

ECHO FEB. 22, 1984

Blumenthal (Houston) residents refused to pay tax

• by J. C. Fehr

For this district we are going to the extreme northeast part of Township 1, Range 1 east. It also extends partly into the R.M. of Montcalm. This township was at one time (1881-1886), part of the R.M. of Montcalm. The residents, mostly Mennonite, and being part of the West Reserve, did not appreciate the change. They protested by refusing to pay taxes to Montcalm and the boundaries were changed back again.

This district being on the eastern edge of the West Reserve was partly settled a few years before the Mennonites arrived. Mostly they had settled on the banks of the River Aux Marais. (The River Aux Marais is a shallow waterway coming from near the Pembina River and following an erratic course through this area, finally emptying into the Red River near Letellier.)

The early settlers in this country looked for timber and water as requirements for settling. Some families by the name of Houston (Scotsmen from the U.S. or Ontario) homesteaded part of this township. The district was named after them. In all, 13 non-Mennonite families bought land in this township.

Houston S.D. No. 214 was formed on Nov. 17, 1884. There were some private schools which operated in various locations until after World War I. The public and private schools were in competition with each



Houston School No. 1 (South) in the 1950 flood, located on the banks of the Marais, where this river follows an erratic course. The road at one time had 3 or 4 bridges within a mile. The area is prone to flooding.



Students of Houston SD North posing for the camera in 1956 or 1957 are, left to right, back row — Henry Dyck, Peter (?) Derksen, Jake Rempel, Susie Friesen, Ruby Friesen, Trudy Penner, Helen Friesen and Bertha Friesen. Second row — Elmer Friesen, Albert Sawatzky, Ben Friesen (?), Johnny Derksen, Jim Friesen, (?) Nickel, Trudy Klassen, Linda Dyck and Tina Nickel. Front row — Ellen Sawatzky, Mary Derksen, Jim Penner, Johnny Nickel, Olga Nickel, Agnes Nickel, Tina Rempel, Hilda Friesen and Eva Friesen.

other. In 1919 some families were involved in a court case for not sending their children to public school. After that the private schools were closed.

Houston School No. 1 (South) was located on SW 26-1-1E (one mile north of present Halbstadt Credit Union). Because of non-

resident pupils, the district boundary was changed in 1942 and a second school was built (Houston No. 2) on NE 34-1-1E.

Miss Helen K. Schellenberg was the first teacher in this school. These schools operated until 1964, when they were consolidated with Halbstadt.

The Halbstadt school and Houston No. 2 were moved to site of Houston No. 1, where they operated as a graded school.

In 1967 they merged with Altona S.D. No. 333 and later became part of the Rhineland School Division in 1971.