

tain channel at different times. But as a permanent and satisfactory means of transportation it proved a complete failure. Mr. A. E. D. Bousquet, one of the most public spirited men among the Hollanders, met with serious reverses in his efforts to further the interests of the colony by making the Des Moines river a suitable outlet and waterway. During the flood year of 1851 he and other Pella merchants conceived the idea of shipping great quantities of corn down stream in flatboats to St. Louis. Their plan was only partially successful and was soon abandoned as impractical.

Two years later Mr. Bousquet organized the Des Moines Steamboat Company, and again met with disappointment. It has been written of him that he "loved the new country in which he had cast his lot," and as he had considerable means he deemed it the better part to spend his money in developing the country rather than in buying great quantities of land to enrich himself by advancing prices. "If I should do this I should be as great a curse to this community as the eastern speculators." He also undertook to lay a plank road from Keokuk to Pella, and is said to have completed from twenty to twenty-five miles.

THE SECOND WINTER, 1848-49

The first winter was so mild that the Hollanders, thinking this was a sample of the usual Iowa winter, made no preparation for the one that followed; but, as is often the case, they were severely punished for taking too much for granted.

For severe and long-continued cold the winter of 1849-49 broke all records as far as the knowledge and experience of the white settlers was concerned; and the snowfall surpassed anything we have experienced up to the present day. From November, 1848, to May, 1849, the snow averaged from two and one-half to three feet on the level, while along the fences it reached a height above that of the fences; so that it was a common occurrence to walk and ride over the fences without knowing they were there.

The result of this unpreparedness was that a large part of the standing corn in the fields was never gathered. The men who were compelled to engage in outdoor work suffered severely and frozen toes and fingers were the order of the day. One of the chief hardships was that of getting corn meal ground at the Dunkard mill. It was not an uncommon experience for men to lay around the mill for a week, waiting for their turn; that they suffered severely is readily understood.

In those days and for years later, candle-wicking was an important article in the life of the pioneers. Not only did it serve in the making of candles, the only illumination by night, except where the still more primitive tallow-dip was used, but it also furnished the material of which mittens were knit. In those early days ready-made mittens were practically unknown, and besides, the money to buy them with was scarce and hard to obtain.

While "women's rights" had not yet been heard of by our early pioneers, nevertheless it is an historical fact that men had to knit or crochet their own mittens. In later years rag parties became very popular, but in the winter of 1848-49 mitten parties were all the rage. At that time a social event in one of Strawtown's palatial dugouts was something like this: The men would come armed with a goodly supply of candle wicking and a wooden crochet hook (made by themselves). Gathering round the fireplace where a roaring fire of hickory logs fought valiantly against the severe cold which would seep in from the outside, the men would crochet mittens while the women gathered around the table (generally consisting of a wooden box) where they busily engaged in knitting, darning and patching, and incidentally discussing the news of the day. Even