

# Peoria Partyline



connecting the extended Peoria community

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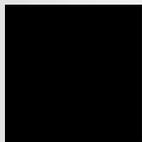
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## A Story of a Country Store

One of the old buildings still standing in “down town” Peoria looks like it could have been a store. Well, at one time it was. Now abandoned, its big windows facing the street just beg for someone to stop by, peek in, and discover its history. Thanks to some former owners, here is its story.

For the early settlers of our township, the Peoria Store was indispensable. Traversing muddy roads with horse and buggy or horse and sleigh was a real challenge for them. No one wanted to travel very far for groceries, hardware, or other necessities. They were also thankful for the huckster wagon or “general store on wheels.” It was an essential part of merchandizing in those early days. Pulled by horses or mules, it went from farm to farm selling groceries and dry goods on a regular route and time table.



At one time the town of Peoria had 3 small stores—this is the only one that survived. Built in 1911 by Johannes H. Thomassen, the original building looked much like it does today

with the main entrance facing west. Until cars were invented a hitching post was located just south of the building and a smaller door was located midway in the north wall. That made it very convenient for the storekeeper—who lived just east of the store—to quickly exit down a path to his house for coffee or lunch.

In the northeast corner of the store were steps which led up to a loft where the book-keeping was done. In those days—when the customer would come in with a grocery list, hand it to the clerk, and the clerk would gather the items—all addition had to be done without the help of an adding machine. Sugar, salt, navy beans, coffee beans and vinegar, were all purchased in the bulk. Customers would grind their own coffee beans. Milk was not available as refrigeration did not exist, and no one needed bread—it was all baked at home. Flour was sold in 25 or 50 lb. sacks and later those empty cloth sacks were used to make dishtowels or aprons. One section of the store was dedicated to boots and shoes, fabric for sewing, window glass, underwear, paint, varnish, hardware, etc. Children loved the candy counter.

In addition to providing goods, the little store made an excellent community center. Many stopped by just to gather around the pot-bellied stove. There were many loafers. The men enjoyed discussing politics, the U.S. economy, religion and much more. Often they would spend hours playing checkers. The Dutch people were very fond of that game. When times were tough and checkers could not be found, pink and white peppermints were a welcome substitute.

In 1913 the store was sold and after passing through several hands, J.J. Stuursma owned it for ten years. Two of the clerks that he hired were his own daughters, as well as other young ladies from the local community. New owners—Jacob and Henry Dahm—took over in 1924 and for a period of time the store was also open on Wednesday and Saturday evenings.



Jacob Dahm also married one of J.J. Stuursma’s daughters—Effie—an experienced clerk who knew a thing or two about running the store. She often talked about the days when the gypsies would come around with an old jalopy and steal merchandise. One gypsy would keep the clerk busy while the other one helped himself to things. Stories also circulated about children sneaking down from the Peoria school—during lunch break—to purchase

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## China Trip (Part 2)

Continuing our story . . . our final week in Beijing was spent touring many markets and public parks. We could truly understand why the people needed these beautiful green parks and were amazed by how well they were kept. The city was busy preparing for the Olympics and they were cleaning everything, scrubbing the subway floors and cleaning all the public facilities—which didn't offer as many western style toilets as we would have preferred. Although it would be good to leave Beijing to see new things, at the same time we were sad. It felt familiar and we knew our way around. We had also met many dear people through Daryl's work, and we would be leaving them. They had been extremely gracious hosts to us.

The next week was spent in Shanghai. It's known for its international business while Beijing is considered the government center. Daryl spent his days visiting suppliers, customers, and the dealership there. Le Ann and the kids toured the city with the help of an English speaking guide. We found the city to be very confusing since the Huang Pu River winds through it, making for many underground tunnels.



We took an elevator up to the top of the Jin Mao Tower—one of the tallest buildings in the world—and were absolutely amazed at how the city spreads out. As far as you could see there were high rises. We also witnessed pearls being harvested, played Chinese instruments, and toured the Yuan Gardens. We learned how to make dumplings and that standing in lines is par for the course any where you go in China. Once again the sub-

way was used, and standing shoulder to shoulder, getting pushed in and out, was the way of life.

At the end of this week, we began our family vacation with Daryl. Up to this point, he had worked every day except Saturdays and Sundays, and so we looked forward to this time with him.

We traveled to the island of Hainan—China's southern most province—and stayed at a coconut plantation. Throwing out nets for fish, eating pic-



## Warren Mill Orchard



The Warren Mill Orchard is located just to the southeast of the Skunk River bridge or about two miles south of Peoria. It started as the location for the Warren Grist (flouring) Mill back in 1846 as well as the chosen spot for the Warren Bridge to be built—the first to span the Skunk River. Over the years the land has seen a good deal of action. The mill burned to the ground, was rebuilt, and several different versions of the Warren Bridge came and went before it was replaced by one further upstream after WWII. The current one was built in 1990. For a time the ground was part of a farm and then bought by a man who put up a small cabin. In the early 50's Virgil and Freida Ten Hagen

and minnows for breakfast, were all new experiences for us. No one spoke English and so we really had no idea as to what we would get to eat or drink. We could always count on tea. Barbeque meant cooking everything on a stick, and I mean everything. Have you ever eaten cuddle fish?

Next we traveled to a rain forest in the middle of the island where it rained every day. It was sad to see how hard life was for the people who there. They lived a simple, humble life yet everyone seemed to have a television and were watching the Olympics.

It was a bit frightening to see signs posted here and there on the island that warned of deadly snakes, so it felt good to check into a resort in the city of Sanya. It offered the first beach water we could swim in safely as well as a special place to celebrate Daryl and Le Ann's 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.



The last days of our trip were spent in Hong Kong visiting with the Choi family—a long time Vermeer dealer and partner. We attended one of the equestrian events of the Olympics and took a tour of the city and harbor. A fascinating city and much more modern. It almost felt like we were back in the states. Also refreshing to hear English spoken again, but frustrating that the Mandarin Chinese words we had learned did not work here. They speak Cantonese, a different dialect.

The Olympics were still going on when we traveled home. We were excited to see what had happened while we were gone, and thankful to be safely home. We learned many things from the Chinese people and their culture—a strong work ethic, surprise at how eager they are to become more “western,” and that you can live with much less and still thrive. We are newly thankful for English, space, manners, good hygiene, jobs, green grass, clean air, family, and freedom. God placed many special Chinese people in our lives, and we were thankful for their gracious hospitality. We hope that we were a shining witness of Him, and we know that our lives were blessed.

-Bouwkamp family

bought the property.

Soon thereafter Virgil started planting apple trees. His daughter Mary remembers going down to the river to get water for the seedlings and how her father fertilized them by burying the innards and bones (of fish he had cleaned) in small holes he dug next to the tree roots. At one time they had 150 trees.

“My father had some cherry trees and some peach,” she said, “also a strawberry bed, grape vines and a big garden. But most of the orchard was made up of apple trees.” There were several different varieties too. Some were for applesauce, some for baking and some were for eating.

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### An Old Man Killed by his Child of Sixteen Years.

A brutal murder case occurred at Peoria, Mahaska County, Iowa, on Tuesday morning, 23d inst. It seems that an old man by the name of ELLIS JONES had deeded away all of his property to his sons, with the condition that they should support him the rest of his life. On Tuesday morning a quarrel arose between the father and a son, 16 years old, about a most trivial matter. During the altercation the son drew a pistol and shot his father in the left side, inflicting a wound which caused his death in six or eight hours. Public opinion in that neighborhood seems to incline to the belief that the affair was a premeditated one, concocted by the brothers, and that the boy who committed the act was merely made the tool of the older but more cowardly ones.

The New York Times

Published: July 29, 1867

## Lower Grove Murder (Part 2)

The short news story above shows that sensationalism in the news media was as rampant a century ago as it is today. The New York Times story was likely picked up via telegraph from the Oskaloosa Herald or some other central Iowa paper. But as in many cases of breaking stories, the headlines were more important than the facts.

To begin with, the “Ellis” Jones reported in the paper was actually Elliot C. Jones, a Vermont native who with his wife Sally and 6 children moved to Mahaska County in 1856. And while the article states that he deeded the farm to his sons, this was not the case. For reasons unknown, Elliot and Sally deeded the 80-acre farm to their daughter Lucinda and son-in-law David C. Jones. Having a woman taking title to real estate in those days was very unusual, as property was virtually always vested in the name of the husband only. It is interesting to note that while this deed was signed in November of 1866, it did not become a matter of record in the courthouse until April 25, 1867.

The deed also had an unusual feature—instead of a selling price for the land, the elder Joneses deeded the land with the following conditions: “*provided that said David Jones and*

*Lucinda Jones his wife shall support, maintain, and take care of us, the said Elliot Jones and Sally Jones his wife, during our lifetime, and provided further that the said David and Lucinda shall not in any way dispose of said Real Estate.”* As the murder of Elliot took place less than three months after the deed became public knowledge, it is probable that this showing of favoritism to the daughter and son-in-law did impact how the rest of the family reacted.

The “trigger man” was said to be the 16-year old John Jones, but was he the real murderer? Both the New York Times and Oskaloosa Herald implicate other family members, but surprisingly there is no record of any arrest or trial taking place for this incident. Did the law enforcement of the day consider it a justifiable homicide? Or did they simply choose to let the folks of Richland Township settle their own problems in their own way? We will probably never know.

The widow Sally Jones continued to live on the farm with her daughter and son-in-law. While no gravestones can be found for Elliot and Sally, it is logical that they were buried in Appel Cemetery which is next to Harold & Stella Pothoven’s farm. David and Lucinda Jones lived long lives on their farm quite possibly because the deed from Elliot and Sally restricted their ability to sell it. David C. Jones died in 1918 at age 90 and Lucinda in 1920 at age 87. Both are buried in Appel Cemetery. David’s obituary notes his service in the Civil War, as well as the fact that he was the last commander of the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) Post in Peoria—a forerunner of the modern-day American Legion. The farm eventually went to their son John E. Jones, before being sold to Omer Verwers in 1939, when the Jones family moved to Oklahoma.

While on the surface it appears that this story may live on just in the yellowed pages of newspapers and dusty recordbooks of the courthouse, Richland Township continues to hold a connection to the Jones legacy. Rosemary Schmit—still a resident of the Lower Grove neighborhood—is the great-great granddaughter of the murdered Elliot C. Jones. Sadly, despite its intriguing history, Rosemary does not know anything about this story. Her father—the well-versed local historian Earl Boyd—would have known. “How I wish I could ask my parents about it,” she now says. —Calvin Bandstra



July 6-10  
Vacation Bible School  
Peoria Church 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

July 10  
Vacation Bible School Program  
Peoria Church 6:30 p.m.

July 10  
Community Hog Roast  
Peoria Church 7 p.m.

## Annual Peoria Hog

Friday, July 10, 2009 @ 7:00 p.m.

Finger licking pork BBQ sandwiches, salads, dessert, drink

Right after the Vacation Bible School program

Every one is invited. Bring your friends, relatives, neighbors!



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

## ■ Business Services



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

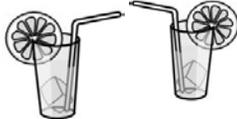
**Van Dyke Repair Inc.,** General repair on tractors and combines. Wayne Van Dyke, 641-625-4146.

**Skunk River Restoration** Re-paint all makes of tractors. Jim De Bruin 641-780-6114

**Peoria Trailer Sales,** Dennis Rozenboom is now selling H & H and Calico Stock Trailers, 641-780-1886.

## ■ For Sale

**For Sale: Hay, grass/alfalfa mix.** Large rounds and small square bales. 625-4122.



## - Country Store continued

things.

Operating this type of business was unique in itself. Farmers brought in eggs and cream for trade—though there was a time when a Model T. truck was used on the egg and cream route. For many years Jake would make the trips to Pella on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons to deliver eggs to the Pella Produce company and cream to the Pella Creamery. Groceries came from many places including Taintor, Oskaloosa and Pella. Later groceries were shipped by truck from the Grocers Wholesale Company in Des Moines. Gas pumps and parking spaces replaced the old hitching post as well—to reflect the new advances in transportation.

After 20 years in a successful partnership, Henry sold his part in the business to his brother Jake. Jake carried on alone for another 12 years and then semi-retired when his son-in-law—Richard Van Kooten—took possession. Jake continued to work in the store on a part time basis for the next 23 years.

During those years a lot began to change. Cars were used for transportation and women learned to drive. More and more farmers found it

unprofitable to raise chickens, except in a large way and the egg trade was discontinued in 1983. Instead of hauling feed from Wakes Feed Mill in Oskaloosa—as had been done for years—a larger feed shed with a deck attached was added to the store in 1971, as well as a new pickup for deliveries.



Rich brought in his boys—David and Robert—to operate the store which they enjoyed, especially making friends with the customers. A yearly highlight was the “Ham Day” held in early December. All customers were invited and served a lunch consisting of hot ham buns, baked beans, chips, coffee and drink. There was ice cream for dessert. Customers who ordered feed that day earned premiums.

On December 1, 1989 Rich and Dorothy decided to retire from the business. This concluded a 75 year long family ownership of the little Peoria Store. Sold to Wynn and Patty Veenstra, the building changed its name to the Veenstra Farm and Home Supply company, and for a time it served as a seed and chemical business. Today the building stands empty—just waiting and hoping that someone, sometime will stop by with plans and ideas of how the little building could be restored to its former glory. -Dorothy Van Kooten, Jim Dahm

## - Warren Mill continued

In a good year an apple tree can yield between 15 and 20 bushels. With over 100 trees, that meant the Ten Hagens often had to harvest between 1500 to 2000 bushels of apples. Needless to say, it took a LOT of help from family, friends and neighbors. Fortunately not all the apples were ready for harvest at the same time. Once picked the apples were brought to a grocery store in Pella or sold to people who stopped by to buy them. One of the highlights for Virgil was his cider press. He would pick up the dropped apples and run them through the press.

Over time the orchard has lost many trees. Periodic floods destroyed those in the lower part, and others were removed when ground was needed to widen the road near the bridge. Then Virgil lost his eye sight and it wasn't possible to plant new trees as the old ones died. In recent years a nephew, Duane Sabin, started taking care of the orchard.

Just east of the orchard an old road bed can be seen—it led to the now long-gone Warren Bridge(s). If the river is low, some of the rubble from those bridges is still visible. On the west side, parts of the path that led down to the old grist mill are still there and a cave—where Virgil used to store vegetables from the garden as well as apples—sits near a cement block building in the center of the orchard. Virgil built the cabin so the family had a place to go during harvest. He was a mason by trade which is why he built it out of cement block. It has a complete kitchen as well as a fireplace.



-Terry Bandstra

A-h-h-h  
summer!

