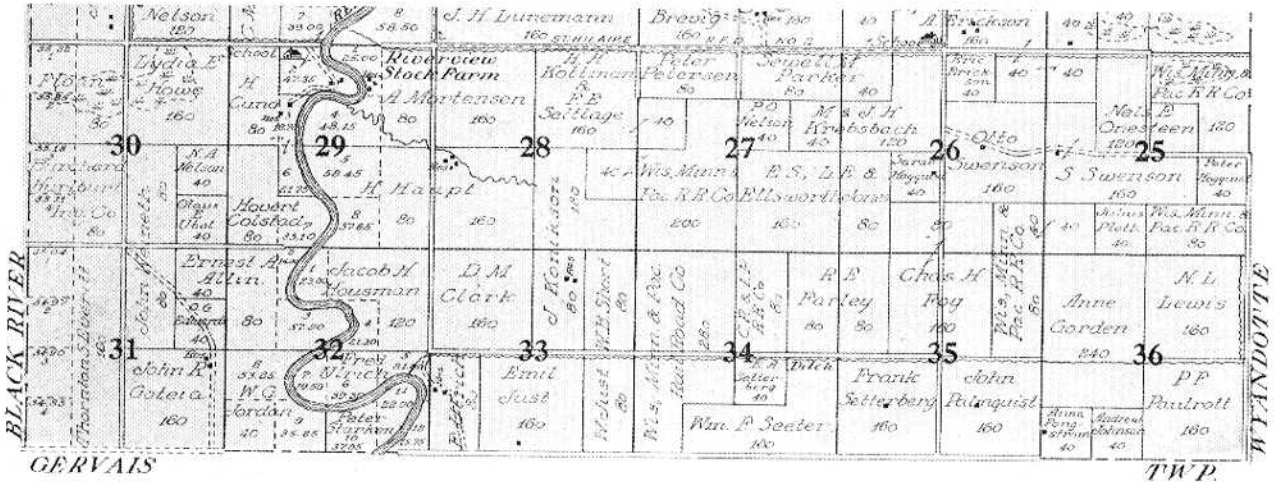

MAP OF
TOWNSHIP 152 N., RANGE 43 W.
of the 5th P. M.
 Scale 1 1/4 inches to 1 mile

RIVER FALLS TOWNSHIP



RIVER TOWNSHIP

River Township was once a part of River Falls Township in Pennington County. With the division of the two counties, the south portion became known as River Township, consisting of twelve sections, as compared to twenty-four sections in River Falls.

The members of the two town boards met in St. Hilaire on April 17, 1911 for the purpose of dividing the assets held jointly by the two towns. One-third of the balance on hand, \$97.75, was allotted to River Township and \$195.50 to River Falls. River got four road scrapers and one split-log drag; River Falls, eight road scrapers and two split-log drags; the one road grader was to be shared by the two townships. Present at this meeting were J. S. Roy, R. L. Hauge, A. P. Sandberg, William Cuno, John Konickson, and Walter Swanson, supervisors of the two townships, and the two clerks, A. S. Anderson and Olaf Nelson. The first officers in River were Walter Swanson, William Cuno and John Konickson, supervisors; Olaf Nelson, clerk, and John R. Gotea (Gauthier), assessor. Poll tax was set at one day per year for each adult male citizen in the township; road tax, one dollar per \$100 assessed valuation.

On May 1, 1913, the board met to examine sealed bids for a road job; the bid of Albert Seaverson was accepted at a cost of seventy-four cents per rod, eight rods wide. No mention was made of the dis-



Log house on the Gauthier homestead built in 1887. John R. Gauthier, Mrs. Math Vesey, Mrs. Roselynn Gauthier, teacher, Lydia Fletcher and Phil and Alice Gauthier.

tance in length, but Mr. Seaverson telled the (huge?) sum of \$355.75. During the years 1912 and 1913, the total paid for road and bridge was \$1055.10; one entry was for a very meager 19c.

The board met at the homes of various board members and occasionally at the school house. Home owners were paid \$5.00 for the use of their homes as a polling place. The town hall was built in 1928, at a cost of \$125.10; this included \$4.00 labor to paint the exterior. It was destroyed in an early morning fire in 1970; since then a building on the John Ulrich farm serves as the official town hall.

Besides the original officers, the following have served on the town board: Paul Thyren, Carl Swanson, John and Andrew Mortenson, John Hogquist, F. S. Erdmann, Miller Peterson, Clarence Konickson, P. G. Gustafson, Ernest Hinrichs, Glen Haugen, Russell Gustafson, Arthur Swanson, Axel Johnson, John Ulrich, Fredolph Swanson, George Hesse, Edgar Peterson, Herman Burstad, Henry Burstad, Gust Larsen, Paul Anderson, George Haupt, Henry Konickson, N. A. Nelson, William Hesse, Walter Gustafson, Roy Steitz and Carl Gustafson — with an apology for any omissions. Some of the above served as constables and justices of the peace, offices which were later discontinued. Paul Thyren was elected clerk in 1915 and held that office for 60 consecutive years, until 1975. Clarence Konickson has been a supervisor since 1938.

Present board members are Glen Haugen, Clarence Konickson, and Fredolph Swanson, supervisors; John Ulrich, treasurer, and Roy Steitz, clerk. At the 1970 census, the population of River township was 90.

Prior to 1925, the children attended one of three schools, one in District 133 in River Falls. The other two were located on the west side of the river, one in River Township and the other in Gervais. The children attending these two schools walked to the river, rowed across in a boat and walked the remainder of the distance to school. During the winter months, they could cross the frozen river on foot; each spring they had a brief vacation from the start of the ice break-up until it was again safe to use their boats.

The new schoolhouse in District 236 was built in 1925 and ended the necessity of crossing the river twice a day in order to attend school.

The first teacher in the new school was Leona Allen. Other teachers listed in the records were Lillian Norman, a Miss Votava, Verna Eitner, Gabrielle deCatelina, Laura Almquist and Melba Rogge. The last year the school was in use, there were but two students in attendance, John and Cecelia Haupt.

Gust Konickson purchased the school-house building a few years ago and remodeled it for a family home.

EARLY DAYS IN RIVER TOWNSHIP

Because of hard times and slavery conditions in Sweden, our parents, Solomon and Christina Swanson, came to America. Leaving Smaland, Sweden, on May 1, 1883, they arrived in New York on May 21 and went to Boone, Iowa where they had friends. Work was scarce, but mother found work in a boarding house for \$2.00 a week and father got a job shoveling gravel for the railroad for \$1.35 a day.

That fall they came to Crookston and then moved on east where they home-



Mr. and Mrs. John Konickson, Alvin, Mabel and Clarence, about 1914. Four generations of Konicksons have lived in this house. The first section of the house was built between 1890 and 1900 and the left side of the house and porch were added later.

steaded on a farm southeast of St. Hilaire. Two brothers, August and Otto, had located there the year before. Father walked to St. Hilaire for groceries and this was an all day trip. There were many families in our area and we shared our joys and sorrows. Our father would take a load of wheat to the flour mill in Red Lake Falls and would bring home twenty sacks of flour which would last a year.

In 1900 and 1901 our father was taken ill. Although he received medical help, he did not improve so one day in the summer of 1901, the neighbors took him in a covered wagon to St. Hilaire and put him on the train to go to the Crookston hospital. He was there two months and then came walking home. While he was gone, our mother, Walter, who was twelve, and I, only eight years old, decided to do some plowing with a rusty walking plow. Walter drove the horses, I hung on the beam, and mother on the handles.

By 1910 times were getting better. We had more cows and hauled cream to the St. Hilaire Creamery. We sowed some tame hay and the crops were better. In the fall of 1913, my brother, Walter, and I bought 200 acres of land of which 160 acres had been railroad land. We paid \$18.00 an acre and cleared thirty-five acres to sow flax. It yielded ten bushels to the acre at a good price of \$1.75 a bushel. The next spring we

cleared more land so now we had 100 acres to put into flax and wheat, but there was so much rainfall that particular summer, the crops drowned out. In 1916 we had 100 acres of wheat but cut only forty acres as the bulk of the crop was ruined by rust.

The spring of 1918 looked promising so we farmed more land putting in the crop on father's land first. It was an extremely hot day when we began to harvest the grain. We changed horses every three hours though father tried to tell us that we were cutting the oats too green. At six o'clock that afternoon a bad hail storm struck and destroyed a strip two miles wide and five miles in length. Then the storm came back and left five inches of rain. That was the end of the harvest. In 1919 due to the rust, we had less than half a crop. Without the road work that Walter and I managed to do and a job loading ties in the woods in the winter months, we could never have paid for our farms, \$4,000.00 for 160 acres.

As we look back at the sixty years that we have been farming, we know we have much for which to be thankful. Our dear friends and neighbors had to struggle so hard and today there are very few of them left. Thank God we live in the land of the United States of America.

Contributed by Carl Swanson



Threshing on the Fredolph Swanson farm, 1915.