### **ALTONA**

#### A PICTORIAL HISTORY



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Compiled by Vic Penner Written by Vic Penner and T.E. Friesen

Published by DWFriesen

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#### Introduction and Acknowledgemer

Compiling and editing this book has given me a new appreciation of the town in which my family and I have lived for almost 40 years. My job as editor of the *Altona Echo*, which later became the *Red River Valley Echo*, enabled me to be near the heartbeat of the town during 35 of those years. But preparing this book has taken me to the beginning (Old Altona village), through the very earliest start of the townsite of the present Town of Altona, and to a vibrant and progressive community in 1990.

Presenting this history in pictures has helped me see what its beginning was like, how it progressed from its earliest stages of a grain delivery centre to a town not only of commerce and industry, but one where religious, cultural, educational, and medical institutions have taken root and flourished.

The community has seen hard times — the Depression and World War II tested the citizens' faith and fortitude, but each time prosperity followed hard times. History is a great teacher, and Altonans should always keep in mind that perseverance has its reward.

Although I accepted this assignment reluctantly, in the full knowledge that there would be errors both in fact and in judgement, I want to express my appreciation to D.W. Friesen & Sons for inviting me to prepare this book. It has to be, at least in part, a tribute to Mr. D.K. Friesen, who from 1940 on played a prominent role as a councillor and mayor, in the chamber of commerce, in the co-op movement, Co-op Vegetable Oils, Radio CFAM, the Altona Mall, D.W. Friesen & Sons, and the Lower Red River Valley Water Commission, to mention only a few of the

organizations to which he devoted time and energy.

To those who will find factual errors, or disappointment in material they believe should have been included but wasn't, or events and organizations that they believe received too much attention, I apologize. Time, space and materials made available were influencing factors in what could be included in the book.

There were a number of people whose help greatly speeded the completion of this book. I would single out Ted Friesen for writing the introductions to the chapters, and to Al and Anne Loewen, who provided many of the pictures and information for captions; likewise to Sarah Reimer, Edwin and Tina Abel, Ben Heinrichs, Elizabeth Bergen, William Kehler, Henry and Hilda Kehler, and D.K. Friesen. Of special and invaluable assistance were the archives of the *Red River Valley Echo*. From 1950 on, most of the pictures in this book are from the *Echo* files. A special thank you has to go to the photographers who worked for the paper during those years.

Closer to home, I want to thank my wife, Olly, for her patience with me during times of frustration, and for her assistance in research. She did the work of two committees and I appreciate it greatly. Thank you also to my son, Steve, whose advice and pictorial judgement were reassuring, and for his artistic design work on this book.

To all these people, plus a host of others who helped in a more casual way during social visits and in coffee shops, I wish to express my deepest gratitude.

Vic Penner

#### **Credits**

Abe N. Braun
John K. Friesen
D.K. Friesen
Altona Mennonite Church
Henry B. Fehr
Walter Braun
Ben W. Heinrichs

David Loewen Henry P. and Hilda Kehler

Neta (Hamm) Eamer

Roy Dick Carol Falk Wilma Thiessen Jolene Klassen
Elizabeth Doell
William J. Kehler
Edwin and Tina Abel
Dr. Percy Goldberg
Al and Anne Loewen
Ted Friesen
Bernie Braun
Bob Stoesz

Elizabeth Bergen Sarah Reimer Russ Mantey William Braun Martin J. Klassen Red River Valley Echo

Ben K. Neufeld

Art Braun Kay Penner Steve Penner Glen Voth

Manitoba Provincial Archives

Dr. Ken Kliewer Dr. D. Bueddefeld Dr. G.D. Redhead

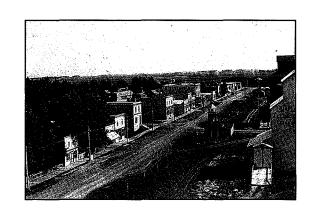
Margaret and Nina Nikkel

Toots Friesen Connie Klassen

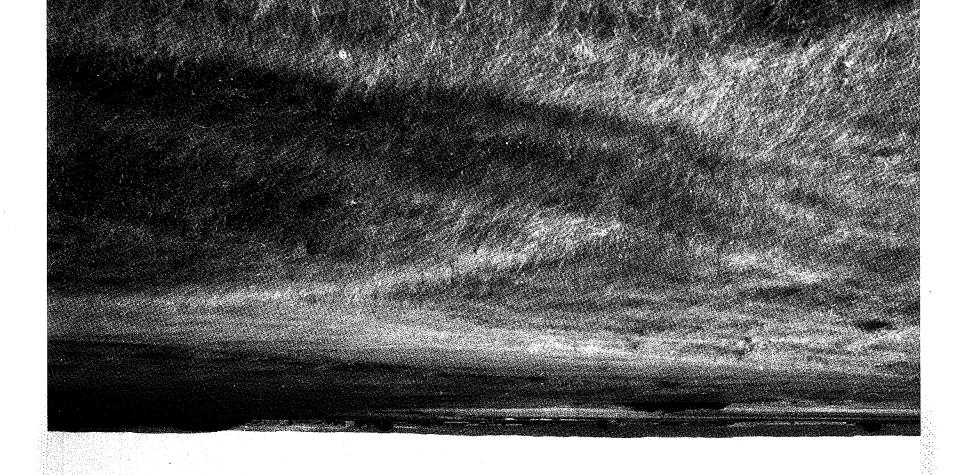


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## Prehistory and Early Rural Life

he story of Altona begins with the history of the Mennonite people and their settlement in southern Manitoba. They are a religious/ethnic group with roots in the Reformation of the 16th century. Their beliefs are:

- 1. The church made up of voluntary believers, hence, adult baptism.
- 2. Love, not force of any kind, in human relationships, hence, pacifistic, non-resistant nature. Separation of church and state.
- 3. The Bible as the ultimate authority in life. Christian discipleship is the norm.

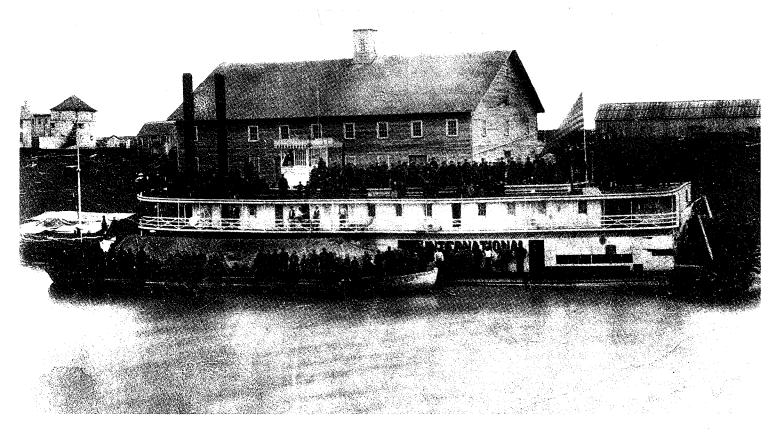
A large group of Mennonites emigrated from the Ukraine in Russia in the years 1874, '75 and '76. They were attracted to Canada for religious as well as economic reasons. Their delegates had scouted the land and found southern Manitoba to be a place of good soil, and suitable for the same kind of settlement that they had experienced in southern Russia. The Mennonite representatives who came to survey lands saw wide expanses of tall prairie grass. Inhabitants were semi-nomadic Indians and the last remaining herds of buffalos. They chose this site for a number of reasons. First of all, they were adjusted to life in open spaces. It was suitable for agricultural settlement, and the land was fertile. Created by the decay of centuries of prairie grasses, the dark loam was rich in organic matter and had the potential to produce tremendous yields. It was also capable of retaining moisture. This was important because the average rainfall was only 20 inches. Water would have to be sought for, and there were almost no trees. However, the people were hardy and determined pioneers. The early years were indeed a struggle for existence. Their ingenuity, determination and solidarity helped them to become established.

Their first buildings were sod huts, partially built into the ground. In winter these were occupied both by people and by some of their animals. Adding to



Early settlers in the Altona area of the West Reserve would have looked like this, posed in front of a sod shack that would most likely also have provided shelter for livestock.

Facing page: Waving prairie grass as far as the eye could see greeted the first settlers in the Altona area of the West Reserve in 1875.



The immigration of the Mennonites from the Ukraine to Manitoba started in 1874 to the East Reserve, and in 1875 to the West Reserve. During the years from 1874 to 1880 a total of 6,931 Mennonites came to Manitoba. This photograph supplied by the Provincial Archives of Manitoba was taken in 1879, and shows a contingent of Mennonites arriving in Winnipeg on the ''International'' that plied the Red River between Fargo and Winnipeg.

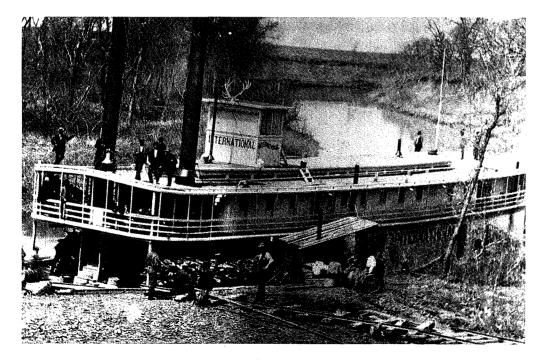
the difficulties of the first years were land clearing, grasshoppers, and spring flooding, which was to become a persistent problem. However, as soon as they could they built better houses, as well as churches and schools. Since there was no wood available, this had to be hauled from areas like the Pembina and the Red Rivers. Early buildings were rough-hewn as illustrated in one of the pictures.

Settlements were structured into villages. The pattern, which they brought from Russia and was also used in the northeastern part of Germany, was characterized by a combination of line village with open field economy. House and barn were built together. That home area provided space for house and farm buildings, barnyard, a flower and vegetable garden, an orchard and a small piece of ploughed land. Larger fields were located some distance from the home. Selection of plots was done according to the traditional methods that were brought along from Europe.

In 1875 there was no municipal government. The Mennonites, therefore, structured their own system as they had had it in Russia. Village government was headed by a mayor, or *Schulze*, who, along with council, was in charge of providing schools, pastures, and streets and was in charge of organizing that work that was common to all the village. The colony was headed by an *Obervorsteher*, who acted in a manner similar to a reeve today. His responsibility was roads, bridges, and the observance of colony ordinances. This system was later replaced by the municipal system as it is today.

The system of landholding, as traditionally organized, also changed. Gradually the field community under the open field system began to disintegrate. People eventually acquired their own titles. There was also a move to settling outside the village.

In farming practices the Mennonites had to adapt to the new conditions in Manitoba. In Russia they had already made the transition from subsistence to commercial farming. Here the first steps had to be the breaking and cultivating of new ground. With the use of oxen and a 12 inch plow a farmer was able to break about six acres of virgin land a year; with horses and more modern machinery about 20 acres of new land could be cultivated. Seed was broadcast by hand and covered with a wooden or brush harrow. At first hay and grain



A closer view of the ''International'' at its dock in Fargo-Moorehead.

were cut with a scythe or sickle but soon grass mowers were introduced. The first reaper made its appearance in 1878, threshing machines as early as 1876. Settlers were forced to switch from winter to spring wheat, because the former proved a failure. Besides wheat, oats and barley became staple crops and later flax. Vegetables and fruit were also cultivated. Another aspect of early Mennonite economy was the introduction of shelterbelts and of methods of dry farming. The latter practice they had been familiar with in their native country. Dry farming, aimed at the preservation of moisture, had its forerunner in summer fallow, with repeated cultivation as practiced in Russia. The rapid progress made by the Manitoba Mennonites in land utilization is borne out by figures such as wheat production in the reserves of Rhineland and Douglas – 443,000 bushels in 1886, just 10 years after their arrival. Grist mills, powered by wind, were also established at various places but their use decreased in time. With wheat prices in 1881 being as high as \$1.00 a bushel, farmers were selling large quantities of grain, with 200-300 loads of grain shipped to Emerson on some days. The increasing switch to commercial farming made the need for closer marketing facilities ever more necessary. The coming of the railroad in 1882, and the beginning of small settlements along the road, was the beginning of meeting this need, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Schools and church buildings were established as soon as possible after the basic needs of the settlers were met. Among other benefits negotiated with the federal government in Ottawa, the Mennonites regarded the privileges grant-

A Mennonite settler in front of his first hut in 1875; perhaps in ''Darp Aultneiv''.



ed religion and schools among the most important. That included the exercise of religion without any kind of molestation or restriction whatsoever. The same privilege was extended to the education of the children in schools. By 1879 most villages had schools either built or under construction. The curriculum consisted largely of religious instruction and moral education in addition to the three R's. Textbooks consisted of the Bible, catechism, a songbook, a German primer, and a mathematics book. Instruction was in German, and most teachers were self-educated. A basic education was the object of the schools. Boys were to become farmers, and girls homemakers.

The church functioned very much like it had in Russia. In the first place it had jurisdiction over a fairly large geographic region. Early church life was identical to that in Russia. For each village the church was the centre of existence. It was that central institution which more or less defined how they made their living, how they governed themselves, and how they related to one another. The elder, along with the Vorsteher, or reeve, were the spiritual and economic heads of the colony. They governed theoretically in tandem. Young men and women were expected to formally join the church prior to marriage. They were instructed in the catechism that had been written several hundred years before in Holland. Churches, or meeting houses as they were called, were very plain, with men and women sitting apart. In many ways the church community made up their society, and the "society" was their church. The Sunday morning worship service, though only one aspect of church life, remained one of the most important. Although people worshipped and identified with local gatherings, they were really members of a central Gemeinde (congregation) which included the entire West Reserve. Other elected ministers assisted with preaching, catechism instruction, weddings, and funerals and served the various communities on a rotating basis.



A typical rural village farmstead.

Some of the information for this chapter has been taken from *In Search of Uto*pia by E. K. Francis, *Altona* by Esther Epp-Tiessen, *The Rural Municipality of Rhineland* by Gerhard Ens, and *Adventure in Faith* by H. J. Gerbrandt.



This early harvesting photo was taken on August 21, 1896, on the Derk Harder farm just east of Neuanlage Village near Gretna. A fair sized crew of operators, oilers and stokers was required to run the steam powered tractor and separator, besides the men who brought the grain sheaves from the field and fed them into the separator. Young boys often handled the task of carting the grain from the threshing machine to storage bins on the farm or directly to elevators located on the railway in a nearby town. In this case it

would have gone to Gretna. The first elevator in Altona was built in 1895, the same year the CPR built a railway spur there. Owner of this threshing outfit was Abram Penner. It was freighted to Rosthern, Sask., in 1898. The man at right in the white shirt is H.H. Hamm, who later served as secretary-treasurer of the RM of Rhineland and the Altona Unincorporated Village District committee, and was elected Altona's first mayor.

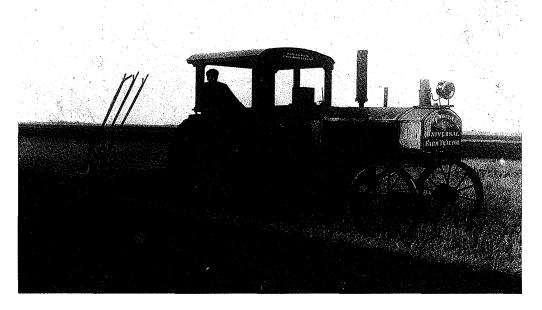


Although the house in the background is very basic and probably houses some farm animals as well as the family, one can assume from the horsepower on display that the emphasis is on agricultural pursuits and not on luxurious living.

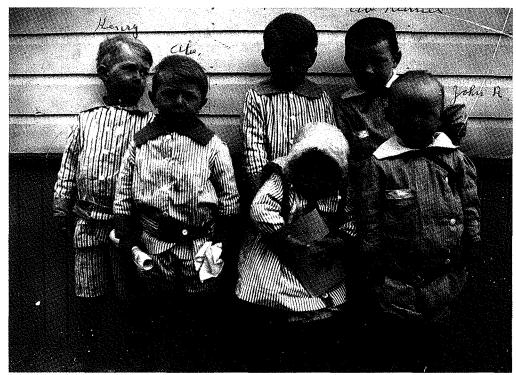
Families gathered at the farm of the Martin Friesens, Kleinstadt, the day it was purchased by the J.M. Kruegers, parents of Ben Krueger (barber), in 1907 or 1908.



At the controls of this Universal tractor by Rumely is Jacob P. Peters (grandfather of Bill and Don Braun) about 1905.

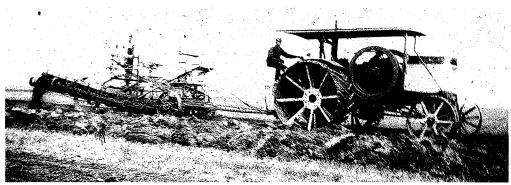


Lined up for this snapshot in 1915 are, left to right: cousins Henry Braun, Abe Braun, Martin Braun, David Braun (wearing bonnet), Abe Reimer, and John Reimer.





RM of Rhineland road construction crew builds up a grade with several teams of horses in 1915.



A few years later this IHC 25 x 45 was used to pull a grader and greatly speed up rural road construction.



This threshing crew dines at a makeshift table on the field. Meals were prepared and brought to the workers by the women and girls of the household on whose farm the threshing was being done.

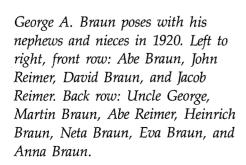
This photo of the Gerhard Kehler family of Hochstadt was taken in 1916 or 1917 and shows, left to right: William, Katharina (Janzen) Kehler, Abram, and Gerhard. Standing in front is Frank. Gerhard was born November 16, 1872, in Schoenfeld, Russia, and emigrated to Canada with his parents in 1874, where they settled in the East Reserve. In 1891 they moved to Gruenthal (near Gretna) in the West Reserve. Katharina was born on March 11, 1872, at Steinau, Russia. They were married in 1893 at Gruenthal and moved to Hochstadt (near Altona) in 1896. Gerhard died on September 9, 1933, and Katharina died on June 9, 1940. Frank, who became the secretary-treasurer of Altona when it was incorporated as a village in



1946, died in 1971. William served as chemist at Co-op Vegetable Oils for many years and is retired in Altona. Abram farmed until his death in 1954.



This Hochstadt trio consisted of brothers George Kehler (violin), Abe Kehler (celestephone), and Bill Kehler (accordion).







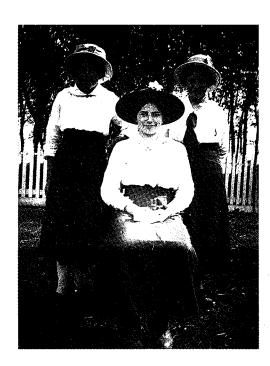
Gerhard Kehler relaxes in the warmth of his living room in February, 1919. He was self-taught in English and became an avid reader of Englishlanguage books and newspapers. The heater at right was a self-feeder and could be loaded up with coal at the top at bedtime for heating all through the night.



Following a hearty noon meal, this crew posed for their picture in 1919.



This 10-bottom plough pulled by a 25 x 45 IHC tractor made short shrift of fall ploughing in 1920. In charge of setting the levers that adjust the ploughing depth is John B. Braun, while brother David drives the tractor.

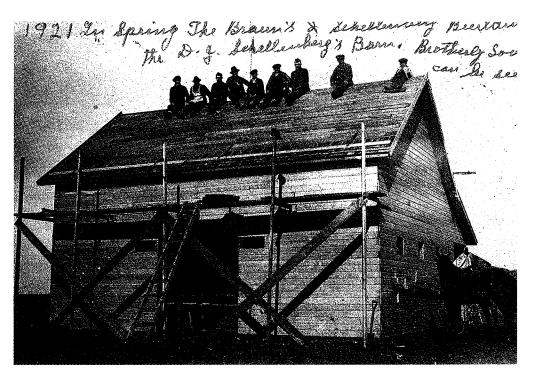


This trio was probably off to a wedding or some other special occasion when this picture was taken in 1920. They are, left to right: Lena Sawatzky, Anna Braun, and Aganetha Sawatzky.

Building bees were a popular way of getting barns erected in early days. These men take off a few minutes from shingling the D.J. Schellenberg barn in 1921 to pose for this picture.



George A. Braun plowing with Fordson tractor in the 1920s.

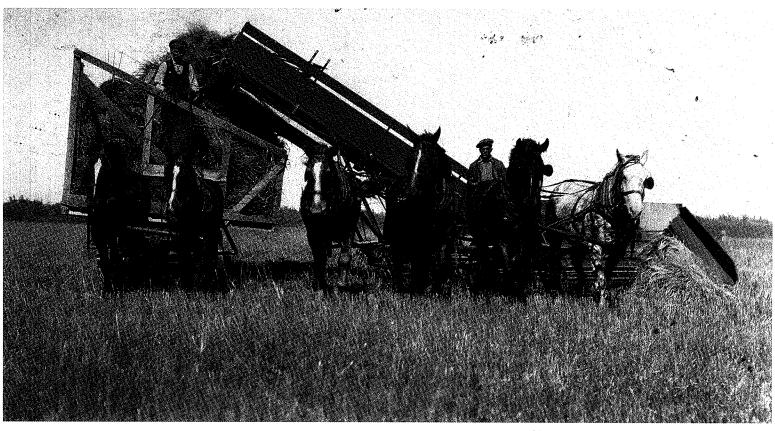


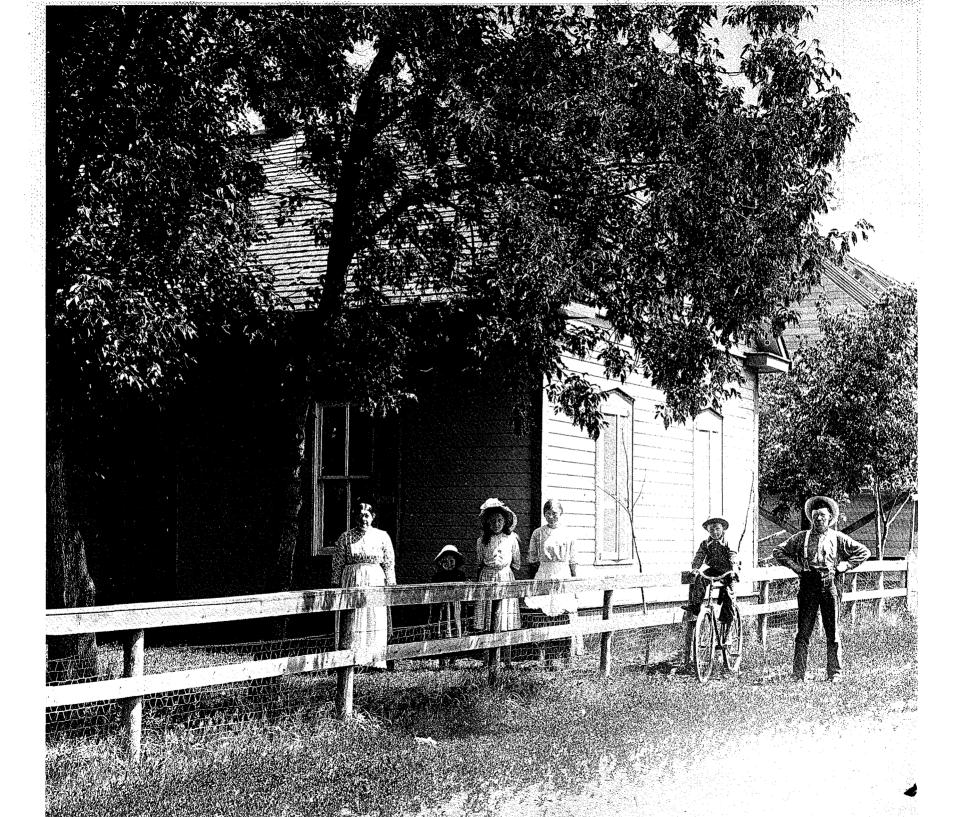
I REIII STORT AND EARLI RORAL LIFE



Farmer A.A. Braun and his young assistant transfer a load of grain from wagon to granary with this motorized wooden auger.

This mechanical sheaf loader was a great labor-saver on area farms about 1928-30.



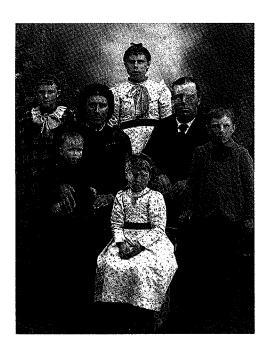


### Altona to 1900: The Coming of the Railway

efore the railway expanded into southern Manitoba no trading centres existed within the area of Mennonite settlement on the West Reserve. Grist mills and sawmills operated in a number of Mennonite villages and stores existed in some of them, but no villages had evolved into trading centres." (Ens, R.M. of Rhineland). The other need for the settlers was for facilities for marketing their agricultural products, especially wheat. As early as the 1870s there was pressure to have a railway built through the West Reserve. In 1882 the Canadian Pacific Railway built the Southwestern Branch from Gretna to Rosenfeld. Daily freight and passenger service began on December 10, 1882. That railway line facilitated the construction of trading centres along the line.

The line went directly by one of the villages, namely, the Old Altona village, which was established on Sections 3, 4 and 5 of Township 2, Range 1, west of the principal meridian. This was settled in February of 1880. The area appealed to the settlers because it lay midway between two low areas. About a mile to the west was Buffalo Creek, one of the larger drainage systems in the reserve, a little further to the east some very high grasses attested to another decline." (Epp: Altona). The village was established in the familiar village and open field system. They could have chosen to move directly onto their respective homesteads, but these early settlers preferred to live and farm in the familiar system. When the settlers formed their village, they divided their individual holdings, like collectively owned property, in the characteristic Mennonite way. There was an agreement between Johann Klippenstein and all the other settlers. This was a common form of arrangement that was used before regular land titles were issued. The village is still in existence today, although some of the old houses have been torn down and new ones built. Village life and government was similar to that of all the other villages in the West Reserve.

Facing page: This picture at the Heinrich Braun home in Old Altona village was taken at a time when the barn behind the house was under construction. Mr. and Mrs. Braun are seen in front of the house with a group of children. Heinrich Braun was the brother of the late Mrs. David (Susie) Loewen.



This Fehr family portrait includes Isaac Fehr (on lap) and David Fehr (right), who later became prominent Altona businessmen as owners of the Altona flour mill.

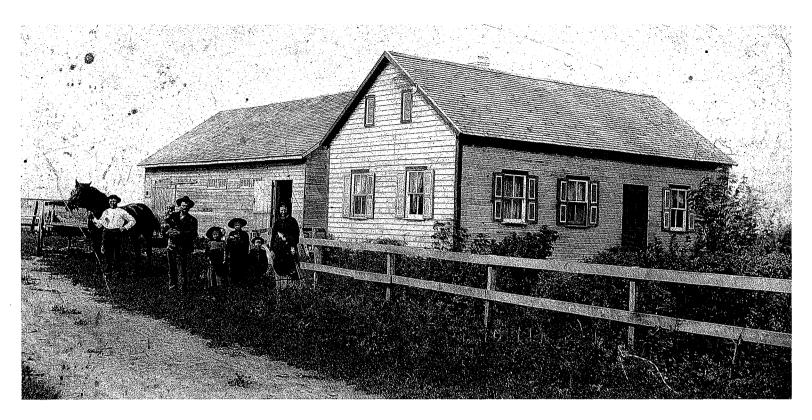
As early as 1890 the people in the vicinity of the Old Altona village had expressed hopes that a railway station would be built there, eliminating the long trip to Gretna or Rosenfeld. In response to this demand, the CPR built a new siding half a mile north of the village in 1895 and surveyed a new townsite. The town developed quickly into an agricultural service centre and in July of 1896 there were already three elevators, six general stores, three wood and machinery dealers, one blacksmith, a flax warehouse, a liquor store, a boarding house, a hotel, and a school operating in the town. The new railway town would have a tremendous impact on the old village. It would have many advantages, bringing goods and services closer. But it also would have some disadvantages, for the people were also exposed to many things that could pose a threat to their quiet and separated existence. The village did not become a part of the town, but there were a number of important connections. They shared a common name. There was a lot of contact between the two. By 1990 the two communities would have grown toward each other to such a degree that it was difficult to tell where one ended and the other began.

People started to move into the townsite, not only from the village, but also from the surrounding farms and villages. They came to establish small businesses, trades, or to work in them. For the traditional farm communities, this drift of even a small part of the population to the town, was a threat, and the communities were apprehensive about it. But it also indicated that some people were looking for different ways of fulfillment than the traditional agricultural vocation.

In addition to the businesses mentioned above, very soon after Altona was founded, construction of a flour mill also began and was completed in 1896. This mill served the town and the community for many decades. Because the entire West Reserve area had very few trees, lumber dealers also brought a needed product to the Altona area. Other businesses opened, including a hotel, a boarding and rooming house, a coal and wood business, and a liquor store, although the latter only lasted to 1901, when it was closed.

Altona was not incorporated, and it was administered by the council of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland. It was this body which passed bylaws, collected taxes, and allocated funds for sidewalks and roads. Incorporation as a village was to become effective only on January 1, 1946. Consequently, nobody promoted the growth of Altona.

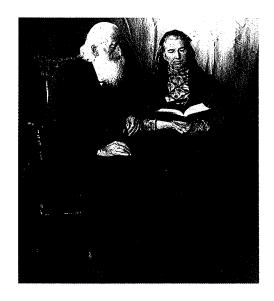
Almost immediately after the first buildings on the townsite were erected, and people moved in, residents petitioned the council for a school. The first



school was built in the summer of 1896. It was a one-room building. Almost immediately it was evident that a larger one would be necessary. In 1899 a four-classroom, two-storey building was erected. This served the town till 1938. Teachers were hard to get, so some Mennonite teachers were hired from the United States. However, non-Mennonite teachers also taught in Altona. Turnover was great, and it was rare that teachers, except possibly local ones, stayed longer than two years. There was no church building in town till 1911. In 1895 the Bergthaler membership had decided against building a church and people had to drive to the village of Hochstadt, three miles northeast. Members of the Sommerfelder church drove to Schoenthal, north of Altona, for Sunday worship services.

The early inhabitants of Altona were people of various origins: Jews and Germans, as well as English. Mennonites were in a minority. One prominent Mennonite businessman was John Hiebert, the father of Paul Hiebert, who later was to achieve fame as a chemistry professor at the University of Manitoba and an author of several books, including *Sarah Binks*.

At their home in Old Altona village are, left to right: John Braun, P.P. Braun and Tina, Anna, Lena, and Peter Braun, and Mrs. P.P. Braun. The photograph was taken by George Viertel of Gretna. This combination of house and barn has become rare not only in Old Altona but also in other villages of southern Manitoba.



Rev. and Mrs. William Hansen first visited Altona in 1898 and moved here soon thereafter. He was a pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Church, although old-timers refer to him as Lutheran. Perhaps some Lutherans attended his services, or maybe his church had close ties to the Lutherans. He must have had good relations with the Mennonites of Altona because he assisted at least once at a Mennonite prayer week service, and also served as Altona Sunday school superintendent when it was inter-denominational. The Bergthaler church took it over in the 1920s. Mr. Hansen held rotating Sunday services in Gretna, Morden, Plum Coulee, Pembina Hills, and Altona. In Altona his services were held alternately with the Mennonites in the public school. They ended when Hansen died in 1912.

The town had only a modest social life. Mennonites, generally speaking, regarded recreation, at least in certain forms, as "worldly" and therefore inappropriate. The other part of the population, however, initiated many forms of entertainment such as games and activities, parades and tournaments, and later on sporting events such as tennis and soccer. However, bike riding was a favorite activity, one that could be participated in by all. Winter activities were, from early on, ice skating and hockey.

There were always festivities associated with Christmas and New Year's. The public school presented a program of song and verse just prior to Christmas. At New Year's the Brumtopp Mummers visited the homes of the community, repeating an old European custom. They had an old rain barrel with a swatch of horsehair extending from its cowhide bottom. The mummers, young men dressed in costumes, slid the hairs between a finger and thumb and thereby produced a most strange and loud noise. They kept up the music-making until they were invited indoors for refreshments. Dancing was also quite popular.

The condition of Altona's roads was poor. In winter the snow made travel reasonably easy, but in spring and summer roads could be impassible. Altona, to a great extent, had to depend on the trains for service – for transportation of both people and goods. Around 1900 the telephone lines were extended to Altona. This greatly facilitated communication with the outside world.

Altona's first doctor was a woman by the name of Susan Isaak. She came in 1898 and stayed till 1900. After that Altona usually had a doctor, although they didn't stay too long. They practiced in their offices, and performed emergency operations in people's homes.

By the year 1900 Altona had become a prosperous community. It had developed almost all of the institutions required: business, school, and church sectors were well developed, and health and communication services, though not great, were certainly adequate and typical of most prairie towns of similar size. Socially and administratively the town was not served as well as it might have been. That improvement was to come later.

Some of the information for this chapter has been taken from *Altona* by Esther Epp-Tiessen.



This two-storey frame schoolhouse was built in 1899 for \$7,000, and dismantled in 1938. A bell in the bell-tower summoned students from Grades 1 to 12 to the four-room school (two classrooms on each level). It was located on 3rd Ave. NE where the Elmwood Apartments were built in the 1980s.

Johann Klippenstein of Old Altona village established this furniture store on Main St. in 1897, but he and his son Bernhard found greater profit in selling wood and coal. Some of the store's wares are shown in front of the store. The family lived in the back part of the building. In the photo are Mr. and Mrs. Klippenstein, son Bernhard and Mrs. D.W. Friesen.



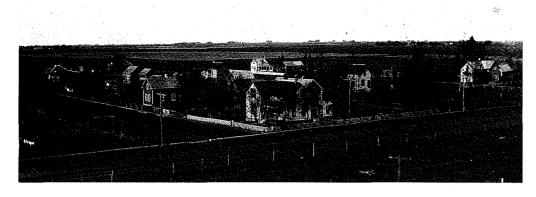
vehicle of the day, are Nita Bergen and Anna B. Braun. A Sunday ride in the country was just as enjoyable then as it is today.



A group of Altona businessmen and their sons posed for this photo in 1900.

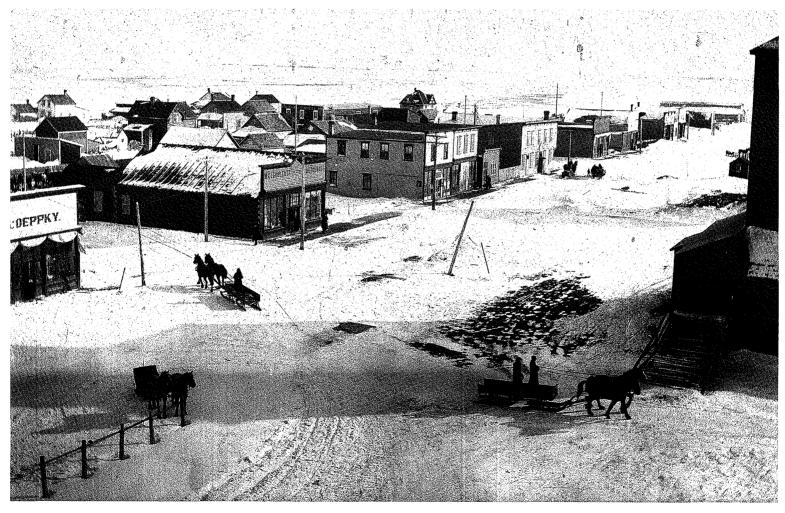






About 1900 the northwest section of Altona was already quite well developed. Shown here is the block northwest of 5th Ave. NW and 1st St. NW.

This photo, probably taken from one of Altona's grain elevators, shows Main Street the way it appeared on a typical winter's day in 1900.



John and Peter Schwartz, sons of Johann Schwartz, who had settled in Altona Village in 1880, built two grain elevators in Altona. By 1897, when their second one was completed, the grain storage capacity in Altona had reached 127,000 bushels.



This photo of the Cornelius Bergmann family was taken in 1900. Seated, left to right, are: Anna Bergmann (mother), Agatha Bergmann, Anna Bergmann, and Cornelius Bergmann. Standing, left to right: Maria Bergmann, C.C. Bergmann, Tina Bergmann, Lena Friesen, C.D. Friesen, Tina Friesen, John J. Friesen, D.W. Friesen, and A.D. Friesen.





By 1899 this store owned by John Kehler had a well-stocked dry goods department. The store was later purchased by John Hiebert.



### 1901-1914: A Prosperous Community

y 1900 Altona was a well-established prairie town with a population of over 200. Growth had been swift in the first five years, but slowed down after the turn of the century. Yet the number of businesses increased, since the outlying villages provided a market that had just barely been tapped.

The more traditional businesses were additional general stores, implement and lumber dealerships, and blacksmith shops. Friesen Brothers opened a store, J. J. Priess started the Altona Machinery Company, founded around 1903, and H. C. Epp opened a machinery business, which began around 1908. Also, a new livery stable was opened after 1900. These stables were patronized mostly by farmers coming to town to do their business. For about 25 cents their horses could be watered, fed, and rubbed down. The liveries also hired out teams of horses to travelling salesmen and professionals, and kept the horses of the more well-to-do townsfolk.

The first Altona bank, a private one, was opened by Ritz and Widmeyer around 1900. The first chartered bank to appear in Altona was the Union Bank, which opened about 1903. In 1906 the Bank of Montreal also established a branch. Although the banks met an important need, many Mennonites used the *Waisenamt* as a bank. This was an orphans' bureau, an old Mennonite institution whose original purpose had been to administer the inheritances of orphans and widows, but it gradually became a trust company which accepted deposits and made loans to any church member. Other businesses that opened after 1900 were a dry goods store, a shoe and boot store, a shoe repair shop, a jewelry store, and a furniture business. In 1907 David W. Friesen opened a small confectionery store. His small Main St. shop carried mainly basic groceries, but it also housed the Altona post office. This small business would eventually be-

Facing page: This band of hunters and onlookers gathered in front of the Commercial Hotel to have their picture taken. It is not known how the bear (centre) came to his untimely end, whether he was taken in town or nearby, but he seems totally relaxed with front paws resting on the shotgun barrels that likely did him in. The Commercial would have been a suitable place for these young men to celebrate with their trophy.



Mr. and Mrs. Johann Schwartz. Prior to the founding of Altona, Schwartz lived on a homestead for a while, in Old Altona for a winter, and in Rosenfeld for a few years. He built his first elevator in Altona soon after it was evident the CPR would establish a station there, and moved his family to town the first year of its existence. He also built elevators in Horndean and Waldeck, Sask., and had lumber interests in Altona and well beyond Altona. The house he built for his family in 1902 was the biggest ever built in Altona.

The Johann Schwartz home in Altona in 1902 with several members of the family on the porch and balcony. The house served as a residence for Elim Bible School students for a number of years before it was obtained as a Heritage Home and renovated with the help of government grants, and local financial assistance. It was moved from its original site and now stands on 10th Ave. NW near the Pioneer Centre.



come one of Canada's largest printing and school supply firms. In 1990 it would also be the only Altona business to trace its beginnings to the town's early years.

Besides Mennonites, there were also German and Jewish people who lived in the town. Perhaps one of the attractions was that they could communicate with each other. Yiddish could be understood by those speaking Low German, and High German, of course, was also understood. During the first years the population was a fairly transient one. Shortly after 1900, quite a few families left Altona for the wide open spaces in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Around 1910, after the whole idea of moving to town had lost its negative connotations, retiring farmers did much to add stability to the Altona population.

Despite the mobility of many of the Altona folk, there were a number of individuals who were around long enough to make a name for themselves. One of these people was Johann Schwartz. He began to build his first grain elevator almost as soon as it was evident that the CPR would establish a station.

MELONA ISOL-ISI.

He was an innovative and ambitious businessman, who also built elevators elsewhere. His lumber interests reached beyond Altona as well. All of these enterprises brought him considerable wealth, and in 1902 he erected a big house on the town's west end, the largest one built in Altona to date. Because of his knowledge of the business world and his command of English, people often consulted Mr. Schwartz on financial and legal matters.

Another prominent Altona businessman was John Hiebert. He served as chairman of the Altona school board for a number of years and was also heavily involved with the Mennonite Educational Institute. One of his sons, Paul, became a chemistry professor at the University of Manitoba and was the author of the humorous novel *Sarah Binks*, and others.

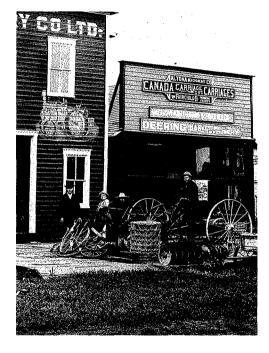
The affairs of Altona were looked after by the council of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland. It passed bylaws, collected taxes and allocated funds for sidewalks and roads. The amount of money allotted for the town was never very large. In 1902 only \$220.85 was spent on Altona. In May of 1904 the council voted to give Altona \$300 to purchase a fire hose. At the same time, however, it was decided that for the next three years it would withhold the \$100 that came from hotel and liquor licenses – a sum that was regularly collected and returned to Altona as town money.

One of the town's problems was water. In spring too much runoff water collected. Because the land was so flat, meltwater could not drain properly. The town also had a water shortage. Water was supplied by town wells. In dry years water levels sank dangerously low. Fire was a constant threat and during Altona's first 19 years it struck on four occasions. A particularly destructive fire occurred on September 7, 1908, which destroyed an entire business block.

Outside of the railway, the town had little means of communication and was therefore somewhat isolated. Trips to Winnipeg were still quite rare and a journey farther than that almost unheard of.

The condition of Altona's roads left something to be desired. In winter the snow made travel reasonably easy, but in spring and summer roads could be virtually impassible. Cars began to appear around 1905. Paul Hiebert recalls that his family owned Altona's first automobile, a one-cylinder car. H. C. Epp became Altona's first car dealer around 1914.

Railway service was good and relatively inexpensive. Trains came daily. In the early days mail arrived twice a day except on Sundays. In 1907 the post office awarded its Altona contract to D. W. Friesen, and there it remained for the next 38 years. Around 1900 the Bell Telephone Company also extended lines to Altona and the surrounding area. However, service was quite poor. The flimsy



Early machinery dealers gear up for one of Altona's first sidewalk sales on Main Street.



Altona had been served by numerous doctors before 1912 but none stayed very long. In 1912 Dr. Lambert Breidenbach, a German-born bachelor, came to Altona from Kenora. He promptly settled into the community and stayed until his retirement 40 years later, in 1952.

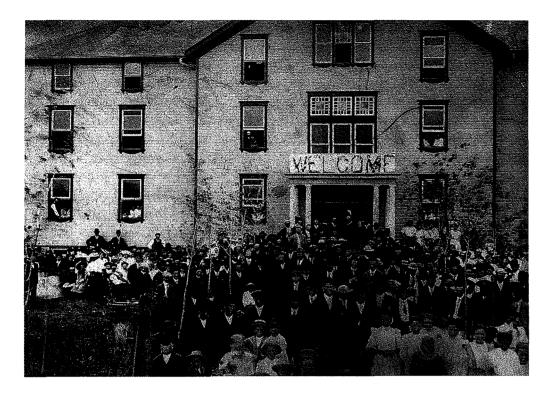
telephone lines strung from rooftop to rooftop were often in disrepair. In 1907 Altona counted only ten subscribers. In 1907 Manitoba Government Telephones also appointed D. W. Friesen as its agent for Altona. He held that position until 1946.

Sickness and death were common occurrences in Altona's early history as they were in any pioneer community. Medical knowledge had not yet advanced to the point where diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, and scarlet fever could be prevented or treated easily. When disease hit it simply had to run its course. In the winter of 1900-1901 the community was first afflicted with measles, then mumps, then typhoid fever. The lack of treatment facilities made matters worse. The nearest hospital was in Winnipeg and only very serious cases were sent there. Altona was, however, fortunate to have doctors at an early date. The first one was a woman by the name of Susan Isaak. She stayed till 1900 and gained the trust of many patients. In 1902 Dr. E. E. Meek came and practiced until 1905. In 1907 Dr. John Paul Hiebert, of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, came to serve the community. He was a very tall and good-humoured man, and the people were very sorry to see him go. In 1912 Dr. Lambert Breidenbach came to Altona and stayed until 1952. He gave the town 40 years of dedicated service. In 1912 a dentist also began to visit Altona one day a week. A small nursing home was established by two sisters, Margaret and Anna Siemens, shortly after the turn of the century. This served the community until the hospital was established in the 1930s.

In 1896 a small school building was constructed. However, in a few years it became apparent that a larger building was needed. In 1899 a four-room, two-storey school building was constructed. In February of 1900 one hundred children were reported in attendance. Instruction was in German and English. Arithmetic, English, and geography were English subjects. German literature, grammar, and religious instruction were taught in the German language.

In 1908 another school, the Mennonite Educational Institute, was opened. It was a three-storey, three-wing structure, and boasted four classrooms, a library, a parlour, a kitchen, a dining room, a pantry, an icebox, and a furnace room. It also contained 28 dormitory rooms for out-of-town students. By the end of the first year it had 66 students that came from Altona and surrounding area.

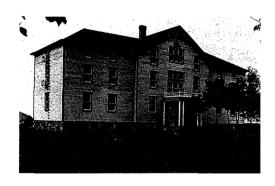
The main purpose of the Altona MEI was to produce qualified teachers for public schools in Mennonite districts. The school also had a much greater impact on the town than merely supplying its public school with teachers. The institute had a way of involving the local people in its activities, so that it soon



took on the air of a community centre. It introduced many people to worlds of music, literature, and religious thought which they had never known before. In a very real way the MEI broadened the horizons of Altona's population like no other institution in those first 19 years.

After the MEI was completed in 1908, Altona still had no church building. People travelled either to Hochstadt or Schoenthal for Sunday morning worship services. The growth of the town, however, necessitated a church building there. In 1912 the governing body of the Bergthaler church granted permission to move the Hochstadt building into town. It was dedicated on October 6, 1912. The first bride to walk to the marriage altar in this new church was Mrs. David Loewen, the former Susan Rempel, one of the shooting victims of 1902. The services were led by five or six different Bergthaler ministers who served various places on a rotating basis. Very early, also, Sunday school was started, in addition to the Sunday morning worship services. Sessions were held in German in both services. Soon after the Sunday school was founded, a *Jugendverein*, a Sunday evening program geared towards young people, was also established.

The Mennonite Educational Institute was founded in Gretna in 1889, and by 1900 it was an effective teacher training centre. When the time came to replace the building in 1903, factions in Altona and Winkler wanted it relocated. The issue came to a head at the annual meeting in 1905. A vote on relocation was held and Altona received 179 votes, Gretna 151, and Winkler 119. Ten acres of land was purchased on the west side of Altona and by 1907 the decision was made to build a threestorey school for \$10,000. The Gretna group, who had worked so hard to keep the school in Gretna, formed a new society whose aim it was to build a new school in Gretna. H.H. Ewert had been principal of the MEI in Gretna and was not enthusiastic about its relocation. He subsequently resigned his position at MEI and became the principal of the MCI. Both MEI in Altona and MCI in Gretna opened their doors in 1908. This photo shows part of the large crowd who attended the opening in Altona. Both schools had the same purpose: to train teachers for Mennonite schools, and both competed for the same students. Competition and acrimony were rife and continued for decades. Although greatly diminished, some of the hostility is still evident today.



The Mennonite Educational Institute was built in 1908, with J.J. Balzer, a minister from Minnesota, as principal. Instruction was given in Grades 8-12 inclusive. The school was destroyed by fire in 1926.

The people of Altona took an active interest in politics at the provincial, federal, and municipal levels. This was somewhat of a departure from the historic stance of Mennonites not choosing to be involved in politics and government. The high level of political interest among the Altona townspeople manifested itself in several ways. One was the percentage of voter turnout at elections held between 1900 and 1914. Well over 70 per cent voted in both provincial and federal elections. Some even became party members, attended meetings, and campaigned actively at election time. Cornelius Bergmann, a farmer living just west of Altona, went one step further and actually ran as the Conservative candidate in the provincial election of 1907. He was not elected, however.

By the time Altona was nearly 20 years old, it had become a prosperous community in one of the major centres in the West Reserve. Its growth slowed down somewhat after the first five years of activity. It benefited primarily from its rich agricultural area. Area farmers hauled their grain to Altona elevators, bought their implements from Altona dealers, purchased their other needs there and made use of the services offered. In 1913 it reached, along with other towns, an economic boom which saw wheat hit record price levels. Real estate prices soared.

During its first 19 years Altona had developed almost all the institutions required by a community of its size. Business, school, and church sectors were well developed and health and communication services, though not great, were certainly adequate and typical of most prairie towns of similar size. Socially and administratively the town was not served as well as it might have been. But just as soon as they could, Altona citizens would seek to remedy the administrative problem. Life in Altona up to 1914 was easy and relaxed. Occasionally a burst of construction activity or a memorable event, such as the 1902 village shooting, would rouse people's excitement. But on the whole there was very little to upset the daily routine of small town life. World War I would be the first major interruption.

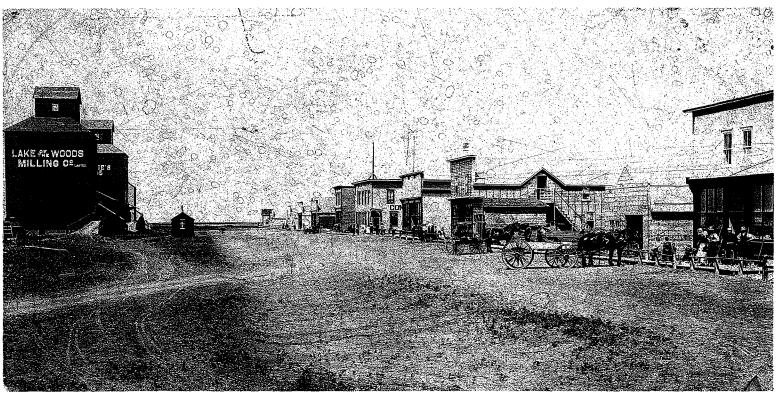
Much of the information for this chapter has been taken from *Altona* by Esther Epp-Tiessen.

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The Commercial Hotel was built about the turn of the century by Otto and Martha Gaube. They came to Altona from Plum Coulee, where they had been liquor merchants. The Commercial became a popular gathering place for the people of Altona and the surrounding area. It was destroyed by fire in 1908 and was never rebuilt.

Altona Main St., looking north, in 1901.



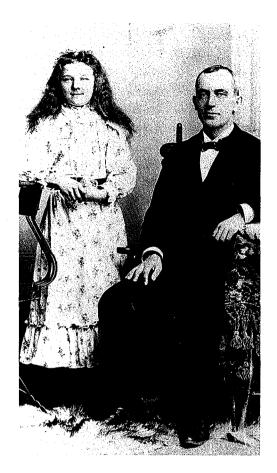


Posing in front of the new Altona public school built in 1899 are these students, teacher, and trustees in 1902. Teacher F.W. Deutschmann is in the middle of the back row. Other adults in the picture are Johann Schwartz and John Hiebert (father of the famous Manitoba author, Paul Hiebert), both trustees.

Henry Toews, who poses here with one of his students, Justine Klassen, was the teacher in the Old Altona village school in 1902. On the morning of October 9 that year he went on a shooting spree at the school. Being an unusually particular man, he had developed a variety of grievances against households where he had boarded in the village and was taking out his feelings against the children from these homes who were in his classes.

On October 9 he was to meet with the school trustees and when they arrived he went to his bed, took a revolver from under his pillow and shot the trustees, wounding Peter Kehler, Abraham Rempel, and John Hiebert.

With revolver in hand, he then entered the classroom and shot Rempel's daughter, Susie (three bullets in the left arm and one in the right wrist), and Kehler's daughters, Helena (one bullet in the back and another in the arm) and Annie (a bullet in the stomach). He held the villagers at bay briefly but when confronted by a friend he raised the gun to his head and shot himself.



He was taken unconscious to a Winnipeg hospital the following day and regained consciousness six days later. He expressed deep regret for the murder of eight-year-old Annie and the wounds inflicted on the others. He never left the hospital and died there on January 19, 1903, at the age of 37. The wounded children and adults all recovered and were able to live normal lives.



This photo of Annie and Helena Kehler, aged eight and nine years, respectively, was taken shortly before the shooting episode in Altona village school. Seated is Annie, who died from the wounds inflicted by shots from her teacher's revolver.

Teachers and students of the Mennonite Educational Institute pose in front of their school in 1909.



Various sources date this photo of some of Altona's leading pioneer businessmen as 1895, 1901, and 1902 vintage. Left to right, back row: Abram Toews, Johann Schwartz, David Funk, John Ewert, and J.J. Loewen. Middle row: Jacob Schwartz, Isaac Harms, Johann Klippenstein, Dr. B.J. Funk, and A.H. Loeppky. Seated in front: Peter Schwartz and John J. Schwartz.







Since Mennonite farmers had already proven the Red River Valley to be prime wheat raising country, grain elevators quickly sprang up after the CPR built its station at Altona midway between Rosenfeld and Gretna. Altona area farmers who had travelled some six miles to Gretna with their grain till then welcomed the convenience of delivering grain to Altona. First to complete an elevator here was the Lake of the Woods Milling Co. Ltd., with Ogilvie's and Schwartz quickly following. The Schwartz & Co. elevator was owned by Johann and Peter Schwartz, sons of Johann Schwartz, who had settled in Old Altona in 1880. A fourth elevator, also owned by the Schwartz brothers, was built in 1897. Even before it was completed, the grain storage capacity in Altona elevators had reached 127,000 bushels, assuring its future importance as a trading centre.

Fire which started in the Yoerger hardware store on September 7, 1908, also destroyed the Commercial Hotel, the Bank of Montreal, the D.W. Friesen store and post office, and the Coblentz general store.

The first cars began to appear in Altona around 1905. The owner and vintage of this horseless carriage is unknown. Some say the first car was owned by John Hannah, the druggist. It had no doors, no roof, no lights, and required a quart of oil every twenty-five miles. This car has lights so it apparently is not the one Hannah is said to have owned. The late Paul Hiebert, author and university professor, however used to claim that his family owned the first car in Altona. His grandfather, Erdman Penner, an early Gretna merchant, passed on a one-cylinder automobile he had bought to the Hiebert family when Penner got tired of it. Storekeeper John Funk and Dr. John Paul Hiebert were also among the early car owners.





Mrs. Peter H. Buhr (nee Susie Hooge) was a teacher in the Old Altona village school.



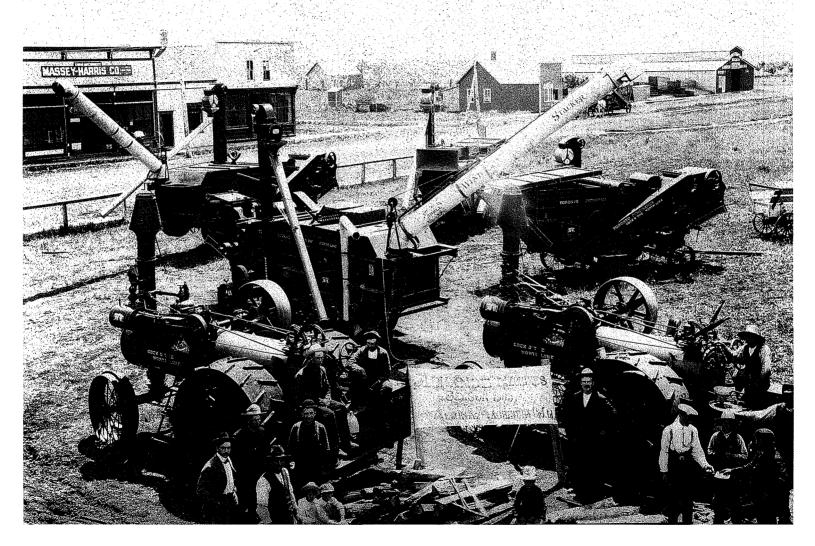
In the winter of 1909 fire razed the Martin Lemke machine shop, the Henry Loeppky store, the blacksmith shop, and John Schimnowski's saddlery.



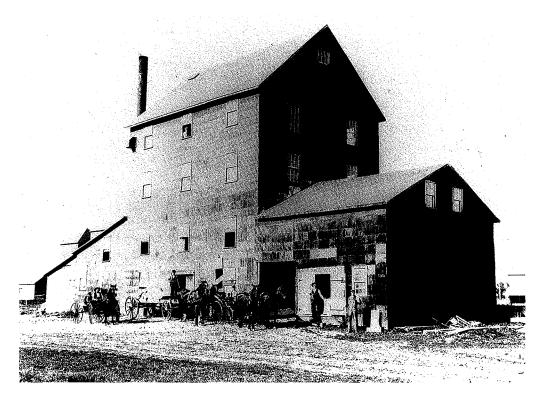
This hockey game in 1904 had Altona pitted against a visiting team from Gretna. Most hockey games, however, were of the shinny kind played by whoever was on the ice at the time. Teams from Plum Coulee and other West Reserve villages also came from time to time to test their skills against an Altona squad. This rink was lighted by lanterns after dark. Notice the wood boards surrounding the ice surface. When the ice on Buffalo Creek remained wind-swept, ambitious children could skate almost as far as Rosenfeld.



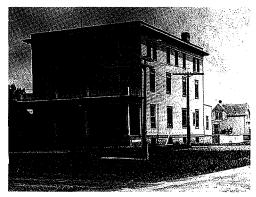
The Altona soccer team poses after winning the Victoria Day tournament in 1903.



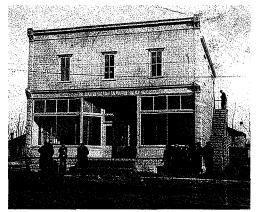
This display of Advance "Cock o' the North Line" tractors and threshing machines on Altona's Main St. drew the attention of farmers and businessmen alike in the summer of 1905.



The first mill was built in Altona in 1886 for Peter Braun of Old Altona village. However, just about the time it was going to go into operation, it burned. Braun had the mill rebuilt but he had to sell all his property to raise enough money to do so. He sold out to Peter Wiebe and moved to Winkler. Wiebe sold to David and Isaac Fehr, two brothers from Rosenfeld, who owned and operated it until 1926. Before the Fehrs emigrated to Paraguay in 1926, they sold the mill to Isaac I. Neufeld, who later sold it to H.H.W. Reimer, of Steinbach, the last owner. Farmers from miles around brought their wheat to the Altona mill to have it custom ground into flour. After World War II small mills all over Canada ran into hard times as the big millers streamlined their operations and the Altona flour mill was no exception. It stood idle through the 1950s and was finally sold to the Blumengart Hutterite Colony. It was dismantled in 1960 and the materials used at Blumengart and other Manitoba colonies.



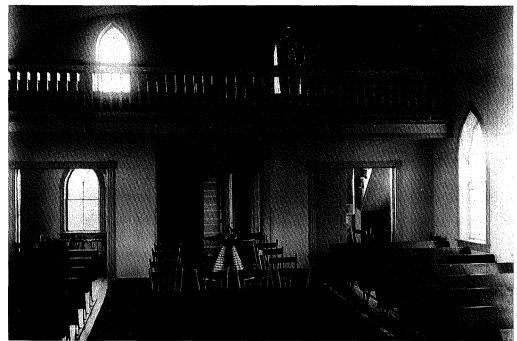
The Rhineland Hotel was built soon after the Commercial burned in 1908. It served as a lodging, dining, and beer drinking place until it was dismantled in 1970. The property on Main St. where the Rhinelander stood became a used car lot.

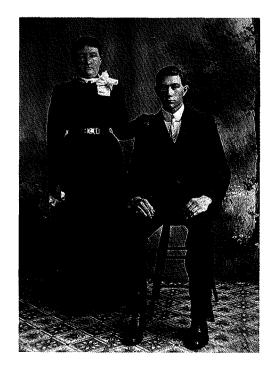


The W. & J. Coblentz store on Main St. in 1909.



The new Bergthaler Church built in Altona was very similar in design to its forerunner in Hochstadt. (Kleinstadt was the name of the school district. Hochstadt was the name of the community in which Kleinstadt school was located). The first Bergthaler church was built in Altona in 1908. The photo at right shows the interior of the church.







Katherine Wiens and John E. Nikkel on their wedding day July 11, 1904. They were the first couple to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in the new Altona Bergthaler church in 1954. Inset: Mr. and Mrs. Nikkel on the day of their 50th wedding anniversary. \_\_\_\_\_\_



About to set out on a test drive of this McLaughlin Buick purchased in 1910 by Isaak and David Fehr are B.J. Klippenstein, H.C. Epp, John Fehr, C.A. Wieler, P.E. Braun, and Jacob P. Kehler. The car is now on display at the Elkhorn Museum.

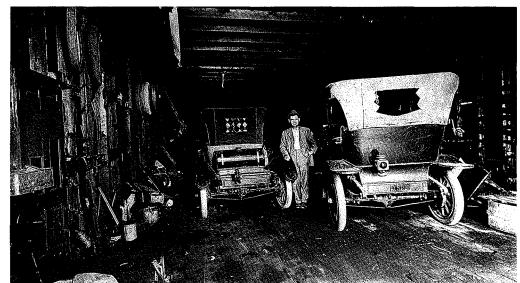
The Otto Spandier family from Winnipeg had moved to Altona in the early 1900s and lived in this fine house in 1908 when this photo was taken. It later became the home and office of Dr. Lambert Breidenbach.

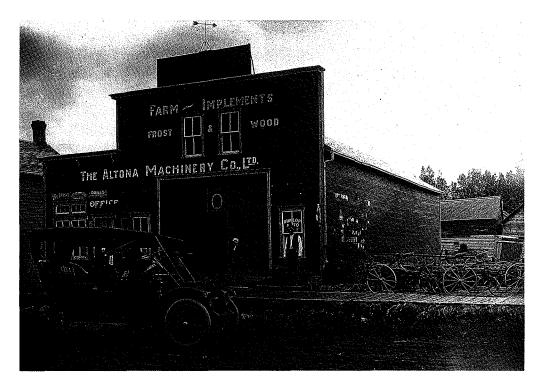


This group of young Altonans went to Neche, N.D., for libations and to have this photo taken by the Neche photographer, George Viertel.

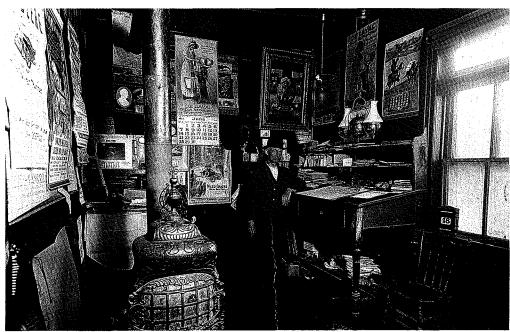


This interior view of the Altona Machinery Co. shows owner J.J. Priess with two automobiles of the day. Although Priess was not the first owner of a car in Altona (that distinction went to the family of Dr. Paul Hiebert, who were given a one-cylinder car by Hiebert's grandfather, Erdman Penner of Gretna after Penner tired of it) Priess was an early coowner of a car with Peter Striemer, who had owned the Altona livery stable.





J.J. Priess formed the Altona Machinery Co. Ltd. in 1903 to become the town's first implement dealer. In 1908 H.C. Epp also opened an implement dealership and a lively competition for customers ensued. The exterior photo of Altona Machinery must have been taken about 1914 judging from the automobile. Since there were no specific auto dealerships in Altona, until H.C. Epp opened the first one in 1914, implement dealers brought in the occasional shipment of cars for sale to the local population. The interior photo shows Mr. Priess in his office in 1926. He emigrated to South America a year later.



Another machinery shop on Main St. in the first decade of the 20th century was that of Peter Braun, dealer for the Champion line of harvesting machines. Left to right: Jacob Schwartz, H.B. Wiebe, Peter Loeppky, Peter Braun, and a Mr. Wadlinger (on the divan). Judging from the various wares displayed in front of the shop, it is quite likely that Mr. Braun also bought and sold other merchandise besides farm implements.

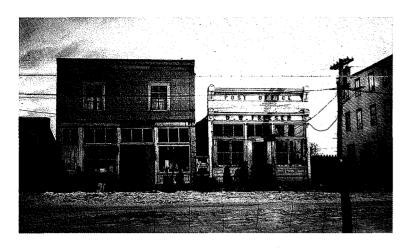


Prominent businessman, Bernhard J. Klippenstein, and his bride Agatha.

A winter scene on Altona's Main St. in the winter of 1910.







The L.P. Yoerger and D.W. Friesen stores on Main St. about 1910. The Friesen store also contained the post office.



Altona Main St. looking north from the present Rhineland Car Co.



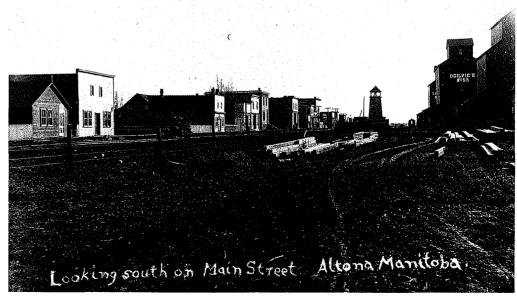
The Altona Cornet Band was formed about 1910 by a group of 20 businessmen who met for practice at the home of Bernhard Krahn. A Mr. Sherwood was the first bandmaster. Smokers had to pay a fee of \$5, and because most of them smoked, it made it possible to meet expenses. The band had to disband during World War I because church leaders said the uniforms looked too militaristic. Standing, left to right: David Fehr, John Schwartz, Derk Berg, Mr. Thiessen, J.D. Harder, B.J. Klippenstein, John Loewen, A.W. Rempel, and Isaac Fehr. Seated are: P.E. Braun, Fred Justice (conductor), John Loeppky, Jacob P. Kehler, and Henry Wiebe.

In 1910 businessmen still travelled mostly by horse and buggy. Thomas Sawatzky and Paul Hansen pause on an Altona street (note the wooden sidewalk) to have their picture taken.

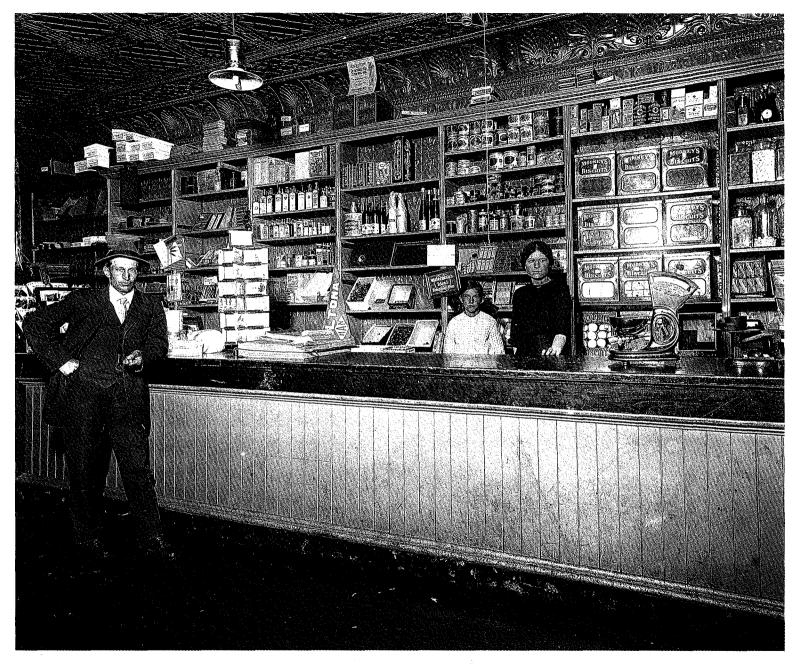


Peter E. Braun and his bride, Lena, pose for this wedding portrait.





Altona Main St., looking south, in 1901.

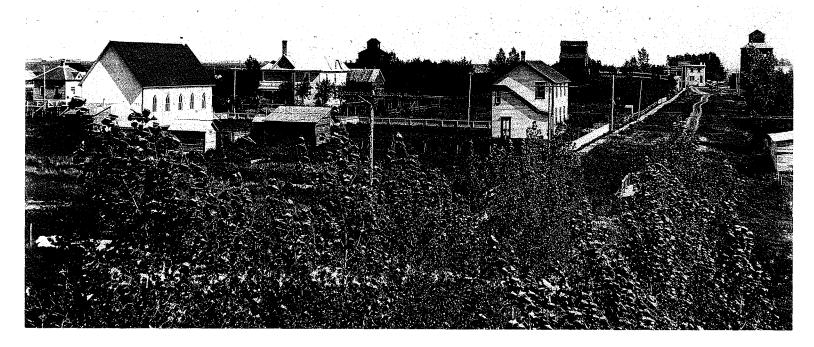


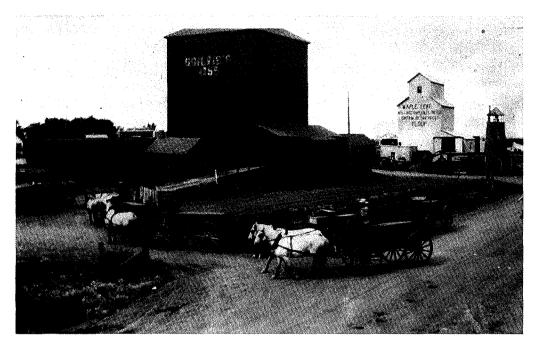
Behind the counter in this picture taken inside the D.W. Friesen confectionery store are Sarah Striemer with clerk Mary Schweitzer. Posing for the camera with them is Abram Hiebert, who was a clerk at the Commonwealth Store.

Shown inside the D.W. Friesen general store and post office in 1910 are, left to right: Peter H. Dueck, clerk; D.W. Friesen, store owner, and Peter Winter, clerk.

This photo was taken about 1912 looking east along 4th Ave. NW. It was probably taken from the third floor of the MEI, which stood on the site of the present West Park School. The Bergthaler church is on the far left with the John Schwartz residence across the street. The two-storey white building in the centre foreground is the first RM of Rhineland office.







As soon as the railway spur was built at Altona the construction of grain elevators followed, and area farmers who had had to travel to Gretna or Rosenfeld to deliver their crops immediately adopted Altona as their delivery centre. The first grain company to build an elevator at the new Altona siding was Lake of the Woods, followed almost immediately by Ogilvie's and the Schwartz brothers.



The Altona Never Sweats baseball team poses in front of the Rhineland Hotel after one of their games. Left to right: John Schwartz, John Braun, Ed Schwartz, Louis Yoerger, Alberta Brudo, Dr. Lambert Breidenbach, Art German (captain), Joe Wright, and Henry Driedger.

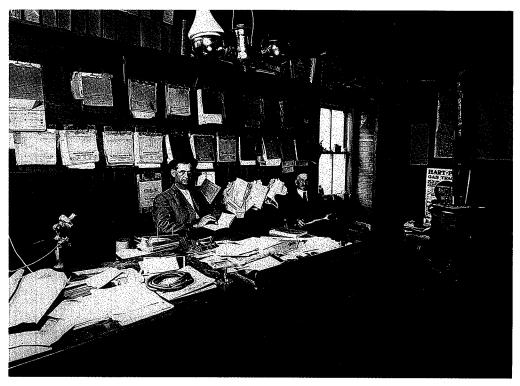


Sarah Striemer Reimer, who supplied this photo of the Altona school students of 1913, was able to identify most of them. Left to right, front row: Otto Hamm, Ed Wiebe, David Fehr, (?), Peter Kehler, and Frank Sawatzky. Second row: Annie Nikkel, Tina Rempel, Tina Gerbrandt, Tina Penner, Susie Voth, Jake Fehr, Susie Berg, Alice Goodman, Susie Unger, Eva Kehler, (?). Third row: David Stobbe, John Kehler, Ben Wiebe, ? Banman, (?), Ben Penner, Eddy Sawatzky, Henry Striemer, Jake Sawatzky, and Jake Berg. Fourth row: Frank Harder, Art Siemens, Bruno Roscoe, (?), Cornelius Neufeld, Abe Penner, (?), (?), ? Unrau, Diedrich

Epp, and Ed Fehr. Fifth row: Susie Dyck, Susie Unger, (?), (?), Justina Bergen, ? Banman, Mary Martens, Nettie Sawatzky, and Mary Penner. Sixth row: Peter Berg, Teacher Miss Susie Neufeld, Bessie Goodman, Lena Goodman, Frances Krivac, Annie Unrau, (?), (?), Neta Hamm, ? Unrau, Tina Penner, and Teacher P.H. Siemens. Seventh row: Sarah Fehr, Tina Unger, Annie Krivak, Annie Kehler, Lizzie Wiebe, (?), Agatha Kehler, Sarah Striemer, and Lizzie Klippenstein. Back row: Phil Kehler, John Roscoe, John Unger, Jake Dyck, Jacob Voth, ? Banman, ? Banman, Abe Rempel, (?), Cornelius Voth, and Frank Klippenstein.



On a three-generational picnic are Mr. and Mrs. Johann Klippenstein, their daughter Elizabeth and daughter-in-law Mrs. B.J. Klippenstein and her sons Menno and Walter.

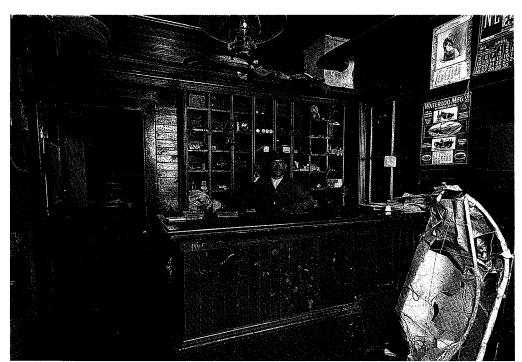


J.J. Loewen, shown here inside his office about 1914, was another one of the early implement dealers in Altona. He had come to Altona from Osterwick and in 1891 had attended the Gretna Normal School to acquire a working knowledge of English, which he deemed essential to carrying on a business. An advertisement he ran in Der Nordwesten in an 1897 issue listed among other items both manual and self-feeding threshing machines, ploughs, saws, steam and gas pumps, and windmills.

John P.H. Kehler is believed to have been the first person in Altona to establish a garage for automobiles. He is shown here inside his hardware shop-garage in 1914 soon after he opened for business.



Abram Loeppky, photographed on his wedding day, died suddenly the same night while preparing for bed.

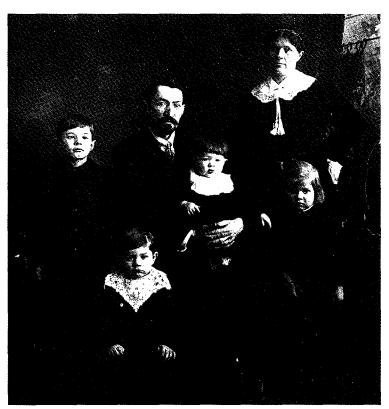




Young women of Altona in the early part of the 20th century are, left to right: Susie Loewen (later Mrs. Diedrich Hoeppner), Mrs. Jacob D. Harder, Mrs. A.D. Friesen, and Mrs. Isaac K. Fehr.



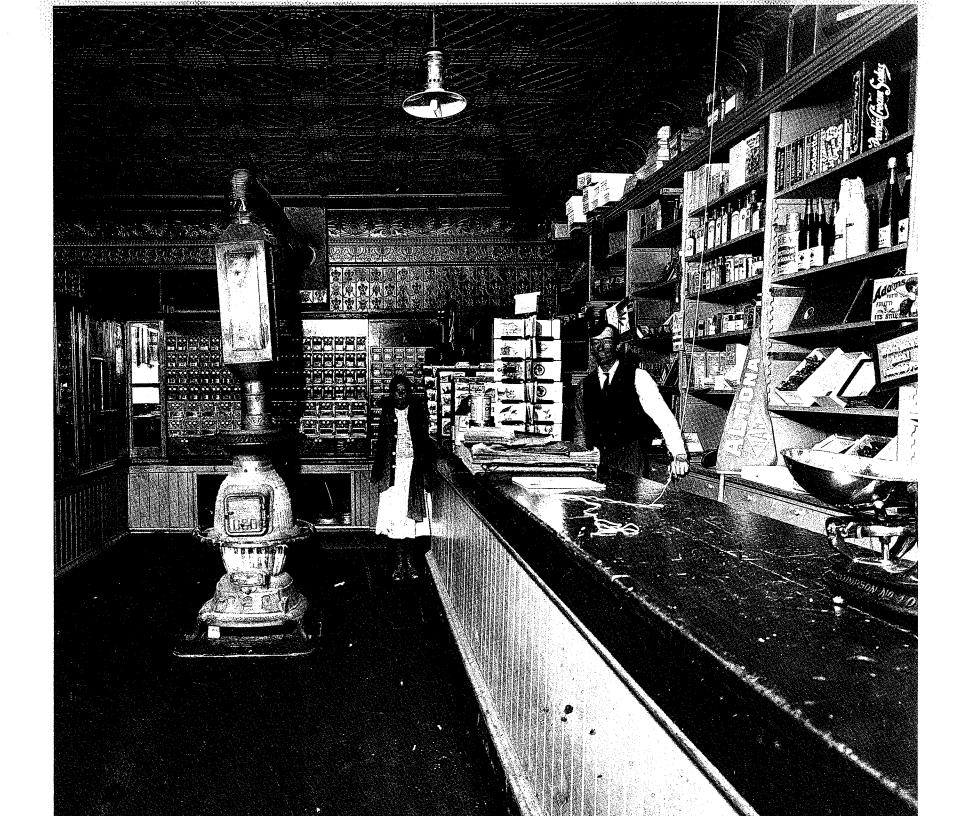
Jacob H. Braun and his car were obviously popular in 1914, judging from the girls eager for a ride.



This family portrait shows prominent Altona businessman, A.D. Friesen, with his wife and children. Children, left to right, are: Abe, David, Henry, and Margaret.



Posing here with their teacher, Leonard Krueger, are left to right, front: Margaret Friesen and Neta Hamm. Back: Sarah Fehr and Sarah Striemer.



# 1914-1929: World War I and Prosperity

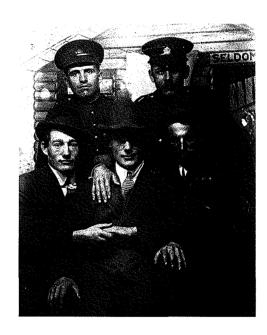
he relative calm and isolation of Altona was threatened by the outbreak of World War I. While it aroused nationalistic fervour in the rest of Canada, particularly the Anglo-Saxon part, the Mennonite part of Altona was apprehensive on several counts.

- 1. It threatened the communal way of life in that the war effort called for support, of manpower and economic resources.
- 2. It challenged the status of Mennonites as conscientious objectors.
- 3. The larger society called for conformity and accommodation.

The response of the community was to reevaluate faith and principles. Talks with government officials assured them that the historic guarantee regarding conscience would be respected. Since the church was still in a strong position to enforce compliance, it was not a problem, as it became in World War II. Only one person from the town of Altona entered the Armed Forces.

The Mennonites did respond in support as far as their conscience allowed them. They responded generously to the Red Cross Fund. And after assurances from the government that the bonds which they purchased would go to hospitals and other mercy institutions, they also purchased these.

But nagging doubts were there that the call to conform to the larger society, which was accelerated by the war, could not be stilled. Many people were restless, and talks of emigration began to be heard. The question of control of their own schools, and conscientious objector status, were two primary reasons. Between 1922 and 1926 nearly 1,000 Sommerfelder Mennonites from Manitoba's West Reserve left for the distant Latin American countries of Mexico and Paraguay. Some of the people in Altona joined the exodus to Paraguay. This included the mill owners, the Isaac and David Fehr families. Another prominent businessman, J. J. Priess, later also followed. These, and others leaving, left an impact on the town.



In uniform in 1916, left to right: Abram Funk and Peter Neufeld. Front row: John Buhr, Erdman Buhr, and Abram A. Thiessen.

Facing page: D.W. Friesen and daughter Sarah inside the Friesen store, which also contained the post office and telephone office, in 1916.

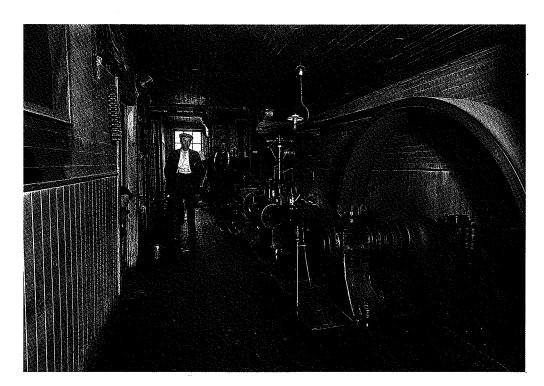


The Altona mill in its heyday in the 1920s was the town's main industry. This photo shows the mill built by Peter Braun before the turn of the century, when it was owned by David and Isaac Fehr, after the large threestorey addition had been built.

Mill owners Isaac and David Fehr in the ''machine room'', which housed a steam engine and this large pulley which drove the mill's various cleaning, grinding, and other machinery. At the same time an immigration into Canada took place. These were Mennonite refugees from Russia. From the beginning, many citizens of Altona were involved in this immigration by providing relief goods and cash, both prior to their departure for Canada and in helping them to begin a new life. Hundreds arrived in the years 1923 to 1928. These people were taken into Altona homes. The top priority for the new immigrants was to find work so that they could begin to pay off their travel debts. Many found work on farms, others at such local establishments as the Altona mill, or one of the elevators. Eventually, they were able to establish themselves to a degree. While there were some tensions, on the whole relationships developed positively. Almost all of the area immigrants joined existing churches.

# **Local Government**

In 1919 Altona became an Unincorporated Village District. There was an elected committee of three persons that looked after such matters as the upkeep of roads and sidewalks, the supply of water, heat and light, and the management of a fire department. Since the wooden sidewalks required considerable upkeep, and since more were always needed, the expense could be quite high.



METOWN INTELLE

In 1925 sidewalk labour and construction accounted for 20 per cent of the total budget. Street lights were set up in 1919. The first lighting was coal oil lamps but that was soon switched to gasoline lanterns. A man was hired as a lamplighter. Later on, this was combined with the police constable's job.

In 1922 the Altona committee helped establish the town's first volunteer fire brigade. This was prompted by several serious fires. Also, about the same time, a police constable for the town was appointed. He had numerous responsibilities such as being in charge of sidewalk and road repair, public school janitor and truancy officer. Besides all of these duties, the constable also had to make sure that children were off the streets at curfew time.

The Altona Village Committee financed its operations primarily through tax revenue. Such businesses as pool hall and restaurant licences also provided some additional revenue. The men who filled the positions as councillors were all Mennonites and virtually all were also businessmen.

# The Business Community

The war had given a boost to the economy. Wheat was in great demand in Europe. Good crops at the end of the decade also meant that westerners, as a whole, benefitted. However, there was a slump in the mid 1920s. Since farmers provided Altona with much of its livelihood, the whole community was affected by the state of the farm economy. In 1919 the Canadian Bank of Commerce opened a branch in Altona. It is still there as the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Two dray operations were started. In 1920 ten new homes were built. Between 1914 and 1918 several garages were opened, testifying to the growing importance of the automobile. Farm implement dealerships were also started. There were other enterprises that opened, either during the war or soon afterwards. One of these was the Altona Printery owned and operated by Henry P. Dick. A Chinese restaurant came to town in 1919. Several large general stores changed ownership. The new owners were Jewish merchants, Morris Goldberg and Sam Nitikman.

Around 1927, after a few years of slump, economic conditions in Altona improved, and, for a few years before the depression, there was a flurry of new business activity. Almost all of it related to the changeover from horses to mechanized power. In 1927 the Rhineland Car Company was formed. Prior to this, H. C. Epp had the first car dealership.

During the war, also, both the Sommerfelder and Bergthaler Waisenamts opened offices in Altona. This was an institution "to administer and invest the estates and inherited property of people, especially widows and orphans, in



Mrs. Sudden (left), wife of the owner of the Rhineland Hotel, entertained Mrs. Natalie Riedle, wife of the owner of Riedle's Brewery, about 1915-16.



The Commonwealth store was one of the town's Main St. landmarks. It opened about 1910 and was owned by William Martens until 1917, when it was sold to Mike Nitikman, of Gretna, who shared ownership with Morris Goldberg. Eventually Goldberg became the sole owner. He retained ownership even after he moved to Winnipeg in 1939. The store was torn down in the 1950s. Standing in front of the Commonwealth are employees David Loewen and Abram Hiebert.

an own-trust system." When they became established in Altona, they expanded operations to a Savings and Loan organization. Another finance-related institution, which opened during this period, was the Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company. It specialized in insuring business properties.

#### **Schools**

The Altona Public School continued to grow modestly, along with the population increase. In 1908 a private institution of higher learning, the Mennonite Educational Institute, was founded. Since Gretna also had a similar institution, there was considerable rivalry between the two. The MEI gave the Altona community something it had not had before. It brought many new teachers to the town and gave it a much broader cultural emphasis. However, the problem appeared to be that the southern Manitoba Mennonite community could not support both Gretna and Altona schools. The problem was "solved" when the Altona institution burned down on January 26, 1926. It was never rebuilt.

# Churches

The latter half of the 1910s and the 1920s witnessed a number of significant developments in Altona's church life. The Bergthaler church assumed a position of greater importance within the overall Bergthaler *Gemeinde*. In 1918 the Sommerfelder Church was built, and in the 1920s two smaller fellowships emerged, an MB group and a Jehovah's Witnesses group. Things in the two large Mennonite churches changed slowly. Worship services were traditional and in the German language. The churches still exercised control over the life of their members. Since they constituted the majority in the town, that pretty well set the pattern of conduct and behaviour.

During the '20s a new movement in Christian education invaded southern Manitoba. This resulted in the formation of the Elim Bible School. This was a joint venture of southern Manitoba Mennonite churches. This school was to expand and existed until the 1980s.

# Social Life

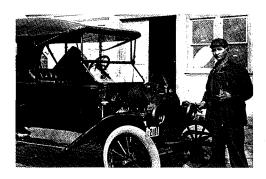
Altona's social life did not undergo any major changes in the last half of the 1910s and the 1920s. But there were some changes. A dramatic society was formed in 1926. Curling came to Altona in 1927. Some of the new things, such





Morris Goldberg was a prominent merchant in Altona in the 1920s and '30s.

The home of the D.W. Friesen family in 1915 was located on what is now 4th Ave. NW. Standing at the door is Mrs. John P. Braun, and beside the house are Margaret Hiebert (the Friesens' maid), Mrs. D.W. Friesen, her daughter Agatha, Ben K. Braun (in dark suit), and David K., Margaret, and John K. Friesen.



Altona mechanic, J.P. Harder, tunes up the engine of this Model T Ford. Automaker Henry Ford used to say his cars were available in any color as long as it was black.

as the pool and billiard hall, the beer parlour, and the theatre, were frowned upon by the churches. In general, participation in Altona's recreational and cultural life was somewhat limited. Except for the occasional hockey game, the literary or the drama program, there was no real activity that attracted widespread community involvement. The 1930s would witness a change.

There was one development which speeded the passage of the traditional way of life in Altona. This was the technological transformation within rural Canada. The automobile and the telephone brought the outside world to the resident's doorstep. This was evidenced by the establishment of the car dealerships in Altona. It made the community much more mobile. Telephone services, also, were expanded. All pointed to a new way of life in the town.

# Conclusion

For the people of Altona, the years 1914 to 1929 offered new opportunities and expanding horizons. The war and its aftermath brought about a new consciousness of the world outside. They responded in support of war victims in Europe. This was the beginning of participation in the ministry of compassion, which was to become world-wide. The town's elevation to the status of an Unincorporated Village District, gave the people a chance to try their hand at self-government.

The late 1910s and early 1920s were generally serious times. The international crisis, the emigration and immigration of large numbers of Mennonites, and the post-war economic slump, all served to make the Altona people more contemplative about life than they had been earlier. Things began to get better, economically, in the late 1920s. There was a period of relative prosperity. People were not ready for what happened at the end of the 1920s, namely, the economic crash, and the ensuing depression period, but that is a story for the next chapter.

Information for this chapter has been taken from: *Altona* by Esther Epp-Tiessen, *In Search of Utopia* by E. K. Francis, *The R.M. of Rhineland* by Gerhard Ens, and *Adventure in Faith* by H. J. Gerbrandt.

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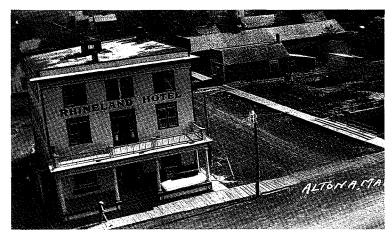


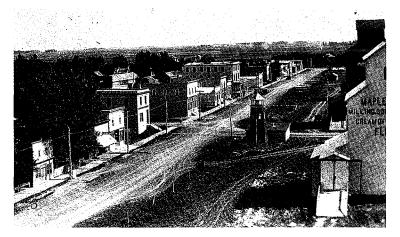
A group of Altona men (and a small girl) posed for this picture about 1916 in front of A.D. Friesen's harness shop, which occupied the left side of the building, and Fiterman's store, which occupied the right side. The man in the wheelchair is Henry P. Dick, who owned the local printing shop.

Looking south on Main St. in 1916. The utility poles along the street carried only telephone lines. The Bell Telephone Company extended lines to Altona around 1900 but the lines strung from roof to roof were so flimsy and so often in disrepair that by 1907 there were only 10 subscribers. Manitoba Government Telephones took over in 1907 and service improved thereafter. The first electric lights did not make their appearance until 1927, when G.G. Serkau built a generator out of an old car motor to supply lights for the curling rink. This phenomenon was so fascinating to Altonans that they often went just to look at this wonder. On November 2, 1931, the Rhineland council gave permission to Abram J. Friesen, who owned a generator, to experiment with a number of electric street lights. At the end of November he was hired at \$2 each per month to keep seven street lights lit in spring, winter and fall. The long days of summer didn't require artificial light. Friesen also provided electricity to some homes - but only during the evenings, and on Monday and Tuesday morning for washing and ironing. All that changed when the Manitoba Power Commission brought in power lines in 1935.

Taken from the highest elevations in Altona, namely the cupolas of the grain elevators, these photos show Altona's business section and neighboring residential streets of the period. (1) Looking north along Main St. (2) Across Main St. from the grain elevators stood the imposing threestorey Rhineland Hotel, now the site of the Rhineland Car used car lot. (3) Looking south along Main Street before



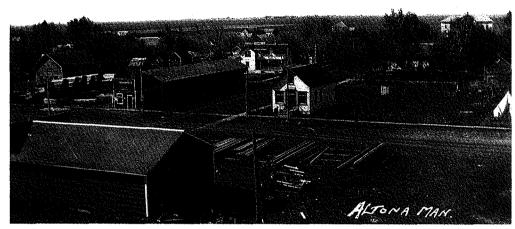


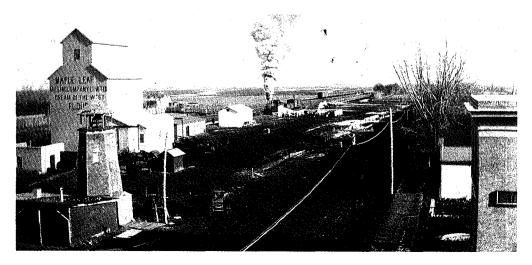


1928, when the Maple Leaf elevator was sold to Federal Grain. Operator of the elevator was P.J. Braun. (4) The most northerly two blocks of Main St. indicate that business was brisk in Altona (judging from the cars parked along the street and the horses and buggies at the hitching posts on the other side).









(5) Likely taken at the same time as Photo 4, this picture shows the railway south past Old Altona village to Gretna. The CPR station is shown in the foreground and part of Altona's residential district in the background. (6) Taken about 1916, this photo shows the southeast section of Altona. The small white building at centre later served as the village office and stood at the present site of the Co-op lumber yard. 4th Avenue NW extends from lower left to top right of the photo with the MEI building in the distance at the end of the street, where the West Park School now stands. (7) Probably taken in the mid-1920s. In the background a train appears to be loading cattle at the stock corral, which was located where the Elephant Brand fertilizer depot later stood.

Altona's first printer was Henry P. Dick, who operated a printery and bicycle shop in spite of being deaf and confined to a wheelchair. This interior view of Dick's business premises contains the paraphernalia of an early print shop, plus bicycle tires on the wall give evidence of its function of a bicycle shop as well. Paul Hansen sits at the typewriter.



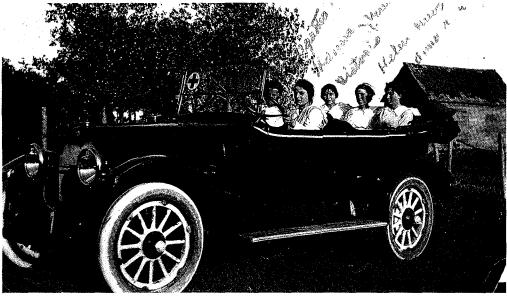
Peter E. Dueck (about 1915) behind the wheel of his new Model T.





Mrs. Isaac K. Fehr (left) and her children, together with Mr. and Mrs. B.J. Klippenstein and their son, Menno, on a picnic in 1915.





Students of the Mennonite Educational Institute in 1916-17 posed for this picture in front of their school.

About to embark for a spin in the country in Adam Neumann's 1918 Buick are, left to right: Agatha Neufeld, Hanna Neumann, Victoria Neumann, Helen Neufeld, and Anna Neufeld.

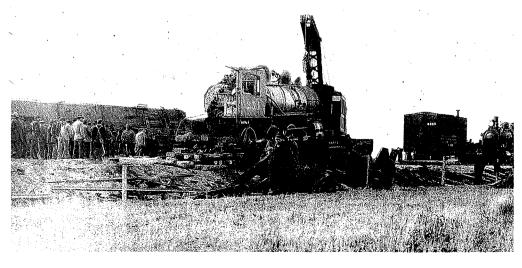
A group of Altona children in 1916, left to right, back row: Neta Hamm, Margaret Friesen, Agatha Striemer, Toots Schwartz. Front row: Mary Schwartz, Anne Friesen, John K. Friesen, and David K. Friesen.



These four buddies dressed up in western costume had this picture taken in 1917. Left to right, back row: John P. Kehler and Jacob P. Klassen. Front: Jacob P. Kehler and Peter Braun.

A train derailment at the Altona switch in 1919 caused a great deal of excitement and brought out the village's populace to see how CPR crews would bring this locomotive back on the tracks.









Before incorporation as a village in 1946, Altona's municipal affairs were handled by the council of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland. RM council members in 1916 were, left to right: Peter Kroeker, Henry Penner, A. Sawatzky, Henry J. Friesen, Isaac Hildebrand, A.P. Hiebert, and H.H. Hamm.



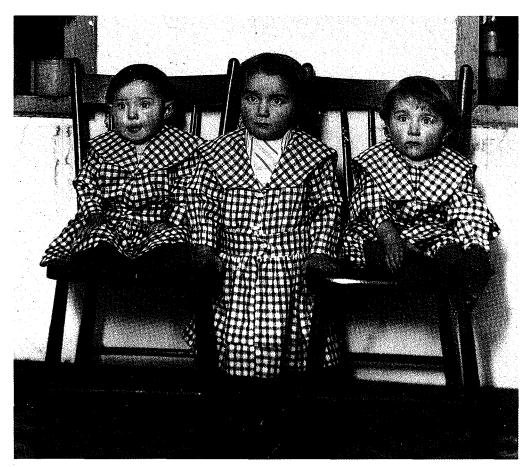
This picture of the Kleinstadt school and some of the students was taken in 1918, six years after the building had been purchased from the Bergthaler Church. A new church was built in Altona, and the former one became a school and teacherage.

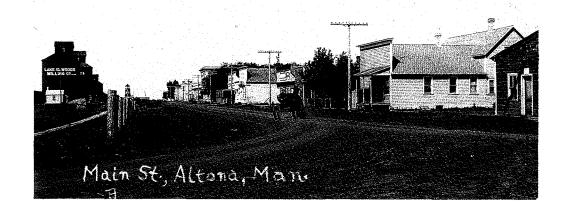
Buffalo Creek just west of Altona was a favorite haunt for young people in the summer time. In 1919, J.G. Neufeld took this picture of his Sunday school class at the creek. Their boat hardly looks seaworthy, and overloaded to boot, but with that crowd they probably never got out of the mud.

Two Tinas and a George pose for the camera in 1918. Left to right: Tina Kehler, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jake Kehler; Tina Kehler, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kehler, and George, son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kehler.



Back from a successful rabbit hunting trip in 1919 are, left to right: C.C. Bergmann, Thomas Sawatzky and Henry Mohr.





Looking north along Main St. from Centre Ave. in the 1920s.



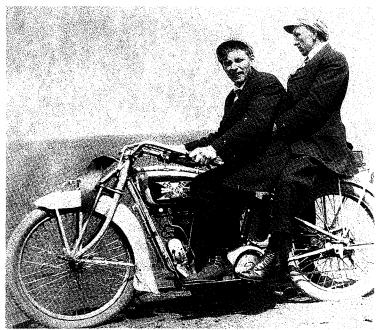
Prominent Altona couple, Mr. and Mrs. John Schwartz, are shown here with their children, Ed and Toots.

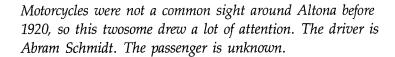


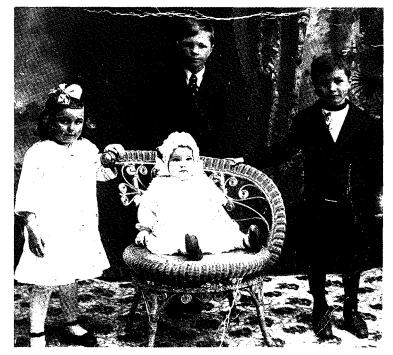
This wedding photo of Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Thiessen shows the wedding apparel worn by Altona bridal couples in 1919.

Teacher Susie (Loewen) Heppner with her school class about 1919.









Children of the John P. Braun family: Mary, Elma, Ben, and Henry.





The view in 1920 looking west on College Ave. (now 4th Ave. NW). The MEI is at the end of the street, where West Park School now stands. The house on the left is the D.W. Friesen residence. Perhaps the man on the wooden sidewalk is the noxious weeds inspector.

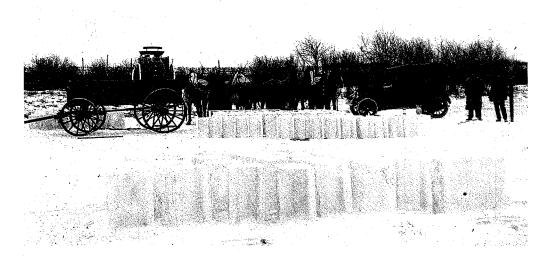


Enjoying a cookout at the Jacob H. Braun farm near Lowe Farm are Mrs. David Loewen and her son, Al, and Mrs. Braun.

Anna Peters with her Grade 1 class in 1920-21. The first two boys in the front row are Peter Doell and Bill Berg.

In the winter Buffalo Creek was a source of ice that was cut and stored for melting as water was needed.

Blocks of ice shown here will be delivered to Altona homes and farms in the area.

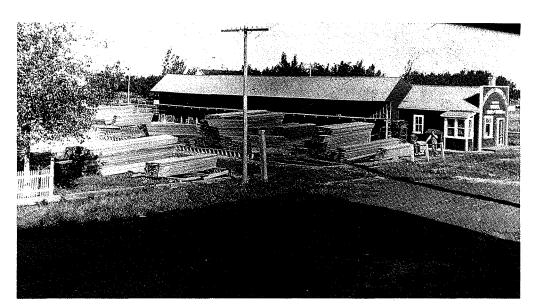




Local boys gather for a game of shinny on a homemade rink. Shinny takes on its own meaning for the goalie in the background, who stands his ground without even the protection of Eaton's catalogues for his legs. In the foreground in this two-on-one attack is Dave Harder. His right winger is John K. Friesen.



Blocks of ice are cut by hand and then wrestled out of the water.



Following the first World War a measure of considerable prosperity came to Altona. In 1920, for instance, 10 new homes were built. The lumber business shown here was owned by John Schwartz, who, in the early 1920s, sold it to Henry A. Thiessen. It was located at the corner of what is now 4th Ave. NW and 1st St. NW.



G.G. Neufeld, teacher at the Mennonite Educational Institute in its early years and principal of the Altona public school from 1918 to 1925, poses with a group of Altona students before he became principal of the Gretna school. Left to right, back row: Abe Penner, Cornie Sawatzky, Ed Sawatzky, G.G. Neufeld, Herman Dick, Cornie Wiebe, Abe G. Friesen, and Isaac Zacharias. Middle row: Sadie Epp, Justina Penner, Susie Epp, Lena Remple, Susan Harms, and Susie Fehr. Front row: Abe Doell, Abe Zacharias, Diedrich Loewen, and Dave Harder.



Before the MEI burned down in 1926, its main purpose was to prepare and train students for teaching in Mennonite schools. This class at the MEI in about 1920 is comprised of Mennonite teachers enrolled in a summer session at the school. Older readers will likely be able to identify some of their teachers from that period.

Fire again struck in the heart of the Altona business district in 1921, levelling the P.P. Dick garage, Joe Henry's cafe, Philip Goodman's grocery store, and Dr. Breidenbach's office.



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G.G. Neufeld surrounded by students from his Grade 8 class in 1922. Left to right, back row: Tina Gerbrandt, Susie Unger, Mary Penner, Susie Kehler, Annie Nikkel, Lena Goodman, Eva Dyck, Nick Neufeld, Henry Wiebe, John Roscoe, and Dave Fehr. Second row: Ruby Vogt, Tina Penner, Annie Unrau, Rosie Vogt, Susie Voth, Otto Hamm, and John Kehler. Third row: Mary Dyck, Ben Wiebe, Frank Harder, Ed Sawatzky, Pete Fehr, Diedrich Epp, and Henry Striemer. Front row: Jake Dick, Bruno Roscoe, and Erdman Fehr. Mr. Neufeld was a teacher at the MEI in its early years, from where he moved to the Altona public school as its principal from 1918 to 1925. He then became the principal at Gretna and subsequently was appointed an inspector of schools by the provincial Department of Education. His jurisdiction included all the schools in the municipalities of Rhineland, Stanley, and Pembina and the towns and villages inside their borders.

The two tracks leading east along what is now Fourth Ave. NE from Main St. indicates its secondary importance in Altona in the early 1920s. The Bank of Montreal building was constructed in 1921 and was occupied only briefly by the B of M. The Canadian Bank of Commerce, which had opened a branch in Altona in 1919, moved into the building and occupied it until the early 1970s.



Young women posing for their picture in 1920 are, left to right, standing: Sarah Striemer, Alice Goodman, and Sarah Fehr. Seated: Nora Vogt and Eva Dyck.





Brothers Ted and Ray Friesen in new sailor suits; very fashionable in the mid-1920s.



The H.A. Thiessen children, Susie, Abe, and Helen, pose in front of the family car in 1926.



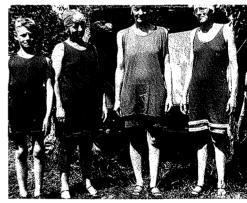
Standing, left to right: Anne Fehr, David Harder, Henry Fehr, Mrs. I.K. Fehr. Seated: W.B. Fehr and Tina Fehr. No names are recorded for the family pets.



Clothing styles of the 1920s are shown in this picture of Mrs. David Loewen (left) and a group of her friends.

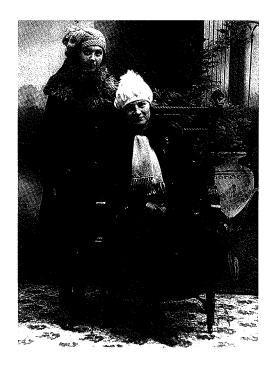


During the prosperous 1920s Altona families travelled to Winnipeg Beach for holidays. This group includes Mrs. D.H. (Sarah) Reimer, standing, D.H. and John Reimer and their sister, Beth (Mrs. P.L. Dick), Mrs. H.M. Friesen and her children, Randolph and Verna, as well as Dorothy and Mary Yoerger.



Al Loewen and his mother, Mrs. David Loewen, pose with cousins Mary Klassen and Tina Rempel, in the swimwear of the day. The cotton suits fit fairly well when dry but clung and stretched to outrageous proportions when wet.

Helen Siemens (centre) with members of her group of Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT).



Dressed against the severe Manitoba winter but still looking wonderfully chic in 1925 are Margaret Friesen (left) and Sarah Fehr.





Young people in the 1920s enjoyed strolls along the railway tracks on Sunday afternoons, often to the village, and sometimes as far as Gretna or Rosenfeld. These six young women were on such a walk when this photo was taken in 1922. Left to right: Neta Hamm, Margaret Friesen (Loewen), Anne Stobbe (Klassen), Helen Reimer, Sarah Striemer (Reimer), and Beth Reimer (Dick).



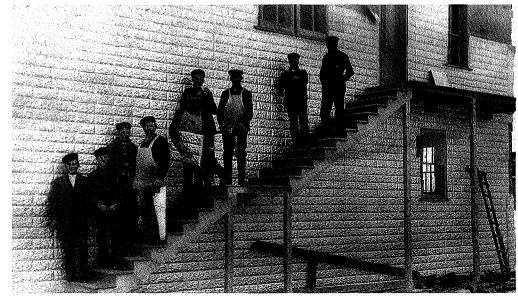
After World War I the pressure was on the Manitoba government to change the Public Schools Act in a way that would enhance quicker assimilation of ethnic groups other than British Canadians. Many of these groups had taken advantage of the 1897 amendments that permitted school boards to provide instruction in a language other than English if parents of at least 10 children asked for it. The Old Colony Mennonites were quick to resist these laws and beginning in 1922 many left their homes and emigrated to Mexico - 3,200 of them, which constituted 64 per cent of the total. Since Altona was not located in an Old Colony area, it was not affected by this kind of emigration until a few years later when almost a thousand Sommerfeld people left. They had shown a greater willingness to comply with the government's wishes and were willing to run English schools as long as they could maintain control of them and teach a church-directed curriculum. When this was turned down they began to plan their exodus. As early as 1920 Altona businessman J.J. Priess, together with a New York lawyer, Samuel McRoberts, had set the wheels in motion to negotiate with the Paraguayan government for settlement

there. By 1926 plans were complete and 357 Sommerfelders, together with 1,201 Chortizers from the East Reserve and 227 Bergthalers from Saskatchewan emigrated to that South American country that year and in 1927. This emigration affected Altona directly, since it included several families from Altona. A special CPR train left Altona station November 24, 1926, with 17 West Reserve families, together with all the tools, implements, furniture, and other paraphernalia that would be scarce in Paraguay. Among them were mill owners Isaac and Anna Fehr and their children. The following year, on April 13, another contingent of 34 West Reserve families left Altona for Paraguay. Included in this group were David and Susan Fehr, who had owned the mill together with his brother Isaac. Priess opened an office in Altona from where he would look after emigration-related affairs, but when the Paraguay settlers asked him to join them and help them with legal matters he did so. He eventually died in Buenos Aires. Photo shows a contingent of Mennonites leaving the Altona CPR station on the first leg of their emigration to Paraguay.

The wedding of David D. Stobbe and Anne Loewen on September 19, 1926, was a memorable event in the community. The wedding took place the same day that David Schulz was ordained as bishop, and many of the audience from the ordination service stayed over for the wedding, since word had got out that there would be attendants, and organ music, and this was unusual in Altona at that time. The wedding party included, left to right, front: Flower girls Mary Stobbe and Dorothy Loewen. Back row: Bridesmaids Mary Loewen and Sadie Epp, the bride and groom, Groomsmen Otto Hamm and Peter B. Fehr. The total cost of the wedding was \$30.



Business activity slowed during the mid-1920s but picked up again around 1927. Here a group of local carpenters pause to have their picture taken during the construction of the Richman & Schiffer store (later the Altona Coop). Carpenters and their friends are: Peter Gerbrandt, Peter Loeppky, Jacob D. Harder, John Schimnowski, Cornelius Funk, Peter Rempel, John Schwartz, Mr. Spandier, and Karl Schimnowski.







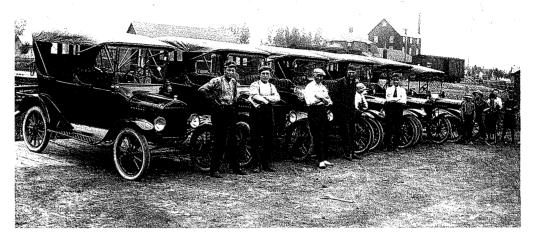
Present at Percy Goldberg's seventh birthday party are, left to right: Percy, Marjorie German, Stan Goldberg, Richard Driedger, Harold German, and Ted Friesen.



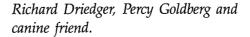
Altona businessman Abe N. Braun at the age of 13 months in 1927 showing his affection for the family cat.

Two of the leading families in the 1920s were, at left, the Wrights (bank manager), and the L.P. Yoergers (businessman).

The first dealership exclusively for automobiles was the Rhineland Car Co. Ltd., which was formed in 1927 by five shareholders, Philip Schuppert, Dr. Mackenzie, and Isaac Coblentz, all of Gretna, and Arthur German and G.G. Serkau, a lawyer, from Altona. P.L. Dick was their manager. Prior to their official opening they showed a film at the Altona Theatre showing the new Model A Fords. The advertising proved so effective that within six weeks of the opening they had sold 16 of the new cars. By the end of the first year they had sold 30 new cars and 12 used ones. The next year sales rose to 35 new and 28 used vehicles. In 1931 their premises had become too small and a new garage was built. Before Rhineland Car, garages had been operated by John H.P. Kehler (probably the first) in 1914, followed by H.C. Epp (the first dealer) and brothers Peter P. and Abram Dick. Kehler, Epp and the Dicks sold cars as a sideline to implements. Epp sold the Durant, the Dicks sold Chryslers and Nash cars for a while, and the Massey-Harris dealer later took on Chevrolets, introducing the first one in Altona in 1928. Even J.J. Priess, who owned the Altona Machinery Company, would bring in the occasional shipment of cars to sell. Shown here with a shipment of Model T Fords are, left to right: H.F. Wiebe, J.P.H. Kehler, Peter Hiebert, P.L. Dick, and H.C. Epp, plus a few young boys whose interest must have been peaked by this splendid line-up of new cars.









Henry P. Kehler at the age of eight handsomely outfitted for church. Behind him is some typical furniture one would have found in an Altona living room.



Bessie Goodman's parents were merchants in Altona during the 1920s. She married and moved to the United States, where she now resides in Rockville, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C.



In 1927 four young men around town were, left to right: Henry E. Friesen, Al Loewen, Dave G. Friesen, and Edgar Braun.





A youthful Bill (Wm. J.) Kehler practises on his guitar. He would later join Henry Funk, cello; Jacob Funk, guitar; Frank Kehler, violin, and John Kehler, violin, in a string quintet that performed at weddings and dances as well as provided musical interludes at Isaac Penner's motion picture theatre while film reels were changed. They played light music at public performances, but classical music in private.

Left to right: Peter Falk, David Wiebe (?), Henry Toews, Abram J. Kehler, George Falk, and Abram Toews ready for a Sunday afternoon bicycle tour.

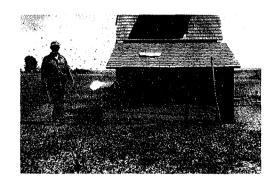


# 1930-1939: The Depression

n 1929, and the ensuing years, a number of events occurred which plunged the western world into a severe economic depression. Canada was part of this, and western Canada was particularly hard hit. Altona was no exception. First the stock crash occurred in 1929. The western Canadian economy was built on one crop, namely, wheat. This was also the case in southern Manitoba. The market for wheat collapsed. Then, at the beginning of the 1930s, a very dry period set in which lasted a number of years. Wheat production plummeted. Then came the grasshoppers. The plague lasted several years. Any one of these events by itself would have been a disaster. All three occurring, at least partially simultaneously, caused an economic setback that was unusual even for the Mennonite people who had endured all sorts of crises in their history.

Altona, of course, was dependent on the surrounding farming community for its livelihood. Therefore, it suffered as well. The standard of living dropped. Businesses went bankrupt. It would take many years before recovery would bring the economy back to the 1929 level.

But the response of the people in the Pembina Triangle to this catastrophe was unique. In part, their sense of community and reliance on mutual aid helped them in this. A key factor was that both country and town united to try and solve the problems. Early in the 1930s, farmers and townspeople got together and organized the Rhineland Agricultural Society. This was undoubtedly the most noteworthy example of the resourcefulness of the Altona area residents during the Depression. They quickly recognized that farmers must move away from a one-crop economy and diversify. During the 1930s there was a gradual conversion from the one-crop to multi-crop economy. By 1950, the tremendous variety of crops grown within Rhineland Municipality would demand that the municipality have its own agricultural representative. The Society further was



Grasshoppers were only one of the hardships farmers and townspeople experienced in the Dirty Thirties. Here A.M. Wiebe walks among a horde of grasshoppers in the summer of 1934. What appears like grass in the foreground is grasshoppers. There was no grass left.

Facing page: This photo of a young "doctor" doing a repair job on his playmate's doll won first prize in a photo contest conducted by the Family Herald and Weekly Star in 1938. The photo was taken by William J. Kehler. The children are his niece, Tina Kehler (Abel), and nephew, Peter K. Wiebe.

Although the conversion of manure to fuel was not new to the Depression, it regained popularity in those years for economic reasons. In the 1930s a machine was invented that greatly improved on the original procedure of spreading the manure on the ground in a 10 to 12 inch layer and then having horses tramp it down and harrow it before the family stamped it down (usually barefoot) to give it a smooth finish. After a period of drying, it was then cut into squares with a spade and set on edge for drying. Gerhard John Ens, in his history of the Rhineland Municipality, describes the process in the 1930s: "This machine enabled the whole process to be accomplished in one operation. The manure was fed into a hopper, an auger carried it along a tube to the other end where it emerged in a continuous ribbon. One man with a long-handled cutter, cut the stream in squares and a crew of men with pitchforks picked up the squares in turn and set them on edge on the ground for drying." This kind of fuel was a valued commodity and was even mentioned as partial payment in some school teachers' salary agreements.

instrumental in establishing agriculture clubs, especially among young people. The annual fair in Altona became a big attraction with exhibits and the usual other drawing cards. In 1936 the Society also established the Rhineland Agricultural Institute which sponsored short courses for farmers right from the start. This was the first big step in a grass roots turnaround in the Altona community.



# The Rhineland Consumers Co-operative

The next step towards becoming their own managers was the formation of consumer co-operatives. In 1931, the Rhineland Consumers Co-operative was formed. They sold gas, oil, grease, and binder twine – items which farmers needed in large quantities. From a modest beginning, it grew to have a wide base of membership covering the municipalities of Rhineland and part of Stanley. Later on, a general store, a co-operative hatchery, machine shop and lumber yard would be added. All of these businesses were tied together and served both the rural area and the town.

#### The Waisenamt

As a result of the economic collapse in the early '30s, the business failure that probably shook the community most, however, was the collapse of the Bergthaler and Sommerfelder *Waisenamts*. Both of these institutions became insolvent. For those people who had savings in the *Waisenamts* saw them almost entirely wiped out. Coming as it did in the midst of the worst depression, the collapse of the *Waisenamts* was for many individuals the straw that broke the camel's back.

## The Altona Credit Union Society

Again, as a response to the vacuum that was created by the collapse of the *Waisenamts*, interested people with vision during the winter of 1937-38, organized the Altona Credit Union Society. Although the organization was new, the ideas incorporated were also present in the old mutual aid systems of the Mennonites. Again, both farmers and townspeople combined to form the credit union. The purpose was to provide consumer loans to people who could not ordinarily get credit. The Society grew steadily, right from the beginning. Today, it is one of the largest organizations of its kind in the province.

#### **Business**

The effects of the Depression had a direct impact on Altona's business community. Almost all businesses noticed a visible decline in sales and some either closed or went bankrupt. Hardest hit, ironically, were the firms which had thrived in the 1920s, namely, the car and implement sales and service outfits. Service industries that repaired farm machinery and automobiles, fared better. Lumber dealers also had a hard time. Most of the grocery and general stores fared somewhat better than more specialized businesses. A few of them had difficulties as well. A new store, D. Loewen and Son, opened in 1931 and maintained itself. In the 1930s, also, A. D. Friesen opened an insurance office in Altona, and also assisted in the transfer of land deals and income tax returns, and sold real estate.

It was in the 1930s that D. W. Friesen's began to branch out into the fields of school supplies and printing. Although progress was gradual, both departments picked up momentum in the latter half of the 1930s.

## **Town Administration**

Throughout the 1930s the Village District's annual budget hovered around \$1,500, about half of what it had been in the late 1920s. First to suffer were roads and sidewalks, even though some of them had not been in the best of condition previously. Even the salaries of the two village employees, the secretary-treasurer and the police constable, were reduced. Unemployed persons were hired to do the kind of public works where costs could be borne by the municipal, provincial, and federal governments. One of the major projects was the construction of a well and a number of ponds to insure an adequate water supply. Another major unemployment relief project was the construction of the road from Rosenfeld to Gretna, later known as Highway 30.



The front steps of the Bank of Commerce was a favourite gathering place for Altona youth. This photo taken in 1930 shows Tien Harder (Funk), Anne Friesen (Loewen), and Alma Braun (Hamm) in the front row. Others in the photo include John K. Friesen, Corny Sawatzky, Dave Harder, Frank Harder, Beth Reimer (Dick), and John Reimer.

For two years after 1926, the Dramatic Society enjoyed considerable success. Dramatic performances were presented in Isaac Penner's livery stable, which he had turned into a movie theatre. (For 35 cents you could watch up to a dozen westerns on a Saturday afternoon, but a shortage of boys with 35 cents caused Penner to close the theatre and turn to Massey Harris implements instead.) The Dramatic Society ran into some church opposition even in the late '20s when it was under the guidance of public school teacher Jacob G. Neufeld, but in 1933 a drama called "The Spooky Tavern" was denounced by the Bergthaler church ministerial. It was about ghosts and goblins and was considered obscene and indecent. To make things even worse, some of the players were church members and baptism candidates. Although none of them nor their parents showed any remorse, the society closed shop.

#### **Schools**

The Altona Public School and its employees probably suffered more because of unpaid taxes than any other local institution. Teacher salaries were reduced, and van transportation from the village was terminated except on very cold days. The 1931-32 school year was shortened from ten to eight months.

#### Churches

During the 1930s the churches in Altona, particularly the Bergthaler church, felt the winds of change. For many years the church had stood essentially unchallenged as the dominant institution in Altona. But this was no longer the case. Improved transportation and communication had increased the community's contact with the broader society. First of all, other groups began to come in as well as ministers from the larger Mennonite constituency in North America. This resulted in a renewal in Altona, and church membership grew during that time. But there was also concern about other groups which used the English language only.



#### Social Life and Recreation

Tension between the "sacred" and "secular" was also present within the cultural and recreational realms of Altona life during the 1930s just as it had been earlier on. But the depression years witnessed an upswing in recreational activity, partly due to the poor economic situation. People had more time on their hands but very little money. In the area of sports, tennis, curling, hockey, and skating increased in popularity. Music also received a real boost during the Depression. Several teachers came out from Winnipeg to instruct in instrumental playing, and even organized small orchestras.

In 1933, K. H. Neufeld, of Winkler, was asked to form a choir in Altona. This choir was to be the forerunner of others and helped to inculcate good mu-

sical tastes in the community. Another man, Lou Erk, made a great contribution to music appreciation in Altona. He was the first druggist in Altona – a quiet, retiring man, who had a great knowledge of music and a wonderful record collection. That left a great impact on many people in the community.

# The Coming of Electricity

One of the major significant events in the '30s was the coming of electricity to Altona. It began in 1931, when Abram J. Friesen began to furnish street lighting and a small amount of power to residents. In 1934 the Manitoba Power Commission offered to extend hydro lines to the town. That technological advancement brought Altona into the modern age.

## Health Care

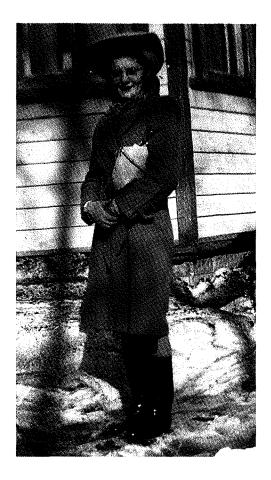
Another significant event was the establishment of a hospital in Altona in 1936. This was a private institution supported entirely by the community, including voluntary organizations. The hospital building was housed in the former H. C. Epp residence, which was renovated. To balance their budget, the hospital sold contracts which covered all services for an entire family. This was an early form of health care insurance and was retained until the hospital was incorporated as a public institution in 1945.

## Conclusion

The 1930s was a difficult time for the town as well as for the rest of the country. Things began to improve towards the end of the decade. Agricultural prices and yields improved. As a result, farmers were buying machinery and townspeople as well began to purchase major items. New houses were constructed, and others renovated and painted. A new public school building was built at the end of the decade.

But despite the fact that community organizations had pulled up the people by their own bootstraps economically, progress was limited as long as the rest of the country had not recovered to the 1929 level. Nevertheless, the lessons learned by the Altona people during the Depression would have lasting significance. Not only would the concepts of diversified farming and economic co-operation continue to be relevant, but increasingly townspeople would take the lead in insuring a sound future for the rural community.

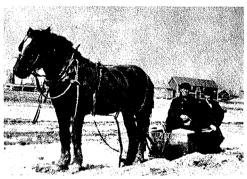
Information for this chapter has been taken from: *Altona* by Esther Epp-Tiessen, *In Search of Utopia* by E. K. Francis, and *Adventure in Faith* by H. J. Gerbrandt.



Marian Toews was a telephone operator in the 1930s when the Manitoba Telephone System's switchboard was in the D.W. Friesen home.

Brumtopp mummers were an integral part of celebrating New Year's. A troupe of young men dressed in costumes would make the rounds of homes in Altona and the villages. The Brumtopp was an old rainbarrel or keg with a swatch of horsehair extending from its cowhide bottom. By rubbing the horsehair between thumb and forefinger they could produce a strange loud sound. They would keep up the noise until they were invited inside for cake or "portzeltje", a favorite New Year's cookie in most Mennonite homes. Brumtopp mumming was an old Mennonite custom that dated back to Prussia.

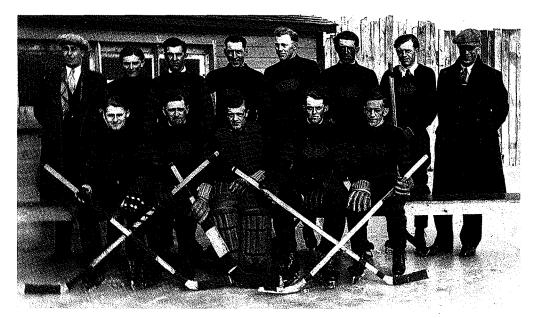




Phil Hiebert and A.D. Friesen pause on Altona's Main St. during the Dirty Thirties to have their picture taken in a typical winter conveyance of the day.



Children of Altona's prominent citizens photographed in front of the Nitikman store in 1931. Left to right, back row: Dorothy Yoerger, Jean Yoerger, Harold German, and Percy Goldberg. Second row: Helen Yoerger, Teddy Friesen, Raymond Friesen, Stanley Goldberg, and (?). Front row: Eileen Goldberg, Betty Yoerger, Eileen Reimer, (?), Allan Nitikman, and (?).





The Altona Cubs hockey team was in its prime in the 1930s. At one time they played in a league which included Gretna, Sommerfeld, and Neubergthal. Games against teams from Plum Coulee, Rosenfeld, and the Roseau Indian Reserve were also arranged from time to time. The boards around the outdoor rink were shipped in from sawmills east of the Red River. The changing shack was built by Russ A. Mantey, manager of the Corona Lumber Yard, who also served as referee for many of the games in Altona. Left to right, standing: Andy Anderson (coach), D.K. Friesen, Jake Penner, Ben Hamm, Died. Loewen, P.N. Friesen, H.H. Epp, R.A. Mantey (referee). Front row: Alfred Loewen, John Fehr, Ed Epp, John N. Friesen, and Dave Harder.

This group of Altonans was likely visiting the Morden Experimental Station greenhouse when this picture was taken of Mr. and Mrs. H.A. Thiessen and their three children, Helen, Abe, and Susie, as well as the first Mrs. P.E. Braun and her children, Helen and Elmer. Mr. Braun was probably the photographer.

A group of Altona women in 1933. Left to right, standing: Mrs. Henry Driedger, Sarah Reimer, Anne Stobbe, Neta Eamer, Mrs. Art German, Mary Driedger, Fanny Rabinovich, and Sadie Epp. Sitting: Sara Nitikman, Miss Robinson, Anne Klassen, Marge Hetterley, and Miss Gallagher.

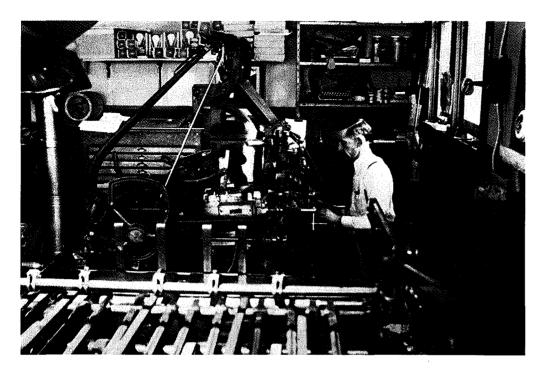


In 1933 John K. Friesen won the singles championship in the Gretna tennis tournament. About the same period, he won the tennis singles crown in three consecutive summer schools at the University of Manitoba.





Pictured here are several Altona Bergthaler Sunday school classes in 1933 with their teachers.





Dave Harder, one of D.K. Friesen's first employees, sets copy for a commercial job on Friesen's first Linotype.



This window achieved considerable popularity because from it the boys could watch the telephone operators at the telephone switchboard, which was located in a front room of the D.W. Friesen residence at that time. Anne Friesen was one of the operators. Al Loewen was a frequenter at the window. They were later married.

Peter Wolfe, as a high school student working part-time, operates a Gordon press in D.K. Friesen's print shop on Main St. A cross-section of Altona's leading businessmen of the 1930s, left to right: A.W. Rempel (blacksmith), J.G. Neufeld (school principal), Fred W. Neufeld (transfer), J.D. Harder (carpenter), H.C. Epp (Ford dealer), David Stobbe (manager of the Sommerfelder Waisenamt), H.H. Hamm (secretary-treasurer of the RM of Rhineland), and A.J. Friesen (owner of Altona's first electric light plant).



This Altona duo of Dave and Frank Harder finds the outdoors to be the best setting for their singing efforts.





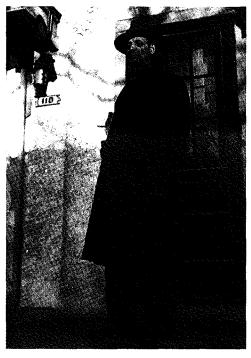
Students of Room III of the Altona Public School in 1934-35.





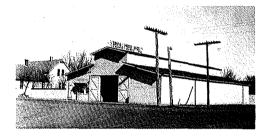
The Altona Tennis Club won the Beaubien Trophy in 1935. Team members shown here are, left to right: David K. Friesen, Mary Stobbe (Friesen), Al Loewen, Ann Friesen (Loewen), John A. Funk, Tien Harder (Funk), and Elizabeth Bergen. John K. Friesen, also a member of the club, took the picture.

Workers building the road from Altona to Rosenfeld (PTH 30) during the 1930s were housed in this tent camp. Local farmers and townspeople also found employment on government projects such as this.



Sam Nitikman was one of several Jewish merchants who owned stores in Altona during the 1930s. He sold his store to the Altona Co-op Service, and the family moved to Winnipeg. Mr. Nitikman died there in 1942 at the age of 49. Two of his sons also died in their 40s – Alan at the age of 42, and Bert, 48. While they lived in Altona, the Nitikman family lived on the top floor of their store.

Peter E. Braun at the coffin of his wife with their children in 1934. Left to right: Elmer, Lena, and William. It was traditional in those years to take a picture like this on the day of the funeral.



The Corona Lumber Yard at the corner of Main St. and Centre Ave. was a result of Beaver Lumber buying out the Winkler Lumber Yard (Altona branch) in 1934. All Beaver-owned yards in Manitoba bore the name Corona. R.A. Mantey had served as manager of Winkler Lumber for nine months before it was sold to Beaver and he remained as manager until he retired in May, 1968. On January 1, 1935, it became Beaver Lumber. The building was dismantled in 1950 and replaced with a new one.





An Altona Bergthaler Church women's group in 1935.



L.P. Yoerger, Altona merchant, sits behind the wheel of his service truck before setting out on a ride around town with his daughters and their friends.



The Rhineland Agricultural Society was formed in 1931 with one of its major purposes to help farmers weather the severe economic depression. One way was to wean farmers away from a one-crop economy. In 1936 the Society established the Rhineland Agricultural Institute to offer short courses. The group shown here is one which would have been enrolled in a surprisingly diverse course of studies. The boys were taught farm accounting, row crops, cereal grains, plant and animal diseases, poultry and livestock, farm electrification, farm machinery and mechanics, and co-ops and credit unions. The girls were instructed in baking, cooking, child care, sewing, and gardening.



Dr. Stephen S. Toni as a young physician. He came to Altona from Sioux Lookout, Ont., in 1938 and served the community until his retirement.



The Bethania Hospital was established in Altona in 1936 in the former residence of the H.C. Epp family. The house had been acquired by the Rural Municipality of Rhineland in lieu of tax arrears. It was sold to the Bethania Hospital Society for \$1. It began operations with 9 beds and soon expanded to 15. The 12-room house was renovated and outfitted with electric lights, since electricity had just come to Altona. The living room became the operating room, and the dining room became the sterilizing room and eating room for the staff. Another large room was the delivery room, and the bedrooms were the patient rooms. Dr. Lambert Breidenbach was the first doctor, and Emilie Klassen was the first registered nurse. Dr. Breidenbach was not qualified to perform surgery so Dr. Stephen S. Toni of Winnipeg was invited to become the second doctor in 1938. In the first year, Dr. Toni performed 29 operations, and in the second year 63. In the first three weeks that the hospital was open five babies were born there. During the first four months patients numbered 51. During 1946 the hospital managed to admit 612 patients and treat a total of 849.



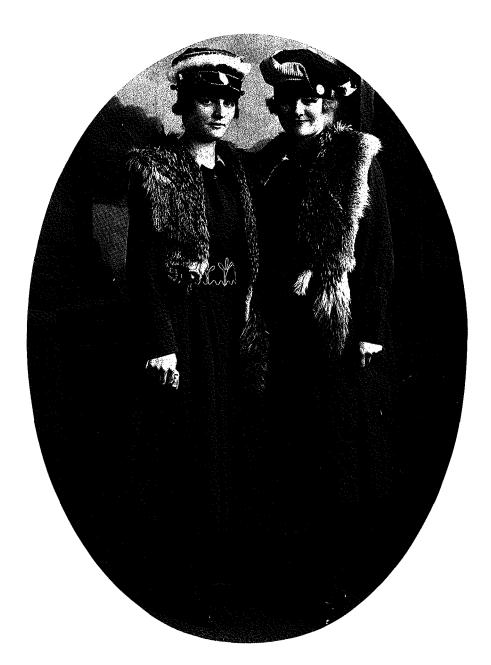


A gasoline engine was blamed for the fire that destroyed the Rhineland Consumers Co-op building, sundry supplies, and equipment valued at \$3,703.46 on July 11, 1936. Among the losses were tires and tubes worth \$67.04; two Massey Harris cream separators worth \$182.00; as well as 4,280 gallons of gasoline worth \$649.16; 593 gallons of kerosene worth \$112.19; 2,301 gallons of distillate worth \$276.22; 380 gallons of oil worth \$186.52, and 850 pounds of grease worth \$74.80. The temperature that day was recorded at 108 degrees F. The storage tanks exploded and burned. Construction of new buildings started the following month at a cost of \$6,000.

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob J. Krueger are shown here on a Sunday afternoon outing. Seated between them is their oldest son, Jake. The identity of the woman in the white apron is not known.



In the mid-1930s Altonans frequently travelled to Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, for holidays. More inclined to pose than to swim are Ann Friesen (Loewen) and Anne Stobbe (Klassen).



These young ladies must have made quite an impression on the young men of Altona. Annie Kehler (left) later married the Rev. David H. Loewen. Agatha Kehler married Andy Anderson, the assistant CPR station agent.





Teenagers of the 1930s, Tien Loewen (Sawatzky) and Tien Harder (Funk) model the teenage style of the day.



Peter J. Braun and David Loewen on the steps of Nitikman's store.

Despite thawing temperatures and slushy roads these players took their street hockey seriously in the spring of 1937. Left to right: Jake Friesen, Richard Driedger, Peter Friesen (goalie), Percy Goldberg, and Barney Bergen. The picture was taken on Main St.

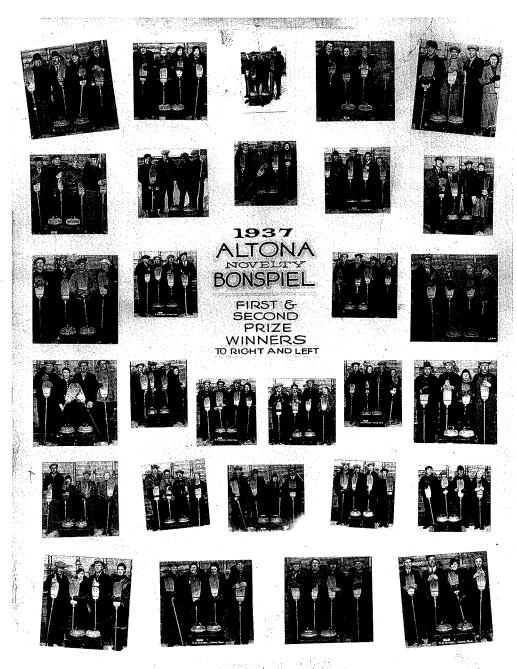


A highlight each January or February was the ice carnival. Young and old dressed up in costumes and headed for the rink. Some ordered costumes from Mallabar's in Winnipeg but mostly they were homemade. Here Jake Hamm models a costume that might well have made its appearance at one of the carnivals.

Curling became very popular during the Depression. When the Altona Curling Club was first formed in 1927 high membership fees had given it an elitist image, but after the stock market crash fees also crashed and became so affordable that many people joined. Bonspiels were common and attracted as many as 25 to 30 rinks. The 1937 bonspiel was such a success that this postcard of the first and second prize winners was printed.

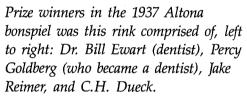


One of the prize-winning rinks in the famous 1937 bonspiel was this foursome. Left to right: Arnold (Drush) Wiebe, Russ Mantey, Jake Neufeld, and Mrs. Frank Kehler.



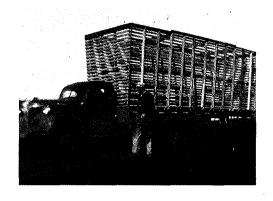
ALIONA 1930-193







Another winning rink from the 1937 bonspiel. Left to right: Dr. Lambert Breidenbach, Harry Yee, Henry H. Epp, and Mary Neufeld.

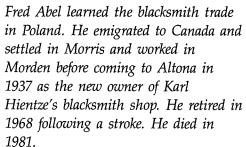


In the late 1930s local farmers diversified into feed corn production. Russ Mantey, manager of the Beaver Lumber yard in Altona, immediately found a role in this new field. He and his crew built corn cribs on the Beaver yard for sale to farmers. Here Fred Neufeld's truck is ready to haul such a crib to an area farm.

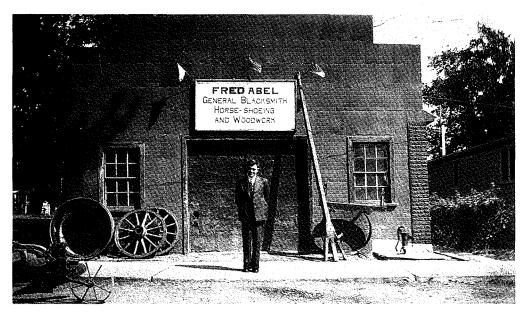


Was April 10, 1938, the day the Mafia came to Altona? No, not really; only the day these four buddies, since they were all dressed up anyway, had their picture taken. Left to right: Richard Driedger, Percy Goldberg, Ted Friesen, and John Loewen.



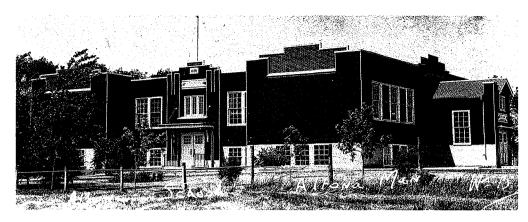


The Rhineland Agricultural Society, which was formed in 1931, joined with the extension service of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture to sponsor farm courses and organize agricultural clubs. Here such a group takes instruction in horse-shoeing from Altona blacksmith Fred Abel.





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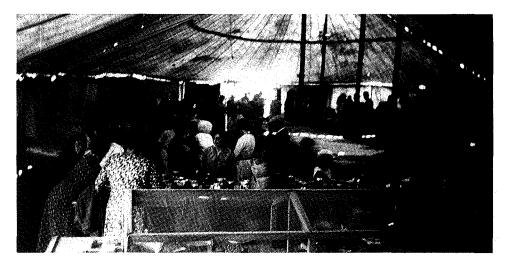


When this five-classroom school was built in 1938 trustees thought they were building for the future, but by 1949 the teaching staff had grown from four to nine and the teachers had given up their staff room for one classroom and the basement auditorium had been temporarily divided for two more.

Teacher Margaret Friesen and her Grades 1 and 2 class in 1939.



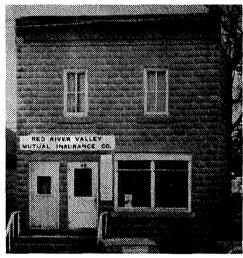
In the 1930s the Rhineland Agricultural Society still held its fall fairs in Altona in a tent.



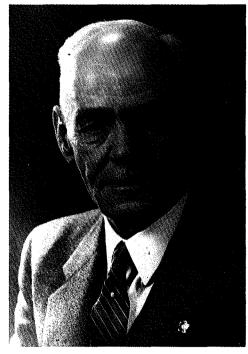
Members of the Bergthaler Church Tabea Naehverein in 1939.







The Mennonite Mutual Fire Insurance Society incorporated as the Red River Mutual Insurance Co. in 1941 and moved from Plum Coulee to Altona into what had been the Bergthaler Waisenamt building. When Red River Mutual built new offices on 4th Ave. NE, this building on Main St. was converted into two residential suites.



A shipment of new row-crop tractors has been put on display on Main St. in this photo taken in 1940. Businesses from left to right include: part of the Rhineland Hotel, the gas pumps visible behind the sleigh and car belong to Rhineland Car whose sales office is somewhat set back from the street and not visible, Harry Yee's cafe, the John Deere agency belonging to John O. Friesen and Alf Loewen (Gretna), David and Al Loewen's ice cream parlour (they owned the Red & White store and operated the ice cream parlour after hours, from which young Al dispensed ice cream, hot dogs, and soft drinks), the Red & White store, and Jacob J. Krueger's shoe repair shop. The entire block of buildings was destroyed by fire in 1946.

J.J. Siemens is perhaps best known for his co-operative organizing skill in the Altona community. He was educated at the Mennonite Educational Institute and after Normal School in Altona he taught for 10 years. From teaching he took over the family farm just prior to the Depression. He helped organize the Rhineland Agricultural Society in 1931, the Rhineland Consumers Cooperative, and the Co-op Vegetable Oils. He died in 1963 at the age of 67.



# 1940-1949: World War II and Transition

he decade of the 1940s was one of turbulence and unrest. World War II, which had started in 1939, brought the relatively quiet hamlet a series of experiences it hadn't felt in World War I or in the intervening years. In the beginning people reacted very much the way they had 25 years earlier. There was sadness and disappointment at the turn of events. But they soon learned that this war and all that it would bring about would affect them much more than the first World War. The outside world, especially the official one, would have more influence and control over the lives of Altonans. That was their greatest concern. In the area of participation their response was varied. The men, not wishing to perform military service, were required to fulfill alternative service obligations. Quite a few of them opted for active service in the Armed Forces.

Very soon the effects of the war made themselves known: war-related government regulations, food and material shortages, the departure of young men of military age, and the mounting pressure for greater involvement in the war effort.

One of the responses came from a grass roots movement within the church. This was the formation in Altona of the Youth Forum organized in 1943 by a group of Altona young people who wanted a place where they could discuss common concerns. They were not happy with the church's handling of their affairs. The Forum served a number of purposes. Members studied about their Mennonite heritage, classical music, consumer co-ops, and church history through various guest speakers. It provided them with an opportunity to discuss issues about which they had many questions. Other groups formed at this time provided literature for those in alternative service. This was the for-



The National War Finance Committee campaigned repeatedly for financing from the public. Victory Bond drives were common. This ad's Bonds of Freedom promised a return of freedom and 3 per cent interest.

Facing page: Altona's Main St. in the 1940s.



Altona's first town office was the former Sommerfelder Waisenamt building.

mation of the Mennonite Service Foundation and the Mennonite Agricultural Advisory Committee. Both hoped to supplement the work of the church.

Altona Mennonites were definitely more sensitive in World War II than in the first World War to the criticism aimed at them for not defending their country. Many of the accusations, of course, were that many of the young people did not enter the Armed Services. Others, that Mennonite people as a whole were German sympathizers. Most people in Altona made a distinction between cherishing German culture and supporting the political aims of Nazi Germany.

Mennonites in Altona tried to come to terms with what was happening. On the one hand they wanted to maintain their traditional values. On the other hand they also wanted to co-operate where they could in good conscience with the war effort. That co-operation took several forms. One was the purchase of Government Bonds. They had persuaded the authorities to allow them to designate their investments for relief or suffering due to the war. Consequently, most of the bond drives were successful in exceeding quotas set for the community. The other was in the formation and support of relief committees. Both financial and material support for the Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee was encouraged and happened. This organization was affiliated with the Mennonite Central Committee. The clothing depot for the West Reserve was located in Altona. Women's groups also were particularly active in contributing material goods.

#### Altona Incorporates

Altona could have applied for Incorporated Village status much earlier, having reached the required population of 500 already in the late 1920s. However, the coming of the Depression and the slow population growth deferred that decision. During the war, however, the town's population rose from approximately 600 to 1,065. The village committee had come to the conclusion that incorporation could no longer be postponed if the town was to provide its growing population with appropriate services. A petition of 150 signatures was collected, which was then presented to the Municipal Commissioner. An Order in Council was issued in 1945 incorporating the Village of Altona. H. H. Hamm was the first mayor, councillors were John K. Enns, J. J. Friesen, John P. H. Kehler and William H. Hetterley. Frank J. Kehler was hired as secretary-treasurer. Immediately the new council approved a budget of \$25,000, an increase of approximately 400 per cent. Money was urgently needed to catch up on sidewalk, street, and drainage projects that had been postponed for years. Incorporation was



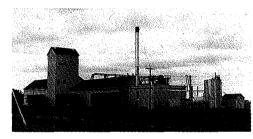
First council of the newly incorporated Village of Altona took office on January 1, 1946, and was comprised of, left to right: William H. Hetterley, J.J. Friesen, H.H. Hamm (mayor), J.K. Enns, Frank J. Kehler (secretarytreasurer), and J.P.H. Kehler.

to enable Altona to grow in an orderly manner, and provide the services that a growing population needed.

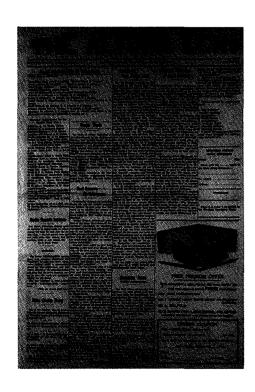
#### Industry

During the war there were a number of shortages that people had to contend with. One of these was vegetable oil. The government encouraged southern Manitoba farmers to grow oil-bearing crops such as sunflower, soybean, and rapeseed and even provided seed. Because the RAS educational program had demonstrated the benefit of diversification in the last decade, local farmers did not hesitate to try new crops. They were particularly attracted to the sunflower crop for a number of reasons. It was well-suited to intertillage, fitted nicely into a rotation scheme, and was a late maturing crop which did not interfere with the harvest of grains and sugar beets. Besides all this, many Mennonite farmers had some prior experience with sunflowers. Their ancestors had grown them in Russia and had brought seeds along with them to Canada. Almost every family grew sunflowers to provide members with roasted sunflower seeds eaten as a snack.

Once the sunflower crops had been grown, the idea occurred to some to process them as well. The idea of building a local seed crushing plant occurred during the winter of 1942-1943. Meetings began to be held and soon there was a lot of interest among farmers for this new venture. Altona was chosen as the site of the plant and the name selected was Co-op Vegetable Oils. A perma-



Co-op Vegetable Oils plant in 1946.



Front page of the Altona Echo Vol. 1, No. 1, founded by D.K. Friesen in January, 1941.

nent board of directors was elected. Two reasons for choosing a local location were freight rates and employment. The latter would provide the basis for a more stable farm economy. Diversification of crops had already proved more beneficial than relying on one crop.

There were plenty of difficulties encountered in the construction of the plant, and procuring machinery. Financing was the main reason. It was difficult to raise money locally and so government guarantees were sought. They were finally secured, but in a limited amount. Despite all these obstacles, CVO came into being. It was the result, largely, of good leadership and community support, including that of the *Altona Echo*. The first year's crop produced a good profit. This encouraged those who had invested to be optimistic about the future. One of the aims the Mennonite Agricultural Advisory Committee had set for itself was the promotion of rural industrialization as a means of creating and maintaining employment in the post-war period. CVO had gone a long way toward realizing that goal. No one knew what CVO's potential was, but the future would vindicate the hopes and dreams of those who had realized the creation of this industry.

#### Commerce

The existing co-ops created during the last decade experienced growth and consolidation during the 1940s. This was especially true for the Altona Co-op Service and the Altona Credit Union Society. In addition, several new co-ops were begun. Altona Co-op Service, started in 1937, bought out Sam Nitikman. This expansion gave the Altona Co-op Service the distinction of being the largest store in town. In 1946, the Co-op amalgamated with both Horndean Co-op and the Rhineland Co-operative Hatchery, making it an even bigger operation.

The Altona Credit Union Society experienced the same kind of phenomenal growth. Membership and assets increased dramatically.

In 1942 a new co-operative was formed, the Rhineland Farmers Co-op Machine Shop. This provided necessary service and also sales to farmers in a larger area.

D. W. Friesen & Sons also expanded, although slowly. One of the new ventures started in the 1940s was the local newspaper, the *Altona Echo*, which was to play an active role in community improvement. It supported new ventures such as CVO and crop diversification. But the *Echo* also offered constructive criticism that drew attention to certain needs, and suggested ways of meeting them.



This building on Main St. housed D.K. Friesen's printery in the 1940s. The right-hand side of the building (with the big windows) contained the linotype and small job presses, while the addition at left provided office space and a place for the Miehle press on which the Echo was printed two pages at a time. The nail kegs in front of the building are full of linotype slugs ready to be shipped to Winnipeg for recasting into "pigs" for re-use in the typesetting process. Standing in the doorway of the vestibule that sheltered the doorway from cold winter winds is Echo reporter, Elizabeth (Isby) Bergen.

The end of the war brought on a new prosperity. New buildings were erected and new businesses opened, such as transfer, machine shops, garages, hardware stores, dry goods and grocery stores. But there were also some novel types of businesses such as a jewellery store, a bicycle and sports goods shop, a funeral home, a feed mill, a hat and dress shop, and a men's wear store.

In 1942, the Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Company located to Altona in the old Bergthaler Waisenamt building.

But there were setbacks. 1946 was the year in which a whole block of Altona's Main St. was destroyed by fire for the second time in 25 years. It was rebuilt by late that summer.

#### Health Care

One of the first of the larger building projects after the war was the Altona hospital. Completed in the summer of 1948, it was hailed as one of the most modern and best-equipped rural hospitals in western Canada, boasting laboratory, X-ray room, major and minor operating rooms, pharmacy, labour and case rooms, nursery, waiting room, nurses' stations and a total of 30 adult beds.

#### Social Life

After the war many young people returned to the Altona community. They got involved in organizing the young people's section of the Rhineland Agricultural Society, set up facilities for tennis, horseshoe, volleyball, softball, and croquet on the fairgrounds. They sponsored field days, softball tournaments, drama productions, and concerts. Together with the Women's Institute, the RAS young people's section organized a community library. It also operated the town's skating rink and obtained use of the RAS fairgrounds for numerous sporting activities.



Looking south-east from the CVO elevator.

#### Conclusion

The war years were transition years for Altona. It was no longer the isolated Mennonite community it had once been. Barriers between majority and minority groups were beginning to disappear. People travelled more, especially to Winnipeg. Almost all homes had radios and a growing number of people were reading English newspapers. The people of Altona were increasingly seeing themselves as Manitobans and Canadians and not only as Mennonites.

The war years also witnessed a transition in the relationship of Altona to its hinterland. The formation of CVO, and the development of the co-operatives, formed the bases for town and the agricultural community to co-operate.

The '40s also witnessed the transformation of Altona from a small, slow-moving village to a busy, fast-growing town. The establishment of industries, commerce, and services were the basis of future growth.

Some of the information for this chapter has been taken from *Altona* by Esther Epp-Tiessen.



Taking a coffee break during a credit union study session at the home of the D.H. Loewens in 1941 are, left to right: D.M. Friesen, Ferdinand Dueck, Anne Reimer, Elizabeth Bergen, Lena Loewen (hostess), and Lena Reimer.





This propeller-driven snowmobile served as Altona's winter taxi from 1940-47. It was owned by Manitoba Hydro.

Young man-about-town, Ike Dyck, out cruising in his Model T on a Sunday afternoon in the 1940s. Accompanying him on a tour of the town are Betty Neufeld and Ellen Dyck.

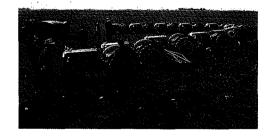


This photograph of the D.W. Friesen family was taken in 1941. Left to right, back row, standing: David K. Friesen (holding daughter Audrey), Mrs. D.K. Friesen, Raymond C. Friesen, John K. Friesen, Theodore E. Friesen, Alfred Loewen (holding son Gerald). Front row, seated: Diedrich

H. Reimer, Mrs. D.H. Reimer, Vera Reimer, Mrs. D.W. Friesen, David W. Friesen, Eileen Reimer, Mrs. Alfred Loewen, Jocelyn Striemer, Mrs. Henry Striemer, and Henry H. Striemer.



The Altona Co-op Service started out in 1937 in a small, run-down garage on Main St., but things improved greatly in 1940, when Sam Nitikman offered to sell his stock-in-trade and merchandise to the co-op members. On March 13 that year they agreed to pay \$14,626.50 for Nitikman's inventory and \$40 a month rent for the two-storey building at left. By 1944 membership had reached 800 and sales approached \$250,000. By the time the store was five years old members had earned \$17,956.48. By 1941 they had purchased the building for \$6,000 and the next year they built a 24 x 64 ft. addition (right). The addition housed a grocery department on the main floor and an egg candling department in the basement. The old part contained the dry goods and hardware departments. Upstairs were offices for the agricultural representative and the fieldman for the Federation of Southern Manitoba Co-operatives.



Ford tractors on display at an area ploughing match in 1941.

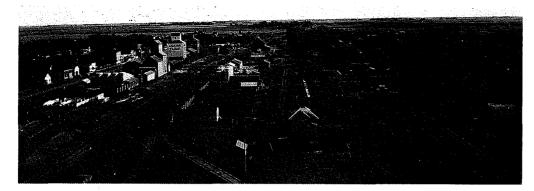
The 14 players under the direction of Marge Hetterley staged the playlet Wedding of the Painted Doll in a former livery stable that had been turned into a hall. Apparently the performances were a huge success, filling the hall for two nights, and drawing standing ovations. All the costumes were made of crepe paper. Left to right, standing: Dorothy Rempel, Mary Harder, Helen Toews, Nettie Nelzen, Allan Nitikman, Wilma Fehr, Helen Braun, Gary Duguid, Eileen Reimer, Shirley Neufeld, and Irene Stobbe. Kneeling: Katherine Stobbe, Edwin Abel, and Vera Reimer.

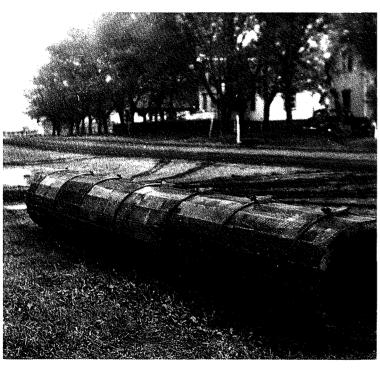
The second Bergthaler church was built in two stages. The right-hand wing was the original part of the church built in 1908. The left-hand addition was built in 1944.

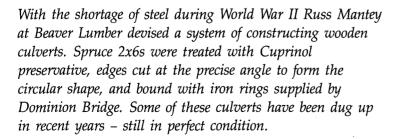


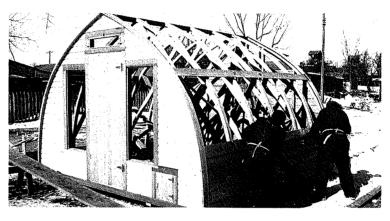


Looking south from the CVO elevator.









In 1942, a year of wartime shortages, Beaver Lumber Co. bought a shipment of wood that had been left floating in the Atlantic Ocean after a freighter carrying the wood to Britain was torpedoed. Beaver, who bought the wood from an insurance company after it was salvaged, sent a carload to Russ Mantey at Altona Beaver.

"The wood was soaking wet when I got it," says
Mantey, "and I figured it could be easily bent into curved
rafters." Brooder houses were in demand by local farmers,
most of who raised chickens at the time, so a brooder-house
building project was launched.

In the photo above Abe Schmidt and an assistant can be seen covering the rafters.

Mrs. P.D. Reimer's boarding house was a home away from home for a host of single people. This photo taken in 1943 shows Mrs. Reimer with some of her boarders. Left to right: Menno Klassen, Ella Goertzen, Mrs. Reimer, her daughter Helen Reimer Johnson holding her son Bruce, Frieda Lang, Violet Goertzen, and Raymond Reimer.



Rhineland Car Co., like all Canadian car dealerships, was hard hit during World War II. Materials, especially metal, was going into military equipment. In 1943 Rhineland Car sold only one new and 12 used cars. The next year sales were one new car and 14 used cars. In 1946 this building was destroyed by fire along with Harry Yee's cafe, Loewen's Red & White store, Merle's Dress Shop, A.D. Friesen's real estate and insurance office, and a shoe repair shop.





The Young Peoples Association was formed in 1944. Here the YPA hockey team took on the Winnipeg B-As in an exhibition game at the town skating rink, which the YPA operated. The YPA also organized field days, baseball tournaments, drama productions, and concerts. Together with the Women's Institute they also organized a community library. The YPA drew wide participation and had the support of J.N. Hoeppner, a Bergthaler church minister, who realized the need for wholesome community activities.





In the early years of the Altona Fair no large midway was brought in to entertain the fairgoers. Here a small train has been set up to give rides to children. The adults seem as interested as the children.

A tractor demonstration at the Altona Fair draws a large crowd.



Roy Dick on his first mustang. In the 1940s Roy's father, P.L. Dick (Altona Ford dealer) also bought and sold the occasional racehorse. The horses were kept in a barn at the rear of the P.L. Dick residence and in a fence in the area of Centre Ave. and Fourth St. NE. Roy recalls the horse's name in this picture was King.

This list of Altona service personnel who served in the armed forces in Canada and overseas during World War II was published in the Altona Echo in May, 1945.

> Heinrichs, Henry Johnston, Jacqueline

Klassen, Walter

Klassen, Benny

Klippenstein, Waldo

Klippenstein, John

Klippenstein, Ben

Klippenstein, Eddie

Klassen, Ed

Kehler, Dave

Nikkel, John

Neufeld, Ted

Penner, Harry

Reimer, Diedrich

Rempel, Henry

Sawatzky, Peter

Toews, Edward

Thiessen, Frank

Wiebe, Norman Wiebe, Abe Wall, Jac. Wall, Anne

Penner, Ed

Reimer, Jac.

Rempel, Jac.

Wiebe, John

Wall, Dave

Nikkel, Herman

Koop, Jac.

#### **CANADA**

#### Braun, Elmer Braun, Art Braun, Edgar Braun, P.L. Bergen, Cornelius Driedger, Richard Doell, Abram Dick, Nick Dyck, Jac. Dyck, Johnny Dick, Annie Derksen, Dave Friesen, J.K. Friesen, Ray C. Neufeld, Harold Franz, Jac. Funk, Elmer Friesen, Frank F. Falk, Jac. Falk, Henry Guenther, A.J. Hamm, Ben H. Harms, Martin Harms, Abram Hiebert, Harry Hiebert, Walter

#### **OVERSEAS**

Braun, Ed
*Driedger, John
Driedger, Jac.
Dueck, Ferdinand
Dick, Peter
Dyck, Albert
Dyck, Harold
Fehr, Isaac B.
Enns, John
Enns, Martin
Enns, Ed
*Enns, Jac. G.
Enns, Peter
Friesen, David
Friesen, Peter
Friesen, Jac.
Grabbins, Ed
Grabbins, H.P.
Harder, Ben.
Klippenstein, Henr
Klassen, John
Loeppky, Ernest
Loewen, John
Loewen, H.G.
Neufeld, Ben.
Neufeld, Peter K.
Penner, John
*Penner, Bernard
Penner, Jac. B.
-

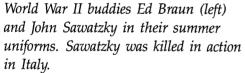
Penner, Henry B.

Rempel, Herman Rempel, Walter Reimer, Abe Reimer, John \*Sawatzky, John Schellenberg, G. \*Schellenberg, Herman @Schwartz, Art \*Teichrobe, Isaac Thiessen, Abram Toews, Erdman Unrau, Cornelius Unger, Peter Unrau, John Unrau, Ed Villeneuve, J. A. Wall, John Wall, Henry Zacharias, Abram Zacharias, Isaac \*Killed in action

@Prisoner of War

ALIONA 1940-1949

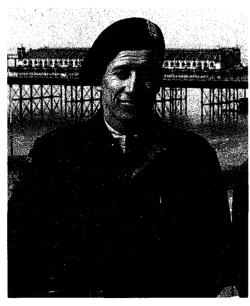




Ben K. Neufeld enlisted in the army in May, 1943, and went overseas with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles in February, 1945. He was in England at war's end and was sent to Germany to serve with the occupation forces. Ben served as a guard in the Canadian war crimes trial of General Kurt Maier, who was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment for his part in crimes against Canadian servicemen.



Flying Officer Art Braun served in the RCAF 1943-45 as a navigator and navigation instructor.





Ads like this one ran in weekly and daily newspapers all over Canada, including the Altona Echo. It is not difficult to understand then that by the end of the war in 1945 the Echo reported that 101 persons from Altona had enlisted in the Armed Forces. Of these 60 had served in Canada, and 41 overseas.

Wartime rationing affected every
Canadian in one way or another.
Altona citizens experienced rationing of
sugar, gasoline, meat, tires, among
other commodities. Applications were
made for coupons, and when purchases
were made these coupons limited the
amount of goods that could legitimately
be bought.

During World War II unnecessary selfish buying was not merely frowned upon but liable for a \$5,000 fine and two years in prison. Then the Wartime Prices and Trade Board labeled you a

becomes a tool of a conqueror; a traitor). Today, unnecessary selfish spending is the motor that drives our economy.



# APPLICATION CARDS FOR COUPON RATIONING OF SUGAR

will be mailed next week to every Household in Canada

CUPBOARD Culphorary Cu

"Cuploard Quality" is that too hard a color of root field by a state of the color of root field by in that too hard a number of root field by in that too hard a number of root field by in that too hard a number of the part of through the property of the root thought the root in the root of the

THE WARTINE PRICES AND TRADE FOARD

dians will be required to register so that ands, good for the 10 week poried. July 1st, may be issued immedice end of that period a coupon good for six months, will be issued

#### W TO REGISTER

hts in Urban Areas not served by hter Carrier, and Residents in Rural Areas

cation cards will be distributed to all house trees through the post offices on or belore Tues June 23rd. Additional cards will also be do red for every person resident in the household to bears a different lost name from the head o' to household. If needed, oxtra cards may be securom local post offices

These application cards should be filled out immudiately and dropped in the nearest mail box or positive. A pamphilet giving complete instructions will be delivered with each card. As soon as your, name is duly registered at headquariers, rations cards good for a ten-week period, will be mailed to youene ration card for each person in your home. Those will be for sugar only.

#### Coupon Rationing for Sugar Becomes Effective July 1st

Beginning July 1st, no one will be permitted to buy sugar for regular domestic use without a ration

Prompt co-operation on the part of the public in filling out and returning their application cards is necessary to ensure roturn of the ration coupon card in time to purchase sugar on or after the

above date.

Remember—the amount of sugar allowed each inchvidual under the new coupon rationing plan will be
exactly the same as allowed at present—I pound per

	PRINT IN BLOCK LETT	ERS	LEAVE BLAN
1	LAST WANT ONLY		
	CASI MAME CHILI		
2	AFTERCANT'S FIRST NAME IS		
3	TAUTAGET TO A TAUTAGE	ACOUNT.	
<b>4.</b> Cr	Y DIT POST OFFICE PROVINCE	LAND C	nuatra
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	IN SUPPORT OF RATION BOD	K APPL	ICATION.
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	FAMILY) LIVE AT THE ABOVE ACCUMATELY DESCRIBED HEREI	ADDRES	S. BEING
CANADA	OTHER APPLICATION HAS BEEN N	ADE ON	BEHALF OF
12.	SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT OR SPE		
100	DIOMETER OF APPLICANT OR SPE	MYCH	

Potential Landing State Commence - Landing

The provision for additional sugar for preserving, etc., will be continued. Special voucher forms for this purpose are being supplied to all retailers. No person may have on hand more than two weeks' supply of sugar, unless resident in a remote district.

DO NOT SURRENDER YOUR APPLICATION CARD TO ANY UNAUTHORIZED PERSON

THE WARTIME PRICES AND TRADE BOARD

METONN 1740-1747

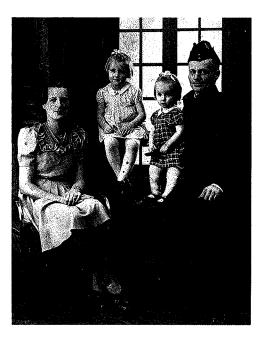


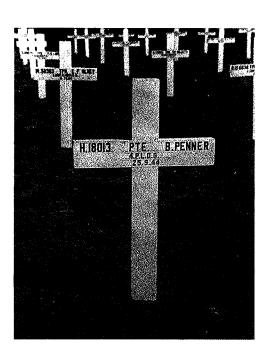
Ed Penner says farewell to his sister, Helen and brother, John (in civvies), and his stepbrother, Isaac Teichrobe (with back turned). Ed went overseas on May 9, 1940, and served in England and Italy. He was wounded in action while in Italy. John later enlisted with the Princess Louise Medical Corps and served overseas. Isaac enlisted in the army on December 2, 1941, and was killed in action in the vicinity of Ijzen dijke, Holland. He is buried in the Canadian War Cemetery, Adegan, Belgium.

John Penner with his family while he was in the Princess Louise Medical Corps. He went overseas and served in England. On August 19, 1942, he was sent on the ill-fated Dieppe raid along with 5,000 Canadian, 1,000 British, and 50 American troops. He was wounded and recuperated in England, returning to Canada after the war.



Brothers Bernard and Harry Penner on leave together in Winnipeg. Bernard went overseas in June, 1944, and was killed the same year, September 25, 1944, in action in Italy. Harry served with the RCAF in the Yukon.





Pte. Bernard Penner's burial cross in a military cemetery in Italy.

#### OUR DEFENDERS

These, in the day when Heaven was falling,
The hour when Earth's foundations fled.
Their shoulders held the Sky suspended;
They stood, and Earth's foundations stay.

And these did strike for Canada; And man and maid are free To foil and spoil the tyrant Beneath the greenwood tree.

With sincere good wishes.

### This is the Job We Have To Do ALTONA AND DISTRICT MUST BUY

\$95,000.00 VICTORY BOND

We Must Do Our Share

# BUY VICTORY BONDS

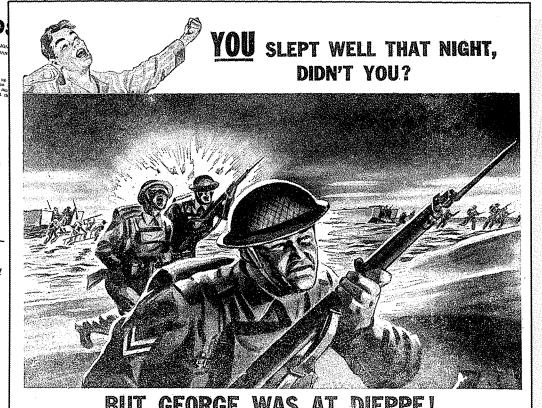
## District Victory Loan Salesmen:

DR. S. S. TONI P. P. NEUFELD H. J. MCGAVIN BEN LOEPPKY

A. D. FRIESEN T. A. SHAVENTASKE TED FRIESEN

In May, 1944, a year before the war in Europe ended, the Altona District Victory Loan Committee was campaigning for \$95,000 in Victory Bond sales. What the bonds did to a great degree was free up money for spending and investing after World War

The National War Finance Committee wasn't above laying some guilt on Canadians not actively involved in the



## GEORGE

TICE fellow, George—one of the lads from the office. Remember, you had him our for dinner one night. He made a great fuss over your kids—and your wife was very pleased. And then, all of a sudden, he slipped away and joined up. Left his good job, his girl and his ne supper away and joined ap. Let in spool job, as gan and as future. And he was at Dieppe, slogging up the beach into a murderous rain of steel—fighting for you and your wife and those kids of yours he played with. And that same night you slept well, didn't you... in a soft bed. You had an egg for breakfast too. But George didn't. And you've still got a good job and you wear good clothes. And being conscientious, you worry about these things a bit. But

you just haven't been able to push yourself into doing much more

than pay your taxes. Well, those taxes aren't enough. Think of what George gave up, and then sit down with your wife and ask yourselves, "What else can we do?" Sure, you've given up a few on. Do it glatily. Because you'll really get a kick out of investing the money you save in Victory Bonds, and in knowing you're not letting George do it all,

Just keep thinking about George and what he gave up. And remember, those Victory Bonds you buy aren't giving—they're leuding your country money to help protect you. That money will

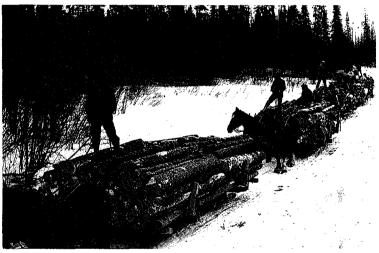
WORK-SAVE AND LEND FOR VICTO

termenne menerikan <del>dalam kala</del>ng sebengan pertemban kalang dalam kalang pertemban kalang p



Not only was there a tight rationing program for Canadians, but various commodities were also saved for the war effort. This ad in the Altona Echo March 24, 1943, urged Altona housewives to save fat and bones for the manufacture of munitions. Other items collected for recycling into tools of war included scrap iron, rags, tubes from tooth paste and shaving cream, and tin foil.

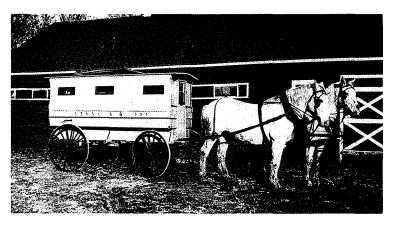




Many Altona men served in camps for conscientious objectors during World War II. Bush camps were the most common. These photos show logs being hauled by horses in one such camp, and CO's in their bunkhouse — some of them writing letters to loved ones at home.



The government had visions of inflation almost immediately after the war ended in Europe. Canadians considered the big enemy in Europe (Germany) defeated and the war with Japan was more of an American affair. Now inflation was a real threat.



This school van was owned by David Kehler of Old Altona village and transported school children from the village to the school in Altona. Henry P. Kehler was the driver.



When Altona was incorporated in 1946, Secretary-Treasurer Frank J. Kehler (right) briefly shared office space with David D. Stobbe (centre), secretary-treasurer of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland, and his assistant David J. Harder, before the new village opened its own office.





Altona Band of the 1940s was directed by school teacher J.E. Dyck. Left to right, front row: David Wiebe, John Reimer, Ann Kehler, William J. Kehler, J.E. Dyck, Vi Neufeld, Mary Klassen, Tina Kehler, and Irma Loeppky. Back row: Ron Stobbe, Irene Stobbe, Ed Wiebe, Ed Sawatzky, Dave M. Loeppky, Jake C. Friesen, Frank J. Kehler, Gordon Stobbe, Eileen Reimer, Helen Sawatzky, and Willie Friesen.

Elim Bible School teachers, left to right: J.N. Hoeppner, A.A. Teichroeb, and George A. Braun, together with graduates in 1946.



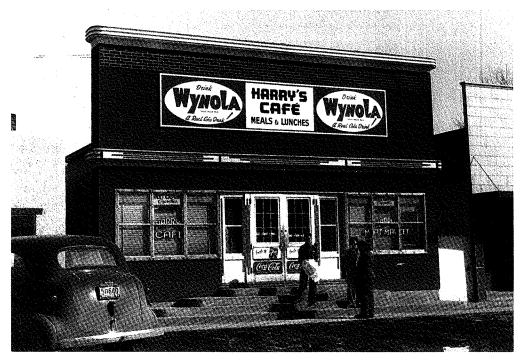
J.G. Neufeld (wearing glasses) was the principal of the Altona public school, and P.H. Funk was vice-principal in 1942. They also taught the high school classes. Mr. Funk left the community in 1951 and became a school inspector for the Manitoba Department of Education in 1953. Mr. Neufeld retired and moved to Abbottsford, B.C.

Harry Yee's Cafe and Meat Market before it was destroyed by fire in 1946.



Industrial Arts teacher Jake Schroeder in 1945.

When Harry Yee came to Altona and bought Joe Henry's cafe on Main St. he left his wife and family behind in China. This wedding picture taken in the 1940s shows Harry's wife standing second from left, and their son second from right, and members of his family. The bridegroom is Harry's grandson and the children are his grandchildren. Young Henry (extreme right) joined his grandfather in Altona for several years before he and Harry sold their cafe and moved to Ottawa in 1963.

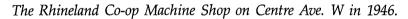


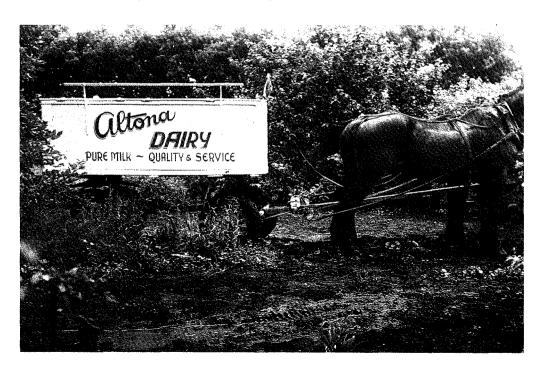


METONIK IJIU-IJIJ



Manitoba Telephone System office and exchange building in Altona 1947.





J.J. Wall and Ferdinand Dueck operated the Altona Dairy in 1946 and used this horse drawn delivery wagon to service their customers.



Orpha Jennison and her teacher, Julius Toews.



Altona Women's Institute members in 1947. Left to right, back row: Mrs. Art Braun, Mrs. Frank Kehler, Mrs. J.C. Sawatzky, Mrs. J.O. Friesen, Miss Margaret Nikkel, Mrs. D.H. Reimer, Mrs. D.G. Friesen, Miss Nina Nikkel, Miss Emma Wiebe, Mrs. D.G. Reimer, and Mrs. David M. Friesen. Second row: Mrs. P.H. Funk, Miss Elizabeth Bergen, Miss Viola Siemens, Mrs. Dave Harder, Mrs. A.B. Klassen, Miss Mary Blatz, Mrs. John A. Funk, Miss Agnes Toews, Mrs. John Sawatzky, Miss Helen Siemens, Mrs. Henry Grabinsky, Mrs. S.S. Toni, Miss Margaret Friesen, (?), and Mrs. David D. Stobbe. Seated in front: Mrs. J.J. Siemens, Mrs. D.H. Loewen, Mrs. P.L. Dick, Mrs. Bill Hetterley, Mrs. Edgar Braun, and Mrs. Ted Friesen.



Used farm implements being loaded into boxcars for shipment to farmers from the Altona area who had emigrated to Paraguay.

..... .... ....



Members of the Tabea Naehverein in 1947-48.



J.E. Dyck was the teacher of this Grade 8 class in 1947-48. Left to right, back row: Ed Sawatzky, John Peters, David Wiebe, Gladys Klassen, Helen Dyck, Alma Funk, Eva Gerbrandt, and Erica Wall. Second row: Rosie Kehler, Elsie Sawatzky, Dorothy Enns, Eva Thiessen, Martha Sawatzky, Elma Friesen, and Mary Wolfe. Third row: Helen Ginter, Irma Loeppky, Jake Hoeppner, Edwin Abel, Arnold Remus, Harvey Friesen, Bernie Braun, and Joe Niessen, Front row: Gordon Heinrichs, Linda Friesen, Linda Sawatzky, Verona Shaventasky, Norma Fehr, Sarah Falk, Jocelyn Striemer, and Martha Janzen.



Edwin Abel at the wheel of a garden tractor built in the Abel blacksmith shop by a Mr. Gerbrandt. Edwin's main contribution to the project was to test drive the tractor on Altona's muddy Main Street after a rain. The cement mixer seen beside the blacksmith shop was later mounted on a truck by the same Mr. Gerbrandt, who travelled around the community mixing cement at construction sites.



Women on the Altona hospital staff in 1948 took time out at their Christmas dinner to pose for this photo. Left to right, back row: Tina Giesbrecht, Eva Heppner, Tina Nickel, and Mary Giesbrecht. Second row: Jessie Rempel, Evelyn Toews, Agnes Giesbrecht, Katie Thiessen, Helena Loewen, Margaret Nikkel, Mary Krahn, Katherine Heppner, Sarah Friesen, Ann Bergen, and Mary Kehler. Seated: Frieda Sawatzky, Helen Heinrichs, Mary Dyck, Alice Schellenberg, Lillian Hoppe, Tinie Wall, Sarah Teichroeb, and Gertrude Heinrichs.

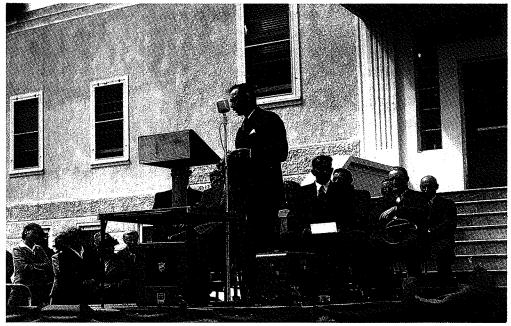


To find relief from high oil prices in the 1920s farmers formed the Farmers' Oil Company, but it was plagued with managerial problems. Aggravated by the problems of the Depression, Rhineland farmers decided to organize a new gasoline co-operative, namely, the Rhineland Consumers Co-operative in 1931. The co-op's board bought the oil station and inventory of Farmers' Oil and got a loan from the bank to start operations. The building and inventory were destroyed by fire in 1936 but new premises were immediately built and the co-op continued to grow. By 1939 it had 573 members and paid dividends of \$1,599. Success of Rhineland Consumers Co-op led to the formation of the Altona Co-op Consumers store. Pictured here is the Rhineland Consumers location in Altona about 1949.



Rev. and Mrs. J.N. Hoeppner and some of their children in 1949. Left to right, back row: Rev. Hoeppner holding Ray, Mrs. Hoeppner, Kathleen, Jake, and Ronald. Front: David and Vernon. Their daughters Doreen and Marie were patients in the St. Vital tuberculosis sanatorium when this picture was taken.

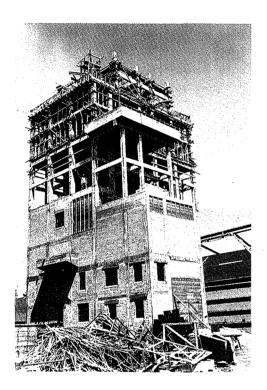




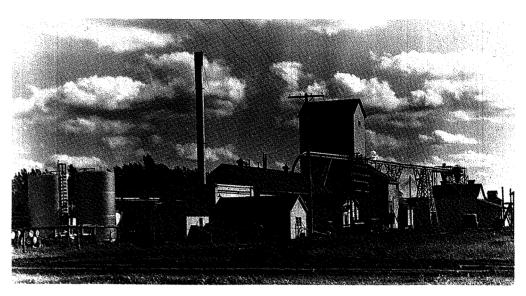
Mrs. D.W. Friesen, and family (children, grandchildren, brother, and sisters) in 1949 or 1950. Left to right, front row: Ben Gerbrandt, Eric Friesen, Cathleen Friesen, Margaret Loewen, David Glenn Friesen, Ken Loewen, Menno Klippenstein, Vic Friesen (in front), Audrey Friesen holding Libby Friesen, Gerald Loewen, Judy Friesen holding Melanie Friesen, Richard and Ronald Loeppky, Vera Reimer. Second row: B. J. Klippenstein, J. W. Berg, D. W. Friesen, Mrs. Gertrude (Abram) Klippenstein, Mrs. Katharine (John) Braun, Mrs. John W. Berg (standing), Mrs. Henry Reimer, Mrs. Agatha (Abram) Loeppky, Mrs. Sarah (D. W.) Friesen. Standing, back row: John K. Friesen, Marta Friesen, Mrs. R. C. Friesen, Ray C. Friesen, Mrs. B. J. Klippenstein, Mrs. D. K. Friesen, Mrs. T. E. Friesen, Ted E. Friesen (holding Paul), Mrs. Alfred Loewen, Alfred Loewen, Mrs. Eileen Walker, Diedrich H. Reimer, Sarah Reimer. Photo was taken in front of the old D. W. Friesen residence on 4th Ave. NW.

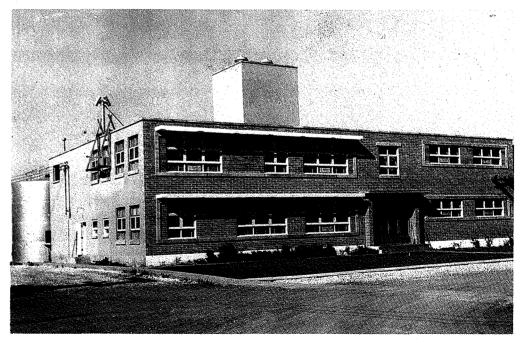
Dr. S.S. Toni addresses a large crowd gathered for the official opening of the Altona hospital in the summer of 1949. Among those on the stage with Dr. Toni are Reeve Ed Pokrant, Dr. Hugh McGavin, and Rev. J.N. Hoeppner.

Co-op Vegetable Oils plant looking southeast in 1947, the year before the concrete elevator was built.



After only two years since opening, CVO undertook the impressive project of building this concrete elevator. The job took over a year to complete but still serves as a landmark for farmers delivering oilseeds to Altona, and for Altonans returning home from travels elsewhere.

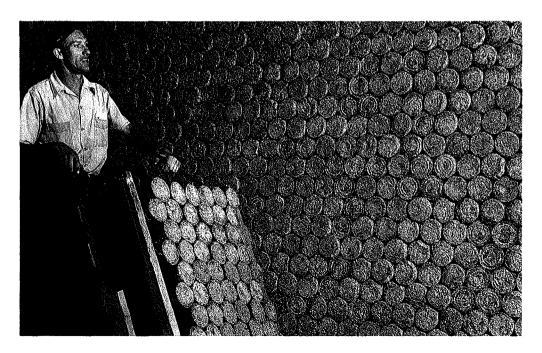


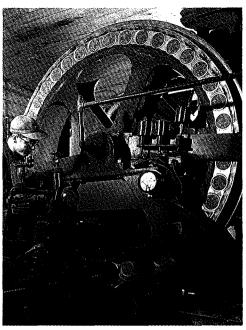


A new era opened for CVO in 1949-50 with the construction of this new refinery and office building.

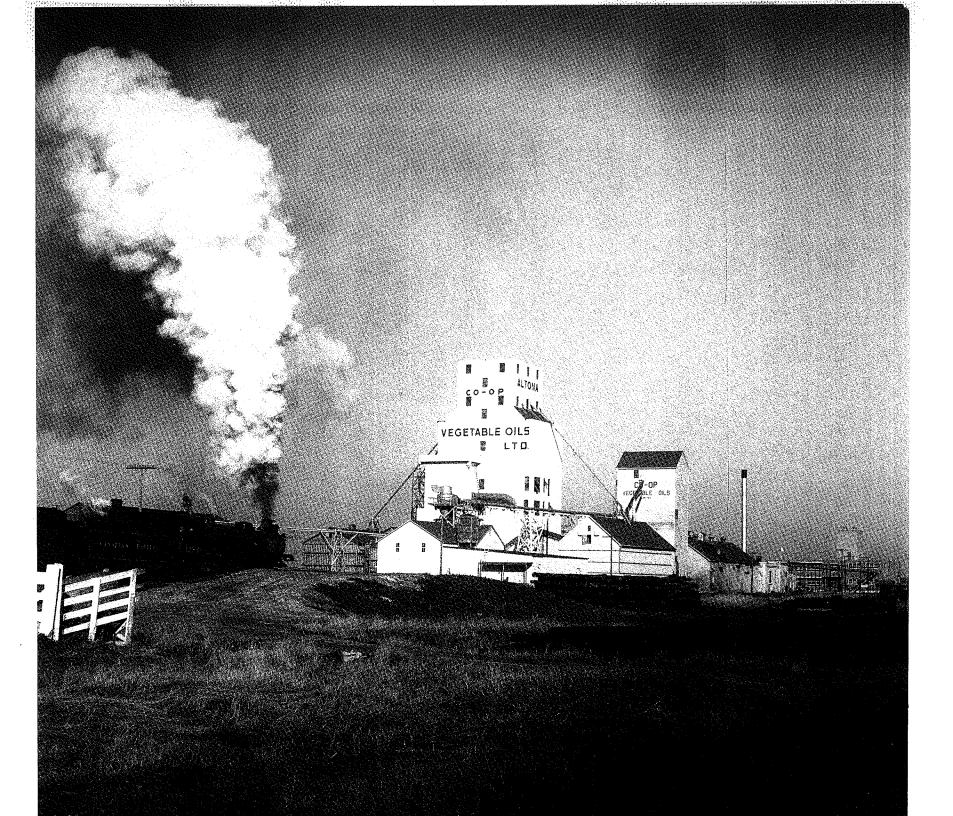


J.J. Siemens, president of CVO, and Eric Putt, agronomist who headed up an extensive plant breeding and field service department in the early years, seem pleased with the results of an oil sample being examined by D.K. Friesen, manager, that has arrived from the lab.





Plagued by the large volumes of sunflower hulls that were left over after crushing the seeds, CVO turned to pressing the hulls into logs for fuel in furnaces, fireplaces, and wood burning stoves. Pres-to-logs, as they were called, were a pollution problem for CVO for 18 years, but came to a fiery end in 1964 when the Pres-to-log building went up in flames. The operation was not resumed. Operating the Pres-to-log machine in which the hulls were made under high pressure is employee Ike Toews. The heat created by the pressure, together with the oil contained in the hulls, made the hulls adhere to form the logs. Facing a wall of Pres-to-logs is CVO employee, Ed C. Stoesz.



# 1950-1959: Growth and Modernization

he latter part of the 1940s saw an acceleration of growth in the town. This was partly caused by better economic times and partly by the growth of such new businesses as CVO, which brought with it also an increase in population. Between 1951 and 1961 the population of Altona increased from 1,438 to 2,026. Another reason was a high birth rate, which led to a natural increase.

In the last chapter, it is reported that the incorporation of Altona, as a village, took place in 1946. But the growth caused the Altona village council, in 1956, to apply to the provincial government to have the community status raised from that of village to town. It had already exceeded the minimum population requirement of 1,500. On October 24, 1956, the community became the Town of Altona. The newly organized town council could now concentrate on doing what had been left undone for many years, namely, repairing the town's streets and sidewalks and providing the services, facilities, and infrastructure necessary for a modern, growing community. The growth provided a tax base and property assessment sufficient to undertake a number of substantial projects. The village budget was increased from \$45,812.00 in 1950 to \$148,763.00 in 1960. The highest priority was, of course, the public works system. Streets were graveled, new ditches excavated, and wooden culverts replaced by steel ones. Main St. was paved in 1953. In the 10 years between 1946 and 1956, 25,000 feet of sidewalks were constructed, virtually all of concrete.

Another significant accomplishment was the inauguration of a town planning scheme, which came into effect in 1956. One of the major features was the zoning of different parts of Altona into residential, commercial, and industrial areas.



Public works crew in 1956 mixing their own cement for a sidewalk construction project.

Facing page: This 1951 photo by Altona photographer B.I. Sawatzky shows the Co-op Vegetable Oils complex with the newly completed elevator. The CPR steam locomotive emits a cloud of steam and coal smoke. At left also is part of a stock pen where farm cattle was held for shipment by train. The mound of earth at centre foreground provided easy access for loading or unloading train cars. The utility poles and spools of cable at right were stockpiled by the Manitoba Power Commission for use in its rural electrification program.

One of the most significant improvements which Altona residents experienced in the 1950s was the completion of the sewer and waterworks system. This was made possible by the supply of water via pipeline, linking it with the Neche purification plant across the border. On February 11, 1961, Mayor Isbrand Rempel, the first homeowner to be hooked up, turned on the taps. It was a major step in bringing Altona into the modern age, and fulfilling a dream.



Mayor Isbrand Rempel at the controls of the backhoe as construction starts on the town sewer system in June, 1958. The initial sewer installation was 24,000 feet long and cost \$146,000. Left to right: Councillor D.K. Friesen; Leo Benjamin, superintendent of Benjamin Bros., the contractor; Russ Raymond, job superintendent; Councillor Dave Zacharias; Councillor Henry Loeppky, chairman of the public works committee, D.M. Loeppky, public works foreman, and Councillor P.E. Braun.

## **New Businesses**

In the '50s, again building on the growth of the late '40s, new businesses were attracted and opened in Altona. Many types of establishments started operations in various parts of the town. These included real estate and insurance agencies, farm implement dealerships, automobile sales firms, garages and service stations. A laundry, radio repair service, an auto and electric shop, and appliance repair shop, were all new to the town.

Three new industries also opened in Altona. The Bigger and Better Puffed Wheat Company, the manufacture of Cressy products, and the house trailer manufacturing plant would all start in this era. The drug store was greatly expanded, the Hi-Way Inn opened, Macleod's Hardware Store, Wiebe's Funeral Home, Altona Memorials, and a furniture and upholstery shop all had their beginnings at this time.

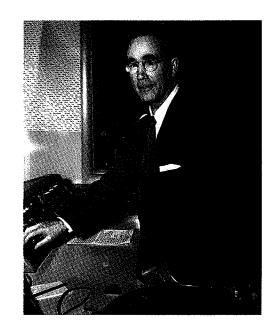
But the new business that gave growth its greatest impetus in the '50s was the founding of radio station CFAM. This opened on March 13, 1957. It brought a new kind of programming to the community. Its objectives were to provide good, religious programming as well as good music. Its other focus was to provide news and information to the farming community. It was also very much of a family-centered radio station. Two of the most popular programs were "Ladies First" and "Children's Party". An important feature about CFAM was its focus on the southern Manitoba community. It broadcasted area hockey games, recorded local choirs, presented live worship services, and announced all kinds of happenings. A year after the station began operating, the staff had increased from 8 to 15 and the power was boosted from 1 to 5,000 watts. In 1959, power went up to 10,000 watts and a 24-hour broadcasting day was initiated.

The other factor that added to growth was the expansion of numerous existing businesses. Beaver Lumber and Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Company both built larger facilities in the 1950s. Altona Co-op Service erected a two-storey addition, complete with a cold storage plant. The credit union got its own office building. Altona Transfer expanded its fleet of trucks to 12. Both the Lake of the Woods and the Ogilvie Milling Companies constructed new elevators.

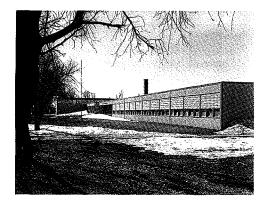
D. W. Friesen's also expanded during the 1950s. The rate of growth was at such a degree that plans for a new, modern structure were made in the eastern part of the town. A building containing 16,500 square feet was built and opened on April 1, 1959. This building would see many additions in future years. At



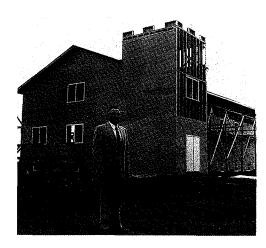
CFAM studio in 1957, the year Altona's radio station went on the air.



Premier Douglas Campbell threw the switch that put radio station CFAM on the air at 8:01 p.m. March 13, 1957. He was also the main speaker at a one-hour live opening broadcast.



The new collegiate had eight classrooms, a library, four auxiliary rooms, and a large auditorium/gymnasium.



Pastor A.H. Pohl watched with keen interest as the construction of the Evangelical Free Church in south east Altona progressed. This photo in September, 1957, shows the building well underway.

the end of the 1950s Friesen's was employing 50 people and paying out \$130,000 annually in wages and salaries.

The expansion of CVO also took place in the 1950s. Sunflower acreage had increased considerably. This necessitated a plant expansion, the purchase of another expeller, and the building of the refinery.

# **Schools**

Between 1949 and 1955 school enrollment increased from 271 to 440. This placed a great strain on the town's classroom space. Between 1949 and 1955 Altona residents were asked to approve three separate expenditures for additional school facilities. The first school to be built consisted of four classrooms added to the old elementary school and opened in 1953. Only two years later the space problem forced the school board again to consider providing for additional classroom space. In June, 1955, a brand new high school was approved. In was completed in January of 1956 and was built in the west part of the town. This is now the West Park School.

#### Altona's Churches

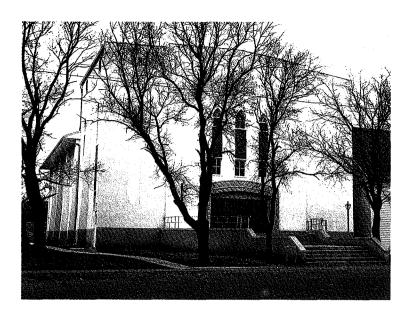
These years were also one of change for Altona's church life. The older ones began a cautious process of adaptation. This was the beginning of a process that would find its fulfillment in later decades.

The Bergthaler Church organized a large and active youth group called the Young Peoples Fellowship. Their focuses were recreation, fellowship, and service. In this period, also, there was a transition in the area of language. It moved from German to bilingual worship services.

The Sommerfelder Church introduced Sunday school classes. A major renovation was undertaken in 1951 to make space available.

Other congregations organized around this period were the Gospel Mission, later the Evangelical Free Church, the United Church, and the Altona Rudnerweider Church, which later came to be called the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church. It was in the '50s, also, that a group left the Sommerfelder Church and formed the Reinland Mennonite Church.

While Altona churches were occupied with their own growth and programs, there were a number of instances where some of them participated in joint efforts. The Bergthaler and EMMC churches supported Elim Bible Institute. A major crusade in 1957 with George R. Brunk had the support of both of these churches as well as the United and the Free Church. The next two decades would build on this foundation of co-operation.





#### Recreation and Social Life

During this period recreational life and cultural life also underwent a certain amount of change. It became more sophisticated. Outdoor hockey rinks gave way to a large indoor rink and community centre. A new area choir came into being and the Southern Manitoba Music and Speech Arts Festival emerged as an annual event. Golfing became a new leisure option, and movies returned to town.

One of the biggest events was the construction of a large enclosed hockey rink. It consisted of an  $80 \times 180$  foot ice rink, a two-storey waiting room and canteen area, and bleachers for spectators. Altona people took the lead in forming the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League, the first intermediate league in the area. Teams represented were Letellier, Winkler, Emerson, Morris, and Altona.

If hockey gained in popularity, the same was true for curling. In 1946 the curling club added a second sheet of ice to its existing rink. In 1960 the club was to begin construction on a new five-sheet curling rink beside the arena. Curling was popular because participation was not limited to a skilled few, but could include almost everybody above the teen age. The first open bonspiel took place in 1958 and attracted 64 rinks, some of them from as far away as Winnipeg and Cavalier, N.D.

A new Bergthaler Church was officially opened and dedicated at a special service Sunday, August 8, 1954. The 60 x 100 ft. building had cost well in excess of the \$70,000 originally estimated.

Rev. David Schulz officiated at a dooropening ceremony kept brief because of threatening rain. Standing behind Rev. Schulz is Henry Berg, building contractor, and Rev. J.M. Pauls faces the camera in the background.



Construction of a lobby on the arena got underway in the fall of 1952 after ratepayers approved a by-law to issue a \$20,000 debenture and take over the arena from the Altona Community Club, which had built the enclosed rink with volunteer labour.





Altona contestants in the Southern Manitoba Festival of Music and Arts usually did well. In 1955 Albert Braun (left) captured the Altona Women's Institute Cup for spoken poetry Grades 5-12, town schools, and Conrad Toni received the P.T. Friesen Trophy for spoken poetry, Grades 1-4, town schools.

Winter sports dominated Altona's recreational life. However, one new summer sport that was organized during this time was golf. The Oakview Golf Club was organized in 1950 by a handful of Gretna and Altona golf enthusiasts and work began immediately on a property just north of Gretna, and by 1952 a creditable nine-hole course was ready for use.

The late '40s and '50s also witnessed a real upsurge in musical and cultural activity in the Altona area. The radio station was probably a good catalyst for this. Another was the tremendous growth in the Music and Speech Arts Festival. The festival was a major production. By the end of the '50s it lasted up to two weeks and included scores of classes held simultaneously in three centres – Winkler, Morden, and Altona. In 1954 the number of entries surpassed 600. Another cultural organization that was established during this time was the Altona Community Choir. Ben Horch was the conductor and the pieces sung by the choir reflected Horch's taste. The first year the performance was Handel's *Messiah*.

### **Political Interests**

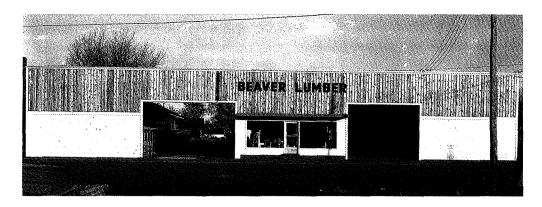
In the '50s, also, the people of Altona displayed a new kind of acceptance of politics, both on a provincial and a federal level. Evidence of this could be seen in the number of people casting their ballots. During the '50s, also, several community people ran for political office. J. J. Siemens was a candidate in the federal election of 1958 for the CCF party. In 1959 D. K. Friesen represented the Liberal-Progressive ticket in a provincial by-election. Neither candidate was successful, but their attempts reveal that political participation of that level had become acceptable.

## Conclusion

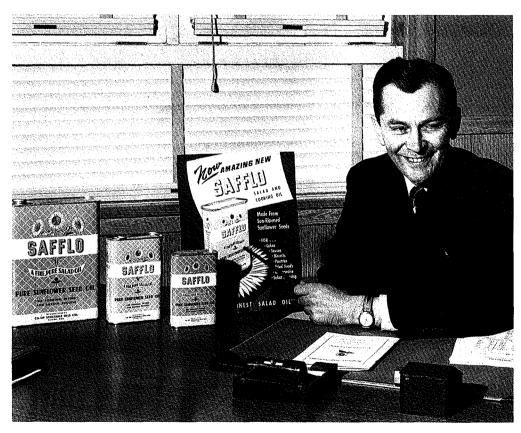
The changes that took place at this time were truly remarkable. That showed in the growth and the degree to which the town had become modernized. Some of these changes derived from those begun in the post-war period. Others would represent a new departure or a new direction in the town's development.

Information for this chapter has been taken from Altona by Esther Epp-Tiessen.

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In 1950 the old lumber yard that had originally housed the Winkler Lumber yard, Corona Lumber (a division of Beaver), and then the Beaver Lumber yard was dismantled and a new yard and building erected. The new structure shown here was officially opened in 1950. It would be partly destroyed by fire on July 7, 1973, after a lightning strike.



Buoyed by the high profits of the first few years of operation, the CVO board of directors decided to try their hand in the consumer market. D.K. Friesen, secretary-manager of the co-op, shows off the famous Safflo package.



Russ Mantey in his office in the new building in 1950. He started in the lumber business in Altona on August 20, 1933, with Winkler Lumber, joined Corona Lumber on July 14, 1934, when Beaver Lumber bought out Winkler Lumber, and retired in May, 1968. His yard was a leader in the Beaver chain for many years.

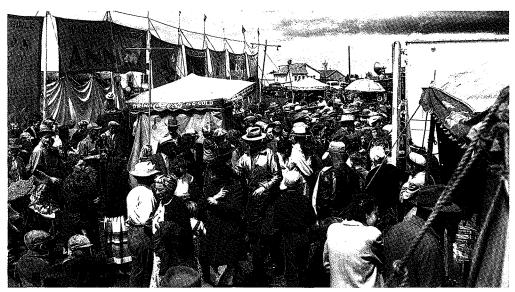
Four-year-old Peter Zacharias had been stricken with polio in 1952 and as a result his legs were paralyzed. When these girls heard that Peter yearned for a wagon they went door-to-door in the neighborhood and collected \$61.59 to buy him one. With Peter are, left to right: Irene Friesen, Barbara Toni, Shirley Neufeld, Jolene Lesperance, Judy Friesen, Marlene Epp, Carol Dick, Gladys Fehr, Lois Epp, and Delores Loewen.



Altona businessmen were solidly behind the Schmockey Nite fundraisers held after the 1952 polio epidemic. J.J. Janzen gets a tip on slap shots from Jake "Conacher" Penner. Looking on and hoping to gain from the coaching are, left to right: P.L. Dick, H.F. Wiebe, H.H. Epp, and Dr. S.S. Toni. This was the third year of Schmockey Nite and net proceeds amounted to \$524.27 for the March of Dimes.







When Salk vaccine became available in 1955, it came as a great relief for Altona residents. A major polio epidemic in 1952 had struck both children and adults in the community. Here Dr. John Lohrenz, assisted by teacher Anne Bueckert, administer vaccine to pupils in school. Getting her shot is Marguerite Loewen while two other pupils look on apprehensively.



Harry Yee became a Canadian citizen after 27 years in Canada when Judge J.M. George presented him with a naturalization certificate at a county court session in the Gretna public school on January 28, 1953. Extending congratulations are Judge George and Justice of the Peace A.L. Friesen. Also in the photo are Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wall, of Altona, who took the preliminary examination for citizenship.

In the summer of 1953 Wallace & Clark brought their circus to the Altona fairgrounds and drew a big crowd.

Presenting trophies and cash awards to winners of the 1953 Chamber of Commerce home beautification contest is Dr. S.S. Toni, chairman of the beautification committee. Mrs. C.N. Friesen is accepting the trophy for best home grounds. Mrs. George H. Dueck holds the trophy for best block. Other winners are, left to right: Bill Friesen, Ferdinand Dueck, C.N. Friesen, Abe Heppner, and Mrs. Abe Heppner.



Reeve of Rhineland municipality, Ed Pokrant, prepares to throw the opening rock in a playoff to determine the first holder of the Rhineland Challenge Curling Trophy put up for competition by the RM. Left to right, standing: Councillors William Pokrant, Rosenfeld; W.E. Dueck, Altona, and J.W. Schwartz, Altona. Winners of the first playoff were two rinks from Altona. Two rinks from each of Horndean, Rosenfeld, and Gretna also competed. A week later a team from Gretna defeated Altona and captured the trophy. Competition continued throughout that winter of 1953.



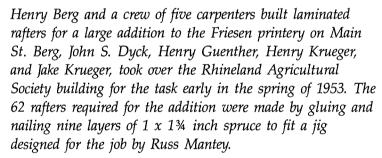


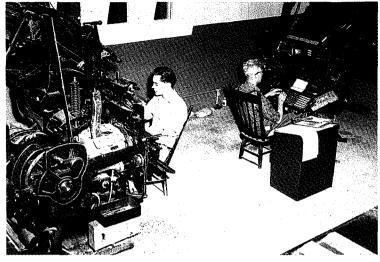
Local Volkswagen dealer, A.B. Klassen (standing), and his German-born mechanic showed this 'beetle' at the Rhineland Agricultural Fair in Altona in 1954. Behind the wheel is Peter Giesbrecht, area teacher, who bought the car and, in fact, purchased several VWs.



Stuffing envelopes for the March of Dimes campaign at the home of Eve and Joe Shaven are, left to right: Mrs. J.J. Krueger, Mrs. Otto Loewen, Eileen Walker, Russ Woodard, Eve Shaven, Mrs. S.S. Toni, and Mrs. Russ Woodard. Standing: Joe Shaven.

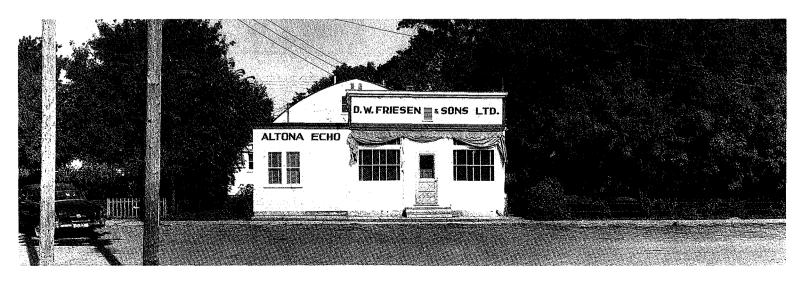






Gordon Stobbe and Jack Baxted operate Linotype machines in the D.W. Friesen & Sons printery on Main St. in 1953. A major expansion had just taken place with the addition of a large quonset-style structure to the rear of the existing premises.

D.W. Friesen printing shop on Main St. in 1954.





D.W. Friesen staff in 1954. Left to right, standing: Menno Braun, Anton Kehler, Gordon Stobbe, Arnold Heinrichs, Bill Falk, Peter Wolfe, Abe Peters, Jack Baxted, Ben K. Neufeld, D.G. Friesen, Frank Falk, Jack Loewen, Victor Penner, and George Dyck. Seated: Grace Heinrichs, Trudy Wiebe, Helen Friesen, Elizabeth Bergen, Martha Block, and Jeanne Dyck.

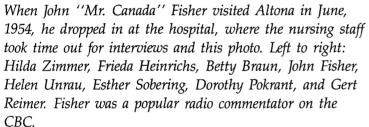




Installation of a Scan-a-graver in November, 1954, was a major event in photo journalism for the Echo. It enabled the paper to produce plastic halftones in a matter of minutes. Combined with modern darkroom equipment, the large number of pictures that started to appear in the Echo greatly boosted the paper's circulation and effect. Shown here with the new machine are Vic Penner, Echo editor (left), and Pete Wolfe, shop foreman.

Frank H. Epp was appointed editor of the Canadian Mennonite, published by D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., when that publication was founded in September, 1953. He was also a leading force in the formation of the Altona Mennonite Church and served as its first pastor.





Senior citizens gathered at the Altona Bergthaler Church for one of the first Altenfests in June, 1955.



Constable Mike Stewart was faced with a Co-op store safe-cracking on his first day as Altona's policeman in February, 1954. Safe-crackers had peeled off the outside door of the safe but failed to get inside, where thousands of dollars in cash and cheques were kept. They took \$19 in change and small bills from three tills in the store and scattered \$25 in change on the floor around the safe.





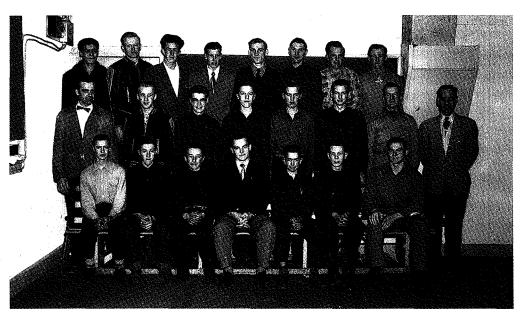
The Altona Collegiate Glee Club's performance of Gilbert & Sullivan's Mikado ran for four nights in March, 1954, and drew a total attendance of over 1,000. The final performance was sponsored by the Altona Volunteer Fire Brigade and raised \$100 towards the purchase of the brigade's first ambulance. Performances were held in the basement auditorium of the school downtown, where 250 persons was definitely a "packed house". Left to right, front row: Ray Dueck, Irma Loeppky, Dave Born, Norman Hiebert, Don Braun, Arlene Siemens, John Fehr, Verna Braun, and Della Kehler. Second row, kneeling: Loretta Neufeld, Don Fehr,

Betty Klassen, Mary Falk, Ronald Funk, Martha Peters, Lawrence Schellenberg, Elsie Unrau, Elmer Enns, Sadie Kroeker, John Winter, and Rosemary Howe. Back row, standing: Myrla Braun, Albert Schmidt, Margaret Ginter, Betty Gerbrandt, Delores Buhr, John Rempel, Evelyn Friesen, Margaret Kehler, Irene Klippenstein, Shirley Sawatzky, Ruth Klippenstein, Irene Artes, Evelyn Funk, Mary Fehr, Shirley Braun, Shirley Fehr, Tina Abrams, Lawrence Klassen, Albert C. Kroeker (director), Mrs. A.C. Kroeker (co-director), and Audrey Friesen (pianist).

Students and teachers of the Rhineland Agricultural Institute's five week winter short course, left to right, back row: Jake Wieler, Jake Heinrichs, Dick Wiebe, George Braun, Art Giesbrecht, Jake Driedger, Ernie Braun, and Henry Penner. Middle row: J.A. Fehr (instructor), Menno Siemens, JohnFehr, Cornelius Driedger, John Thiessen, John Toews, George Enns, and E.T. Howe (instructor). Front row: Alfred Wieler, Cornie Driedger, Pete Klassen, A. Lee (instructor), Pete Wieler, Dan Klassen, and Francis Zacharias.



Members of the Altona school board in 1954 were, left to right: Art Braun, D.M. Friesen (chairman), Jake C. Sawatzky, and D.D. Stobbe (secretary-treasurer). Missing from photo is Ed. J. Braun, the fifth trustee.





Altona Has Beens who lost to the Neubergthalers at the Schmockey Night March of Dimes fundraiser February, 1954, were, left to right, back row: Len Dueck, Eddie Braun, Art Heintz, Bob Edgar, Ed Buhr, Marcel Porter, Edgar Braun, Pete Hildebrand, Jake Franz, Jack Thiessen, Ted Neufeld, and Russ Mantey. Front row: Art Braun, H.H. Epp, Curt Schuppert, Menno Funk, Sid Lesperance, Ray Friesen, Irvin Braun, and Hugo Klippenstein.



This school safety patrol was organized in the spring of 1954. Left to right, front row: Kenny Loeppky, Bill Heinrichs, Kenny Hiebert, and John Fehr. Second row: Bob Derksen, Gordon Braun, Richard Schmidt, Willie Kehler, George Zacharias, Vernon Friesen, Rodney Sawatzky, and Bob Siemens. Third row: Const. Dunkelman, Leslie Friesen, John Dueck, Benny Reimer, Alfred Funk, Don Zacharias, Myron Kehler, Ron Funk, and Abe Wiens. Back row: Earl Dick, Paul Guenter, Bernard Toni, Gerald Loeppky, Rob Wiens, Eddy Olfert, Pete Derksen, Werner Friesen, and David Buhler. Students were recruited from Grades 4 to 10.

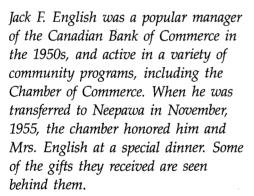


Altona telephone operators in June, 1955, were, left to right, back row: Sadie Kroeker, Nina Nikkel, Chief Operator Agatha Thiessen, Elma Giesbrecht, and Edith Braun. Front row: Mildred Harder, Gladys Heide, Anne Heppner, and Ruth Klippenstein.



D.D. Stobbe, RM of Rhineland secretary-treasurer (left), and Irvin Braun, assistant, dispense licence plates the day prior to the deadline in the old RM office on 4th Ave. NW in 1955.



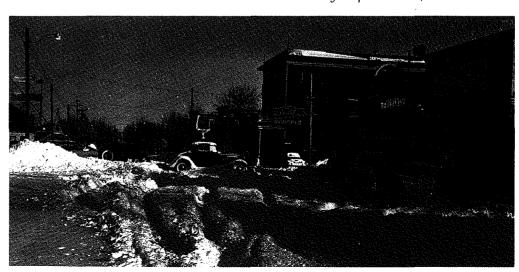




Winners in the ACT-CJOB Talent Night held in Altona in February, 1955, was this octet from the collegiate. Left to right, front: Myrla Braun and Loretta Neufeld. Middle: Judy Friesen and Verna Braun. Back row: Albert Braun, Gerald Loewen, Ray Dueck, and Ronald Hoeppner.



P.L. Dick, owner and manager of Rhineland Car Co. at his desk in the 1950s. P.L. was the company's first manager when it was formed in 1927 by five partners – three from Gretna and two from Altona. It was the first dealership in Altona to sell only cars. Until then cars had been sold as a sideline by implement dealers.



Altona Main St. after a February blizzard in 1955.





Al Loewen stands in the doorway of his Red & White store on Main St. in 1955. He joined his father, David Loewen, in a partnership in 1931, and became the sole owner when his father died in 1953.

Altona council poses proudly with the Banfield Trophy awarded to their village in 1955 by the Manitoba Good Roads Association for most improved village. Left to right, standing: Councillors Rudy Sawatzky, George H. Dueck, and P.H. Dyck. Seated: Councillor P.E. Braun, Mayor Isbrand Rempel, and Secretary-Treasurer Frank J. Kehler.

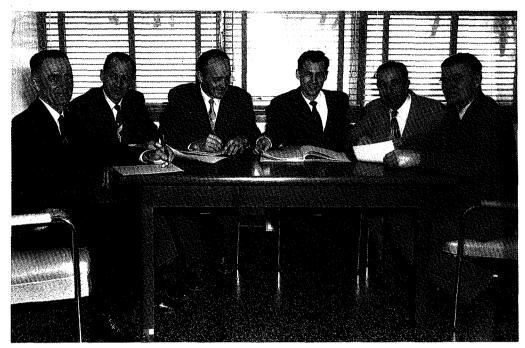


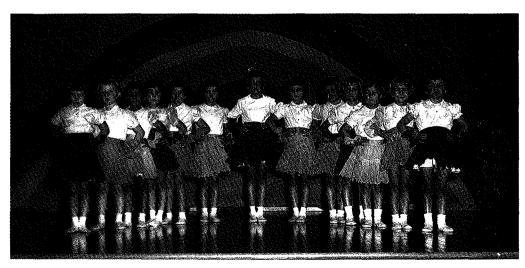
Every Christmas in the mid-'50s the Echo published a special advertising section called Susie Goes Shopping. In 1955 Margaret Loewen was Susie. Here her uncle, D.H. Reimer, manager of the dry goods department at Altona Co-op Service, shows Margaret a sweater just perfect for her daddy's Christmas present.

Teachers at the new collegiate, which included both junior and senior high school, were, left to right: J.G. Siemens (Grade 7), Henry T. Thiessen, John I. Warkentin, and A.C. Kroeker, principal, and Henry H. Goertzen (all senior high school grades), and J.E. Dyck (Grade 8).



In March, 1956, students from the junior and senior high school classes were called on to help move furnishings and equipment from former classrooms in the school built in 1938 to new premises in what was then the Altona Collegiate building on the west side of town. The move started Friday afternoon and was completed in time for classes to start in the new school Monday.





Primary students presented Rainbow Drill in the new collegiate auditorium that had recently been opened. Left to right: Phyllis Braun, Marlene Funk, Frieda Kehler, Delores Dyck, Rosalind Klippenstein, Bonnie Buhr, Edna Hiebert, Sharon Goertzen, Wilma Braun, Joanne Friesen, Margaret Guenther, Judy Froese, and Viola Braun.



This Model A roadster was owned by Don Braun and was restored by the fellows in this photo. Left to right: Toni Braun (deceased), Walter Braun, Gerald Loewen, Don Braun, and Ron Hoeppner. They made one trip to Winnipeg to show off their red beauty.



Elected to the Altona Collegiate student executive in 1956 were, left to right:
Don Braun (president), Rosemary
Howe (secretary), and Howard Krushel (vice-president).



Altona Collegiate students presented Shaw's drama Arms and the Man in the new collegiate's auditorium March 7 and 8, 1956. Members of the cast are, left to right, seated: Audrey Friesen (Raina), Irene Artes (Catherine), and Irmgard Wieler (Louka). Standing: Bradley Braun (Russian officer), Lawrence Buhr (Blunchli), Elmer Hildebrand (Petkoff), Frank Toews (Sergius), and Len Pokrant (Nikola). All were Grade 12 students.



The Maroons were the toast of the town in the 1950s. When this photo was taken in the spring of 1956 the team had captured the Manitoba Pool Elevators trophy by defeating their arch rivals, the Winkler Royals. It was the second successive year the Maroons had won in the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League playoffs. It was customary those years for the Chamber of Commerce to honor the players at an annual banquet at which their good sportsmanship was

always lauded. Left to right, standing: Walter B. Klippenstein (executive), Bob Friesen (equipment manager), Art Klassen, Harry Sulkers (playing coach), Alfred Ayotte, Bill Schroeder, Dr. J.C. Lohrenz (president), Jake Winter, Peter Hildebrand, Wilbert Funk, Dick Hildebrand, J.H. Penner (executive). Kneeling: Ron Funk (time keeper), Tony Penner, Henry Hildebrand, Frank Hildebrand, Elmer Enns, John Kehler, and Bernie Derksen.





David Hiebert's high-top rubber boots are barely high enough for him to navigate this muddy intersection at the Altona Collegiate (West Park School) in the spring of 1956.



Drainage during the spring thaw was a perennial problem during the 1950s, when heavy snowfall marked the Manitoba winters. Here the public works crew employs a crude but effective steaming device that applied steam to frozen culverts to speed thawing.

Before garbage collection started in 1956, the town stockpiled 350 garbage cans for resale to Altona residents at \$4 each.











Dr. Stephen S. Toni

Dr. Waldemar Artes

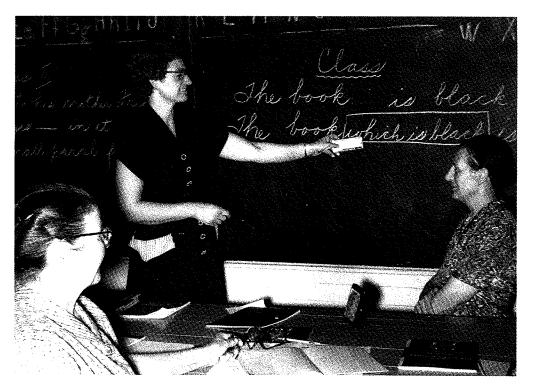
Dr. John Lohrenz

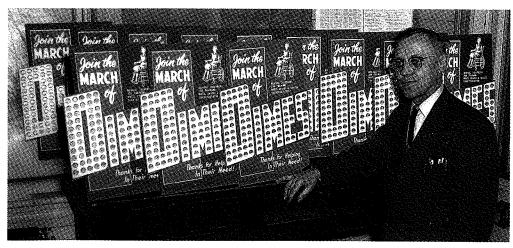
Dr. J.P. Boreskie (Gretna) Dr. Hans Fast (Dentist)

In 1956 these doctors were part of the Altona hospital's active medical staff:

Margaret Nikkel, of the nursing staff at the Altona hospital, demonstrates the croupette, a small oxygen tent used for babies, at the hospital open house May 11, 1956. Over 400 visitors toured parts of the hospital.







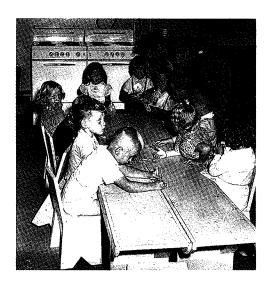
Frank J. Kehler with 12 cards that had been turned in to the town office in the 1957 March of Dimes campaign to raise funds for those disabled in the 1952 polio epidemic. Each card held 92 dimes.

Two Altona grandmothers, Mrs. J.W. Wiebe (left) and Mrs. Peter P. Peters, enrolled in a night school class with Mrs. H.H. Goertzen in the winter of 1956-57 to learn English. Both had missed learning English in their youth and now took the opportunity to attend classes twice a week. Mrs. Peters was preparing for a trip to Ontario, and Mrs. Wiebe had a son in the Yukon who wrote to her in English. She wanted to be able to read his letters and write back in English.

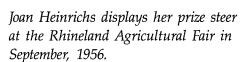


Mrs. Dave Loewen, a member of the Altona Women's Institute since 1936, receives the WI life membership pin and a certificate from Elizabeth Bergen, who made the presentation on behalf of Institute president Marge Hetterley, who was vacationing in California.

Taking time to pose for this photo during the 1956 Christmas rush at the Altona post office are, left to right: Margaret Schuppert, Joe Shaven (postmaster), Eve Shaven, Darcy Loewen, and Ed Unrau.

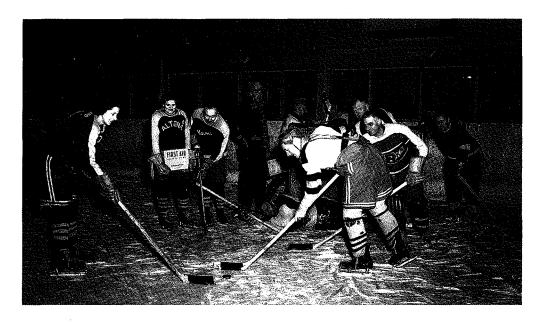


Katherine Bergen is shown handing out seatwork to the kindergarten class of youngsters at Daily Vacation Bible School in the basement of the Bergthaler church in the summer of 1956. DVBS enrolment that year was 251.











To assist in publicizing the upcoming Schmockey Nite game in 1957 the Echo published this photo of Eileen Walker facing off with Abe Enns of Rosenfeld, while Eva Braun stands ready with a first-aid kit and Dr. Toni and P.L. Dick observe the prostrate form of J.J. Bueckert. Behind the net is W.W. Heinrichs, and J.J. Janzen is in goal. To the right of Abe Enns is Oscar Martel, while Sally Braun leans wearily on the goalpost.



The tension is obvious on the faces of these CFAM employees as they anticipate the moment when CFAM's first broadcast will start. Left to right: Les Garside, supervisor of operations; Dennis Barkman, production manager, and Reuben Hamm, agricultural director.

These employees comprised the staff of Braun's IGA when it opened in March, 1957. Left to right: Corny Martens, Dan Dyck, Stanley Funk, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Braun, Harold Dyck, and Eva Siemens. A year after going on the air, CFAM celebrated its first birthday with an open house both afternoon and evening. Pictured here on the day of the open house are D.K. Friesen, manager (seated), with members of the staff, left to right: Ben and Esther Horch, Alvin Esau, Dennis Barkman, Elmer Hildebrand, Jake Peters, Christine Voth, Mrs. Jake Dueck, Dr. P.J. Olson, Trudy Wiebe, Larry Johnstone, and Leonard Enns. Over 1,000 visitors attended the open house.



John Letkeman's corner grocery store on Main St. at 5th Ave. NE was a convenience store that served neighborhood housewives and children well in the 1950s.





Ben Horch, music director at CFAM at the time, conducts the Community Choir. This photo was taken at a rehearsal of Handel's Messiah.

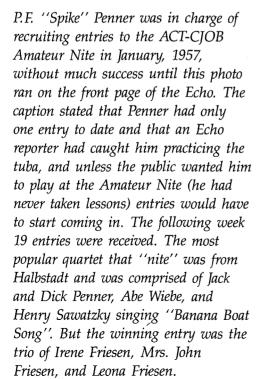




Dr. Erwin Penner came to Altona in July, 1957, after the departure of Dr. John Lohrenz to Montreal to study psychiatry. Dr. Penner left Altona on April 26, 1958, to practise medicine in Winnipeg.

When the P.A. Schellenberg home was damaged by fire on Saturday, October 5, 1957, fifteen volunteers from Mennonite Disaster Service (all from Altona) came the following Monday to help clean the house. Left to right: Mrs. J.H. Loewen, Mrs. A.S. Enns, Mrs. Peter Bergen, Mrs. Ted Friesen, Mrs. Otto Loewen, Mrs. A.A. Teichroeb, Mrs. D.G. Friesen, Mrs. P.A. Schellenberg, Nina Nikkel, Mrs. D. Loewen, Mrs. A.D. Friesen, C.N. Friesen, and Jacob Bergman.





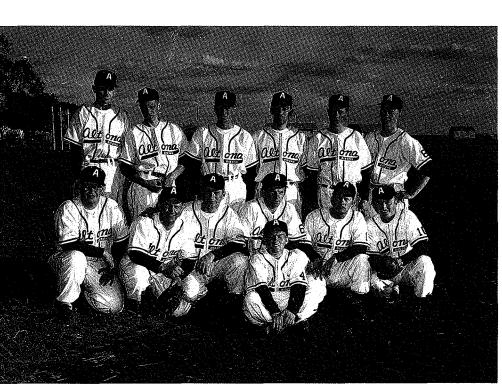


Altona Collegiate Aces basketball team, who had occupied the cellar in the Red River League, won the league championship and the Red River Valley Echo trophy. Left to right, front row: Coach David Dyck, Bob Schellenberg, Bill Kehler, Garry Pohl, and Jim Reimer. Back row: Joe Fast, Earl Dick, Dave Hoeppner, Bob Wieler, Ken Buhr, and Bernard Villeneuve.



Their backyard skating rink gone after a mid-February thaw, these children wait for winter to resume. Left to right: Peter Dyck, Harold Friesen, and David Glenn Friesen.





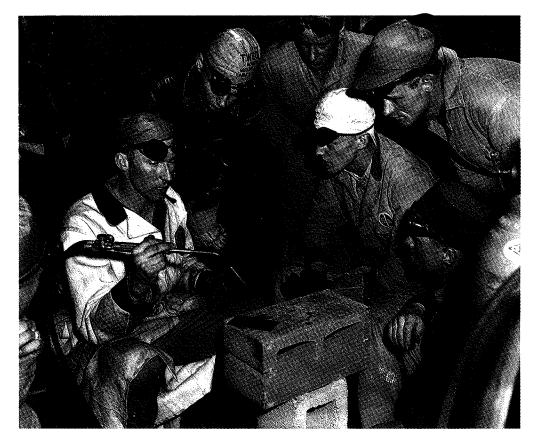
Altona Collegiate graduating class of 1958. Left to right, front row: Marilyn Stobbe, Marilyn Janzen, Shirley Braun, Jolene Lesperance, Jane Schimonek, Mary Loewen, Marg Hamm, Dora Toews, Mabel Dueck, Lorna Wall, Ruby Driedger, and Joyce Kehler. Second row: Marg Peters, Judith Friesen, Gladys Fehr, Cliff Peters, Alfred Klassen, Bernhard Penner, David Heinrichs, Frank Bergen, Thomas Milne, Esther Giesbrecht, Marilyn McVey, and Sara Bergen. Back row: Patricia Berg, Ken Klassen, Raymond Krahn, Eric Leuzinger, David Sawatzky, David Hoeppner, Howard Krushel, Irvin Kehler, David Kroeker, and Marlene Ерр.

The 1958 Altona Bisons pose for a team picture in their smart new uniforms. Left to right, back row: Harold Buhr, Joe Fast, Ken Klassen, Jake Winter, Dick Hildebrand, and Henry Klassen. Front row: Elmer Hildebrand, John Kehler, Abe Dueck (coach), Pete Hildebrand, Elmer Enns, Don Penner, and Henry Derksen (bat boy).

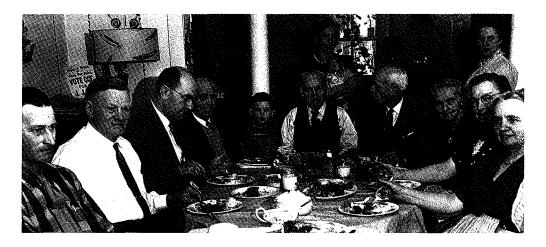
P.L. Dick and Drush Wiebe pose behind the wheel of a Model T parked beside a 1958 Edsel. The Model T was obsolete at the time and was only brought in to the Rhineland Car Ford dealership as a museum piece. However, the Edsel followed the T into obsolescence only a few years later.



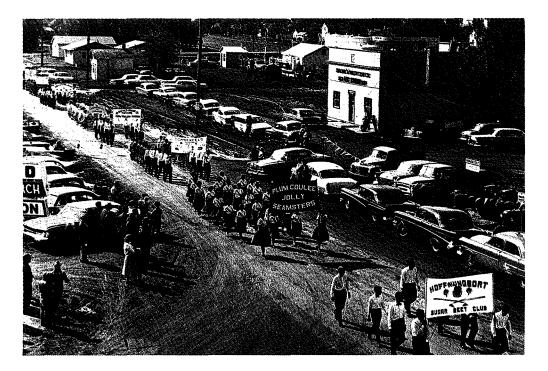
Twenty-four farmers enrolled in an arc and acetylene welding course offered by the extension service of the Department of Agriculture in Altona in February, 1958. Holding the torch is instructor Bill Ransom. Gathered around him are some of his students, Jake Penner, Grimsby; Alfred Wieler, Rosenort; Bill Heinrichs, Altona; John Hildebrand, Gretna, and Pete Braun, Langevin.



ALIONA 1930-193



Family members gathered in Altona for the 94th birthday of Johann Siemens, are left to right: Jake Enns, Henry Wiebe, John Ginter, John J. Siemens, little Glen Siemens, Johann Siemens, standing is Mrs. Jake Enns holding son Leonard, Jake J. Siemens, Anne Siemens, Mrs. John Ginter, Elfrieda Siemens, and Mrs. Jake J. Siemens.





W.C. "Wally" Miller, minister of public works in the Manitoba cabinet, raises his hands in a victory salute the night of his last election on June 16, 1958, after defeating his nearest opponent, Oscar Martel, 1,686 to 854. Between 1936 and 1959, the year he died, he was repeatedly elected in Rhineland - first as a Conservative and then as a member of the Coalition government, and last as a Liberal-Progressive. He held several cabinet posts. The one he relished most was minister of education. W.C. Miller Collegiate in Altona is named after him.

4-H clubs from the Rhineland agricultural district march down Main St. in the Rhineland Agricultural Society's annual fair parade. The balcony of the Rhineland Hotel provided an excellent vantage point for the photographer who took this picture.



Ernie Donin, water diviner (centre), and driller Paul Slusarchuk (right) and his assistant take time out in their search for fresh water for Altona in June, 1958. Donin guaranteed water for the town but his method of finding it failed him. He claimed his blood pressure rose and his feet ached when he walked over an underground water source. They found water but it was too salty to be of any use.

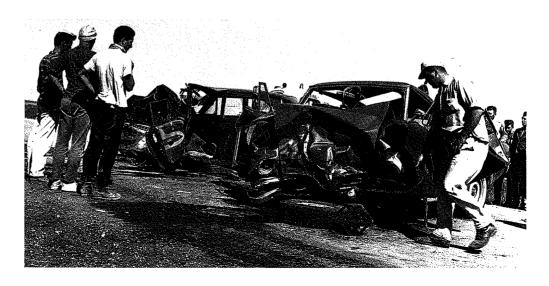
Serious highway accidents were common during the '50s. Paved highways that reduced dust and improved visibility, plus better engineered highways and driver training programs for both new and experienced drivers, greatly reduced injuries and fatalities among drivers in later years.



After Ernie Donin failed to find a source of potable water Joe Malinsky came with a mechanical apparatus that supposedly was sure-fire. Here he and his son combine their efforts on behalf of the town. He was so sure of his ability to find underground water that he offered to pay drilling expenses if he failed. He failed and was out \$1,000. The biggest gain in the water search was Paul Slusarchuk, the driller. He was paid in spite of all the failures.



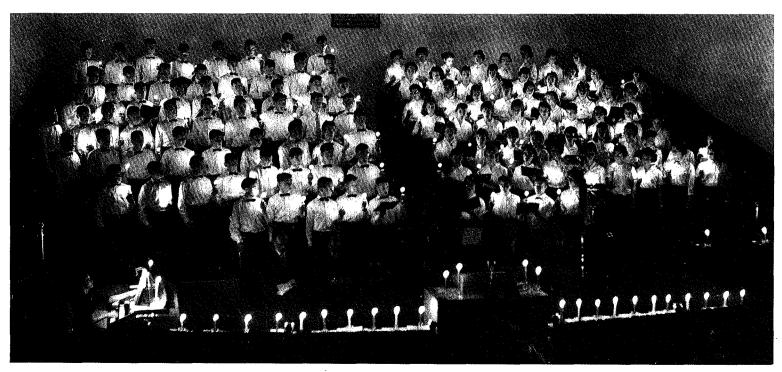
The high school freshies of 1958 found the big water search a perfect subject to poke some fun at on Freshie Day. From right to left: Harold Kroeker, with a willow rod, is the diviner; Vernon Friesen is the driller; Ken Loeppky is the tester/taster with the verdict SALT, and Dave Reimer represents the frustrated Altonan carrying water in buckets from Neche.





The many ditches and poor drainage was an open invitation to youngsters to turn grain doors, wooden sidewalks, or any other lighter-than-water materials into rafts.

The Altona Collegiate choir consisting of 125 singers under the direction of Albert Kroeker perform at their first candlelight service in the Bergthaler Church.

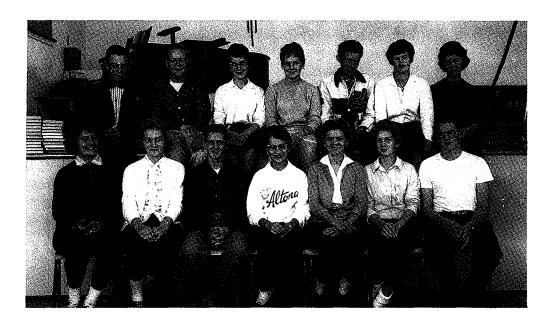


Henry H. Striemer was manager of the Canadian Mennonite Relief depot in Altona in the 1950s. In July, 1958, it contained 75 cartons containing 571 Christmas bundles (4,742 lbs.) for shipment overseas. Packing a carton is Mrs. A.J. Kehler. The others are, left to right, Mrs. Henry Striemer, Mrs. Henry Peters, and Mrs. FW. Neufeld.





In 1958 the Altona Volunteer Fire Brigade gathered in front of the old fire hall on Main Street for this photo. Left to right, back row: D.M. Loeppky, Henry Fehr, Frank Falk, Gordon Heinrichs, Ben Kehler, Henry Stoesz, Larry Dueck, and Peter Wolfe. Front row: Rudy Sawatzky, Ferdinand Dueck, Peter Stoesz, Edwin Abel, Ben Neufeld (chief), I.C. Hiebert, Menno Funk, and Jake Dyck.





Altona council members elected in 1959 are shown here in the council chamber of Altona's first village office. Left to right: Councillors Abe Dueck and P.E. Braun, Mayor Isbrand Rempel, Secretary-Treasurer Frank J. Kehler, and Councillors Dave Klassen and Dave Zacharias.

Altona Collegiate class representatives in 1959 were, left to right, back row: Grade 9, Sam Schellenberg, Carl Block, Leona Hildebrand, and Irene Dueck; Grade 10, Lawrence Kehler, Esther Toews, and Mary Anne Kehler. Front row: Grade 11B, Kathy Thiessen and Darlene Siemens; Grade 11A, Kenneth Loewen and Marjorie Howe; Grade 12, Patricia Froese, Corliss Brown, and Ken Buhr.

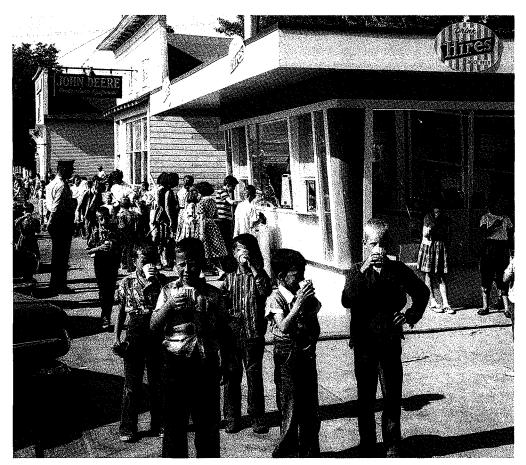


In 1959 Jerry Rempel was attending Grade 11 at the Altona Collegiate when he was called up by the Detroit Red Wings to play hockey on their Lethbridge team in their farm system. Jerry was 17 years old at the time and had been an important right-winger on the Altona Maroons team for some time. He dropped out of professional hockey while playing for the New York Rovers. He returned to Altona to play for the Maroons for a few more years before retiring.

The Tabea Neahverein of the Bergthaler church enjoyed an outing at the H.L. Braun farm and had this picture taken on that occasion (late 1950s). Left to right, standing: Sarah Reimer, Mrs. A.D. Friesen, Mrs. H.A. Thiessen, Mrs. H.L. Braun, Mrs. J.N.H. Funk, Mrs. J.J. Janzen, Mrs. John L. Fehr, Mrs. A.B. Klassen, Mrs. I.P. Friesen, Tina Giesbrecht, Mrs. F.W. Neufeld, Mrs. John Kehler, Mrs. Jacob H. Reimer, Mrs. David Loewen, and Mrs. B.J. Klippenstein. Seated: Mrs. Isaac Friesen, Mrs. John E. Nikkel, Mrs. H.C. Epp, Mrs. J.D. Harder, Mrs. Jacob Rempel, Mrs. William Enns, Mrs. P.P. Kehler, Mrs. J.E. Dyck, Mrs. P.D. Reimer, Mrs. Henry Born, Mrs. B.I. Sawatzky, and Mrs. Frank Braun.

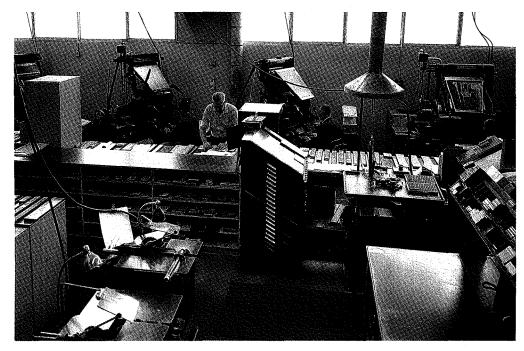
Mr. and Mrs. A.B. Klassen opened Altona's first dairy bar on Main St. at 4 p.m. Friday, June 26, 1959 – a most appropriate time for school children. In a full page ad in The Echo Mr. Klassen had promised free root beer to the first 1,000 children to come to his bar. The following day, Saturday, he dispensed free ice cream cones. Judging from this photo the local constabulary was on hand to provide crowd control.







Altona teacher, J.E. Dyck, sits in his empty classroom on the day of his retirement June 31, 1959. The room may have been empty of children but it was full of fond memories of 47 years as a teacher.



Soon after Friesen's move to new premises on 6th St. NE, new printing equipment and staff were added. A battery of four Linotypes and Intertypes greatly increased production.



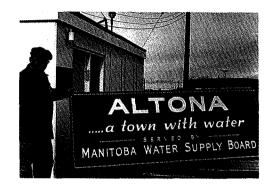
# 1960-1969: A Time of Many Changes

n the 1960s many of Altona's old landmarks disappeared. In 1960 the old mill, which stood unused for over ten years, was dismantled and sold. During the '60s, also, three of Altona's four grain elevators were either moved or torn down after being purchased by the Altona Co-operative Elevator Association. The disappearance of the old and the appearance of the new were characteristics of this decade.

## **Industrial Development**

One of the lessons that had impressed itself upon community leaders in Altona during the post-war period was that the town would have to broaden its economic base if it wished to provide the citizens with a promising future. After the establishment of CVO and CFAM, there were few new industries and businesses. The reason for this, as the Echo repeatedly pointed out, was the lack of a proper water supply. Growth was not possible until this was assured. The coming of the waterworks in 1961 did not mean an immediate rush of new businesses. Yet the event did coincide with an upsurge in activity within the community. Water made further industrial development in Altona feasible. The formation of Altona Industrial Developments Ltd. in 1960 was to provide facilities for industries wishing to establish themselves in Altona. The first industry to sign an agreement with A.I.D. was the Aetna Garment Company of Winnipeg, which established a clothing factory in Altona. A.I.D. also attracted a readymix concrete plant and later rented premises to Continental Crafts Ltd. During this time Altona, along with 12 other towns, also formed the Pembina Valley Development Corporation (PVDC) in 1964. This did provide some new businesses, but not as many as the town had hoped for.

Two existing businesses, however, experienced tremendous growth during the '60s. One was the biggest homegrown industry in terms of the value



Dave M. Loeppky, public works foreman, with the sign that was erected in November, 1961, and stood on Highway 30 at the north entrance of Altona for many years.

Facing page: Dozens of Altonans ran for their lives when this 98 ft. high Pool elevator threatened to topple as five tractors tugged it off its foundation. It didn't topple, however, and was moved from Altona to Plum Coulee by Champagne Movers of Winnipeg. The 50,000-bushel capacity structure and its moving equipment weighed an estimated 190 tons.



Jake Loewen, president of Loewen Manufacturing Co. Ltd., displays a photo of the low-bed trailer, whose design won his company an award of excellence from the Manitoba Design Institute in 1966. Loewen had also received a merit award for a bearing kit in 1963.



Part of the EMM Church congregation gathered for the sodturning ceremony for their new church building in 1968. The new 48 ft. x 90 ft. church would have a seating capacity of 450. There would also be a spacious 20 ft. x 36 ft. side entrance. Total cost was estimated at \$53,000. of goods produced, namely, Co-op Vegetable Oils. Both in terms of sales and in its processing facilities, great strides were made.

The '60s were also years of growth for D. W. Friesen & Sons. Both the stationery and printing departments were expanded with new sales outlets throughout western Canada. Plant facilities were added and the staff increased.

Another one of Altona's cherished local industries was the Loewen Manufacturing Company located in the Old Altona village. Loewen manufactured various components for farm machinery and even auto accessories.

Between 1961 and 1971 Altona created 195 new manufacturing jobs. But commercial growth was very slow. That prompted the town council, in 1965, to hire a Winnipeg planner to carry out an urban renewal study. It recommended a renewal of the downtown core and making development for housing possible. Out of this was to come the Altona Mall, which was built in the next decade.

#### Schools

The 1960s were years of change for education in Altona, as they were for all of Manitoba. It was during this decade that the school division was formed. This saw the consolidation of schools, and necessitated the building of new schools in Altona. In January, 1966, W. C. Miller Collegiate was opened. It was, and is, a comprehensive high school with all necessary facilities.

# **Developments for Special Needs**

Another new development in Altona at this time was the creation of a facility for the handicapped. The Occupational Training Centre was started in a renovated building on Main St. In January, 1960, the association started a class for eight mentally handicapped children. This was later to be developed into an institution for adults who could also be trained vocationally. At the present time this institution is providing employment for adult handicapped people.

In the early 1960s also, the churches of the community combined to form a separate society to build a home for the aged. This opened in the spring of 1962. It contained 44 beds and was built for people who could not look after themselves. In 1966, a 16-unit apartment building, just north of the home, was built for people who could manage by themselves.

## Churches

In the 1960s there were some important changes in Altona's church life. Existing churches made significant accommodations in order to maintain or regain the interest of the young people and to meet the changing needs of the

times. But also new churches, both Mennonite and non-Mennonite, were organized.

In the Bergthaler Church the '60s saw the shift in language from German to English. That resulted in services in two languages to accommodate both the older people and the rest of the congregation. In 1966 also, women were granted voting rights in the church. Women deacons were also installed. It was during this time that the church became a more autonomous congregation within the larger organization. A leading minister, Henry J. Gerbrandt, was elected in 1960 with a salary and with certain functions that had till now been reserved for the bishop.

On April 14, 1962, the Altona Mennonite Church was organized by a group of individuals that attempted to meet the needs of existing as well as new community members in the matters of language and church life. The formation of this church challenged existing ones to make some necessary changes.

The Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church followed a pattern similar to the Bergthaler Church in that it became a more autonomous congregation. It called its own pastor in 1960. Language changes and women's voting rights followed.

The Sommerfelder and Reinlander churches were slower in their adoption of new forms but also made some significant changes during this period. In the Sommerfelder Church there was some accommodation on the language issue in that Sunday school classes were held in both languages. Both churches also began strong young people's programs to reach the youth in their midst.

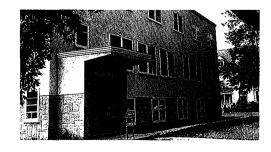
It was in the '60s also that community churches began to co-operate in some things. One of these was the Daily Vacation Bible School held for children each summer. Many churches combined to run one school. Another venture was in holding Eastertime worship services. For some years two churches united to hold combined services. Later on the area ministerial would sponsor community Passion Week services. There was also co-operation in evangelistic crusades and providing worship services at the Ebenezer and Personal Care Homes.

## **Recreational Developments**

In the 1960s recreation emerged as an integral part of community life. It was seen to be as important as a vigorous economy, good schools, and active churches. One of the clearest indications of this strengthened emphasis was the involvement of the town council in recreational and cultural affairs. Besides operating the arena, it took on new projects such as the building of tennis courts,



David Schulz retired as bishop of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in 1964, due to ill health. He had been ordained a Bergthaler minister at the age of 25 in 1920 and was elected bishop five years later when Jacob Hoeppner stepped down. He controlled the church with a strong hand and during World War II helped many a young Mennonite boy seeking Conscientious Objector status. Under his direction the Bergthaler Church grew from 1,162 members worshipping in three churches, to over 3,000 members and 20 houses of worship.



Elim Bible Institute in 1967.



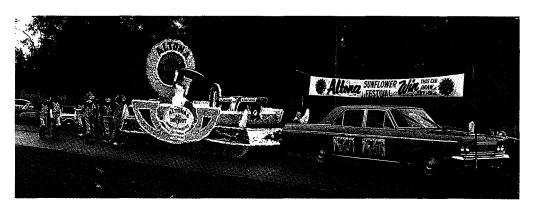
Aerial photo of the Altona Centennial Park on the day of the official opening of the swimming pool on July 2, 1964. supporting a library, and providing space for an arts group. Later on it would also hire a recreation director to plan summertime activities.

The best example of the town council's deeper concern for recreation was the Altona Centennial Park, established between 1962 and 1964. In 1962 the Altona-Rhineland Parks Board was elected to develop the park. It purchased a 10-acre piece of land in Altona's northwest corner, started planning and began to raise funds. The park was officially opened on July 1, 1964. It contained a new swimming pool, ball diamonds, picnic areas and green spaces for relaxation and renewal. It became the focal point for recreational events and community social life in the summer months.

Another sign of the increasing priority given to recreation was the major improvement made in Altona's two most used recreation facilities – the curling rink and the hockey arena. The curling rink received artificial ice in 1967, which enabled the curling club to lengthen its season by two months. The arena was outfitted with artificial ice facilities the next year.

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The development of all kinds of new activities in the '60s provided yet further evidence of the impulse to realize Altona's recreational potential. An Associated Arts Group was formed. A local library provided access to a permanent collection of donated books as well as the rotating collection of the University of Manitoba Extension Service books. A community choir and community band gave local people a chance to perform, while community concerts brought in outside talents. In addition, the Women's Institute, an Elks Club, and an Optimists Club provided opportunities for socializing and service.



An annual event that quickly became one of the year's highlights was the Sunflower Festival. The two-day July festival began in 1965 and was a continuation of the RAS fall fair that had been on the decline for some years. In 1967 the festival was taken over by the RAS. It had business floats, parades which included 4-H club members and contests of various kinds, ball tournaments, handicraft and baking displays, a small midway, and an auction sale. Subsequent festivals were similar to the first one. But a shift came in the form of an increasing emphasis on Altona's Mennonite cultural heritage. Mennonite foods and a Low German program added a further dimension to the community event.

## Conclusion

The '60s were times of change for Altona. Old patterns and ways of life were becoming obsolete. The town was faced with the choice of changing or running the risk of becoming insignificant. It met the challenge by changing to meet new needs in the community. That process was to continue in the '70s and '80s.

Information for this chapter has been taken from Altona by Esther Epp-Tiessen.

An estimated 14,000 persons attended Altona's first Sunflower Festival in 1965. The biggest parade ever in Altona lined up on the morning of July 30 with Mayor Stephen Juba, of Winnipeg, as parade marshal.



The first queen of the Sunflower Festival was Theresa Villeneuve. Princesses Beverly Porter (left) and Cherry Larson adjust the royal robes.

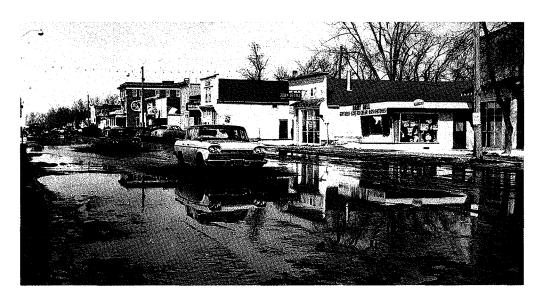


Eleven hundred fans turned out at the Altona arena to honor Wilbert Funk and his family in March, 1960. Wilbert had played on the blueline for the Maroons for 11 years and would turn his attention to coaching Altona boys' hockey for another 30 years. Shown here with some of the gifts presented to Wilbert and his wife Sally are four of their children – Richard, Ronald, Jean, and Laurel.

Altona Main St. looking north from Centre Ave. in the spring of 1961.



A well on 7th Ave. NE was still a source of water for households in that part of town on July 20, 1960, but a vote on a money by-law to finance a town water distribution system was only six days away. Mrs. Henry Dueck and Mrs. Henry Abrams and their children were hoping this would be one of the last times they would draw water from the well before the by-law would be approved.







Altona council's campaign to persuade residents to approve a money by-law that would finance a water distribution system for the town came to a satisfactory end on July 26, 1960. Mayor Isbrand Rempel holds up a placard announcing the outcome of the by-law vote, while Councillors P.E. Braun, Abe Dueck, and Dave Zacharias show their obvious approval. Work on the water system started almost immediately and was officially opened the following summer.

The season of 1959-60 was another highly successful one for the Maroons as they were again crowned champions of the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League. Left to right, back row: Abe Dueck (president), Elmer Hildebrand (secretary), John Goertzen, Wilbert Funk, Wayne Busse, Dick Hildebrand, Ed Martens, Dennis Martel, Joe Fast, Dave Stoesz, Jake Heinrichs (executive), Jake Friesen (executive), Peter Letkeman (scorekeeper). Front row: Harry Sulkers, Jerry Rempel, Elmer Enns, Frank Hildebrand, Pete Hildebrand, John Kehler, Jake Hildebrand, George Zacharias (timekeeper), and Gordon Braun (equipment manager). The Maroons also captured the Molloy Cup that year by defeating the St. Pierre team 3-1 on January 25.

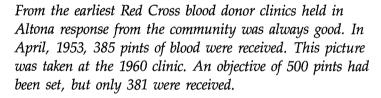


Premier Duff Roblin was the keynote speaker at the official opening of the Altona water distribution system on June 26, 1961. Schoolchildren were given the afternoon off to attend the ceremony at the reservoir site on 6th Ave. SE.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Reimer opened the Four Winds Motel on Highway 30 in November, 1961, with eight units.

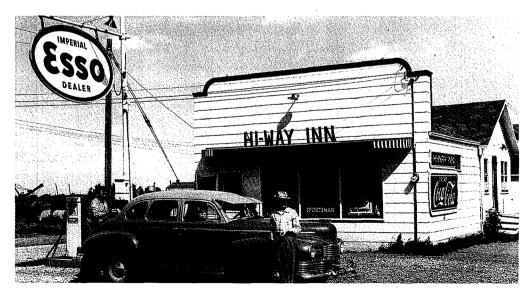








After a number of futile attempts to put the Altona mill back into operation, its owner, H.H.W. Reimer, of Steinbach, finally sold the building to members of the Blumengart Hutterite Colony for \$850. It was torn down and the salvaged materials shipped to Blumengart for re-use.



The original Hi-Way Inn was located at the intersection of 6th St. and 4th Ave. NE and for most of the 1960s was owned and operated by John and Sally Braun. Abe Wiebe relaxes in front of his car while John Braun cleans the back window. John and Sally were famous for their double-decker ice cream cones. Their convenience-style store had a few tables in the rear for snacks and light meals.

The Economy Store served its neighborhood in northeast Altona for almost three decades – from the early 1950s to 1978, when it was dismantled. Some of the owners were Martin Harms, Henry Wiebe and John Hildebrand, Abram Wiebe, Peter Dueck, Cornelius Stoesz, and Henry Friesen. It was located immediately west of the hospital on Fifth Ave. NE.



P.H. Dyck's Esso Service and Volkswagen dealership on Centre Ave. W in 1961.





George P. Wiebe's Imperial Service on Centre Ave. in 1961.



Sid Lesperance with Gloria Gray and Allen Lesperance in Sid's Barber & Beauty Shop apply their skills on unidentified customers in 1961.



Cutting the ribbon at the official opening of the new Credit Union building in October, 1961, was Dave J. Harder, first president of the Altona Credit Union, while the 1961 president, John Enns, looks on.



During the late '50s and up to the mid-'60s considerable expansion took place at CVO. The commercial seed plant had been established, large volumes of storage facilities were added, and the plant site was taking on the shape of its magnitude of the '80s.



Fifteen year service awards were presented to these CVO employees at the co-op's annual meeting in 1961. They had all joined CVO in its first year, several of them on day one. They are, left to right, standing: Menno Funk, Bill Kehler, Cornie Friesen, George H. Dyck, and Jack Ginter. Seated: Jake Friesen, John Enns, Ed Buhr, and Peter Doell.



The Dr. William Loewen family soon after moving to Altona in the early 1960s. Left to right: Randy, Geraldine, Dr. Loewen, Mrs. Selma Loewen, and Beverly.

Runners-up in the northern division of the Pembina Canadian Little League in June, 1963, was this team comprised of, left to right, back row: Assistant coach Joe Villeneuve, Dennis Stoesz, Reg Wall, Donald Stoesz, Jim Hildebrand, Stan Toews, Leroy Kehler, and coach Gerry Rempel. Front row: Dennis Braun, David Penner, Larry Wiebe, Wally Adams, Sheldon Friesen, Teddy Friesen, and Terry Braun.





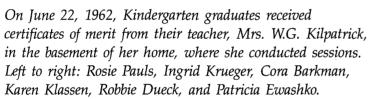
Speaking at the official opening of the Ebenezer Home on June 10, 1962, is Premier Duff Roblin. Other speakers and officials on the platform with the premier are, left to right: Rev. David Schulz, J.M. Froese, MLA for Rhineland, W.E. Dueck, reeve of the RM of Rhineland, Mayor Isbrand Rempel, Rev. J.G. Froese, Premier Roblin, George H. Penner, Ebenezer administrator, A.J. Thiessen, chairman of the ceremony, Ed. Pokrant, chairman of the board of Ebenezer Home for the Aged, Mrs. Roblin, John B. Braun, and W.F. Noyes, superintendent of Elderly Housing for Manitoba.

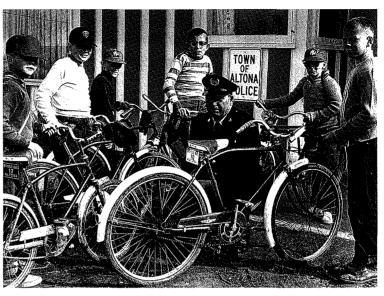


Posing with their new fire truck in front of their new fire hall are members of the 1963 Altona fire brigade. Left to right, standing: D.M. Loeppky (assistant fire chief), Henry E. Abrams, John C. Loewen, J.F. Rempel, Jake Franz, Pete Friesen, and I.C. Hiebert. Front row: Menno Hildebrand, Ben K. Neufeld (chief), Abe Kroeker, Edwin Abel, and Peter Wolfe. Also on the brigade that year but missing from the picture were: Gordon Heinrichs, Wilbert Funk, Don Penner, Menno Funk, Died Froese, Ken Loeppky, Ben R. Kehler, and Ben Wiebe.

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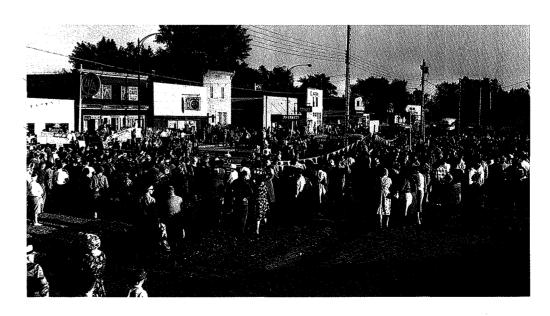






Const. Joe Villeneuve checks the bikes of a group of boys applying for bike licences in May, 1963. Left to right: Steven Penner, David Penner, Stanley Franz, Ralph Villeneuve, Const. Villeneuve, Randy Klippenstein, and Edward Wiebe.

A crowd of 1,500-2,000 people gathered on Main St. August 31, 1963, for the final event of Blacktop Day – speeches from Premier Duff Roblin, Mayor Isbrand Rempel and Reeve W.E. Dueck, and a band concert. It was held to commemorate the start of Altona's street paving program. The day had started with a townwide sale.



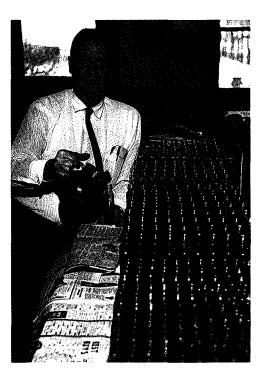




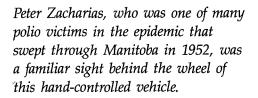
A summer rain that dumped four inches on Altona on July 25, 1963, turned the Elmwood school grounds on 4th Ave. NE into a lake made for children.

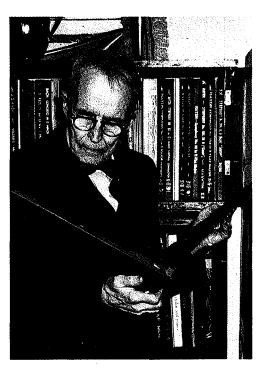
Ground-breaking ceremony at the Altona Mennonite Church September 23, 1963. Left to right: Peter Derksen (foreman to the contractor), Ted Friesen, Frank Epp, Dennis Barkman, William Loewen, and John Unrau. AMC was the first English-language Mennonite church in Altona.

Henry H. "Cressy" Epp had a flourishing business in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, when this picture was taken. He started selling John R. Cressy products in 1930, peddling them farmto-farm and door-to-door. In 1955 he obtained the formula and some basic machinery and started mixing and packaging a variety of extracts, food flavorings, liniments, and ointments in his shop at 2nd Ave. and 2nd St. NE. Mr. Epp supplied dealers in western Canada as well as customers in the Altona area. He retired from the Cressy business in the summer of 1990 at the age of 82, after 60 years as salesman, manufacturer, and distributor. His dealers ranged from Prince Edward Island to Alberta and he sold his products by mail order from coast to coast. Four of his granddaughters in Winnipeg took over the production and distribution of the products from their grandfather. Besides his Cressy business, Mr. Epp also served as manager of the Halbstadt branch of the Altona Credit Union for 16 years, and as Altona town councillor for 12 years.









Ludwig (Lou) Erk, was a native of Hannover, Germany, who came to Canada at the age of 19. He studied at the MCI in Gretna for a few years and after a brief stint in teaching turned to pharmacy. He first opened a drug store in Gretna, then in Winnipeg, and came to Altona to operate a pharmacy in 1935. He was a great lover of music and was reputed to have the largest collection of "seventy-eights" in western Canada. He had a strong musical influence on people like Dr. S.S. Toni, Ted Friesen, and Bill Braun, who gathered at his home regularly to discuss music and listen to Erk's records. This photo shows him with part of his record collection.





Altona council 1964, left to right, standing: Menno Funk and Peter Wolfe. Seated: H.H. Epp, Mayor William Braun, Secretary-Treasurer Frank J. Kehler, and John Enns.

In August, 1963, these members of the Tabea Sewing Circle of the Bergthaler Church prepared 57 chickens for canning for the Ebenezer Home for the Aged. They are, left to right: Mrs. George Dueck, Mrs. J.F. Kehler, Mrs. P.F. Rempel, Mrs. I.P. Friesen, Mrs. H.M. Wiebe, Mrs. John G. Kroeker, Mrs. John Heinrichs, Mrs. H.P. Kehler, Mrs. P.H. Dyck, Mrs. J.J. Janzen, Mrs. H.L. Braun, Mrs. George Warkentin, Mrs. J.H. Funk, Mrs. John H. Loewen, Agnes Hildebrand, Mrs. F.W. Neufeld, Mrs. William Neufeld, Mrs. P.P. Funk, Mrs. P.E. Braun, Mrs. Dave Loewen. Mrs. Henry Born, and Mrs. H.F. Klippenstein.

In the fall of 1963 the Altona
Collegiate flag football team was
runner-up in the chase for top honors
in the Rhineland-Stanley flag football
playoffs. Left to right, front row: David
Wiebe, Barry Braun, Ben Heinrichs,
Dennis Siemens, and Cliff Kehler.
Middle row: Jim Braun, Gerald
Gerbrandt, Joe Braun, Brian
Hildebrand, Lloyd Penner, and George
Giesbrecht. Back row: John Gerbrandt,
Harvey Heinrichs, Kenn Driedger, Pete
Wiebe, and Rod Stoesz.



On December 4, 1963, the chamber of commerce honored Mayor and Mrs. Isbrand Rempel, and Dr. and Mrs. Stephen S. Toni. Mayor Rempel was retiring after 10 years in public office, and Dr. Toni, had served the community as a physician for over 25 years, during which time he had delivered more than 3,000 babies. Dr. Toni also served as the first president of the Altona Chamber of Commerce. Left to right: Dr. and Mrs. Toni, Mrs. Rempel, and Mayor Rempel.



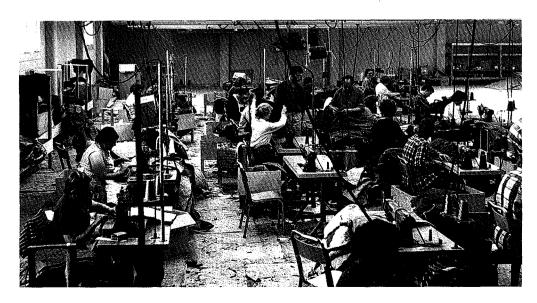
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Mayor William Braun officially opened the Altona Rifle Club's indoor shooting range in the Elks hall in February, 1964. Left to right: P.H. Driedger (instructor), Mrs. Ernie Schmidt (assistant secretary), Ernie Schmidt (instructor), Charles Stevenson (past president Manitoba Federation of Game & Fish), Myron Woroschuk (instructor), Joe Knowles (vice-chairman of the Manitoba Federation), Mayor Braun, Mrs. Ralph Wride (secretary), and Const. Ralph Wride (director of the club).

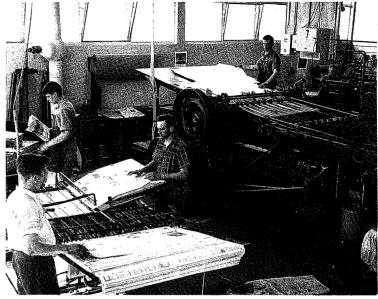


CVO never took up Pres-to-log production again after fire levelled the Pres-to-log building in a spectacular morning blaze in 1964. The fire ended 18 years of making fireplace logs from sunflower hulls.



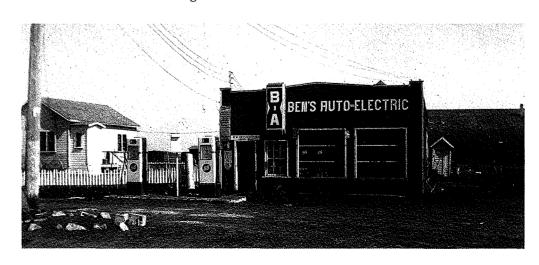
The Aetna Garment factory was humming with orders when this picture was taken in March, 1965. Slacks and work pants for all ages were being produced for sale in many major cities across Canada. The plant employed 62 workers. It opened in December, 1961, with Sam Pesochin of Winnipeg as president.





Canada's new red and white flag was hoisted to the top of the flag pole in front of the post office for the first time at noon February 15, 1965. With Mayor William Braun (left), is Ed Unrau, building superintendent of the post office, who ran the flag up the pole. In the 1960s Echo publishing day (Wednesdays) involved most of the 'back shop' staff. At far right pressmen D. G. Friesen and John Heide (who is feeding the Miehle flatbed press) see to the press's smooth operation. In the foreground Don Penner and John Froese feed printed pages into the folder, while Bob Wieler stacks papers that will go to the mailing room.

Ben Heinrichs' shop on 6th St. NE in August, 1966.

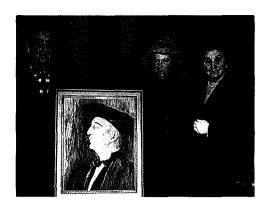




Steve Juba, mayor of Winnipeg, served as parade marshall at the first Altona Sunflower Festival in 1965. While he was in Altona he presented Altona's mayor, William Braun (left), with this framed certificate declaring him an honorary citizen of Winnipeg. Looking on are Warner Jorgenson, Member of Parliament for Provencher, and Lawrence Williams, chairman of the first Sunflower Festival.



Fourteen contestants entered the first Sunflower Festival queen pageant in 1965. Left to right: Marie Wahl, Altona (sponsored by the Altona implement dealers), Darlene Latatski, Neche (sponsored by Altona Coin Laundry), Edna Wiebe, Altona (D.W. Friesen & Sons), Bonnie Buhr, Altona (Dot's Restaurant), Carol Fehr, Altona (Beckert Motors), Cheryl Berg, Cavalier (Cavalier Lions Club), Lena Hoeppner, Altona (Red River Mutual Insurance Co.), Valerie Harder, Plum Coulee (Plum Coulee Kinsmen), Beverly Porter, Altona (Altona Hospital District), Donna Neufeld, Altona (Women's Institute), Theresa Villeneuve, Altona (Elks Lodge), Margaret Bednar, Dufresne (Pete's Inn, Steinbach), Dianne Reimer, Altona (Co-op Vegetable Oils), and Cherry Larson, Neche (City of Neche).



The portrait of W.C. Miller that hangs in the collegiate named after him was unveiled at the school's grand opening on January 31, 1966. Shown here at the unveiling ceremony are, left to right: Ernest Mueller, brother of W.C. Miller; Mrs. J. Belcher Smith, who painted the portrait, and Mrs. Antonie Belcher, sister of Mr. Miller.

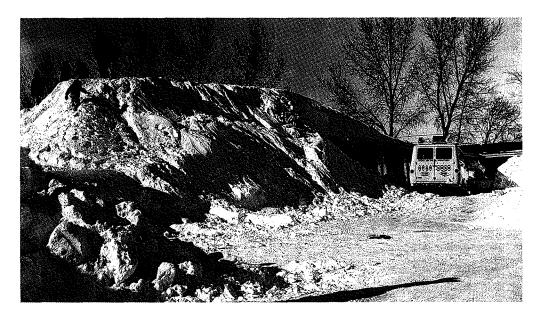


W.C. Miller Collegiate in 1967.



In 1966 the Altona school band was made up of a small nucleus of players from W.C. Miller Collegiate but mostly of students from West Park junior high, and were under the direction of Bill Janzen. Left to right, back row: (trumpet section) Dennis Klassen, Peter Braun, John Braun, Paul Hildebrand, Donald Loewen, David Penner, Ken Penner, Bill Janzen (band leader), Maynard Loewen, Bonnie Reimer, Janet Schmidt, Donald Stoesz, Arnold Kehler, Gloria Hildebrand, Gloria Thiesen, Cliff Penner, and Allan Friesen. Middle row: (clarinet section) David Enns, Carol Enns, Sharon

Funk, Sharon Dyck, Shirley Giesbrecht, Rhonda Braun, Jill Braun, Brenda Thiessen, Harold Friesen, Jolene Abrams, Ken Hildebrand, Karen Loewen, Harold Wiebe (trumpet), and Tim Friesen. Front row: Richard Sawatzky, Elizabeth Enns, and Bruce McIntosh (trombones), Hilda Hildebrand, Valerie Walker, Gail Braun, Sherry Wiebe, and Susie Dyck (drums), Glenda Braun, Elmer Guenther, Dennis Stoesz (baritones), Conrad Voth and Randy Wiebe (altos). Kneeling: (bass section) Steve Penner and Melvin Braun.





What may well be Altona's most memorable blizzard started at 1 p.m. March 3, 1966, and didn't end until 7 p.m. March 5 - a total of 57 hours. Winds ranging up to 70 miles an hour piled snow on streets, yards, and buried some houses completely. These photos were taken the day after the snow and wind stopped and shows children enjoying the mountains of snow on 9th Ave. NE, while adults were left to cope with a major dig-out. The storm knocked out hydro power, and all vehicle traffic except snowmobiles was halted. Fortunately, temperatures were not extreme and within a week or two it was looked back on as a great adventure. Altonans could only speculate on what to expect when the snow began to melt.



Arena and curling rink in 1967.

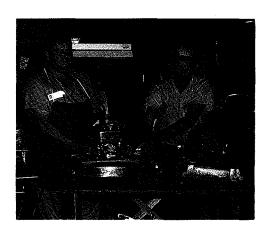


This Grade 12 class was the first to graduate from the new W.C. Miller Collegiate in 1966. Left to right, back row: Alvin Pokrant, David Wiebe, Armin Wiebe, Ken Thiesen, Lloyd Loewen, John Wiebe, Harvey Toews, and Frank Loewen. Third row: Frank Kehler, Vic Friesen, Lorne Derksen, Ken Friesen, Ray Friesen, Ray Klassen, and Frank Kehler. Second row: Barbara Heinrichs, Gwen Reimer, Carol Schroeder, Dorothy Howe, Frieda Toews, Marguerite Loewen, and Elizabeth Kehler. Front row: Lois Nickel, Virginia Doell, Jane Friesen, Gladys Loewen, Elaine Gerbrandt, and Maureen Klassen.

Bill Fehr and Abe Bergen did a thriving business in mower and other small engine and appliance repairs in Fehr's Fix-It Shop on Centre Ave. in the 1960s.



Throughout the 1960s the constituency of Rhineland was represented in the Manitoba legislature by J.M. Froese, a Winkler area farmer. He won his seat in a by-election following the death of W.C. Miller. Besides being a strong and consistent supporter of Social Credit principles, he campaigned for public support of private schools and against the adoption of the unitary school division. His main opposition to unitary divisions was based on the loss of local control that would result.



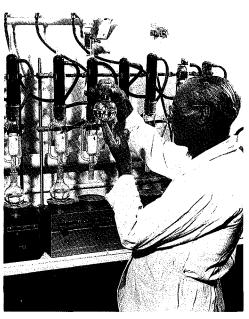
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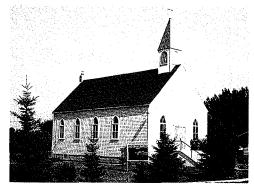
Entertainers at the 1966 Sunflower Festival was this musical group comprised of Ben Kehler on guitar, Bill Kehler on drums, and Arnold Brown on the organ.



Crowned queen at the second Sunflower Festival was Dorothy Howe shown here with the first queen of the festival, Theresa Villeneuve, and princesses, Edith Heinrichs (left) and Elsie Hildebrand (right).



William J. Kehler, chemist at Co-op Vegetable Oils, tests an oilseed sample for oil content. The first CVO lab was located in the boiler room. This photo was taken when it was in the refinery building.



United Church in 1967.



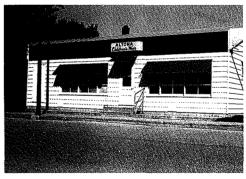
Kingdom Hall on 3rd St. NE in 1967.



Ebenezer Home for the Aged, 1967.



Trilite BA service station on Highway 30 in 1967.



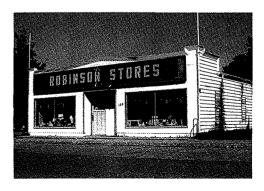
Altona Children's Wear on Main St.,



CPR station in 1967.



Southern Discount Centre on Main St.



Robinson Store on Main St. in 1967.

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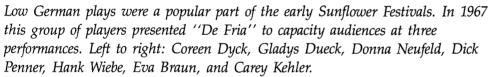


Canadian Girls in Training at the Altona United Church in May, 1967. Left to right, back row: Martha Remple, Debbie Hiebert, Heather Braun, Elizabeth Wiebe, Rhonda Braun, Elma Remple, Janice Neufeld, Jill Braun, Wendy Hildebrand, Bonnie Reimer, Carol Enns, and instructors Mrs. Robert L. McIntosh and Mrs. Ben K. Neufeld. Middle row: Denise Tessier, Myrna Fehr, Delores Reimer, Ronda Nickel, Karen Thiessen, Joanne Neufeld, and Gail Gladue. Front row: Jean Clibbery, Bernice Neufeld, Carolyn Loeppky, Lois Braun, and Debbie Bachewich.



Maitland B. Steinkopf, chairman of the Manitoba Centennial Committee, prepares to throw the opening rock in the Centennial Bonspiel in January, 1967. Looking on are members of the Altona Curling Club and a number of local politicians. It was hoped to gain 100 entries but the final count reached only 82.

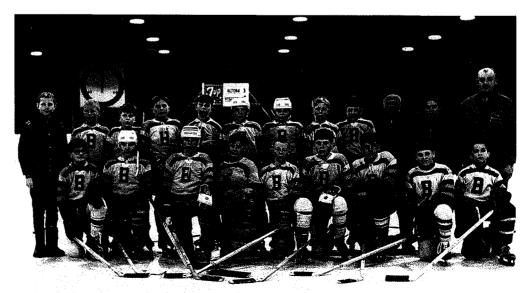






Queen of the 1967 Sunflower Festival, Elizabeth Friesen with Princesses Joanne Neufeld (left), and Patricia Buhr.

During the winter of 1966-67 the Altona Bruins (14 years and under) played hockey in the Red River Valley Midget League. Other teams in the league included Gretna, Neubergthal, Morris, Halbstadt, and Letellier. Left to right, back row: Ben Gerbrandt, Ed Gerbrand, Dwight Loewen, Allan Friesen, John Braun, Ron Funk, Peter Wiebe, Richard Nickel, Brad Wolfe, Allan Wiebe, Leonard Giesbrecht, and Coach Wilbert Funk. Front row: David Enns, Steve Penner, Marvin Heinrichs, Elmer Guenther, Larry Zacharias, Reg Giesbrecht, Ken Giesbrecht, Bruce Hiebert, and Randy Wiebe.







These local businessmen and town officials travelled to Winnipeg by bus in January, 1967, to attend a Manitoba businessmen's ''summit conference''. Left to right: Len Fast (manager of the Altona branch Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce), Barney Gerbrandt and August Lang (councillors of the RM of Rhineland), Frank J. Kehler (secretarytreasurer Town of Altona), John Wiebe (farmer/businessman), Dave Beckert (president of Beckert Motors), Henry D. Hildebrand (reeve RM of Rhineland), Abe Thiesen (BA oil bulk dealer), William Braun (druggist and mayor of Altona), D.D. Stobbe (secretary-treasurer RM of Rhineland), Oscar Martel (sales manager H. Martel & Sons), John G. Stoesz, B.W. Penner, John Wahl, and Walter B. Klippenstein (all councillors RM of Rhineland), and J.J. Janzen (president Altona Industrial Developments Ltd.).

Members of the Altona Consolidated School District board of trustees in 1968 were, left to right: Abe Thiesen, Jack Thiessen, Art K. Dyck, Vic Penner, C.D.C. Friesen, and Oscar Martel. Mr. Dyck was chairman and Mr. Martel was vice-chairman. Mr. Thiessen also served as secretarytreasurer.

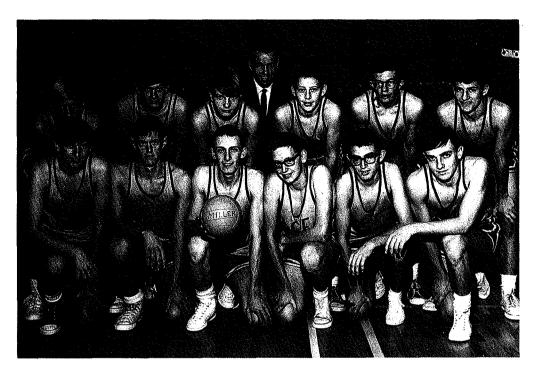


Canada's Centennial Year 1967 was a time for recalling the past. In commemoration of the event the Altona Women's Institute modelled these fashions of the past. Left to right, standing: Mrs. Ben K. Braun, Mrs. Vic Penner, Mrs. W.E. Dueck, Connie Braun, Mrs. R.C. Friesen, Mrs. Pete Kroeker, Mrs. J.C. Sawatzky, Mrs. Doug Reddy, Mrs. Otto Loewen, Rhonda Braun, Valerie Walker, Harold Friesen, Mrs. A.P. Hildebrand, Audrey Loewen, Mrs. T.E. Friesen, Mrs. J.C. Friesen, Gladys Loewen, Mrs. Wes Sawatsky, Maureen Braun, Carol Enns, Eva Hamm, Mrs. Peter Wiebe, Mrs. Bill Heinrichs, and Mrs. S.K. Braun. Front row: Mrs. Ed Braun, Barbara Hamm, Tammy Dick, Gail Braun, Carol Braun, Sherry Wiebe, Mrs. Roy Dick, Karen Hamm, Darlene Braun, Mrs. Blake Thompson, Mrs. Jack Thiessen, and Margo and Judy Enns.

Board of directors of the Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Company, whose head office is in Altona, in 1968. Left to right, back row: Ben Fast, Steinbach; Jacob P. Dyck, Winkler; Raymond C. Friesen, Altona; Frank Suderman, Winkler, and Henry D. Falk, Winkler. Front row: Peter J. Reimer, Steinbach; Frank Fast, Kleefeld, and Dick Eidse, Rosenort. Mr. Friesen was first elected to the board the year this photo was taken, and served for 18 years as the company's president.



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Coach Don Fehr took this team to the inter-provincial volleyball playoffs in Shilo in December, 1967, only to lose to Gimli in the final game. Many of the players were also on the 1968 team that won the Provincial B championship. Left to right, back row: Terry Braun, Allen Unrau, Steve Penner, Coach Fehr, Danny Davis, Dave Goertzen, and Greg Wolfe. Front row: Larry Wiebe, Jim Wolfe, Richard Funk, Sheldon Friesen, Ralph Villeneuve, and Aubrey Kehler.



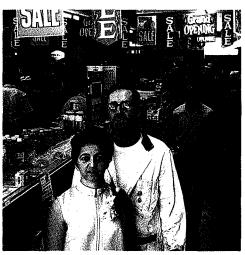
Ice carnivals had been a popular winter feature in Altona for many years, but when a figure skating club was formed the old ''carnival'' became an ''ice revue". These are some of the skaters at Altona's first ice revue in March, 1968. Left to right, teddy bears: Becky Braun, Carol Lee Kehler, Coreen Dueck, Janice Gunn, Ellen Gunn, and Margo Enns; flowers: Laurie Braun, Susan Schwartz, Pamela Schwartz, Janice Fast, Joannie Hoeppner, Kathy Hartnett, and Laurie Peterson. Trees were Richard Klippenstein and Mark Braun. About 700 people attended the performance.

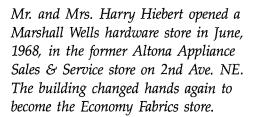
The Altona Fire Department's ambulance service made its 1,000th trip April 26, 1968, when Oscar Martel was rushed to a Winnipeg hospital after suffering a heart attack. The authorized ambulance drivers that year were, left to right: Jake Franz, Frank Nickel, Ben Wiebe, Ben Neufeld, D.M. Loeppky, and Ken Loeppky. The ambulance made its first trip in 1956, with D.M. Loeppky at the wheel, when Mrs. Dave Warkentin of Rosenfeld was taken to the Altona hospital. Mrs. Alex Heim of Rosenfeld, mother-in-law of Oscar Martel, was the patient on the ambulance's first trip to Winnipeg.

In an interview with D.M. Loeppky in May that year, he told the Echo that the fastest trip he had ever made was with Herman Martens of Halbstadt after Martens lost a leg in a beet harvester accident. The trip took only 55 minutes. Loeppky also recalled a trip to Winnipeg with a patient who had a broken foot. Driving in a snowstorm, the ambulance had a flat tire near Ste. Agathe on Highway 75. They had to have the ambulance towed to Ste. Agathe, remove the patient to get at the spare tire under the floorboards, replace the tire and the patient, and continue on their way.

The objective of the fire department was to save at least one life a year.

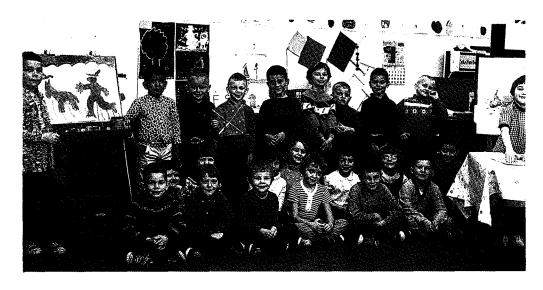


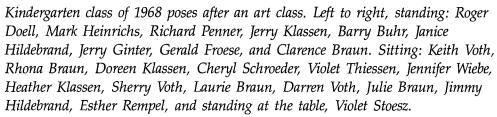






Dave Sawatzky, owner of Sawatzky's Home Entertainment Centre, at the grand opening of the store May 30 and 31, 1969.







Sunflower Festival queen of 1968 was Karen Thiessen shown here with Princesses Rhonda Nickel (left) and Viola Braun (right), and Jim McSweeney, master of ceremonies.



Altona's first school was built in 1899. This photo was taken in 1968, when it was the residence of Mr. and Mrs. P.H. Dueck. It was still in use as a dwelling in 1990 on 4th Ave. NW.



The P. Braun house at 3rd St. and 3rd Ave. NW as it looked in 1968. It was built in 1895.



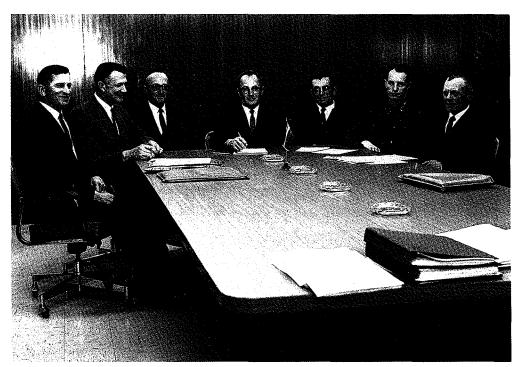
Built in 1890, this building, which most recently housed the John Driedger Confectionery and home, stood empty on Main St. in 1968, when this picture was taken.

Board members of the Rhineland Co-op Service Ltd. when the new store opened on November 21, 1968, were, left to right: Otto Fielman, Peter P. Wiebe, Henry J. Siemens, Jake W. Hildebrand (president), Peter N. Wiebe, Dick Hildebrand, and Henry J. Martens.



The new Co-op store opened in 1968.

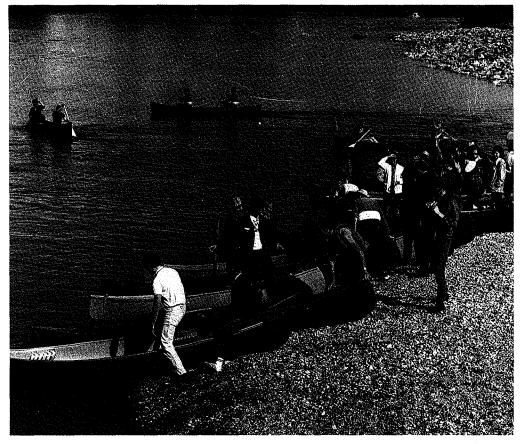
At his Altona election headquarters J.M. Froese flashes the victory sign shortly after the announcement was made that he had defeated Henry D. Hildebrand, the Progressive Conservative candidate, by 136 votes on the night of June 25, 1969. The Social Credit MLA is accompanied by his wife and six of their daughters as well as many of his campaign workers and supporters. At this time Mr. Froese had already served Rhineland in the provincial legislature for 10 years.



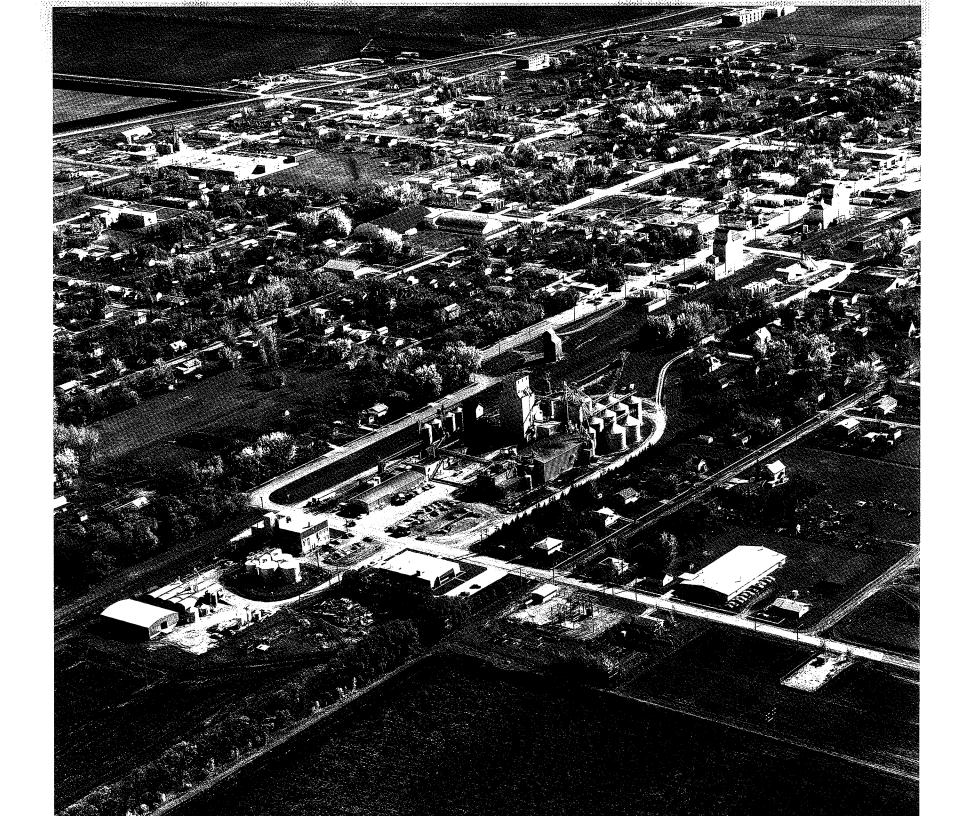




Queen of the 1969 Sunflower Festival, Frances Heide, receives congratulations from Master of Ceremonies Jim McSweeney.



In 1969 a number of students from W.C. Miller Collegiate had participated in several programs for the retarded in Altona. That spring they came up with the idea of holding a canoe-a-thon to help raise funds for a camp being built by the Canadian Association for Mentally Retarded. Approximately 125 canoes entered, and this photo shows the scene of the canoe launch at the start of the 20-mile course near the floodway gate at St. Norbert. Thirty Miller students participated. Spearheading the event were Ed Wiebe, Delores Reimer, Bruce Martel, and Vern Braun, all Miller students. The Canoe-a-thon became an annual event and was continued for a number of years, but the Miller students never received the credit for it that they deserved.



# 1970-1979: Planning Shows Results

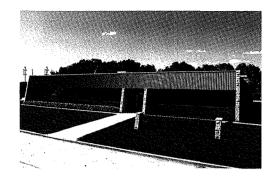
he planning that was started in the 1960s, showed some results in the '70s. Initiative by the town, the Chamber of Commerce and private individuals resulted in the town's industrial development proceeding. In 1975 the town annexed a half section of land immediately north of its existing boundary for the purpose of creating an industrial park. Some old and some new businesses were attracted to locate there. However, growth in this area was not as great as had been hoped for. The town was reluctant to grant tax concessions to new businesses, and it stuck to this position throughout the '60s and the '70s. There was also concern that there be steady but not too rapid growth. This would create problems of housing and services. Also, Altona favored locally initiated or "home-grown" industries and businesses. Such sentiments probably took some of the wind out of promoters' sails. It was felt that industries with roots in Altona would provide strong growth in the long run. To help this along, in 1980, the town council and Chamber of Commerce appointed a joint committee whose task it would be to attract new business and industry.

In the 1970s the two larger industries in Altona continued to grow at a good rate. Co-op Vegetable Oils had a dramatic growth. Between 1960 and 1980 its gross sales increased from just over \$2 million to nearly \$50 million and its number of employees rose from 60 to 135. There was also a shift from depending on imported oilseeds to domestically grown seeds. Canola replaced soybeans as the main crop processed at CVO. Because of the difficulty in obtaining necessary supplies of seed, in 1974 CVO members approved their board's proposal that it merge its assets with Manitoba Pool Elevators and then join with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in forming a new organization responsible for operating a number of seed crushing facilities in the two provinces and for marketing their products. The new organization came into being in the spring of 1975



Left to right: Menno Funk, Bernie Friesen, and Norman Buhr in 1974, planning another CVO expansion project.

Facing page: Aerial view of Altona in October, 1972, with Co-op Vegetable Oils and the Aetna Garments factory in the foreground.



The construction of this new administration building was part of a large expansion program that took place at CVO between 1969 and 1973. This photo was taken in 1974.

Mayor William Braun and Elmer Hildebrand prepare to turn the first sod on the Altona Mall construction project in June, 1973. Shareholders attending the ceremony are, left to right: Anne Blair, Dave Sawatzky, David Glenn Friesen, A.N. Braun, William Braun, Dave Penner, Steve Penner, Elmer Hildebrand, John Unrau, D.K. Friesen, Ivan Donald, and Dr. S.S. Toni. with a new name, CSP (Co-operative Seed Processors) Foods. Soon after the merger the head office announced its \$3.1 million expansion plan which would boost daily crushing capacity from 300 to 600 tons. In 1980 another \$5.7 million was allocated to upgrade facilities and increase production by slightly more than another 100 tons.

Altona's other main industry, D. W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., also saw expansion during this decade. Between 1960 and 1980 the Altona head office was enlarged to nearly five times its original 1958 size and the number of employees grew from 50 to approximately 300. It was during this period that Friesens expanded geographically so that it became a national company.

# Altona Mall Shopping Centre

The formation of the Altona Mall Development was another example of the strong commitment to the notion of self-help characteristic of Altona. The initiative and the support came from within the community. Planning started in the late '60s. Once a number of basic tenants had been lined up, construction started and the Altona Mall was opened in November, 1973. By December 11 stores were in operation. The original mall had a space of 36,500 square feet. There was room for a Phase II addition of 20,000 square feet. This was completed in 1978 and was immediately occupied by seven new stores, a restaurant



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and a number of offices. In 1980 a total of 32 tenants were leasing space in the Altona Mall. It had a sudden and striking impact on the town. Retail trade increased immediately. This caused other businesses outside of the mall to open in Altona. By 1980 Altona's tax rolls included over 100 different business firms, about 30 of which had been established during the previous decade. Between 1970 and 1980 the annual service and retail trade grew from \$5 million to \$24 million.

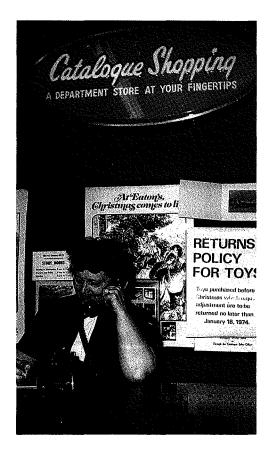
The mall stimulated growth in the community as a whole. While the population growth rate had been declining through the '60s, it suddenly took a sharp turn upwards after 1970. Between 1971 and 1980 population rose from 2,122 to 2,961. This necessitated the construction of nearly 300 new homes and several apartments. Statistics reveal that young adults between the ages of 20 and 34 comprised a growing portion of the population. In 1966 they made up only 16.9 per cent of Altona's inhabitants, while in 1980 they accounted for 24.4 per cent. Evidently the mall and the commercial growth had stimulated and given young adults reason to remain in town.

# **Schools**

W. C. Miller Collegiate opened in 1966. Besides the general courses offered, in the early '70s the school developed a vocational program that would present even more diversity. It offered a total of four vocational courses by three different divisions. Students enrolled in one of these courses would spend one semester in academic study and the other in vocational study. This new program went into effect in 1975. Food Services and Building Construction were the two programs offered in Altona.

Rhineland School Division also officially became a unitary division on January 1, 1972. This centralization of educational facilities and teaching also meant something to the town. One of the immediate effects was to have many rural children come to Altona. This necessitated another school and in 1977 a new junior high school was opened in the northwest sector of town. It was called Parkside and housed Grades 7 and 8. In 1980, Elmwood, a new Kindergarten to Grade 3 school was completed in the southwest part of Altona. The town now had four school buildings, all relatively new.

The coming of the division system to the elementary grades did not lead to the dramatic curriculum changes that occurred at the secondary level, even though a more holistic approach to the education of younger children more or less coincided with this development. It did, however, facilitate the process of integrating children with physical and learning disabilities into regular class-



When the Altona Mall opened in 1973, Katherine Unrau moved her Eaton's mail order office into the mall. She and her husband, John, had opened their Eaton's business in June, 1969. When Eaton's discontinued its mail order department, the Unraus remodelled their premises and opened a shoe store.



The Altona Coffee House operated briefly in 1971-72 when students from Elim Christian Education Centre, the Inter-School Christian Fellowship, a number of youth groups from Altona churches, and students from the Gretna MCI formed a planning committee. The Coffee House operated under the guidance of George Neufeld and Lawrence Klippenstein, both teachers at Elim. It was open Friday and Saturday evenings from 7:30 to 12:00 midnight. Entertainers at the Coffee House pictured here are two Elim students, Mary Ann Bergen and John Taves. Taves was largely instrumental in getting the venture underway.

rooms. Special resource teachers as well as psychologists, speech pathologists, and teachers for the blind and deaf became accessible to all children. By 1980 the Rhineland School Division had gone a long way to provide for the special needs of its elementary students.

In the 1970s, also, the Elim Christian Education Centre was undergoing some difficulties. There was a question of closing the school, and it actually did occur for a year. However, there was a reorganization and the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba took over the sponsorship and the responsibility for the school. There was a decision to rebuild the school with separate male and female dormitories. The increasing enrolment was reason for optimism. In 1978 the Conference purchased a five-acre plot of land just west of Altona for the purpose of building a new campus. In 1979 a men's residence was completed, and by 1980 construction on a new school and administration building had begun.

#### Churches

The process of change begun in the 1960s continued in the '70s. In those churches that originally had used the German language, English was becoming the primary and German the secondary language. The non-Mennonite churches continued to offer several alternatives to people in the area. Language was not an issue there as English only was used. The United Church, the Evangelical Free Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses functioned as independent congregations. By 1980 the United Church had even hired a woman as its pastor. Between 1975 and 1983 new congregations emerged. The first of these was a Pentecostal Church called the Gospel Tabernacle. A second new church fellowship to be established was one with distant connections to the Plymouth Brethren Church. In 1978 it built a small meeting house and thereby took a step in the direction of identifying itself as a congregation. In 1980 a third congregation was formed. This was the Mennonite Brethren Church.

A number of Altona women made a valuable contribution to the cause of inter-church co-operation at the grass roots level and they organized a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Self-Help Centre in 1972. The idea was to sell donated used clothing and household goods to raise funds for the programs of the Inter-Mennonite Relief and Development Agency. It was staffed entirely by volunteer women from all five Mennonite churches in Altona. Later the men decided to get in on the act by starting a used furniture, appliance and men's

clothing store alongside the centre with the proceeds also going to MCC. Its success led MCC Canada to encourage other communities to establish similar centres.



The women initially responsible for getting the MCC Self-Help Centre underway in Altona were, left to right: Mrs. T.E. Friesen, Mrs. William Loewen, Mrs. Lawrence Giesbrecht, Mrs. Ed Stoesz, (all committee members), and Mrs. B.R. Martens, a volunteer. The photo was taken at the Centre on opening day in March, 1972, when there was still ample room for merchandise on the shelves.

## Health Care

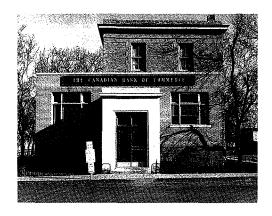
Discussions began early in 1971 for the construction of a personal care home for people who were too ill to stay at Ebenezer, but not quite ill enough to remain in the hospital. In November, 1974, a 25-bed personal care home was built adjacent to and connected to the hospital. That enabled the two institutions to use the same services such as doctors and nurses.

Yet another institution, which reflected the growing concern for the elderly, was the establishment of a recreation centre for the Altona Senior Citizens Club. This was founded by a local group of senior citizens in 1975. A short time after that a new building was built with facilities for games and special programming. Senior citizens had a place where members could go three times a week to have coffee, play games, celebrate a birthday or simply talk about the latest happenings.



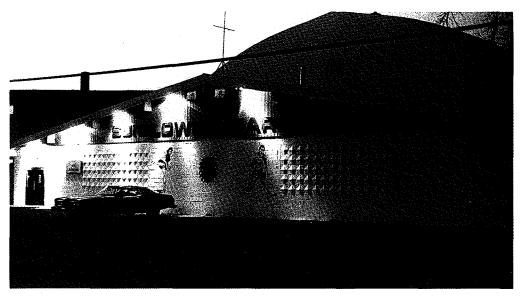
Dr. Stephen S. Toni in his office in the new clinic in 1970.

Sunflower Gardens after dark in 1978.





After 50 years in the two-storey brick structure on Main St. the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce moved into new premises in the Altona Mall in 1974. The picture of the old building was taken before the name was changed to include "Imperial". The interior photo shows the bank after its latest renovation before moving to the mall.



#### Recreation

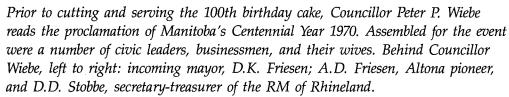
The Centennial Park and Sunflower Gardens recreation area were further developed in the '70s. A large new waiting room and dressing rooms and showers were added to the arena. Hockey became an absorbing sport. 1975 was a big year when five local teams, the Midget Maroons, the Bantam A's, the Braves, the Miller Collegiate Aces and the Maroons all captured the championships in their respective leagues.

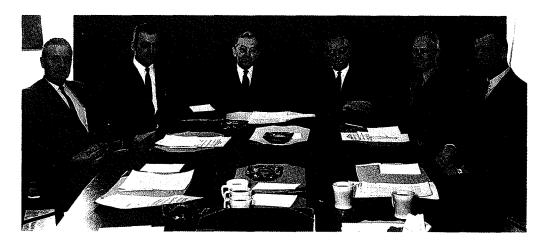
### Conclusion

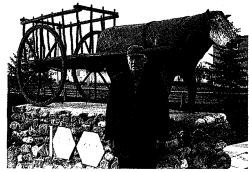
By 1980 Altona had moved in a number of new directions. Its long-time economic function of serving the agricultural hinterland had been supplemented with strong manufacturing and trade sectors. Its schools had been integrated into the centralized division system and were meeting the needs of a much more inclusive group of students at both the secondary and elementary levels. Many of its churches had made major shifts in the use of language and their organizational structure. New institutions were established for groups with special needs and a strong and well-rounded recreational program contributed to improving the quality of life in general. In 1980 it appeared that these new directions were the right ones. The Chamber of Commerce slogan, "A nice place to visit, a great place to live", was in the process of being realized.

Information for this chapter has been taken from Altona by Esther Epp-Tiessen.









J.J. Janzen in front of the statue of ox and cart he built as the centrepiece in the park named after him. Mr. Janzen was largely responsible in turning a low area between Highway 30 and 6th St. SE into a small park as a Manitoba Centennial project in 1970. The RM of Rhineland and Town of Altona each chipped in \$500 to purchase the property. Mr. Janzen was presented with the Centennial Medal in recognition of his work.

Altona council 1970, left to right: H.H. Epp, D.W. Klassen, Mayor D.K. Friesen, Secretary-Treasurer Frank J. Kehler, Peter Wolfe, and Peter P. Wiebe.

Edward T. Howe, Rhineland's dedicated agricultural representative for 20 years, was honored at a retirement dinner on September 10, 1970. He and Mrs. Howe moved to Altona in 1950 from Selkirk. Premier Ed Schreyer, who had been a 4H club member when Mr. Howe was in charge of 4H clubs in Selkirk, is seen here with Mr. and Mrs. Howe. He presented the Howes with a replica of a Red River cart.

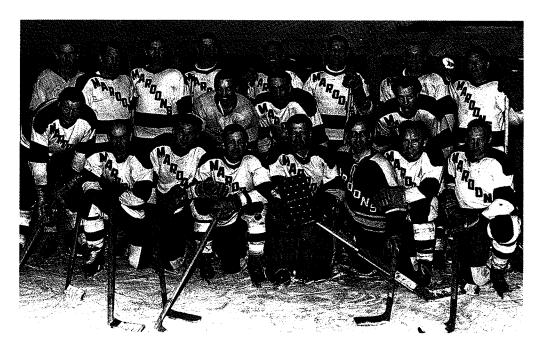


Queen of the 1970 Sunflower Festival, Helen Thiessen, watches as her crown teeters precariously.

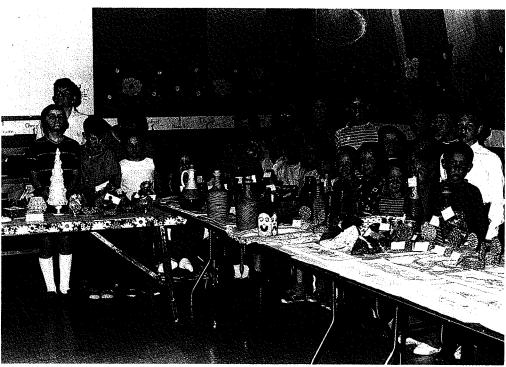
A sudden downpour of rain on June 10, 1970, caused considerable damage in Altona. Basements were flooded, CVO shut down for 10 hours, and the hospital suffered damage from almost a foot of water in the furnace room. Records show Altona received 4.57 inches and Gretna 5.8 inches of rain.







In April, 1970, Altona Maroons Oldtimers formed this team for a benefit game to raise money for an artificial ice plant for the arena. They defeated the Gardewine team from Winnipeg by a score of 6-3. Left to right, front row: Tony Penner, Jake Hildebrand, Elmer Enns, John Kehler, Frank Hildebrand, Elmer Hildebrand, Peter Hildebrand, and Henry Hildebrand. Middle: Jake Winters, Harry Sulkers, and Dick Hildebrand. Back row: Dick Schroeder, Larry Dueck, Harry Hiebert, Bill Schroeder, Harold Klassen, Art Klassen, Wilbert Funk, and Bernie Derksen.



The Rhineland Division special classes held a tea and bazaar in June, 1971, to raise money for camping fees for the children. Articles made by the children that were sold at the bazaar included quilts, pillow cases, aprons, bottles covered with twisted crepe paper, and pin cushions.



In March, 1970, the space age came to the Altona Kindergarten. Apollo 747 "took off" with three Kindergarten astronauts aboard – Timothy Heinrichs, Robert Wiebe, and Cheryl Schmidt, while their fellow K-gartners watched on a self-made TV set. TV commentator was Gregory Lindenbach. Teachers were Anne Berg and Maija Grendze.

Rev. and Mrs. David Schulz were honored at a Recognition Night June 29, 1971, for their many years of service in the Bergthaler Church, from 1920 to 1964. Here Rev. Schulz receives a special plaque from Elder Ernest Wiebe of Winnipeg. The Schulzes were also presented with a cheque and an easy chair.



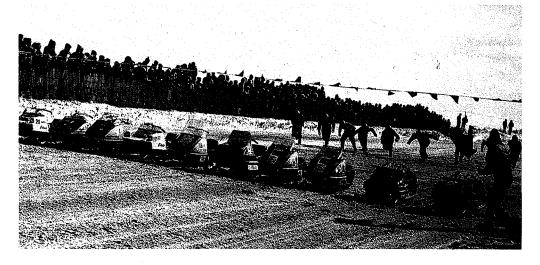
The Grade 4 boys chorus of the Elmwood School in the operetta "William Tell". The operetta was under the direction of Teacher Helen Schulz.



ALIUNA 19/0-19/9



Queen of the 1971 Sunflower Festival, Anna Wolters, with Princesses Jill Braun and Myrla Enns.

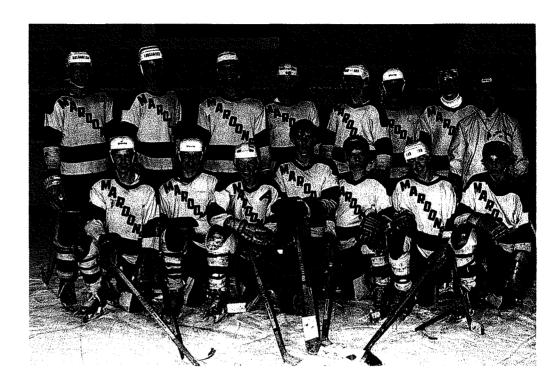


The first annual snowmobile races were held on the west side of town in March, 1972. In this Le Mans race racers run to their machines, start them, then make one lap of the track. Here 10 drivers sprint the 20 yards to their machines. A 17 year-old Winnipeg racer cleaned up on these races, carrying off seven first-place trophies and \$110 in prize money.



Peter H. Driedger with shooting awards won in the Canadian matches of the Shooting Federation of Canada held in Winnipeg in the fall of 1970. He was the Canadian champion in the sporting rifle sharpshooter class. He also placed second in the match rifle sharpshooter class, and third in the sporting rifle master class. He had previously won the sharpshooter trophy in Cooperstown, N.D. He was also a gun collector, and an auto mechanic by trade.

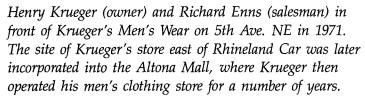
Champions of the Red River Valley
Midget Hockey League in 1971 was
this team from Altona. Left to right,
back row: Ken Enns, Lorne Braun,
Cliff Wiebe, Menno Dyck, Dwight
Heinrichs, Allan Wiebe, Donald
Unrau, and John Kehler (coach). Front
row: Gordon Sawatzky, Howard
Schellenberg, Ron Funk, Harold Dick,
Dwight Loewen, Gordon Klippenstein,
and Bruce Hiebert.



Members of the unitary school division board in January, 1972, were, left to right: John Penner, Ben Toews, Art Hamm, Frank F. Friesen, Frank Kehler, Peter E. Hildebrandt, Secretary-Treasurer Abe K. Braun, Chairman Art Braun, Art Penner, Ruth Enns, Arnold Pokrant, Art K. Dyck, and Jack Thiessen.









David Glenn Friesen (left), president of the Rhineland Liberal Association, chats with Izzy Asper, Manitoba Liberal leader and guest speaker at an Altona Chamber of Commerce dinner in April, 1972.

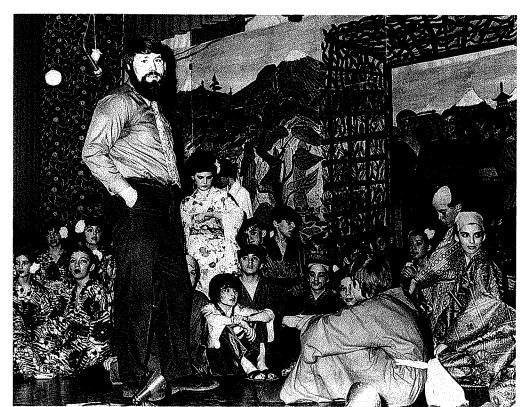


Some councillors, public works employees, and John P. Enns look on as the first cell of Altona's new sewer lagoon takes in its first trickle of waste in August, 1972.



One of the last and largest beet weeding gangs is shown here working on a 28-acre field on the John L. Klassen farm near Sommerfeld. Forty-two persons comprised the gang, many of whom were students from Altona. Workers were paid by the hour, except for the young students, who were paid by the row. The weeders hoed approximately 400 acres in the spring of 1972.

West Park School teacher Allan Schritt surrounded by students who comprised the cast of an abridged version of Gilbert & Sullivan's famous musical "The Mikado". The performances drew capacity audiences in March, 1972.





Queen of the Sunflower Festival in 1972 was Eunice Wiebe. With her are Princesses Pearl Spenst and Linda Smith.





Altona schools always did well in the Southern Manitoba Music and Speech Arts Festival. Frankie James and Douglas Friesen, representing their Grade 6 class, hold the Wiebe Drugs Trophy won by their class for choral reading in March, 1972. Mrs. John Wiebe was the director of the choir.

The Altona hospital and the Emergency Measures Organization staged a mock disaster in the summer of 1972, to test the hospital's disaster plan. The enactment dealt with the handling of a collision between an auto and a school bus. Firemen are dousing a burning auto, while some 'injured' students are receiving first aid while others have been rushed to hospital for 'treatment'.

Marie Roberts (left) of Osborne, president of the Red River Valley Women's Institute, was in Altona in April, 1972, to present life memberships to six members of the Altona WI. With Mrs. Roberts are, left to right, the new life members: Mrs. D.K. Friesen, Mrs. S.S. Toni, Mrs. R.C. Friesen, Mrs. Al Loewen, Elizabeth Bergen, and Mrs. T.E. Friesen.



Coaches Jake Sawatzky and Menno Friesen back up their Maroons Hockey School All-Stars (10 and 11 year-olds), who played against the Winnipeg-based Canadian Warriors in November, 1972. In the foreground and out of uniform is Bobby Hull, former super-star with Chicago Black Hawks of the NHL, who had recently signed to play with the Winnipeg Jets in the WHA. Left to right, front row: Wesley Dueck, Leroy Bluhm, Jerry Klassen, Mr. Hull, and Cory Wiwchar. Next row: Mark Epp, Rickey Penner, Robin Ayotte, Boyd Hamblin, Rickey Loewen, Troy Ehnes, Donald Sawatzky, Paul Cadieux, Tim Schellenberg, and Pat Braun. Back row: Lester Dueck, Craig Hamblin, and Perry Mohr. Bobby Hull's son, Brett, was one of the players on the Winnipeg Team.



ALIONA 1970-1979



1973 Sunflower Festival queen was Carol Wiebe (centre), photographed here with Princesses Jean Clibbery and Marianne Schmidt.



Operator of the Co-op gas bar, Dave J. Fehr (in dark uniform), sold 4,400 gallons of gas the day the bar opened on the Mall parking lot in November, 1973.

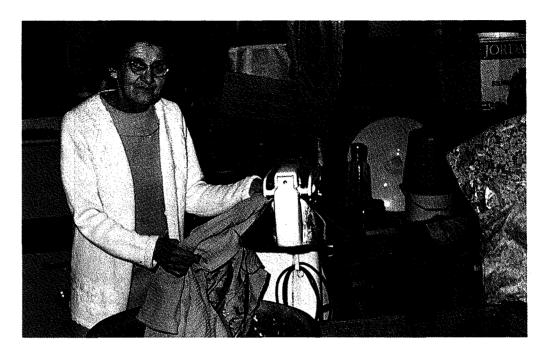


Mayor D.K. Friesen congratulates Jim Penner (left) of Penner Foods at the opening of their 9,000 sq. ft. store in the Altona Mall on November 22, 1973. Penner Foods was one of two stores that opened that day. The other was Robinson Little.



This group of children from 7th Ave. NE held their annual parade on June 30, 1972. They got together once a year to parade around town with wagons and tricycles they decorated themselves. This photo was taken at the Ebenezer Home, which was always on their parade route because 'these people can't come out to see the Sunflower Festival parade, so we decided to bring a parade to them'.

Mrs. Jacob P. Klassen served the Altona community as a housemaid and laundress for some 40 years of her life. She started as a housemaid working 12 hours-plus a day for \$10 a month. In 1941 she opened a laundry business in a shed behind her house on 4th Ave. NE. The accompanying photo shows her laundry facilities in December, 1972. Her starting wage as laundress was 10 cents an hour. During the 31 years in the business she estimated her income at around \$100 a month. Between sessions in her laundry she picked up potatoes for North Dakota potato farmers. Among her regular laundry customers were: Dr. Breidenbach, Altona Co-op Service, Braun Drug Co., Dr. Toni, and the Altona hospital, for whom she laundered gowns and examining jackets.







Agricultural Representative Ed. Howe presented 4H leadership awards to Jean Friesen (left) and Eleanor Bergen in November, 1973.

Sam Berthe at work in his new barber shop in the Altona Mall in November, 1973.

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Mall stores joined in February, 1974, to introduce the new spring clothing with a fashion show. Capacity audiences attended. Kathy Enns models a short polyester knit dress.

Twelve W.C. Miller Collegiate students, together with their chaperone, Al Schmidt, about to leave for an 11-day excursion to London and Paris. Included in the group are: Lloyd Bergen, Merle Hildebrand, Randy Loewen, Jerry Friesen, Ken Hamm, Lori Neufeld, Leslie Sawatzky, Laurie Thiessen, Susan Loewen, Linda Wiebe, Kathy Hamm, and Libby Enns.



Campaign Manager Bill Siemens (left) celebrates with Arnold Brown and Mrs. Brown the night of June 28, 1973, when Brown defeated J.M. Froese to win a seat in the Manitoba legislature. Froese had held the seat for the Social Credit party for 14 years. Brown ran on the Progressive Conservative ticket and continued to represent Rhineland until he retired in 1987.



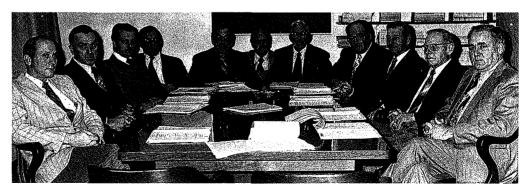
This Altona rink won the right to represent Zone 1 in the British Consuls curling playdown in Winnipeg in January, 1974. Left to right: Henry Bergen (lead), George Cheyne (second), Ed Klassen (third), and Art Wiebe (skip).



Queen of the 1974 Sunflower Festival, Jean Zacharias (centre), with Princess Carolyn Fehr (left), and Brenda Neufeld.



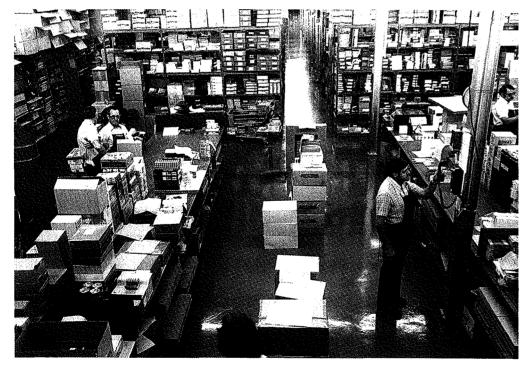
A Christmas program with a difference was presented on December 19, 1974, by 29 trainees from the Occupational Training Centre. It was the first time the OTC'ers had presented a program open to the public. It was initiated by a group of high school girls who spent their lunch hours helping the trainees rehearse.



Members of the first board of directors of the Altona Personal Care Home. Left to right: Henry D. Hildebrand, Henry Giesbrecht, Don Heinrichs, Peter N. Wiebe, Abe J. Froese, George Cheyne, Willo Forrester, Walter Klippenstein, Ted Neufeld, Frank Kehler, and Bill Harms.

ALIONA ITTO





Staff members Alvin Kehler, Jake Sawatzky, Cornie Driedger, and Peter Derksen fill orders in the newly enlarged warehouse at D.W. Friesen & Sons in the '70s.

Altona council 1975, left to right: Henry Loewen, Albert Schmidt, Ed Buhr, Mayor D.K. Friesen, Peter Wolfe, Abe Dueck, and Abe Thiesen. It was the first year of the enlarged council – from five members to seven. Mayor Friesen resigned that year after serving as mayor since 1970, when he was elected after Mayor William Braun resigned.



Edwin Abel, the last of Altona's blacksmiths in the old tradition, watches a plowshare heating up in his forge prior to sharpening it with hammer on anvil. When Abel shut his shop in 1982 due to ill health, throwaway plowshares were greatly reducing the amount of work available to traditional blacksmiths.



After presenting a variety of Gilbert & Sullivan musicals, Miller Collegiate staged "Anne of Green Gables" in May, 1974. Here Anne (Dorothy Plett) interprets the meaning of PEI's red roads to the amazed but engrossed Matthew Cuthbert (Elmer Goertzen).



Joining in the sod turning ceremony at the start of construction of the New Horizons building on 1st Ave. NW on July 5, 1975, were, left to right: Al Schmidt (councillor), Jake Enns (New Horizons president), Ed Buhr (councillor and president of the Altona Credit Union), Abe J. Froese (councillor of the RM of Rhineland), and William J. Kehler (vice-president of the New Horizons in Altona).



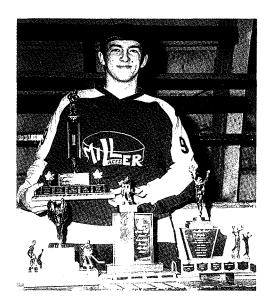
The Bantam A's were the powerhouse of the Red River Valley Hockey League in the 1974-75 season – undefeated in league play and winning the championship in the play-offs four games straight. Left to right, back row: Brian Toews, Tim Schellenberg, Henry Sawatzky, Paul Cadieux, and Ted Couling. Middle row: Coach Dick Hildebrand, Doug Kehler, Brian Wiebe, Tim Fast, Darren Penner, and Gord Epp. Front row: Murray Funk, Cliff Sawatzky, Henry Derksen, Garry Loewen, and Art Zacharias.



Captain Grant Heinrichs accepts the trophy for the Altona Braves, who won the Pembina Valley Hockey League championship for the second consecutive year in 1975. It was also the third year the Braves had finished first in league play. Team members included Jack Penner, Lynn Hoeppner, Gord Sawatzky, Dave Wiebe, Grant Heinrichs, Rick Pappel, Bill Loewen (coach), Tony Hildebrand, Robert Loewen (equipment manager), Steve Toews, Dave Hildebrand, Bruce Hiebert, Henry Loewen, Ben Hildebrand, Doug Schmidt, Rod Heinrichs, Frank Friesen, and Ken Bergman.



Graduates of the Bergthaler Church Wayfarers program in May, 1975, were, left to right, back row: Leaders Leona Braun, Anneliese Plett, and Rosella Stoesz. Middle row: Bev Siemens, Jennifer Braun, Elaine Hamm, Rhona Braun, Cathy Friesen, and Heather Klassen. Front row: Margo Enns, Marilyn Funk, Sandra Wagner, Carla Hildebrand, Yvonne Stoesz, and Julia Braun.



The 1974-75 season was a highly productive one for Altona hockey teams, producing championships for the Maroons, Braves, Aces, Midgets, and Bantams. Mike Kehler, who played for the Aces, Midgets and the Maroons, was rewarded with four trophies for personal performance, namely, most valuable player and top scorer for both the Aces and the Midgets.

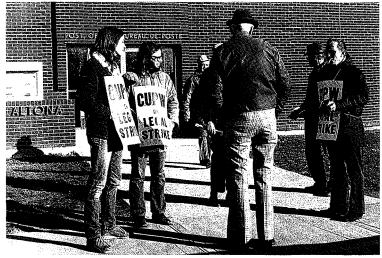
When the Maroons' starry left-winger, Eddie Martens, retired from the team in 1976, Menno Friesen, team manager, presented him with the No. 8 sweater he had worn during his 17 years with the team, at a special Eddie Martens Nite at the Altona arena on January 31. With Eddie are his wife, Wilma, daughter, Angie, and son, Keith.



Queen of the 1975 Sunflower Festival, Sherry Friesen, surrounded by fellow queen contestants.







Four long-time members of the Altona Women's Institute were recipients of lifetime memberships in May, 1975. Left to right: Jean Friesen, Elizabeth Doell, Kay Hamblin (president of the Red River Valley district WI), Kay Friesen (president of the Altona WI), Ruth Enns, and Wilma Thiessen. Life memberships are given to members who have been active in the organization and in the community.

Union picketers were first seen in Altona in October, 1975. Altona postal workers were members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) but refused to leave their jobs to picket. Their resistance prompted their union to send out picketers from Winnipeg and Steinbach to picket in front of the local post office. Here one of them gets an earful from a boxholder.

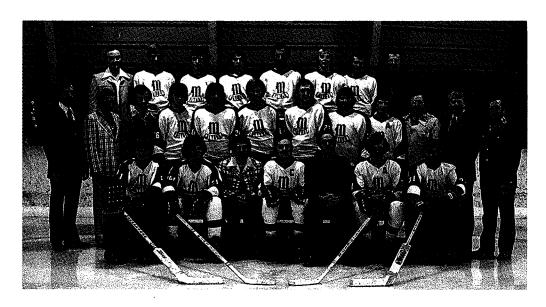


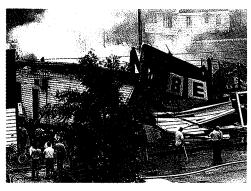
Pee Wee (12 years and under) champions of the Red River Valley Hockey League in March 1976 was this team from Altona. Left to right, back row: Coach Wilbert Funk, Tim Cornelson, Howard Friesen, James Heinrichs, Mike den Haan, Bernie Sawatzky, Laverne Pappel, Mark Braun, and Coach John Kehler. Front row: Mike Rempel, Byron Loeppky, Lyndon Friesen, Brian Enns, Conley Kehler, Dale Wiebe, Jeff Peters, and Brent Stepaniak.

Altona Maroons executive and team photo taken in April, 1976. Left to right, back row: Gerald Kehler, Cornie Bergen, Jack Penner, Dwight Heinrichs, Ed Bergman, Don Unrau, Menno Dyck, and John Gerbrandt (treasurer). Middle row: Harv Heinrichs (transportation), Died Klassen (canteen), Ken Bergman (Braves manager), Frank Friesen, Henry Driedger, Bill Loewen, Bill Sawatzky, Gerry Falk, Mike Kehler, Pete Hildebrand (minor hockey), Les Martens, and Elmer Hildebrand (secretary). Front row: Rick Pappel, Mark Heinrichs, Menno Friesen (manager), Rick Klippenstein, Dick Braun (coach), Bernie Bergen, and Charlie Hildebrand.



Eugene Letkeman won the championship flight in the Oakview Golf Club's annual tournament in the summer of 1975. He shot a 69 over 18 holes.





The Beaver Lumber store was hit by lightning at the height of a severe thunderstorm at 1 a.m. June 12, 1976. The fire brigade was credited with containing the fire and preventing it from spreading to neighboring buildings.

This new Beaver Lumber store opened October 28, 1976. Two previous Beaver buildings had been damaged or



destroyed by lightning that struck the same Hydro pole from which the lightning bolt entered the building along a power line. Beaver Lumber had been in business for 50 years and 6 days when it closed its doors. The building was later purchased by the Full Gospel Fellowship for a church, who sold it to the Mennonite Central Committee for a thrift store selling used clothing, appliances, etc.

ALIUNA 1970-1979



By the spring of 1976 J.A. Funk's store on Main St. had become as much a museum as a store. Funk's place had for years been a favourite gathering place of children who appreciated the small affordable toys he offered and the penny candies and gum, and older men 'at leisure', who came to swap stories and munch on Sweet Maries washed down with Wynola. When John and his wife, Tina, decided to retire, they started selling off their merchandise and filling

the empty floor and shelf space with the many old collectibles and antiques they had accumulated over the years. When these pictures were taken in 1976, the back of the store contained such relics as 150 empty tobacco tins, a variety of stuffed birds and animals, a catechism printed in 1818, a Bible printed in Königsberg, Germany, in 1745, some 100-year-old china, clocks, an abacus, and an ancient Victrola. J.A. Funk in his role as confectioner.



Staff of the Macleods store when they moved to larger premises in the Midtown Shopping Plaza on 4th Ave. NE in March, 1976, included, left to right: Agatha Klassen, Susie Klassen, Jake Penner, Lillian Ginter, Martha Schmidt, and Ella and Wes Sawatzky (owners).



Altona council 1976, left to right, standing: Roy Dick, Henry Loewen, Abe E. Dueck, Abe Thiesen, and Secretary-Treasurer Jake Sawatzky. Seated: Ed Buhr, Mayor Dick Penner, and Peter Wolfe.

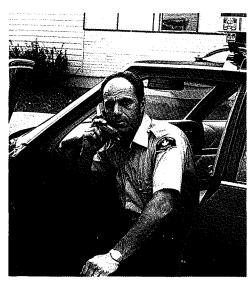
In October, 1977, Rhineland Car Co. celebrated its 50th anniversary with a grand opening of expanded facilities. Mrs. P.L. Dick (left) and her daughter Carol hold the ribbon in preparation of the ribbon cutting by Ken Linton, general manager of Ford of Canada's midwest region, assisted by Mayor Dick Penner. Left to right: Mrs. Dick; Earl Dick, vice-president of Rhineland Car; Ken Linton; Mayor Penner; Roy Dick, president of Rhineland Car, and Carol Dick.



ALIUNA 19/0-19/9



Queen of the 1976 Sunflower Festival, Georgeann Fedoruk (centre), with Princesses Valerie Neufeld and Heidi den Haan.



In August, 1977, the Altona police department upgraded its communications system by installing a mobile telephone in its cruiser car. Const. Bob Mart demonstrates the phone. He was later appointed chief of police when Chief Villeneuve resigned.



The Altona Women's Institute celebrated its 40th anniversary in June, 1976. These three charter members were still active members at the time of the celebration. Left to right: Anne Stobbe, Sarah Reimer, and Tien Sawatzky.



The CAMR grass cutting crew took time out to have their picture taken in June, 1977. Under contract were five cemeteries, plus ditches and boulevards in town, and a number of private yards. Left to right: Cornie Thiessen, Jake Thiessen, Tom Braun (supervisor), Brian Moffat, and Gerald Johnson. Seated: Larry Fierbach, Robert Haines, and Bill Herne.



Queen of the 1977 Sunflower Festival was Val Schwartz (centre) photographed with Princesses Ruth Toews and Angela Klippenstein.



Front entrance of Parkside Junior High School.



The congregation of the Bergthaler Church honored their church musician, Anne Loewen, on April 12, 1978, after 50 years of service. She was given an engraved plate and a bouquet of roses. Anne began playing at church services and community functions at the age of 13 or 14 years; at first, on a reed pump organ purchased in 1920. The first piano was installed in the renovated Bergthaler Church in 1944.



H. Martel & Sons opened a large new sales and service building in the Altona Industrial Park just north of town in December, 1978. The Martel firm was founded by H. Martel in Rosenfeld in 1914 and operated for three years as a blacksmith shop. They moved to Altona in 1960. Seen here are Wally and Bonnie Martel as they are about to cut the ribbon to officially open the new John Deere dealership building. Assisting them are their sons, Rick Martel (left), parts manager, and Don Martel, sales manager.





Left to right: D.K. Friesen, Ted Friesen, and Ray Friesen with the portrait of their father, D.W. Friesen.



Sunflower Festival queen, Audrey Schellenberg (centre), with 1st Princess Irene Wolters (right), and 2nd Princess Debbie Toews (left).

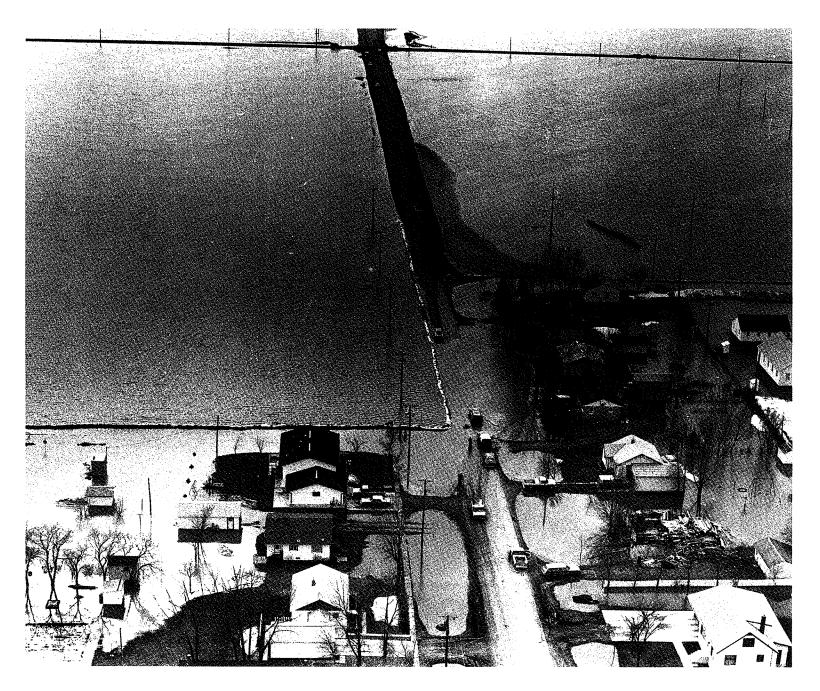
A special Appreciation Day was held for Dr. Stephen S. Toni in the Centennial Park in June, 1978, to commemorate the doctor's 40 years of service to the Altona community. He delivered some 4,300 babies during that time. He is shown here with some of them after the ceremonies at the park.



Jeanette Wiebe, queen of the 1978 Sunflower Festival with Princesses Karen Schroeder and Leona Hildebrand.

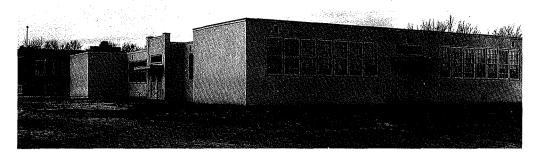


The Toronto Dominion Bank operated a branch in Altona briefly. It opened temporarily in March, 1977, in a trailer and in July, 1979, moved into more permanent premises on 2nd St. NE across from the Altona Mall.

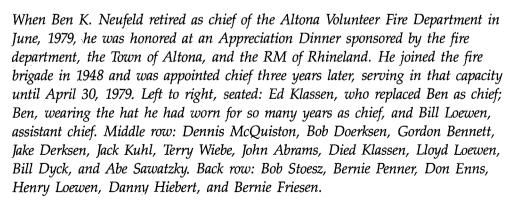


This aerial view in April, 1979, shows the west end of Centre Ave. under water and residences threatened by flood water. Floods were caused by melting snow and a two-inch rainfall at a time when ditches and culverts were still plugged with snow.

Elmwood Schools in 1979.









The first 'boat people' to arrive in Altona in October, 1979, was this refugee family from Laos. The head of the family is 29 year-old Phouvieng Nhouyvanisvong. With him is his wife Nouthay, and three children (two daughters and a son) left to right: Thonekam, 7; Phonethip, 3, and Franc, 5. They came under the sponsorship of the Altona Area Refugee Assistance Committee composed of representatives from most of the Altona and area churches. The family later moved to Calgary, where Phouvieng took a job as interpreter with the government.



# 1980 — 1990: More Growth And Progress

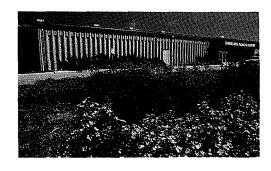
he 1980s carried on in the momentum of the previous decade. Growth and progress continued on a broad front in the community. A number of services were introduced, others improved and expanded. Cable TV came to Altona in May of 1980. An expanded fire hall opened that same year. A new serv ice club, the Optimist was started and has provided help to the underprivileged. The Optimist Club also furnished a building for the use of pre-school and day care children.

A major addition to the town was the building and the opening of the Rhineland Pioneer Centre. It was started in May of 1981 and opened in April of '82. It has 12,000 square feet with a seating capacity of 1,000 people. It provides space and facilities for social and community events. It is owned by the Rhineland Agricultural Society.

Another community program that was started and completed in the 1980s was the Main Street Manitoba Program. This consisted of renovation of the downtown area, sidewalk upgrading, and tree planting on Altona boulevards.

A new water treatment plant was authorized and built for the town at a cost of \$3.4 million. A Letellier-Altona Regional Water System was planned and carried out with the central treatment system at Letellier piping water to Altona and surrounding area. Cost of this system, \$1.78 million.

Park renovations included a new building, public washrooms, and renovations to the swimming pool deck. The park also received a large, public stage for outdoor performances. The former Schwartz home was declared a "historic site" and over a number of years restoration and renovations to the house have been made, making it into a period house and museum.



Pioneer Centre on 10th Ave. NW in 1989.

Facing page: Elmwood School students release hundreds of balloons at the official opening of the school's new playground equipment in June, 1989.

The telephone system was upgraded by modernizing the system entirely, allowing for speed calling, call forwarding, and other services. It added additional toll facilities, converting from analog to digital at a cost of \$1 million.

Altona Mall Development expanded the shopping mall by adding to the complex (Phase III) at a cost of \$1 million. An all-weather airport runway was built at a cost of \$290,000. A new hydro sub-station was built at a cost of \$1.25 million. The Canadian Pacific Railway line was upgraded between Altona and Rosenfeld, ballast and ties, at a cost of \$738,000. The Altona Community Library joined the South Central Library of Winkler, Morden and the RM of Stanley, thus becoming part of the provincial library system.

## **Sunflower Festival**

Altona . . . the Sunflower Capital of Canada, appropriately hosts the annual Manitoba Sunflower Festival the last weekend in July. This unique festival blends the agricultural interest of the area with the ethnic traditions of the Mennonites, and the contemporary music of today's youth.

From Friday morning pancake breakfast to the Sunday evening concert in the park, there is something for everyone.

The pavilion in the Centennial Park is the focal point for the evening stage shows and the Sunday morning community worship service.

A highlight of Saturday night's show is the crowning of the new Sunflower Queen. An exchange program with the Sunflower Festival of Emerald, Australia, gives the Altona Sunflower Queen the opportunity to attend the Australian festival during the Easter weekend. In return, the Australian Sunflower Queen visits Altona and participates in our local festivities.

Some of the features of the festival are: baby contests, flea market, beautiful yard contest, Sunflower Farmer award, and a ping pong ball drop. The festival is a major, annual celebration for Altona and community.

## **Town Administration**

Very early in the decade Dick Penner, the mayor, stated the town's goals for the 1980s:

- 1) Assist the Chamber of Commerce in town promotion.
- 2) Maintain a sound financial base.
- 3) Provide necessary services at a reasonable cost.
- 4) Improve environmental, recreational, and cultural areas of Altona.

The 1980s have seen a steady implementation of these objectives. Early in the decade the town adopted a building code to regulate the construction of



In 1985 Altona and the provincial government shared in the cost of a \$150,000 downtown improvement project as part of the government's Main Street Manitoba Program. Old sidewalks were ripped up and replaced with walkways of interlocking bricks, trees and shrubs were planted, and ornamental lights installed in a major sprucing-up of the business section. Shown studying plans for the project are, left to right: Don Braun, of the town planning commission; Andy Gilchrist, surveyor, and Steve Blayney, supervisor for Maple Leaf Construction who held the contract for the work.

all buildings. There was a long-term program of street paving and sidewalk construction. By the end of the decade all the streets in the town had been paved. The town also upgraded fire fighting services and entered into a cost-sharing agreement with the Rural Municipality of Rhineland. Several annexations took place in the '80s. One was the highway bypass area, and the other approximately 32 acres abutting on the southeast edge of town.

A major project of the town council was the planning and construction of the Altona Civic Centre. This came to fruition with a grand opening on March 12, 1990. It includes the town's administration offices, public library, and police services. Despite providing for increased services to the local population, property taxes are well controlled.

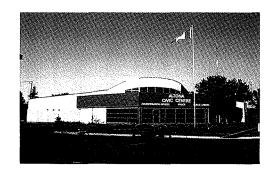
# Industry

One of the major industries in town, CSP Foods, expanded during the 1980s. Early in the decade the capital expansion doubled sunflower crushing capacity, upgraded facilities, and increased production. But it also experienced some difficulties due to world market pressures and problems, trade restriction, high dollar values, and high interest rates. Its refining operation contributed towards a continuing viability. At the end of the decade it was employing 90 people and continuing to process and refine oilseed and other special crops for the domestic and export market worldwide.

Another industry, D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., continued expansion in its main plant and head office in Altona. Additions were made to the plant area. A new office complex was added on the west side of the main plant in 1987. A new stationery building, consisting of offices and warehouse, was constructed in 1989 across the street from the main plant. New equipment was added including 4-color, 5-color and a 4-color 50" press, and an automated book line. In addition, territory was expanded so that Friesen's is now a truly national company. At the end of the decade it employs more than 400 people in buildings covering 165,000 square feet.

Loewen Manufacturing also expanded during the decade by adding to its building and new equipment. It makes and distributes parts for combines and diskers, as well as a wide variety of other agricultural items. Loewen products are sold throughout North America as well as Australia and Europe.

Other locally manufactured products include mobile homes, hopper bin cones, fibreglass products, and denim wear.



Altona Civic Centre on Centre Ave. E. in 1990.



Loewen Manufacturing Co. Ltd., manufacturer of farm implement parts, attachments, etc. continued to grow and make several additions to their factory in the '80s.



The new Elmwood School was built in the south west part of Altona at a cost of slightly over \$1 million. Construction started in September, 1979, and it was officially opened in October the following year. Art K. Dyck, chairman of the Rhineland division board of trustees (in dark suit) assists Arnold Brown, Rhineland MLA, in cutting the ribbon. Addressing an audience of children and adults is Superintendent Edgar Enns (left) while Elmwood principal, Levi Reimer (right), looks on. Holding the ribbon are Cheryl Hildebrand and Kyle Dyck. The school has many modern features, such as study nooks, storytelling areas, and carpeted tiers. It accommodates 320 students Kindergarten to Grade 3 and has a library and gymnasium.

## Commerce

The Altona Mall expanded by implementing Phase III. In 1990 it was home to 30 stores and services.

A number of businesses, either new or expanded, opened in the 1980s and included: Hiebert's new Paint & Body Shop, Red River Glass, Sawatzky Bros. Appliance Sales & Service, Whiteline Body Works, Precision Lawn & Garden Centre, Sawatzky's Home Entertainment Centre, SAAN Stores, Altona Farm Services Ltd., Altona Greenhouse, Altona Railings & Custom Welding Ltd., Altona Memorial Co. Ltd., Manitoba Sugar Co. Piling Station, Al's Air Service, Sunrise Aviation Inc., Wiebe's Custom Application Ltd., Denistan Farm Supply, Altona Motor Hotel Extension, Altona Building Centre Extension, and Krueger & Thiessen Fruit Growers.

Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Company, the fifth largest property insurer in Manitoba, with head office in Altona, completed a building extention in May of 1990. It has 25 employees.

The Chamber of Commerce introduced Altona Agribition, which included Sun Valley Co-op's annual sale, and exhibition in the Sunflower Gardens. Agribition exhibits include arts and crafts, baking, and generally is a salute to agriculture.

Golden West Broadcasting also expanded in taking over Radio Station CISV Winkler, in 1987. Golden West Media bought the *Red River Valley Echo* in the summer of 1990.

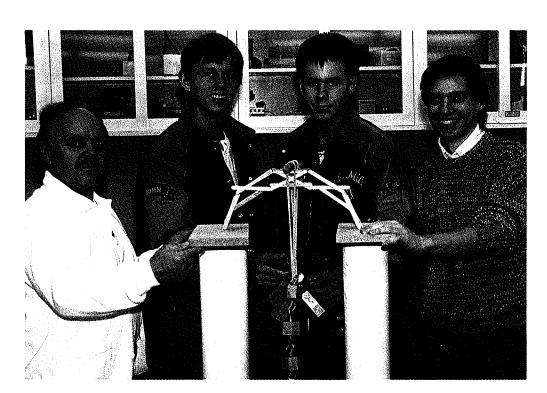
Altona Credit Union showed a steady increase in assets, profits, and membership during the decade. Assets increased from \$35 million to \$72 million during the decade. Expansion and renovation of facilities took place in 1982 and a further expansion is planned in 1990. The credit union celebrated 50 years of service to its members in 1989.

The town also has a wide range of trade and professional services available.

#### **Schools**

The quality of education continued to improve in the 1980s. Special attention was given to gifted pupils, special needs areas, i.e. pupils with handicaps and disabilities, French and English language, and family life and adult evening classes at Miller Collegiate. In addition, the Kindergarten program was expanded, and a language program for new Canadians instituted.

All this resulted in Altona schools doing exceptionally well in provincial and national competitions. The Miller Collegiate choirs won a number of com-



petitions in Moose Jaw, Calgary, and Toronto. Miller students also won awards in the Canadian Mathematical Competition and in the Regional and National Science Olympics.

At the end of the decade a comprehensive education in the public school system is available from pre-school to Grade 12. A variety of programs are offered from vocational to university preparation. Rhineland School Division has a pupil enrollment of around 1,400, with 87 teachers.

#### Churches

A number of existing churches constructed new buildings during the decade. The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church dedicated a new sanctuary in 1985. The Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church completed a large expansion program, which included a new sanctuary in 1986. In 1987 this church conference celebrated 50 years at the 28th Annual Convention in Altona. The Gospel Tabernacle opened its new sanctuary in July of 1981. A new Kingdom Hall, constructed by 600 volunteers of Jehovah's Witnesses, opened in September, 1984. A new Reinland Mennonite Church sanctuary also opened that year. South Park Mennonite Brethren Church is constructing a new sanctuary in 1990.

This model of an arch bridge made out of popsicle sticks won first prize for this team from W.C. Miller Collegiate at the Manitoba Science Olympics in November 1988. Left to right: Ed Doell (instructor), John Fehr, Steve Klassen, and Michael Heinrichs.



In October, 1980, the first sod was turned to start construction of a new Elim Bible Institute on the west side of town. Student Norma Stoesz assists Henry Isaak (board chairman), and Phil Bender (principal). The building was to cost \$810,000.



The Community Self-Help Centre opened in the former Beaver Lumber building on Main St. on June 16, 1987. The first store of its kind had opened in Altona 15 years earlier. The movement spread from here to other parts of the province and across Canada and the United States. Long-time volunteer at the Centre, Susan Hamm, snips the ribbon, assisted by Ed C. Stoesz, chairman of the board, and Sara Stoesz, early organizer (left), and Nettie Stoesz, chairman of the ladies department (right).

1984 also saw a community-wide crusade sponsored by the churches of the area.

Community churches also continue to provide services. One is the Self-Help Centre on Main Street. This processes and makes available for use donated goods of a wide variety. It also includes a Global Gift Shop, selling craft items from many areas of the world. Proceeds are contributed to Mennonite Central Committee for its Relief and Services program. Mennonite community churches also provided a service to Mennonites returning from Mexico, helping them resettle and prepare for integration into Canadian life.

Churches are an integral part of the life of the community. Worship services are complemented by social activities, music, study and youth activities.

#### Health Care

In 1983 the Altona Community Memorial Health Centre added an addition to the nurses residence and completed a hospital renovation.

Ebenezer Home for the Aged received major renovations and updating of fire standards in 1982. The manor, and apartments, provide a home for some of Altona's senior residents. These facilities also offer a much-needed level of medical and social care.

The Altona & District Branch of the Canadian Association for the Mentally Handicapped supports three residences and the Occupational Training Centre, a workshop where the mentally handicapped can learn and develop new skills. A new home for five handicapped persons was opened in 1986.

A new hospital building is being planned for completion sometime in the early 1990's.

#### Arts & Culture

Altona is a centre for the arts. The community supports many cultural activities.

The Festival of the Arts is an annual event. There are a number of weeks of competition in such categories as Band, Speech & Visual Arts, Voice, Folk Dance and Gymnastics. They include students as well as others. The Southern Manitoba Choral Society attracts singers from the southern Manitoba community and performs several times a year.

Altona also joins Winkler and Morden in the Southern Manitoba Concerts. Well-known cultural performers give three or four concerts in these centres during the winter months.

Ballet classes are offered through affiliation with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and a variety of music lessons are offered by local professional and semi-professional musicians. Amateur camera buffs also have an opportunity to display their expertise at several photo contests and exhibits throughout the year.

# Sports and Recreation

Altona offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities for all ages.

Spacious and well-planned parks are carefully maintained to provide pleasure and comfort to residents and visitors alike. There is a heated swimming pool, tennis courts, baseball diamonds, shaded picnic areas, serviced camping sites, and children's play areas.

Oakview Golf Course, located south of Altona near Gretna, offers a challenging 9-hole course with grass greens and modern clubhouse facilities.

Five sheets of artificial ice provide an extended curling season. The Sunflower Gardens Arena, home of the Altona Maroons, sees plenty of action in the form of organized hockey, figure skating, and pleasure skating. The community takes great pride in its minor hockey program.

The Altona Maroons have won several championships including the SEMHL in 1985. In 1982 they did an exhibition tour of Czechoslovakia.

The community is health conscious. For several years now it has engaged in competing in a Participaction Event with Carman.

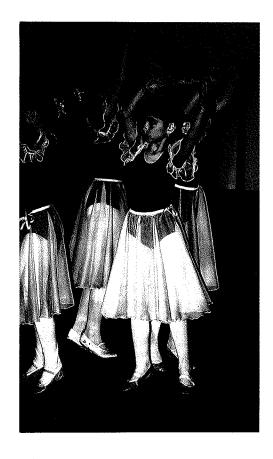
## Conclusion

The first settlement in the Altona area was made around 1882, the year when the railway line was built. The town took on an identity around 1895. A Centennial Committee was appointed by the town council to plan for centennial events and a celebration in 1995.

Altona's population has seen a slow but steady growth. From a population of 1,422 in 1951 it has climbed to 3,187 in 1990. Predictions are for a population of 3,800 to 3,900 by the year 2006.

Because of the strong work force and healthy work ethic, Altona has become a major commercial centre for retail and manufacturing firms, serving the needs of local, national, and international markets. In addition, it provides a wide range of other services, professional and others, meeting the needs of the community and the town.

Much of the information for this chapter was taken from the *Red River Valley Echo* files.



Altona Arts Council sponsors a ballet demonstration in the Elmwood School gymnasium in January, 1989.



Officers of the Altona-Gretna Optimist Club sworn in by Lieutenant-Governor Bob Migliore were, left to right, standing: Syd Onchulenko, Al Smalley (secretary-treasurer), Ken Penner, Menno M. Friesen (president) and Jake Guenther. Seated: Jack den Haan, Bernie Neufeld, Lt. Gov. Migliore and Harv Kroeker.

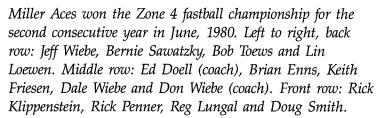


Town council poses here with some of the 1,000 Dutch bulbs Altona received from the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce in October, 1980. The bulbs were an expression of apprecation from the people of the Netherlands for the part Canada played in the liberation of their country from the Nazis in World War II. Left to right: Councillors Jack den Haan, Ed Buhr, Roy Dick, Al Schmidt, Peter Wolfe and Jake Neufeld.

1980 Sunflower Festival queen, Sandra Wagner, with Princesses Eleanor Froese and Marlene Rempel, and Miss Congeniality Glenys Giesbrecht.









Members of the Altona Bisons, winners of the A-side in the fastball tournament at the Sunflower Festival in 1980 were, left to right, back row: Ken Penner, Conley Kehler, Barry Buhr, Dave Kehler, Tony Hildebrand, Ron Voth, and John Kehler (coach). Front row: Frank Friesen, Menno Friesen, Ray Harder, and Barry Braun.



Members of the Altona Volunteer Fire Brigade in May, 1981. Standing in pumper doors are Chief Ed Klassen (right) and Deputy Chief Bill Loewen (left). Left to right, standing: Terry Wiebe, Bob Stoesz, Marvin Falk, Benno Krahn, Bernie Friesen, Bernie Penner, Allan Jaeb and Bill Isaak. Kneeling: Henry Loewen, Jake Derksen, Dan Hiebert (captain), Bob Doerksen (captain), Bill Dyck, Abe Sawatzky and Died Klassen.



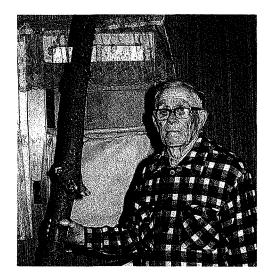
Parkside Junior High School volleyball champions in the South Central Volleyball League in 1980. Left to right, back row: Carol Braun (coach), Sharman Friesen, Debbie Heppner, Lisa Enns, Sharon Smalley, Jackie Martens and Wendy Klassen (manager). Front row: Michelle Funk, Angela Martens (captain), Kathy Friesen and Kelly Hildebrand.



The Pee Wee A's pose with their trophy after winning the championship of the Pembina Valley Minor Hockey League in March, 1980. Left to right, standing: Wilbert Funk (coach), Jeff Loeppky, Kevin Nickel, Barry Kehler, Chris Braun, Terry Letkeman, Tom Klassen, Tim Hildebrand, Earl Voth, Menno M. Friesen (manager), and Danny Kehler. Kneeling: Mark Friesen, James Friesen, Carl Giesbrecht, Jim Dick and Dwight Doell.



John and Edith Klassen in front of their furniture store in the Altona Mall in May, 1981.



On Easter Sunday, April 6, 1980, a small twister passed through the west side of Altona, sending debris and small buildings soaring into trees. At the home of Mr. and Mrs. John H. Heinrichs at 49-2nd St. SW, a tree branch tore through the roof. Mr. Heinrichs shows the branch poking through the ceiling before it was removed. The incident happened while the family was gathered in the living room to celebrate the Easter holiday.





After an extensive fund-raising program involving municipal and provincial governments, plus local businesses and private individuals, the Rhineland Pioneer Centre building project was finally launched with a sod-turning in May, 1981. Left to right: Elmer Hildebrand (chairman of the building committee). John G. Froese (representing the Rhineland Ministerial Association), Arnold Brown (Rhineland MLA), Mayor Dick Penner, Ray Siemens (vice-chairman of the Pioneer Centre board), Rhineland Reeve Henry D. Hildebrand, Ray Loewen (chairman of the fund-raising committee), Peter Cole (president of the Altona Chamber of Commerce), and Jack Penner (president of the Rhineland Agricultural Society and chairman of the Pioneer Centre board).

The Altona Farmers Orchestra was a popular musical group when this picture was taken in 1981. They were frequently called on to perform at a variety of occasions.



Parkside Sabres were the winners of the Parkside Volleyball Tournament in November, 1981. Left to right, standing: Barb Neufeld (coach), Marilyn Klassen, Gwen Smith, Kelly Hildebrand (captain), Marilyn Elias, Donita Giesbrecht and Linda Enns (manager). Front row: Michelle Tarnick, Debbie Schapansky, Kathy Friesen, Barb den Haan, Jodi Friesen and Leila Braun.



Reinland Church and dining hall on 2nd Ave. NW in June, 1981. The buildings were removed and the land sold to developers. A new church was built on Willow Bay.



Queen of the 4H dress revue at the 1981 Sunflower Festival was Candace Martens (wearing slacks). With her are Princesses Deb Giesbrecht and Sara Penner (second and third from left) and the other contestants in the revue.



1981 Sunflower Festival queen, Corrine Dueck (centre), with Princesses Corinne Fay Wiebe (left), and Wanda Klassen.



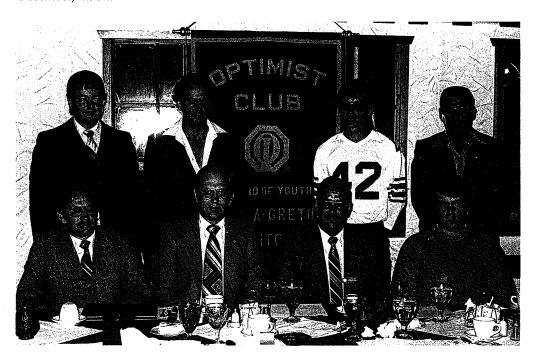
Mayor Dick Penner presents Manitoba's Lt. Gov. Pearl McGonigal with an Altona pin after she spoke at a chamber of commerce dinner in December, 1981.



D. D. Giesbrecht, collector and dealer in antiques, was selling off some of his artifacts in October, 1981, when this photo was taken in his shop on Centre Ave.



Don Cherry (left), popular hockey commentator and former coach of the Boston Bruins, accepts a gift of two locally printed books presented by Ray Friesen, president of D.W. Friesen & Sons, following an address by Cherry at the July, 1981, Optimist Sportsmen's Dinner.



Members of the Altona-Gretna
Optimist Club following the installation
ceremony in October, 1981. Left to
right, standing: Ken Penner (treasurer),
Jake Guenther (social committee
chairman), Jack Penner (master at
arms), and Ted Saunders (secretary).
Seated: Menno M. Friesen (past
president), Harv Kroeker (president),
Lt. Gov. Lew Pelletier from Assiniboine
Optimist Club, and Bernie Neufeld
(vice-president).



The Altona and District Hospital board paid tribute to its nurses on Canada Health Day, May 26, 1982, by presenting them with certificates of appreciation. Left to right: David Klassen, Peter N. Wiebe (board chairman), Lucy Barnabe, Willo S. Forrester (chairman of the public relations committee), Patti Dick, Mary Anne Austman (head nurse at the personal care home), Roseann Hoffman (head nurse at the hospital), Sandra Kletke, and Jake Neufeld (vice-chairman of the board).



Jim McSweeney and Olly Penner were co-hosts of the popular forenoon program Ladies First on CFAM for 18 years. This photo shows them preparing to go on the air in 1982. Olly retired from broadcasting in 1987, and Jim joined CHSM in Steinbach soon thereafter.

ALIONA 1700-177



First babies born at the Altona hospital in 1982 were these twins — a boy and a girl — born to Dennis and Bernice Harder. Their two other children, Randy and Carrie Ann, show obvious interest in the new arrivals.



Members of the CFAM staff served birthday cake in the Altona Mall at the radio station's 25th anniversary in March, 1982. Olly Penner, host of Children's Party and Ladies First, is assisted by Wanda Klassen and Eleanor Neudorf.





The Craft Nook on 2nd Ave. NE was owned and operated by Cheryle Guenther and Selma Loewen. It took in one-of-a-kind craft items from local craftspeople and sold them on consignment. Items included such things as pottery, petit point, knitting, dolls, etc. Here Cheryle (right) discusses a craft item being brought in by Dorothy Schritt.

Sally Pappel (in clown suit) and Linda Friesen carry the Rhineland Pre-school banner to head up the parade which wound its way through two blocks of Altona's downtown in June, 1982. The enrollment was 20 and was based in the Elmwood School.



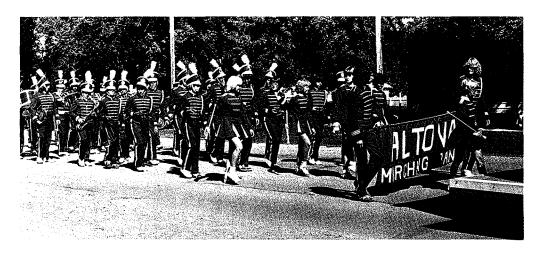
The Pioneer Centre was officially opened in April, 1982, when the ribbon was cut by Reeve H. D. Hildebrand (centre) and Mayor Dick Penner. Jack Penner, president of the Rhineland Agricultural Society, smiles his approval. In the background are Ray Loewen and Joe Braun, members of the Centre board, who were both deeply involved with raising funds.



The W.C. Miller Collegiate Angels won the Brandon Lions Invitational Midget Fastball Tournament on June 13, 1982. Left to right, back row: Peter Hensen (coach), Marlene Heppner, Deb Zacharias, Ang Martens, Sandy Klassen, Margaret Fehr, and Lynn Voth. Front row: Cathy Kehler, Bev Kehler, Carla Klassen, Diane Hiebert, Sheila Enns, Brenda Toews (captain), and Candace Martens.

Altona Hurricanes in September, 1982, after winning the championship in the Southern Manitoba Flag Football League. Left to right, back row: Peter Thiessen, Jim Wiebe, Robert Loewen, Armand Plett, Brian Wiebe, David Banman, and Ernie Klassen. Front row: Bernie Neufeld, Alex Jones (coach), Leroy Friesen, Bernie Sawatzky, Henry Sawatzky, and Keith Friesen.

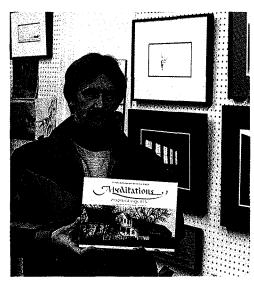




The marching band from Parkside School helped add spirit to the Sunflower Festival parades in the '80s.



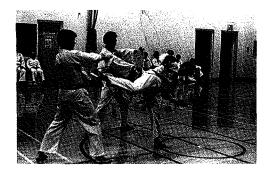
1982 queen of the Manitoba Sunflower Festival, Sandra Marie Giesbrecht (centre), with Princesses Louise Bergman and Patricia Kehler at the Sunday morning worship service in the park.



Ken Loewen, Altona photographer/artist with a collection of his framed photographs in January, 1983. He is holding a copy of his recently released book entitled Meditations on a Place and a Way of Life.



The staff of D.W. Friesen & Sons presented roses and a plaque at the firm's 75th anniversary in 1982. Left to right: Kay and Ray Friesen, Linie and Ted Friesen, and Mary and D.K. Friesen.



A Tae Kwon Do martial arts class goes through some of their routines at the Elmwood School in February, 1983. An instructor came out from Winnipeg to teach this Asian skill.

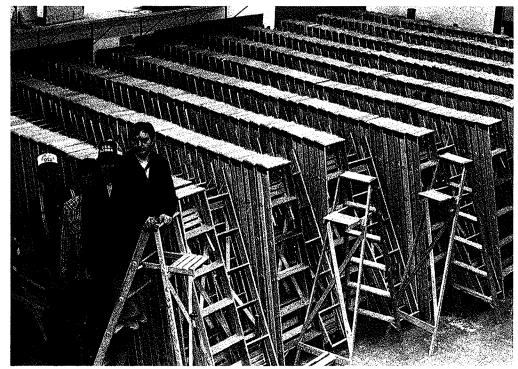
W.C. Miller Collegiate winners in the Canadian Mathematics Competition, left to right: Grade 9 — Mike Wolfe, Larry Hamm, and Peter Unger; Grade 10 — Danny Kehler, Helen Wall, and Sonya Friesen. Grade 11 — Rob Peters, Chris Schellenberg, and Ed Penner. About 44,000 Grade 9-11 students from 1,300 schools competed.



Dinner guests crowd around Danny Gallivan, who for many years was the broadcast voice of the Montreal Canadiens, after the Altona-Gretna Optimists third annual Sportsmen's Dinner in May, 1983.

CAMR workshop staffers John Thiessen, Kelvin Reimer, Trudy Toews, and Brian Moffat pose with some of the 2,086 six-foot ladders made in the workshop during the first 3½ months of 1983. They were distributed through Federated Co-op and Macleods.







In 1983 Altona and Emerald, Queensland, Australia, set up an exchange program which had their respective queens visit each others' festivals. The first sunflower queen to visit the festival at Altona was Patricia Couper (left) seen here with Delores Heinrichs, the Altona queen, and Princesses Laurie Wiebe and Nicole Buhr.



West Park School track and field winners in June, 1983, were, left to right, back row: Mary Thiessen, Vera Klassen, Tanya Penner, Shauna Hamm, and Leigh-Ann Kehler. Front row: Jeremy Hiebert, Susie Wiebe and Ryan Penner (holding plaque), Tim Klassen, and Colin Hildebrand.



Fifty youngsters aged 6 to 13 years participated in the summer art classes held in 1983. Showing the products of their papier-mache classes are, left to right: Karen Wiens, Noel Friesen, Arlen Friesen, Vince Wiebe, Krista Loewen, Joanne Wiebe, Bradley Klippenstein, Natasha Penner, Teddy Redekop, and Michael Goertzen.



Solo winners in the Altona Festival band finals in March, 1984, were, left to right: Allison McClelland (recorder), Patty Elias (flute), and Sheryl Wall (clarinet).



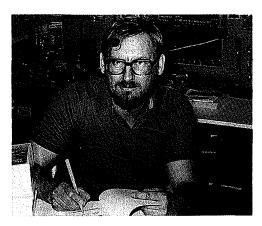
Eric Friesen was born in Altona in 1946, the oldest son of Ted. E. and Linie Friesen. He received his elementary and high school education in Altona before going on to the University of Waterloo (Ontario), where he graduated in 1967. He began his career in radio at CFAM, and then went to St. Catherines, Ont., to work for a private station there. He then joined the CBC in Ottawa and worked as a broadcaster there as well as in Winnipeg and Toronto. In Toronto he switched from "on air" work to the executive offices. In 1984 he became the executive vice president of American Public Radio in St. Paul, Minnesota. His wife, Susan, is a native of Ontario, and works as an artist.



Peter Goertzen conducts the Southern Manitoba Choral Society choir and Mennonite Community Orchestra at their performance of Handel's Messiah in December, 1984. Soloists were Henrietta Schellenberg, Lois Watson, John Martens, and Victor Engbrecht.



Altona Panthers await the start of the opening parade at the Special Olympics held at the University of Manitoba in June, 1984. Holding the pennant are Marlene Wiebe and David Ringland. Seated, left to right: Joanne Weir (coach), Callum McLean, Keith Peters, Henry Saunders, Eva Friesen, and Mary McCormick (coach).



Armin Wiebe, teacher and author of the novel The Salvation of Yasch Siemens autographs copies of his book at The General store in the Altona Mall in August, 1984. Wiebe attended W.C. Miller Collegiate. His novel is set in the Altona area.



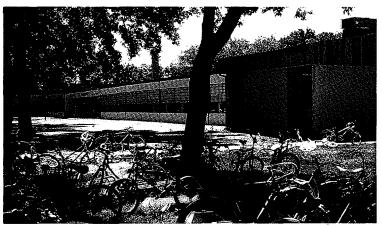
Altona Bison Bantams, Western Canada and regional champions in August, 1984. Left to right, back row: Lefty Hendrickson (asst. coach), Scott Hendrickson, Vince Wiebe, Greg Enns, Myron Penner, and Rick Penner (coach). Middle row: Jim Hamm, Steve Riley, Brad Friesen, Jerry Loeppky, Glen Schroeder, Chris Friesen, and Larry Smith. Front row: Jerry Fehr, Rick McConnell, Chris Braun, Terry Letkeman, Randy Lebleu, Curwin Friesen, and Greg Loeppky (bat boy).



1984 Sunflower Festival queen, Sandra Toews (right), with Princesses Sharon Neufeld (centre) and Brenda Toews.



The Pee Wee A's had a successful season in 1984-85, winning the Pembina Valley Minor Hockey Association regional championship and qualifying for the finals in the provincial MAHA "B" play-offs. Left to right, standing: Ed Bergman (asst. coach), Les Martens, Tim Klassen, Darryl Toews, Jody Hildebrand, Gerald Schellenberg, Steve Enns, Lonny Loewen, Vaughn Stephenson (coach), and Ben Hildebrand (manager). Seated: Nathan Buhler, Brad Derksen, Jeremy Hiebert, Mark Bennett, Murray Sawatzky, Scott Schimonek, and Colin Hildebrand.



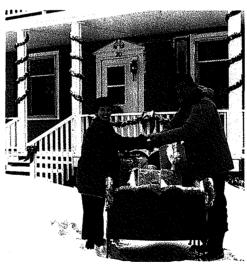
West Park School.

Red River Valley Echo staff members wave certificates of merit received by their paper at the annual convention of Manitoba Community Newspapers Association in October, 1984. Five of the seven awards were for first place finishes in the MCNA's Better Newspaper Competitions. Left to right: Elmer Heinrichs (news editor), Jolene Klassen (advertising representative), Connie Klassen (reporter and receptionist), Val Penner (typesetter and darkroom operator), Betty Driedger (circulation manager and receptionist), Eugene Letkeman (production manager), Heather Klassen (typesetter and advertising assistant), Vic Penner (editor), and Ted Saunders (sports editor).



In 1984 the Schwartz Heritage House was moved from its original site across the street from the Bergthaler Church to its new location west of the Pioneer Centre.





Winner of the 1984 Christmas home decorating contest, Della Klippenstein, was presented with a cheque for \$100 by Axel Meyer, president of the Chamber of Commerce, in front of her home on Centre Ave.



Dr. G.D. Redhead and his wife, Joyce, and their children Todd and Heidi in 1984. Dr. Redhead graduated from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in Toronto in 1969 and began his practise in Altona in September, 1971.

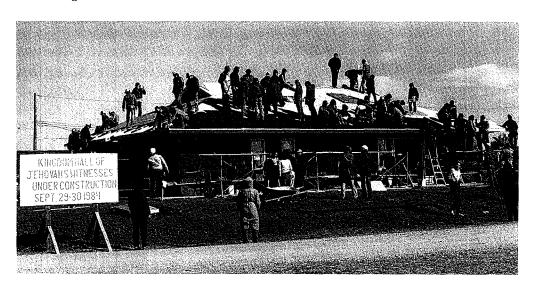
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W.C. Miller Collegiate basketball Aces won the Zone 4 championship in 1984. Left to right, back row: John Klassen (coach), Bruce Schulz, Terrance Voth, Pat Hiebert, Steve Voth, and Jeff Hildebrand. Front row: Toni Braun (asst. coach), Dave Schellenberg, Rob Peters, Doug Doell, and Steve Bergman.



The W.C. Miller Collegiate boys volleyball team won the provincial MHSAA volleyball championship in November, 1984. Left to right, back row: Terry Braun (coach), Jim Hamm, Steve Voth, Greg Klassen, Terry Letkeman, and Glenn Wagner (asst. coach). Front row: Terrance Voth, Mark Friesen, Carl Giesbrecht, and Kevin Friesen.



About 600 persons converged on Altona in October, 1984, to join local Jehovah's Witnesses in building a new Kingdom Hall on Willow Bay in the west end of Altona. The first nail was driven in at 7 a.m. and 32 hours later they used the hall for their first meeting. Workers and their families came from Alberta, Saskatchewan, North Dakota, and all parts of Manitoba. The 1,800 sq. ft. hall seats 100 and when finished the hall was completely air conditioned, had a public address system, and was fully carpeted.



Graduates of the Red River Community College home care attendants course in April, 1985. Left to right, back row: David Webb, Anne Krahn, Audrey Enns, and Lucille Wiebe. Middle row: Susanne Thiessen, Helen Bergen, Kathy Teichroeb, Giselle Ouelette, and Tina Sawatzky. Front row: Mary Klassen, Karen Jean, Julia Webb, Shirley Bergen, and Jeannette Dupuis.



Boys enrolled at the Maroons Hockey School go through one of their many drills in October, 1984. Maroons players and former players conducted the classes throughout the '80s. In 1984 there were 196 boys enrolled.



Parkside Junior High School students in their 1984 presentation of Gilbert & Sullivan's HMS Pinafore.



The Maroons again emerged champions of the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League in 1985, when they defeated the favored Warroad Lakers in four straight games in the final playoff. Left to right, back row: Rod Pappel (coach), Corey Klippenstein (asst. trainer), Glenn Friesen, John Falk, Mike Rempel, Levi Bergen, Mark Braun, Denis Vandale, Brian Wiebe, Mark Heinrichs, Keith Martens, Henry Sawatzky, Ken Penner (manager), Byron Loeppky, and John Martens (trainer). Front row: Frank Hunt, Mike Kehler, Henry Derksen, Laverne Pappel, Bob Toews (captain), Wes Friesen, and Ken Bergen.



Parkside School again presented Gilbert & Sullivan's Mikado in April, 1985. The main characters, left to right: Jonathan Dyck (Pish Tush), Rob Geworsky (Pooh Bah), Natalie Schimonek (Ko Ko, Nanki Pooh, and Yum Yum), Tami Braun (Pitti Sing), Tammy Martin (Katisha), and Patty Elias (Peep Bo). The chorus is in the background.



Twenty Altona businesses participated in the May, 1985, Home and Leisure Show in the Sunflower Gardens.



The Optimist Centre was officially opened in Altona January 26, 1985, when 4-year-old Curtis Gerbrandt cut the ribbon. Holding the ribbon for him are Tim Neilsen (left) and Mayor Dick Penner. The Altona-Gretna Optimist Club purchased the Sommerfelder Church on Centre Ave. after that congregation built a new church in the north end of town. Following extensive renovation, it became the home of the Pre-School and Kiddie Sunshine Centre.



Bernie Neufeld, president of the Altona-Gretna Optimist Club, hands over the keys to the new Optimist Centre to Kathy Braun of the preschoolers group and Iris Hiebert of the day care centre. The two children's groups found a new home when the Optimists bought the former Sommerfelder Church and turned it into suitable facilities for them.



Walking on the dividers was almost as much fun as curling for some of the Grades 4-6 children participating in the Elks jam pail curling bonspiel in April, 1985. Actual jam pails were used at first but were replaced by child-size curling rocks.



In 1985 the Ebenezer Home bought this van with a lift for wheelchair patients for \$18,000. By July it was making an average of three trips a day. Here Helen Friesen is entering the van for a trip to a doctor's appointment.



Eva Dueck, Altona co-ordinator for the Red Cross, presents blood donor awards to Peter C. Voth (50 donations) and Ed. C. Stoesz (35 donations) in February, 1986.

ALIONA 1900-1990



Group A champions in the Altona Ladies Curling Club in 1985 was this rink composed of, left to right: Martha Friesen (lead), Edna Stoesz (second), Wilma Martens (third), and Val Bennett (skip).



1985 queen of the Manitoba Sunflower Festival, Yvonne Neudorf (second from right), together with Jacki Sparrow (Emerald, Australia, sunflower queen) pose with Deb Derksen (2nd princess), and Jackie Braun (1st princess).



D.K. Friesen (right) accepts a plaque on behalf of the Lower Red River Valley Water Commission presented by Mayor Dick Penner in April, 1986. The plaque was in recognition of the LRRVWC's efforts in educating Red River Valley residents on water issues. Friesen had been an active member of the commission since its inception.



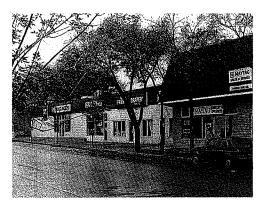
Sunflower Festival queen of 1986, Kelly Siemens (centre), and visiting sunflower queens from festivals in Australia and North Dakota — Lyndele Helmore, of Australia (left), and Carma Twete of McVille, North Dakota.



Trophy winners in the Maroons Minor Hockey Golf Tournament in September, 1985, were, left to right: Keith Stoesz, Les Martens, Curwin Friesen, Eric Hildebrand, and Kelly Recksiedler.

Richard Tang (top left) opened a
Chinese restaurant in Altona on March
27, 1985, when he purchased Clae's
Restaurant from Lloyd Wilson in what
had previously been Harry Yee's
restaurant in Main St. Tang brought
eight years of experience in the
restaurant business with him as well as
a chef, Yin Leuk Ho (seated), who had
served as a chef with Marigold
Restaurants and the China Garden in
Winnipeg for 20 years. Shown with
them here are hostesses Sylvia
Hildebrand and Khanh W.





Midtown Plaza strip mall and Sawatzky Bros. appliance store on Centre Ave. in 1986.



Bill Herne, a member of the Altona Panthers Club, was a medalist in the Summer Special Olympics held in Calgary in July, 1986. He won silver in the senior men's 100 metre event, and bronze in the senior men's 200 metre event.



The Ping Pong Ball Drop was a highlight of the Sunflower Festival in 1986. The ping pong balls are dropped from an airplane. Each has a number and can be turned in at participating merchants whose numbers correspond with those on the balls, for gifts or discounts on purchases.



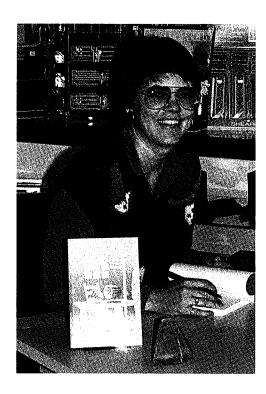
Life member Linie Friesen (extreme right) presented life memberships to three WI members at that organization's 50th anniversary celebration. Holding their life membership certificates, left to right: Olly Penner, Selma Loewen, and Clara Braun.



Altona council 1986. Left to right, standing: Councillors George Wiebe, Rick Martel, Nick Enns, and Jake Sawatzky (secretary-treasurer), and Councillor Axel Meyer. Seated: Councillor Dennis Friesen, Mayor Art K. Dyck, and Councillor Al Schmidt.



Organized on June 3, 1936, the Altona Women's Institute celebrated its 50th Anniversary in June, 1986. About to serve the WI's anniversary cake are charter members, left to right: Anne Stobbe, Marge Hetterley, Sarah Reimer, Anne Loewen and Mary Friesen. Despite a rocky start (opposing the organization was the church, which objected mainly because it was a secular organization that attracted English and Jewish women as well as Mennonites) it has been very active throughout its history. That it persisted in those early years was a sign of the diminishing influence of the church, although some women did terminate their WI membership, especially those whose husbands held leading positions in the church.



Lois Braun, teacher and author, autographing copies of her book of short stories, A Stone Watermelon, at the D.W. Friesen bookstore in December, 1986. Her second book of short stories, The Pumpkin Eaters, was published in 1990. She is a graduate of W.C. Miller Collegiate and the University of Manitoba, and teaches at West Park School in Altona.

The largest mobile home ever built by Conquest Manufacturing is this 16 ft.  $\times$  90 ft. unit ready to move out. Posing with their 1,376 sq. ft. unit in the summer of 1987 are Ben Sawatzky (right) and his son Reynold.



Optimist volunteers Louise Turenne, Lori Lechow, and Enza Pohl, assist Anne Kroeker (left), co-ordinator of the Optimist Club's annual Christmas Hamper Fund, pack hampers for needy families in December, 1986. Hampers of food, toys, and clothing were distributed to over 100 families with more than 300 children that year.





Rhineland Pre-School held its wind-up in May, 1987, with a presentation of certificates to "graduates". Left to right, back row: Carol Enns (teacher), Pamela Onchulenko, Jeremy Sawatzky, Justin Friesen, Jennifer Giesbrecht, Joseph Warkentin, Michael Penner, Arlin Dueck, Benita Kliewer, Derek Sawatzky, and Anna Penner (teacher). Front row: Bobby Burgess, Leah Enns, Jeffrey Wolters, Lori Fast, Nathan Falk, Kara Penner, Pamela Heinrichs, Dustin Loeppky, Andrew Braun, Sarah Friesen, and Kristin Loewen.

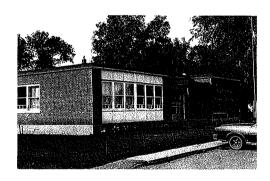


Popular kids event at the 1987 Sunflower Festival is the pig scramble in which children try to catch pigs in a mud-filled pen.



Sunflower Festival queen in 1987 was Donita Giesbrecht (centre), shown here with, left to right: Ang Klassen (2nd princess), Kerry Mitton (Emerald, Australia, sunflower queen), Donita, Angela Ruff (U.S. sunflower queen), and Kerri Neufeld (1st princess).

The Atom A's hockey team in the spring of 1987. Left to right, back row: Earl Dick (coach), Ken Wiebe (manager), Cliff Doell (trainer), and Terry Letkeman (asst. coach). Middle row: Clayton Fehr, Eric Hildebrand, Robert Elias, Chad Friesen, Ryan Dyck, Corwin Bergen, and Ryan Hildebrand. Front row: Matthew Giesbrecht, Craig Doell, Dwight Neufeld, Kerri Bennett, Kenny Wiebe, Mike Dick, and Curtis Klassen.



Altona town office in the former post office building, in 1986.

Ray and Dorothy Siemens were honored at an Appreciation Night in April, 1987, prior to their leaving Altona to take up residence in B.C. Ray had been active in the co-op movement for many years, especially Co-op Vegetable Oils and CSP Foods, where he served on the board of directors for 27 years — as president from 1975-1986 — and as a director of Manitoba Pool.







Watermelons from Joe Braun's farm stockpiled for shipment to store shelves in Altona and other southern Manitoba towns in 1987.



A group of conscientious objectors who served in Camps I and II at Clear Lake during World War II met in an Altona coffee shop to swap stories and memories in October, 1987. Left to right: Willie Wiebe, Altona; Peter Teichroew, Williams Lake, B.C.; John C. Klassen, Morden; Henry Sawatzky and Ed Buhr, Altona, and Isaac Krahn, Winkler. Ed Buhr later joined the armed forces after serving as a CO.



Elsa Redekopp, author and musician, surrounded by students on her visit to West Park School in November, 1987.



Peter Sawatzky (seated at centre) instructs a woodcarving class in February, 1988. Sawatzky specializes in bird carvings and has gained a wide reputation, with showings in several leading art galleries in Canada and the U.S.



A native girl dances in the Altona Mall during Cross Cultural Days in November, 1987.

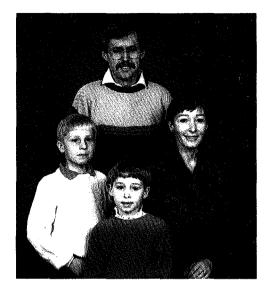


Vic Penner, who had served as editor of the Echo for 35 years, retired in 1987. President of the Canadian Community Newspapers Association, Jean Barber-Pearce, is shown presenting him with the Silver Quill Award "in recognition of over 25 years of distinguished service to the community newspaper profession" at the MCNA convention in Winnipeg on May 1, 1987.

The Altona branch of the South Central Regional Library opened in the Altona Mall in October, 1988. Preparing to cut the ribbon is Councillor Albert Schmidt, assisted by Linie Friesen (left) and Kathy Wall. All three were members of the library board. Member municipalities of SCRL are Altona, Morden, Winkler, and the RM of Stanley.



Dr. Dieter Bueddefeld, his wife, Debra, and their sons Nathan and Derek in December, 1987. Dr. Bueddefeld was born, raised, and educated in Winnipeg. He moved to Altona and established his medical practise at the Altona Clinic in 1984.



Dr. Ken Kliewer, his wife, Iris, and children J.D. and Karin. Dr. Kliewer started his medical practise at the Altona Clinic in 1974.





Queen of the 1988 Sunflower Festival was Francine Hiebert (left), seen here with Princesses Karen Hiebert and Lisa Sommer.



Gary Ardon, forester, plants a Tower poplar tree at Elmwood School on Arbor Day, 1989, with the help of Carl Klassen and Devin Penner.



United Church pastors, Bob and Myrna Stark, pose with their confirmation class following the confirmation service in June, 1988. Left to right, back row: Mrs. Stark, Kelly Klassen, Michael Dyck, Alison McClelland, and Bob Stark. Middle row: Dietra Stoesz, David McClelland, and Kurtis Nickel. Front row: Katrina Thiessen, Carla Klassen, and Tonya Abrams.



Rhineland Agricultural Society sponsored a computer workshop for farmers in February, 1988.



Council 1989. Left to right, standing: Secretary-Treasurer Jake Sawatzky, Councillors Ed R. Klassen, Axel Meyer, Vaughn Stephenson, and Rick Martel. Seated: Councillor Nick Enns, Mayor Art K. Dyck, and Councillor Al Schmidt.



Scene at the Sunflower Gardens before the Auction Bucks that climaxed the Agribition in September, 1989.

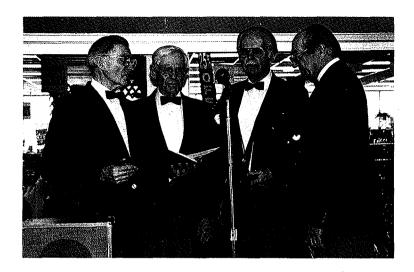


Mayor Art K. Dyck signs a proclamation at the 25th Sunflower Festival in 1989 officially "twinning" Altona with Emerald, Australia, site of the "down under" sunflower festival. Left to right: outgoing Princess Lisa Sommer and Queen Francine Hiebert, Mayor Dyck, and the Australian queen, Veronica Shilvock, and Princess Gita McKenna.

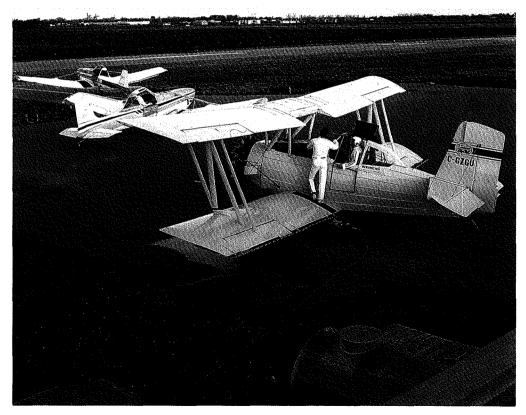


Queen of the 1989 Sunflower Festival, Sheryl Wall (centre), with Princesses Carrie Schellenberg and Sandra Zacharias.

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The Hochstadt Quartet sang their first number together in January, 1932, and has been singing together more or less continually ever since. Their first song together was ''Jolly Old Winter has Pleasure for Me'' sung at a literary program in the Hochstadt school. Members are, left to right: Jake Hoeppner, 74, John Hoeppner, 75, Ben W. Sawatzky, 77, and Ben J. Krueger, 75. Their pianist for 50 years has been Henry Berg. This photo was taken in March, 1990, when they performed in the Altona Mall and were taped by the CBC-TV for a Ted Weatherhead feature on CBWT. They are frequently invited to sing at weddings, funerals, anniversaries, and church services.





Anna Born celebrated her 100th birthday at the Ebenezer Home for the aged on June 28, 1988.

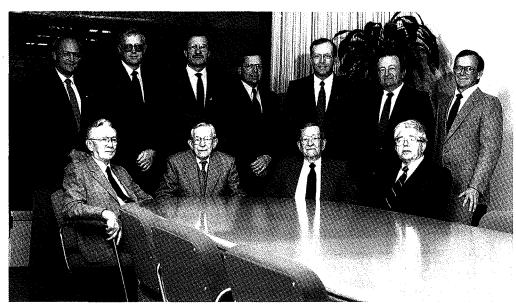
Aircraft fueling up at the Altona airport in 1988.

By 1989, when this wedding picture was taken by Glen Voth of Viewfinders studio, wedding photography had changed greatly from some of the wedding photos in this book from earlier decades. With the coming of the wedding album and videos, a much greater variety of poses was needed to fill an album and a one-hour video. Here the photographer found a way of combining the old and the new with this buggy and the wedding party. Left to right: Bridesmaids Wendy Heinrichs, Tara Klassen, Tracey Falk, and Cindy Klassen; the bride, Joanne Voth, and the groom, Warren Klassen; flowergirls, Candace and Jodie Voth; and providing the horsepower, Conrad Klassen, Mark Krahn, Dwight Braun, and Tom Klassen.



In May, 1990, a second team of students from W.C. Miller Collegiate qualified for a trip to the National Science Olympics by placing first at the Manitoba Science Olympics. Left to right: Charles Klippenstein, Corey D. Friesen, Mike Giesbrecht, and Chris Friesen.





The board of directors at DW Friesen in 1990. Left to right, standing: Don Elias, John Gerbrandt, Jake Thiessen, David Friesen, Jake Dueck, Don Penner, and Gerry Sawatzky. Seated: T. E. Friesen, D. K. Friesen, R. C. Friesen and John Wolters.

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Queen of the 1990 Sunflower Festival, Cindy Hildebrand (centre), with Princesses Rachel Ginter (left), and Sara Unger.



Motocross competition was providing thrills for drivers and spectators at the Sunflower Festival in 1990.

W.C. Miller Collegiate in 1989.

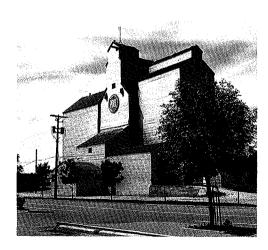


Band director, Curt Braun, holds the trophy won by the W.C. Miller concert band at the Assiniboine Optimist Band Festival in March, 1990. One hundred and fifty bands competed.





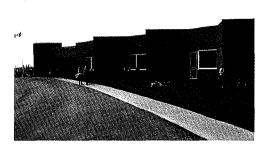
4th Ave. NE in 1990.



In 1990 the Manitoba Pool elevator was the only grain elevator left in Altona.



In the winter of 1989, the Maroons were still going strong in the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League.



Elmwood Elementary School.



Parkside Junior High School.



The concert stage in the Centennial Park.



The 8th hole at the Oakview golf course was designated the Irvin J. Braun Memorial Hole on July 7, 1990. Irvin was a charter member of the club and a strong supporter until the time of his death on November 16, 1989. Present for the dedication service were members of the Braun family. Left to right, front row: Jack Braun, John Braun, Edith Braun, Steven and Spencer Braun, Cara Koroscil, Andrew Braun, Clayton Koroscil, and Bob Koroscil. Back row: Louise Braun, Joan Braun, Jill Koroscil, and Dawn Braun.



The 9th green at Oakview Golf and Country Club near Gretna in 1989, where Altona golfers form a large part of the membership. The modern and expanded clubhouse is in the background.



Bob Giesbrecht, chairman of the building committee, turns the sod to start construction of the \$660,000 Mennonite Brethren Church in south east Altona in April, 1990. Left to right: Mayor Art K. Dyck; Allan Labun, MB conference; Walter Wilms, Central Canadian Structures; Walter Hiebert, church moderator, and Bob Enns, pastor of the Altona congregation. The church will seat 318 persons when completed.



Bergthaler Church.



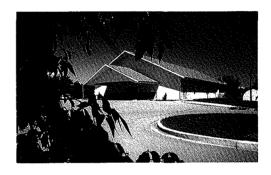
Altona Mennonite Church.



Evangelical Free Church.



Reinland Church.



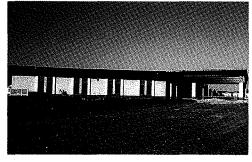
Sommerfeld Church.



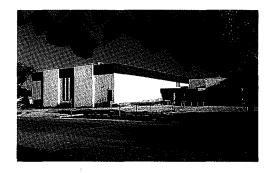
Altona United Church.



Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall.



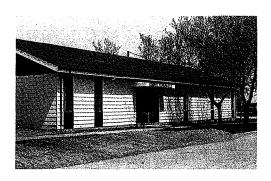
Mennonite Brethren Church.



EMM Church.



The Altona Meeting Room.



Gospel Tabernacle.



Ebenezer Home for the Aged.



This sign welcomes visitors, and Altonans returning home along Highway 30 from the north.