the buildings, landscapes, and sites important to Pella's heritage. While our work certainly benefits us today, its true reward lies in what we preserve for tomorrow. We hope future generations will find meaning in these places—roots that anchor them to community, belonging, and continuity.

Buildings, after all, are something we all share. They transcend politics, faith, and background. As one historian put it: "Places are powerful common threads we all share. They commemorate our history, culture, and the collective stories that have shaped our community and identity."

When we post stories about Pella's buildings, people respond with fond memories—of first jobs, family gatherings, favorite shops, and long-gone neighbors. Each comment reminds us why this work matters. Preservation is not just about bricks and mortar; it's about memory, connection, and the generous act of keeping history alive for those who come after us.

We're deeply thankful for the generous support our followers give—whether through kind words, shared stories, or financial contributions. The Trust depends on all of it. Thank you for helping us preserve Pella's past, enrich its present, and inspire its future. ❖

Thank you,
Bruce Boertje



Central College students Sabryn Egli, Zoey Sizemore, and Davis Hovey met with the Trust to discuss the trait of Generosity.



Central College's historic Jordan Hall, completed in 1906, is the oldest complete building standing on Central's campus.

IF THESE LOGS COULD TALK

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In 2015, wishing to ensure the cabin's future, Gail sold the property to the Pella Preservation Trust. Sadly, that October, Gail passed away. That same year, the Tuttle Cabin was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and a new wooden-shake roof was installed. Since then, the Trust has carefully maintained the site, ensuring that this rare log home continues to tell its story.

The preservation effort didn't stop there. In partnership with the City of Pella, the Trust raised \$200,000 to construct the Tuttle Learning Walk, dedicated in 2021. The walkway connects the historic cabin with beautiful Sunken Gardens Park, inviting



both residents and visitors to stroll through a living timeline — from pioneer settlement to the vibrant community we know today.

Every generation has a chance to either forget or preserve its history. The Tuttle Cabin stands as proof that even humble buildings can carry immense meaning — if only someone cares enough to look closer. From Scholte's land purchase in the 1840s to Gail's decision to save her family's cabin, the story of this place is one of vision, stewardship, and generosity.

Each visitor who pauses at the cabin or walks the Learning Walk becomes part of that ongoing story — learning, reflecting, and discovering how the past continues to shape the place we call home. ❖

WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT — PLEASE JOIN US

Pella Preservation Trust (formerly Historic Pella Trust), founded in 1994, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit preservation organization. Our mission is simple and vital: **to protect and promote the buildings, landscapes, and sites that are important to the heritage of Pella, Iowa.**

When you become a member, you'll receive our annual newsletter and an advance invitation to our annual meeting. Just as important, you'll know you're making a real, tangible contribution to preserving Pella's historic architecture and heritage for future generations.

Memberships are for a one-year term, and we invite you to contribute additional funds as you are able.

You may also be able to support the Trust through employer-matched charitable contributions, Qualified Charitable Distributions directly from your IRA, or charitable grants from a donor-advised fund.

We rely on the generosity of friends like you, and we are deeply grateful for your support. Thank you!

DONATE, RENEW YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP, OR BECOME A NEW MEMBER!

Secure online transactions via credit card at:



Website - pellapreservationtrust.org



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Postal Mail – check/money order:



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To join or donate by postal mail, please make check/money order payable to Pella Preservation Trust and send with this completed form to the address shown below.

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PELLA PRESERVATION TRUST 2025 PRESERVATION AWARD PROPERTIES



512 FRANKLIN STREET
Kevin and Michelle Jones



606 EAST FIRST STREET
Karen TeRonde
Pella's last remaining
Romeo & Juliet balcony!



811 WEST THIRD STREET
Jeff and Stephanie Lenderink