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The Home Front



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School began in Altona

Construction of a railway spur just north of the village of Altona, now known as Old Altona, marked the beginning of the town of Altona in the summer of 1895. Elevators, businesses came quickly. But children went to the school in the village during the 1895-1896 school year.

By the summer of 1896 it became plain that the village school would have to be enlarged or that a new school must be built in the town. At a June 30th school board meeting it was decided that hiring two teachers and opening two schools would solve the problem.

Kathleen Hildebrand recalls growing up in the Jacob N. Hoepfner family, and residing in a small house on 4th Avenue N.W. The town recently relocated this former school building, donated by John Reimer, to a spot near the Schwartz house in anticipation of restoring it.

"We were always told that the house had formerly been a school," says K. Hildebrand, adding however that she didn't know for sure if it was Altona's first school.

Al Loewen confirms that it was, saying "my father David Loewen, with grandfather Jacob Loewen, a widower, lived in the former school when they moved into town. The town is seeking to verify that it really is the town's first school. Further information? **Call 324-5281.**

Now in 1896 the first school was

already operating in the town of Altona, and Altona school director Jacob Braun presented a written report on operations, dated Dec. 4, 1896.

"This year we visited the school in town and the village school on Nov. 20th, 1896 and are very satisfied with the achievements and the work done," he wrote.

Because the town of Altona was built in our (school) district in 1895, and because the pupils count grew, we were entitled to hire another teacher, but we had no room for the children.

So we had to decide whether to enlarge the school or build another school in town. The taxpayers decided on the latter option, that is: the school in town. School directors were empowered to borrow \$700.

Braun says "we also bought an acre of land, and negotiated with the department of education in reference to the borrowed sum. It took much time, a lot of correspondence and many trips to conclude all the arrangements, explained the director.

Once we knew we could receive the money we contracted for building contractors, and in the end we chose August Pyde to build the schoolhouse for \$630.

We were satisfied with the workmanship, but we would like the blackboard undercoated and painted, and the platform completed by the contractor, added Braun.

We bought an acre of land for the village school yard. And we engaged Mr. K. B. Krehbiel to teach in the town school. He will receive \$35 month plus \$2.50 to cover rental costs. Mr. G. Limprecht, in the village school, will receive \$35 per month, including a place to live.

Along with day-time classes, Krehbiel also taught evening classes and Sunday school.

Without noting the length of earlier terms, the director advises that "in 1896-97 school will be conducted for eight months in both schools. We have bought a coal burning unit for both schools, at a cost of \$21 for the town school, and \$11 for the stove in the village school."

He also explains that the school loan repayment will be over eight years, with the first payment of \$10 due Feb. 1, 1897, a second payment of \$90 on Feb. 1, 1898, and the rest in \$100 increments each, all due and payable on Feb. 1 in following years.

The special school taxes demanded should cover the costs that we expect to incur. But if unexpected expenses arise, it's possible that we will not have enough money to break even.

About taxes, Mr. Braun says that the levy of nine mills on \$1 is really 8.5 mills for those who pay their taxes before Jan. 1, 1897. The municipal secretary gives a 10 per cent discount.