

Churches

Missionaries began coming to Dakota Territory in 1871, to bring the Gospel to the early pioneers who were settling the land. We do not know of any missionaries working in this area, but there were itinerant preachers and priests assigned to this area to assist in organizing church congregations.

The desire to gather for the worship of God was evident among the early settlers, as they came from countries where religious worship and training was an important part of their lives. The pioneers were also experiencing so many adverse conditions, that it seemed like their faith in God was all they had going for them.

The first congregation to organize at Sims was Presbyterian. They met in the Community building, on the east end of Main Street. They had planned to build a church, about two blocks south of the community building, and had laid out the foundation for it. The congregation dissolved before the church building became a reality. The Presbyterians also had a cemetery about a half mile northwest of town, which was known as the English Cemetery.

Those of the Lutheran faith started meeting in various homes in the community in 1881; they met most frequently in the Arjan Johnson home. The Scandinavians who came to Sims were mostly Lutherans, as the state religion of Norway was Lutheran, and still is.

Roman Catholics met in the Northern Pacific section house, which was located on the railroad right-of-way, about one mile south of town.

The Skandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sims was organized on September 30, 1884. This church was the first Lutheran congregation to organize, west of the Missouri River. The Lutheran parsonage was built in 1884, and worship services and other church meetings were held on the second floor until the church building was erected. Rev. O.J. Norby helped organize the congregation. He traveled to the outlying parishioners carrying his carpet bag with him. The bag contained vestments, Altar book, Bible, New Testament, hymn book, elements of the Sacraments. He also carried a round tin box which contained his fluted Elizabethan collar.

In 1884, the Sims Lutheran Cemetery was laid out. Later graves at the English Cemetery were opened and the remains were removed to the new Sims Cemetery, and to New Salem and other cemeteries in the area. My Dad helped with this unpleasant task.

Construction of the Lutheran Church began in 1897. Andrew Anderson was hired to build the edifice and he received \$150.00 for his labors. Quite a bit of used lumber was used in its construction, including material from the Oakes House barn. In 1898, before the building was completed, tornado-type winds blew the church off the foundation; it was jacked up and rolled back. The church was completed and dedicated in 1900.

The Lutheran Church purchased their first organ from the Presbyterians when they dissolved. Before getting the organ,

the congregational singing had been led by my dad with his violin.

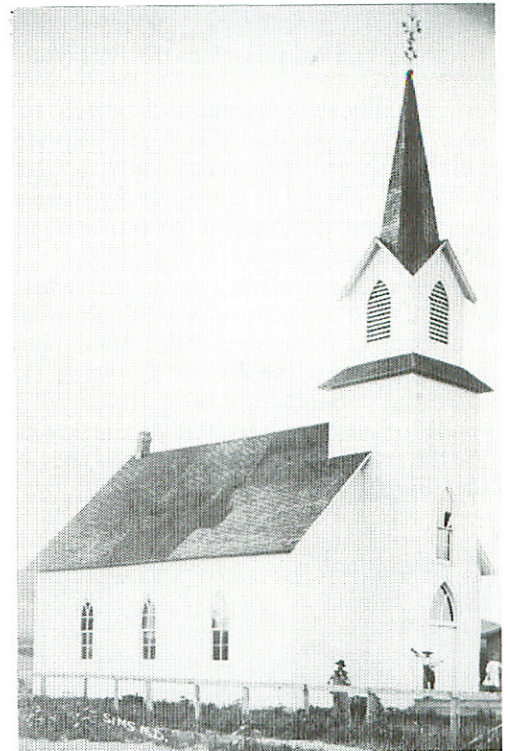
In the early years, the preachers either walked or went by horse and buggy to visit parishioners who lived in rural areas. The preacher also traveled by train to Mandan and Taylor, where he served those congregations before they had a resident pastor.

Lutherans who lived in the Heart River

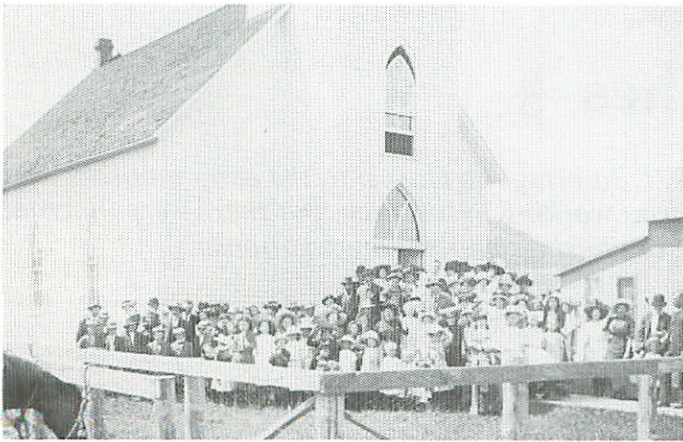
area, 12 miles south of Sims, organized the Heart River Scandinavian Lutheran Church, and were served by Rev. Isolany of Sims until about 1910. The congregation never built a church, but met in homes and the school house; they met most often at the Hans Anderson home, located on the Heart River.

The Sims Skandinavian Lutheran Church has been well kept through the years and is still in good repair, and worship services have been held almost every Sunday since it was built. The Centennial celebration of the congregation was observed on July 1, 1984, with more than 500 in attendance. (A more detailed history of the Sims Church can be found in "Prairie Heritage," a book written about the church for their centennial.)

The Sims Church had the usual "klokker" sexton. He was the song leader and also read the opening prayer. The first klokker whom I remember was Pete Hoovestol; he was also the Sunday School teacher and superintendent. The language spoken at that time was, of course, Norwegian. The Hoovestol family lived just south of the church; the boys



Sims Lutheran Church.



Gathering at Sims Church in the 1924 (40th Anniversary).

in the family were mechanically gifted, so rigged up a merry-go-round. On Sundays they would sell rides to the kids before Sunday School. Hoovestol soon noticed that the Sunday School offering was considerably smaller than it had been and realized the reason; he put a stop to merry-go-rides before Sunday School.

Women have always been the heart and body of the church, even though they weren't allowed to vote in the Sims Lutheran Church until 1930. Mrs. Norby (pastor's wife) helped organize the *Kvinne Forening* (Ladies Aid) shortly after the congregation was organized. They helped raise funds for the church by holding suppers and fancy work sales for the public. With money raised they purchased pews for the church.



Curlew Aid

In 1890, the *Pige Forening* (girls club) was organized. They, like the Ladies Aid, had fund raising projects, and used the money they made to buy hymn books and other items needed for the new church.

Ungdoms Forening was also organized. I remember many programs sponsored by the Young People's Society, as it was later called. The group usually met on Sunday evenings; it was permissible to use the English language in the programs.

Church services were in the Norwegian language until about 1920. Everyone attending church brought their own *Salme Bog* (hymn book); it was about 3x4 inches in size and contained only the words for the hymns. The organist had a larger hymn book with the notes. By 1920 services were

held in the English language every other Sunday. Even though we spoke Norwegian at home, I could never understand much of the Norsk sermons as too many unfamiliar words were used.

The preachers we had in Sims, when I was a kid, were very stern and serious; very seldom did they smile. We were all a little afraid of them. When we received instruction for confirmation, it was referred to as "reading for the minister." There were six kids in our family and the three oldest were confirmed in the Norwegian language; we three younger ones were fortunate to study and learn in English. The catechism and many Bible verses had to be memorized. On Confirmation Day, the class had to stand before the congregation and answer questions asked by the preacher. This was very scary for 13-year-olds, who had no idea what questions would be asked. Sometimes our memory failed completely and prompting was necessary, and on occasion some kids became so scared they wet their pants! In too many cases confirmands considered confirmation a graduation from church, so attending services became very irregular.

In the Sims Church the men would sit on the right side of the church aisle and the women and children on the left. This practice continued until well into the '20's. Quite a few men would fall asleep during the sermon; perhaps it was because their wives were not sitting close enough to poke them in the ribs. The young men would sit in the balcony and they sometimes caused quite a commotion. I remember one time a minister stopped in the middle of his sermon and told the fellows to behave.

I do not remember any large church weddings in the church when I was young. Many couples were married in the church parsonage and others went to the County Judge or the local Justice of the Peace, who was authorized to perform a marriage. C.A. Knutson, Justice of the Peace, "tied the knot" for several couples.

Marrying someone other than of your faith was not popular years ago. A Lutheran girl married a Catholic young man secretly, but they were afraid to tell their parents, so they continued to live in their respective homes until they strummed up enough courage to break the news. Divorce among the early settlers was almost unheard of. A wife might be unhappy, but she suffered in silence for the sake of her family.

Living across the street from the Sims Church, our family was very involved in all activities that were held there. My mother was also the church custodian, and decorated the church for special functions.

As the parsonage was so close to our house, we became very close friends of the minister's family. I was too young to remember the Rev. G.N. Isolony family. They had been missionaries in Madagascar before coming to Sims, and brought with them a young dark man from that country. They also had four daughters and one son. I've been told they had many interesting stories to tell of the five years they lived in Madagascar.

I have always enjoyed hearing the sound of the Sims church bell. It was bought in 1903 and John Jacobson was the boss for its installation. I was told that it was extremely difficult getting it in place in the high bellfry tower as it was very heavy. Block and tackle and planks were used to accomplish the job. On a quiet day the bell can be heard for three or more miles. It was the custom to toll the bell when news was received of a death in the congregation. The bell

would be rung to attract attention, and then toll the age of the deceased, which would give the clue as to who had died. On November 11, 1918, when word of the Armistice was received, Dad and my two brothers, Thorleiv and Ralph, took turns ringing the bell all day. Fritz Feland, who lived a mile south, came over to the church on his horse, wondering if there was another Methusela who had died.

Funerals have changed from years ago. My mother used to decorate the church in black or white for a funeral and also line the graves with white muslin cloth. The deceased would be kept in the home until the time of the funeral; a short service would be held at the home that day, which would include a hymn, a short message and prayer. The procession would then proceed to the church — in early years by horse drawn vehicles or sleighs. The open casket was placed at the front of the sanctuary, and after the service everyone in attendance would pass by the casket to view the body before leaving the church. When the last person left the sanctuary, the doors were closed so family members could view the deceased for the last time. This was a very sad and stressful time for the family, as the undertaker closed the casket before their eyes. As the casket was removed from the church to the waiting hearse (horse-drawn), the bell would toll, and continue until the procession reached the cemetery. All the women mourners were dressed in black, and wore black veils. The men usually wore black suits.

Until recently, grave digging at both the Sims and Almont cemeteries was done by hand by friends and neighbors of the deceased. There were times when local young men from the community were called on to help, when someone outside of the community passed away. I remember that my older brothers and the Jacobson boys helped several times. Clarence Jacobson perhaps helped dig more graves than anyone else in the community. The graves on the original part of the Sims Cemetery were very difficult to dig; most of the earth had to be loosened with a pick axe. My brothers told of using dynamite; most of the men had coal mining experience, so had the dynamite "know-how." In comparison, digging at the Almont cemetery is easy as the soil is sandy. I have helped at the Almont Cemetery when there were up to 20 friends of the deceased on hand to help — a sign of respect and affection for their departed friend. A back-hoe has been used for opening a grave the past ten or more years; however, on rare occasions a grave will still be dug by hand.

The first religious service held in Almont was August 12, 1906, a little over a month after the town was founded. The service which was non-denominational, was held in the Chase Lumber Co. shed and was attended by about 300 people who were in Almont to celebrate the founding of the town. Mrs. E.W. Hyde is credited for arranging for the service and speaker.

In 1907, Mrs. Hyde organized an inter-denominational Sunday School, which held classes in the school or town hall. For over 10 years the Almont Bible School was the only regular religious service in the community. Two special programs a year were sponsored by the Sunday School — the 4th of July Picnic at the Heart River, and a Christmas Eve program. Special evangelistic meetings and weekly prayer meetings were also sponsored by the Sunday School.

This inter-denominational Bible and Sunday School became the basis for the Wesleyan Methodist Church which was organized in 1924. Mrs. Hyde was also instrumental in

its organization. Visiting pastors held services in either the city hall or school until 1928, when the Rev. L.D. Harris answered the call to come to Almont. Shortly after Rev. Harris and his family arrived, a church was under construction, with the help of many volunteer workers. The church was completed in 1930 and dedicated Nov. 21, 1932. (More info about the Wesleyan Church in Almont's History Book 1981.)

In the early 1900's Catholic families living south of Almont attended Mass at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, south of Glen Ullin. Later these families made arrangements for the priest, Father Wigitt of St. Joe, to have Mass for these families at the Herman Timpe farm home. Mrs. Timpe fixed up an altar on a dresser, and planks laid on nail kegs served as pews. The parishioners provided transportation for the priest. This extra service by Father Wigitt, who was quite elderly, proved to be too much for him, so the arrangement did not last long.

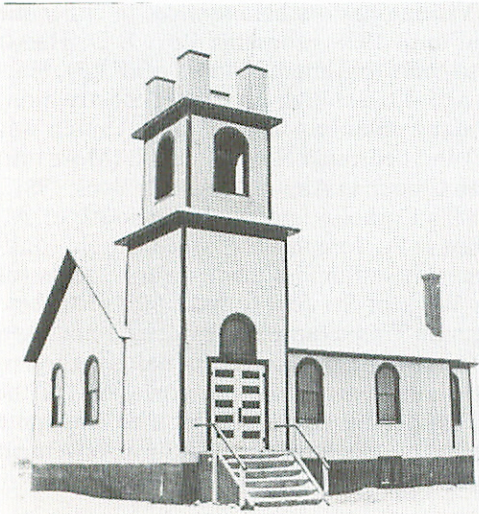


Honoring pioneers at Sims Church. Seated: Rick Olson, Theo Ramstand, John Olin. Second Row: Mrs. Theo Ramstand, John Johnson, Tobias Olson, ??, Mrs. Oscar Olin. Third Row: Julius Bredvold, P.R. Peterson, Mrs. Otto Feland, Mrs. P.R. Peterson. Back Row: Dr. C.J. Fylling and Rev. Johns.

In 1917, His Excellency, Bishop Vincent Wehrle came to Almont and celebrated Mass in the Almont City Hall. His Excellency brought an altar stone which is still used in the present church. It was at this time that the Bishop realized the need of a church and a pastor for the Almont families; he arranged for a priest to come from the Abby in Richardson several times a year to have Mass in the City Hall. After the new school was completed, one of the class rooms was used for Catholic services; it was used until the basement of the present church was completed.

In 1936, there were 25 families that were members of St. Leopold's Catholic Church. Construction of the church building was started that Spring, under the supervision of Joe Pfaff, Val Kary and Joe Filibeck. The first wedding in the new church was held on June 6, 1937 when Regina Timpe and Clarence Nilles exchanged vows. In 1948, St. Leopold's became a mission of St. Pius Catholic Church of New Salem.

In 1984 it was discovered by Father Walsh that the church had originally been named Saint Mary, Queen of Peace. It had been changed to St. Leopold in 1936, because of the generous donation of Father Leopold Burchardt, through the Extension Society, at the time they were building a church. The congregation voted in May 1984 to restore the



Almont's first church — Lutheran.

original name of the parish church — "Saint Mary, Queen of Peace." (A complete history of the church can be found in their history booklet, written in observance of the 50th anniversary of the church—1936-1986. A history of the congregation can also be

found in Almont's 75th Anniversary history book — 1981.)

The United Lutheran Church of Almont was organized in 1915 at the Almont Town Hall with the Rev. T.H. Larson of Taylor assisting. It is believed that O.C. Ellingson, E.E. Templeton, C.A. Knutson, O.K. Overgard, Jens Nelson, Jonathan Pederson, Mrs. Otis Malone, T.A. Barstad



Sims-Almont Lutheran Choir — 1952. Front Row (L. to R.): Joan Knutson, Ann Marie Stagmeier, Mrs. Sig Peterson, Frances Nelson, Mrs. N.E. Bechlund, Caroline Larson, Joyce Larson, Mrs. Robert Atkinson. Middle Row: Marlene Torgerson, Audrey Ritz, Shirley Timpe, Gloria Hansen, LaVonne Ritz, Iona Hoovestol, Donna Knutson, Adeline Larson. Back Row: Duane Johnson, Vernon Knutson, Sig Peterson, Roman Peterson, Leonard Olson, Clayton Anderson, Roger Estrin, Jake Larson, Roger Bechlund, Joel Johnson.

and J.R. Sherwood were among those at the first meeting.

Lutherans in Almont had worshiped at the Sims Lutheran Church until this time, but they felt an English congregation in Almont was needed for those who did not understand the Norwegian sermons delivered at the Sims church. Services were held in the Town Hall until the congregation was able to purchase the one-room Almont School (replaced by a two-story brick building) in 1917. The building was moved to the south end of Main Street, and was remodeled into a church, which was dedicated July 22, 1919. This was the first church building in Almont — 13 years after the town was founded. The Rev. L.D. Dordal, pastor at Sims, began serving the Almont congregation in 1916; Almont and Sims congregations have continued to share pastors since that time.

As the congregation continued to grow, the church felt growing pains and realized the building was too small for their needs. The present church building was built on a new site and dedicated Sept. 9, 1956. (For more history of the congregation refer to the Almont History Book 1981 or the 75th Anniversary booklet of the Almont Lutheran Church - 1990.)

Although the rural population of our area, as well as the population of our town, has dwindled considerably, our four churches continue to hold weekly worship services, preaching the Word of God and ministering to the needs of people here and abroad. There is a very good kinship between the congregations — Roman Catholic, Wesleyan and Lutheran — we respect our differences and enjoy fellowship with each other. An annual ecumenical Thanksgiving service has been held since 1979, with each church body taking part in the service. In later years we have had an annual community Hymn-sing which everyone seems to enjoy.



1961 — Back Row (L. to R.): Harold Foley, Bruce Peterson, Dale Olson, Penny Anderson, Candy Gustafson, Orlette Kilen, Edith Smith, Patricia Feland, Lynn Peterson, Carol Feland, Pat Anderson, Larry Smith, Charles Olson, Margie Peterson. Front Row: Arvin Kilen, Randy Christianson, Doreen Willman, Sharon Maas, Peggy Thorson, Sharon Thorson, Amy Kilen.

Morton County held its first general election on July 18, 1881. 147 votes were cast, which was considered the approximate county population at that time.

❧ Schools ❧

Shortly after Sims was founded, the pioneers realized the need for a school, not only for the children in the community, but for adults, as well. In 1887, a law was enacted which stated that all children between the ages of 10 and 14 years must attend school at least 12 weeks a year. That year there were only eight public schools in Morton County; teacher's salaries averaged \$43 a month for male and \$35.27 for female teachers.

The Scandinavians were anxious to learn the English language, and also the history of their new country — the USA. An 1883 map of Sims shows that the first school was a dugout into the hillside, west of the depot. Night classes were set up for the adults at 50¢ a month; we do not know who taught the classes.

The Sims Community building was built in 1885, on the east end of Main street, and was also used as a Territorial School. Three month terms were held in the spring and fall. Laura Ims Holritz, who attended the school, said the enrollment was between 80 and 90 pupils. She also said that some students were taller and older than their teachers. Jonathan Pederson told of walking five miles to attend school at Sims. My sister and brother, Borghild and Thorleiv, attended the Territorial School until 1907, when a school was built south of town. Teachers at the Territorial School included Gertrude McNamen, Mrs. John Wadeson, Mrs. Gaustad (wife of the Lutheran pastor), Mr. Lawrence, and others.



Sims School - 1908

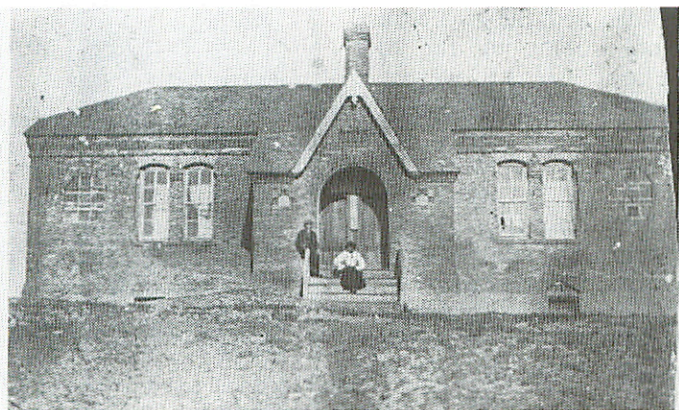
as it was called, was for the elementary grades and the smaller room for primary grades. The highest enrollment was about 80, which was quite a load for two teachers. The school barn was east of the school and housed the horses used by students who had to travel a distance. A small baseball diamond, laid out just north of the barn, provided recreation and also turned out some good baseball players.

My first three years of schooling was in Sims. After we moved to the farm east of Almont, I attended the Almont School, graduating there in 1927.

By 1920, school enrollment at the Sims School dropped to the extent that one teacher was sufficient. In 1945 the school closed, and in 1952 the building was moved to Almont and remodeled for a teacherage.

There were a number of one-room schools in the area. The Benson School was located a mile west of Curlew; the Tobias Olson School was south of the Olson farmstead; the Erlandson School was a half mile south of the Erlandson farmstead and there was also a school at the Hogan Anderson farmstead. Andrew Holritz taught at the Anderson school and rode from Sims on a bicycle which could be ridden on the railroad track; it had a gauge wheel which followed the opposite rail of the one on which he was riding. It must have been a very smooth ride. The Almont and Sims schools, and also those just mentioned, all belonged to Sims School District #8.

Other country schools in the area included the Bond School; Peck School (later called the Hansen School — and



Sims Community Building used also as Territorial School until 1907.

The Community Building (and Territorial School), built in 1885 at a cost of about \$5,000, was a two-room brick building and said to be quite elaborate. It was used for all community functions and also for church services. As the population of Sims declined, after the founding of Almont, there was little use for the building anymore; it was sold in 1910 to Mr. Morelle who tore it down, and used the salvaged material for other projects.

A new school, built in 1907, was located ¼ mile north of the Sims Lutheran Church. It had two rooms; the big room



Sims school - 1911.



Almont School - Feb. 28, 1921. Front row (L. to R.): Leonard Anderson, Laverne Macklin, Irene Walker, Dorothy Templeton, Georgia Stoeckel, Myron Knuson, Bill Bird, Enoch Willman, Myron Stiler, Rueben Olson, Howard Hyde, Chris Overgaard. Second row: Myer Mitzman, Sig Peterson, Vivian Nagel, Ragna Olson, Ruth Malone, Valborg Peterson, Lucile Templeton, Ingeborg Nyquist, Verna Williams, Reliance Peck, Lois Templeton, Carl Feland, Monty Anderson. Third row: Ole Peterson, Earl Bird, Gertrude Willman, Olga Knudson, Elsie Willman, Viola Knutson, Anna Timpe, Evelyn Erlandson, Ida Olson, Meni Nyquist. Fourth row: Oliver Anderson, Stanley Lucas, Wallace Hyde, Alice Anderson, Trgyve Feland, Edith Malone, Mary Timpe, Helen Scharff, Esther Erlandson, Verna Bird, Ida Mitzman, Mrs. Nellie Anderson, Mabel Adele Olson, Chas. Bugbee.

is now in the Almont Heritage Park); Ramsland School and the Feland School.

Most schools had a barn for the horses used by the teacher and pupils for transportation. Norman Hansen told about one of their teachers who drove a very thin horse and came a distance of seven or eight miles every day. One day she asked the older boys to help get the thin horse on its feet so she could drive it back home. This they did, but were surprised when she came back the next day — driving the same thin horse.

Water was a problem in most schools as they did not have a well; water had to be hauled, and in some cases one or two students were paid to do this. Norman said their school was near a spring, and water was hauled from it. The older boys in the school had dug a large hole or reservoir at the spring and Norman, as a first grader, fell in the hole. The teacher,

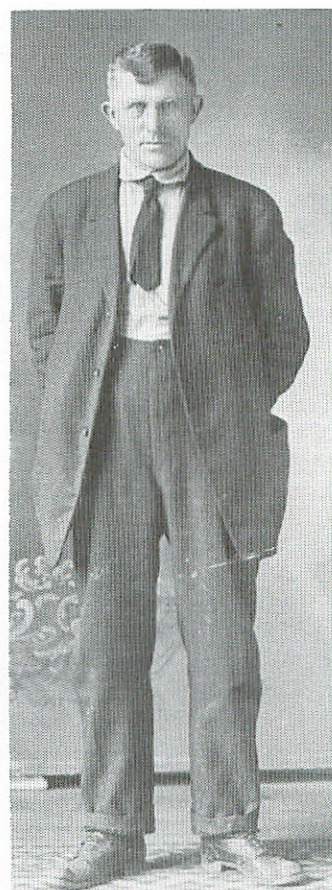
Mrs. Bayson, who lived near the school, pulled him out and then went home to get dry clothing for him. She came back with her daughter's dress and other clothing which he had to wear the rest of the day. Needless to say, Norman was uncomfortable and very humiliated. Norman also said that after two years of schooling he had not learned the alphabet — it was all play.

Young ladies (and some men), who came to teach in the country schools, experienced many hardships. They had to contend with bitter cold winters, snow and blizzards, coal stoves that were hard to manage, a scarcity of text books and other materials to teach with, and sometimes had pupils in each of the eight grades. Some classes could be only five to 10 minutes in length. In this day and age, it's hard to realize the sacrifices made by a country school teacher.

Theodore Feland was president of the Sims School District board for many years. He visited every school in the district many times a year, driving a single horse and top buggy. He was highly respected by both teacher and pupil and his visits were always very formal.

An elementary school was built in Almont shortly after the town was founded in 1906. Karine Jacobsen was the first teacher. The first 8th grade class to graduate was in 1917. With 17 students ready to attend high school, the community and school board felt the need of a high school. By January 1, 1918, a new 2-story, 4-room brick school was ready for occupancy.

The two lower rooms were used by the elementary grades and the two second floor rooms by the high school. There were 20 freshmen that first year and one teacher, Mrs. G.H. Anderson. It wasn't until 1921 that a second high school teacher, Charles A. Bugbee, was added to the staff (he later became Deputy County School Superintendent). Two teachers continued to carry the load until 1929 when a third teacher was added.



Theodore Feland, School Board President

Looking back to my years in elementary school, I remember Mrs. G. H. Anderson (my first teacher in Almont) as one who had a great influence on my life. She taught the "upper grades" room for more than 20 years. The primary grades teacher at that time was Clara Knudson (she was Marge's first teacher). Clara and her sister, Aalga, who was a student in high school, rode to school with my sister Valborg and I. (They lived about a mile from us.) We drove a horse on a two wheeled cart, which wasn't too roomy for four people. Because Valborg and I were the smallest of the four, I sat on Clara's lap and Valborg on Aalga's. The cart



Almont school - 1921. Back row (L. to R.): Alvin Peterson, Lee Macklim, Dorothy Anderson, Alga Hoeger, Myrtle Olin, Myrtle Falkenberg, Alf Olin, Mabel Feland, Lillian Knutson, Margido Willman. Front row: James Stoeckel, Minnie Fulton, Fred Oregard, Viola Olson, Louise Hoeger, Mitzman, Henry Nyquist, Dagmar Pederson, Howard Knutson, Marjorie Nelson, Mildren Anderson, Ruth Pederson, Raymond Olson, George Macklim, Clara Knudson (teacher).

also held our lunch buckets, school books and a sack of oats for the horse. Now I wonder how we managed — we did become very close friends! In the Spring and Fall we walked to school, across the hills to Rattlesnake Cut. Dad made a swinging bridge so we could cross the creek.

School buses weren't in the picture at that time — each family provided their own transportation, or made arrangements for the students to stay in town. Many students "batched" in small rooms, in order to be close to school. The roads were very poor, and during the winter they became blocked with snow and only horses could get through. There were no snow plows — all shoveling was done by hand. School was never dismissed early because of bad weather — the horses were trusted to take the kids home safely. Horses were kept in the barn behind the school. Marge says her grandparents kept horses in their barn belonging to a family of children who drove quite a distance to school every day. In the wintertime her grandmother would heat bricks in the oven, and put them in the buggy to keep the children's feet warm on the way home. The Macklim family were the envy of other kids who drove horses — as they drove a team of Shetland ponies to school every day.

In 1922 Agnes Aymond joined the high school staff and taught English, History and several other subjects. Charles DeNoyer was the other teacher, and also was the school

"head" and was called Prof. DeNoyer. The school was under the County Superintendent, and all final exams were sent out by the state. The teachers had no idea what questions would be asked in the exams — which caused worry to both students and teachers. Sometimes the questions were on topics we had never studied. The teacher had a Course of Study to follow, but it was hard to cover everything. Miss Aymond taught Home Ec, and several other subjects she had never studied in college. She had to study hard to stay one step ahead of her students. In one of her Home Ec classes, she had a demonstration on caring for a baby. Marge's baby sister, Frances, was bathed by a nurse for one of the class lessons.

During the time Mr. DeNoyer and Miss Aymond were the high school teachers, they organized a Literary Society which met every month. All high school students were members. The meeting was conducted according to Roberts Rules of Order, and a program for the public was planned for each meeting, which usually included a debate, skits and musical numbers. It was a good way to learn how to properly conduct a business meeting and also overcome shyness by having to appear before the public. The meetings and programs were held in the City Hall until the gym was built in 1928. In fact, all school programs were held in the hall until that time. The school body would be "marched" down town to the hall for practice several times before the final perform-



Almont School operetta - Spring 1930.



Class of 1927 (60 years later). Sig Peterson, Mimi Nyquist, Hoger, Agnes Aymond Halvorson (teacher), Lois Templeton Kuns, Grace Willman Thor, Lucille Templeton Frelleson.

ance. The grade students presented many programs that required elaborate costumes made of crepe paper and the mothers were responsible for getting them made. Mrs. Falkenburg was very talented in this line so was called on to make more than just for her own daughter. Marge's mother was also a costume maker who was kept busy creating every kind of costume, from a raindrop to a beautiful red rose. The costumes were beautiful and so were the kids who wore them. These same talented mothers also made May baskets every year for their children. It was almost a contest between Mrs. Falkenburg, Mrs. Kelsven, Mrs. Becklund and Marge's Mom, to see who could make the prettiest baskets.

The teachers were responsible for all extra-curricular activities. Agnes Aymond was very interested in drama and was an excellent coach and director. She was also very clever at creating the props for plays, and used a lot of creeping cedar for greenery. The students were always glad to get a little time off to gather the greens on the top of Lovers Cliff. She directed the Senior Class play every year and also coached those students interested in debates and declamations. In 1930 the school entered the one-act play "Cabbages" in the state contest at the North Dakota Agriculture College (NDSU). There were about eight in the cast and they placed second or third. Marge was also in the declamation contest but said she "froze" half way through it — spoiling her chances of placing. Her declamation was "The Death Disk" — a 10 minute, memorized, dramatic story.

Prof. Leslie Klopfleish was also a teacher of many talents.

He introduced the Smith-Hughs Agricultural program to the high school, and under this program, judging teams were organized for competition with other schools. In 1930 several teams entered competition in the NDHS Judging contest in Fargo and came home with several trophies. Klopfleish also organized and directed Almont's first high school band in the fall of 1928. Marge was a member of the band, playing an E flat saxophone. Others in the sax section were Enoch Willman, Madaleen and Yvonne Templeton. Nick Timpe and James Stoeckel played clarinets,; Paul Harris played trumpet, Margido Willman and Harold Harris played trombones and Art Harris and Howard Knutson were the drummers. The following year the band changed to an orchestra and Marge played the piano instead of the sax. Klopfleish was an accomplished pianist and organist.

Klopfleish was also the basketball coach. 1928 was the first year the school had a team; no one had played the game before except the Harris boys, who had just moved into the community. That next spring, they entered a tournament in Carson, and because roads were snow blocked, they made the trip in a horse-drawn bobsled. They didn't win any trophies, but they had a wonderful time. Marge was Almont's first cheerleader — but wasn't asked to make the trip to Carson with the team! A favorite Almont cheer was "Lutefisk and Lefse, Takk skal du ha — Almont High School, Rah, Rah, Rah!" (sounds a little Norsk)

Agnes Albrecht, the 7th and 8th grade teacher, directed the High School Glee Club and other musical programs. She also taught German language in high school two years and organized a German Club. I was a member of the class and also the club. We met once a month in various homes and conversed as much as possible in the German language and learned German songs. When we visited Germany some 50 years later, I was thankful that I had learned the language, as it was a great help to us. Another foreign language taught in the Almont High School in the 20's was Norwegian, taught by Miss Strangstadlien. Valborg was one of her students.

Mention should be made that the teachers promoted all the extra-curricular activities and were never reimbursed for their contributions and after-hour activities.

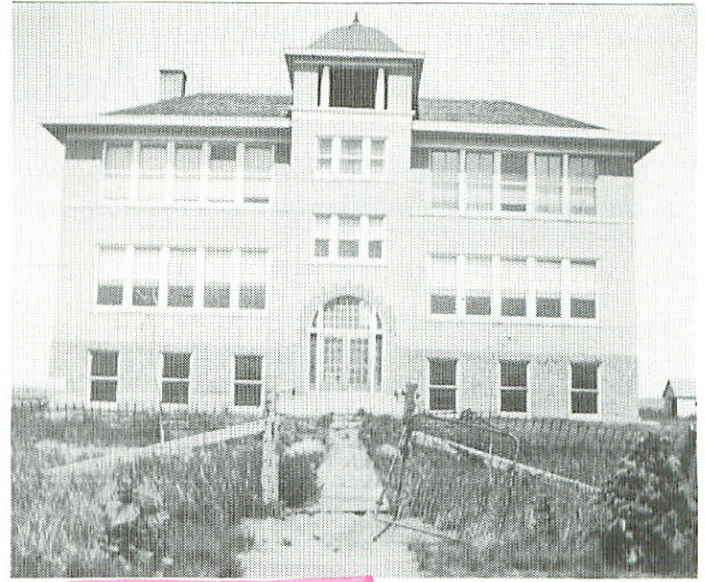
During the 30's many farmers could not pay their taxes. Consequently the County Treasurer was not able to send the necessary money to the school districts to honor their obligations. School districts had to issue warrants, instead of checks, to the teachers. The warrants could be cashed at some stores and banks at a 15 to 20¢ discount. Monthly wages were as low as \$45; figuring a 20% discount would leave only \$36 — and from that amount, they paid room and board. How did they manage?

The early years of high school bring back many memories — teachers were very strict, and kids were punished by having to stay after school. In some cases, you "stayed after" to complete your work, and in other cases you were kept in for misconduct. There was a lot of "playing hookey," which sometimes ended up with expulsion. Most kids dreaded being expelled, as it was difficult to explain "why" to parents, and usually meant more punishment at home.

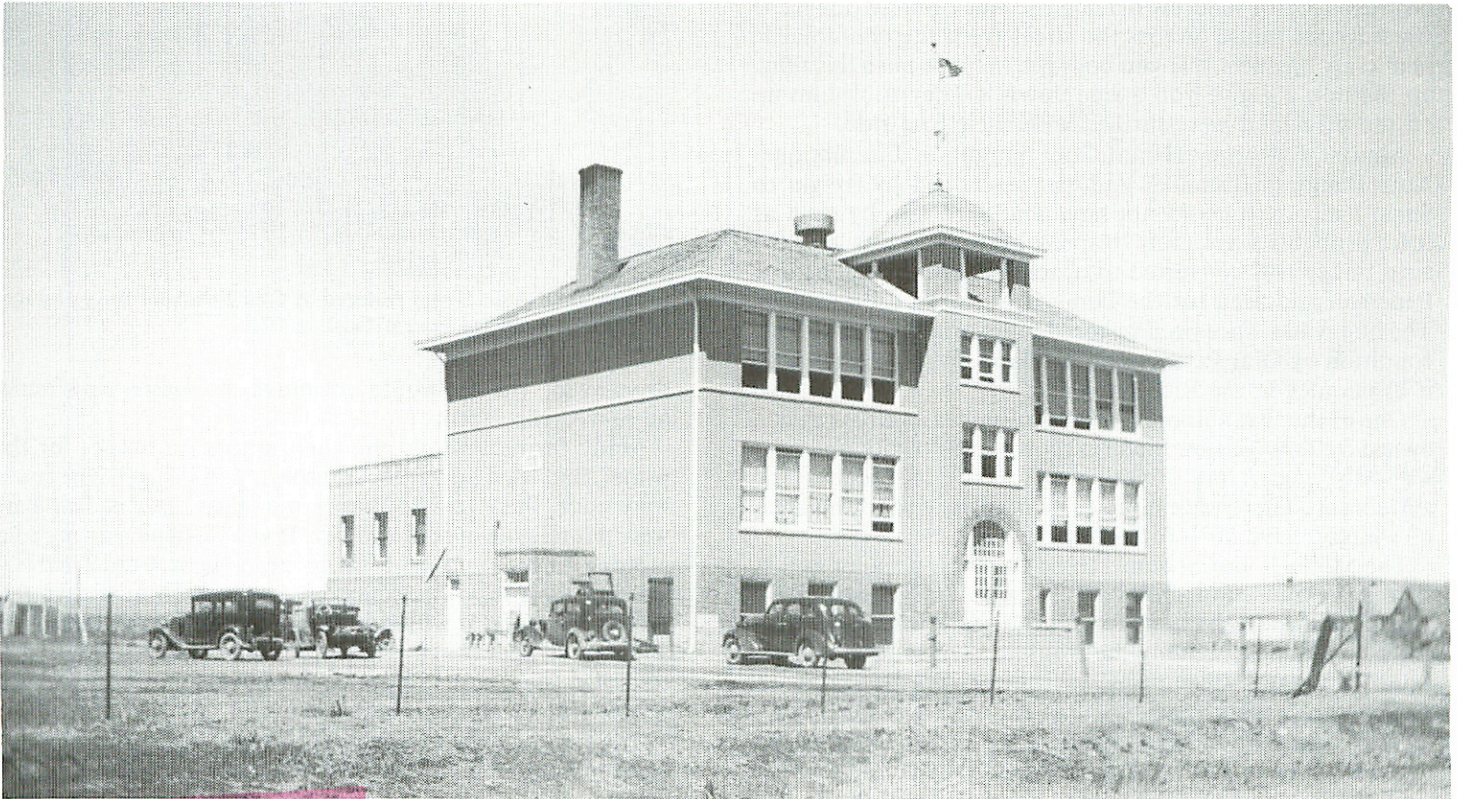
There were also fun times in school. We had parties, but no dancing — it was prohibited — but we played lots of different games and had good times. It was a different age than now — we lived in a smaller world, but were quite satisfied with whatever we had.



Almont's first school house.



Almont's new school - 1917.



Almont school - 1928 addition.

In observance of the 65th anniversary of the AHS class of 1927, four members of our class drove to Hettinger, ND in June of 1992 to spend a few hours reminiscing with Mrs. Agnes Aymond Halvorson, who was our teacher throughout high school. The remaining members of our original class of eight are Mimi Nyquist Hoger of New Salem, Lucille Templeton Frelleson and Lois Templeton Kuns of Bismarck and myself. I wonder if there are many classes who can top this.

The average man has five senses: touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing. The successful man has two more:
horse and common.