

History Question of the Month

The Homestead Act of 1862 was passed to help in the population of the west with farmers. It was available to citizens and immigrants. Many of the homesteaders within our City boundaries were immigrants. Being new to our country and not speaking the language presented problems for some of those applying for Homestead Grants. What were some of the problems they encountered?

Answer

In 1871, Andrew Hansen and his wife Elsie arrived in Utah from Denmark. They settled in Cottonwood at about 3900 South and Highland Drive. Andrew found work at the LDS Church's granite quarry in Little Cottonwood Canyon. Because of the distance it took to travel, it made it necessary for him to stay in the nearby camps. He learned about the Homestead Act from a friend and in 1872 with help of his friend applied for a grant.

The property he chose was close to the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon, making it so he could commute each day. Shortly after his first son was born in the fall of 1872, he moved his family, wife, son and mother-in-law into a dugout on his homestead. They lived there until he built a two room log house which he moved them into in May 1874. In 1877 when he applied for a patent on his homestead, he found he had built the house on property that wasn't part of his homestead. Because he had been either misled or he didn't understand because of the language barrier, he was able to have his grant amended to include the property with the house, but had to wait another two years before he could again apply for the patent.

Published May 2018 –Gayle Conger

Published April 2019

Published December 2019