



Free Land



Mini Fact:

About 270 million acres in 30 states were settled through the Homestead Act.

In the 1800s, only about one out of 100 people in Europe owned land. Even when they owned land, it was usually no more than five acres.

Many thousands of Europeans left for America, trying to escape poverty, famine and religious differences.

When the United States passed the Homestead Act in 1862, it gave millions of people a chance to live the American dream.

The Homestead Act offered to give citizens, or people promising to become citizens, enough free land for a family farm. This was about 160 acres.

Homesteaders had to farm the land, make improvements on it, build a home there and live on that land for five years.

Hard labor

Homesteading was difficult. It was so hard that only about four out of every 10 homesteaders were able to stick it out on the frontier for the necessary five years.

Plowing the land was rough work, especially on the plains. Prairie grasses had long roots that made the soil hard to cut through.

To plow one acre of land, a farmer had to walk 10 miles while pushing a heavy plow. Horses or oxen may have helped pull it.

This meant he or she had to walk hundreds of miles just to plow the land, to plant it, weed it and harvest it!



America's first homesteader, Daniel Freeman (right and above left), poses with his wife, Agnes, one of their daughters and three grandchildren. They are in front of a brick home they built on their homestead near Beatrice, Nebraska. The clay for the bricks came from their land.

Everyone helped

Women and girls often did all the housework: cleaning the house, preparing food, making clothes, cleaning and ironing them – all without electricity or running water.

Children as young as 2 or 3 years old had chores. They brought in firewood, gathered eggs and herded the cattle. Older children milked cows and helped with the planting and harvesting, cooking and cleaning.

Communities often built schools before permanent homes so that children could be educated. Students might share books and slates brought from their former homes.

A monument to hard work

The Homestead National Monument in Beatrice, Nebraska, has a museum and exhibit space in the Heritage Center, built in 2007. The monument is built on the site of Daniel Freeman's original homestead from 1862.



The last homesteader

Kenneth Deardorff was the last person to receive free land under the Homestead Act.

His claim was on 80 acres of land in Alaska. He gained title to his land in 1988, where he fished for salmon and hunted moose.

He and his family still live in Alaska today, although they no longer live on the original homestead.



Ken Deardorff

Resources



On the Web:

- nps.gov/home
- bit.ly/1Ff56xR

At the library:

- "The Homestead Act" by Elaine Landau
- "Wagon Wheels" by Barbara Brenner

The Mini Page® © 2015 Universal Uclick

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of the Homestead Act are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally. See if you can find:



ACRES, ACT, ALASKA,	A S Y L I M A F A K S A L A F
AMERICA, BUILD,	M C S N E Z I T I C W N W O R
CHILDREN, CITIZENS,	E H S R E L T T E S L O L N O
DREAM, EDUCATION,	R O P L O W B U I L D A R V N T
FAMILY, FARM, FREE,	I O D R E A M E P L E R F V N K T
FRONTIER, HELP,	C L H O M E V M P L E H B D I
HOME, HOUSEHOLD,	A S C H I L D R E N M R A F E
LAND, OWN, PLOW,	A C T D L O H E S U O H H G R
SCHOOLS, SETTLERS, WORK.	S E R C A N O I T A C U D E H

Cook's Corner

Peanut Butter Pudding Parfait

You'll need:

- 2 tablespoons reduced-fat milk
- 3 tablespoons chunky peanut butter
- 1 1/4 cups light whipped topping
- 3 cups cold reduced-fat milk
- 1 large package chocolate instant pudding

What to do:

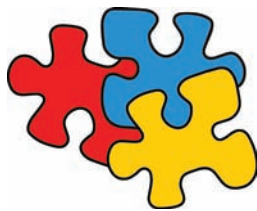
1. Stir 2 tablespoons milk with peanut butter until well-mixed.
2. Gently blend in whipped topping.
3. In a separate bowl, make pudding according to directions with 3 cups cold milk.
4. Spoon whipped topping mixture and pudding alternately into parfait glasses.
5. Chill for 1 hour before serving. Serves 6 to 8.



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of the Homestead Act.



detohmesa _____

yafilm _____

vtahrse _____

arbksane _____

Answers: homestead, family, harvest, Nebraska

Mini Joke



Doug: What happens when the sun gets tired?

Denise: It sets awhile!

Eco Note



Believe it or not, 40 percent of bottled water comes from exactly the same source as tap water. But the government tests your tap water much more often, and much more strictly, than it tests bottled water. So tap water is probably safer to drink!

adapted with permission from "The New 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth" by The Earthworks Group, Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com)

Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Blake Bell, historian with the Homestead National Monument, for help with this issue.

Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html

Books from The Mini Page are wonderful resources and make great gifts! See all of our Mini Page products at MiniPageBooks.com, or call 844-426-1256 for more information. Mail payment to: Universal Uclick, Mini Page Books, 1130 Walnut, Kansas City, MO 64106. Include \$4.00 shipping and handling per order.



\$9.95

\$15.99