

which became known as "pre-emption". The homesteader wishing to take advantage of this opportunity of extending his land could enter a claim for an additional 160 acra (or part of a quarter section) of land adjoining his homestead. Pre-emption right was obtained through the payment of \$10 to the agent and the purchase price which was set at \$1 per acre. This pre-emption often added variety - such as a treed area or a pond for livestock watering - and made his holding a more economic farm unit. Not all the land, however, was open on these terms. In addition to setting aside two odd-numbered sections in each township for the support of schools, the government hoped to combine free grants with the raising of a revenue from land sales. The remaining odd-numbered sections were set aside for railway and other grants or for sale at a minimum price of \$1 an acre. Homesteading was thus to be confined to the even-numbered sections, and even there it was restricted by the alienation of considerable quantities of land for other purposes. The terms of this act remained in force, in various forms, until they became obsolete during the 1930's.

The pioneering ambition and desire to own land brought many settlers west, despite the hardships and difficulties. Not only farmers but lawyers, surveyors and many others took out homesteads. Not everybody was successful, some lost their land because the rules and regulations of the Homestead Act were not met. For example: one young fellow lost a $\frac{1}{4}$ section of land because the inspector caught him spending the nights at his parents home, which was only a few miles away. Another example of making do was where two brothers had adjoining $\frac{1}{4}$ sections. To simplify housekeeping duties they parked their wagon, which served as living quarters, right on the $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Consequently, each one could sleep on his own land. But despite the difficulties most homesteaders were able to get title to the land.

The land in the surrounding area was a large open prairie. Mainly due to the prairie fires that periodically swept the area. This had its advantages and disadvantages. A major advantage was the land didn't have to be cleared. This was also a disadvantage in that there were few trees to build log cabins. Many of the settlers got around this by using sod for their first homes. Mr. Austin Henderson can still point out the location of his fathers' and Uncles' first sod dwelling on SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of 31-3-5.

Two related problems were the lack of firewood and lack of shelter around the yards. To overcome the firewood problem, sec. 17-3-5, which was a heavily wooded area, along the creek, was divided into woodlots. Cottonwoods were planted to overcome the shelter problem. Fires presented quite a hazard to the settlers as well. About the only method of control was helping each other plow fire breaks around yards and setting back fires.

Thus we can see that the settlers adapted to their new environment with a solution to each problem as it presented itself.

The soils in our district vary all the way from Altona fine sandy loams to Gretna clays. This change in some cases takes place in less than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. So the problems homesteaders faced with their light machinery and horse drawn im-