

In 1876, there were fewer than 100 people living on South Florida’s mainland. To encourage people to spread out across the United States, Congress passed the Homestead Act in 1862. This law gave 160 acres of land to any person who would live on the property for five years and improve it. The free land encouraged people to travel to the wilderness of South Florida and prepare the way for others to follow.

South Florida Pioneers

**Circle what you think the homesteaders might have seen when they arrived in South Florida.**

mosquitoes                      alligators                      snow

electricity                      cars                      grocery stores

snakes                      forest                      shopping mall                      school

What do you think daily life was like for a South Florida homesteader?

In the late 1800’s, a young homesteader your age might have the following chores to do on an average day:

- Make candles
- Chop Wood
- Sew
- Hunt for food
- Help mom take care of the baby
- Help dad repair the house
- Do laundry and iron
- Farm the land

Compare your daily chores with those of a young homesteader. List the chores that each of your family members does daily. How are they similar? How are they different?

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At this time, the only way to reach South Florida was by boat. There were no major highways or roads connecting to South Florida. Once a week a ship from Key West made its way to Miami for settlers to send their crops to market or travel to Key West for supplies.

One of the cash crops the settlers sent to Key West was starch. The Seminoles taught the settlers how to extract the starch from the COMPTIE plant and sell it or use it for food. Many homesteaders had their own mule or hand powered comptie starch mill.



*Homesteading* by Ken Hughs

**Create a story about what is happening in the painting above.**

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