



The Mini Page

Next Week:
Summer reading

Issue 18, 2024

Founded by Betty Debnam

Free Land



photos courtesy National Park Service

Mini Fact:

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



The Homestead Heritage Center features many exhibits about homesteading in the 1870s. The building was finished in 2007 and is designed to resemble a plow moving through earth.

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 they had to walk hundreds of

miles just to plow the land, to plant it, weed it and harvest it.

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 notice about the Homestead Act.



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.

A monument to hard work

The Homestead National Historical Park 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.

At the park, visitors can visit the Freeman School, where children were educated between 1872 and 1967. The building also served as a church meeting place, a polling place and gathering spot for homesteaders.

The Palmer-Epard Cabin, built in 1867, shows visitors how homesteaders lived on the prairie in the years following the Civil War.

Some homesteads around the country are still being farmed by descendants of the homesteaders. The last person to receive free land under the Homestead Act was Kenneth Deardorff. He gained title to his land in 1988.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPhomestead

At the library:

- "The Homestead Act: \$10 for Acres of Land" by Universal Politics
- "The Homestead Act" by Elaine Landau

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Try 'n' Find

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

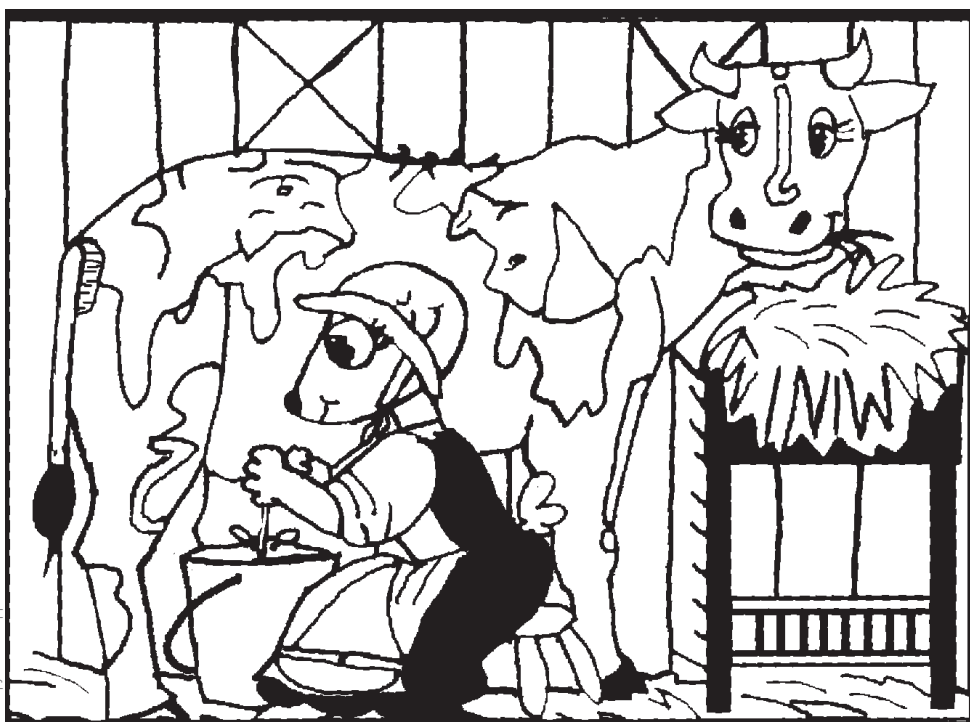


ACRES, ACT, CHURCH, FARM, FRONTIER, HARVEST, HERITAGE, HOMESTEAD, HORSES, HOUSES, LAND, NEBRASKA, OXEN, PLANT, PLOW, PRAIRIE, SCHOOLS, STATES.

C	T	G	D	A	E	T	S	E	M	O	H	I	P	E
U	H	C	W	O	L	P	X	R	N	S	T	S	R	Y
M	B	U	A	N	S	H	E	B	E	S	N	L	A	H
L	R	G	R	L	E	I	J	S	U	E	A	O	I	E
S	N	A	A	C	T	B	R	E	E	S	L	O	R	R
O	E	N	F	N	H	O	R	T	R	U	P	H	I	I
Y	D	R	O	N	H	D	O	A	B	O	H	C	E	T
K	B	R	C	I	D	X	N	T	S	H	J	S	P	A
Z	F	U	M	A	E	J	U	S	E	K	R	E	U	G
H	K	U	C	N	A	T	S	E	V	R	A	H	S	E

Mini Spy Classics

Mini Spy and her friends are homesteading. See if you can find the hidden pictures. Then color the picture.



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- exclamation mark
- question mark
- ladder
- toothbrush
- man in the moon
- sailboat
- pig's face
- kite
- ruler
- number 2
- cat
- word MINI

Mini Jokes



Harry: What happens when the sun gets tired?
Hannah: It sets awhile!

Eco Note



A new study highlights how noises made by ocean shipping are drowning out the songs baleen whales make to communicate. This is a particular problem at mating sites, where the noise pollution can disrupt reproduction at certain times of the year. The scientists say baleens have evolved with a unique U-shaped structure instead of vocal cords that lets them create low-frequency songs that can travel across long distances through water. But those songs have frequencies of up to 300 Hz, which are within the range of noise made by ships.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about modern farming methods.

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