

AICP STUDY GUIDE

Podcast

Episode 10: You Get A Bunch of Acres!

And welcome, planners, to the tenth episode of the VERY UNofficial AICP podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller, and thank you all so much for joining me.

We've hit a milestone here with double digit episodes now. I have to admit, when I decided to start this thing, I wasn't really sure what I was doing - I still have no idea what I'm doing; which I'm sure is self-evident here. But it's been a fun ride so far! So, here's to some more episodes and seeing where this ride takes us.

Last week we talked about the first tenements, the New York Citizens' Association response by putting together a report on hygiene, and arguably the first truly planned community, Riverside, Illinois. This week, we're circling back around to the westward expansion since it was going on around the same time.

We last left our expansion off with the Erie Canal and National Road. Both of these had done a great job of opening up areas in the "west," but what about the west-west, like really far west; like we know of today as the west. Those needed a bit of an extra push.

Enter the Homestead Act of 1862, and less directly related to expansion, but very much to related to promoting opportunity for citizens, the Morrill Act, also of 1862.

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So, let's start out with a bit of a background. To really understand the homestead Act of 1862, and more importantly actually remember facts about it for the exam, a brief lead up will help a ton.

So in our little machines, lets hop back one to two decades. It's the 1840's and 1850's and tensions in the United States are starting to build. Thomas Jefferson's political ideals took on a decent following, aptly named Jeffersonian democracy, and had a strong focus on small, independent farmers, as well as a strong aversion to aristocracies and the elite.

At the same time though, the southern plantations were booming obviously, because of slave labor. So, when the concept of the Homestead Act giving away land to individual farmers as a homestead first made its appearance in the 1840's and 1850's, it was very quickly snuffed out by the southerners.

You see, the southerners wanted to ensure their continued supremacy, and not allow independent, small guys to gain any economic power. So naturally, they weren't in favor of the idea.

(03:01)

Now fast forward back to 1860, and the first version of the Homestead Act was put out and passed actually by Congress. So why wasn't that it?

Well, James Buchanan, president at the time, vetoed it. Buchanan was aligned with the southerners and he acted like it, so he vetoed the proposition in order to prevent land being given away to independent farmers in the west. Well, that wasn't going to be an issue for much longer. Abraham Lincoln won the

election in 1860 and the southern states were pissed.

In February of 1861, shortly after he was elected, he said in a speech that the Homestead Act was "worthy of consideration, and the wild lands of the country should be distributed so that every man should have the means and opportunity of benefiting his condition;" pretty progressive at the time. It was this mentality that contributed to the ball rolling with more southern states seceding.

Fast forward to July of 1861. The southern states have left at this point, and we were on the cusp of the civil war, like weeks at this point. Lincoln said in another speech, that the role of our government was "to elevate the condition of men, to lift artificial burdens from all shoulders and to give everyone an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life."

And that's what he followed up on. The U.S. Congress passed the Act in 1862 and signed by Lincoln that same year. The extra cool thing about it? It was only restricted to individuals who never fought against the U.S. government, was at least 21 years old, or the head of a household. This meant that, yes, freed slaves could apply, and yes, women could apply.

The only requirements were that you had to live on the land for five years, make improvements to the land - i.e. start farming it - and do both of those things within seven years.

So, what did the Homestead Act get you? 160 acres of surveyed public land for farming.

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Now, there were other additions, amendments, compliments to, whatever, the Homestead Act of 1862. The Southern Homestead Act of 1866 - after the civil war obviously - allowed tenant farmers and sharecroppers to become land owners during reconstruction. The Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 allowed for larger chunks of land that were deemed to be marginal, or just generally not as good for farming.

Another one was the Stock-Raising Homestead Act of 1916 which allowed even larger tracts of land as long as it was for ranching purposes, but we're getting way off the mark here. In short, the homestead act allowed any - I repeat, any - person who wasn't an enemy of the U.S. to get 160 acres of land as long you lived there for five years and started farming it within seven.

So, how can you remember it was in 1862? Well, the Union needed the south to secede in order to pass it. The southerners were not at all in favor of it, and with their votes stopping it, it never would have happened.

And how successful was it? Pretty damn successful if you look at the metrics of it. First, it didn't even end until 1976 - 1986 if you were in Alaska, but Alaska is pretty much 10 years behind the continental U.S. anyways so I guess that makes sense. All in all, 10% of all U.S. land was given away under the Act. That equates to about 270 million acres, and that was under 1.6 million different deeds.

Now there were also a lot of negative things about the Homestead Act. For one, it's what took most of the land from the Native Americans, and two, it was exploited and taken advantage of in a multitude of ways; like fraud, the passing of false claims, and a lot of farmers using the act to move one state over as opposed to actually getting the people who really needed it to take advantage of it, but that is all outside of our scope here.

That wasn't the only thing happening around 1862 though, and remember Buchanan, the guy who vetoed the first attempt at the Homestead Act? He was apparently just veto crazy.

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So, if you remember the episode where we talked about the public land survey system, you might remember how they surveyed out townships into sections, etc. etc. etc. And if you remember really well, you'll remember that Section 16 of these townships was reserved for? Education, congratulations, you remembered.

Well, in the long run Section 16 was rarely actually reserved for education, but was instead sold off to fund education. So, it wasn't perfect, but it did help and went a long way to some sort of educational opportunity for those who wouldn't afford the private schools.

Man, we did a lot back then in terms of beneficial social programs.

Anyways, enter the Morrill Act of 1862. The Morrill Act of 1862 granted each state 30,000 acres for each Representative and Senator in congress. This ended up being over 100 million acres dedicated to use for public universities.

Now, some states ended up wasting this opportunity, but a lot of states ended up founding colleges with the grant. Some states sold the land to fund state colleges which already existed, either way, the Act was a huge boon to higher education across the nation.

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It wasn't that easy getting it passed though.

Let's rewind it again to 1855. Michigan's governor, following through with a declaration in their state constitution, signed a bill that would establish the first agricultural college in the United States. Now, we just call it Michigan State University.

So, led by Illinois and a guy named Morrill - from Vermont - they put together an Act which would provide these land grants to each state based on the number of Senators and Representatives in Congress which made it way more advantageous to the northeastern states, since they were more populated.

That said, it's no wonder that when it was first proposed in 1857, it passed Congress - just like the Homestead Act - and was vetoed by President Buchanan - just like the Homestead Act. So 4 years later, in 1861, Morrill reintroduced the Act, but this time, expanded the teachings that the universities had to offer. The original proposal was for industrial colleges, which at the time meant agriculture and engineering. The revamped version? Well, based on the impending civil war, Morrill included military tactics.

And with the southern states having seceded, the act had enough votes, and was signed in 1862.

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Now the inclusion of military tactics is important too because that clause is what created the ROTC: Reserve Officer Training Corps. So basically, any land-grant university is required to maintain agriculture, engineering, and ROTC programs.

Now like the Homestead Act, the Morrill Act had program expansions. In 1890, an expanded Morrill Act was extended to the southern states on the basis that race was not an admissions factor, and in 1994, it was extended again to Native American colleges. But the Morrill Act of 1862 was the first and the one that you're going to need to know.

All in all, the Morrill Act of 1862 gave away 17.4 million acres of land which generated endowments of \$7.55 million, and ended up creating 57 universities; many of which have a hall named after the Act which made it: Morrill, Morrill Hall.

So 1862 was apparently just the first year of Oprah's Favorite Things, and the only thing on the list was land: You get a bunch of acres! You get a bunch of acres! Everyone gets a bunch of acres! And that wasn't bound to catch up with anybody, right?

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So, the general theme in these days - and before it obviously - was to not hold onto federal land. The U.S. generally viewed these as assets that they could sell or give away to either generate funds or get people to settle.

During the surveys then for these lands, the land was all categorized into some pretty basic classifications: Mineral, and non-mineral. Over time, however, these classifications began to grow: Non-mineral, coal lands, lead lands, iron lands, etc., etc., etc.

Now, all of this was not happening under the federal government. These surveys and classifications were done by either the U.S. Military, the states, or even private institutions. This was mostly because surveys just delineated farm lands, but as the industrial age was rapidly approaching, the U.S. economy switched to focus more on minerals.

So, by the late 1860s, industrialization was taxing the natural resources. So, the U.S. set out in 1866 and said, in effect, "This stuff is worth a boatload. We should probably take some kind of inventory of it." So, they started authorizing surveys with geology as the primary focus.

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This sort of turned out to be a shit show of sorts though. Four different surveyors received contracts from the U.S., and undoubtedly, some of these created a few conflicts. So in 1878, Congress decided it needed addressed. Why then? Well, the entire world was in an economic recession and the government decided handing out money to four different people probably wasn't in the best interest.

So, they actually did a pretty smart thing and asked the National Academy of Sciences to recommend a course of action to complete surveying and mapping all of the U.S. territories in order to get the best results, for cheap.

Their recommendation? To rename the Coast and Geodetic Survey, "The Coast and Interior Survey," and give them the duties of geodetic and topographic surveys. And to create a new, separate organization called the U.S. Geological Survey, which would be responsible for classifying the public lands and looking at the geological structure, minerals, and products of the public domains.

And in 1879, Congress did just that.

(15:00)

So, what did we learn today?

We learned a lot, but for the AICP?

We learned that the Homestead Act of 1862 really opened up and pushed settlement of the west by offering 160 acres to pretty much anyone as long as they lived there for five years and made improvements to the land.

We also talked about the Morrill - That's M-O-R-R-I-L-L - Act of 1862 - same year - that gave states thousands of acres of land for the purpose of starting or funding universities which offered agriculture, engineering, and ROTC programs.

And finally, we covered the U.S. Geological Survey which was originally formed in 1879 to classify all public lands.

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And there you have it. Probably more than you ever wanted to know about the Homestead and Morrill Acts of 1862, and the formation of the U.S. Geological Survey; at least as far as the AICP exam might be concerned.

If you want to know more about these topics, feel free to reference the show notes for links to the information we used for this episode, or use google; it's a wonderful tool.

For those of you playing along at home, our question last week was, "In what year was the first model tenement built?" I feel like that was a little bit of a softball, but the answer for that is 1855.

If you want to play along this week, the question is, "What event helped ensure that the Homestead Act of 1862, and the Morrill Act of 1862 passed?"

Well, thanks for tuning in. If you have any questions, suggestions, whatever, just email me or send me a message through the website, Instagram or facebook, whatever, and let me know. And please remember, if you have a question, other people probably have the same one.

Also, it's not complete without a little self-promotion, so please don't forget to subscribe to this podcast on whatever platform you use for podcasts, or sign up on the show's website, so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement all of your other study regimens. And be a peach and go ahead and share this out with any planners you know who might be interested.

And as a special favor to me – if you want – leave a review and rating; preferably a good one. Yes, it helps me out, but really, it helps make sure this content gets put in front of the people who could use it.

Make sure you tune in next week. We are, sort of, closing out our westward expansion with the transcontinental railroad and John Powell's book, "Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States." That doesn't mean we're done with the west. It just means, well, we have expanded there.

Thanks again everyone, 'till next time.

Links:

Homestead Act of 1862

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act#:~:text=President%20Abraham%20Lincoln%20signed%20the,pay%20a%20small%20registration%20fee.>

<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=31>

<https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/homestead-act>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homestead_Acts

Morrill Act of 1862

<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=33>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morrill_Land-Grant_Acts

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Land-Grant-College-Act-of-1862>

https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/civil_war/MorrillLandGrantCollegeAct_FeaturedDoc.htm

U.S. Geological Survey

<https://www.doi.gov/blog/us-geological-survey-marks-139-years-scientific-advancement#:~:text=Created%20by%20Congress%20on%20March,our%20knowledge%20of%20natural%20science.>

<https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/70039204>

<https://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/c1050/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Geological_Survey