

in this early day the chief topic of conversation among the men was that of land. And he who knew of a good eighty or of a quarter section that could be bought at the right price, was sure of an interested audience. While the average American pioneer, being accustomed to an unlimited quantity of cheap land, did not value it highly, the thrifty Hollanders, coming from a country where land was very high and almost unattainable, had a keen sense of its value, and a determination to "git aplenty" while the opportunity was there.

THE FIRST CHURCH BUILDING

The first church building to be erected in Pella was finished in March, 1848, and was located west of the Star Garage, on the lot now occupied by "The Chapel." Its dimensions were twenty-five by fifty feet and it was built out of native lumber, unplanned. The seats on both sides of the aisles consisted of boards nailed on trestles and in addition there were eight school desks, of the same model used in Holland. For years this building was used for church services, public meetings, and served also as a day school. When we take in consideration the fact that this building was completed within seven or eight months from the time that the first Hollanders arrived, and that many dwellings and other buildings had already been built, besides which a brick kiln, a lime kiln, sawmill, etc., were already in operation, we cannot accuse our pioneers of lacking in ambition and energy.

DROWNING OF TWO HOLLANDERS

In the spring of 1849, E. F. Grafe, already mentioned as the second merchant of Pella, was doing an extensive business in a building located just east of the present location of the Pella Motor Company. Owing to a fatal epidemic among cattle, the buying of hides was an important business at that time. In order to secure as large a part of this business as possible, Mr. Grafe sent his clerk, Hendrik Dingemans, into the country to buy hides from the farmers.

On the 22d day of March, 1849, he arrived at Elwell's Mill on the Skunk river. There Pieter Klein (uncle of our townsman, A. T. Klein) started to take Dingemans across the lake in a boat. For some reason Dingemans tried to stand up in the boat, with the result that it capsized and both men were drowned.