



Especially

for

kids

and their

families

The Mini Page

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By BETTY DEBNAM

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Free Land!

The Homestead Act

Have you been enjoying your summer vacation? If so, you're not alone. Most American schoolkids get to take the summer off.

But for kids living on frontier homesteads in the mid-1800s, summer was probably their busiest time. Everybody in the family had to work from sunup to sundown to put food on the table.

But most people did not feel bad about working this hard. They felt lucky because they were working for the chance to own their own land.

Until the United States government began offering free land on the frontier, few people had the chance to own their own land.

A homestead is a home and the land surrounding it. When the United States passed the Homestead Act in 1862, it gave thousands of people a chance to live the American dream.

The Homestead Act

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.

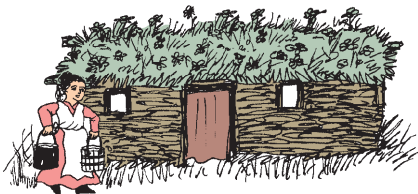


photo courtesy Homestead National Monument, National Park Service

The first homesteader, Daniel Freeman (right), is standing with his wife, Agnes Freeman, one of their daughters and three grandchildren. They are in front of a home they built on their homestead near Beatrice, Neb. The clay for the bricks came from their land.

Who could claim the land?

In order to be eligible for this free land, people had to be 21 years old and the head of the household. Or they could have served during the Civil War in the Union Army for at least two weeks.

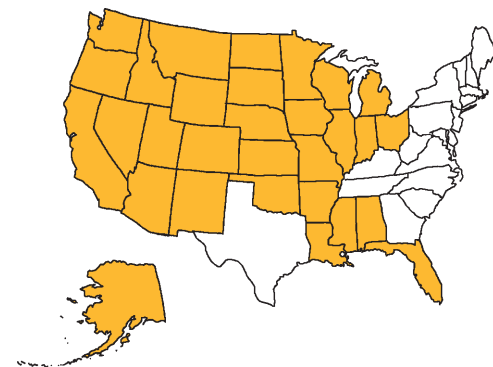
Boys as young as 8 to 10 years old could legally homestead if they had served as buglers or drummer boys.



Confederates were not eligible to homestead because they had taken up arms against the U.S. government.

After the Civil War, former slaves became citizens. They were then able to homestead. About one in 20 homesteaders was an African American.

Single women, widows and "deserted women" could also homestead. Later, Native Americans could homestead, although few did so. They had been forced from their original lands by the U.S. government.



About 270 million acres across 30 states were settled through the Homestead Act. Although it was changed many times, this law was in effect from 1862 to 1986. Alaska was the last state to be homesteaded.

The First and Last Homesteaders

photo courtesy Homestead National Monument, National Park Service



The first known homesteader was Daniel Freeman (seated at left). He is pictured here with his wife, Agnes Suiter Freeman, and six of their eight children.

The first homesteader

The first person to file a claim under the Homestead Act was Daniel Freeman (1826-1908). He grew up in Illinois and practiced medicine there.

In 1862, as soon as the Homestead Act was passed, he scouted out the land he wanted, a claim outside of Beatrice, Neb. He filed his claim 10 minutes after midnight on Jan. 1, 1863, minutes after it became law.

The story is that he was at a New Year's Eve party with the land agent in Brownville, Neb. Mr. Freeman persuaded the agent to open up the

office and let him file his claim as soon as the new year rolled in.

Daniel Freeman married Agnes Suiter in 1865. They had eight children. Daniel Freeman also served as a coroner and sheriff in Nebraska.

Agnes Suiter Freeman (1843-1931) lived on their homestead for nearly 60 years.

The site of this first homestead is now Homestead National Monument of America. Although the original log cabin Daniel Freeman built is no longer standing, a neighboring cabin from the same time is at the site.

The last homesteader

Kenneth Deardorff was the last person to receive free land under the Homestead Act. His homestead claim was on 80 acres of land in Alaska.

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

Besides farming, he fished for salmon and hunted moose and other animals for food. He traveled by dogsled or boat. Temperatures often fell to 65 degrees below zero.

photo courtesy Homestead National Monument, National Park Service



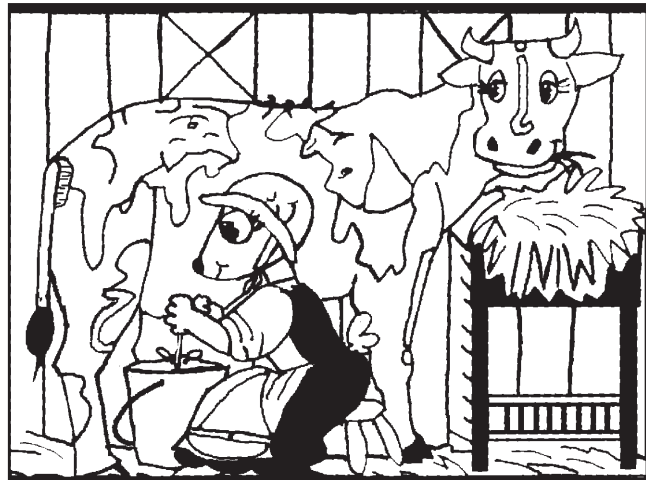
Kenneth Deardorff, a Vietnam veteran, is the last person to receive land under the Homestead Act. He gained title to this land in 1988.

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Mini Spy ...

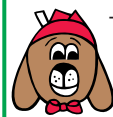


Mini Spy and her friends are homesteading. See if you can find: • exclamation mark • question mark



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

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TM Basset Brown
The News
Hound's

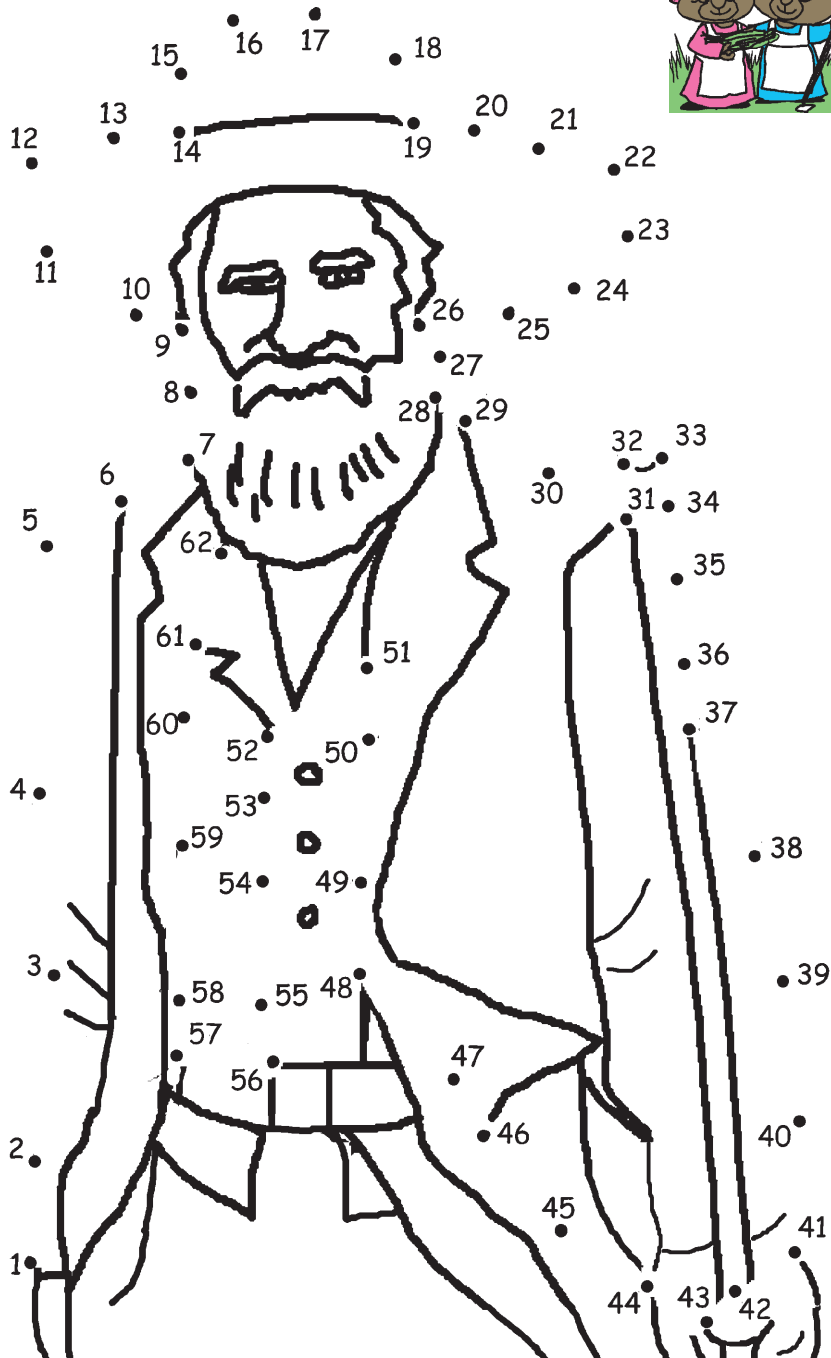
Homestead Act TRY 'N FIND

Words that remind us of the Homestead Act are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally. See if you can find: FRONTIER, WORK, LAND, OWN, AMERICA, FARM, HOME, CITIZENS, BUILD, ACRES, CHILDREN, CABIN, PLOW, EDUCATION, SCHOOLS, FREE, FAMILY, HOUSEHOLD, SETTLERS, ALASKA, LAW.



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

Go dot to dot and color this homesteader.



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Rookie Cookie's Recipe Corn Salsa and Chips

You'll need:

- 1 cup corn, canned or fresh off the cob
- 3 large tomatoes, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup Vidalia onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup red pepper, chopped
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 bag tortilla chips

What to do:

1. In a medium bowl, combine all ingredients except chips and mix well.
2. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
3. Serve with tortilla chips. Serves 4.

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

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THE HOMESTEADERS
ATE LOTS OF CORN AND
USED IT IN MANY
DIFFERENT RECIPES.



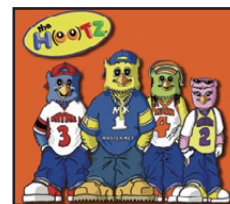
Meet Scott and Cheri Smith



Brother and sister Scott and Cheri Smith are the creators of a new hip-hop CD for kids called "The Hootz." The cartoon band is made up of four owls: MK (Master Key), the group leader; Reason, the DJ; and Rhythm and Rhyme, who are twin sister and brother.

Scott wanted to make music for children that both he and his own kids would enjoy listening to. Scott and Cheri have started foundations, or groups that raise money, to bring music education to children.

Cheri was always creative as a child. She has worked as a graphic designer in New York City. She enjoyed using her talents and ideas to create The Hootz. She is studying visual communications at Gibbs College in Livingston, N.J.

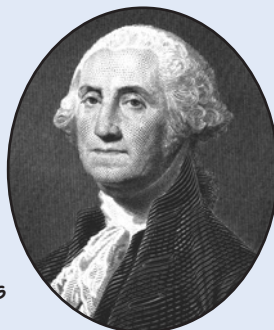


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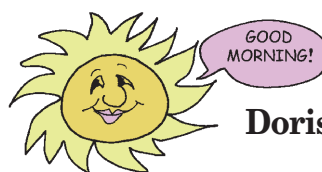
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MIGHTY FUNNY'S Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Doug: What happens when the sun gets tired?

Denise: It sets awhile!



Danny: Which is lighter, the sun or the Earth?

Doris: The sun, because it rises every morning!

Deanna: Did you hear the joke about the sun?

Dorothy: No, tell me.

Deanna: Never mind. It is way over your head!

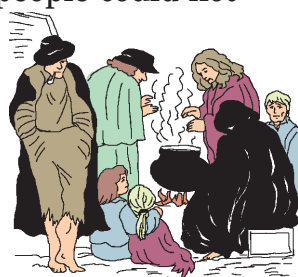


The Homesteaders

The American dream

In the 1800s, only about one out of 100 people in Europe owned land. Even when they owned land, it was not usually more than five acres. When the U.S. government offered 160 acres for free, people could not believe it.

In the mid-1800s, Europe had been in a drought for years, and famine was widespread. People were starving, especially in Ireland.



Many people were also suffering from religious persecution.

Thousands left for America, even though they knew they would never see their families and friends again. The Homestead Act gave them a chance to start a new life.

Experts believe that one-third of Americans today are descended from homesteaders.

On the other hand, the United States took land from Native Americans. The federal government forced them onto reservations so it could give land to homesteaders.



In the 1800s, a homesteading family with 10 children lived in this small cabin. Children slept in the loft, an area so small they could not even stand up in it. In winter, the whole family was crowded together in this little building. This cabin is now at Homestead National Monument of America near Beatrice, Neb.

photo courtesy Homestead National Monument, National Park Service



This woman (right) was a homesteader in western Nebraska. She and her two sisters are picking up cow chips, or dried manure, to use as fuel.

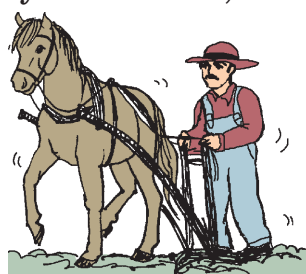
Hard work

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

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

In order to qualify for the land, the farmer had to plow at least 10 acres.

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 100 miles just to plow the land. Then the farmer had to walk this 100 miles again to plant it, then another 100 to weed it and another 100 to harvest it.

Women often did all the housework: cleaning the house, preparing food, cooking, 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.



Education

Most homesteaders realized the importance of education. Often families in an area would come together to build a community school even before they built permanent homes.



In the winter, students and teachers were often very cold.

At first, floors might be packed-down dirt. Later, when straw was put on the floors, fleas and other insects might live in it. Students often shared a few books and maybe one slate brought from the East. (A slate is a tablet of thin rock, which people write on with chalk.)

The Mini Page thanks Mark Engler, Todd Arrington and Susan J. Cook, Homestead National Monument of America, for help with this issue.

Site to see:
www.nps.gov/home

Look through your newspaper for stories about people working to reach a goal.

Next week The Mini Page is all about monkeys.

The Mini Page is created and edited by
Betty Debnam

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Read all about the Homestead Act



photo courtesy Homestead National Monument, National Park Service

in

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by Betty Debnam

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(Note to Editor: Above is camera-ready, one column-by-4¹/₄-inch ad promoting Issue 32.)

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32-5 (05)

The Mini Page® Standards Spotlight: The Homestead Act

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Mini Page activities meet many state and national educational standards. Each week we identify standards that relate to The Mini Page's content and offer activities that will help your students reach them.

This week's standards:

- Students describe the geographic context that has influenced people and events in the past. (Geography)
- Students understand family life in various places long ago. (History)
- Students understand the characteristics, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth's surface. (Geography)

Activities:

1. Design a poster telling about the Homestead Act and encouraging people to travel west for land.
2. Find items in the newspaper that would have helped homesteaders (a) build a house, (b) plow or clear the land, (c) heat a home, and (d) teach in a classroom.
3. Pretend you are a member of a homesteading family that has been working the land for four years. Write a letter to a relative in the East telling about your life on the homestead.
4. The Homestead Act caused many people to move west. Make a list of the personal qualities homesteaders had to have. Make a list of the skills they needed. Now make a list of people you know who have some of those qualities and skills.
5. Use resource books and the Internet to learn more about the Homestead Act. Use these questions to guide your research: How did the government decide which land to open to homesteading? How successful was the Homestead Act; how many people were able to live for five years on the land? How did the homesteading laws change over the years? What kind of fraud did the dishonest engage in with homestead land? Why was the Homestead Act finally repealed?

(standards by Dr. Sherrye D. Garrett, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi)

(Note to Editor: Above is the Standards for Issue 32.)



Gus Goodsport's Report

Supersport: Roger Federer

Height: 6-1

Birthdate: 8-8-81

Weight: 185

Hometown: Basel, Switzerland



Once again, the challengers charged after Roger Federer. Once again, they succumbed to the smooth-stroking Swiss, who fended them off with an array of masterful forehands, backhands, serves and volleys.

The result was a third-straight Wimbledon singles tennis title for Federer, the No. 1-ranked player in the world. Some experts believe he could become the best player ever.

Federer, who turned pro in 1998, won an amazing 11 titles in 2004. He's a champion who also shows good sportsmanship and serves as an outstanding role model. As a result, he has thousands of fans.

Federer's fame is widespread. He has a fragrance — RF Roger Federer — that went on the market in 2004. Everywhere the Wimbledon champ goes, there seems to be the sweet smell of success.

(Note to Editor: Above is copy block for Page 3, Issue 32, to be used in place of ad if desired.)

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