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Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History.

By Richard Edwards, Jacob K. Friefeld, and Rebecca S. Wingo. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017. 272 pp. Illustrations, figures, maps, tables, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Through hard work and thorough research, Richard Edwards, Jacob Friefeld, and Rebecca Wingo seek to dispel any false notions and set the record straight on what was one of the most influential events in the history of the United States in their book, *Homesteading the Plains*. Throughout the work, the authors are able to correct false historical accounts that cast a poor light on the Homestead Act while they provide a wealth of statistical evidence to move toward a new history, as the book's subtitle suggests. The Homestead Act provided opportunity for many ancestors of current Great Plains residents and helped populate the Great Plains along with making the region a major agricultural producer, cementing our roles in both national and international markets. As land was given out, communities were formed and churches and schools were soon to follow, helping to make the region and its people not only economically viable, but also culturally significant. While nothing is without its flaws, the Homestead Act was successful in its original goals, which is conclusively proven throughout the book.

This book is refreshing as it offers more content than most books on the Homestead Act. The amount of research that the authors and other contributors put into setting the record straight on farm formation, proving up on claims, accounts and definitions of homesteading fraud, and the relationship between the Homestead Act and Indian land dispossession is both outstanding and convincing. After disproving the "facts" that portray the

Homestead Act as unsuccessful, the book goes on to include great detail on the homesteading experiences of women, married or single, and multiple ethnicities, dispelling the common notion that the Homestead Act was only taken advantage of by white men.

The authors suggest a new vision of homesteading, based on the increasing amount of available digital data that is both intriguing and practical. The original research done using the digital homesteading records in Custer and Dawes Counties serves as a model that future researchers can duplicate using their own counties or other areas of interest as digital data continues to become available. *Homesteading the Plains* does an excellent job of providing reasons to be excited for the future of homesteading research while celebrating the past success of the Homestead Act, its principal role in the history of both the Great Plains and the entire country, and its enduring legacy on the land and the people who call it home.

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