

Opportunity for All? Homesteading Next Year Country

39th Annual Montana History Conference

Helena, September 20-22, 2012



This is a next year country, people out here live on hope. If you can saddle hope and ride it, you'll get over the next divide.

John L. Moore, author and historian

2012 marks the 150th anniversary of America's first Homestead Act. Born of the same political discord that led to the Civil War and signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln during the early years of the conflict, the act provided for the transfer of 160 acres of public land to each homesteader upon payment of a nominal filing fee and five years of "proving up." The original proponents of the Homestead Act envisioned the settlement of the West by individual farmers with an almost utopian fervor, and today, our cultural mythology most often portrays homesteading as a symbol of the most American of ideals.

There is no question that homesteading played a significant role in the development of Montana. But did it truly represent "opportunity for all?" The 39th Annual Montana History Conference seeks to examine that question in depth and from many different angles. Session proposals relating to any aspect of homesteading are encouraged (see page 2 for information on how to submit a proposal). Possible topics include:

- The impact of the Homestead Act on Montana's first peoples
- The impact of homesteading on the environment and Montana's arid environment's impact on homesteaders
- Daily life on a homestead
- The material culture of the homestead era
- Homesteading as it relates to women's history
- Homesteading as it relates to ethnic and minority history
- The role of archaeology in telling the homestead story
- Homesteading's effect on Montana politics
- The impact of homesteading on rural settlement and community development
- Homesteading and family folklore
- And more!

What you need to know:

- To submit a proposal for the history conference you must provide the information outlined below. You may submit this information in any manner that is convenient—word documents attached to emails are preferred, but no “official” form is required as long as all information is provided.
- After the February 1 deadline, the History Conference Committee will meet to evaluate the proposals and put together a comprehensive program. You will be notified by March 1 whether or not your proposal has been accepted. (Please note that we generally receive far more proposals than the schedule will accommodate).
- Our conference is primarily comprised of three concurrent sessions that last a total of 1 hour and 15 minutes each. Normally, each session has two presenters so each gets **25-30 minutes** for his/her presentation and the remaining time is used for introductions and joint Q&A (if there are three presenters, each gets 20 minutes). The program committee pairs speakers together so that their topics relate in some way or, if you prefer, you can submit a panel proposal comprising an entire session.
- Although we do greatly appreciate the time and effort that a presentation at the history conference entails, we are, unfortunately, not in a position to pay for speakers’ travel or lodging expenses. We do however provide speakers with a complimentary, full-conference registration, including all meals and events.

Submission deadline: February 1, 2012

Required information:

- **Title of proposal**
Proposal format (i.e. lecture, slideshow, PowerPoint, panel, etc.) and equipment needed:
- **Speaker’s(s’) information:**
 - Name(s)
 - Organization(s) (if any)
 - Mailing address(es)
 - Phone number(es)
 - Email address(es)
 - Brief credentials as they relate to the proposed topic:
- **Synopsis of presentation:**

Submit proposals to:

Kirby Lambert, klambert@mt.gov
Montana Historical Society, PO Box 201201, Helena, MT 59620-1201
Phone: 406-444-4741 Fax: 406-444-2696
Web: <http://mhs.mt.gov/education/ConferencesWorkshops.asp> and click on “2012 History Conference”