

74th year on Hi-line



A jam session and sing-a-long was one of the highlights at the Romain family reunion.

June 15, 1989

unrehearsed jam session with group singing.

Then there was another dinner followed by a tour of the ranch area. Kenneth showed the guests some of the old farm machinery, including the basin seeder Fred Romain invented. He was working on the seeder the day he suffered a heart attack and died in 1956.

Next, Kenneth took the group to the Romain reservoir, which has been yielding good catches of trout this summer. He then took them past the location of some of the other sites where other homesteaders built their shacks. Then the group viewed the scenic dug-out, a formation that is a mystery because it appears for no apparent reason in the middle of the prairie.

Kenneth showed the visitors the tracks left from the olden days when freight was hauled from Fort Benton to Ft. McCleod, Canada, by wagon. He also took the group to the site of the Marias School House, and rural cemetery where one of the Romain babies was buried.

It was in the summer of 1913 when Fred Romain took his family to the homestead from Carter. It wasn't long before they encountered trouble.

It was a hot summer day. Lena, the oldest child was suffering from Scarlet fever, and they ran out of drinking water, which was scarce on the prairies in the olden days. The trip was just the first of numerous hardships they endured, hardships that were common to most homesteaders. Few survived these hardships.

In those days, subsidies were unheard of, and when there was a crop failure, Fred Romain had to get winter's work to raise enough money for spring seed wheat. In the fall, he left the homestead and walked to look for work. He usually found it in the oil fields, but this meant Mrs. Romain was home all winter in the homestead shack 28 miles from the closest town with no transportation. She had three pre-school age children, the youngest was still a babe in arms. That didn't seem to bother her, but the thing that did scare her was at night the coyotes would howl too close to the homestead shack.

Probably every homestead family could tell similar stories to those which were told at the Romain family reunion. It wasn't easy to settle this country and to learn how to farm this dry land, but strong families like the Romains survived to give us the heri-