

A Newsletter from the Historic Pella Trust

# PRESERVE PELLA

November 2013

Volume Nineteen

[www.historicpellatrust.org](http://www.historicpellatrust.org)

PRESERVE PELLA:  
HISTORIC PELLA TRUST  
615 Main St. PO Box 1  
Pella, IA 50219

TELEPHONE  
641-628-8003

EMAIL  
HISTORICPELLA  
TRUST@YAHOO.  
COM

## Historic Pella Trust Celebrates 20th Anniversary Year

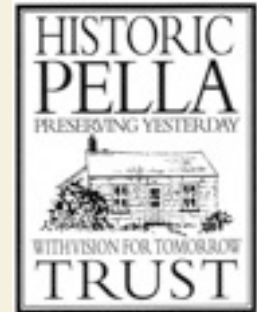
**FOUNDED IN 1994 AND  
SERVING THE PELLA  
COMMUNITY FOR 20 YEARS**

### **PRESERVING YESTERDAY**

The Historic Pella Trust was founded in 1994 when a group of local citizens became concerned at the ongoing destruction of Pella's architectural history.

### **WITH VISION FOR TOMORROW**

For 20 years the Historic Pella Trust has undertaken a variety of projects to help preserve the character and charm of the city of Pella. Numerous Pella buildings have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Buildings such as the Soul Sleeper Church have been saved from demolition, restored, maintained, and rented to a small business. Simple Treasures, located at 710 W. 1st Street, is a thriving small business located in a historic home, which the Trust also saved from demolition, restored and sold, in turn stimulating economic growth and development in our community. The Trust continues to work on establishing Pella's 1st Collegiate Historic District and actively restoring other properties of historical significance. We would appreciate your support as we continue carrying out the vision of the Historic Pella Trust.



*Soul Sleeper Church saved from demolition and now home of Pella's Used Bookstore.*



*Establishing Pella's Collegiate Historic District*



*Simple Treasures*

**CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF  
HELPING TO PRESERVE PELLA**

*"LIKE" THE HISTORIC PELLA TRUST ON  
FACEBOOK TO SEE ONGOING UPDATES OF OUR  
WORK-PAST & PRESENT*

## A Letter from Our President

HISTORIC PELLA TRUST PRESIDENT ROBERT ZYLSTRA

Historic Pella Trust is continuing its preservation effort to help maintain Pella's distinctive charm. Many of our older buildings provide a special link to our Dutch heritage and give our village a comfortable, gracious feel. It is this "feel" that helps make Pella a wonderful place for all of us to live. It's this village charm that helps make Pella an attractive destination for our many visitors and tourists.

The HPT board is working with our new Executive Director Melynda Van Zee so we can have a bigger positive impact in Pella. Pella is continuing to lose its historic buildings at a surprising rate (12 buildings over 90 years old have been razed so far this year). Although some of these have long since outlived their useful life, the loss of others have a deep impact on some of our most historic neighborhoods. The loss of an important neighborhood building undermines the historic neighborhood's allure but also damages property values in the neighborhood.

After recovering from a serious ladder incident, Wayne Stienstra is back leading our efforts on the Ten Hagen Store (circa 1850) at 1110 Washington. Work is now beginning

on the exterior where we hope to see an emerging revitalized mid 1800s village store building. This should be an important part of the first impressions people form as they drive into Pella from the west. This will be an expensive project for us, so we would certainly appreciate your financial support. Please "Like Us" on Facebook and you can follow our team's step-by-step progress.

Our work is continuing on the Collegiate Historic District for a broad neighborhood corridor from downtown Pella to Central College. By getting this special designation from the U.S. Department of the Interior, home owners in this area are eligible for special grants and tax incentives to upgrade and repair their homes. For Pella, this means we can continue to enjoy some of these delightful historic streets for many years to come.

You are invited to visit our website ([www.historicpellatrust.org](http://www.historicpellatrust.org)) or stop by most mornings and visit with Melynda at our offices at 615 Main Street. The Historic Pella Trust phone number is 641-628-8003.

Het aller beste, Bob Zylstra

### A STORY FROM THE PAST

Julie and George Vande Voort from Georgia recently visited the Historic Pella Trust office to complete some research using the early Pella maps located at our office. During their visit, they shared with us letters that were written by Johannes Everhardus Streng in 1848-1854. Johannes was a tailor living in Pella who wrote to his brother in the Netherlands. Below are excerpts from the letters describing life in the Pella colony.

#### May 14, 1848 Pella, IA

*"Now I'll tell what we talked about. The land still has the same price: \$2.25 per acre. As to a house: one cent per board-foot. (That's oak, nut tree, wild fig tree; all the best kind) a horse \$40, Oxen \$40, a dairy cow with calf 12 to 14 dollars. About farms: there are a few left, but they are big half section, 320 acres: then you have farmland, pasture and timber. One is for sale yet. It is close to the city, a little more than a section, for \$900 plus the State price which is \$1.25 per acre, so that the total cost will be \$1300."*

*Continued on Page 3*



*Scaffolding goes up as exterior restoration work begins at 1110 Washington.*



*Restoring the original roofline beginning soon.*

## Establishing Pella's First Historic Collegiate District

The Historic Pella Trust is continuing its work to recognize Pella's first Historic Collegiate District. In 2009 the Trust began a lengthy process to identify the residential area north of Central College in Pella as a valuable historic district. The first step of the process was to undergo a Reconnaissance Survey of the area to study the historical structures. This phase of the project has been completed.

In 2013 the Historic Pella Trust began conducting an Intensive Survey, which is the second step of the process of identifying this area as a historic cultural district. During an Intensive Survey, in-depth research of the history and architecture heritage of the area will be undertaken. This research will provide specific information about each

property. Most of the houses in this area date from the 19th and early 20th centuries and reflect the influences of various architectural styles popular during those eras. The brick streets in the area provide another resource of historical significance.

After the Intensive Survey of the area is completed, the preparation of the National Register nomination for the Historic Collegiate District can begin. The National Register phase requires one year's time on average to complete. After the National Register nomination is completed, it is reviewed by the National Park Service and the State Historical Society of Iowa. The residential neighborhood included in this project is the area north of Central College, along W. 1st Street, Broadway, and Main.

### A STORY FROM THE PAST

*Continued from Page 2*

*"Dear friends come to us with your whole family, for here we live in a land where even the poorest one enjoys the 'fat of the earth'; we enjoy, with trouble, a quiet and restful life. Yes, come soon and tear yourselves from the shackles, for if you don't flee soon, you might not be allowed to go."*

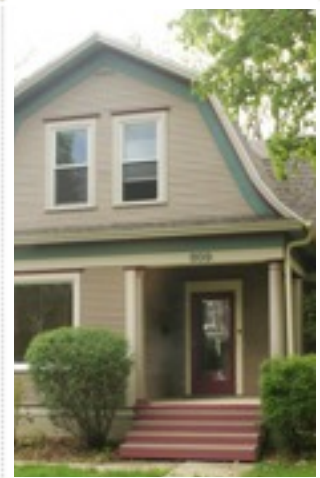
*Mr. Streng continues to describe the best way to travel to Pella in his next letter.*

*"When you come, go to New Orleans, then on a steamer to St. Louis, then per boat to Keokuk, and then by wagon to Pella. This is by far the cheapest route, for per person from New Orleans to Pella, plus the wagons on the boat, the cost is unusually no more than \$6.00-and 100 ounds of luggage will cost you \$1.50."*

If you are interested in reading the letters in their entirety, please contact the Trust office.



*Homes along West 1st Street to be included in Pella's First Historic Collegiate Cultural District.*





*De Zee Meeuw: Hagens-Van Willigen House located at 1357 Main Street Pella, IA*



*Front door & tower room*

## ARCHITECTURAL FOCUS: HAGENS-VAN WILLIGEN HOUSE

BY: MELYNDA VAN ZEE

### HAGENS-VAN WILLIGEN HOUSE 1357 MAIN STREET

One of Pella’s most interesting architectural gems is the Frisian-style home at 1357 Main Street. This home was designed and built by Maurice Van Willigen and Cora Olivier-Hagens-Van Willigen. The home was begun in 1940, but work continued through the 1970’s. Maurice studied architecture at Central College and Iowa State and he designed the home in memory of Cora’s childhood home in Jelsum, Friesland, Holland. The home is distinguished by its unique exterior built of bricks from Redfield, Iowa, and hundreds of stones collected by Cora from all over the United States, Europe and Canada. The brick mason was Virgil Ten Hagen, who with the help of Cora designed the outside stone work.

Maurice salvaged the balcony railings from a turn of the century elevator in Ottumwa. Maurice was a master wood

craftsman and the interior of the home shows his love of experimenting with a variety of woods. The house has interior walls made of birch with mahogany trim paneling. Maurice also created exceptional mahogany tulip trim and sliding drawers throughout the home.

### DE ZEE MEEUW

Cora named the home “De Zee Meeuw” (The Sea Gull) in memory of the sea gulls she saw while sailing into New York harbor on her arrival to America at age 14. The sea gulls reminded her of home and offered assurance and hope for their new journey to America. At the bottom of the stairway, Cora placed a sea gull mural.

This one-of-a-kind home has a rich and interesting history. In 1992 Julia Hagens opened the home for tours. In 2010 the Historic Pella Trust recognized this home for Architectural Significance. Currently, the home has been available for sale.

On a personal note- Maurice Van Willigen was the brother of my great-grandfather Albert Van Willigen, so one of my favorite features from the home is the “VW” that Maurice placed in stone high under the roof in the back of the home. I remember touring the home years ago and seeing the baby buggy that I was pushed in as a child during Tulip Time parades.

## RHONDA RESTORES

BY: RHONDA KERMODE

As a history teacher, my students' most common complaint was that they really didn't care what happened long ago, and they saw no relevance to their present lives. It's sometimes hard to encourage students just to stick with it, and they will see the connections and understand how history helps us learn from our mistakes. As an owner of an old home, I'm coming to understand that they have a history as well. The more I learn about my home, the more I learn from the past.

My husband and I purchased our 1920's home eleven years ago. One project we have long considered was replacing our windows. However, in the back of my mind, I just kept thinking that these windows were 90 years old and were really in pretty good shape. Then, we saw a segment of the Alliant Energy show with Bob Yapp, and I became really excited about the possibility of repairing our old windows. I sent my Dad and my son to his seminar on building wooden storm windows. Then, I

went to hear Bob Yapp speak which led to a course I attended called window restoration and weatherization.

Mr. Yapp is a noted preservation expert, and it is hard not to catch his enthusiasm for preserving old homes and their windows, floors, and original exteriors. The biggest reason for preserving the old is that it is much better for our planet. The more we restore, the less we put in our landfills. Restoration also preserves our natural resources. Much of the wood in old homes is old growth wood. It is much harder than the new growth wood that is used now. Old windows were designed so that the top sash was lowered the same distance that the bottom sash was raised. This allowed hot humid air to escape out of the top and cool air to come in through the bottom. I learned that restoring our old windows can help save money on air conditioning as well as letting in fresh air.

Learning that window restoration was possible is what inspired me to

take the class to learn how to repair and weatherize our windows. I'm also excited to restore my old windows as I feel they help retain the character of our home and are a tribute to the craftsmen of old who most likely built these windows on sight in Pella. I'll be keeping you updated on my progress—look for further articles and photos detailing my restoration project on the Historic Pella Trust Facebook page and in future newsletters.



*Rhonda Kermode is a Historic Pella Trust board member. Look for more installments of "Rhonda Restores" in upcoming newsletters.*



*Second Reformed Church*

### SECOND REFORMED CHURCH CELEBRATES 150 YEARS

Congratulations to Second Reformed Church which is celebrating 150 years. Second Reformed Church has created an interesting display of historical church memorabilia, photos, and artifacts available to view in the Cloister Walk. Also, of note is a display of artwork in the Fireside Room featuring artwork created by members of Second Reformed Church. Items should be available for viewing through the end of November.

# PRESERVE PELLA

November 2013

Volume Nineteen

FROM:

HISTORIC PELLA TRUST

615 Main Street PO Box 1  
Pella, IA 50219

92°

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER?

If you are interested in volunteering for the Historic Pella Trust, please call the office at 628-8003 or email us at [historicpellatrust@yahoo.com](mailto:historicpellatrust@yahoo.com).

We are in need of volunteers in areas such as...

- ~Work with grants/National Register issues
- ~Construction Needs-wallpaper removal, painting, etc.
- ~Newsletter/Publicity
- ~Membership/Fundraising
- ~Work with Historic Building Preservation
- ~General

### Historic Pella Trust Property Updates

**The Rock House:** (Univ. Ave.)  
rented and building in good condition.

**The Soul Sleeper Church:**  
Building in excellent condition.

**Pella's Collegiate Historic District:**  
(Between W. 1st St. and Independence St.)  
Phase 1-Reconnaissance Survey Completed  
Phase 2-Started in 2013  
Funding needed to complete.