

Staking a Claim

Settling Milford Valley



Many pioneers came here to the Milford Valley in the late-1800s to stake their claim on a homestead. They met big challenges and hardships. Limited water and poor soil made raising crops difficult. Grasshoppers and rabbits ate the crops that did manage to grow.

Most of the non-native settlers in Beaver and Millard counties came here from wetter climates. They lacked experience with farming such arid land.

Those settlers who succeeded in homesteading here often did so by working together. While farmers owned their own plots of land, many built and maintained canals communally. The arrival of the railroad in Milford in 1880 boosted the local farming economy, as did new irrigation techniques in the early 1900s.



Homestead Act of 1862

In 1862, Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act. The Act allowed individuals 21 years old or the head of a household—including women and former slaves—to stake a claim on a 160-acre piece of public-domain land in the West. For an \$18 filing fee, the land was theirs, as long as they “proved up” on it—building a home, making improvements, and farming for five years.



Homesteaders head west in 1866. Through the Homestead Act, the US government distributed 270 million acres, 10% of the country's landmass.

Settlement-Era Artifacts

Before construction of the wind project began, archaeologists surveyed the project area for cultural artifacts. At one site, they found a variety of artifacts—glass and ceramic fragments, milled lumber, a plastic button, sharpening stone, knife blade, bullet casing, shotgun shell cap, and fragment of leather. The artifacts suggest that this was a temporary encampment, occupied sometime between 1900 and 1920, possibly by cowboys working for local ranchers.

Remains of a Utah homestead.



Settlement-era artifacts found in Milford Wind Corridor area.