

History Question of the Month

The Homestead Act of 1862 provided for the homesteader to apply for a patent on the property after living on the land for five continuous years and making improvements. Why then was not a patent issued to Yorgen Rasmussen after he applied for it?

Answer

1 On October 1, 1875, **Yorgen Rasmussen**, applied for an eighty acre homestead grant. He was not a citizen at the time but declared his intentions to become one. On October 16, 1880, he became a citizen and on the same day applied for a patent on his homestead. He claimed as improvements to the land, a house, stable, orchard, and eight acres of cultivated land on which he grew wheat and other grains. He had also diverted water from Little Willow Creek to irrigate his orchard.

On August 5, 1881, Yorgen Rasmussen, died at home, never receiving the patent certificate for his property. On February 12, 1884, his son, William, wrote a letter to the General Land Commissioner in Washington D.C., requesting that a certificate be issued. He learned that the reason a certificate had not been issued was because the signatures on the original homestead grant and the patent application didn't agree. On November 15, 1884, William, requested, again, that the patent be issued. He sent a letter with the application explaining that on the day his father applied for the patent, he was nearly blind and could not see to sign his name. The person filling out the application for him, signed his name for him and had Mr. Rasmussen mark an "X" by it, advising him that the "X" was as good as him actually signing. In reviewing the documents, the "X" was plainly there and a patent certificate was issued to William Rasmussen, being the only living son of Yorgen Rasmussen.