

HOMESTEAD PROGRAM

HISTORY • CLASS 2-A

DATE

TOPIC -

OBJECTIVES

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Interactive timeline slideshow

RESOURCES

- <http://becker.mngenweb.net/land2.htm>
- <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/22/v22i03p227-248.pdf>
- <https://www.startribune.com/welcome-to-the-1860s-when-most-minnesotans-were-born-in-another-country/422124103/>
- <https://www.ereferencedesk.com/resources/state-history-timeline/minnesota.html>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why was the homestead act important to early pioneers?
- What kind of products did minnesotans export from early minnesota?
- Why did early minnesota need railroads?
- Where would you settle in Minnesota if you could pick anywhere?

RELATED EXHIBITS

- Railroad Museum
- Ojibwa Gallery
- Immigrant Waiting Room
- Logging Exhibit

INTRO

Minnesota used to belong to Native American tribes before the U.S. government forced them into reservations. Minnesota was then settled by white settlers who came from the east coast. Many of these settlers were from Norway or Sweden which explains why so many people have Scandinavian heritage. These settlers came to Minnesota to create a better life for themselves by claiming land for their families.

TIMELINE OF MINNESOTA SETTLEMENT

- Minnesota became a territory in 1849 and there was only 4000 people living here
- In 1854 settlers could settle on land that wasn't for sale as long as they signed a paper saying they would buy the land eventually
- Minnesota quickly attracted many settlers and became a state in 1858
- 1862 Homestead act created by Abe Lincoln gave people free land if they lived on it for 5 years and improved the land

EARLY PROBLEMS

- Minnesota grew from 350 people in 1840 to 40,000 in 1855 which was good, but to have that many people you have to figure out things like mail, stores, sewage (infrastructure)
- New pioneers struggled with how to market and transport products (timber, crops, fur) out of Minnesota this problem was eventually solved by railroads being built.
- The Panic of 1857 was the first large bank crisis in the U.S. and caused people to lose money and stopped the construction of railroads.

SCANDINAVIAN IMMIGRATION

Lack of employment opportunities and land ownership led to many Scandinavians coming to Minnesota for more opportunities. There were many factors that attracted Scandinavian immigrants to the Midwest including

- Similar climate
- Logging industry
- Homestead Act, free land

Once the Scandinavian community was established they brought over more families leading to the Scandinavian community becoming large in early Minnesota. In 1870 there were 50,000 Norwegians living in Minnesota by 1880 there were more than 120,000.

RAILROADS

Railroads at this time were a big deal and needed for moving goods and people. The first rails for the railroad started to be built in 1862 and by 1880 there was 3100 miles of rail. This large railroad system allowed settlers to move throughout Minnesota. The railroads were given the land for the railroads by the federal government.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The U.S. Government took advantage of Indian tribes to be able to provide land to people moving west. The U.S. government made false promises to native people in order for them to sign treaties. More of their land was taken when the Dawes Act of 1887 was passed which forced tribes to only live on a certain amount of land and allow the surplus land to be given to settlers. The Dawes act was meant to assimilate native americans to a eurocentric lifestyle but in reality led them to poverty.