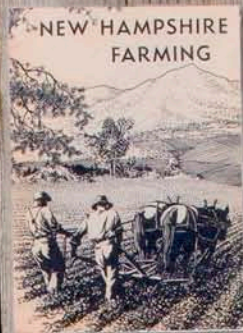


The Art of Homesteading



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This exhibit explores a variety of arts, skills, and tools needed for homesteading and how many of these are still being practiced today in New Hampshire and even right here in Tamworth where traditional skills live on in modern artists and craftspeople.

To begin with we must look at the different definitions for the term "homesteading." Historically, it meant the act of claiming public land for farming and improving it and gaining outright possession of it after a certain period of time. This type of homesteading began in Tamworth even before the town was chartered in 1766. Early records show that squatters had already staked their claims.

The Homestead Act of 1862 encouraged the migration of people westward throughout the United States and set the term homesteading into the American consciousness. The act gave each applicant freehold title to up to 160 acres of undeveloped federal land outside the original 13 colonies. The law required three steps: file an application, improve the land, and file for deed of title. Anyone who had never taken up arms against the U.S. government, including freed slaves, could file an application and evidence of improvements to a federal land office. The original Homestead Act was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on May 20, 1862.

In order to make a home, provide for themselves and their families, and make a living, a "homesteader" had a great deal of work to do and they had to possess many tools and skills to accomplish the many tasks required of them. We will explore these in this exhibit. The notion of going out into the wilderness with an axe and a gun and being able to homestead is far from accurate.

Today, "homesteading" has come to mean a lifestyle choice. Also known as "back to basics" or "back to the land" the homesteading mindset involves adopting sustainable, self-sufficient practices. Modern homesteaders desire to raise their own livestock and food, build their own houses, and properly manage their woodlots and land for future generations. We teach those skills here at the Remick Farm through workshops, special events, and exhibits.



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