

Excerpt from **PIONEER ROUNDUP – A History of Albright, Demmitt, Goodfare,
Hythe, Lymburn, Valhalla.**

Published 1972 by Pioneer History Society and Area
Printed 1972 by D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd. Calgary, Alberta

Valhalla School District No. 3130

The first settlers came to the Valhalla Centre district with their settlers' effects in March, 1913. Several other families arrived in August and December of that year. The problem of schooling for the children now arose. In May, 1914 school was opened in Olaf Horte's house located one mile west of the present hamlet. (This house was later moved to the Valhalla Centre where the Hortes lived in it until 1961. It burned down in 1966.) Nelius Ronning, just home from attending University of Alberta, Edmonton, was the first teacher. The children worked at homemade double desks with benches attached.



Valhalla Centre School, 1918, Inga Horte teacher. Back Row: Mark Hanson, Walter Olson, Edwin Nepstad, Harold and Agnes Melsness. Second Row: Dagny Heggelund, Hilma Berge, Mabel Olson, Lily Ronning, Sara Hanson, Olga Melsness. Third Row: Dolores Melsness, Margaret Viken, Myrtle Floen, Gertie Hanson, Roy Olson, Arthur Hanson. Fourth Row: Elenor Melsness, Petra Heggelund, Anton Melsness, Milford Nepstad, Albert Hanson.

The first school board was Olaf Horte, O. M. Melsness and Simon Hanson. Four pupils from each of four families were in attendance. They were: Hanson — Olaf, Mark, Sara (Mrs. Peter Ganzeveld) and Gertie (Mrs. Clifford Floen). Lunseth — Louise, Ingaborg, Ragna (Mrs. Martin Flaten) and Mari (Mrs. Harry Hossier). Melsness — Agnes (Mrs. Ingvald Loberg), Harold, Olga, (Mrs. Paul Loberg) and Dolores. Ronning — Talbert, Hazel, (Mrs. Julius Hanson) Harold and Lily Victoria.

Most of the children walked to school. Some rode horseback. Classes were held for four months. At the end of that time Nelius had to return to the U. of A. In the spring of 1915, school opened again, this time in Rev. H. N. Ronning's home, with Nelius teaching again. This time there were the pupils of the previous year plus six new ones. The newcomers were: Owens — Bessie, Earl and Percy. Olson — Walter, Mabel and Roy.



Valhalla school, 1921.
Back Row: Oscar Vatne, Holst, Arthur Hanson. Second Row: Albert Hanson, Roy Olson, Margaret Viken, Myrtle Floen, Dolores Melsness. Front Row: Anton and Elenor Melsness, Adolph Fimrite, Petra Heggelund, Guro Vatne, Alma Hanson.



Harry Sherk's senior class.

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The records of the first years of this school district apparently were lost, but from Olaf Horte's memoirs, we learn that he was the chairman of the first school board. Others recall that O. M. Melsness and Simon Hanson were the other members.

During the winter and early spring of 1915 the menfolk cut and hauled logs for the school — with volunteer labour. Shingles and lumber were bought from Cady and Evans' Buffalo Lakes Lumber Co. In the summer the men built the new school on the S.W. corner sec. 18-74-9-6 on Olaf Horte's land. This was the first building, the nucleus of Valhalla Centre. Work on the school was well and carefully done. Desks and seats each large enough for two pupils were built by the fathers. Just after New Year 1916 the school was opened with Alvie Baycroft as teacher. In 1916-17 Chester Ronning was the teacher, and from September-December 1917, Miss Sigrid Hommy conducted classes. Apparently from minutes of school meetings, Valhalla was operating a 2 room school 1924-25 with Mrs. A. S. Todd and Miss M. Erickson as teachers.

According to the January 19, 1925 records, the school board resolved to supply cocoa and sugar free to the school children, (between thirty and forty years later Mrs. Vera Severson was serving cocoa or soup to the school children during the winter months), and also to allow Pentecostal Friends to hold services in the school.

Teachers over many years received their pay when enough taxes were collected to pay them. Frequently the board obtained a loan from one bank to pay back a previous loan from another bank, or to pay the teacher's salary and other operating expenses. The local boards assessed buildings, cars, trucks and land in the hamlet.

1925 assessments were:

Valhalla Co-op Creamery, Lot \$20, Bldgs. \$5,000, — \$5,020 Valhalla Public Hall — \$800

Valhalla Hardware Ltd., Lot \$20, Bldgs. \$600, Mdse. \$1,200 — \$1,820

G. N. Nepstad, Bldgs. \$200, Mdse. \$3,300 — \$3,500 Maple Leaf Milling Co.,
Mdse. \$1,200 — \$1,200

J. M. Brown, Lot \$20, Bldgs. \$1,200, Mdse. \$600 — \$1,820

H. E. Tveter, Lot \$20, Bldgs. \$600 — \$620

J. J. Ormson, Bldgs. \$50, Car \$550 — \$600

Land evaluation (set by Dept. of Municipal Affairs) — \$60,550 A tax rate of 16 mills was struck.

K. O. Vatne was charged \$8.00 tuition for the last half of 1924-25 term when Guro Vatne attended Valhalla School.

The Board met with various taxpayers to hear complaints of assessment.

On July 17, 1925, the Valhalla School Board resolved to sign an agreement with Molde School Board to accept Molde pupils for 1925-26 to be educated at a charge of 90c per day and have free use of Molde School equipment.

A 2-room school was to be opened here. The back room was to be enlarged to the same size as the first classroom. In order to do this work without too much expense to the district, the sum of \$100 was guaranteed donated. The following men were paying \$25 each: O. M. Melsness, G. N. Nepstad, Matt Olson and H. E. Tveter. Charlie Lundblad was hired at 50c an hour to do the work on the school and he could get any help he might need. Matt Olson agreed to haul the lumber free.

The first bus system in these north western districts carried Molde pupils to Valhalla school in Dolemo's wagon or sleigh — according to the season.

The two teachers (Mrs. A. S. Todd and Miss Ferne Rideout), the parents and the children held a school opening three-hour concert — proceeds to be used to buy blinds and equipment for the school.

Tuition for children from outside the district was at the rate of \$16 per family from Grades 1-8, and \$30 per pupil for Grades 9 and 10.

The school was now to be closed to all gatherings except school affairs.

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At the January 16, 1926 Annual Meeting, L. A. Flom, Sec-Treasurer and General Manager of the Valhalla Co-op. Creamery, brought up the matter of assessment and taxation of the Creameryplant and asked for some adjustment either by reduction of the amount of taxes or else by making the Creamery an allowance for the water they (the school and people) use from the Creamery. The Board maintained it had made the taxation on the Creamery as low as possible. Mrs. C. Horte and Mrs. Matt Olson moved and seconded that this whole problem be left to the Board of Trustees to settle. Nothing further was heard about it.

The problem of contracting, hauling and piling wood came up annually. Wood, cut and delivered, cost \$2.75 per cord then. The problem of purchasing an organ was investigated.

A strip of ground along the north, west and south side of the school yard was ploughed, disced and planted to trees.

By 1926 there were many more businesses, buildings, cars, trucks, etc., assessed in the hamlet. The list read like this: Rev. P. Ellingson, Bldgs. \$300, Car \$100 — \$400

Valhalla Public Hall Buildings — \$800

Nepstad, Ormson & Johanson, stock of saddlery — \$600 Eivind (Ed) Oland, Lot \$20, Bldgs. \$1,000 — \$1,020

. A. Flom, Garage \$50, Car \$175 — \$225

Valhalla Hardware Ltd., Bldgs. \$600, Mdse. \$1,400 — \$2,000 Olaf Horte, House \$100, Car \$100 — \$200

Harry Horte, Truck \$200 — \$200

Frontier Lumber Co., Lumber & sheds \$4,000 — \$4,000 H. E. Tveter, House & barn \$800 — \$800

Melsness Mercantile Co., Bldgs. \$1,200, Mdse. \$600 — \$1,800 J. J. Ormson, Garage \$50, Auto \$500 — \$550

Valhalla Creamery, Buildings & equipment — \$4,000

A. H. Hagen, Barn \$150 — \$150

P. M. Melhus, Bldgs. \$300 — \$300

Hans Hanson, Auto \$600 — \$600

A. Davis (or Davies), Bldgs. \$2,000, Car \$500, Mdse \$7,500 — \$10,000

Land Evaluation — \$60,550

Tax rate was still 16 mills.

In June, 1927, the Board resolved to tax all autos and trucks in the school district. Ole Heggelund, Albert Nepstad and Pete Melhus each owned Ford touring cars, G. N. Nepstad, a Ford sport, J. J. Ormson a Ford Tudor, Olaf Horte a Chevrolet Sedan, Chris Horte a Chevrolet touring and Olaf Hanson a Star touring. These autos were assessed all the way from \$300 to \$700.

Hans Hanson was sent a note of appreciation for the fine flagpole he made and erected at the school. Olaf Hanson assisted in raising the pole in 1926 and also in taking it down many years later when the new school was built on a new location.

Legal action was threatened against those people in arrears in paying taxes. A 10% discount was given on all taxes paid within 30 days of receipt of the tax notice. School began at 9:30 a.m. from November 1 to April 1, because of dark winter mornings and lack of good lighting facilities and difficulties of travel in winter.

In 1929, the school reverted to one room. The teacher was paid \$50 per year extra for teaching Grade 9.

The school Board took an active interest in school fairs.

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Mr. O. K. Seljehaug, O. M. Melsness, G. N. Nepstad served for several years as Board chairman or secretary-treasurer. But Chris Horte's neat, legible handwriting recorded every meeting from January 20, 1928 until February 18, 1943 with the exception of all year 1931. He was also Treasurer of the Valhalla S.D. from January 20, 1928 until January 1, 1938 when big District 14 was formed.

About 1943 a 2-room half building was erected. In 1951, three rooms were opened and in 1954 a six-room building was erected about one quarter of a mile east of the original log schoolhouse. A fine gymnasium was added to the new building about 1964.

The County of Grande Prairie No. 1, organized in 1951, looked after school affairs. In 1960 (autumn) Grades 10, 11 and 12 were vanned to Hythe. In 1970, Valhalla S.D. lost its Grades 7, 8 and 9 to Hythe, and our high school students were sent to Beaverlodge.

Teachers of Valhalla School:

1914 summer and 1915 summer — Nelius Ronning. 1916

Jan.-June — Alvie Baycroft.

1916-17 — Chester Ronning

1917, fall term — Miss Sigrid Hommy.

The names of the teachers following these first ones are not necessarily in the proper order. Our apologies if any names have been omitted. Mr. Judd Perry, Miss Tillie Torgerson, Mr. John Paul, Mr. R. Leitch, Mr. E. A. Keeping. First teachers when 2-rooms opened in 1924-25 were Mrs. A. Todd and Miss Myrtle Erickson (later Mrs. Harold Melsness), Miss Edna Small, (Mrs. Moyer), Miss Ferne Rideout (Mrs. Olaf Horte), Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Pattullo, Mrs. Stella M. Becker, Mr. R. A. Hill, Miss Agnes Melsness (Mrs. I. M. Loberg), Miss Ruth Axelson, Mrs. Stella M. Gilkyson, Miss Elizabeth Baker (Daughter of Perrin Baker, Min. of Education for Alberta), Mrs. Lorna Horte, Mrs. Rubina Baker, Mrs. Agnes (I. M.) Loberg, Mr. Gimmell — a wonderful pianist, Mrs. A. Dolemo, Mr. Stanley Roberts, Miss Lottie Lee (Mrs. Mark Hanson), Miss Beryl MacAuley, Mrs. Duncan McDougald (from Tupper, B.C.), Mr. Harry Sherk, Mrs. Woods, Mrs. Vera Severson, Mrs. Ingaborg Johnson (now Mrs. Oscar Jerstad), Mrs. Clara Nepstad, Mrs. Harriette Sullivan, Mrs. Mary Gray, Mrs. Jennie Slette, Mrs. Joan Moller, Mrs. Ruth Fredland, Miss Karen Gunderson (Mrs. W. Fimrite), Mr. Ken Fulton, Mr. David Smith, Mr. Mac Kufeldt, Mrs. Lorraine Charbonneau and Mr. John Staniforth.