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Alexander to honor old settlers Saturday, Sept. 2

Honor Art Abelmans



Plans have been completed for the 22nd Annual Old Settlers' Picnic to be held in the City Park at Alexander on Saturday, September 2nd. Everyone is invited to attend to honor the pioneers of this area.

Walter Hjelle, North Dakota State Highway Commissioner, has accepted an invitation to speak at the ceremonies. Vince Rettig will be master of ceremonies.

Activities will begin with a big parade at 11 a.m. There will be floats, bands, old machinery, horses and entries of all kinds.

A free beef barbecue will be served at noon with the beef furnished by the honored guests, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Abelman.

Ceremonies honoring the Abelmans and all pioneers will be held at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Hjelle will be guest speaker.

Horse racing, always a popular part of the picnic, will begin at 3:00 p.m. with prizes for the winners in all events.

A special event this year will be a greased pig to be released after the horse races. The critter will go to anyone who can catch and hang on to him.

At 4:30 p.m. there will be a Pee Wee baseball game.

A dance in the old gym will complete the day's activities. Music will be furnished by "The Classics" of Williston.

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Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Abelman, rural Alexander, are furnishing the beef for the 22nd annual Old Settlers Picnic in Alexander Saturday, September 2nd, and consequently will be the honored couple that day.

Some back ground history about them, revealed that Art Abelman was born September 15, 1892 in Faribault, Minn. and in 1896 moved with his parents to Taylor, N. Dak. where his parents homesteaded. From this ranch, Art walked three miles every day to school to learn the three "R's", until 1904 when the family moved into Taylor while Art's father carried mail to Halliday. However, in 1908 the family returned to the ranch and in 1911 the father bought two oxen and two mules, which Art helped break to work. With that kind of power hitched four abreast to a plow, the sod was broken for new fields. Art also worked on neighboring ranches wrangling horses.

Between 1916 and 1920, Art was a mail carrier, and it was then he became acquainted with Selma Swenson, a rural school teacher in the Dickinson area. Selma was born December 29, 1894 in Hager City, Wis., and after high school attended Normal School in Red Wing, Minn., and continued her summer school education every year after her teaching term ended.

Because teachers' salaries were higher in North Dakota than in Wisconsin, Selma came to Dickinson in 1914 to teach a rural school for \$30 a month. Out of this, she paid \$11 a month room and board. She walked two miles to the school house, built the fires, did the janitor work and taught all eight grades.

A couple experiences she related were, when a prairie fire

was sweeping over the prairie, a school patron came to tell her to dismiss school at 2 o'clock instead of at four. Fortunately, the fire by passed the school house. Another time a large rattlesnake was crawling toward the school house steps, when a visitor came to the school. The visitor killed the rattler, and gave Miss Swenson the 13 rattlers as a souvenir.

Art and Selma were married in Dickinson in 1922 and came to McKenzie county. They settled in Poe Township in 1924 and have lived there ever since. They experienced the depression, the droughts and poor crops; but prospered in the good years. In the 1930's when the old Highway 85 was first built, all the work was done by horses and manpower. Art furnished four horses and received \$2.50 a day for his labor and that of his teams. He stayed on the job for 42 days — longer than any other employee there.

The Abelmans have one daughter, Ardath (Mrs. Lloyd Workman) at Kent, Wash.; and four sons, Forrest, Williston; Dale, rural Alexander; and Marvin and Hildreth, both on the home farm, which they have taken over and operate, while Mr. and Mrs. Abelman relax and enjoy the comforts of the modern new home, built recently on the farm and think of the changes which occurred during their life time — from oxen to high powered tractors, and from \$30 teachers salaries to hundreds of dollars per month. The couple has eleven grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. Abelman believe this part of North Dakota is still the best place to live and are happy to retire on the home place, nestled in the valley along Timber Creek.