

Lowland Forest

A HOME INSTEAD

Living in the New Land

Purpose of This Activity: To understand the difficult decisions and hard work of Washington's early settlers.

Imagine you and your partners represent three families making claims for homesteads. Your claims are on land the Washington Territorial government is giving to people willing to live on and develop the property. (Development in this time usually meant turning the land into a farm.)

1. On the map provided, each of you is to pick an area of land you wish to claim and develop. The chosen areas should be next to one another.
2. On another piece of paper, this one a square that represents your 160 acres, draw a detailed map of how you plan to develop that land. Consider the following: Do you have trees on your land? Will you cut down some of the trees to make a clearing for farmland? What will you do with the felled trees? Will you use part of the forest for cows to graze? For firewood? How do you plan to obtain food? What will you use to build your home? What will you use for fuel? (Remember, you might be living here a long time.) How will you use any streams on your property? Where and how will you get water for drinking, cooking and bathing? Where will you put your outhouse? Will you fence your land? Your animals?
3. Make a written plan to go with your map. The tasks should be listed in the order in which you plan to accomplish them. Take into consideration:
 - a. You brought only the tools and utensils to meet your basic needs.
 - b. You need to use some of your land resources to build a place to live. (Resources include what is already on the land, such as trees, as well as what you might raise there, including livestock and food such as grains, fruit and vegetables.)
 - c. You need to provide your own food.
 - d. You want to improve your lifestyle, so you must decide what you are going to do with the resources in the future (including the possibility of selling part of them.)
 - e. You will want to consider how you or your resources will be transported to a trading center.
4. After you have designed your section of land, put your square next to the squares of your partners.
 - a. Note the impact you will have on the environment as you accomplish each "improvement." List the resources that will be used for each step.
 - b. List the conflicts you might have with your neighbors as a result of your plans.

- c. How can you and your neighbors resolve any conflicts in your plans? Can you work cooperatively to provide food, water, transportation, building materials, etc.?
 - d. What problems might people in the future have as a result of your plans?
 - e. What effect did your homesteading have on our forests?
5. After comparing your plan with your neighbors' plans, work together to devise a barter system that will benefit each team member. (See **Information to Help You** for ideas and information.)

Information to Help You

Officials at British-owned Hudson's Bay Company had strict orders not to sell food to American settlers. You can imagine their reaction when a group of 30 Americans, including the Bush family, settled in what is now Thurston County in 1845. Lewis Bush remembered how his mother, Isabella, found a solution:

Mother had made friends with Dr. Tolmie (the local factor at Hudson's Bay's Fort Nisqually), and it was through him that she got her first start in poultry and sheep. She had traded for a few hens from a French family who were connected with the Hudson's Bay Company, and when one of these hens showed her willingness to set, mother got a setting of turkey eggs from Dr. Tolmie. She was very soon successful with this hatching, and by coddling those young turks soon had a nice flock. Dr. Tolmie had not been so lucky with his turkeys, so he told mother he would trade her a fine ewe for every turkey she would let him have. She was glad to do so and in that way she got the first start of the large flock of sheep which was one of the greatest sources of profit in a few years. From Dr. Tolmie also, we got the first start of hogs. Well, so we lived for years always getting ahead a little and I am glad to say, always having a little to share with our poorer neighbors. Neither father nor mother could bear to deny anyone who applied to them for assistance.

Early homesteaders throughout the region paid dearly for basic staples, many of which came around Cape Horn at the bottom tip of South America. (A look at a globe will show quickly why anything coming by this route would be costly.) Flour cost \$50 a barrel, salt pork \$80 and potatoes \$84 a bushel. Wages for an entire day of chopping wood amounted to only \$4.

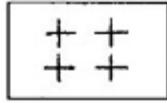
In the Columbia Plateau, homesteaders settling land under the 1862 Homestead Act often dealt with angry cattlemen whose livestock were cut off from streams and waterholes by homestead fences. The ranchers often drove their herds through fields or pulled up survey stakes to frustrate homesteaders intent on filing legal claims.

Once the settlers had acquired land, they had to pay taxes on it. The taxes went to finance roads, schools and other governmental services, helping to further develop the Territory, and in turn attract more settlers.

HOMESTEADERS' MAP

(each area = 160 acres)

Forested



Grassland

