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(16)



Photo taken April 28, 1909 shows the teacher Jacob G. Voht from Minnesota, with his pupils. In this group are 19 pupils with a family name of Heinrichs and seven Friesens. Photo courtesy Mrs. Mary (Janzen) Wall (front center the 5th from left).

Halbstadt: flood prone, but home

• by J. C. Fehr

Halbstadt area as we know it today is located in the extreme southeast part of the R.M. of Rhineland. Actually it consists of three schools districts: Strassburg, Halbstadt and Houston. The original Halbstadt was settled as a village two and one half miles southwest of the present day store. The Halbstadt S.D. No. 886 was established as a school district by Judge Lock on April 18, 1896, consisting of sections 3, 4, 9, 10, 15 and 16 Township one, range 1 east. As with many other districts, a private school and a public school operated here in the early 1900s. A new public school was built in 1937, teacher at that time being Peter J. Peters.

In the late 1950s attempts were made to consolidate with the neighboring districts, but this was not achieved until 1964. The consolidation was with Houston No. 1 and No. 2.

The Halbstadt school and the Houston School No. 2 were then moved to the site of Houston No.

1. Here they operated until 1967, when they merged with Altona Consolidated. Today they are part of the Rhineland School Division.

Even though there is no school in operation here anymore, the people have a community organization. They have bought a yard and built a community centre. Here the people can come together for local events as a community. They have kept up the tradition of an annual picnic, also an annual fall supper is held in the Centre. It is also extensively used for family gathering, flood fighting headquarters and the like. The latest project of this organization is the acquiring of the local store, which is run entirely by volunteers.

This community togetherness has been reinforced many times in battling the spring floods of this area. It is here that the flood waters from the southwest, along with waters backing out of the Red River from the east have often caused considerable flooding. The last year when waters threatened the homes was the spring of 1979

when a lot of sandbagging was done. When asked why they prefer to live in this flood-prone area and not somewhere else on higher ground, the answer they give is "because this is our home."

Halbstadt also has a Post Office. This was started by Jacob Heinrichs before the 1900s. He operated it until 1905, when it was moved to the present site in the store, then owned by C. C. Fehr. In 1919 the store and Post Office was sold into the Sawatsky family, who operated it for more than half a century until it was bought by the community.

Another business establishment in this community is the Halbstadt Credit Union. After a very humble beginning in 1943, it grew very slowly at first. It progressed more rapidly when the office was located in the store. Later they built an office of their own which today is a branch of the Altona Credit Union.

In the earlier years there was no church building, so worship services were held in the schoolhouse in turns by the various denominations.