

VanDyke family gathers for reunion

Contributed to the Daily Sun

One-hundred-and-two descendants of Archie and Esther (Swigart) VanDyke gathered in Beatrice on July 29-31 for a family reunion.

Relatives came from throughout the United States, including Hawaii, New York, Texas and Minnesota. The oldest in attendance was 87, while the youngest was 4 months old. Tables were left set up over the weekend to display pictures and memorabilia relating to the family. In 1879, Archie and Esther (Swigart) VanDyke moved to Gage County from Pennsylvania. They had 15 children. Eleven of the 15 children have descendants.

Friday was "Get Acquainted With Your Ancestors Day," including informative speeches about Archie and Esther VanDyke and each of their 15 children.

Saturday began with games to help attendees become familiar with each other. Prizes were awarded for the oldest, the youngest, who traveled the far-

thest, and (in honor of the family's Dutch heritage) who was the shortest.

Saturday afternoon consisted of picture taking, and a tour of Gage County, including: the farm Archie bought in 1879, the Pleasant View Cemetery, and the Brethren Cemetery near Holmesville.

The highlight of the weekend was Saturday evening when a catered banquet was held in honor of what-would-have-been Archie's 175th birthday. The evening included a keynote address by local historian Lauren Riedesel of Beatrice titled "Gage County, Nebraska, When the VanDykes Arrived."

Sunday morning the family attended services at the South Beatrice Church of the Brethren — the same church the VanDyke family attended more than 100 years ago. Sunday afternoon the reunion was brought to a close after a picnic in the Filley Stone Barn. The family voted to hold another reunion in five years.