

# THE HOMESTEADERS



Homesteaders in the American West relied on the strength of family to overcome brutal conditions in the fulfillment of their dreams. With confidence and optimism, the homesteading family groups journeyed over 1000 miles in crude modes of transportation with limited supplies to a destiny unknown. Many arrived only to find the last claims available, dry and barren, but with ingenuity and the use of efficient sools and systems, they made the most of it. The Homestead Act encapsulated a truly American ideal; with hard work and perserverence, anyone can succeed. Families abandoned their possessions and together, took a risk.

# SETTING THE ROLE

Staff greets students at the stake as head of the family, Ma or Pa. Draw students away from the parking lot to read a telegram from your brother, John Quick, who has just set up a homestead somewhere in central Colorado. Using the letter from your brother the homesteader, come to a group consensus about taking the risk to meet him in Colorado to set up your own homestead.

## ***Questions to ask:***

What is the American dream for you?

Has anyone here had to move?

How have you had to rely on your family?

What is your role at your house?

How do you demonstrate hard work and perseverance to your life?

What risks have you taken? How did you calculate whether it was worth it?

## ***Could you be a homesteader?***

-What time do you like to wake up?

-What do you like to do best?

-Rank your hygiene on a scale from 1-10.

-How much time do you spend with your family?

-What is your ideal house temperature?

-What is your ideal job?

-What is your ideal vacation?

-How comfortable are you with wildlife?

11/21/1868

*Dear Brother,*

*We made it. We met a lot of nice people on the trail that helped us with a few setbacks. The climate here is warm and sunny, even in November. Not like home where we had the string tied between the barn and the house so we could find our way in the blizzard snows...remember that! The snow covered mountains here reassure us that the clean cold water is always flowing for our crops and livestock. We have built a nice shanty and believe the US government will grant us title to the land without issue. I believe you have the spirit of determination to make it across the plains. We will be waiting.*

*Your brother, the homesteader.*

# THE HISTORY

After walking in the direction of the astropad, pass the cabins and sit the students in a circle to discuss the history of the Homestead Act. Admit to the students you already paid the application fee since you knew they would agree to go. Use the following guided questions to explain the basics of US History in the mid-1800's:

The Homestead Act, passed in 1862 by President Abraham Lincoln, basically said that any 21 year old US citizen or immigrant with an application to be a US citizen could file an application for a 160 acre plot of land (mostly west of the Mississippi River) to be lived on for 5 years. Title to the land would be granted by the US government if the land had been improved, by building a 12X14 ft dwelling and growing crops. Title could also be acquired after 6 months by paying the government \$1.25 per acre.

At this time in history, the US government also gave land away to veterans of the Civil War, religious groups, and earthquake victims. But the largest recipient of land was the railroad companies who received over 30 million acres of land to build their tracks across the nation! The goal of the government was to promote settlement and land improvement of a vast territory and to link the two coasts.

Private land companies also sold land on the frontier for 1.25-2.00 an acre, often claiming their land was better than government land that lacked schools, mills and mercantiles.

Land plots were limited to 160 acres to avoid the big plantations style farming of the South, which required slave labor. 160 acres was also the ideal size farm in the east for a small family to operate, however, the arid and rocky western soil made farming more difficult.

## *Questions to ask:*

If the government was giving away free land on planet MR2, would you go?

Is land a good investment? Why?

Why would the government just be giving away land to anyone?

What was happening in the United States in 1867?

Why 160 acres?

## **Frontier Facts**

- 270 million acres or 10% of the lower 48 were homesteaded.

- out of 2 million applications, 730,000 families received title.

-5-20% of homesteaders were women.

-to get around the law, many settlers built portable shanties they would set up at different 160 acre plots to meet the building guidelines

## *Voices of the homesteaders...*

**“Buy land. They don’t make it anymore.”**  
- Mark Twain

**Song from the late 1800’s,**  
**“Come along, come along, don’t be alarmed.**  
**Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm!”**

# Who and Why?

Different people moved west for different reasons. But for all who made the decision to pack up and go it was a new life with new challenges. Several reasons families left their homes to move west include religious differences within their communities, the Civil War, family strife, urban epidemics, the stock market crash of 1837, slavery and large plantation economics. New opportunities awaited and many found the idea of life on the western frontier romantic and adventurous.

## *Questions to ask:*

What would cause you to leave home with the chance of never coming back?

Who took advantage of the homestead act?

What are a few reasons people left everything to homestead in the late 1800's?

## ACTIVITY:

Break students and high school leaders into 'family groups'. As they walk toward the astropad they will come up with family names and roles and why they are moving west. They will present themselves at the next stop, which can act as a springboard into a short discussion about who and why took advantage of the Homestead Act in the late 1800's. When you arrive at the astropad, stop and ask students to analyze the land in the west.

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## LAND ANALYSIS – WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

The best homesteads on the plains and in the mountains had close proximity to clean water from a spring, stream or river, access to lumber for building materials, decent soil, access to roads, towns, railroads and a plot that is protected from the elements. In order to improve the land, the homesteaders built wells and fences, planted seed and maintained livestock. If the homestead was on the plains, many homesteaders used sod and buffalo dung as building material and fuel due to lack of timber. When you get to the homestead, inspect the kitchen walls for evidence of sod/mud 'chinking', a form of early insulation.

## *Questions to ask:*

What kind of land are we looking for?

What qualities should the land have to create a successful homestead?

Look around, where would you place your cabin to meet the specifications we just discussed?

Lets do a brain exercise, look at the land for 10 seconds then close your eyes. Now picture a typical homestead of the 1800's on that plot of land. How many buildings are there? Did you picture a fence? Anything living? A windmill. Keep this picture in your head and compare it to the real homestead when we arrive.

# MODES OF TRANSPORTATION AND TRAIL ROUTES

At the astropad and explain that settlers had options for travel just like we do today. If you are powerful and wealthy perhaps you take a private plane on vacation, others take the bus or drive. Thanks to the improvement of the steam engine by James Watt in 1787, wealthy settlers had the option of traveling by steamboat for a majority of their trip west. The transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869 as the golden spike was pounded at Promontory Summit, Utah to connect the east and west lines.

The Homestead Act may have helped to hasten the completion of the rail line that would now serve to supply the homesteaders along the way. Most working class homesteaders rode west in a “prairie schooner,” a converted farm wagon so named because it looked like a boat crossing the “sea of grasses” that made up the Great Plains. Lines of wagons could be seen along established routes such as the Oregon Trail, Santa Fe Trail, Lewis and Clark Trail and others. Use the raised relief map of the US to illustrate the Lewis and Clark, Santa Fe, Mormon and Oregon Trails.

## *Questions to ask:*

How did the pioneers get to the west?

What the longest car trip you’ve taken?

How did you entertain yourself?

## THE MORMON HANDCART

Today, to travel to the Quick Homestead we will be using a Mormon Handcart to carry our supplies. The Mormons were persecuted in the Midwest as religious fanatics and moved west under a holy order from their leader, Brigham Young. A majority of Mormon settlers moved west without the aid of steam or animal, they walked and pulled their own carts under their own power.

A unique feature of the Mormon migration was their use of handcarts. Handcarts, two-wheeled carts that were pulled by emigrants, instead of draft animals, were seen as a faster, easier and cheaper way to bring European converts to Salt Lake City.

The handcarts were modeled after carts used by street sweepers and were made almost entirely of wood. They were generally 6 to 7 feet long, wide enough to span a narrow wagon track and could be alternatively pushed or pulled. The small boxes affixed to the carts were 3 to 4 feet long and 8 inches high. They could carry about 500 pounds, most of this weight consisting of trail provisions and a few personal possessions.

Almost 3,000 Mormons, with 653 carts and 50 supply wagons, traveling in 10 different companies, made the trip over 1200 miles to Salt Lake City. While not the first to use handcarts, they were the only group to use them extensively.

# WHAT SHOULD WE BRING? PACKING THE BASICS.

Planning a cross-country move, even today, is no minor feat. With boxes to be packed, movers to be hired, travel arrangements to be made, relocating is always stressful. But the stresses faced by cross-country emigrants 130 years ago -- weeks (or months) of grueling travel, rough (or nonexistent) roads, and few amenities -- were monumental by modern standards. Homesteaders traveling to Montana in the 1880s had to abandon the majority of all their material possessions, bid farewell to family and friends who they would often never see again, and prepare supplies that would last not only for the long journey ahead, but for the first few months in their new home.

Homesteaders had to pack essentials for life on and off the trail into a space. Although game could be shot and roots and berries could be gathered while in transit, settlers carried the vast majority of their food in the wagon, taking up most of their storage space. Basic staples included flour, bacon, sugar, coffee, tea, dried fruit, corn meal, and rice. Some resourceful emigrants brought along eggs packed in barrels of flour or meal. Settlers packed minimal utensils for cooking, often limiting themselves to a skillet, a coffee pot, tin plates and cups, a camp stove, and a few sets of flatware.

## *Questions to ask:*

What would you need for a 3 month trip?

What are your basic needs?

If your parents said you could only pack a small backpack, what would you put in it?

## **ACTIVITY:**

In small family groups, create a list of the essential 20 items needed for a trek across the plains.



# THE TREK AND HARDSHIPS OF THE TRAIL

Once your family groups are all packed up and ready to go the journey west required cooperation and communication by all involved.

Travel was boring and dangerous. The greatest dangers were lack of water or food, river crossings, disease, wild animals, other pioneers and accidents. The threat from American Indian tribes was overexaggerated by the media, as the Indians were offered more help than harm to lost or struggling pioneers.

## *Questions to ask:*

What do you think the trip was like?

1 in 10 people died on the trail, what do you think is the major reason why?

What is the key for us having a successful trip to the homestead?

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## ACTIVITY - The Trek across the Plains

Using the Mormon Handcart is a teambuilding challenge for students and a central focus of the discovery group. Students can attain a true sense of empathy for the original pioneers who had to work together to move across the plains efficiently. Let them deal with the cart as a group with YOU AS THE MEDIATOR...do not let the high school leaders take charge. Students can load all their bags/gear/stuff in the bed of the cart. You and the high school leaders will present challenges to the students as they blaze a trail to the homestead. As the group leader, it is your responsibility to lead the students with the cart safely to the destination. If they are struggling, stop them, sit and debrief. They will go through the natural stages of any group challenge...storming and eventually norming. When experiencing their own internal challenges do not burden them with more issues. However, once the students have gained a good sense of the use of the cart, stop them with the challenges. Also incorporate facts and pioneer songs as they are moving West. Remember, this is a potentially dangerous activity if students do not have proper oversight.

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### *Voices of the homesteaders...*

**“to enjoy such a trip...a man must be able to endure heat like a Salamander, mud and water like a muskrat, dust like a toad, and labor like a jackass. He must learn to eat with his unwashed fingers, drink out of the same vessel as his mules, sleep on the ground when it rains, and share his blanket with vermin, and have patience with musketoes...he must cease to think, except of where he may find grass and water and a good camping place. It is hardship without glory.”**

# THE TREK

## Challenges

Ask high school leaders to stop the students in their family groups as they hike to Quick's Homestead with the following challenges (students need to come up with creative solutions to these problems). Students will present their answers to the rest of the group when they are 3/4 way to the homestead.

### Challenge #1

\* 2 students are struck with typhoid fever (explain how disease was #1 killer). What do you do to make them comfortable on the trail?

### Challenge #2

\* a family member breaks his leg...what do you do?

### Challenge #3

\* the dangerous South Platte river is raging in spring time. How do you propose getting you and your stuff across the river safely?

### Challenge #4

\* you are behind schedule and have run out of food. What do you do?

### Challenge #5

\* both of your oxen succumb to the elements of this arduous journey

## Useful Information

- Travel continued until noon, when the wagons stopped for a cold meal of coffee, beans, and bacon, which had been prepared that morning. During this break, or "nooning," men and women would gather and talk, children would play, and draft animals would rest.
- Settlers often left notes scrawled on boards, rocks, or animal bones for emigrants who were following them. The messages could range from advice on good campsites to more ominous messages, such as "For God's sake, don't drink this water."
- Many families brought along household pets on their journeys. During one 1850 wagon train, a cat saved its owners from starvation by providing it with a freshly killed rabbit each morning.
- The great fluctuations in temperature caused the wood of the wagon wheels to shrink, and if they were not soaked overnight in a river or stream bed, their iron rims would roll off the wagon during the day.
- After sickness and accidental gunshot wounds, drownings at river crossings were the most common cause of fatalities among settlers.
- Indians were among the least of the settlers' problems, for example, When an Indian woman stood staring at an older female pioneer, the settler dropped down her false teeth, which caused the Indians to scream and yell, and "leave the camp in a big hurry."
- Some settlers had portable rubber mattresses that could be filled with air or water ... an early version of the modern-day waterbed.

# QUICKS HOMESTEAD!

Quick's Homestead has been home to many families, unfortunately, mostly unsuccessful as homesteaders. The original structure was built in the 1890's, by a family who plotted the land based on the tenets of the Homestead Act. Upon arrival at the homestead site, many families first built shelter for their livestock, living in tents or other rough structures until enough lumber was harvested and finished to build a strong cabin with. At one point in the history of the Quick place, a small wildfire threatened the structure. Do you see any evidence of this fire? (Look at the old Ponderosas behind the hen house). Encourage students to imagine what life was like for kids their age who lived and worked at this homestead.

## TOURS -

Be sure students have the time to get their hands on the history! Sit students around the campfire, and ask the teacher to lead a discussion concerning what resources the students think the pioneers would have needed to build and maintain this site and where those resources may come from, while you give a quick tour to the high school students who will lead each tour. When the high school leaders are ready, break students back up into family groups and have them rotate through the house, barn, toolshed and field for 15 minutes each. Bring students together after the tours for the closing discussion and planning/preparation for the trip back to high trails.

### *Questions to ask:*

Is this what you imagined?

How is this land according to the qualifications we discussed earlier?

How long has this homestead been around?

### *Voices of the Homesteaders*

**“I am looking rather seedy now while holding  
down my claim,  
and my victuals are not always served the best.  
And the mice play shyly ‘round me as I settle  
down to rest,  
In my little old sod shanty in the West.  
The hinges are of leather and the windows have  
no glass,  
While the roof lets the howling blizzard in;  
And I hear the hungry ki-yote as he slinks up in  
the grass,  
‘Round my little old sod shanty on my claim.  
But I’m happy as a clam,  
on the land of Uncle Sam,  
in my little old sod shanty on my claim.”**  
-- from “Little Old Sod Shanty on the Claim”  
(Traditional)

### **Tour Guide Tips:**

- Ask lots of questions
- Use the challenges and scavenger hunts
- Be sure students pick stuff up
- Use What if statements....

# THE HOUSE – Family Life and Recreation

## Major parts of the house to inspect:

**Notching** - refers to the construction technique used to build the log frame of the home. When you look at the corners of the exterior of the log frame, notice how the logs were hand cut and flattened. The notch used at this homestead (which is triangular in shape) strengthens the frame as the house shifts and does not require any nails to hold it together.

**Glass Window Frame** - a large stone fireplace was originally where the window is.

**Foundation** - the stone used to support the frame of the house is made from a volcanic formation known as Wall Mountain Tuff. This rock was used for two reasons, it is local and easily accessible and is easy to 'block' into level, square chunks.

**Chinking** - refers to the packing of sod and dirt into the cracks between the log framing to insulate the house from cold and wind.

**Kitchen Implements** - Use the following questions as a guide for a scavenger hunt?

Where is the refrigerator?

What could be used as a toaster?

Look closely at the stove, how was it heated?

Which kitchen tools could you find in your kitchen today?

Which tool have you never seen before?

**Laundry implements** - Can you tell which machines are for washing and which for drying? Pick up an iron...how heavy are they? Those homesteaders must have been strong!

**Recreation** - What do you think kids did for fun at this house? How much time was devoted to work vs. play? What chores do you think the kids were responsible for? Can you find something the homesteaders may have used for entertainment?

## *Questions to ask:*

What are some things you have in your house you absolutely could not live with?

How would this house stay warm?

Can you tell which parts of the house were added on? Fixed recently? Original?

Could you live here? Why or why not?

What did the homesteaders do with their free time?

## **Useful Information**

-to conserve even more water, many families did not wash or rinse their dishes ... so when a pioneer mother commanded her children to "clean their plates," she really meant business.

-because of the scarcity of water, homesteaders conserved it (and recycled it) in ways that would be unthinkable to most 21st-century Americans. It was not uncommon for an entire family to take turns and bathe in a single tub of water. Bathing itself was usually limited to once a week, and following the family baths, the filthy bathwater was then used for light cleaning

- After their journeys to the frontier, settlers frequently built their wagon boxes into the design of their new homes. One Montana settler used her wagon box as a root cellar for her new home.

# THE TOOLSHED AND POTATO CELLAR –

## Agriculture and Farming

### *Questions to Ask:*

Why is a toolshed necessary?

What crops do you think grow here? (use crops section in guide)

What is in your garage at home that your family could not live without?

What was the cellar used for? Why was it built into the side of the hill?

### **Useful Information...**

The nearby chicken houses and rabbit hutches were also important to the family as a source of fresh meat and eggs. An older chicken house near the barn is now gone, but once kept 50 roosters and 50 hens.

### **The Potato Cellar**

Before refrigeration, cellars were used to store anything settlers wanted to keep from spoiling in the summer or freezing in the winter. The great amounts of dirt around the cellar kept its contents at a fairly constant temperature year round. Root crops such as carrots, turnips, beets, parsnips and potatoes would keep quite a while. Other fruits and vegetables had to be dried, canned or made into butter or jelly such as apples, green beans, peas, cabbage, rhubarb, and choke cherries. Settler may have a freshly killed elk or deer in the corner until it was ready to be processed. Dairy products were stored in the house.

### **Toolshed Scavenger Hunt**

The items on this list are for discovery rather than collection.  
Please don't move or remove anything!

A tool used to make repairs.

Something from nature which was valuable to the homesteaders.

A work saving feature.

A tool or machine useful for a potato farmer.

Something modern which looks out of place.

Something that would be useful in taking care of the cows.

Something which shows that it was made by hand rather than machine.

A square nail.

Something useful.

Some way that man has helped the environment.

Some way that man has harmed the environment

A tool used to cut large chunks of ice.

A machine used to make apple cider.

A place used to store lettuce, potatoes and other vegetables.

A tool used by someone interested in building a house or shed.

A tool used to make shoes.

Something used to sharpen steel.

Something you might use to weigh your produce before going to market.

Something you may also find in your garage today?

# The Barn – Animals/Livestock

Greet students at the entrance to the barn and use the challenges and points of discussion to engage students.

## Challenges:

1. You need to keep two work horses to help you in the field during planting and harvesting for a total cost of \$50. In order to keep horses, figure out where they will stay, how you will feed them and what kind of care they will require. Where will you store the hay they need to be fed and how much extra work will it be to harvest and store the hay?
2. You have a small calf which keeps going through the barbed wire fences. You can either add another strand of wire to the fence at a cost of \$15, or you can figure out another way of keeping the calf from going through the fence.
3. Take a closer look at how the barn may have originally looked before it collapsed. Notice some of its work saving features. The barn is built into the side of a hill with a road behind it so that hay could be thrown down instead of up. The trench in the floor of the milking area probably made it easier to clean the barn. Why is the outside fence built with a jog in it? Note where the well is and the slope of the ground - an automatic water system!
4. Hanging on the wall is some farming equipment. See if you can figure out what they were used for...

## *Points of discussion for the barn tour...*

- Ask students to brainstorm why farmers keep animals. On farms where people survive on the things that their farm produces, what things do animals provide for these farming families? Ask students to name some farm animals and the products they give to farm families.
- Discuss how some animal products can be used directly (eggs, milk, etc.) and some require processing. Define processing – using tools, methods or other ingredients to change the product into something that can be used in a different way. For example, brainstorm a list of the things that milk can be turned into (butter, icecream, cheese, yogurt...).

Be sure not to miss!

## **Barn structure** - (See Challenge #3...)

- Where hay was kept on the chicken wire above the candle hanging area.
- The foundation made from the same material as the house, just not shaped as square.

## **Tools:**

cow weiners - A calf wearing this device would not have much luck getting milk from its mother.

(See Challenge #2)

dehorner - used to remove the horns from yearling calves to prevent them from hurting each other  
harnesses and pens

**The view** of the rest of the Homestead compound from the barn!

# The Field – Water, Soil, Technology

## Challenges:

1. Your plow wears out completely. You can either buy a new one for \$22 or dig up your fields with shovels. If you decide to dig with shovels, get a shovel from the toolshed and dig up one square foot of ground. Would you like to reconsider your decision?
2. Take a close look at all the machinery in the field. Can you determine which step of the planting process each tool was made for? Try to figure it out!
3. Clearing the land - you will be required to cut down trees and remove large rocks. How will you do it?

## Activities:

Rubbings - students visually inspect field implements for brand names, dates, etc... Take charcoal pencils with a blank sheet of paper and rub to get an 'original' work of art!

Plow vs Shovel - how hard was the work really? See the 'plowing' section in farming technology.

Plow tag - call out the uses of certain machines in the fields. Students can find safe haven from whoever is 'it' if touching a machine that does the duty you called out.

Things to inspect on the field tour:

old windmill

water spring

plows

wagons

seeders

## Questions to ask:

- What do you consider modern technology?
- What tools do farmers use today to grow crops?
- How important is water to your everyday life?

## Farming Terminology

**Plowing** - the plow created 'furrows' when pulled by a horse. Farmers had to decide how furrows would be arranged and how deep. What factors did the farmers had to consider?  
-soil compaction, strength of animals, wind, slope, source of water, uniformity

**Harrowing** - breaking up the big chunks of earth after plowing. How would you do it?

**Planting** - Here, small pieces of potatoes were planted rather than seeds. Each year homesteaders would save part of the previous years crop to plant the next year. Hay grows wild in these valleys and was not planted.

**Thinning and Weeding** - Even after the crops were planted, they needed a great deal of care. Who would do this work?

**Water** - Do you see a way to irrigate this field in the case of a dry season?

**Protection** - What do you do about bugs? Erosion control? Birds, rabbits and cows?

**Harvest** - Potatoes must be dug up and hay must be cut. Can you identify any machines that may assist the farmers in these tasks?

# Wrap Up and Trip Back

Revisit the major themes and big historical points of the late 1800's to conclude the Homesteaders discovery group. These themes include: hard work, dependence on family, self-sufficiency, the value of work saving devices, living with and using nature to your advantage. Use one of the activities/discussions below as closure for students.

## Questions to ask:

Do you think you would have been a good homesteader?

How did the homesteaders take advantage of their natural surroundings for survival?

## HOMESTEAD OF THE FUTURE

After finishing the various projects for the day at the homestead, gather the students to look at the homestead and analyze how we can create more energy-efficient structures in the future.

People design passive solar homes today (or even active solar homes, which collect the sun's energy and store it in large batteries) for a number of reasons. Some people want to help conserve the limited energy supplies on Earth and try to help in this way. These people may be concerned about pollution from conventional energy sources. Others may simply be interested in saving money. With passive or active solar energy, heating and electric bills are always smaller.

Ask students to imagine the 'green' homestead of the future. They can describe or draw their vision. In debriefing the imagination exercise, be sure to discuss wind power, solar power, rain collection, regional and global obstacles and opportunities for unique "Earth" based building techniques.

### Homesteader Fact:

The Homestead Act was repealed in 1976.

## Failure of Homesteads

Although between 400,000 and 600,000 families moved West from 1862-1900, largely as a result of the Homestead Act, many of these families were unable to make a living. In the arid climate of the plains, their crops failed again and again. Insects, soil deficiencies, and harsh winds, which blew away what little topsoil they had, also contributed to the failure of many homesteaders. When the use of farm machinery became common, farms of only 160 acres became uneconomical to operate. Many homesteaders sold their land to speculators and moved on. Some couldn't find buyers and abandoned their land. Others couldn't pay the taxes or loans and their land was taken away.

# HOMESTEADER ALL-DAY

The all-day group can use all of the materials presented in the half-day session. It is very likely you will want to spend more time on the Homestead tour than is possible on the half-day. In addition, students on the Homesteader all-day will have an opportunity to dip candles, make apple cider in a press, cook biscuits over a fire and make butter. The students should remain in their family groups and rotate through these activities, allowing approximately 30 minutes for each. Emphasize for students how these hands-on activities illustrate the self-sufficiency of the homesteaders and their ability to make beautiful works of art with utilitarian products.

## CANDLE-MAKING

In order to melt the wax, stoke up the stove in the outdoor part of the barn. After the fire is burning well, place the can with the wax on the burner, just until it is completely melted. (Don't let the wax boil; it pops and could cause burning).

While the wax is melting, have each student select a piece of wick about a foot long. Tie one end of the wick around a stick and tie three or four knots in the other end. When the wax is melted, carefully remove it from the stove and set it on the ground next to a can of cold water.

To make the candles, the students dip the string into the wax and then into the water, repeating the process a number of times. Be sure to dip the string into the wax quickly. If you leave it in too long, it will melt the wax already accumulated. As the wax builds up, begin to shape the candle. Press out any air bubbles that have formed and flatten the bottom. The completed candle should be about 1 1/2 inches in diameter.

If you wish to scent or decorate your candles here are a few suggestions:

The water in which the candles are dipped may be scented. In order to do this, gather a bunch of the scent desired (pine needles and sage are abundant) and place them in a bucket with water. Bring the water to a boil then take it from the fire and let it cool. (This may have to be done in advance.) After the water is cool, strain the matter out and use the water.

Another method is to place the scented material in the wax. Gather the pine needles and break them, to let the scent out. As you dip the candles, place pieces of pine needle on the warm wax. As the candle burns, the pieces will be heated and burned, allowing the scent to escape.

Tips for Candle Makers:

- Maintain the wax temperature.
- Manage your candle making group so no one is in danger of burning each other as they pass hot wax strings.
- The wax may be colored with bits of crayons.
- Decorate the candles with leaves, flower petals, pine needles by sticking items to the warm wax then redip the candle to coat the decoration with a layer of wax

### Questions to ask:

Why would the homesteaders need candles?

- *cheaper means of light than kerosene*

Where would you get the wax and wick for candles?

- *thallow came from animal fat*
- *wick could be made from fabric remnants, string, etc..*

What other items we take for granted today which often had to be handmade by the early settlers?

- *Soap, butter, jelly, bread, dyes, clothing, furniture, toys, etc...*

How much time would it take to make all of these things? How much time would be left over for recreation and relaxation?

# MAKING BISCUITS AND BUTTER

In order to make biscuits, you will need to get a fire going in the firepit outside of the homestead. You will need biscuit mix, water, a mixing bowl, frying pan, salt, jelly (optional). While you are managing the fire, everyone can join in on the mixing. After the group has created a decent mixture, students can cook the biscuits in a hot pan like pancakes or twist the biscuit mix onto a solid stick to roast the mix.

You will probably want to start making the butter as you finish lunch. Use a waterbottle or clean peanut butter jar with a lid to start the process. Put heavy cream with a little salt into the waterbottle and begin to shake. The students enjoy shaking the butter, especially as it begins to thicken, which it will do after about 45 minutes or an hour - if you plan it right, should be ready in time to use on your biscuits. It will give the students something to do while the biscuits cook.

Questions to ask:

What kind of work would be involved if you had to cook over a fire all the time?

What foods were not available to the homesteaders?

Would biscuits be a special treat?

How much time would the homesteader spend cooking?

How would the kids help with the cooking?

Where would you get the ingredients?

Imagine your grocery store; Are there foods we consider common today which homesteading families almost never had?

- fruit, seafood, peanut butter (not invented until World War I)

# PRESSING APPLES FOR CIDER

The wooden cider press is located in the tool shed. The press is another example of how self-sufficient homesteaders were. To use the press, cut the apples up into quarters, core them, and then place them in the top of the press. You can now start to crank the press, but be sure you have a container at the bottom ready to catch the juice! As soon as the press crushes the apple you will begin to have cider! In order to purify the cider, it must be boiled over the fire before students can consume any. Take a gallon of store-bought cider to have a taste test or if you don't have time to boil the cider.

Questions to ask:

Do you think we could grow apples here?

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How would you make sure none of the apples would go to waste?

- bottle cider, make apple jelly, can apples, dry apples

How much waste do we create? How can we lower our waste output?

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## The Story of Adeline Hornbek

Adeline Warfield was born in 1833 in Massachusetts. At the age of 25 she married Simon A. Harker, her brother's well-to-do business partner. Harker worked as an Indian trader and merchant in the Creek Territory in what is now part of the state of Oklahoma. In 1860 he developed a lingering illness. In the summer of 1861, the couple left the Creek Agency with their two young children and traveled by wagon to the Colorado Territory, an area known for its healthful climate.

The Harkers settled along the South Platte River, just northeast of the new mining supply town of Denver, where they farmed and raised cattle. In 1863, the year their third child was born, Simon Harker filed a claim under the Homestead Act on 160 acres of land on which the family was living. When Harker died in 1864, Adeline faced life as a widow with three young children. Despite her difficult circumstances, it appears that she managed well by earning money from her crops and livestock. Foodstuffs sold for high prices in Denver because most of the supplies needed by gold miners in the area had to be brought to the territory by wagon train. Nearby farmers could sell their produce for lower prices than the wagon train traders and still make a sizeable profit.

By July 1866, Adeline Hornbek was able to exercise the clause in the Homestead Act that allowed early purchase of a homestead. She bought 80 of those acres for \$100 in cash. Two months after she acquired ownership of the property, she married Elliott Hornbek, and in 1870, the couple had a son. Then, in 1875, Elliott Hornbek disappeared. There is an air of mystery surrounding him: his occupation, his reasons for leaving his family, and his ultimate fate are unknown. Once again Adeline Hornbek became the sole support for her family.

Hornbek left her Denver homestead after her husband's disappearance, but there is no record of why and no certain knowledge of where she spent the next three years. By early spring of 1878, she had accumulated enough money to build a ranch for her family in Colorado's Florissant Valley, a region that was becoming important as a supply center for gold and silver miners in the nearby mountains. Proximity to good transportation may have been an important factor in Hornbek's choice of this land because she knew it would be helpful for shipping out her agricultural products and bringing in goods she could not get locally.

The area Hornbek chose to settle lies along a tributary of the South Platte River. The immediate area offered an abundant water supply, fertile soil, large meadows for grazing cattle, and forests of Ponderosa pine. Dozens of these pines were cut and seasoned, and then built into a fine home by the master craftsman Hornbek hired. Aside from the main house, Hornbek's homestead consisted of several outbuildings including a milk house, chicken house, and stables. Her improvements created an impressive house and ranch. Her teenage children undoubtedly helped with the hard work the homestead required.

Adeline Hornbek's homestead house is not the typical one-room cabin that most of us envision when conjuring up a picture of homestead life. Instead, it is a two-story, four-bedroom log house boasting nearly a dozen glass-paned windows. When completed in 1878, the house was the first in the valley to have more than one story. The interior was decorated with ornate Victorian style furnishings. Furnishing a homestead house in a fancy style was typical. Many settlers brought small organs, rugs, pictures, and perhaps a few pieces of good furniture to their frontier homes even when their "house" might have been nothing more than a small sod shanty.

Like many homesteaders, Hornbek needed a cash income. She found work in town at the Florissant Mercantile (the general store). It was one of the few jobs, other than teaching, where women could work outside the home. She became a prominent member of the growing community of Florissant, serving on the school board and hosting social gatherings in her home. As further evidence of her ambition and energy, it can be noted that by the time she filed the final homestead papers in 1885, she had increased the value of her property nearly five times.

At the age of 66, Hornbek married Frederick Sticksel, a German immigrant who is thought to have worked for her. They spent nearly five years together before Adeline Warfield Harker Hornbek Sticksel died of "paralysis" (probably a stroke) on June 27, 1905. She had demonstrated how a successful living could be earned through wise choices in selecting land and in improving that land with energy and hard work. It is an interesting testimony to Hornbek's independent spirit that her last two husbands moved into her already-established homes. She had enjoyed 27 busy years on her mountain valley ranch.

Although the Homestead Act was not originally intended to help women become a stronger economic force in this country, it did provide some women with land and farms of their own. There were a number of flaws in the Act and it never accomplished all that Congress intended. The Act did not ease overcrowding in the East. In fact, eastern population increased 400 percent between 1870 and 1910. Of homestead lands, only one out of nine acres ended up in the hands of those it was intended to help. The specification of granting land in 160 acre plots was not really useful in the West. Unlike the Midwest where there was sufficient rain and good soil, the West had a dry climate and less abundant and less fertile topsoil. Eking out an existence on 160 acres was very difficult. Many homesteaders failed. Nevertheless, the Homestead Act did act as a powerful force in populating the West, changing the shape and attitudes of our nation, and in some cases empowering women.

- From the Florissant Fossil Beds