

ECHO FEB 1, 1984

5

Bergfeld is also Thames S/Thames N

• by J. C. Fehr

Between Plum Coulee and Altona is the largest district of the R.M. of Rhineland by the name of Thames or Bergfeld. Like many other districts of this municipality it has two names, the original one and the official one. But unlike most of the others, which are known mostly by their original name, this one is known by both. It depends on which language you speak ... English or Low German.

Bergfeld was originally settled as a village one mile south of the Thames S. school site, around 1879, by members of the Bergthaler Colony of Russia. Apparently this village was broken up in the early years, as not much is known about it. This area was served by three or four private schools. One was located at a place called Rome, three miles south of Horndean. There's a story about this place. Being called Rome, it had to have a Pope, so a Mr. Derk Klassen was known as the Roman Pope until he moved to Saskatchewan. Now Rome, having no Pope, became part of Bergfeld.

Thames S.D. No. 1991 was established by Order in Council on February 1, 1920. A new school was built on SE 20-2-2W which soon proved to be too small, and another building was moved onto the yard. The increasing enrollment and large area necessitated another school to be built on NW 29-2-2W in 1938 known as Thames North. In 1946 a new two-room school was built at Thames South to replace the two buildings on the yard. A third classroom was opened in the basement in 1959 for the grades 9 to 11. The Thames North School operated until 1964 and the Thames South was closed in 1971 to become part of Rhineland School Division.

This area contains some of the most fertile soil in the R.M., therefore is also one of the most densely populated. However, not all of the land is class one, as parts of the northern and eastern parts are of heavy clay. In fact, the section no. 15-2-2W was known as the Lazy Fifteen (Dee Fuhle Fiftien) because it would not produce and parts of it were uncultivated for many years.

This community also has its own church. It was built in 1937, the first one built by the Rudnerweide Gemeinde. Known today as the Bergfeld Mennonite Church, it is still very much in ac-



Thames pupils in the winter of 1931 were, left to right, back row — Peter Thiessen, Henry Zacharias, Abe Dueck, Peter Stoesz, Lena Giesbrecht, Tina Reimer, Gertrude Driedger, Susie Bergen and Tina Friesen; second row — Eva Zacharias, Tina Derksen, Dora Friesen, Annie Stoesz, Lena Heppner, Annie Bergmann, Agatha Derksen, Mary Zacharias and Mary Thiessen; front row — Died Bergen, (?), Henry Dueck, Edd Zacharias, Abe Reimer, Isaac Derksen, David H. Penner (?), Pete Giesbrecht, David D. Penner and Jake Thiessen. (Photos courtesy H. P. Giesbrecht)



Two school buildings on the Thames South yard.

tive service.

Two famous residents of this area are: Henry D. Penner, who

served the R.M. as councillor for seven years (1912-1919) and one year as reeve. He died at the age

of 101. Henry F. Wiebe, the present mayor of Winkler, went to school at Thames North.