

LAND, LIFE, AND *FEME SOLE*: WOMEN HOMESTEADERS
IN THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER VALLEY,
1909-1934

by
Sunday Anne Walker-Kuntz

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of
Master of Arts

in
History

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

January 2006

© COPYRIGHT

by

Sunday Anne Walker-Kuntz

2006

All Rights Reserved

APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Sunday Anne Walker-Kuntz

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

Dr. Mary Murphy

Approved for the Department of History

Dr. Robert Rydell

Approved for the Division of Graduate Education

Dr. Joseph Fedock

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree at Montana State University, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

If I have indicated my intention to copyright this thesis by including a copyright notice page, copying is allowable only for scholarly purposes, consistent with "fair use" as prescribed in the U.S. Copyright Law. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this thesis in whole or in parts may be granted only by the copyright holder.

Sunday Anne Walker-Kuntz

January 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION1

2. THE HISTORY OF HOMESTEADING LAWS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
HOMESTEADING IN MONTANA.....6

 Government, Land, and Law: A Brief History of Homestead Legislation.....6

 General Land Office6

 Federal Land Statutes.....8

 History of Montana Homesteading.....11

 Conclusion17

3. WOMEN AND HOMESTEADING.....19

 Previous Work Concerning Women and the Homestead Phenomenon.....19

 Women and Homesteading Land Law.....24

 Conclusion30

4. METHODS32

 Yellowstone County, Montana: River Valley, Railroad, Opportunity32

 The Record Universe34

 Collecting and Understanding Land Patents.....34

 Clearing Up Discrepancies with Land Patents.....42

 Conclusion44

5. YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA WOMEN HOMESTEADERS46

 Patents Issued to Women Through Time.....46

 Land Authorities and Women Homesteaders52

 Women Homesteaders and Diversity.....56

 Conclusion58

6. CONCLUSION.....61

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....66

 Books and Articles.....66

 Government Documents68

 Unpublished Sources69

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Patents Issued to Women in Yellowstone County, Montana Between 1909 and 1934 by Year	47
2. Yellowstone County, Montana Number of Patents and Land Authority Information for Women – Between 1909 and 1934	54
3. Yellowstone County, Montana 1910 and 1920 Census Results	59

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Example of Legal Land Location Search for Yellowstone County, Montana.....	36
2. Example of Land Patent Details – BLM GLO Records	38
3. Example of Original Land Patent Document.....	39
4. Rectangular Survey System – Township and Range	42
5. Rectangular Survey System – Section	43
6. Yellowstone County, Montana Issued Patents, 1909 to 1934	53
7. Yellowstone County, Montana Acre Averages by Land Authority, 1909 to 1934.....	57

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on women homesteaders in Yellowstone County, Montana during the boom years of 1909 to 1934. The historical and cultural phenomenon of American homesteading and its legal framework are discussed, but emphasis is on homesteaders in Montana who did not migrate to the state great numbers until the early twentieth century, particularly after 1909. This study relies principally on data from primary documents including the records of the General Land Office, Census Bureau data, oral histories, and homestead legislation. The data is used to describe and analyze the patterns of homesteading behavior among women in Yellowstone County, Montana. Homesteading is presented as a medium for transforming gender identity through suffrage, land ownership, and autonomous financial security.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 1915, Mrs. Elizabeth Bertha Weldon arrived in Montana. At that time, her sister resided in Livingston. Soon after Elizabeth's arrival, she traveled to her homestead in Yellowstone County. Elizabeth Bertha Weldon described her first memories of arriving in Montana at her new home:

My husband had moved out onto the homestead. The night after he moved out, the bridge went out across the Yellowstone River. So when he came and got me up at Livingston, we came and got on the train and we had to hire a taxi to come out to the ranch and we had to go around across what's the east bridge now and back to the hill south of Billings. I don't know how long...I thought we'd never get there. Then we drove over where the house was, I thought to myself I had a man that was crazy, to come out and settle in a place like that. But I got so I liked it. I wouldn't move anywhere else now, I still have my homestead and ranch out there.¹

Mrs. Elizabeth Bertha Weldon and her husband were two of the many optimistic agriculturalists who migrated to Eastern Montana between 1909 and 1934 on the tide of the homesteading boom. During this period, one in five issued land patents in Yellowstone County, Montana listed a woman as property owner. National propaganda touted Montana as rich in farmland, with plenty of room for land ownership and private enterprise. Several railroad companies promoted the benefits of acquiring land in Montana, while advocates of dry land farming sang its glory. In addition to this rush of advertising, the unusually wet years from 1914 to 1917 led to deceptive crop yields,

while America's entering World War I resulted in higher prices for wheat.

Thomas Jefferson linked the importance of the "yeoman farmer" to the American Republic and professed, "Our governments will remain virtuous...as long as they are chiefly agricultural: and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America."² The alternative to the promise of Jeffersonian Democracy was urban corruption. When the people "get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become corrupt as in Europe, and go to eating one another."³ In nineteenth-century American culture, the lands and ideology of the American West did not just represent a particular place, but an attitude or identity, a socially and historically contingent phenomenon. The availability and accumulation of free or cheap land contributed to the process of American development and the American character. Owning private property inspired individuals, particularly men, to stand on their "own two feet," make personal decisions, and care about political policy and how it affected their personal investments. Additionally, conquest of the "frontier" produced a sense of moral imperative. America must proceed west to remain a virtuous (and masculine) society. Americans were rugged individuals: confident, strong, and good. Early colonizers and settlers in the United States certainly acted upon this attitude and identity, which is still a powerful conceptual metaphor in American society today.

Americans, particularly white Americans, viewed the acquisition of land as a cultural imperative.⁴ The previous paragraph illustrates the qualities and values ascribed to property and the power these images wield. Historian Patricia Limerick contends the earliest western colonizers understood these concepts, attitudes, and identities. There was

only one way to treat land – “divide it, distribute it, register it.”⁵ The history of the American West illustrates this, particularly the history surrounding homesteading of the West, including Montana.

Even though these statements refer to generic Americans, the subtext of who these people are is male. Society ascribed gender specific characteristics to men and women, whether adhered to or not. Men moved west, tamed the land, and carried on the agrarian heritage of democracy and individualism. Women accompanied them and provided culture, civility, and religion. These were characteristics assigned to women since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in America. Women exercised their “power” by wielding moral influence and encouraging respectable behavior. Contrary to these early narratives, alternative interpretations of Montana and its early residents abound. “Tales that put women in the center of traditionally male-defined pursuits...and probe the issue of how women dealt with the spaces and places of the West.”⁶

One story of women in the American West tells of those who came west and acquired land due to changing homestead laws that made land acquisition easy and practically free. One assumption has been that greater numbers of women came after the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act, which relaxed the requirements of the original 1862 Homestead Act. However, is this true? Could scrutinizing the actual numbers of women who migrated to Yellowstone County, Montana between 1909 and 1934, lead historians to an alternative “narrative” of the homesteading boom and the opportunity of free land?

This study primarily examines issued land patents from the General Land Office records of the Bureau of Land Management for Yellowstone County, Montana. This

research seeks the answers to several questions. What percentage of women homesteaded in Yellowstone County and attained legal land ownership, either alone or with a partner (male or female) between 1909 and 1934? Which land authorities did women use to attain land and which were used most often? Did the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act truly make a difference for women in search of their own property? Did women follow the same trends as men for acquiring land? What amount of land and average acreage did women claim? Historians generally acknowledge the Montana homesteading boom years as 1910 to 1918, when hopeful agriculturalists arrived in the state by the thousands. With the drought cycle starting in 1918, many left the state and moved on to “greener pastures.” Do these boom years coincide with the evidence analyzed in this research, and did women follow this trend?

To complement the land office title records, I examined oral histories of women homesteaders living in the Yellowstone River Valley. Popular literature usually portrays these women with soaring expectations, eventually succumbing to a hard life, resulting in premature aging, loss of sanity, and even death.⁷ A very different “narrative” depicts male homesteaders as conquering and taming the wilderness, even when saddled with a lunatic wife. This study examined first hand accounts of these women to evaluate if the fiction is true, at the same time fitting them into a broader context with the numbers from the land title search.

Chapter Two describes the history of homesteading laws and the development of homesteading in Montana. Chapter Three follows with an examination of women and homesteading by reviewing the literature and how the laws introduced in Chapter Two

affected these women. Chapter Four explains the methods of data collection, the record universe, and why Yellowstone County serves as a good example by putting it in context within the region. Chapter Five details the results of my data collection. Finally, Chapter Six explains the significance of my findings and attempts to further explain, and perhaps, revise the “master narrative” of women homesteaders. Additionally, this final chapter attempts to elucidate questions and studies for future research. This study’s goal is to shape new questions to ask about the history of women homesteaders, and where these questions may lead historians in “re-mastering” the traditional narrative.

¹ Elizabeth Bertha Weldon, interview by Diane Sands, August 26, 1976, no. 43, transcript, Montana Women’s History Project, 15, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana.

² David M. Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (University Press of Kansas, 1993), 6.

³ Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism*, 6.

⁴ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: WW Norton and Company, 1987), 55.

⁵ Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*, 55.

⁶ Mary Murphy, “Searching for an Angle of Repose: Women, Work, and Creativity in Early Montana,” in *Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity*, eds. David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner, (University Press of Kansas, 1997), pp. 159.

⁷ Peggy Czyzeski, “And I was Alone, All Alone,” in *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*, eds. William Kittredge and Annick Smith (University of Washington Press, 1988), 546-553.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORY OF HOMESTEADING LAWS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
HOMESTEADING IN MONTANAGovernment, Land, and Law: A Brief History of Homestead Legislation

Frederick Turner Jackson recognized the significance of free or cheap land in the colonizing of the United States. His famous essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *Proceedings of the Forty-First Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, argued that, “American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.”¹ He claimed the process of settling free land not only explained American development, but also the American character. An agrarian heritage fostered the idea and growth of American Democracy and American individualism in the Jeffersonian ideal. Furthermore, the concept of American “progress” was tied to settling the open spaces of the unpopulated west. The US government codified this concept through homestead acts and related laws.

General Land Office

On April 25, 1812, the federal government established the General Land Office (GLO) in Washington, D.C., as a bureau of the Treasury Department. The duties of the

GLO involved the distribution of land warrants and grants, the schedule of property sales at various district land offices, the collection of money from land sales, the evaluation and issuance of patents or deeds, and the maintenance of land records. Land record maintenance included sustaining copies of plats of survey, tract books, original entries and copies of patents, case records, and all related data. Under the supervision of an appointed Commissioner, the GLO, and the appropriate district land office, oversaw all aspects of control, administration, recording, and transfer of public lands, whether by grant, sale, or other means. Within these district land offices, government officials sold tracts of surveyed public lands at auction to the highest bidder - at or above a specified per acre price mandated by Congress. After auction, any lands that remained unsold were available indefinitely for sale at a minimum price. The GLO in Washington D.C. received documents recording the sale of land from the district offices. Once at the GLO, government employees performed all filing and subsequent preparation of patents and related materials. Until 1833, the President of the United States signed every land patent issued. After 1833, Congress authorized a full-time secretary to sign the President's name. Once completed, the GLO returned land patents to the original district offices. The district land offices would then deliver the recently issued patent to the new property owner.

On July 4, 1836, the federal government initiated an act that reorganized and expanded the GLO. This act adjusted the increasing workload and eliminated delays in processing land transactions. Land surveying became a new responsibility of the Office, which ended conflict with various Surveyors General. As part of this act, the GLO

assumed responsibility for public land claims, surveys, records, and adjudication. An authorized recorder certified and affixed the seal of the GLO to all patents and similar documents. By the following year, 65 district land offices existed within the system.

The federal government created the Department of Interior by congressional act on March 3, 1849. Reorganization transferred the GLO from the authority of the Treasury Department to the Department of Interior, originally known as the Home Department. Within forty years, the GLO established 123 operational district land offices, assisting in land and resource management. By 1912, the GLO continued its work associated with administration, conservation, and use of the public lands and natural resources of the remaining public domain. Although district land offices decreased to 102, the Office continued to administer public lands and oversee resource management for the Department of Interior. On July 16, 1946, the US government established the Bureau of Land Management within the Department of Interior. This new bureau took on all responsibilities of the GLO.²

Federal Land Statutes

The United States federal government instituted several land statutes for acquiring public land in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Specifically, this overview reviews seven land statutes relevant to this study.

On April 24, 1820, Congress initiated an act abandoning the credit system for buying public lands. The government established a minimum fixed price of \$1.25 per acre, and a minimum unit of sale of 80 acres. District land offices continued to offer

public lands for sale at preannounced, scheduled public auction. If unsold, the lands were then available for purchase at the minimum price on a first-come, first-served basis.

Congress passed the initial Homestead Act in 1862. This act offered authorized, unrestricted settlement on public lands to all settlers, requiring only residence, cultivation, and some improvement of a quarter section of land – a tract of 160 acres. Any person, male or female, who was head of a family or had reached the age of 21, who was a citizen or intended to become a citizen, and who did not own as much as 160 acres was eligible. After living on the land and farming it for six months, the individual could buy the homestead at \$1.25 per acre. The alternative to purchasing the land at this price was to live on the property for five continuous years. At the expiration of this term, the individual could apply for and receive a patent or title to the 160 acres for a filing fee of \$15.00.

Congress eventually realized the agricultural demands and obstacles present on the Great Plains and passed several supplementary laws in order to provide more land to eager homesteaders. In 1877, the Desert Land Act passed and authorized 640-acre tracts of arid public lands at \$1.25 per acre to homesteaders upon proof of reclamation of lands by irrigation. Although disguised as land acquisition opportunity for homesteaders, the act was primarily organized by stockmen to acquire grazing lands. In 1891, the government reduced the number from 640-acre tracts to 320-acre tracts of desert lands.

Following passage of the Homestead and Desert Land Acts, Congress passed the Reclamation Act in 1902. Also known as the Newlands Reclamation Act, this law established a system of water-development projects for the irrigation of arid lands and

other purposes. The act created a revolving fund, sustained by receipts from the sale of public lands in several states, including Montana. The act authorized homesteading on as much as 160 acres of arid public lands, provided individuals reclaimed lands through irrigation. Additionally, each homesteader paid for the cost of providing water to these arid lands.

In 1909, Congress realized the minimal help that these acts provided and met the needs of homesteaders by enacting the Enlarged Homestead Act, in effect, amending the 1862 act. Realizing that Great Plains agriculture demanded larger acreages for successful farming and that 160 acres was too little for a family farm, Congress increased the number of acres an individual could claim from 160 acres to 320 acres. The public lands eligible for homesteading under this act were classified as dry farming lands and not subject to irrigation. Many believe the initiation of this act led to the large homesteading boom, which affected many western states in the twentieth century. Additionally, in 1912, Congress enacted the Three-Year Homestead Act. This act reduced the waiting period for ownership from five to three years. It also permitted the individual to be absent from his/her homestead five months of each year.

The Stock-Raising Homestead Act of 1916 allowed 640 acres for homesteading lands that were suitable for livestock grazing. This act did not mandate cultivation of lands, but some range improvements were required. Congress repealed this act in 1934 and instituted the Taylor Grazing Act in its place.³ The Taylor Grazing Act allowed organized groups of ranchers to lease federal lands cooperatively for grazing purposes without purchasing the lands. This 1934 Act initiated the arrangement of allowing

stockmen the opportunity of using reliable pasturage at a low cost, which continues today.⁴

History of Montana Homesteading

The Homestead Act of 1862 offered free government land to all American citizens and provided a farmer with 160 acres of land for a filing fee after fulfilling a five-year period of “proving-up.” “In enacting laws to promote the settlement and development of the public domain in the nineteenth century, Congress gave women the opportunity to take up public lands.”⁵ Several acts, including the Homestead Act, allowed for women under certain circumstances, to enter land under their provisions. At the time of its passage, this original Homestead Act meant little to Montana, primarily because there were so few whites in Montana in the 1860s, and most of them engaged in mining. The land survey in Montana also did not begin until 1867. Additionally, 160 acres was too little land for a family farm in a largely dry state. The first filings of land patents in this state under the 1862 Homestead Act did not occur until after 1867.⁶

The agricultural industry in early Montana served the local mining markets within the geographically confined southwestern valleys. By the 1870s, farmers who catered to the mining markets faced an uncertain future due to the decline in placer gold mining towns. The following three decades observed Montana farmers moving east and north, but at a slow pace.

Prior to the mid-1880s the aridity of the land, the lack of rail connections, and the presence of enormous Indian reservations and huge open range livestock outfits all

combined to hold back the farmers' advance. Even the arrival of railroads failed to touch off a rush to the Montana plains. During the 1890s, scattered farmers irrigated bottomlands along the Yellowstone, Missouri, and Milk rivers, and a few even tried dry farming on the bench lands of northern and central Montana. But they were few and far between.⁷

Reports from the early explorers made it clear that Montana had fertile grasslands for grazing. By the early 1880s, ranchers drove cattle into Montana by the thousands. Many of these herds were longhorns driven north from Texas.⁸ The ranching business on the open range flourished during the 1880s. The eastern two-thirds of the state saw cattle and sheep thriving on the free grass of the public domain. These companies depended on unrestricted grazing on the open range, but ranch corporations took steps to secure access to water. Before and around the turn of the century, most Montana homesteads had natural surface water, were along the creeks and rivers, and/or around springs and water holes. Many large ranchers using thousands of acres of grazing land actually had title to only the 160-acre home place where the ranch headquarters was located.⁹ The Desert Land Act of 1877 provided a full 640-acre section of land for \$1.25 per acre, if the homesteader proved up in three years and irrigated part of the claim. This Act, although claiming to be supportive to agricultural farmers, was a thinly veiled action by organized stockmen to seize grazing lands. Approximately three million acres of public lands in Montana passed into private hands under this act.¹⁰ The livestock industry dominated the region until the 1900s when homesteaders began to arrive on the railroad.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the eastern two-thirds of Montana consisted of large areas of vacant, public land, ripe for settlement. The rush to settle eastern

Montana did not occur until the beginning of the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, individuals, whether native- or foreign-born, passed through the “Great American Desert” on their way to the fertile valleys of the Rocky Mountains and the West Coast. Three factors gave rise to the homestead boom in Montana: the promotion of dryland farming techniques; the availability of large land tracts - either free or at low prices; and the advertising blitz around 1908 that encouraged settlement of eastern Montana. “It was only after 1900, with the advent of new land policies, new farming machines and methods, and new promotional groups that the farmers’ frontier – the last frontier – broke upon the immense emptiness of the Montana plains.”¹¹

Agricultural pioneers had already realized the benefits of farming in North and South Dakota. These high expectations, however, paused at the 98th meridian – the line that divides the moister environment of the eastern Dakotas from the characteristically dry environment of the western Dakotas and eastern Montana. The lack of rainfall within this geographical area emphasized the need for large-scale irrigation or dry land farming techniques.

Prior to the 1900s, the region of the West between the 98th meridian and Rocky Mountains was considered the “Great American Desert.” Aridity and a lack of good transportation routes held back the advance of farmers into the region. Many entrepreneurs investing time, effort, and money in the settlement of eastern Montana saw the harnessing of water resources as the key to prosperity. Promoters sought to dam and divert major rivers, like the Yellowstone and Missouri, to provide much needed water to dry, but fertile lands. In 1902, with the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act, many

Montana “boosters” saw their dreams and hopes come to fruition. This new law committed federal monies to building large-scale irrigation projects throughout the arid West. In the early 1900s, construction began on several important federal reclamation projects. Significant as these were, these projects left much of Montana dry. Upon this realization, many promoters turned their interest to the promise of dry land farming.

Dry farming was not a new idea. In fact, settlers in Utah had grown crops on non-irrigated lands since the 1880s. Other dry land farmers had not been so successful. A drought struck during the 1890s that devastated boomers in Colorado and Kansas. Hardy Webster Campbell, advocate of the dry farming technique, encouraged deep plowing and intensive cultivation in order to retain the moisture content within the soil. Additionally, he invented a machine that packed the soil to preserve water, and recommended loose soil mulch be maintained over the packed layer to help preserve the moisture. The railroad industry relied on Campbell’s farming technique to turn the “barren desert” of Montana into a “Garden of Eden.” Unfortunately, further scientific research - conducted by institutions like Montana State University - eventually discredited Campbell’s dry land farming technique, but the “seed had already been planted.” Potential homesteaders concerned about the problems farming a vast, dry area were given a remedy. The minimal success of dryland farming in Montana was sufficient to inspire great promotional campaigns after 1908. “With science and the optimism of the new century on their side, the railroads, the state of Montana, bankers, real-estate interests and merchants’ associations increased their advertising blitz.”¹²

With a huge promotional campaign touting the benefits of farming in Montana, it

seemed that all any farmer needed was enough land. Dry farming required large tracts of land, units big enough to allow for summer fallowing and for lesser crop yields per acre. The potential settler had several options for land acquisition: buy from a private individual, buy from the railroad, or get it free (or at a greatly reduced price) from the federal government. As Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder asserted in *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, “It was only after 1900, with the advent of new land policies, new farming machines and methods, and new promotional groups that the farmers’ frontier – the last frontier – broke upon the immense emptiness of the Montana plains.”¹³

Not until passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and the 1912 Three Year Homestead Act did settlers begin farming in the semi-arid environment of eastern Montana. These laws, which increased acreage and shortened the length of required residency time, allowed the claimant to be absent for five months a year to earn much needed cash at other pursuits. Although 320 acres was usually still far too little for a farm on the plains, homesteaders responded enthusiastically to these acts.

The settlement of eastern Montana in the early twentieth century was swift. During the period 1910 to 1922, homesteaders claimed nearly half of the land area. In 1887, the “Empire Builder” James J. Hill built his railroad, named the Great Northern in 1890, into northern Montana. In 1908, Hill began a promotional campaign to populate the lands along the Great Northern Railway. Brochures touted the Milk River country as “a poor man’s paradise where land was plentiful and a fortune could be made with little effort.” Between 1909 and 1918, nearly 80,000 people moved into eastern Montana. The passage of new homestead laws, rising prices of land in the Midwest, a barrage of

promotional campaigns, and several years of deceptively humid weather helped to usher in a second, and much larger wave of settlers.¹⁴ Additionally, large populations immigrating to America, the overcrowding of eastern cities, industrialization, and the opportunity to acquire land encouraged individuals to move west. Eventually a total of nearly thirty-two million acres passed from public to private ownership in Montana under these various land acts.

The year 1918 marked the beginning of a region-wide drought cycle that continued through the 1930s. A popular rhyme expressed the homesteaders' bitterness about Hill's promises: "Twixt Hill and Hell, there's just one letter, were Hill in Hell we'd feel much better!" Another went: "Forty miles to water, sixty miles to wood, I'm leaving old Montana; I'm leaving it for good." Unfortunately for the homesteaders, more than 80 percent of the new farmlands would prove to be unfit for crop agriculture. After little more than a decade, the homestead "boom" was followed by a long "bust" period that displaced thousands of settlers.

By 1922, approximately 60,000 people had left Montana.¹⁵ Intensive farming of small plots was destined to fail, and the majority of homestead entries were relinquished or cancelled. Consolidation of homesteads into a smaller number of larger farming units has been a continuing trend since the Second World War. Congress passed the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act in 1937 to return abandoned or sub-marginal farmland to public ownership for revegetation. Proponents of the Bankhead-Jones Act argued that improper land management by homesteaders led to the dustbowl of the 1930s.

Conclusion

Congress passed many legislative land acts to encourage land settlement, primarily the Homestead Acts of 1862, 1909, and 1912, which were administered by the General Land Office and the Bureau of Land Management. State historians see these acts as pivotal to the settlement of Eastern Montana. Federal legislation, along with the promotion of dryland farming techniques and huge advertising campaigns touting the benefits of Montana farming, positioned the state for a rush of land settlement and a population boom.

Individuals – native-born, foreign-born, men, and women – came to Eastern Montana hoping to start a new life farming in a land described as paradise. Numerous people came between 1910 and 1920, while a large majority were gone by 1925. A percentage of these settlers were women, seeking the same promises as their male counterparts. Many of these women filed and were issued land patents in their own name.

¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *Proceedings of the Forty-First Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, (1894): 79.

² Bureau of Land Management, “Abbreviated Historical Highlights,” (photocopy, Bureau of Land Management, Billings, Montana, nd).

³ Bureau of Land Management, “Abbreviated Historical Highlights,” (photocopy, Bureau of Land Management, Billings, Montana, nd).

⁴ Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1976), 244.

⁵ James Muhn, “Women and the Homestead Act: Land Department Administration of a Legal Imbrolio, 1863-1934,” *Western Legal History* 7, no. 2 (1994): 284.

⁶ Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder, *Montana*, 178-179.

⁷ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 178-179.

⁸ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 184.

⁹ Daniel N. Vichorek, *Montana's Homestead Era*, Montana Geographic Series, no.15 (Helena: Montana Magazine, 1987), 9.

¹⁰ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 183.

¹¹ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 180.

¹² Vichorek, *Montana's Homestead Era*,10.

¹³ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 178-179.

¹⁴ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 180.

¹⁵ Don Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana* (Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1999), 20.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN AND HOMESTEADING

A woman “dependent upon her own resources for support, she can make homestead entry as the head of a family or as a feme sole.”¹

Previous Work Concerning Women and the Homestead Phenomenon

A plethora of work produced by academic and avocational historians exists on the western frontier and homesteading. These studies appear in books, periodicals, and popular magazines, examining all facets of life these homesteaders experienced, including discussions of community, family, work, and law. Existing literature on women homesteaders falls into one of two basic broad categories. The first is the memoir— a personal account of a specific individual’s experience. The second assumes an academic, sociological perspective, but still relies on anecdotal evidence and oral history. The information concerning women homesteaders is vast, and to review it all would be a monumental task. Therefore, several works have been selected to summarize the variety of work studying the region of the Northwestern Plains.

Elaine Lindgren’s *Land in Her Own Name* discusses women homesteaders in North Dakota and the contributions they made to agricultural development and the growth of new communities between 1900 and 1915. Lindgren gathered information from three sources: women who homesteaded; friends and relatives of women who

homesteaded; and land records.² Lindgren collected interviews and information compiling a database of 306 case studies and relied greatly on the personal accounts of these women to describe their lives. She explored, specifically, women's age, marital status, ethnicity, gender, and property rights. Additionally, Lindgren studied aspects of women's life experiences such as home life, social events and interactions, and emotional dexterity. Lindgren concludes, "The interviews and the accounts leave the impression that each woman was in some way unique; each related a tale different in content and circumstance. Underlying their individual experiences, however, were characteristics that all possessed."³ She identified those as capability, independence, strength, and courage.

Dee Garceau, in *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929*, focuses on Sweetwater County, Wyoming, spanning the decades from 1880 to 1929.⁴ Concentrating entirely on women's experience, she examines subjects associated with women involving work and family. Her study compares women from different ethnic backgrounds (foreign-born versus native-born), and life occupations (mining versus ranching/homesteading). Garceau claims most women homesteaders had three motivations for acquiring land in the early twentieth century. First, many single women filed claims to increase their family's property holdings. Second, a number of women filed and attained claims as an investment property, eventually selling and earning a profit from their investment. Third, some independent women felt "satisfaction from their economic and social status associated with land ownership."⁵ Women homesteaders moved into new territory,

reconciling two lives: group cooperation and service to family, while simultaneously building a foundation of individual purpose and financial independence. Garceau asserts that these western, rural women capitalized on opportunities for land ownership. More importantly, women who chose to write about their experiences created a version of New Womanhood, as independent women in a rural heterosocial world.⁶

Paula Bauman published “Single Women Homesteaders in Wyoming, 1880-1930” in the *Annals of Wyoming* in 1986.⁷ Using oral histories and examining public documents, Bauman explores single women’s motives, how they obtained land, quality of life, and their status after a patent was issued. Bauman asserts that homesteading “offered a peculiar challenge to women. They sought adventure and fun, a husband, perhaps financial security, independence and equal rights.”⁸ Interestingly, she concludes that many women remained single after proving up on their land claims.

Glenda Riley’s book, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains*, compares the lives of women on the prairie and the Great Plains between 1815 and 1915. She begins her research by questioning the absence of women in the agricultural frontier narrative.⁹ This question leads her to “demonstrate not only that women did play highly significant and multifaceted roles in the development of the American West but also that their lives as settlers displayed fairly consistent patterns, which transcended geographic sections of the frontier.”¹⁰ Riley seeks to prove her statement by examining woman’s household work, contribution to income and production, and the communities of these two groups of women. Riley contends that regardless of a women’s place in the frontier (ranch, homestead, mining community,

etc.), duties were limited by her gender. Mothers', wives', daughters', and sisters' responsibilities were primarily based around the domestic sphere, which included childbirth, childcare, family relationships, and all associated domestic activities related to these tasks. Although Riley acknowledges women assisted in male tasks, their primary duties in all environments, involved domestic chores.

Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs, in "Montana Women's Clubs at the Turn of the Century," in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, examined homesteading women and their lives from a different perspective.¹¹ She focused on Montana women's groups and the importance they played in staving off loneliness and contributing to the success of local communities. Her conclusion is that frontier women and men lived in different worlds: women's more concerned with domesticity, and men's economically oriented. Women in community groups shared social values that provided an important bonding agent among them and ensured the survival of certain qualities: hard work, love of family, sobriety, and civility.¹²

Nancy J. Taniguchi's "Lands, Laws, and Women: Decisions of the General Land Office, 1881-1920 – A Preliminary Report" in the *Great Plains Quarterly* discusses property law and women.¹³ Taniguchi begins the article explaining the process of attaining land through the government, which involved a three-step process of filing a claim, proving up or making payment, and obtaining title or ownership. She further clarifies that each of these steps had problems, which the General Land Office (GLO) resolved to the best of their ability. This article specifically examines how the GLO handled land law cases concerning women. The research examined 1,162 cases

involving women, either sole litigants or a member of a party (i.e. one of a group of heirs). The cases varied concerning women's right to property after marriage, land claims after families fell apart, and a woman's property rights after desertion and/or divorce. She accomplishes this task by dividing the data by decade, ranging from 1881 to 1920. Data is further examined in relation to the "states or territories in which women met with their greatest number of land conflicts and how these were resolved."¹⁴

Taniguchi organizes the preliminary information from her research according to land office cases by decade, land decisions published, and the location of women's land office success. After analyzing the land decisions cases in her study, she reports that claims by women peaked in 1891 – 1900, and most activity took place in the Trans-Mississippi West. Following 1900, cases dropped off sharply, probably due to "the reduction in the size of the public domain caused by nineteenth-century land office activity."¹⁵ Further analysis of her results shows that Dakota Territory provided the first best hope for women legally, while Montana was the last best hope, with California a frequent stronghold of legal success.¹⁶ This result is based on the number of cases published where women brought the most litigation in those places and at those times. Taniguchi's research pointed to Montana as the only place where women achieved success throughout the entire period of study. In Montana, women won more cases than they lost in their attempts to obtain land through decisions reported by the General Land Office.¹⁷

This article is a brief synopsis of her current research and highlights the importance of her work. Taniguchi believes the importance of her study is that it "indicates the richness of a generally untapped source, the use which would allow more

precise information on the legal aspects of women's "settlement" of the West."¹⁸ She believes the GLO records present an interesting outlook of individual women's lives offering fresh perspectives on women's settlement of the west. Taniguchi acknowledges the positives and negatives of using this data. The benefit of these records is twofold: "First, they can augment existing research with an addition to the 'paper trail' specific to any time and place under study. Second, the inclusion in these records of data on women of varied age, class, economic pursuit, race and affiliation offers possibilities for comparison and tends to broaden research centered on the Homestead Act or a particular geographic location."¹⁹ The downside of using such primary records does exist. Unfortunately, they are an incomplete collection and "the brevity that makes these records so accessible often leaves the scholar wishing for more information."²⁰ Taniguchi recognizes that primary documents, like the GLO records, are favorably supplemented by local sources and histories.

Women and Homesteading Land Law

Many stories involving women homesteaders in historical and contemporary literature portray these individuals in a distinct way. These narratives depict women with high hopes, eventually succumbing to a hard life, which resulted in premature aging, loss of sanity, and even death. In contrast to the tragic end in these stories, many women actually homesteaded successfully without the loss of soundness of judgment and life. Numerous women made application - either alone, with partners, or husbands - and filed land claims in their own name. Prior to 1900, the number of female entries was small,

but after the turn of the century numbers increased notably.²¹ All of the laws discussed in Chapter Two were open to women to utilize, but the Homestead Act proved most attractive. This law, and its later amendments, was the most enduring of the settlement laws.

The process of attaining land from the federal government under the Homestead Act involved three steps: filing a claim, proving and/or making a payment, and obtaining title or ownership.²² General Land Office personnel bore responsibility for supervision of public lands and the laws that governed private interests. A preliminary report on the success and failure of land law cases concerning decisions by the GLO and women found Montana to be the only place where women achieved consistent legal success between 1881 and 1922.²³ Nancy Taniguchi found in her study of GLO documents that in Montana (as compared to other states) women won more legal cases than they lost. Explanations for this phenomenon are unknown.

Inquiries pertaining to the eligibility of women to file a claim under the provisions of the law fell within GLO domain. Fortunately, for single women, the gender-neutral wording of the 1862 Homestead Act dictated clearly who was eligible to file a claim. Any individual, male or female, considered head of a family or 21 years old was unhindered. Exceptions to this rule included single, unwed mothers who were not yet twenty-one. Considered the natural guardians of their children, these women met the provision “head of family.”²⁴

Unfortunately, this language made eligibility for married women difficult. Since the beginning of the new nation, patriarchal society considered that women’s political

and social choices “were, and ought to be, controlled by male relatives.”²⁵ Common law, which governed male/female relationships, deprived a woman of property rights after she was married. The GLO interpreted common law to mean that married women, unlike single women who had reached 21 years of age, could not make entry. In 1864, the commissioner of the GLO stated:

It is held [by the courts] that a married woman has no legal existence, her services and the proceeds of her labor being due and belonging to her husband; hence, although arrived at the age of twenty-one years, she can *per se* do no act that will not enure to the benefit and use of her husband; that if permitted to enter land because of having arrived at twenty-one years of age, the legal restrictions growing out of her matrimonial relations would at once be violated. The same objection arises should she claim as the ‘head of the family,’ as the husband is the ‘head’ during the existence of the marital tie.²⁶

As with single women, there were a few exceptions. Circumstances permitting a married woman to make entry included a husband imprisoned for life or abandonment.

In 1882, a married Colorado woman challenged the legal position of the General Land Office. Although her lawyer made a vigorous argument, the commissioner of the GLO cited earlier rulings and upheld the Denver Land Office’s decision on the “established rule of the Department that a *femme covert* [was] incompetent to make a homestead entry.”²⁷

Married women encountered other problems concerning land law. The long-standing position held as early as 1867 was that a subsequent marriage did not negate her claim to patent, if the individual complied with the requirements pertaining to residence and cultivation. This rule remained undisturbed until 1886, when a zealous

commissioner dictated that a woman forfeited her claim if she married before acquiring title to the property. The Secretary of the Interior did not concur with this decision and reversed the ruling. The judgment of the Secretary stated that if individuals met the qualifications before marriage, the occurrence of marriage did not forfeit the land claim.

Problems also emerged surrounding residence on the land. Initially, the GLO required that each married person live on his or her claim. The alternative was for one person to prove up on entry (i.e. pay for the land), or, if that was not possible, to relinquish a claim back to the government. If the couple took neither option, the GLO cancelled one for failure to comply with the provisions of the Homestead Act as to residence. Some couples found an alternative to these two options and resolved the quandary by building one home on the property line between the claims (if the claims were adjacent). This resolution did not convince the GLO, and the Department of Interior maintained that two separate residences could not be satisfied to the letter of the law by residing in one home on the property line. Concerning the difficulty surrounding individuals with land claims and marriage desires, Congress passed an act rectifying the problem. The Act of April 6, 1914 allowed the husband of a couple with homestead entries, each of whom had fulfilled the requirements of the Homestead Act for one year before their marriage, to select, which of the two entries would become their home and keep both acreages. The law encompassed not only prospective entries, but was also retroactive to those couples who already had land claims.

Widows, like single women, could file a homestead entry provided they were the head of a family and/or over 21 years of age. A widow of a man who had already made

an entry, and had died before proving up, could complete the entry first before the right passed to another heir.²⁸ No other public land laws gave a widow such privilege. The federal government viewed the widow as the only competent individual to submit proof for the entry of her deceased husband. The patent issuance was put in her name and protected by Congress – not even a husband's will vanquished this right.

This interpretation of the law allowed women to hold two homestead entries at the same time. This gave widows the opportunity to file land claims in their own names, if they had not already done so. The widow then had the opportunity to fulfill homestead requirements as to residence and cultivation on her own entry, while simultaneously only being required to fulfill cultivation requirements on her deceased husband's claim.

Widows also benefited under the Soldier's and Sailors Homestead Act of 1872, which stated that the surviving wife of a veteran was entitled to the same benefit of her husband. This meant that a widow could subtract the time equal to her husband's enlistment in the army to the time requirement required by the Homestead Act. Stipulations to the benefit required a woman not to remarry by the time she made entry; otherwise, the right went to the veteran's minor children. The widow could remarry after she made entry and still be entitled to deducting the time credit of her deceased husband.²⁹

There were exceptions to all of these benefits, which included insanity (her appointed guardian would then be responsible); voluntarily relinquishing her right to her children/heirs; a wife's desertion of her husband before death; divorce; and the murder of her husband and her conviction of the crime.

Women deserted by their husbands had other issues to deal with. Early in its

administration, the GLO considered a deserted woman capable of making entry as *femme sole*. A deserted woman had to meet the eligibility requirements concerning the land claim in question under the provisions of the Homestead Act, just like all other independent women. If a woman was deserted by her husband, and under age, she could not assume responsibility of the entry. Desertion of a wife and homestead claim by a husband was not uncommon, but proved to be a difficult legal question for the General Land Office. The Office's position stated that a woman, as long as she continued to comply with the requirements and proved desertion, was entitled to ownership of the land claim. The woman, however, had to keep the entry in the husband's name through the five-year compliance period, and could only file the patent in her name after it had been canceled for abandonment. Before this could happen, the GLO was required to make an effort to contact the husband and notify him of the claim cancellation. Obviously, this afforded the spouse an opportunity to protect his entry. Provided all these stipulations went smoothly, the deserted wife did not necessarily secure the entry. "Under the law, she had to be the first legal applicant after the cancellation of her husband's entry to be assured of getting the land."³⁰ Many abandoned women found most disheartening the fact that the time lived on and cultivating the land held under their husband's entry could not be credited to them. Residency and cultivation requirements began with their entry under the law. Many acts were proposed and defeated in Congress concerning these problems. Finally, in 1914, Congress enacted legislation that better protected the interests of deserted wives and the homestead entries that affected their lives. The new legislation permitted a deserted wife, who demonstrated that she had been abandoned for

more than one year, the right to prove up her husband's homestead in her own name, applying his time on the entry to her advantage.

Conclusion

Recent academic research concerning women homesteaders in the northern plains paints a picture of independent, capable women with strength and courage. These researchers and authors create a portrait of women homesteaders who assume family responsibilities while simultaneously asserting individual purpose and financial independence. These women are not dependent, but contribute to community, as well as to the emotional, physical, and financial functioning of households, farms, and ranches. Still, there is a separation of male and female spheres and a carry over from the constructed "republican wife and mother." Women are still primarily responsible for the survival and execution of moral behavior and, if married, under the jurisdiction of her husband and deprived of property rights.

Women homesteaders came west alone and with family. Government laws affected each group differently when they sought to file claims and assume ownership of land. Single women had an advantage in acquiring land, as long as they met all criteria in the gender-neutral wording of the 1862 Homestead Act. Married women faced many more obstacles in acquiring and/or maintaining their property rights and both groups were subject to varying legal interpretations made by reigning commissioners. Common law concerning married women made interpretation of land law difficult at best.

-
- ¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, General Land Office, *Circular in Reference to the Manner of Acquiring Title to the Public Lands* (Washington, D.C., 1904), 12.
- ² H. Elaine Lindgren, *Land in Her Own Name: Women as Homesteaders in North Dakota* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), xii-xiii.
- ³ Lindgren, *Land in Her Own Name*, 229.
- ⁴ Dee Garceau, *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press).
- ⁵ Garceau, *The Important Things of Life*, 112-113.
- ⁶ Garceau, *The Important Things of Life*, 127.
- ⁷ Paula M. Bauman, "Single Women Homesteaders in Wyoming, 1880-1930," *Annals of Wyoming* 58, no.1 (1986): 39-53.
- ⁸ Bauman, "Single Women Homesteaders," 48.
- ⁹ Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas).
- ¹⁰ Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 2.
- ¹¹ Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs, "Montana Women's Clubs at the Turn of the Century," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 36, no. 1 (1986): 26-35.
- ¹² Tubbs, "Montana Women's Clubs," 28.
- ¹³ Nancy J. Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women: Decisions of the General Land Office, 1881-1920 – A Preliminary Report," *Great Plains Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1993): 223-236.
- ¹⁴ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women", 229.
- ¹⁵ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women", 230.
- ¹⁶ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women", 230.
- ¹⁷ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women", 233.
- ¹⁸ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women", 234.
- ¹⁹ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women", 234.
- ²⁰ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women", 234.
- ²¹ James Muhn, "Women and the Homestead Act: Land Department Administration of a Legal Imbroglio, 1863-1934," *Western Legal History* 7, no. 2 (1994): 283-284.
- ²² Nancy J. Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women", 223.
- ²³ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women," 233.
- ²⁴ Muhn, "Homestead Act," 286.
- ²⁵ Carol Berkin, *First Generations: Women in Colonial America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 174.
- ²⁶ Muhn, "Homestead Act," 287.
- ²⁷ Muhn, "Homestead Act," 289.
- ²⁸ Muhn, "Homestead Act," 297.
- ²⁹ Muhn, "Homestead Act," 300.
- ³⁰ Muhn, "Homestead Act," 302.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODS

This study defines a woman homesteader as a female – single, married, divorced, or widowed – listed on a Yellowstone County, Montana General Land Office (GLO) land patent as sole owner or partner in the ownership of the property. Many women sought land ownership individually, while others listed themselves with another individual. Individuals listed with women included men (husbands, fathers, brothers), but many were listed with other women (mothers, sisters, friends). The surprising factor of this study is the high number of women listed on land patents of all kinds.

Yellowstone County, Montana: River Valley, Railroad, Opportunity

The Yellowstone River flows into Montana from its headwaters in Yellowstone National Park. The river runs north/northeast for approximately 450 miles before merging with the Missouri River near the North Dakota border. Several important tributaries diverge from the Yellowstone River – the Stillwater, Clarks Fork, Bighorn, Rosebud, Tongue, and Powder rivers – contributing to the grass-rich valleys which early explorers, like William Clark, identified as prime land for livestock grazing and agriculture. Captain W.F. Reynolds was one of the first explorers to conclude that the Yellowstone River Valley “affords peculiar facilities for a railroad,” while still other adventurers noted the river’s suitability for steamboat navigation.¹ By 1882, the rails of

the Northern Pacific Railroad arrived in the Yellowstone River basin and ended the days of steamboat travel and shipping. Yet “Even after the arrival of the railroad, agricultural development in the Yellowstone Valley moved slowly.”² Since the late 1800s, the region had been considered stock raising country. The arrival of other railroad companies, such as the Burlington and Milwaukee railroads, began bringing homesteaders to the region. Railroad advertising campaigns publicized the advantages of dryland farming (see Chapter Two), and also sold portions of their land tracts to eager homesteaders. Huge promotional campaigns launched by several railroad companies encouraged homesteaders to pack up and move west to settle in the Yellowstone River Valley, including Yellowstone County.

Yellowstone County, Montana is located in the south central portion of the state and organized in 1883 from a part of Custer County. The county further divided to form Carbon and Sweet Grass counties in 1885, Musselshell in 1911, and Big Horn and Stillwater in 1913.

Established in the summer of 1882, Billings became the administrative seat of Yellowstone County. Within several months, the city gained a population of several thousand people. Soon, the city and county occupied a strategic position and a logical stop in the Northwest being on the main line of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and the terminus of the Burlington and Missouri River railroads. The seat of Yellowstone County soon developed into a freight and passenger point for many converging rail lines and roads.³ Billings and Yellowstone County became successful due to good location, ideal climate, good railway service, and the agricultural wealth of its tributary and

surrounding lands. By the first decade of the twentieth century, homesteaders began to arrive in Yellowstone County.

The Record Universe

As discussed in Chapter Two, the GLO was established in 1812 as a bureau of the Treasury Department and has a long, detailed history. Currently, the Eastern States Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Springfield, Virginia maintains 7.5 million land transactions, involving more than a billion acres of land. These patent documents, including all homestead entries and cash entries, are filed according to the Act of Congress under which they were issued prior to 1908. After 1908, all patents have been assigned consecutive serial numbers, regardless of location, and filed numerically.⁴

Presently, there are 1,582 original GLO tract books at Eastern States, showing how, when, and to whom title to Public Domain lands passed from federal ownership in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Ohio, and Wisconsin. An Additional 2,325 tract books covering the western Public Domain states are also filed at the office on microfilm. In addition to the original tract books and microfilm, the office houses 9,386 volumes of patents and other conveyances of title in land, 30,000 Cadastral Plats, and 1,750 volumes of accompanying field notes.⁵

Collecting and Understanding Land Patents

All Yellowstone County, Montana patents used in this research were collected

from the BLM's General Land Office database. The BLM has created a website to access federal conveyance documents (including land patents), which offers researchers a source of information on the initial transfer of land title from the federal government to private ownership. As with other documents, the Eastern States Office manages and supplies access to all Public Land States patents. The GLO records were accessed online at www.glorerecords.blm.gov. Once at this page, an individual can search by name, accession/serial number, patent number, or legal land location. For the purposes of this study, all patents were searched by legal land location, which included state, county, township, and range. This locational information was submitted into the search page and generated a list of all land patents issued for that land area.

The generated list provided the patentee name, state, county, issue date, district land office, document number, and accession/serial number (see Figure 1). From this list, individual patents were accessed and examined fitting within the research parameters, i.e., women listed on patents issued in Yellowstone County between 1909 and 1934. The land authorities used in total number counts include the 1862 Homestead Act; 1877 Desert Land Act; 1902 Homestead-Reclamation Act (Newlands Reclamation Act); all supplemental Homestead Acts (1909 Enlarged Homestead Act, 1912 Three Year Homestead Act); 1916 Stock Raising Act; and the 1820 Sale-Cash Entry. Chapter Two describes these seven land authorities in detail. Two land authorities excluded from this study that appeared frequently were Sale-Townsite Settlement patents and Sale-Reclamation Townsite patents. Townsite patents are areas of public land kept apart for urban development, often subdivided in blocks, and further subdivided into town lots.

Figure 1. Example of Legal Land Location Search for Yellowstone County, Montana.

You searched on: State=MONTANA, County=Yellowstone, Township=1-S, Range=28-E,
Meridian=Montana PM

Patentee Name	State	County/ Parish	Issue Date	District Land Office	Doc. Nr.	Accession or Serial Nr.
BIDLAKE, JOHN	MT	Yellowstone	11/24/1928	Billings		1021325
CASE, ST PAUL	MT	Yellowstone	3/5/1915	Billings	05231	461296
DAWES, JOHN H	MT	Yellowstone	3/17/1915	Billings	05385	463428
DAWES, JOHN H	MT	Yellowstone	3/17/1915	Billings	05386	463429
FRASER, EDWARD A	MT	Yellowstone	4/11/1918	Billings	05402	624445
FRASER, EDWARD A	MT	Yellowstone	4/11/1918	Billings	05403	624446
HAGEN, ED	MT	Yellowstone	4/24/1917	Billings	08147	580217
JOHNSON, FRED	MT	Yellowstone	4/24/1917	Billings	08145	580216
KOUNTZ, IDA	MT	Yellowstone	4/24/1917	Billings	08214	580245
KOUNTZ, LOUIS	MT	Yellowstone	4/24/1917	Billings	08212	580243
KOUNTZ, LOUIS	MT	Yellowstone	4/24/1917	Billings	08213	580244
MCCONNACHIE, JOHN	MT	Yellowstone	3/5/1915	Billings	05356	461326
MCCONNACHIE, JOHN	MT	Yellowstone	11/22/1909	Billings	0687	90443
MONTANA STATE	MT	Yellowstone	7/22/1924	Billings		MTBIL 0017646
MONTANA STATE	MT	Yellowstone	4/26/1956	Billings		1159214
PERIL, ERVIN H	MT	Yellowstone	7/8/1914	Billings	08136	420180
PRESENT, ELIZABETH	MT	Yellowstone	3/5/1915	Billings	05581	461365
PRESENT, ELIZABETH	MT	Yellowstone	4/24/1917	Billings	08249	580265
SNIDOW, THOMAS A	MT	Yellowstone	6/6/1927	Billings		1003567
SNIDOW, THOMAS A	MT	Yellowstone	6/6/1927	Billings		1003568
SNIDOW, THOMAS A	MT	Yellowstone	6/6/1927	Billings		1003569
WILHELM, CHARLES C	MT	Yellowstone	10/24/1917	Billings	08757	605101

Also excluded were public lands obtained by Montana State University and the railroads, under the assumption that these patents and land sales did not contribute to homesteading activities relevant to this research.

The land patents can be viewed and printed in detail (see Figure 2), while a large majority of original patents have been digitized and are available online for viewing and printing (see Figure 3).

The land patent detail document explains original land patent information in understandable specifics for each issued patent for a particular area of land. The primary identification numbers are located the upper left-hand corner of the document. The accession/serial number, and beginning in 1908 the BLM serial number, were assigned consecutively and filed numerically at the opening and closing of the various land offices. The accession/serial number directly relates a document image to the original hardcopy document. The number identified the state, volume number, and page number of the original GLO document. Beginning in 1908, a serial number was assigned to each serial patent. The first serial patent has a serial number of 1, while the highest patent number is 1,242,610. Serial patent numbers maintain eight digits, with zeros filled in to the left to make eight places.⁶

Immediately below these two document numbers, is the patentee name. Generally, this is just one person, but it is not unusual to have several individuals listed on the patent as property owners. The BLM placed no limit on how many people could be listed as patentees. Also, there may be additional names listed on the document. For instance, an individual could have listed their maiden name, alias, and heirs.

Figure 2. Example of Land Patent Details – BLM GLO Records.

Accession/Serial #: 359980		BLM Serial #: MTBIL 0003246						
Names								
Patentee: MARY MURPHY								
Survey								
State: MONTANA								
Acres: 160								
Metes/Bounds: No								
Title Transfer		Document Numbers						
Issue Date:	10/14/1913	Document Nr.:	03246					
Land Office:	Billings	Misc. Doc. Nr.:	0					
Cancelled:	No	Accession/Serial Nr.:	359980					
U.S. Reservations:	Yes	BLM Serial Nr.:	MTBIL 0003246					
Mineral Reservations:	No							
Authority:	May 20, 1862: Homestead EntryOriginal (12 Stat. 392)							
Aliquot Parts	Sec./Block	Township	Range	Fract. Section	Meridian	State	Counties	Survey Nr.
N½SW	22/	2-N	26-E	No	Montana PM	MT	Yellowstone	
SESW	22/	2-N	26-E	No	Montana PM	MT	Yellowstone	
SWSE	22/	2-N	26-E	No	Montana PM	MT	Yellowstone	

Following the patentee name is title transfer information. Title transfer information includes the day, month, and year the land title was issued (not filed). The issue date is the actual date the President signed the land document, as well as any officers or employees of the General Land Office.⁷ The land office is the name of the location where the GLO established a district land office to handle various land transactions. Issued patents were bound into volumes by land office names, and existed for each state.⁸ A yes or no after cancelled indicates whether land documents that were

Figure 3. Example of Original Land Patent Document.

Billings 03246	4-1003-B.	
<p>The United States of America,</p> <p>To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:</p>		
<p>WHEREAS, a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Billings, Montana,</p> <p>has been deposited in the General Land Office, whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress of May 20, 1862, "To Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain," and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of Mary Murphy</p> <p>has been established and duly consummated, in conformity to law, for the north half of the southwest quarter, the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter, and the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter of Section twenty-two in Township two north of Range twenty-six east of the Montana Meridian, Montana, containing one hundred sixty acres,</p>		
<p>according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land, returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE by the Surveyor-General:</p>		
<p>NOW KNOW YE, That there is, therefore, granted by the UNITED STATES unto the said claimant the tract of Land above described; TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said tract of Land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said claimant and to the heirs and assigns of the said claimant forever; subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of courts; and there is reserved from the lands hereby granted, a right of way thereon for ditches or canals constructed by the authority of the United States.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I, Woodrow Wilson</p> <p style="text-align: center;">President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.</p>		
<p>GIVEN under my hand, at the City of Washington, the FOURTEENTH</p> <p>(SEAL) day of OCTOBER In the year of our Lord one thousand</p> <p>nine hundred and THIRTEEN and of the Independence of the</p> <p>United States the one hundred and THIRTY-EIGHTH.</p>		
<p>By the President: <i>Woodrow Wilson</i></p> <p>By <i>M. P. LeRoy</i> Secretary,</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>L. L. O. Lamar,</i> Recorder of the General Land Office.</p>		
<p>RECORD OF PATENTS: Patent Number 359980</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">6-3177</p>		

issued were later cancelled. Cancelled documents were replaced by another document.⁹ U.S. reservations refer to the federal government retaining some right, title, or interest in the lands conveyed, such as granting right-of-ways for ditches or canals.¹⁰ Mineral Reservations indicate whether the land described in the land conveyance document involved the reservation of mineral rights for mining, agriculture, manufacturing, or other purposes.¹¹ Finally, the title transfer authority refers to the congressional act or treaty that supports the transfer of land from the United States government to private owners.¹²

Survey information offers minimal description of the land conveyed from the federal government to the private individual. State, depending on the context, is either the geographic name where the lands were located or the administrative name of the land office where the sale was completed.¹³ Acres indicate the total or cumulative acreage described in the document. This number is expressed to the nearest thousandth of an acre.¹⁴ Metes and Bounds indicate whether property is described in some other way than the rectangular survey system.¹⁵

The final portion of the land patent document is the legal land location, described using the rectangular survey system. The land descriptions uniquely identify the parcel, or parcels of land; title is given by the land patent. Briefly and simply described, the rectangular survey system uses imaginary “nets” of big rectangles superimposed on the land. At a known geographic position, the center of a “net” is anchored where two base lines cross the center. One base line travels east/west, while the other, called the principal meridian, travels north/south. The big rectangles of the net measure 24 miles by 24 miles, and are described according to their position in relation to the base line and

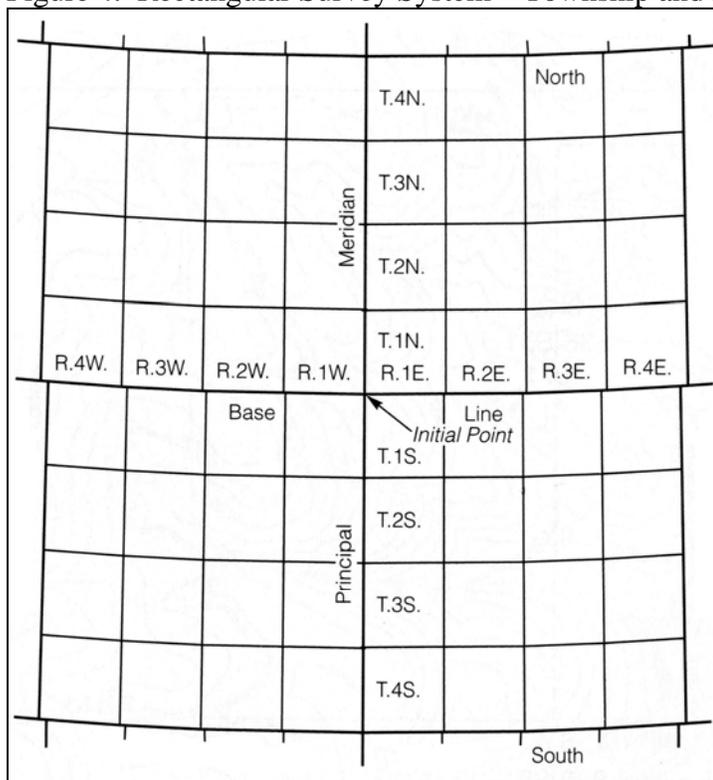
principal meridian.¹⁶ These 24-mile square rectangles, called tracts, are divided into 16 townships. A township is a major subdivision of public lands contained within the boundaries of the north/south range lines. Townships, measuring six miles on each side, contain approximately 36 square miles, or 23,040 acres.¹⁷ Townships are notated on maps using a number and directional letter. The number identifies its relation to a base line and a principal meridian, while the letter indicates which side, north or south, of the baseline the township is located.¹⁸ The townships are divided into sections. Sections are one-mile square tracts of land, containing 640 acres within a township (i.e. 1/36 of a township). The section numbers identify the tract of land within the township, and are numbered 1 to 36.¹⁹ Sections are further divided into half and quarter sections, repeatedly, until the parcel of land is accurately described.

Parcels of land are described using additional terms such as aliquot parts, ranges, and lots (or fractional lots). The range, used in conjunction with township, indicates a row of townships lying east or west of the principal meridian and numbered successively to the east and to the west. Like townships, ranges are notated on maps using a number and directional letter. The range number identifies a township's east or west relation to its principal meridian, while the letter indicates which side of the principal meridian the township is located²⁰(see Figures 4 and 5).

Aliquot parts notate exact subdivision of a section of land and use half or quarter of the largest subdivision of the section to accomplish this. To summarize aliquot parts: a section contains 640 acres; a half section contains 320 acres, a quarter section contains 160 acres; a half of a quarter section contains 80 acres; and a quarter of a quarter section

contains 40 acres.²¹ Forty-acre quarter, quarter sections can be further divided using quarter sections, or lots or fractional lots. Lots and fractional lots are commonly used for tracts of land that cannot be generally described by conventional aliquot parts.

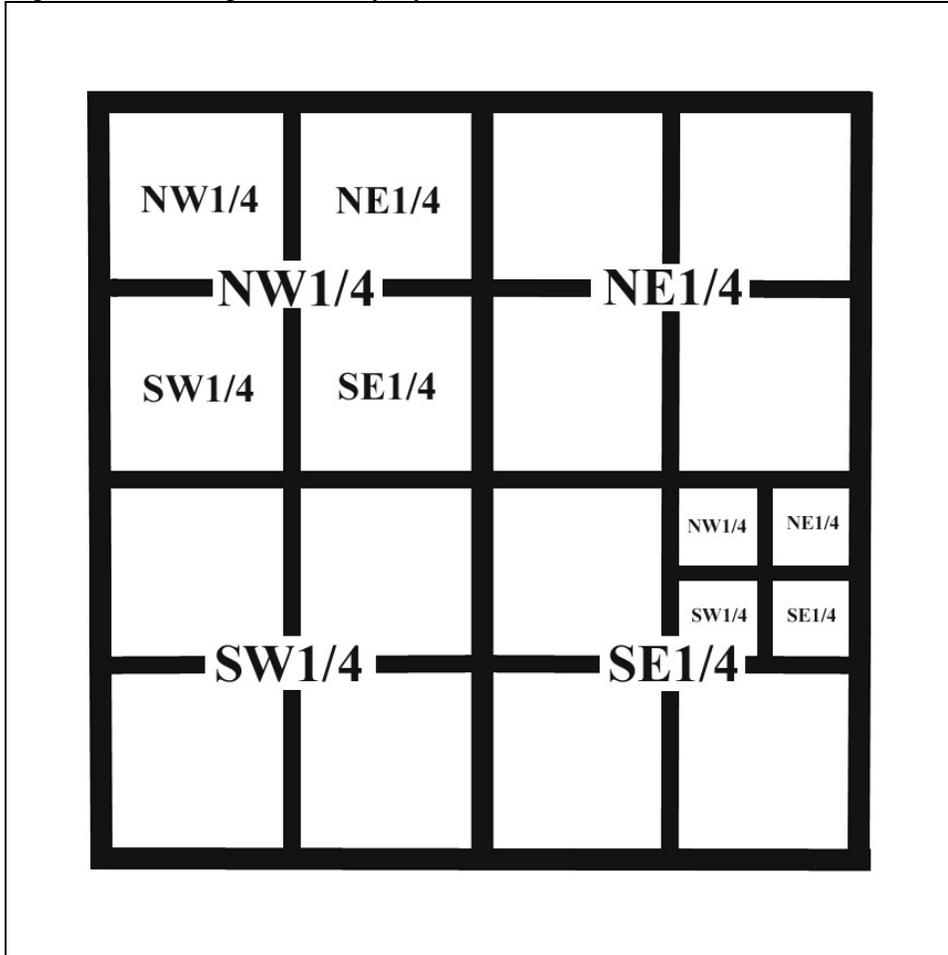
Figure 4. Rectangular Survey System – Township and Range.



Clearing Up Discrepancies with Land Patents

Following collection and examination of land patents and the authority under which patents were issued, it became clear that a significant number of homestead entries were made under the 1862 Homestead Act. None of these documents indicated whether patents were issued under the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act or the 1912 Three Year Homestead Act. I contacted the BLM records office regarding this discrepancy. Terri

Figure 5. Rectangular Survey System – Section.



Bakken, the BLM's Montana State Office Public Room's Work Leader, explained the records office's procedure for recording homestead entries. All homestead entries are recorded under the 1862 Homestead Act. In order to distinguish between issued patents under the 1862 Act and all supplemental homestead acts, each patent was examined to see which ones do not fit the 1862 Homestead Act parameters. Therefore, land patents issuing more than 160 acres are counted within all supplemental homestead acts.

Further examination of patents also revealed certain document numbers

listed twice. These patents usually indicate a woman was unmarried when she filed, but by the time she had “proved up,” she had married. This illustrates that these women met the criteria required for fulfilling patent requirements, regardless of marriage and maintained their property ownership.

Finally, decisions needed to be made concerning individuals first names. Some names are given to both men and women, and, therefore, spellings of certain names usually associated with men or women were used to assign gender identity. For example, I counted Frances, Jessie, and Jessey were women; Francis and Jesse as men.

Conclusion

The Bureau of Land Management has successfully made a vast amount of information readily and easily available to the public. The information found in the GLO records concerning homesteaders is a valuable resource, not just to academic historians, but anyone interested in history, genealogy, and settlement of the United States. Additionally, the BLM has produced a plethora of information accessible online defining terms, explaining how to read land patents, and describing the rectangular survey system and the methods of recording information. Through the course of this research, decisions had to be made on how to organize and interpret information. Not being able to separate out every homestead entry according to the land authority it was issued under was an unforeseeable obstacle. Therefore, a decision was made to simply separate patents issued under the 1862 Homestead Act and all supplemental homestead acts. Although general, this separation has shed light on settlement in Yellowstone County concerning women

and revealed interesting patterns.

¹ Don Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana* (Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1999), 335.

² Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, 336.

³ Anonymous, *An Illustrated History of Yellowstone Valley*, Part V, (Spokane: Western Historical Publishing Company, 1907), 58.

⁴ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Patent Documents and Tract Books," *General Land Office – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/generallandoffice>.

⁵ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Public Domain States," *Our Recordkeeping History – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/ourrecordkeepinghistory>.

⁶ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Serial Patent" and "Serial Patent Number," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

⁷ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Issue Date," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

⁸ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Land Office," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

⁹ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Cancelled Document," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹⁰ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "U.S. Reservations," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹¹ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Mineral Reservations," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹² Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Title Transfer Authority," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹³ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "State," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹⁴ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Acres," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹⁵ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Meters and Bounds," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹⁶ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Rectangular Survey System," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹⁷ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Township," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹⁸ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Township Direction" and "Township Number," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

¹⁹ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Section" and "Section Number," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

²⁰ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Range," "Range Direction," and "Range Number," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

²¹ Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior), "Aliquot Parts," *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

CHAPTER FIVE

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA WOMEN HOMESTEADERS

Between 1909 and 1934, the federal government issued 4,066 land patents in Yellowstone County, Montana. Of these total land patents, 746 (18%) land patents were issued to women, who laid claim to 154,647.95 acres. These statistics reflect the number of land titles issued on the patent date. Filing dates are not listed on the land patents, and, therefore, there is no information concerning the amount of time it took an individual to “prove up” and patent their land claim. Table 1 lists the number of patents issued by year and the percentage associated with women.

Patents Issued to Women Through Time

Examination of the raw numbers and the associated percentages indicates that the time span from 1913 to 1921 is significant for women, as well as men. These numbers in relation to dates exhibits a rise and fall for both women and men at the same time. From 1913 to 1914, the number of men receiving patents rises 44%, while women’s issued patents increase by 60%. The sudden increase in homesteaders in the year spanning 1913 to 1914 most likely occurred due to the 1912 supplemental Three-Year Homestead Act. This act reduced residence time on a filed claim to three years and allowed the settler to be gone from his/her homestead five months of each year. Birdie Streets, from the Blue Creek area in Yellowstone County, recalled that her family patented its first 160 acres

Table 1. Patents Issued to Women in Yellowstone County, Montana Between 1909 and 1934 by Year.

Year	# of Patents Issued to Women	Total Patents Issued	% of Women
1909	19	56	34
1910	21	123	17
1911	30	121	25
1912	23	118	19
1913	19	173	11
1914	47	322	15
1915	150	579	26
1916	65	426	15
1917	137	694	20
1918	51	243	21
1919	79	493	16
1920	34	256	13
1921	22	153	14
1922	11	85	13
1923	11	48	23
1924	1	31	3
1925	1	14	7
1926	3	8	38
1927	2	17	12
1928	2	19	11
1929	1	15	7
1930	1	11	9
1931	5	32	28
1932	6	12	50
1933	1	3	33
1934	4	14	29
TOTALS	746	4066	18

using one of the supplemental homestead acts.¹

The years from 1914 to 1917 produced unusually wet years, which led to high crop yields. However, attributing “boom” years to weather is risky analysis. It is important to remember that considering weather as a “boom” factor may be misleading since land claims were filed, in some circumstances, long before issue dates (maybe as much as three to five years beforehand).

By 1915, women’s numbers triple, while men’s are only up 36%. Several reasons

most likely contributed to the high rise in numbers for women. Montanan historians refer to this year as the “miracle year.”² High precipitation contributed to abundant crop yields. This, in combination with high grain prices and the increasing demands for Montana wheat stimulated by World War I, contributed to the influx of farmers and the forecast of a bright future in the agricultural industry. Montana’s nutritious wheat held a top position in the international markets.³ No doubt, women as well as men took advantage of these positive developments. Additionally, in November of 1914, women’s suffrage passed in Montana. The suffrage amendment gained its largest support from the new homestead counties in eastern Montana. Although it is difficult to prove that the right to vote spurred women to move to Montana and homestead, suffrage was likely an attraction for some women, particularly those single or divorced and considered head of their household.

The following year, 1916, the number of women receiving patents dropped by 57% in Yellowstone County, while men’s only dropped 16%. Although the numbers decreased, 1916 is still considered part of the boom years. The following year, 1917, women issued patents increased 53%, while men’s increased 35%. This high increase in women homesteaders may be the response to two important factors. First, Mother Nature was generous with successive years of good precipitation, and high food prices had fostered persistent farm success. The effects of a devastating war in Europe opened new markets. Secondly, America entered World War I in 1917 and had an abrupt effect upon agriculture. The price of food and commodities climbed and Congress enacted the Lever Food and Fuel Control Act. This act affixed the price of wheat at not less than \$2.00 per

bushel. The U.S. government appealed to the patriotic fervor in America, and encouraged farmers to expand operations and production. The newly established Federal Reserve System made taking out loans incredibly easy and farmers bought more land, buildings, and machinery.⁴ With wheat bringing in over \$2.00 per bushel and confidence that the War would last at least until 1920, farmers invested heavily in themselves, certain of being able to repay the debt. Because of all these factors, historians consider 1917 the climax of the homestead boom. However, the first signs of the drought cycle appear the next year in Eastern Montana.

After using a supplemental homestead act to patent their first homestead, Birdie Streets recalled her family purchasing another farm in 1917 or 1918. This time they purchased the 160-acre property from a private individual. Ms. Streets recalled,

Few years when it rained real well my mother had a beautiful garden. She had all kinds of flowers. Zinnias, carnations – well, it was a carnation-like flower. It wasn't really carnations. I think it was "Pinks" or something like that. She had a wonderful garden. Raised potatoes. I say this was only a few years because we didn't have very much rain for a number of years. But when it did rain, why, she had a wonderful garden. And then were wonderful crops.⁵

All of these preceding reasons explain a general increase in numbers, but still does not answer the question why women were more active than men in attaining land patents in certain years. Nancy J. Taniguchi offers an interesting explanation in her 1993 article "Land, Laws, and Women" concerning legal land decisions made by the General Land Office.⁶ Her preliminary study found Montana, as well as California, fair and positive to women with land cases. "Based on the cases published, women brought the

most litigation in those places...Probably they were at least reasonably confident of success, for only on that basis will anyone litigate.”⁷ Taniguchi’s findings indicate, “Montana was the only place where women achieved success throughout the whole period of study (1881-1922).”⁸ Although not specific in her article about which cases in Montana were litigated, she gives examples of the kinds of cases brought to court overall. For example, a major concern facing women was, upon marriage, would they lose ownership rights if their claim had not yet proceeded to title. Other cases involved fulfilling residency requirement, such as a married couple owning two, separate claims, but living together straddling the property.

Taniguchi also suggests that the election of Jeannette Rankin to Congress in 1916 may have been a result of decades of conditions more favorable to women than those of the rest of country. She does concede, however, that there is no direct correlation demonstrable between women’s success in the General Land Office and women’s suffrage.⁹

In 1918, both women’s and men’s numbers drop 63% and 66%, respectively. Prior to 1918, the effects of drought occurred north of the Missouri River. However, by 1918, the drought moved south and affected the eastern two-thirds of the state.¹⁰ The high drop in the percentages of homesteaders probably aligns with drought conditions. An interesting occurrence is the rise of numbers in 1919 in Yellowstone County. In eastern Montana, 1919 is considered one of the most destructive years, yet the year 1919 sees both groups’ numbers rise again. Women’s rise 35% and men’s rise 54%. Perhaps this is due to the presence of the Yellowstone River, making this area of eastern Montana

slightly more fertile than other regions of the state. Additionally, perhaps word of the drought did not spread as fast. Most likely, newcomers to the state in the previous years did not realize that the wet years were not the norm, but the exception.

The remaining two years, 1920 and 1921, see both sexes' numbers decline. Women's drop 57% and 35%, while men's drop 46% and 41%. A myriad of problems hit the state at this time and were catastrophic. Due to drought, other problems arose including fires, gophers, and locusts. By 1920, high winds devastated the environment. Several years of wasteful cultivation methods and overproduction encouraged by the Federal Reserve System contributed to serious wind erosion, resulting in dust storms and the inability of the soil to retain moisture. Birdie Streets recalled that 160 acres was not enough on which to make a living. "It had to be at least 320 and that still wasn't enough."¹¹

Patents issued significantly dropped off, by at least 50%, starting in 1922 and consistently decline through the remaining 1920s and 1930s. Although percentages for women's patents remain high for the 1920s and 1930s, these are deceptive figures considering that the actual numbers for both sexes issued land patents are much lower. Between 1919 and 1925, approximately two million acres passed out of production in the state of Montana and farmers vacated eleven thousand farms, not able to pay large debts incurred since 1917¹². Birdie Streets recalls her family leaving their homestead in 1932. Her story reflects the hardships many families faced.

Well, it was due to the poor water. No water for the livestock that was any good. And then we didn't have enough pasture to have any excess number of cattle to

make a living. A homestead of 160 acres is just too small in a dryland area to make a home out of, you know, unless you can irrigate. And then due to grasshoppers and drought, hail, poor prices, we just couldn't make it and we have to leave. And all my Dad owed on the place was \$2,000. And he just walked off and left it.¹³

Eighteen percent of the individuals issued land patents between 1909 and 1934 were women. Comparing the rise and fall of issued patents, it becomes apparent that, although the percentages differ, women and men's numbers increase and decrease at the same intervals over time. This data suggests women followed the same trends as men, indicating whatever compelled men to homestead, appears to hold true for women as well. At the beginning of the century, a bombardment of positive advertising, frequently executed by the railroad companies, explains the initial rise in homesteading. Additionally, 1909 and 1912 saw the first of the supplemental homestead acts, which increased acreage and reduced residence requirements.

The outbreak of World War I and America's eventual involvement raised the price of wheat and coaxed individuals into a false sense of well being, promoting the mortgaging of land and equipment. The unexpected onset of drought drove the state, as well as Yellowstone County, into a decline. Figure 6 illustrates this trend.

Land Authorities and Women Homesteaders

Scrutinizing the number of patents issued to women each year in association to the land authority paints an alternate social picture. Table 2 lists the number of women issued land patents through time, but, in addition, compares the amount of acreage

Figure 6. Yellowstone County, Montana Issued Patents, 1909 to 1934.

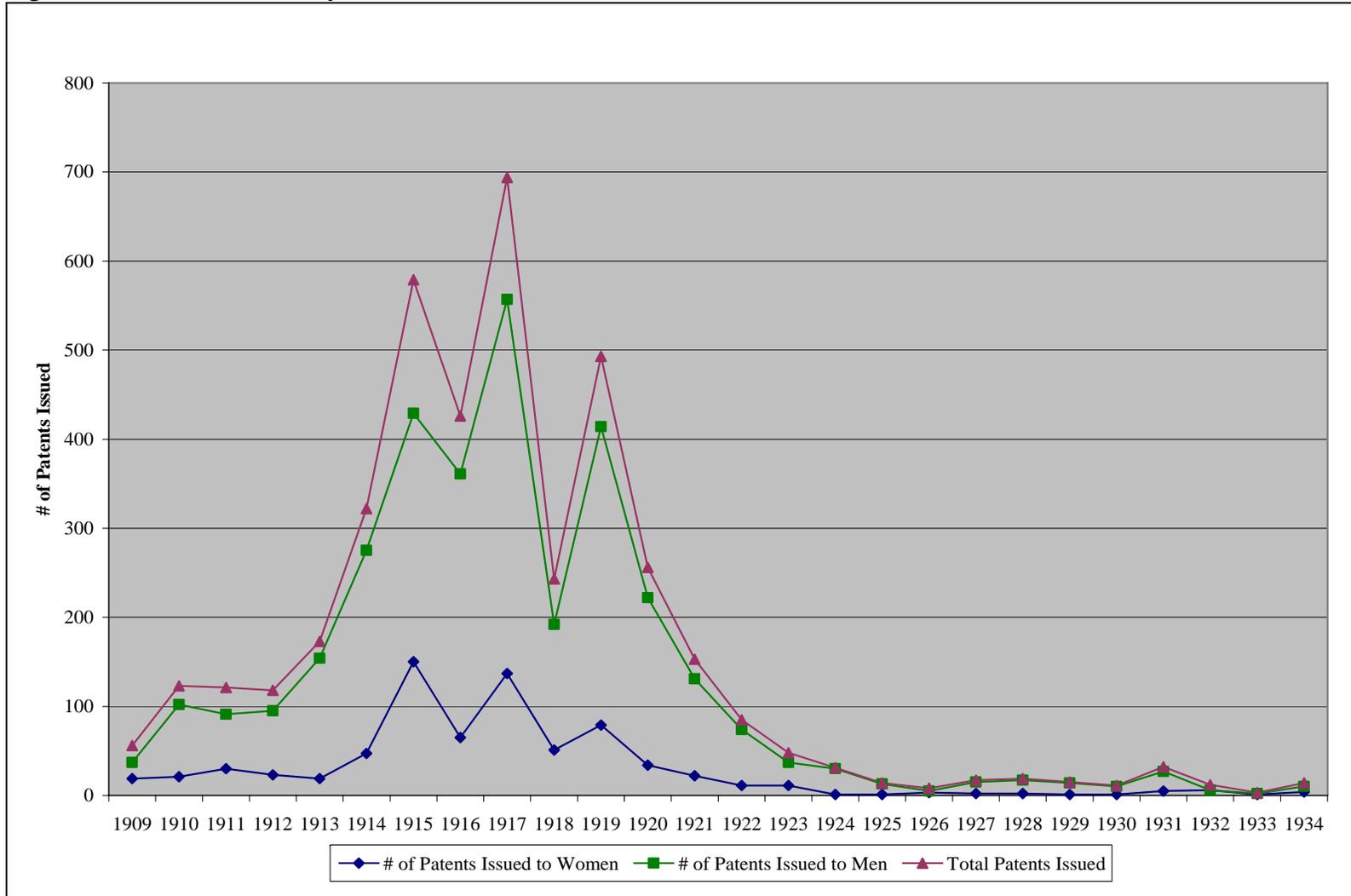


Table 2. Yellowstone County, Montana Number of Patents and Land Authority Information for Women - Between 1909 and 1934.

Year	May 20, 1862: Homestead Entry		June 17, 1902: Homestead Reclamation		All Supplemental Homestead Acts		March 3, 1877: Desert Land Act		December 29, 1916: Stock Raising Act		April 24, 1820: Sale-Cash Entry	
	# of Patents	Acreage	# of Patents	Acreage	# of Patents	Acreage	# of Patents	Acreage	# of Patents	Acreage	# of Patents	Acreage
1909	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	2768.36
1910	8	892.8	0	0	0	0	1	320	0	0	12	2018.91
1911	4	399.81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	3398.58
1912	7	964.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	2480
1913	6	880.04	0	0	1	320	0	0	0	0	12	1996.01
1914	25	3713.21	1	40	4	956.79	0	0	0	0	17	3317.63
1915	27	3884.29	3	160	27	8090.01	0	0	0	0	93	23055.58
1916	14	2157.4	9	510.56	16	4310.95	0	0	0	0	26	5916.35
1917	18	2658.72	3	120	28	8033.73	0	0	0	0	88	24126.72
1918	10	1558.31	6	249.54	31	9278.4	1	155.68	0	0	3	520
1919	24	3135.75	7	324.92	47	14261.84	0	0	0	0	1	121.17
1920	7	794.74	5	354.31	21	5785.03	0	0	0	0	1	40
1921	6	680.03	9	643.17	6	1856.45	0	0	0	0	1	160
1922	2	200	2	120	5	1516.32	1	160	1	320	0	0
1923	2	212.1	3	199.19	3	960	0	0	1	320	2	240
1924	0	0	0	0	1	199.72	0	0	0	0	0	0
1925	0	0	1	49.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1926	0	0	1	40	2	520	0	0	0	0	0	0
1927	0	0	0	0	2	640	0	0	0	0	0	0
1928	0	0	2	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1929	0	0	1	86.15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1930	0	0	1	63.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1931	1	160	4	344.76	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1932	0	0	6	394.99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1933	0	0	1	81.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1934	0	0	4	210.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	161	22291.23	69	4192.49	194	56729.24	3	635.68	2	640	317	70159.31

women laid claim to over time by land authority. This data indicates the amount of acreage offered through the supplemental homestead acts was not necessarily the driving force. The issuance of 160-acre plots appears to be as common as 320-acre plots.

Only one percent of the total women homesteaders in Yellowstone County used the Desert Land Act and the Homestead Stock Raising Acts to acquire land. At one percent, these acts, at least for women, had very little to do with women seeking out and purchasing property in their own name. The Homestead-Reclamation Act, also known as the Newlands Reclamation of 1902, was used by 10% of women homesteaders in Yellowstone County, Montana. Interestingly, all of the women using this act acquired 100 acres or less. This may be due to the requirement to irrigate lands patented, and the inability to accomplish such a task, particularly after 1919.

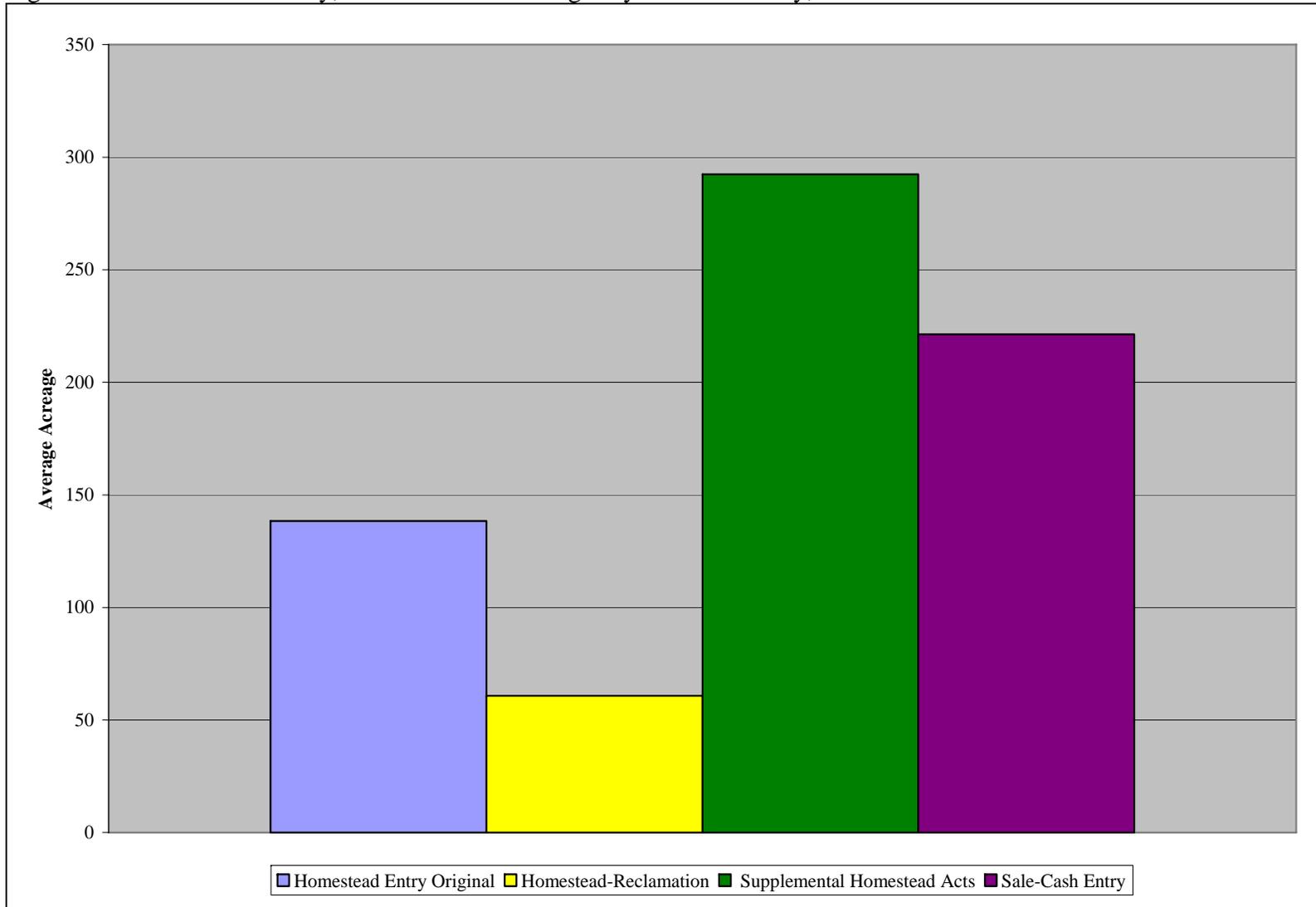
Several congressional acts contributed to women homesteading in their own names or with equal ownership rights: 1) Homestead Entry Original; 2) Sale-Cash Entry; and 3) All Supplemental Homestead Acts after 1862. Land patents issued under the 1862 Homestead Act (patents issued prior to 1909 for 160 acres or less) comprised 22% of listed women homesteaders in Yellowstone County, while all supplemental homestead acts (patents issued in 1909 and after for over 160 acres) comprised 26%. Issued patents under the Sale-Cash Entry Act comprised 42% of women homesteaders in Yellowstone County. This large percentage of women purchased land with cash. The numbers that appeared during the land patent search, at least in Yellowstone County, disproves assumed homesteading facts. First, the additional acreage that supplemental homestead acts added on did not necessarily prove anymore important than the original Homestead

Act. What was likely more attractive to women homesteaders, as well as men, was the shorter residency requirements and the option of leaving your homestead for a longer duration of the year. Second, free land proved not to be the prevailing impetus. Over 300 women chose to pay cash instead of meet the requirements of any homestead act and only pay the filing fee, and they bought considerable acreage. The average land acreage women purchased with cash was 221.32 acres. Therefore, a woman who purchased with cash would pay the following amounts: 160 acres, a purchase price of \$200; 200 acres, a purchase price of \$250; and the average of 221.32 acres, a purchase price of \$276.65. The average acreage acquired using a supplemental homestead act was 292.42 acres. Figure 7 illustrates these patterns.

Women Homesteaders and Diversity

Malone and Roeder, in *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, discuss the difficulties of generalizing about homesteaders and describe them as a very diverse group. Searching the 1910 and 1920 manuscript censuses yielded 23% and 21%, respectively, of the women who homesteaded in Yellowstone County. In the 1910 census, five women who received patents in 1910 appeared in the census. Four of the five listed themselves as the head of their household. All were white; one of the women was under the age of 30; the remaining women were in their 40s and 50s. Two of the women listed themselves as single; one was divorced, one was married, and one widowed. Only two of these women had living children. Two of the women were born in Canada, while one was born in Missouri, one in Iowa, and one in Sweden. The

Figure 7. Yellowstone County, Montana Acre Averages by Land Authority, 1909 to 1934.



majority of these women's parents were born in Europe, and immigrated to America from either Ireland or Sweden. All of the women spoke English as their first language.

Interestingly, none of the women are listed as a farmer or rancher, either by their own accord or the census recorder did not list them as such.

In 1920, seven women appeared in the census. All of the women listed themselves as white, but only three identified themselves as head of household. The two youngest women were 36 and 38, while the rest of the women ranged in age from 40 to 62. Five of the seven women were widowed, while the remaining two were married. All of these women were born in America, as well as the majority of their parents. These women's occupations ranged from farmer to seamstress. Table 3 summarizes this information.

The 1910 census shows that 60% of the located women were foreign born, while in 1920 all the women were native born. In addition, many of the women were widowed, suggesting homesteading may have been an opportunity to "start over" and assert some financial independence.

Conclusion

From 1909 to 1934, Montana women claimed over 150,000 acres and 18% of the issued land patents in Yellowstone County. These women came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, ages, and marital status. Scrutinizing the data indicates 1913 to 1921 as important for women, as well as men, suggesting that women's impetus for homesteading was the same as men's, and those women took advantage of the same opportunities.

Table 3. Yellowstone County, Montana 1910 and 1920 Census Results.

Name	Patent Issue Date	Relation	Race	Age	Marital Status	Place of Birth	Father Place of Birth	Mother Place of Birth	Occupation
1910 Census Information									
Eva Garvin	2/3/1910	Head	W	47	Divorced	MO	?	?	None
Mary Kennedy	7/7/1910	Sister	W	47	Single	Canada	Ireland	Ireland	Cook
Emma Dietz	9/8/1910	Head	W	52	Married	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Housework
Lottie Hardee	7/21/1910	Head	W	27	Single	IA	IA	IA	?
Julia Reeves	6/9/1910	?	W	58	Widow	Canada	Ireland	Ireland	?
1920 Census Information									
Gertrude Anderson	8/11/1920	Head	W	40	Widow	IA	IN	IA	?
Rose Austin	5/14/1920	In Law	W	62	Married	PA	PA	IA	Housewife
Anna McMullin	9/23/1920	Head	W	52	Widow	KS	NY	PA	Farmer
Lulu Kilfoy	5/17/1920	Sister	W	38	Widow	OH	IN	IN	Housekeeper
Mary Logan	4/26/1920	Head	W	54	Widow	WI	Germany	Germany	Labor
Stella Paustian	5/17/1920	Wife	W	36	Married	IA	IL	VA	None
Ida Miller	9/8/1920	Roomer	W	55	Widow	OH	VA	VA	Seamstress

Nancy Taniguchi, in her research, suggests women may have felt equal standing in Montana concerning land law and the legal judgments handed down.

The original Homestead Act, all supplemental homestead acts, and the direct purchase of land with cash all contributed significantly to women homesteading. The combination of these legislative acts accounted for almost 90% of the women who homesteaded. Interestingly, when separating out all homestead entries from cash entries, women paying cash for land almost equals those using homestead acts to acquire land. This suggests that free land and large landholdings were not necessarily important to homesteading women. What may have been important for these women not purchasing land was revised residency requirements and the opportunity to acquire land in her own name.

¹ Birdie Streets, interview by Rom Bushnell, July 20, 1993, transcript, The Real West Project, Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT, 2.

² Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1976), 186.

³ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 186.

⁴ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 194.

⁵ Streets Interview, 2.

⁶ Nancy J. Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women: Decisions of the General Land Office, 1881-1920 – A Preliminary Report," *Great Plains Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1993): 223-236.

⁷ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women," 230-231.

⁸ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women," 233.

⁹ Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women," 233.

¹⁰ Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 216.

¹¹ Streets Interview, 4.

¹² Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, 218.

¹³ Streets Interview, 3.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Today, the deserted homesteads seen around Montana are a lasting legacy of the homestead boom of the early to mid-1900s. These landscape features of the past remind residents how dependent we are on the land, whether through resource extraction, ranching, or farming.

The image of women homesteaders forming a new, independent identity for women through supporting suffrage, private land ownership and autonomous financial security presented homesteading as a medium for transforming gender identity. Dee Garceau explored this rural story of independence in Wyoming, and discovered a more complex reality. “Homesteading was like a fault line in the terrain of opportunity for single women – the drift of one side toward group cooperation and service to family; the other toward individual ambition and economic independence.”¹ Even though specifically referring to single women, these are feelings that were most likely felt by all women homesteaders. Ann Kooistra-Manning points out in her article, “A Place of Our Own: Homesteads in the Yellowstone Valley,” that some women found living in the west an experience in freedom. “The reins of protocol for women relaxed on the frontier, and many of the social constraints of Southern and Eastern society were absent altogether.”² It is likely that this relaxation of “societal constraints” may have been more out of necessity than choice. With the amount of work on a homestead, many sexual

divisions of labor may have gone by the wayside, superceded by the need to accomplish mandatory tasks and survive.

This research examined actual issued land patents in an attempt to understand the relationship between women homesteaders and the land acts. American Western history generally assumed women came west and attained land patents primarily due to homestead laws, specifically the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act and the 1912 Three Year Homestead Act. Examination of the land patent documents led to some interesting interpretations.

Analyzing the data and the associated percentages suggests the time span from 1913 to 1921 is significant for women, as well as men, being issued land patents in Yellowstone County, Montana. Although close to the historic boom period of 1910 to 1918, the data suggests that Yellowstone County lagged behind the rest of the state by three years in experiencing the “bust” of homesteading. The numbers in relation to dates display a simultaneous rise and fall in patents issued for both sexes at the same time. This data proposes women followed the same trends as men, indicating whatever compelled men to homestead, appears to have held true for women as well. As discussed in Chapters Two and Five, many reasons are likely responsible for these trends, including frenzied advertising initiated by the railroad companies; dry land farming propaganda; the 1909 and 1912 supplemental homestead acts; the unusually wet years from 1914 to 1917, which led to deceptive crop yields; and America’s entering World War I, which resulted in higher prices for wheat. Additionally, it is likely that Yellowstone County felt the effects of drought later than the rest of the state due to the water provided by the

Yellowstone River and the rich environment of the Yellowstone River Valley. For women, an attraction to homesteading in Montana may have been the favorable circumstances concerning women and land law. Nancy Taniguchi's article touts Montana as "the last best hope" for women regarding legal litigation.³

Examining the number of patents issued to women each year in association to the land authority demonstrates an alternate social picture. The amount of acreage offered through the supplemental homestead acts was not necessarily the driving force. Studying the land authority data from Yellowstone County, Montana disproves some of the assumed causes of the homesteading phenomena. The primary congressional acts that contributed to women homesteading in their own name or with equal ownership rights were the original Homestead Act, Sale-Cash Entries, and all supplemental homestead acts after 1862. The additional acreage that supplemental homestead acts added on did not prove anymore important than the original Homestead Act. What was likely more attractive to women homesteaders, as well as men, was the shorter residency requirements and the option of leaving your homestead for a longer duration of the year. Paula M. Bauman found this to be the case in Wyoming during the homesteading phenomena. Bauman's research found that "the majority of women filed their homestead claims after the residency dropped from five year to three."⁴ Furthermore, free land proved not to be the primary factor in homesteading choices. As Chapter Five illustrated, many women paid cash instead of meeting the requirements of any homestead act and only paying the filing fee. Only when combined does the Homestead Act and all supplemental homestead acts total 48% of issued land patents to women, while cash sales

alone account for 42% of issued land patents to women. Scrutinizing the land patent documents reveals that these women were not buying smaller land sections, but preferring to pay cash outright and not have to meet the requirements of any legislative act.

After analyzing the data it seems apparent that the Homestead Act and all supplemental homestead acts were important to women homesteaders and settling in the west, but not necessarily as important as previously thought. Apparently, after examining the Sale-Cash Entries, many women came with money to invest in a homestead. Large land plots and an extended period in which to pay were not necessarily important. As stated previously, for women as well as men, shorter and flexible residency requirements appear more important. More interestingly, none seemed any more important than just paying cash and exercising the freedom to do with the land what one wanted.

This research and the analysis of the results lead to questions concerning future research. A significant question pertains to how long it took women to “prove up” on land claims after filed. The General Land Office records online do not record this information. Each claim would require document and microfiche research to answer this question. This answer could then be used to ascertain if women held onto their claims, or quickly sold them for a profit. The same could be asked of cash entries. How long did women hold onto these purchases? In Montana’s booming real estate market today, it would be interesting to know if much early homesteading of this state was the manifestation of a “hot” real estate market. Rather than an agricultural boom, were people turning over their land purchases to make a profit (“flipping” real estate)? This

would have profound implications for the motives of homesteaders, all of whom may not have been planning to make a new home on the frontier.

Of course, this thesis addresses only patented claims. A much more in depth analysis would be required to determine the rates of failure on homestead applications. Any research questions relating to whether women homesteaders were more or less likely to maintain their claims could be explored with this information.

Popular fictional literature portrays homesteading women as dependent, worn out by hard living, and driven to mental instability. Modern academic work on the subject debunks this fictional caricature and presents these women as asserting their independence and transforming gender identity and responsibility. Like men, women homesteaders embraced the mythic West and took advantage of the opportunity for renewal, self-reliance, and economic independence.

¹ Dee Garceau, *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press), 113.

² Ann Kooistra-Manning, "A Place of Our Own: Homesteads in the Yellowstone Valley," *Hoofprints* 34 (Winter 2004): 3-22.

³ Nancy J. Taniguchi, "Lands, Laws, and Women: Decisions of the General Land Office, 1881-1920 – A Preliminary Report," *Great Plains Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1993): 223-236.

⁴ Paula M. Bauman, "Single Women Homesteaders in Wyoming, 1880-1930," *Annals of Wyoming* 58, no.1 (1986): 39-53.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Articles

- Anonymous. *An Illustrated History of Yellowstone Valley*. Part V. Spokane: Western Historical Publishing Company, 1907.
- Armitage, Susan. *The Women's West*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987.
- Bauman, Paula M. "Single women Homesteaders in Wyoming, 1880-1930." *Annals of Wyoming* 58, no. 1 (1986): 39-53.
- Bell, Edward. *Homesteading in Montana, 1911 – 1923: Life in the Blue Mountain Country*. Bozeman: Montana State University, 1975.
- Berkin, Carol. *First Generations: Women in Colonial America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1996.
- Campbell, John Martin. *Magnificent Failure: A Portrait of the Western Homestead Era*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Corey, Elizabeth. *Bachelor Bess: The Homesteading Letters of Elizabeth Corey, 1909 – 1919*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990.
- Czyzeski, Peggy. "And I was Alone, All Alone." In *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*, edited by William Kittredge and Annick Smith, 546-552. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988.
- Garceau, Dee. *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
- Hendricks, Cecilia Hennel. *Letters from Honeyhill: A Woman's View of Homesteading, 1914-1931*. Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1986.
- Jameson, Elizabeth. *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women's West*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.

- Kahn, B. Zorina. "Married Women's Property Laws and Female Commercial Activity: Evidence from United States Patent Records, 1790 – 1895." *The Journal of Economic History* 56, no.2 (1996): 356 – 388.
- Kooistra-Manning, Ann. "A Place of Our Own: Homesteads in the Yellowstone Valley." *Hoofprints* 34 (Winter 2004): 3-22.
- Larson, T.A. "Montana Women and the Battle for the Ballot." In *Montana Vistas: Selected Historical Essays*, edited by Robert R. Swartout, Jr., 159-184. University Press of America, 1981.
- Layton, Stanford. *To No Privileged Class: The Rationalization of Homesteading and Rural Life in the Early Twentieth-Century American West*. Provo: Brigham Young University, 1988.
- Limerick, Patricia Nelson. *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987.
- Lindgren, H. Elaine. *Land in Her Own Name: Women as Homesteaders in North Dakota*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- Lucey, Donna M. *Photographing Montana, 1894 – 1928: The Life and Work of Evelyn Cameron*. Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2001.
- Malone, Michael P., and Richard B. Roeder. *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1976.
- Muhn, James. "Women and the Homestead Act: Land Department Administration of a Legal Imbroglio, 1863-1934." *Western Legal History* 7, no. 2 (1994): 283-307.
- Murphy, Mary. "Searching for an Angle of Repose: Women, Work, and Creativity in Early Montana." In *Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity*, edited by David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner, 156-176. University Press of Kansas, 1997.
- Nelson, Paula M. *After the West was Won: Homesteaders and Town-Builders in Western South Dakota, 1900 – 1917*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986.
- Northside Historical Committee. *North of the Yellowstone, South of the Bulls*. Billings: Western Printing Company, 1978.
- Obie, Ann. *My Life and 40 Years in Montana*. Eugene: Ann Obie, 1980.

- Riley, Glenda. *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988.
- Robertson, Pearl Price. "Homestead Days in Montana." In *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*, edited by William Kittredge and Annick Smith, 532-542. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988.
- Spritzer, Don. *Roadside History of Montana*. Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1999.
- Stewart, Elinore Pruitt. *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.
- Taniguchi, Nancy J. "Lands, Laws, and Women: Decisions of the General Land Office, 1881 – 1920, A Preliminary Report." *Great Plains Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1993): 223-236.
- Trails and Tales Historical Committee. *Trails and Tales: South of the Yellowstone*. Billings: Midland Printing and Supply Company, 1983.
- Tubbs, Stephenie Ambrose. "Montana Women's Clubs at the Turn of the Century." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 36, no. 1 (1986): 26-35.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." *Proceedings of the Forty-First Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, (1894): 79-112.
- Vichorek, Daniel N. 1987. *Montana's Homestead Era*. Montana Geographic Series, No. 15. Helena, MT: Montana Magazine.
- Wollaston, Percy. *Homesteading*. New York: The Lyons Press, 1997.
- Wrobel, David M. *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal*. University Press of Kansas, 1993.

Government Documents

- Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior). *General Land Office – BLM GLO Records*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/generallandoffice>.

Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior). *Public Lands History – BLM GLO Records*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/publiclandshistory>.

Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior). *Our Recordkeeping History – BLM GLO Records*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/ourrecordkeepinghistory>.

Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior). *Land Patents – BLM GLO Records*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/landpatents>.

Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior). *Rectangular Survey System – BLM GLO Records*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/rectangularsurveysystem>.

Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior). *Title Transfer Authorities – BLM GLO Records*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/titletransfer>.

Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior). *Glossary – BLM GLO Records*. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/visitors/glossary>.

U.S. Department of the Interior. General Lands Office. *Circular in Reference to the Manner of Acquiring Title to the Public Lands*. Washington D.C., 1904.

Unpublished Sources

Buechler, Jeff. “Homesteads: Assessing the Archaeological Significance.” Paper presented at the Northwestern Plains Archaeological Symposium, Billings, Montana.

Bureau of Land Management (US Department of Interior). “Abbreviated Historical Highlights.” Photocopy, Bureau of Land Management, Billings, Montana, nd.

Haste, Gwendolen: Materials from Dr. Mary Murphy concerning life and writing. Photocopy, Department of History, Montana State University, Bozeman.

Streets, Birdie. Interview by Rom Bushnell. Transcript of Tape Recording. July 20, 1993 Western Heritage Center, Billings.

Weldon, Elizabeth Bertha. Interview by Diane Sands. Transcript of Tape Recording. August 26, 1976 Montana Women’s History Project, University of Montana.