

This letter was written by Henry Hospers on Sept. 24, 1853 from Pella, Iowa to Gerhard Hendrickus Nollen in Didam, Neth. We have no real proof it was written to G.H. Nollen but since it was found in the Nollen family documents and was written only a year before the Nollen family emigrated to Pella we are fairly certain it was directed to that person. It was evidently written in answer to an inquiry about the suitability of settling in the Pella area. It tells about life in Pella and surrounding area from 1849-1853, the price of goods, and the best way to travel from the Netherlands to Pella. Translated by Marie Nollen (Mrs. Elmer Nollen) Pella, Iowa with help from friends.

Hospers, Henry

Pella, Iowa - Didam, Gelderland

H. Hospers to Gerhard Hendrikus Nollen

September 24, 1853

Worthy Friend and brother in Christ,

We received your letter written on Aug 21, 1853 on Sept. 20. By the Lord's goodness we are in good health. We receive news here from the Netherlands so we are well informed. Sorry, the letter must be sent so quickly from Arnheim. Next time you should write earlier.

We know each other just by name. Friendship through brother in Christ. On top of that we had same occupation in Holland. Soon we should have same place to live (America).

You ask me about the quality of the ground. It is very fruitful. With little labor it looks like a garden, very rich ground. It grows faster than in the Netherlands. We are now still eating canteloupe and watermelon from open ground. You further ask about the future. Most of the land is open prairie that must be plowed with heavy iron plows pulled by 10-12 oxen. It will make rich farm ground.

In June it was decided to start an academy in Pella. Iowa is bigger than all of Holland. It is planned to have a railroad from the Atlantic to Pella, to the Pacific. The outlook for the town is good. Prices are going higher for most everything; cattle, horses, etc.

The price of government land is .25 dollar per acre but most of it is gone. Some of the poorest still available for .25 dollar per acre.

If you were here now my oldest son who is a Marion County Supervisor could help you to get a nice farm. Where I live you should be able to buy a nice farm for 3000-7000 guilders. You can get one cheaper but not as good quality. Need timber for farm and you must buy from present owner-cannot buy from government any more. Close to me near Pella is 80 acres farm (open prairie) with 20 acre timber in one piece, never been used and belongs to a Mr. Hattink, a miller near Utrecht. It has a stream of water, something Americans need. Other running water is used for power to run mills. I do not know Mr. Hattink but he does not plan to come to Pella. He still must pay tax on it. I think and what my neighbors think it is good farm because it also has timber on it. If you are interested it would be well to talk to Mr. Hattink or write him. In 1847 he bought it for .5 dollar per acre. Can buy it from him for \$4 or \$5 per acre. That would be a good deal. The address I have of that man is from 1847. He may have moved since.

You wanted me to write about us here, how everything is going. I can do that easily. I am not bashful. I am blessed by God. My wife is 45 and is in as good health as when she was 21 years old. We have six children, 5 still at home. Oldest son is married and has one child. Those at home are sons are 17,15,9,2, daughter is 12. My occupation is farmer and I live on my own farm of 330 acres, 3 miles west of Pella on the highway. Every day 60-80 wagons go past my door. I have 50 acres of farm ground in cultivation and raise Indian corn, winter wheat, summer wheat, oats, potatoes, rye, and flax. In the garden I have peas, beans, watermelon, carrots, onions, turnips, radish, etc. I have an orchard of 50 apple trees and they did bloom this year. It looks good for the future.

When I came in 1849 it was rough prairie and wilderness so you can see what mans' hands can do. On ground is frame house 50 by 30 ft. It was so strong it can stand heavy storm, does not even shake. Oak shingles on roof-looks like in Holland. No drops of rain came through. It cost a lot of money to build but the Lord giveth me.

My horses and cattle are in good shape. My 2 yr. old brown mare \$50; 3 yr. old \$75-80. My son last week bought 4 yr. old mare for \$90. Cows cost from \$20-30, good milk cow \$40. Yoke of oxen 5 yr. old \$75. My neighbor P. Welle paid \$50 for excellent yoke of oxen 6 yr. old. Cattle around Pella is good business. Products I do not need I can sell easily to people that go past here, just about a market by my house. I sell it for money not trade. Privelege I have that the Lord set me here on the highway. That is enough of myself.

It is easiest to come in the spring and go to New Orleans. Plenty of people come in the spring on steamship, direct from ship to steamboat to St. Louis. Then to Keokuk and on Des Moines River if water is high enough. Some rent 2 or 3 family steamboats from Keokuk to America. If water is low, come from Keokuk with wagon. It is 120 English miles and taken 40 hours or 3 days. From New York it costs a lot more to come to Pella. Cheaper over New Orleans. One week from New Orleans to here. Over New York you must repack more often. On the trip from New Orleans there is more danger of getting yellow fever in the summer months. The heat and cold of which you write is not a problem on ship. Sea sickness on ship was more of a problem as far as I was concerned.

Bring along as little baggage as possible. After you arrive here and Holland things wear you out you can get American things. Netherland

things in Netherlands, American things here. We took too many things along. Lots of things cost a lot to bring and were broken or lost. Sell your things in Holland and bring money. In St. Louis and Keokuk you can buy everything you need. Don't buy too quick, wait till you get here, that will save you a lot of money and care. Cotton dresses can be bought here as well as in Holland. Bring along linen, wool blankets, bedding; that is expensive here. Blankets are useful on trip. Shoes are high priced here and not as good. The clothes here of average people are as good as the high class (fashionable) in Holland, men as well as women.

Could write more but paper is full. You wrote letter of one sheet, I send back letter of eight pages. Important letter for you. I am not sorry I came. The Lord called me. I wish you good health. My wife sends greetings too.

H. Hospers

Hospers, Henry  
Pella, Iowa - Oklam, Gelderland  
H. Hospers to Gerhard Hendrikus Mollen

LETTER WRITTEN TO (PROBABLY) GERHARD HENDRIKUS MOLLEN

Pella 24 Sept 1853

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