

World War I and the Homestead Act of 1862:

When Farmers Fought and Soldiers Farmed for America's Homestead States

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Homestead National Monument of America

The idea that would become the Homestead Act of 1862—to make areas of the public domain available as “free land” for settlement by citizen farmers—was already emerging soon after the United States itself was born, perhaps best described by the image of Thomas Jefferson’s “yeoman farmer;” but the passage of a “free land” law like the Homestead Act was only made feasible by the Civil War. The secession of the Confederate South from the United States of America, and the subsequent removal from Congress of those Southern lawmakers who had routinely blocked “free land” bills whenever they had come up in the years preceding the South’s secession,¹ is what made it possible for the Republicans of 1862 to deliver on their 1860 party platform—in which they’d promised to fight for “free homesteads.”² The Homestead law was not just made possible by the war, however: It was also marketed as a military service benefit to the warriors fighting on behalf of the Union.

¹ Southern lawmakers generally opposed Homestead Act-like propositions in the years prior the passage of the 1862 Homestead Act because it was felt by many at the time that small, independent family farms provided an attractive alternative to the morally indefensible practice of human slavery. Those Southern lawmakers who opposed it worried that a homesteading law that gave away free land to small family farmers would encourage new states coming into the United States to enter the Union as “free states” rather than “slave states.” This would in turn weaken the South’s political position and perhaps even hasten the total abolishment of slavery. It is worth noting that 1862, the year of the Homestead Act, was in fact also the year that President Lincoln made his Emancipation Proclamation—which did not abolish slavery entirely, but did move the country one step closer to doing so. An excellent book to learn more about the political climate of the 1840s and 1850s leading up to the Civil War and the Homestead Act of 1862 is *The Nebraska-Kansas Act of 1854* from the University of Nebraska Press, edited by John R. Wunder and Joann M. Ross; but any academic work describing the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, or the “Bleeding Kansas” period following the Kansas-Nebraska Act, should give readers a good introduction to the political situation that helped to bring to life the Homestead Act in 1862.

² The House and Senate had, in fact, passed a Homestead Act in 1860, overcoming Southern opposition to the law. But Democratic President James Buchanan, at the urging of Southern lawmakers, vetoed it. To review the 1860 party platform of the Republican Party, see “National Republican Platform: Adopted by the National Republican

As far back as the times of ancient Rome, land has been used as an incentive or reward for military service. It could be argued that the feudal systems of Europe, Japan, and other regions were also based on the premise of military service in exchange for land, at least for the feudal elites. And certainly free land as a veterans's benefit has had a long tradition within the United States—military bounty land warrants were given out after a number of wars (including the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, and several Indian wars) as veterans's benefits prior to the American Civil War.³ The Homestead Act is largely what ended the practice of granting veterans military bounty land warrants in the United States; instead encouraging them to homestead. And, indeed, from the very beginning, the Homestead Act courted the Nation's fighting forces. As early as in the original legislation, soldiers and sailors were specifically exempted from the requirement that a single homesteader must be 21 years of age or older to file for a homestead claim.⁴ In subsequent alterations and amendments to the law, additional benefits would be made available to veterans and service members, allowing them to claim homestead tracts in less time and more easily than could others. As a result of these exemptions and benefits, many veterans of the Civil War and other wars participated in the Homestead Act, acquiring land on which to retire after their fighting was done. One of these "other wars," the subject of this paper, was "the War to End All Wars:" World War I.

Convention, Held in Chicago, May 17, 1860." Accessed 7 August 2018, <<https://www.loc.gov/resource/lprbcsms.scsms0716/>>.

³ For a more in-depth discussion of land allotments to the veterans of ancient Rome, see P. A. Brunt's 1962 paper "The Army and the Land in the Roman Revolution," from *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 52, Parts 1 and 2 (pp. 69-86), available through JSTOR at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/297878?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents>, accessed 31 October 2018. For an overview of U.S. military bounty land warrants, see the following high level introduction from FamilySearch <https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Military_Bounty_Land_Warrants>, accessed 31 October 2018.

⁴ The language in the 1862 legislation is that "no person who has served, or may hereafter serve, for a period of not less than fourteen days in the army or navy of the United States, either regular or volunteer, under the laws thereof, during the existence of an actual war, domestic or foreign, shall be deprived of the benefits of this act on account of not having attained the age of twenty-one years."

Because the Homestead Act was in effect from 1 January 1863 to 21 October 1986⁵—with its peak years in the first part of the Twentieth Century—it is perhaps not surprising that many “soldier-homesteaders” were involved in the First World War. Among these, not only were there the homesteaders who left their homesteads to fight in the war (the exact number of which has not yet been examined in detail), but there were also a number of soldiers who returned from Europe at the war’s resolution and decided to claim farms of their own—taking advantage of new homesteading benefits made available to them following the end of the war. These benefits will be discussed in more detail later on.

This paper is a preliminary attempt to explore the relationship between homesteading in the United States and the First World War. The purpose of this paper, then, is to ask what role homesteading played before, during, and after World War I—particularly in relation to a number of veterans benefits that were passed during and after the conflict. The federal government devoted a great deal of time and attention in making the Homestead Act more attractive to veterans for homesteading after the war. Why? And did it work? Was there any difference in the way that veteran and non-veteran homesteaders treated homesteading? It has been argued in relation to military bounty land warrants, and even ancient Roman military pension lands, that these lands might simply be resources given to them by land-rich states that the receiving veterans could in turn convert to cash. This certainly seems likely in the case of military bounty land warrants—these documents were transferable even before the land was claimed (i.e., they could be bought and sold as is), and as a result many of the people who claimed land with military warrants had never served in the military. They simply purchased the warrants from veterans, widows of veterans, or descendants, or from real estate venture capitalists who had earlier purchased said warrants. Was that the case with homesteading after

⁵ The Homestead Act of 1862 was repealed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (Pub.L. 94-579) in 1976, but by special provision was extended in the state of Alaska until 1986. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 can be accessed at <<https://www.blm.gov/or/regulations/files/FLPMA.pdf>>.

World War I? Did veterans simply claim the land in order to sell it? Or did veterans stay on the land? Did homesteading veterans during the “Great Plow-Up” years of the 1920s contribute in a meaningful way to the Dust Bowl years that were to come only a decade later? Not all of these questions will be answered in the course of this paper, but the paper will suggest possible avenues for further investigation. This paper’s primary premise is that the Homestead Act played a role in the way government thought about rewarding military service before, during, and after World War I, and that this in turn impacted the homesteading movement during the post-war years.

The time period discussed in this paper saw the end of the peak years of homesteading in the United States of America, with a steady decline in homestead entries beginning in 1923 before falling off sharply in the decade of the 1930s (during the Dust Bowl and Depression Era years).⁶ There appears to be a spike in entries immediately following the war, in 1920 and 1921 in particular—with both years having more homesteaders than did 1919. Were these WWI veterans taking advantage of the new benefits afforded to them by Congress? In terms of the narrative structure of the paper, it will begin with a very broad overview of the First World War, America’s role in that conflict, the homesteading boom that occurred in the United States before the War, and the economics of the time. Attention is then given to several case studies, highlighting the experiences of individual homesteaders who left their homesteads to fight on behalf of their Nation. The paper next turns to homesteading in the post-war years, how Congress hoped to use homesteading as a means of repatriating soldiers, and how successful post-war homesteaders were in their efforts to stake a claim. This includes an examination of a number of individual post-war homesteaders, before concluding with some general takeaways.

⁶ It has been argued that the true “end” of widespread homesteading in the United States was the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. But there were a few exceptions to this supposed death knell, including homesteading in Alaska and post-World War II homesteading—the latter of which has been examined in detail in Brian Cannon’s excellent book, *Reopening the Frontier: Homesteading in the Modern West* (2009).

U.S. Involvement in World War I

World War I began in Europe, following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria during a visit to Sarajevo (in present day Bosnia and Herzegovina) on 28 June 1914. Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and shortly after his assassination Austria-Hungary declared war on the Kingdom of Serbia (which was believed, correctly, to have played a role in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand). In response to Austria-Hungary's declaration of war, Russia began to mobilize its army in defense of Serbia, which was its ally. This set off a chain reaction of diplomatic and military activity that resulted in a rush of war declarations in August 1914.⁷ In short order, many nations were involved in the fighting. The United States, however, was not militarily engaged in the war until 1917.

America's public position for most of the war was that the conflict was a European conflict, and should therefore be dealt with by the nations of Europe. After war erupted, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson went before the American people to declare America's position as a neutral power, stating that "[t]he United States must be neutral in fact, as well as in name, during these days that are to try men's souls."⁸ And this remained the official stance of the United States for the majority of the war. It has been argued that U.S. political and economic sympathies were primarily aligned to the Allied cause, and there were certainly occasions where America's commitment to neutrality was tested—such as with the

⁷ Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914; Germany declared war on France on 3 August 1914; Germany declared war on and invaded Belgium on 4 August 1914; in response to Germany's invasion of Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914; Montenegro declared war on Austria-Hungary on 5 August 1914; Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia on 6 August 1914; Serbia declared war on Germany on 6 August 1914; France declared war on Austria-Hungary on 11 August 1914; the United Kingdom declared war on Austria-Hungary on 12 August 2018; Austria-Hungary declared war on Belgium on 22 August 2018; and Japan declared war on Germany on 23 August 2018. Between the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the end of the war in 1918, more than 20 countries made formal declarations of war against other countries, and many of these original declarations of war have been digitized and can be accessed through the Library of Congress: <<https://www.loc.gov/law/help/digitized-books/world-war-i-declarations/foreign.php>>.

⁸ Woodrow Wilson. 1914. *Message to Congress*, 63rd Cong., 2d Sess., Senate Doc. No. 566:3-4. Accessed 8 August 2018 and available at <https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/President_Wilson's_Declaration_of_Neutrality>.

reporting of German atrocities in Belgium in 1914, or with the sinking of the *RMS Lusitania* on 7 May 1915 (which killed nearly 2,000 passengers, including 128 Americans).⁹ But it wasn't until February 1917—when Germany authorized the continuation of unrestricted submarine warfare (1 February), and the British shared with the United States a secret telegram that they had intercepted from Germany to Mexico that invited Mexico to attack the United States with German backing (24 February)—that the Wilson administration began to feel that America's involvement in the war was necessary. After the secret "Zimmermann Telegram" inviting Mexican aggression hit American newspapers on the first of March, public sentiment for the war became enormous, and the United States officially declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917.¹⁰

The United States was only involved in World War I as a combatant for a little over a year and a half, but in that short time mobilized 4,734,991 service members.¹¹ To give some context to this number, when America entered the war in April 1917, the U.S. Army only had about 200,000 service members.¹² The massive military mobilization of the United States had a tremendous impact on the economy at large, on communities across the country, and on numerous families and individuals. With regards to its economic consequences, economist Hugh Rockoff of Rutgers University has published an incisive paper exploring the effects of the war on the U.S. economy. As he points out in his work, even though America was only involved in the war for "nineteen months, from April 1917 to November 1918, the mobilization of the economy was extraordinary."¹³ American exports to Europe "rose from

⁹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. "Lusitania." Accessed 8 August 2018, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lusitania-British-ship>>.

¹⁰ *National Archives*. "The Zimmermann Telegram." Accessed 14 August 2018, <<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/zimmermann>>.

¹¹ VA.gov. "America's War" Fact Sheet. *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Office of Public Affairs*. Accessed 13 August 2018, <https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf>

¹² Hugh Rockoff. "U.S. Economy in World War I." *Economic History Association*. Accessed 9 August 2018, <<http://eh.net/encyclopedia/u-s-economy-in-world-war-i/>>

¹³ *Ibid.*

CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED

Fast Day Message

Day Letter

Night Message

Night Letter

Patrons should mark an X opposite the class of service desired; OTHERWISE THE TELEGRAM WILL BE TRANSMITTED AS A FAST DAY MESSAGE.

WESTERN UNION

TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

Receiver No. **MC**

Check **5500**

Time Filed

Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

GERMAN LEGATION

MEXICO CITY

via Galveston

JAN 18 1917

130	13042	13401	8501	115	3528	416	17214	6491	11310
18147	18222	21560	10247	11518	23677	13805	3494	14936	
98092	5905	11311	10392	10371	0302	21290	5161	39695	
23571	17504	11269	18276	18101	0317	0228	17694	4473	
22284	22200	19452	21589	67893	5569	13918	8958	12137	
1333	4725	4458	5905	17166	13851	4458	17149	14471	6708
13850	12224	6929	14991	7382	15857	67893	14218	36477	
5870	17553	67893	5870	5454	16102	15217	22801	17138	
21001	17388	7446	23638	18222	6719	14331	15021	23845	
3156	23552	22096	21604	4797	9497	22464	20855	4377	
23610	18140	22260	5905	13347	20420	39689	13732	20667	
6929	5275	18507	52262	1340	22049	13339	11265	22295	
10439	14814	4178	6992	8784	7632	7357	6926	52262	11267
21100	21272	9346	9559	22464	15874	18502	18500	15857	
2188	5376	7381	98092	16127	13486	9350	9220	76036	14219
5144	2831	17920	11347	17142	11264	7667	7762	15099	9110
10482	97556	3569	3670						

BEPNSTOPFF.

Charge German Embassy.

The encrypted Zimmermann Telegram inviting Mexico to attack the United States with Germany's backing, as received by the German Ambassador to Mexico; 1/16/1917; 862.20212 / 57 through 862.20212 / 311; Central Decimal Files, 1910 - 1963; General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. [Online Version, <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/zimmermann-telegram-as-received>, 9 August 2018]

\$1.479 billion dollars in 1913 to \$4.062 billion in 1917,” and a lot of these exports were agricultural products, especially food grains.¹⁴ There was also a very strong production economy at this time, so that “by the end of the war the United States was beginning to achieve the ‘production miracle’ that occurred in World War II.”¹⁵ And even though, as noted above, more than 4.5 million Americans were mobilized into the armed forces, the domestic labor force in the United States still grew.¹⁶ This trend would not be reflected, however, in agriculture. As discussed below, there was an *agricultural* labor shortage that would not be corrected until well after the end of the war.

Ultimately, the cost of the war for the United States is estimated to have been as high as thirty-two billion dollars—to say nothing of the more than 50,000 Americans who lost their lives in the fighting, the more than 60,000 Americans who were killed by other causes (primarily disease, with perhaps as many as two-thirds of the 60,000 killed by the 1918 influenza pandemic, which also affected many civilians, including homesteaders), or the more than 200,000 who were wounded in the war. But the economic legacy the end of the war secured for the United States helped to generate America’s financial high tide in the 1920s, established New York as the center of the world capital market in place of London, transformed the U.S. from a debtor nation to a creditor nation, and stood up many of the systems and ideas that the nation would later call upon in combatting the challenges of the Great Depression and World War II (such as the creation of federal agencies to help improve the economy, the thought to base the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps off World War I-style military training, and the process of establishing a wartime economy).¹⁷

On America’s homesteads, the war also had its impacts.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Homesteading in the 1910s

People commonly associate homesteading and the Homestead Act with the 19th century, imagining pioneers, covered wagons, and sod houses. But actually, more homesteads were claimed between 1900 and 1920 than all of the rest of the law's 123-year history, including the nearly forty years between 1863 and 1899. According to the Bureau of Land Management, more than 70 percent of all successful homesteading was done in the 20th century.¹⁸ At the start of the 20th century, 560 million acres of the public domain were still opened to settlement in the contiguous United States,¹⁹ and from "1904 up to the passage of the Stockraising Act in 1916,²⁰ more than 67 million acres of [this] land were claimed by over 400 thousand homesteaders."²¹ There were a number of reasons for this homesteading boom, not least among them the passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act in 1909 (which granted up to 320 acres of land in Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and Arizona, effectively doubling the amount of land a person could homestead in these states and territories)²² and the passage of the Three-Year Homestead Act in 1912 (which allowed homesteaders to make final applications for the patents to their land after three years of residency, rather than five years of residency). The Enlarged Homestead Act, in particular, greatly stimulated homesteading in Montana: Greg Bradsher writes in an article in the Winter 2012 issue of *Prologue* that, in Montana, "it pushed the

¹⁸ Bureau of Land Management. *Homesteads*. 1962. Available online at <<https://books.google.com/books?id=HEGNxfGJjaoC>>.

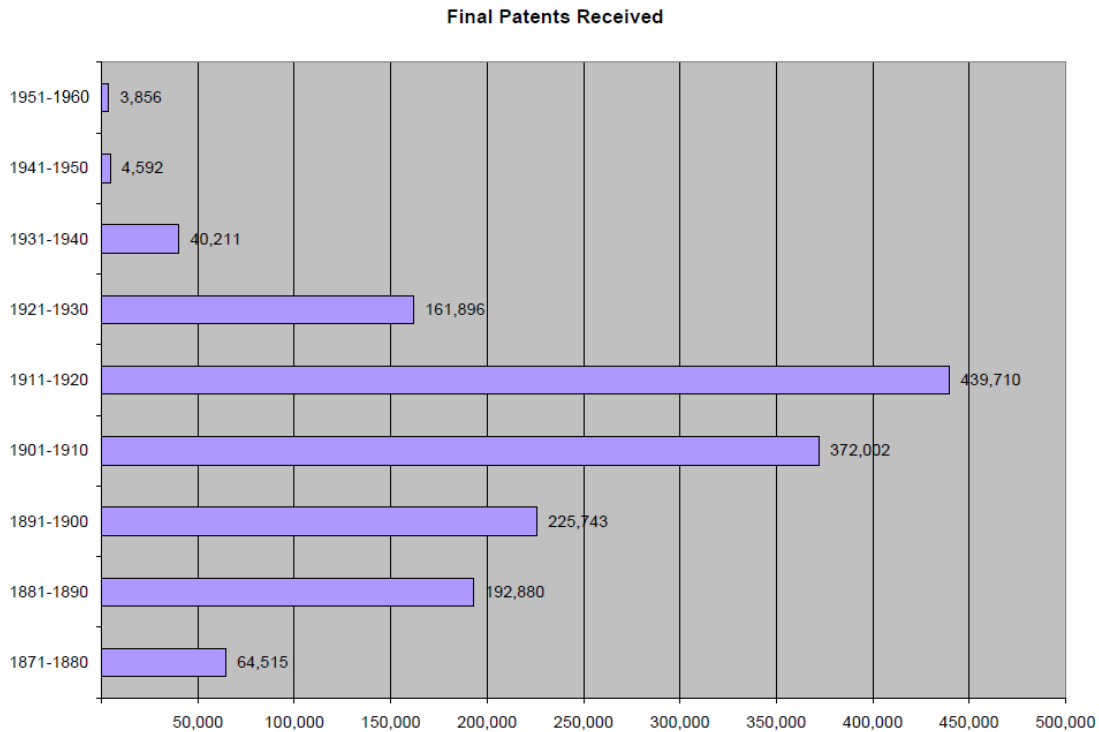
¹⁹ Brian Q. Cannon. *Reopening the Frontier: Homesteading in the Modern West*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009. Page 1.

²⁰ This is a reference to the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916, which allowed homesteaders to claim up to 640 acres of public land for ranching, rather than for farming.

²¹ Bureau of Land Management. *The Homestead Act: A Brief Sketch in United States History*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962. Page 32. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=B7xLAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>, accessed 14 August 2018.

²² You can review this law at <<https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/60th-congress/session-2/c60s2ch160.pdf>>, accessed 14 August 2018.

number of [homestead] entries from 7,500 in 1909 to nearly 22,000 the following year.”²³ The end result of the liberalization of homesteading laws and shifts towards dryland farming during this period was that between 1900 and 1920 there were more homesteaders homesteading in America than ever before or after.



The number of patents issued by decade from 1871 to 1960, accessed from Homestead National Monument of America’s online web documents, and compiled from data in the Bureau of Land Management’s 1962 *Homesteads* [Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=HEGNxfGJjaoC>, accessed 14 August 2018]

But not only was more farmland being made available and advertised for homesteading—under the new laws that made it faster and easier to acquire a homestead—that farmland was itself becoming more profitable. And once war erupted in Europe in 1914, farmers in the United States stood to make

²³ Greg Bradsher. “How the West Was Settled: The 150-Year-Old Homestead Act Lured Americans Looking for a New Life and New Opportunities.” *Prologue*: Winter, 2012. Page 35.

significant financial gains from the fighting going on across the Atlantic. In *The Worst Hard Time*, Timothy Egan wrote that:

[N]o group of people took a more dramatic leap in lifestyle or prosperity, in such a short time, than wheat farmers on the Great Plains. In less than ten years, they went from subsistence living to small business-class wealth, from working a few hard acres with horses and hand tools to being masters of wheat estates, directing harvests with wondrous new machines, at a profit margin in some cases that was ten times the cost of production. In 1910, the price of wheat stood at eighty cents a bushel, good enough for anyone who had outwitted a few dry years to make enough money to get through another year and even put something away. Five years later, with the world grain supplies pinched by the Great War, the price had more than doubled. Farmers increased production by 50 percent. When the Turkish navy blocked the Dardenelles, they did a favor for dryland wheat farmers that no one could have imagined. Europe had relied on Russia for export grain. With Russian shipments blocked, the United States stepped in, and issued a proclamation to the plains: plant more wheat to win the war. And for the first time, the government guaranteed the price, at two dollars a bushel, through the war, backed by the wartime food administrator, a multimillionaire public servant named Herbert Hoover. Wheat was no longer a staple of a small family but a commodity with a price guarantee and a global market.²⁴

During the war, many small wheat farmers were making more money than the factory workers on Ford assembly lines (and about eight times more at that).²⁵ Wealthier farmers, such as Kansas farmer Ida Watkins with her 2,000 acres of wheat, could do even better. Watkins bragged that she had made a profit of \$75,000 one year, which was “bigger than the salary of any baseball player but Babe Ruth, and more money than the president of the United States made.”²⁶ The reason that this is in Egan’s award-winning book on the Dust Bowl is, of course, because this ramped-up farming—continued well after the

²⁴ Timothy Egan. *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*. New York: First Mariner Books, 2006. Pages 42-43.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

end of the war—is what led in part to that great environmental catastrophe that is the subject of his book. Indeed, one of the questions raised by this paper is what role did veterans play in the “Plow-Up” of the 1920s that led in part to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s? Nevertheless, with the future unknown, for the period of the war itself and in the years that shortly followed it seemed like a very good time to homestead. So a lot of people did just that. And once America became involved in the war as a combatant, a lot of homesteaders fought for their country.



Changes to the Homestead Act and new land openings frequently made front-page news in the 1910s. A search of the Library of Congress’s “Chronicling America” database from 1912 to 1915 for “homestead act” shows 341 front page mentions in this three-year period alone. In the above 1912 issue of *The Ekalaka Eagle*, nearly the entire front page features homesteading news. Montana, where the *Eagle* was published, was the nation’s most homesteaded state—with more homesteaders there than any other state in the Union. Source: *The Ekalaka eagle*. (Ekalaka, Mont.), 10 May 1912. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85053090/1912-05-10/ed-1/seq-1/>>

Homesteaders at War

Many young men in America, including homesteaders (and the fighting age children of homesteaders), were drafted into World War I. This allowed the United States to produce an enormous fighting force in short order, but it also resulted in an agricultural labor shortage that at least one newspaper described as a “menace to [the] Nation.”²⁷ Advertisements went into newspapers exhorting readers to serve the nation by growing food,²⁸ asking citizens to limit their use of certain foods such as meat or wheat on certain days of the week, or describing in detail the Farm Service Division of the U.S. Department of Labor’s newly created Employment Service—and then encouraging workers to participate in it “to assist the government to place properly every man necessary to bring about maximum production.”²⁹ One paper even suggested that it “takes 6 to 8 men to back up one soldier on the firing line,” and that by being part of the “Unseen Army” of American farm labor, workers back home could fight with the soldiers on the front who “rely on YOU to fill the gaps in this great agricultural army.”³⁰ One quite interesting way in which the Nation combatted the labor shortage brought on by the drafting of homesteaders and other farmers and farmhands was through the creation of the “Woman’s Land Army of America,” an organization “established by a consortium of women’s organizations—including gardening clubs, suffrage societies, women’s colleges, civic groups, and the YWCA.”³¹ Women from all walks of life were recruited into the Woman’s Land Army as “farmerettes” to fill gaps in the labor force, and they numbered in the thousands, serving dozens of states. Many farmers

²⁷ *The Sun*. (New York [N.Y.]), 03 Feb. 1918. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030431/1918-02-03/ed-1/seq-62/>>

²⁸ *The Era-leader*. (Franklinton, La.), 26 April 1917. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88064305/1917-04-26/ed-1/seq-6/>>

²⁹ *The Alliance herald*. (Alliance, Box Butte County, Neb.), 08 Aug. 1918. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/2010270501/1918-08-08/ed-1/seq-4/>>

³⁰ *Goodwin's weekly: a thinking paper for thinking people*. (Salt Lake City, Utah), 14 Sept. 1918. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/2010218519/1918-09-14/ed-1/seq-16/>>

³¹ Elaine F. Weiss. "Before Rosie the Riveter, Farmerettes Went to Work." *Smithsonian*. 28 May 2009.

Women in Wartime



Ready for any task



Patriotic Pets



Oiling the Windmill



Gang-plow ready for action



Mrs. L. A. Dermody

Woman Land Army Invasion Started

Mrs. L. A. Dermody First Omaha Farmerette to Enlist Her Land and Herself to Win the War—Good for Complexion

INTRODUCING the war's latest feminine product—the farmerette. She is Mrs. L. A. Dermody, the first president Omaha woman who has enlisted her land and herself to help win the war. When the United States broke with Germany a year ago, Mrs. Dermody, who is the wife of one of Omaha's leading surgeons, had a vision of the day when her husband would leave her for his part in the war. How could she do her share? She could not go with him. Such is war's fate for the doctor's wife. Since she had once been a rural school teacher, Mrs. Dermody knew something about "the cows and chickens" and she decided that "down on the farm" she could do her patriotic bit. So the handsome Dermody home on Duane was disposed of and a big shack exchanged for 240 acres near Berens, and the lady of the house donned her rusty farmerette and today she can put her hand on her heart and say "I can do every known farm chore." The great that this is no little feat is here in black and white. It is the picture story of a farmerette's day. "I simply love it all," declares the lady farmer. "If I can sneak up on those adorable little white pigs, I'll show you one of them." The photographer caught her "smiling up." Perhaps the most unusual thing the pretty farmerette includes in her day's work is oiling the windmill. Right up the dizzy heights she climbs. "I'll bet there isn't another woman in Nebraska who would do that," exclaimed one admiring "masc man" who happened along. These two gray noses up in the ocean there on the grids of Mrs. Dermody's life. She went to the stack yards and bid for them in public auction, had them delivered to her home.

Urge Gardening and Preserving

Federal Food Agent Talks on Importance of Two Conservation Means

GARDENING and food preservation are important phases of conservation that are being emphasized in the district meetings and extension schools conducted by Miss Helen E. Foxworth, federal food agent. Reports are coming in from the various districts of the city above excellent work on the part of the black belt. From George Chapman—did you have been made at the success of conservation. In the woman who is successful with her first attempt at beekeeping.



Failing the cow

Red Cross Workers Tell Best Stories to Gabby Detayls

Women farmers played a role on the home front during World War I, keeping agricultural production going in much the same way "Rosie the Riveter" women would keep industrial production going during World War II. Picture from Omaha Daily Bee. (Omaha [Neb.]), 05 May 1918. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1918-05-05/ed-1/seq-17/>>

came to depend on these women while their sons and farmhands were away, sometimes overcoming long-standing prejudices against women in the process.³²

But while keeping farming productive at home was an enormous domestic challenge, even with the profits to be made on wheat and other agricultural products, the soldiers on the front were focused more on the day-to-day chore of simply staying alive. Some of these soldiers were the sons of homesteaders (which of course led in part to the farm labor shortage)³³, and some of the soldiers were homesteaders themselves. And while many of these homesteader-soldiers were able to come home after the war to continue work on their family farms, others would never see their fields again.

Ezra Sweet was the son of homesteaders. He was born to Amos and Mary Sweet in Applegate, Michigan on 1 November 1892, and his family moved to New Mexico when he was young in order to homestead (he is located in Michigan at age 7 by the 1910 census, and in New Mexico at age 17 by the 1920 census).³⁴ On his draft registration card, he describes himself as a tall and slender Caucasian man, with blue eyes and light brown hair.³⁵ He enlisted on 21 May 1918, and during his time in the military, he

³² One such anecdote of a farmer overcoming his prejudices and coming to rely on the help of these women farmers is recounted in *The Sun*. (New York [N.Y.]), 14 April 1918. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030431/1918-04-14/ed-1/seq-64/>>. By the end of the article, the farmer is specifically requesting women for farm help and “protest[ing] against our sending boys.”

³³ The agricultural labor shortage would continue even after the war was over, as many of these sons of homesteaders resettled in cities instead of returning home to the farm after the fighting. Farmers would eventually turn to increased mechanization to solve the problem; with, for example, the number of farmers reporting tractor ownership across the Nation in 1920 compared to 1950 being a difference of around 5% reporting tractor ownership in 1920 to around 45% reporting tractor ownership thirty years later. For a discussion on the changes in agriculture from 1900 to 1950, see <<https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/41667073v5p6ch4.pdf>>, accessed 1 November 2018.

³⁴ Amos Sweet took 320 acres of land under the Enlarged Homestead Act in 1915 <see <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=498809&docClass=SER&sid=ylosopftw.ysy>>, and an additional 320 acres under the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916 in 1922 <see <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=841106&docClass=SER&sid=ylosopftw.ysy>>.

³⁵ Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

served as a 2nd Class Fireman on the U.S. Naval Reserve Force.³⁶ Surviving the war, he married a woman named Elmira Page who died young, leaving him a single father to one daughter, and possibly a son.³⁷ Ezra also died young, however, when he was murdered on 18 May 1924, with his cause of death listed as “two gunshot wounds, from a gun, or rifle in the hands of, and fired by William L. Nail.”³⁸ Ezra’s children were living with his father, their grandfather, in the 1930 census.

Another homesteader-turned-soldier was Grover Cleveland Baird. Born on 12 March 1887 to a homesteading family near Crawford, Nebraska, Grover’s father, George Baird, took 159.84 acres under the Homestead Act in 1892.³⁹ According to the land entry case file, the 1892 Baird farm consisted of a 24x26-foot frame house, a stable, a hen house, a corn crib, and a well, with 100 acres of land broken for farming and 50 acres fenced.⁴⁰ Again, going off the land entry case file, we know that in 1892 Grover had five siblings. As an adult, Grover homesteaded himself, taking 320 acres of land under the Enlarged Homestead Act by crossing the Nebraska border into Wyoming in 1913.⁴¹ After the war, in 1923, he’d

³⁶ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: *Applications for Headstones for U.S. Military Veterans, 1925-1941*. Microfilm publication M1916, 134 rolls. ARC ID: 596118. Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Record Group 92. National Archives at Washington, D.C.

³⁷ Ezra is listed as the father of Julia Sweet in her death certificate, and findagrave.com suggests that Ralph “Junior” Sweet was his child as well. Both Julia and Junior are living with Amos (their grandfather) after Ezra’s death, per the 1930 census. For Julia, see: Ancestry.com. *Texas, Death Certificates, 1903-1982* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013. Original data: Texas Department of State Health Services. *Texas Death Certificates, 1903–1982*. Austin, Texas, USA. For Junior, see:
<<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/129480816/ralph-lee-sweet>>.

³⁸ Ancestry.com. *Arizona, County Coroner and Death Records, 1881-1971* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016. Original data: County Coroner Records. Arizona History and Archives Division, Phoenix, Arizona. County Death Records. Arizona History and Archives Division, Phoenix, Arizona.

³⁹ See George Baird’s homestead claim at
<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=NE0730__411&docClass=STA&sid=p12boxkb.2rh>.

⁴⁰ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Homestead Records, 1863-1908* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014. Original data: *Land Entry Case Files: Homestead Final Certificates*. Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management. The National Archives at Washington, D.C.

⁴¹ See Grover C. Baird’s homestead claim at
<<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=316090&docClass=SER&sid=3tzfratj.pnd>>.

increase his holdings by another 160 acres under the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916.⁴² Like Ezra Sweet, Grover C. Baird was self-described as tall and slender, but with grey eyes and brown hair.⁴³

During the war, Grover was a Private with the U.S. Army (serial number 3143205), and after the war he farmed.⁴⁴ He died on 14 May 1969, at 82 years old.⁴⁵

The last example we look at in this paper is Loyd W. Fouts, who, unlike Ezra and Grover, was not able to return home at the end of the fighting. Loyd (also spelled “Lloyd” in some records) was born in Missouri in 1896, married a woman named Lewella, and started a 640-acre homestead with her in Wyoming under the 1916 Stock Raising Homestead Act. He was then drafted into the war. On his 1917 draft card, he describes himself as a married man of 21 years age who was 5’10” tall with a medium build, grey eyes, and dark brown hair.⁴⁶ He joined the Company “O” 22nd Engineers as a Private and a Bugler,⁴⁷ and then died of an illness during the war.⁴⁸ His wife, Lewella, would go on to finish the homestead claim, receiving patent to the land in 1922.⁴⁹

⁴² See Baird’s Stock Raising Claim at <<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=894443&docClass=SER&sid=3tzfratj.pnd>>

⁴³ Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

⁴⁴ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Army Transport Service, Passenger Lists, 1910-1939* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016. Original data: *Lists of Incoming Passengers, 1917-1938*. Textual records. 360 Boxes. NAI: 6234465. Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774-1985, Record Group 92. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland. *Lists of Outgoing Passengers, 1917-1938*. Textual records. 255 Boxes. NAI: 6234477. Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774-1985, Record Group 92. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁵ His gravestone can be viewed at www.findagrave.com, accessed 16 August 2018, <<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/100682513/grover-cleveland-baird>>.

⁴⁶ Fold3.com, *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. NARA catalog ID: <<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/572850>>. Accessed from Fold3.com on 3 October 2018.

⁴⁷ Fold3.com, *Lists of Incoming Passengers, 1917-1938; Lists of Outgoing Passengers, 1917-1938*, Record Group 92, accessed from Fold3.com on 3 October 2018.

⁴⁸ See <[http://warmemorial.us/mediawiki3/index.php?title=LLOYD_W._FOUTS_-_WY_\(Cactus\)_WWI](http://warmemorial.us/mediawiki3/index.php?title=LLOYD_W._FOUTS_-_WY_(Cactus)_WWI)>, accessed 3 October 2018.

⁴⁹ See the Fouts homestead at <<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=852604&docClass=SER&sid=hul0jooc.abz#patentDetailsTabIndex=0>>, accessed 3 October 2018.

But although there were many like these men who homesteaded, or came from homesteading families, and fought in the war, there were many others who returned from war to homestead for the first time, taking advantage of new laws that made it easier for them to try their hand at farming—which, as described above, could be seen by some as a lucrative trade.

Turning Swords into Plowshares: Homesteading after the War

Even before World War I had ended, the U.S. government began planning for the post-war demobilization of America's armed forces. As discussed earlier, the U.S. military had increased in size by approximately 2,250% when mobilizing, from the start of America's involvement in the war in April 1917 to the end of the fighting in November 1918. There were concerns that the demobilization of this huge fighting force would be too rapid, and that it would do serious harm to the economy. In his 1964 paper on one of several post-war soldier resettlement plans being considered at the time, Bill G. Reid notes how officials at "both the Labor and Interior departments gloomily predicted a vast labor surplus in the postwar period" as these discharged soldiers rejoined the workforce.⁵⁰ One of the most frequent, and seemingly most popular, proposals for simultaneously dealing with this planned labor surplus and a predicted world agricultural shortage—a prediction based largely on the idea that there would be a huge demand for agricultural products in post-war Europe, where domestic agricultural production had been so badly interrupted by the fighting—was the suggestion that returning veterans should be given homesteads to farm. In fact, a number of "soldier settlement" proposals were put forth in 1918 and 1919, with the majority (all but one of them) advocating the creation of multiple farm settlements or "colonies" of soldiers-turned-farmers (where there would be multiple veterans working side-by-side as

⁵⁰ Bill G. Reid. "Franklin K. Lane's Idea for Veterans' Colonization, 1918-1921." *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol 33, No. 4 (Nov., 1964), pp. 447.

neighbors) over having soldiers settle as individuals throughout the country (that is, mixed in with non-veteran neighbors, which would actually be the settlement pattern that predominately occurred).⁵¹ The most public of these proposals was Secretary of the Interior Franklin Knight Lane's, often called the "Interior Plan" or the "Lane Plan."

Secretary Lane's plan proposed the organized settlement of veterans on reclaimed lands with federal and state support made available to them. The thought was that because as many as 1.5 million of the 4.5 million soldiers mobilized for World War I were from agricultural or farm backgrounds, they



Numerous plans were advocated for the resettlement of returning veterans on homesteads during the immediate post-war years. Headline 1 is from *Newark post*. (Newark, Del.), 27 Nov. 1918. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88053005/1918-11-27/ed-1/seq-2/>> Headline 2 (lower-left) is from *The Monroe journal*. [volume] (Monroe, N.C.), 15 Nov. 1918. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn91068476/1918-11-15/ed-1/seq-3/>>. Headline 3 (lower-right) is from *Omaha daily bee*. (Omaha [Neb.]), 22 April 1919. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1919-04-22/ed-1/seq-11/>>.

might be able to make a success of a farm.⁵² Indeed, as Harry Schwartz reports, in referencing a 1919 issue of the *Journal of Farm Economics*, the farm labor shortage was "caused largely by the departure of about 2,500,000 family and hired farm workers [... of whom] about 1,000,000 joined the armed forces

⁵¹ Ibid., 448.

⁵² Ibid., 454.

and over 1,500,000 went into non-farm work.”⁵³ And although it was perhaps hoped by some early planners of the demobilization process that most of these men would return to the communities they’d come from, resolving the farm labor shortages that had been reported all throughout the war, not all of them did return to their rural communities after the fighting had ended.⁵⁴ In fact, many of them resettled in cities. So if they were not to return to the farm to work for their fathers or former employers once exposed to high-paying jobs and the overall perceived quality of life in the cities, perhaps they’d return to the land (and thereby ensure that the U.S. was able to keep up with the country’s, and world’s, agricultural demands) if they were given a farm of their own? Along this train of thought, following the war, at least for the period of 1918 to 1921, veterans’ colonization plans received a great deal of attention from Congress.⁵⁵ The Lane Plan, which among these soldier settlement plans was the most popular, was, however, never actually enacted into law. “Some six states experimented with planned settlement during the 1920s and the Veterans’ Bureau attempted the colonization of disabled ex-soldiers on Minnesota cutover lands in the same period”⁵⁶ but “these experiments failed miserably because of the agricultural recession of the 1920s and other factors,” not least of which was the

⁵³ Harry Schwartz, “Farm Labor Adjustments After World War I,” *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Proceedings Number (Feb., 1943), pp. 269.

⁵⁴ The farm labor shortage actually intensified after the war as continued industrial prosperity attracted laborers to cities. In the end, it was the increasing mechanization of agriculture that resolved the crisis, not the return of the farmhands. On 1 January 1921 “the number of tractors on farms was almost 250 percent the number on farms on January 1, 1919” according to Harry Schwartz in “Farm Labor Adjustments After World War I;” and by 1944 when the United States Department of Agriculture was estimating the amount of man-hours in field operations tractors had saved, they found that tractors had saved 1.7 billion man-hours of labor (between work in the field and caring for draft animals), which “represented about 8 percent of the total agricultural labor requirements in 1944, and translates into about [850,000] workers.” See Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode’s “Reshaping the Landscape: The Impact and Diffusion of the Tractor in American Agriculture, 1910-1960” in *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (September 2001), page 665 for quote and discussion. Available online at <http://old.econ.ucdavis.edu/faculty/alolmstead/Recent_Publications/Reshaping_the_Landscape.pdf>, accessed 4 October 2018.

⁵⁵ Reid, 457.

⁵⁶ For an examination of the 1920s disabled veterans’ colonies in Minnesota see Bill G. Reid’s “Colonies for Disabled Veterans in Minnesota” printed in *Minnesota History’s* Summer 1965 publication, and available online at <<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/39/v39i06p241-251.pdf>>, accessed 3 October 2018.

“determined opposition of commercial farmers.”⁵⁷ Soldier settlement plans would come up again, later in the 1920s under Hugh MacRae and Elwood Mead for the South; during the New Deal era; and during World War II, when Harold Ickes proposed one; but, they weren’t to be the answer for post-World War I

EFFECT OF PEACE ON FARM PRODUCTION

Assistant Secretary Ousley Says City People Must Help in 1919

Clarence Ousley, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, in an address before the New York Humanitarian Society said in discussing agriculture in the reconstruction period:

“Now peace appears to be at hand, but the immediate effect perhaps will be to increase the de-

city. Possibly high prices for food may cause a reversal of the tide of movement and city people will seek the country for its profits as heretofore country people have sought the city for the exceptional and spectacular profits and the luxurious life that the cities offer.

No Food Without Effort

Even after the war, there was still a perception that agricultural production in America might not be able to keep up with agricultural demand, particularly as many soldiers who had been farmers resettled in cities instead of returning to the farm. Without hindsight’s clear view of what was to come in the years ahead, there was a belief at the time was that the nations of the world would look to the United States to feed them in the post-war peace years, and that more farmers and more farm labor would be needed to meet the demand and to grow the economy. It is instructive in how difficult it is to predict the future, for example, to consider that in the article above Clarence Ousley, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture at the time, predicts very incorrectly that “high prices for food may cause a reversal of the tide of movement and city people will seek the country for its profits as heretofore country people have sought the city for the exceptional and spectacular profits and the luxurious life that the cities offer.” *Newark post*. (Newark, Del.), 27 Nov. 1918. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88053005/1918-11-27/ed-1/seq-2/>>

agricultural resettlement. Of those that were attempted experimentally, Brian Cannon reports in

Reopening the Frontier: Homesteading the Modern West that:

Despite the success stories, barely 60 percent of the 1,311 homesteaders on reclamation projects during the interwar years “proved up” by complying with the federal homestead law and thereby obtained title to the farms. Of those who did prove up, 75 percent (or about 45 percent of all 1,311 original claimants) retained their farms

⁵⁷ Ibid., 459.

until 1944—an impressive rate considering the economic volatility of the 1920s and 1930s. However, nearly half (46 percent) of those who had gained title to their homesteads no longer farmed the land themselves by 1944. The homesteaders were more likely to continue farming on projects that were more fertile: on the highly productive Klamath Project [on the Oregon-California state lines], 65 percent of the homesteaders who had proved up continued to farm their land in 1944, whereas on the North Platte Project [in Wyoming], only 19 percent still did so.⁵⁸

And while lessons would be learned from the problems uncovered by post-WWI soldier settlement projects (a fact-finding report put before Congress in 1925 suggested that success rates would be higher if loans were approved for and agricultural advisors assigned to settlers—a suggestion that was rejected),⁵⁹ and applied when the experiment was tried again following the end of WWII, many of the soldiers who actually homesteaded following WWI's conclusion ended up doing so on their own terms—with the benefit of a number of legal privileges that actually did get signed into law.

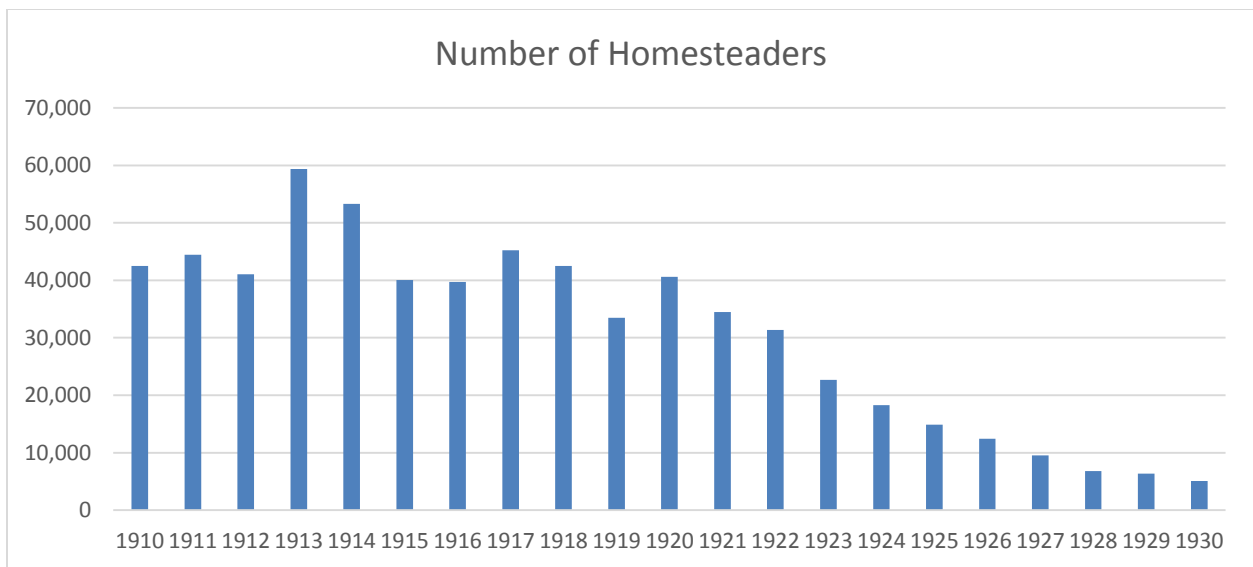
Before examining the laws that were passed, let us take a moment to consider some numbers. In 1919, a year after the war had ended, more than 33,000 Americans received patents (or legal title to the land) to their homesteads. In 1920, there were more than 40,000 new homesteads in private hands. After that, the rate of new homesteads claimed began to decline, with just over 34,000 homesteads in 1921, and 31,000 homesteads in 1922. It drops to around 22,500 in 1923 and falls rapidly from there (getting to fewer than 10,000 in 1927).⁶⁰ One wonders how many of the homesteaders in the spike years of 1920 and 1921 were World War I veterans? Or, for that matter, how many veterans homesteaded in 1922, before the big drop in homestead recipients? This paper contends that the otherwise unexplained

⁵⁸ Brian Q. Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier: Homesteading in the Modern West*, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009, page 13. The first chapter in Cannon's book, particularly from pages 11 to 17, describes well the development of the Lane plan and others like it, and the experiences of some of the veterans who farmed on the experimental reclamation projects.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁰ All of these numbers are sourced from the admittedly imperfect 1962 *Homesteads* by the Bureau of Land Management. For an analysis of this source, see Richard Edwards's 2008 paper, "Why the Homesteading Data Are So Poor (And What Can Be Done About It)," which was published in the Summer 2008 edition of the *Great Plains Quarterly*, but is also available online here <<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2373&context=greatplainsquarterly>>.

spike in homestead claims during the immediate post-war period likely represents a significant proportion of veteran homesteaders taking advantage of new homestead laws that incentivized and made easier the taking of a homestead by WWI veterans. It is the only time in a survey of homestead claims from 1910 to 1930 that we see a jump like it that cannot be easily related to a more universal change to the homestead law (such as the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and the Three-Year Homestead Act of 1912) or a big increase in agricultural prices (as happened during the actual fighting of the First World War, when European agriculture and the Russian export of grains were disrupted).



The spike in 1913 and 1914 most likely relates to the passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and the Three-Year Homestead Act of 1912; the spike in 1917 and 1918 probably relates to the increase in agricultural pricing as a result of the war in Europe, which made farming more lucrative; and it seems quite likely that the spike in 1920 and 1921 relates to the passage of a number of laws meant to privilege veteran homesteaders of the First World War in 1918 and especially 1919. Data compiled from the Bureau of Land Management's 1962 *Homesteads* [Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=HEGNxfGJjaoC>, accessed 14 August 2018]

An act of Congress approved on 25 February 1919 extended the privileges established by Section 2304 and 2305 of the 1873-1874 Revised Statutes of the United States to all World War I veterans who had manned the border with Mexico or who had participated in the war against Germany

and its allies.⁶¹ These benefits were, chiefly, that the veteran could apply his or her time in service during the war towards a homestead claim.⁶² Given that U.S. involvement in the war lasted approximately a year and a half—and that the passage of the Selective Service Act of 1917 allowed the U.S. government to draft as many as 2.7 million citizens to the U.S. Army alone shortly after its declaration of war⁶³—many of these veterans would have been able to acquire patent to a homestead in only one-and-a-half to two years’s time. Those recruited for the heaviest U.S. involvement in the war (in 1918) might have had half a year or so’s time to credit towards the three years of residential time required under the Homestead Act to claim their farm. This seems to suggest that if a number of these veterans started their homesteads in early 1919 or even 1920, then they’d have perfected them in 1920, 1921, and 1922—when there was the above-referenced (and quite temporary) spike in homestead patents. As will soon be shown, there were many other laws and even programs and advertisements to attract veterans to homesteading in the post-war years.⁶⁴

⁶¹ The Revised Statutes of the United States can be accessed in its entirety online at <<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/43rd-congress/c43-revised-statutes.pdf>>. This is a very large document (approximately 125 MB), but contains the sections referenced on page 422.

⁶² The use of “his or her” is intentional here, as it is worth noting that military nurses were also credited by this law for their time in service if they chose to homestead following the war. Even as far back as the first passage of the 1862 Homestead Act, women were able to take homesteads in their own names, and many did, as has been explored by a number of excellent historians in recent years—such as H. Elaine Lindgren and Katherine Harris, among many others who have made careful studies of the subject of women and homesteading. The 25 February 1919 Act can be referenced online at <<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/65th-congress/session-3/c65s3ch37.pdf>>, accessed 17 October 2018. One question worth investigating is how many WWI nurses homesteaded after the war?

⁶³ Mitchell Yockelson, “They Answered the Call: Military Service in the United States Army During World War I, 1917–1919,” *Prologue Magazine*, Fall 1998, Vol. 30, No. 3 available online at <<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/fall/military-service-in-world-war-one.html>> as accessed 17 October 2018.

⁶⁴ Many who have researched or read about homesteading under the Homestead Act of 1862, particularly during the 19th century, will be familiar with the fact that it took 5 years on the land to claim a homestead. To clarify where my numbers are coming from, then, it should briefly be noted again that in 1912 a law was passed that allowed for homesteads to be claimed in only three years—rather than five. This “Three-Year Homestead Law” (Chapter 153 of Session II of the Sixty-Second Congress, approved June 6, 1912 and entitled “An Act To amend section twenty-two hundred and ninety-one and section twenty-two hundred and ninety-seven of the Revised Statutes of the United States relating to homesteads”) can be reviewed online at <<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/62nd-congress/session-2/c62s2ch153.pdf>>, accessed 17 October 2018.

During this same period, even as the numbers of homesteaders started their decline, the acreage being taken by homesteaders was often larger than before (on account of changes to the law allowing for homesteads of 320 and 640 acres). Indeed, according to the Bureau of Land Management, “[m]ore than a quarter of the total acreage [transferred under the Homestead Act] to private ownership” was done “in a 10-year period during and after World War I.”⁶⁵ As stated above, it is likely that many of the post-war homesteaders who benefited from these lands were World War I veterans taking advantage of new laws that came out after the war to make homesteading easier for veterans.

From 1917 to 1922, the 65th, 66th, and 67th sessions of Congress enacted 11 laws meant to benefit veteran homesteaders of World War I.⁶⁶ A later law, approved on 27 August 1935, would allow for any veteran of the war who started a homestead prior to 1935, but was unable to meet the residency, improvement, or cultivation requirements of the Homestead law due to mental or physical disabilities, to claim their homestead in spite of their not being able to meet those aforementioned requirements.⁶⁷ But among the laws allowing homesteaders privileges prior to 1935, there was a law

⁶⁵ Bureau of Land Management. *Homesteads*. 1962. Available online at <<https://books.google.com/books?id=HEGNxfGJjaoC>>.

⁶⁶ The laws thus passed included, in chronological order, the 28 July 1917 “An Act For the relief of homestead entrymen or settlers who enter the military or naval service of the United States in time of war;” the 6 October 1917 “An Act Providing for an amendment to section twenty-two hundred and ninety-three of the Revised Statutes, allowing homestead and other public land affidavits to be taken before the military commander of any person engaged in military or naval service of the United States;” the 20 December 1917 “An Act To authorize absence by homestead settlers and entrymen, and for other purposes;” the 25 February 1919 “An Act To extend the provisions of the homestead laws touching credit for period of enlistment to the soldiers, nurses, and officers of the Army and the seamen, marines, nurses, and officers of the Navy and the Marine Corps of the United States who have served or will have served with the Mexican border operations or during the war between the United States and Germany and her allies;” the 29 September 1919 “An Act To authorize absence by homestead settlers and entrymen, and for other purposes;” the 14 February 1920 “Joint Resolution Giving to discharged soldiers, sailors, and marines a preferred right of homestead entry;” the 1 March 1921 “An Act To authorize certain homestead settlers or entrymen who entered the military or naval service of the United States during the war with Germany to make final proof of their entries;” a 21 January 1922 amendment to the February 14, 1920 joint resolution; an 7 April 1922 amendment to the 1 March 1921 Act; the 21 September 1922 “Act To allow credit for husband’s military service in case of homestead entries by widows, and for other purposes;” and a 28 December 1922 extension of the 14 February 1920 joint resolution.

⁶⁷ See Public Law No. 377 of the 74th Congress, approved 27 August 1935 and entitled “An act to authorize certain homestead entrymen who are disabled World War veterans to make final proof of their entries, and for other

that allowed for single entrymen to be under the age of 21 if they had served in the military (as had the very first iteration of the Homestead Act back in 1862), a law that allowed a veteran's time in service during the war to count towards their homestead residency requirements, a law that allowed soldiers to make their homestead-based affidavits before their commanding officer instead of a land office agent, a law that allowed homesteaders serving in the war to be absent from their homesteads without risking their loss, a law that allowed homesteaders who had started a homestead before the fighting but after the war couldn't finish it due to a disability to nevertheless gain patent to the land, and, perhaps of greater consequence still, a law that allowed veterans of the war first rights to claim lands newly opened to homesteading at least sixty days in advance of their being opened to the general public. A 29 September 1919 law even allowed veteran homesteaders to attend vocational training away from their homesteads under the 1918 Vocational Rehabilitation Act and count their time there towards their homestead residency requirements.⁶⁸ These laws all acted together to encourage veterans of the war to homestead.



One of the benefits made available to World War I veterans was that they received first rights to claim lands being opened for settlement under the Homestead Act. Only *after* any interested veterans had had an opportunity to “stake their claims” was the land open to the general public. *The Morning Tulsa daily world*. (Tulsa, Okla.), 16 July 1921. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042345/1921-07-16/ed-1/seq-1/>>

purposes,” available online at <<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/74th-congress/session-1/c74s1ch770.pdf>>, accessed 4 October 2018.

⁶⁸ Public Law 52 of the 66th Session of Congress, entitled “An Act To authorize absence by homestead settlers and entrymen, and for other purposes,” approved 29 September 1919.

As these laws were passed, local communities, newspapers, and others actively informed veterans of them, and recruited former soldiers for homesteading. An August 1990 report by the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office entitled “Homesteading in Arizona 1870-1942,” even references soldiers being “targeted” by “homesteading propaganda” while convalescing in hospitals in the state:

Arizona’s genial climate boosted homesteading. A haven for respiratory sufferers since the turn of the century, Arizona became especially attractive to World War I veterans, many of whom had been mustard gassed or had contracted tuberculosis. General Hospital 20 in Prescott specialized in treating veterans with pulmonary diseases. Targeted by homesteading propaganda, the hospital’s patients often filed Arizona claims upon their discharge.⁶⁹

One area where the public sharing of information could be challenging, however, was through official government notification channels—or the lack thereof. The General Land Office’s 1921 “Annual report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Secretary of the Interior,” indicates that, in complying with the 14 February 1920 law that required the General Land Office to give first preference to veterans, it had restored 676,012 acres “under such preference” for veterans, and “in the areas opened thereunder through survey or resurvey have aggregated 2,234,380 acres;” but that it had “no appropriation from which notices of these restorations and openings may be published except in a few instances, and therefore we must generally rely upon the public press carrying such items as news.”⁷⁰ The report goes on to indicate that local land officers in areas being opened to homesteading were being encouraged to try and raise publicity for the soldiers’ preference “without expense to the Government,” but that most of the information “concerning restorations or openings under public resolution No. 29 is furnished to the legislative committee of the American Legion [...] in the belief that

⁶⁹ Pat H. Stein, “Homesteading in Arizona, 1862 to 1942: A Guide to Studying, Evaluating, and Preserving Historic Homesteads,” (front cover title “Homesteading in Arizona 1870-1942), *Arizona State Historic Preservation Office*, August 1990, page 8.

⁷⁰ Department of the Interior. “Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office to the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1921,” Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921, page 36. Available online at <<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001719265>>, accessed 4 October 2018.

deserved something tangible for their service in the war, many veterans did turn to homesteading. Soldiers's benefits in the Homestead Act weren't the only thing enabling veterans to homestead successfully, of course. A military pension along with a homestead would be tremendously beneficial to a veteran. Pension money would allow the veteran homesteader to care for themselves and their family as they established their farm; and, or, to purchase machinery, improvements, or even additional land for themselves that would be less realistic for homesteaders without an outside source of income. A pension would give a veteran homesteader a great deal of flexibility and a leg-up over farmers without one. So even with federal communication and advertisement challenges, many veterans still found themselves hearing about and participating in post-World War I homesteading. Below, we briefly meet several of these soldiers-turned-homesteaders.

The first such veteran is John Simmons Kearley. Born on 12 June 1888 in Tunnel Springs, Alabama, John had four siblings and grew up on a farm.⁷² In 1917, he registered for the draft, stating that he'd spent one year in "State Military School" and describing himself as a farmer of medium height and build with gray eyes and dark hair.⁷³ He was inducted on 14 September 1917,⁷⁴ and joined the 116th Field Artillery where he served as a corporal.⁷⁵ He survived the war and returned home to Alabama, where, in 1920, he was living with his parents and working as a "tick eraticator" [sic] for Monroe County. He married a woman named May Day on 28 October 1920, and proved up on a homestead of 39.52

⁷² Kearley's birth date and location are listed on his draft registration card and his siblings and occupation, at 11 years old, as a "farm laborer" is listed in the U.S. Census for 1900.

⁷³ Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

⁷⁴ Ancestry.com. *Alabama, Military Card Files, 1917-1918* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: *WWI Soldiers' Draftees, by County, 1918-1919*. Montgomery, Alabama: Alabama Department of Archives and History. SG017111-3.

⁷⁵ National Archives and Records Administration, "Lists of Incoming Passengers, 1917-1938; Lists of Outgoing Passengers, 1917-1938," Record Group 92, as accessed from fold3.com at <<https://www.fold3.com/image/604005099>>, accessed on 4 October 2018.

acres on 6 January 1921.⁷⁶ By 1930, John and May were living in Selma, Alabama, where Mr. Kearley was working as a salesman. John Kearley died on 10 August 1955 and he is buried in Selma, Alabama.⁷⁷

Walter Ellis Cummins was born on 24 March 1893 in Missouri, completed an 8th grade education,⁷⁸ and farmed with his family in Oklahoma. In 1917, he registered for the draft, describing himself as a tall Caucasian male of medium build with blue eyes and brown hair.⁷⁹ Once mobilized, Cummins joined Company “D” of the 136th Infantry, where he shipped out to France as a Private.⁸⁰ He returned home with “L” Company of the 49th Infantry, then moved to Colorado where he lived in 1920 with his brother and sister-in-law as a farmer.⁸¹ In 1923, he proved up on a 320-acre homestead in Las Animas County, Colorado, and two years later married a woman named Leone Castleberry.⁸² Together they had several children, and continued to farm. Cummins died in 1984, aged 91, and he is buried at the Mountain View Cemetery in Branson, Colorado.⁸³

Finally, we look at John Ralph Hutton, born in Kansas on 18 January 1897. In the 1900 Census he was living on the family farm with his father Austin, mother Mary, and two siblings. By 1905, he had three more siblings. He registered for the draft in June 1918, describing himself as a White

⁷⁶ See Kearley’s homestead claim at the Bureau of Land Management’s General Land Office Records website <<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=789259&docClass=SER&sid=fxo4hvf5.wls>>, accessed 4 October 2018.

⁷⁷ FindAGrave.com, <<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/69372890/john-s-kearley>>, accessed 4 October 2018.

⁷⁸ As is listed as his highest grade completed in the U.S. Census for 1940.

⁷⁹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

⁸⁰ The National Archives at College Park; College Park, Maryland; Record Group Title: *Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774-1985*; Record Group Number: 92; Roll or Box Number: 498

⁸¹ The National Archives at College Park; College Park, Maryland; Record Group Title: *Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774-1985*; Record Group Number: 92; Roll or Box Number: 103

⁸² See Cummins’ homestead claim at <<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=911969&docClass=SER&sid=lhjao4dx.bnn>>, accessed 4 October 2018; married on May 6, 1925, per Ancestry.com. *Colorado, County Marriage Records and State Index, 1862-2006* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016. Original data: *Marriage Records. Colorado Marriages*. State Archives, Denver, Colorado.

⁸³ FindAGrave.com, <<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/155510122/walter-e-cummins>>, accessed 4 October 2018.

The Soldier and His Homestead

As there have been a number of reports going around as to what credits soldiers and sailors are allowed in making final proof on their homesteads, we publish herewith a portion of Circular No. 641, issued by the General Land Office, April 25, 1919, relative to the matter. We have omitted portions of the Circular which do not apply to ordinary homestead entries.

Department of the Interior, General Land Office, Washington, D. C., April 25, 1919.

Under the terms of the act of Congress of February 25, 1919, (Public, 273), any officer, soldier, sailor, or marine who has served, or shall serve, not less than 90 days in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps of the United States during the war with Germany and its allies, or during the operations in Mexico or along the borders thereof, who has been honorably discharged, who has not exhausted his homestead right, and who makes a homestead entry, is entitled to have the term of his service, but not exceeding two years, deducted from the three years' residence required under the homestead laws. If his service continues after the end of the war under the same enlistment (having served 90 days during the war), he may have credit for his entire period of service. If he was discharged on account of wounds or disability incurred in the line of duty, he obtains credit for his whole term of enlistment; and said term extends to the end of the war if he enlisted or was

must prove cultivation of one-sixteenth of the area during the second year and one-eighth thereof during the third year and until submission of proof.

Operations in Mexico

The operations in Mexico or along the border thereof, above referred to, are regarded as having begun May 9, 1916, the date of the President's order mobilizing the militia of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Persons then serving in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps and in the National Guards of those States who were mustered into service will be given credit on account of their service from that date. Such members of the National Guards of the other States and the District of Columbia as were mustered into the Federal service will be given credit from June 18, 1916, the date of the order for mobilization. Credit for service will be given the guardsmen until the dates of their discharge from the service, but the operations referred to will be held to have continued until after the beginning of the war with Germany, there not being any material interruption in the service of those who were mustered into the United States Army during said war.

Duration of the War

The war with Germany and its Allies commenced April 6, 1917, and its termination will be marked by the date of the proclamation of the treaty by the Presi-

Newspapers widely published the new laws affording veterans special privileges to homestead. Picture from *The Mountainair Independent*. (Mountainair, N.M.), 12 June 1919. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn93061704/1919-06-12/ed-1/seq-1/>>

male of medium height and slender build, with grey eyes and light brown hair.⁸⁴ He was then enlisted into the U.S. Navy where he served as a Seaman 2nd Class with the Navy Ordinance Division. He made it home in one piece with no injury, and joined the Shepherd Moore American Legion post on return to Kansas.⁸⁵ In 1920, he was living with his parents and working as a salesman at a hardware store, but on 10 January 1922 he was able to prove up on 658 acres under the Homestead Act (in Kearny County, where he remained near his family).⁸⁶ Hutton married Vera Aileen Phegley in 1925, and by 1930 he was working in hardware again. He lists himself as “self-employed” in the 1942 WWII draft.⁸⁷ He died aged 83 on 24 December 1980, and he is buried in the Lakin Cemetery in Lakin, Kansas.⁸⁸

As each of these cases shows, there were still many places to claim a homestead after the war (Alabama, Colorado, and Kansas in our case studies), and many reasons for doing so. But part of the draw was that it was easier for veterans than it was for everyone else. Those that did not stay with their homestead long, as was a “problem” discussed in the “soldier settlement” reports and appears to have repeated itself in some of our case studies, begs the question as to whether this was due to the economic hard times in agriculture in the 1920s, when crop prices plummeted, followed by the even harder times of the 1930s, or if there were other reasons for it (such as claiming the land in order to sell it, so that the veteran might have assets with which to pursue their personal goals).

⁸⁴ Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

⁸⁵ Ancestry.com. *Kansas, Enrollment of WWI Veterans, 1930* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013. Original data: Enrollment of World War One Veterans or Their Widows and Orphans, 1930. 43 rolls. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

⁸⁶ To see Hutton’s homestead claim, see <<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=841955&docClass=SER&sid=f5t3gz5y.hge>>, accessed 4 October 2018.

⁸⁷ Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. *Selective Service Registration Cards, World War II: Fourth Registration*. Records of the Selective Service System, Record Group Number 147. National Archives and Records Administration.

⁸⁸ FindAGrave.com, <<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/41076708/john-ralph-hutton>>, accessed 4 October 2018.

Concluding the Analysis

This paper has asked what role homesteading played before, during, and after World War I in the lives of the soldiers who fought the war—and in the Nation that they fought for. It has attempted to gauge the economic climate of the time, considered the domestic impact of the war on agriculture as well as the impact of agriculture on the war, and looked at the legislated benefits that made homesteading attractive to veterans of “the War to End All Wars.” It has made the argument that the post-war spike in homestead claims, particularly in 1920 and 1921, was due to veterans homesteading—advantaged in numerous ways by legislation, military pension, right to first claim, and advertisement efforts to inform veterans of their homesteading privileges. But many questions still need answering. A case study of individual homesteaders and the climate in which homesteading occurred before and after the war is a start, as it indicates that there are connections here, and that the Homestead Act did play a role in the lives of these veterans; but we still do not know how many homesteaders fought in the war, nor do we know how many soldiers homesteaded after the war. A next step into this research would be to take a sizable random sample of homestead entries from at least 1920 and 1921 to determine what percentage of these entries was taken by veterans. The General Land Office made sure to note in its annual reports the fact that it took pains to ensure that veterans were given the first right to claim lands opened for homesteading, as they were mandated to do so, but these reports do not tell us how many soldiers actually made use of this window of time where they were advantaged. There were, one supposes, soldiers who took homesteads outside of this window of first opportunity (1920-1921) as well; but one or two sizable samples of the claims taken in 1920 and 1921, and perhaps all the way to 1925, should demonstrate how many of these homesteads were perfected by WWI veterans. There would be notice of the homesteaders’s veteran status in any of these homestead claims where the homesteader was using their veteran status to call on the privileges afforded to them by law. The

National Archives and Records Administration does make these records available, as well; however, as they are not digitized, there is a copying and shipping fee of \$50 per case file.⁸⁹

The economic promise of agriculture in the pre- and immediate post-war years, where farmers were “making more money than professional baseball players,” would have been attractive to many. And since its beginning in 1862, the Homestead Act has always held out the promise of economic prosperity to the men and women who took part in its 123-year-long “Free Land” movement. Indeed, it can be said without much controversy that the Homestead Act was, for many people, the physical embodiment of the American Dream—a path to freedom for persecution for many African-Americans after the Civil War, a path to economic independence for single women and widows in the decades before women could even vote in America, a path to land ownership and education for their children for immigrants coming from across the world to become Americans. But as with many homesteaders before them, the post-World War I veterans may sometimes have met unexpected challenges and not been able to stay on the farm. As indicated earlier, those high agricultural prices that would have attracted so many to farming collapsed very quickly in the 1920s.⁹⁰ How many veteran homesteaders had every intention of staying on their land once they had claimed it, but then ended up selling it off as a result of changes in the price of crops? Or the drought conditions that were soon to come? There are surely stories to be told here.

⁸⁹ As noted, the cost to request these files from the National Archives is \$50 per case file, and it includes shipping and handling (where applicable). One can request these case files using an NATF-84 form (<https://www.archives.gov/files/forms/pdf/natf-84.pdf>), or through NARA’s eservices website: <https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eservices.archives.gov>.

⁹⁰ A 2015 article by Daryll Ray shows how the boom in crop prices in the 1916-1919 period (where corn was selling at an average of \$1.35 per bushel) might have encouraged farming, but then agricultural recovery in Europe crashed the market. “Over the next four years, U.S. corn prices averaged \$0.61 per bushel, a decline of 54.7%,” and didn’t go up much over the period to follow (1920-1940). Ray argues that there is “some real justification for the complaint of farmers that they entered the Great Depression 10 years before the rest of the nation.” Daryll Ray, “How Did Prices Fare Following Other Golden Eras in Agriculture?” 25 March 2015, <https://www.agriculture.com/markets/analysis/corn/how-did-prices-fare-following-or-golden_9-ar48090>, accessed 5 November 2018.

Likewise, it is important to look at just how many laws were passed during this time period with respect to homesteading after the First World War—and how much discussion was devoted to the subject of soldiers and homesteading. It should be evident that, regardless of how many veterans actually ended up taking advantage of these laws, the Homestead Act remained at the forefront of the minds of politicians and journalists when it came to planning out “opportunity:” In this case the opportunity for soldiers returning from war to reintegrate into society in a meaningful way doing meaningful work. The time, money, and energy that went into discussing these plans and these laws is indicative of the importance homesteading played in the planning process of Congressional representatives, and in the minds of the men and women they represented across the country.

But there are still many, many specifics to be explored—and this topic has so much more to tell us. In the broadest sense, the relationship between war and homesteading in general is a subject that has not been fully explored. It is certainly clear that the United States has used land to reward military service since as far back as the Revolutionary War, but the role of homesteading in military incentivizing and reward for service begs further discussion. As far as the author is aware, veterans of every American conflict after the Civil War up to and including the Korean War received special privileges with regards to homesteading if they so-chose to utilize them.⁹¹ But, again to the author’s limited awareness, no formal study has ever been devoted to this subject. Other questions likewise tempt investigation. How did African Americans fit into the veteran homesteading picture? We suggested, above, that homesteading was a path to freedom after the Civil War, and it is known that there were many black homesteaders, including some Buffalo Soldiers. Did African American veterans of the First World War homestead? It was also mentioned briefly in footnote 62 of this paper that military nurses were able to count their time in service towards the residency requirements of taking a homestead. Did many of the

⁹¹ See Public Law 402, “An Act to allow credit in connection with certain homestead entries for military or naval service rendered during the Korean conflict, and for other purposes,” available for review online at <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-68/pdf/STATUTE-68-Pg253-3.pdf>>, accessed 17 October 2018.

servicewomen who served as military nurses during World War I take homesteads? This paper is only a start, it turns out, with many tall questions awaiting further scholarship.

In concluding, the author would like to thank the staff at Homestead National Monument of America for their support in the research and writing of this paper, Homestead National Monument of America Volunteer Denise Ehlmer for her assistance in researching individual homesteaders, Richard Edwards and Jake Friefeld of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Great Plains Studies for their instructive review of an early draft, historian Brian Cannon for his insightful suggestions, and the staff at the National World War I Museum and Memorial for their recommendations as well. But while there were many who helped to make this paper stronger than it would have been without them, any errors, omissions, or oversights are, of course, entirely my own.

The Homestead Act had a tremendous impact on the United States of America and its peoples over the course of its 123-year lifespan. One population that benefitted from this law repeatedly was the veteran population of America's wars, and yet the relationship between homesteading and war has been little studied. It is the hope of the author that this paper will encourage further discussion around this subject, as well as the subject of the Homestead Act in general.

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