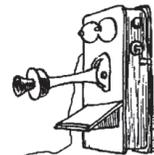


Peoria Partyline



connecting the extended Peoria community

Volume 3. No. 1

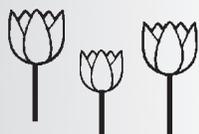
March 2007

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Peoria Partyline Mailing List

Do you want to be on our mailing list? Will you be moving or have a new address?

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The Wonder of Water Witching

Have you ever wondered if there is anything to the practice of “water witching”? I have, and I wanted to find out more about it.

Fortunately there was a good source of information close by. I talked with John C. Roose who told me about his experiences. “In the 1980s,” John said, “I worked for Larry Roose, who owned and ran a tiling machine. One day we needed to locate a tile line so Larry found a Y-shaped branch of a willow tree, put a hand on each end of the “Y”, and walked back and forth in the ditch. Suddenly his branch turned down. They dug in that spot. It was the tile line.” Hmmm, interesting!



John C. locating a spot of disturbed soil.

Some years later, John purchased a tiling machine with some of his neighbors. “I remember the day we were working on John Kloosterman’s farm,” continues John. “We dug in numerous locations and just could not locate the tile line we needed to tie into.” Then he remembered his experience with Larry and decided to see if he had any abilities in that area. “I had a couple of wires in my pickup,” he said, “so I cut them and jokingly held them in front of myself as I began to walk across the field.” Lo and behold, at one location, those wires crossed. John said, “Okay, boys. Dig here!” Since they had been digging all over the place, there was nothing to lose by digging one more time. To everyone’s surprise, the tile line was right there. Success!

Water witching is also called dowsing or divining. Some even call it witchcraft. John does not claim to be a “water witch”. Instead he says he locates disturbed soil. If woven wire, old machinery, a tree, or even a dead cow has been buried for years, the soil will have been disturbed in that spot.

- Continued on page 3

Temptation Hill: Its History and Its Mystery

Every day, for years on end, motorists have been stopping, starting, turning, and driving up and over Temptation Hill. Without doubt this road makes up one of the most unique features of our township. Where else in the area is there a road with a “T” intersection, a steep hill, a steep curve, two areas of warning strips, a security light, a red flashing warning signal, warning signs, directional signs, a stop sign, and advertising signs all within a few hundred yards?

Old maps of Richland Township show that the road hasn’t changed much over the years. In 1875 it lay just like it lays today. Many old timers remember when it was still gravel—not a good combination with speed when the hill and intersection used to be poorly marked and graded.

Temptation Hill has always been a challenge to travelers. Its dangers and oddities have been notorious—causing destruction and yes, even death.

The corner stop sign seems to surprise some drivers. Often at night they’d miss it and go crashing through the warning sign posted straight ahead. The next morning passersby would see a vehicle down in the field below. Others would take the steep, sharp corner too fast or get in trouble when it was icy.



The Peoria/Pella corner on Temptation Hill.

The most unique feature about the hill, though, is that no one knows for certain how it got its name.

There are some wonderful theories circulating out there, however. Here’s a few that I was able to dig up!

- Continued on page 2

Abandoned Building Has Story to Tell

Everyone who drives through Peoria no doubt notices the old building that is located right at the bottom of the hill (Peoria West and Main). Surrounded by weeds and overgrown trees and bushes, it has a sad, neglected look to it. No doubt many people wonder if there is a story to go with the building. In fact there is, and the Peoria Partyline team sent me out to get it.

Many years ago Peoria had a Town Hall where this building now stands. In 1927 the Town Hall was moved to cemetery hill and a new, large blacksmith shop—the current building—went up in its place.

At that time the shop was owned by Tabe Vander Veen—a man who could fix about anything. He did welding, repair work on cars, harness mending, and shoe repair. When he died unexpectedly, Tabe's brother-in-law took over for a while. His shop carried on with the addition of ferrier services and wooden wagon wheel repair.

In 1961 Gerrit Slykhuis moved to Peoria, bought the building, and took over the business. His shop continued with blacksmith services. Equipment included

a harness sewing machine for repairing harnesses, a coal-fired hand-cranked forge to make horseshoes or iron tools, special metal inserts to aid in leather shoe repair, and a special pit to aid mechanics in working underneath cars.

Named Richland Auto, the shop also had a line shaft on the second floor. Originally the shaft was powered by a gas engine, but later an electric motor turned it. The shaft had several pulleys and belts running off of it. Upstairs it ran an air compressor, bandsaw, and a table saw. Downstairs it ran a metal lathe, a wood lathe, a stone grinder, and a trip hammer.



At one time, Richland Auto Shop was a thriving business in Peoria.

Gerrit remembers sharpening many plow shares and cultivator shovels when he first opened his shop. "I'd start by stoking up my forge," said Gerrit. "For many years it was a coal-fired one, but eventually I got tired of all

the smoke and switched to a gas-fired one."

The next step involved putting the plow share or shovel into the forge, heating it to red hot, and then placing it on the trip hammer. "I'd lay the piece flat and then push a lever on the floor," said Gerrit. "That would make a 'V' shaped

- Continued on page 4

Big Buck Contest

Richland Township hunters were given a challenge in the last newsletter—find the biggest buck! The hunters I know are always looking for 'the big one', so I was curious about what our local hunters would find.

Congratulations to Jeremy Van Wyk of Peoria for his submission. His winning big buck was a five point that he got during shotgun season.



Jeremy shows off his prize-winning buck with help from Andrew Veenstra.

Congratulations to the rest of you hunters who bagged your own winners this year!

Enjoy sharing your stories about the one that got away!

-Nicki V.

New Baby in the Neighborhood

Little Alyson Ann De Bruin was born on November 2, 2006 to Jim and Ruth De Bruin. Big sister Sharla, and brothers Zachary and Daniel, welcomed her home.



- Temptation Hill continued

The first one tells the story of young people approaching the intersection from the east. Once at the stop sign they would be "tempted" to turn south to Pella (where they could indulge in all sorts of "forbidden" entertainment) instead of going north to Peoria Church (which is where their parents expected them to be).

Then perhaps it was, that years ago, there used to be a thick stand of wild berry bushes growing along the road on Temptation Hill. Kids on the way to school were tempted to stop and get their fill of berries rather than hurry on to school before the bell rang.

Another story tells of young people coming to the stop sign but then faced with a decision. Should they go north and attend Young People's Society at the Peoria Church, or should they yield to

temptation and go to Pella to cruise the square?

The fourth story dates back to the early 1900s during WWI. At that time the people who lived to the east of our township were considered to be "Americans" and quite worldly and undesirable. Since they were also the ones suspected of burning the Peoria school and church, emotions were quite high and sentiments strong. Peoria young people were encouraged to have NOTHING to do with the likes of those people. Therefore, when young drivers left the fair city of Peoria, they were strongly encouraged to go straight ahead on Temptation Hill—to head to Pella, the city of Refuge. They were to resist the temptation to head the buggy towards the east.

Maybe a fifth theory could be proposed that because of the way it is,

Temptation Hill is a driving challenge that some can't seem to resist. Just because it's there, they are "tempted" to disregard common sense and use the hill to test their driving skills. For them it's a thrill just to see what will happen.

-Marilee Vander Wal

Farewell Neighbors!

Doug and Denise Pleak and their children will be moving to Hastings, NE. As a two-year member of the Peoria Partyline team, Doug had these parting words to say:

"I really thank all of you in our neighborhood for welcoming us and making us a part of the community! We appreciate all of you, and we will miss the fine neighbors we have had. When I think back of all the Midwestern places

- Continued on page 4

- Water Witching continued

While I watched, John walked slowly towards such an area holding his two L-shaped wires. Both the wires pointed straight ahead. When he got over the disturbed area, the two wires swung inward and crossed. As he continued past the area, the wires once again pointed straight ahead.

This skill has been very helpful to John in locating existing tile lines as he's spent time digging in and around Richland Township. He claims to be accurate about 80% of the time. "The 20% of the time that I don't find the line is what is frustrating to me," says John. "That's when the rest of the troops make fun of me."

Can John explain how he does it? No, he can't. There doesn't seem to be any scientific evidence to explain it either. But, if you'd like to experiment, cut two clothes hangers and make two straight wires out of them. Then bend the two wires into "L" shapes. Hold onto the short ends of the "L" and point the long ends forward. Walk slowly over an area, and see if you can get your wires crossed. You just might locate buried treasure.
-Doris Nibelink

For the next few issues, we're going to include some quiz questions that will bring back lots of memories for those of us over 40. (Those younger will learn something!)

Here's questions 1 and 2:

1. In the 1940's, where were automobile headlight dimmer switches located?
 - a. On the floor shift knob
 - b. On the floor board, to the left of the clutch
 - c. Next to the horn
2. The bottle top of a Royal Crown Cola bottle had holes in it. For what was the bottle used?
 - a. Capture lightning bugs
 - b. To sprinkle clothes before ironing
 - c. Large salt shaker

(Answers on page 4)



**Neighbors are much more than just names!
Grab a cup of coffee and let's meet Jeremy and Glenda Van Wyk.**

What happens when you combine an animal loving veterinarian and an avid hunter? In September Jeremy Van Wyk and Glenda Henle married, residing at 525 Peoria Cross Street. Jeremy never thought he would have a wife living in his three-year-old 'bachelor pad', much less have animals move in as well.



Jeremy and Glenda

"I made a deal with Glenda," he said. "She can keep cats in the house, if we can afford it; and I can go on my hunting trips, if we can afford it." So far, they are happily married, with four cats and a dog keeping them company.

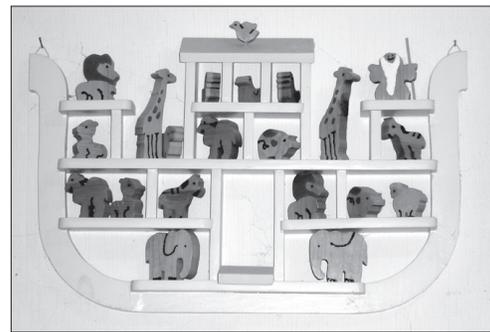
Jeremy is familiar with the Peoria area. He grew up about one and a half miles south of town, and he attended the Peoria school. Pella Corp has been his employer for the past ten years. In

Hand Crafted with Care

"It's something to do in the winter while it's cold outside," comments Elvin Vander Werff when asked why he has a woodworking shop. It's also something he enjoys. "I've made baby doll cradles, hobby horses and banks for my nieces and nephews," he says, "in addition to quilt racks, newspaper/magazine racks, lazy susans and clocks." Some of his most unique pieces include a deacon's bench, a country coat rack and a spice rack/recipe chest.

"It's a hobby for me," continues Elvin. "I look through books for new patterns of different projects and order what looks interesting to me." He used to work with redwood but more recently switched to cedar because of cost. It holds up well outside but still makes beautiful pieces for inside use.

Elvin also enjoys sharing his creations with others. No



One of Elvin's projects: a wooden Noah's Ark set that he has hanging in his shop.

doubt you've seen his, and his sister Barb's home as you drive the highway between Peoria and Pella. Down below one of the sharp curves stands an old farmhouse—the

one they grew up in. Out front there's a sign that says "Hand Crafted Gifts For Sale."

"Word of mouth is the main way I get customers," says Elvin, "since not many people stop in while they're driving by." If you get the chance though, do stop! Say "hello" to Elvin and Barb and look around his little shop. You just might find the perfect gift—for yourself or for someone else. And you'll get to know two of this area's long-time residents!
-Nicki Veenstra

August of this year, he switched from second shift to first shift. What a man will do for his wife! In his spare time he likes to read Westerns and go hunting—particularly for turkey and white tail deer.

Glenda grew up in Pella. She attended Central College and Iowa State University. One summer she spent five weeks in Kenya, and would like to go back someday. This past spring she graduated and joined the team at Tri County Veterinarian Clinic in Pella. In her spare time Glenda likes to read mysteries and spend time with family, friends and her cats. If you see the white veterinary truck on the driveway, you will know that she is on call. Ask her sometime about the unusual things people will call her for, and how far she may need to travel for a call.

Welcome to the Peoria community, Glenda. We're glad to have you both as neighbors.
-John Gorter



...heard about it on the partyline ...

Business Services

VAN'S Electrical and construction services, John VanWyngarden, 1480-168th St. New Sharon, IA, 50207, Phone: 641-625-4280.

Van Den Broek Concrete, Inc. for all your concrete work, Cornie Van Den Broek, Cell: 641-660-0109, or 641-625-4107.

Peoria Trailer Sales, Dennis Rozenboom at Peoria Repair, is now selling H & H and Calico Stock Trailers, 641-625-4381.

Van Dyke Repair Inc., General repair on tractors and combines. Wayne Van Dyke, 641-625-4146.

Experienced backhoe operator looking for jobs. Tile holes, clean-up, final grade, septic systems, water lines, etc. Affordable \$55/hour. Owner: Jim Bandstra, Operator: Jesse Peterson. Call 641-780-6800 for Peterstra Backhoe.

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Do you need scrapbooking supplies or assistance? Creative Memories consultant Tammy Veenstra is here to help. Call 641-780-2885.

- Farewell Neighbors cont.

we've lived, Peoria exemplifies the word 'neighbor' and 'community'—always willing to put a hand out, always willing to comfort and share, and always willing to protect and be vigilant! When I think of Peoria, I think of the Memorial Day services on the cemetery hill—God, country, family, and community?"

-Marilee Vander Wal

Tulip Time

Don't forget to stop in at the Pella Memorial Building between 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. for great food by the Peoria School Circle.



May 3-5

New Home a Promise Fulfilled

When fire destroyed their home on May 18, 2006, Ed and Wilma Van't Sant were faced with many decisions. After considering all the options, they decided to purchase a modular home and build it just south of the old house site.



A new home—a welcome blessing and a promise come true.

Things didn't go as smoothly as they had hoped, but they were finally able to leave the small camper that had been home for almost five months. On October 6, they moved into their new house.

Many years ago, Ed had promised Wilma that they would have a new house someday. Little did he know back then, what circumstances would lead to his promise finally being fulfilled.

-Warren Van Wyngarden

Upcoming Events

March 3: Hostess supper for Peoria School, 6 p.m. in Peoria Gym

March 14: Prayer Service at Peoria Church, 7 p.m.

March 28: Cadet pancake supper, Peoria Gym, 5 to 6:30 p.m.

April 6: Good Friday communion service, Peoria Church, 7:30 p.m.

April 8: Easter worship service, Peoria Church, 9:30 a.m.

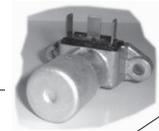
May 17: Ascension Day service, Peoria Church, 7:30 p.m.

May 29: Memorial Day service, Peoria Cemetery, 9 a.m.

Answers to Quiz Questions on page 3.

1. b

2. b



- Abandoned Building Continued

metal wedge come down with considerable force. The wedge would flatten out the cutting edge of the piece being sharpened." Sometimes the process of heating and pounding had to be repeated several times.

Richland Auto also had an Edwards Machine Sheer which was used to cut metal, and in later years a welder came in handy for repairing all sorts of cars, trucks, and farm machinery. Many farmers also remember coming into Richland Auto just to "thaw out" on cold winter days. A coal burning furnace helped keep the shop toasty warm.

"Finally," said Gerrit, "the day came that I could no longer fit the increasing size of modern farm machinery in my little 'buggy shop.'" To compensate, he did welding and repairs outside for a few years.

By and by Gerrit decided to move on. In 1972 he went to work for Ring-O-Matic full time. He closed the shop in Peoria. For a brief period of time Peoria Truck Repair used the building until they could get into their present location, but for the most part the shop has stood quiet and empty.

Undoubtedly there are more silent years ahead for the old building. Someday, if Gerrit or his family decide to have a sale, things will suddenly change. Once again there will be activity in and around Richland Auto. For many, it will seem as if the years have rolled away. Seeing inside the old shop will bring back memories and no doubt stories will once again surface about "Peoria—way back then."

-Terry Bandstra



Today Richland Auto stands silent and neglected in the center of Peoria.