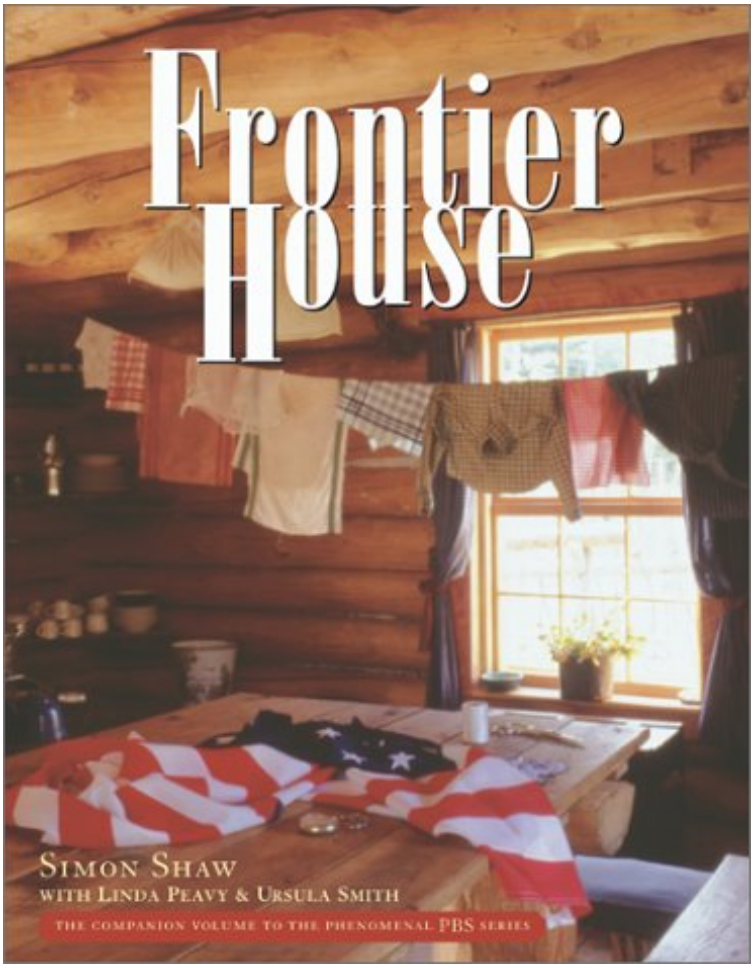
Frontier House

Simon Shaw, Ursula Smith
*audiobook | *ebooks | Download PDF | ePub | DOC*



#5329686 in Books 2002-04-30Format: Bargain PricePDF # 1 #File Name: B0002RQIXO240 pages | File size: 63.Mb

Simon Shaw, Ursula Smith : Frontier House before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Frontier House:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Frontier House- the companion bookBy JOSEPHRecently we saw that the PBS series Frontier House had been chopped up into half hour segments and was being rebroadcast as a "new" show. We watched our copy after not seeing it for quite a while, and I thought about finally getting a copy of this book. I found that the TV series DVD set is still pretty pricey, but this book could be gotten very, very reasonably.I'm glad I got a copy, while it was very good, the TV series just couldn't go into the detail this book could. If you like, liked, or have yet to see the DVD's of the series, which would be way better than seeing the 20 minute, less the commercials, episodes of the 6 hours of the original show, get this book to help go along with it! Very early 'reality TV' with a lot happening that summer of 2001 when the show was taped.This book is the one that came out back then in the early 2000's so it doesn't have any recent 'what happened to' of the people involved. And I actually couldn't find

out anything either when I searched on line which was what helped me decide to get this book. Very good!!1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Montana Homestead ProjectBy K. O'DonnellThis book was fascinating! Though I had seen the TV production (twice) I was intrigued by the additional information the book provided, as well as the photos. The interactions among the families was just amazing--their strengths and weaknesses in dealing with each other and with their circumstances were so revealing, and often amusing. It was interesting to see how their feelings about the project evolved from beginning to end; how the things that were most troublesome for them when they arrived in Montana, such as the back-breaking, never-ending chores,and the struggle to obtain enough food and supplies for their survival, ended up being some of their fondest memories when the project ended. The book effectively illustrates how difficult life in the 1800's really was on the Montana prairie and how very strong and capable the frontier pioneers and homesteaders were.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Goes with the DVDs...By Michael ValdivielsoFrontier House, the book, by Simon Shaw with Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith is the companion volume to the Frontier House series. In other words this is not a stand alone and you should at least watch the episodes once before reading the book. The book is half on the show and half on the real history of homesteaders. For example, with the chapters talking about the kids going to school they have sections dealing with teachers on the frontier and children on the frontier. Half the book, in other words, is chapters on real history, tons of it.Also the book is slightly different than the show. The order in which events happened seems to be different and not all events in the show is covered by the book. Of course the chapters, and the television episodes, were focusing on certain topics or subjects, therefore both were very likely heavily edited. On the other hand, some events that happened were not in the series but WERE in the book and also there is a lot more information about how the show was started, interviews, behind the scenes and aftermath. It even explains just how DANGEROUS the show really was - seems there were a lot more bears running around than the TV episodes showed us.The book itself is a lovely book with tons of photos showing the families during their daily lives but also showing the landscape and the beauty that was all around them. It truly helps you understand why some of them felt sad on leaving. Also the book has the applications from all the families, shows some of the lists of supplies and so on. For example, they show the list of clothing Nate was given and the Brook's family supplies.Over all it is a great companion book and very well made.

A behind-the-scenes look at the six-part Channel 4 series that sends three contemporary American families back in time to the harsh frontier of 1880s Montana. They head west in the spring, equipped only with the tools and technology of the period, to encounter extreme weather, hunger - and bears.

About the AuthorSimon Shaw is the successful producer of "1900s House" and "1940s House". He will also produce "Frontier House".Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Chapter One: The American Dream If you were told that an artist had devised this place, you'd believe it. Tucked in a perfect valley that nestles at the feet of a mesmerizing mountain range lies the place we call Frontier Valley. Even Montanans, who've grown accustomed to living among majestic settings, pause to take in its beauty. Sit quietly here and nature will come to you. Deer and elk graze nearby, eagles will watch you from on high. Time your visit right and hundreds of species of wildflowers and butterflies will accompany you. Last spring we brought a dozen strangers here. Men, women, and children from across America who imagined we had delivered them to a heaven on earth. But beauty and serenity comes with a price. This valley, a lush carpet of green for much of the year, can be deep in snow for up to six months. (Minus forty degrees isn't uncommon where the plains meet the mountains.) The real residents here are hungry predators such as coyotes, bears, and mountain lions. In high summer the sun chars every blade of grass to a crisp brown. Raging forest fires are an annual hazard. In truth, you and I probably wouldn't find it such an enticing place once Mother Nature had shown us the full picture of life here. But this place really was home for a small community who volunteered to take part in a unique experiment. For six months they put their real lives on hold to forsake the modern world and stepped into the shoes of their ancestors to taste life when being on the frontier promised no safety nets. Isolation, danger, unpredictable weather, and punishing workloads became their everyday expectations. Their experience affected them in ways no one expected. From the youngest (nine years old) through to the most senior member of the community (sixty-eight), this was a life-changing encounter. It all began at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, November 21, 2000, when PBS television affiliate KPTS broadcast an appeal to its Kansas audience: "It's time to make American history....Could you live as a pioneer out in the American West? ...We're looking for volunteers." In making the twenty-second broadcast the station was, unknowingly, starting the first current in a wave that was about to envelop the nation. Seventeen minutes later the first response landed via e-mail at frontier@pbs.org. By the end of that day thirty-eight other applications had arrived. By the end of the month upward of one hundred and fifty responses were received daily as the message flashed from Hawaii to New York City. Christmas saw over two thousand hopeful families join the rush. By our deadline of January 15, 2001, more than fifty-five hundred applications had been received. As we started to wade through the piles of eager entrants it became clear that the dream of carving a new life out in the untamed land of the West was still a potent force in modern America. Life in this day and age is way too fast. I just want the opportunity to slow down and take advantage of the more important things like the smell of pure, clean air and to

know that I have a part in giving something to my children that was not bought or ordered. -- Family, Florida My son is a dotcomer and making lots of money at twenty-three but has decided that wealth isn't everything. -- Mom, New York I always feel that we are spoiled by our technological developments and want to develop a proper amount of respect for those who gave their lives so that future generations could live on. -- Father, San Francisco Like most girls growing up in the 1970s I was addicted to Little House on the Prairie and often wondered what it was really like to live during such exciting, yet uncertain times. I realize that life in the Frontier House would hardly be Little House but I'm certain it would be a fantastic bit of hard yet inspiring reality. -- Family, Washington, D.C. We offered no prizes. No big money rewards. And the experience promised the very opposite of glamour. Yet that first response spoke for many: "Can it be that we are alone in seeking a better life by wanting to downscale and decelerate from our frenzied daily pattern?" The Wyness family anticipated a groundswell of opinion in their swiftly dispatched submission. Soon National Public Radio was fanning the flames with a broadcast feature asking, "What can we learn from living in the past?" Newspaper columnists took the baton forward, from the New York Times to the San Francisco Chronicle. It seems our offer, setting up a homestead on 160 acres of land with only 1880s know-how, food, and equipment, was an unmissable opportunity to a hard core of people in the world's most technologically advanced nation. Shortly after launching our quest to find modern families for the encounter, a package arrived from the Montana Historical Society. Along with scores of other authorities on the era, they were helping us put together a picture of the lifestyle we aimed to re-create. Among the contents was a postcard of a railroad poster that powerfully illustrates why frontier fever infected the minds of so many. Its symbolism captures the promise by which many thousands of families were lured out West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gold coins spill from the plow as it cuts a swath through Montana. Little did those seduced by its declaration of an affluent future know that much of the territory the railroad promoted in its poster was "badlands," often unworkable acres that would eventually prove the ruin of many. Many of those excited by the apparent offer of a place in the New World came with little knowledge of working land in such a harsh environment; clearly they were unsuited in every way for the encounter. Looking at the growing numbers of twenty-first-century applicants prompted the question: Were any of these better prepared? A "Most Beneficent" Piece of Legislation The Homestead Act of 1862 The concept of homesteading had been at the heart of public debate for decades before that morning in late May of 1862 when Abraham Lincoln signed the bill that made the Homestead Act the law of the land. The legislation was based on the populist ideal that the public lands of the United States belong to the people, are to be "held in sacred trust for the benefit of the people, and should be granted in limited quantities, free of cost, to landless settlers." Though the original act was amended several times over the next two decades, by the early 1880s, the period of particular interest to Frontier House families, it still contained all the essential elements: "[A]ny person who is the head of a family, or who has arrived at the age of twenty-one years, and is a citizen of the United States, or who shall have filed his declaration of intention to become such" could claim up to 160 acres -- that is, one-quarter of a one-mile-square section of land -- by filing a claim with the local land office, living on that quarter section for at least six months each year over the next five years, and making improvements on the land. A small filing fee, usually between $10 and $20, was required. At the end of five years, if the basic requirements had been met, the homesteader received a patent, a deed free and clear, to the land. Under hardship conditions, a homesteader who needed more time to "prove up" could request -- and was often granted -- an extension of time in which to do so. Conversely, a homesteader who did not wish to wait the full five years -- and who had the cash in hand -- could obtain early title through "preemption," buying the 160 acres for $1.25 an acre. The wording of the original Homestead Act was, at best, vague as to the nature and extent of the "improvements" that had to be made before a homesteader was granted title to the land. Indeed, the law set forth no specifics as to the size or type of building that had to be built or the amount of land that had to be cultivated. Over time, however, prevailing wisdom said that the house had to have at least one door and one window and that a minimum of ten acres had to be put into production. The standards varied, however, when it came time for the land agent to determine the eligibility of the homesteader to be given title. Available under the Homestead Act were millions of unappropriated public acres, most of them lying west of the Mississippi River. In general, the climate of the times in the post-Civil War years was favorable for a mass migration. The West was portrayed as an exciting place with a bright future. The railroads, eager to increase business along newly constructed routes, published a variety of ads and pamphlets designed to entice prospective homesteaders to settle in this region or that. "You will only have to tickle [the land] with a plow," one such ad proclaimed, "and it will laugh a harvest that will gladden your hearts." The railroads were not alone in using the lure of free land as part of a carefully orchestrated redistribution of the country's growing population. During the years that followed the panic of 1873, Eastern industrialists saw in the act an opportunity to entice the unemployed and indigent away from the populous centers of the East Coast. Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, described the Homestead Act as a "most beneficent" piece of legislation, one intended "to diminish...the number of paupers and idlers and increase the proportion of working, independent, self-subsisting farmers." But city folks weren't farmers, and even those who might have wanted to take part in this noble agricultural experiment could hardly have afforded to do so. The thought of free land was enticing enough, but financing the move across the country, getting started, and surviving for those first five years cost money the urban poor did not have. Thus the vast majority of the homesteaders came not from the crowded

population centers in the Northeast but from rural areas in the Midwest. And the distance traveled in miles mattered less than the difference free land could make in the lives of homesteading families. For example, one of the first to file a claim under the new legislation was Daniel Freeman, a Union scout from Iowa, who transported his wife, Agnes, and their children to the tall-grass country of southeastern Nebraska, a move that assured their prosperity on land that is, today, the site of the Homestead National Monument. The Freemans came early, but in their wake came a wave of homesteaders pouring out of the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys in search of homesteads on the fertile plains of Kansas and Nebraska. That first wave soon gave way to an influx of immigrants from Scandinavia, Germany, and the British Isles, most of whom brought with them to the Western frontier not only their dreams of free land but also their farming experience. Those who were destined to succeed also generally brought a modicum of material resources, for the costs of proving up could be considerable. In addition to putting up a house of some kind and a few outbuildings, the homesteader had to invest in work animals, a milk cow and chickens, a wagon, a plow, fencing, and a well or some other source of drinking water. It was estimated that breaking the first 40 acres of a 160-acre homestead and putting it into production could cost up to $1,000. Of course, not every homesteader started out with that kind of capital. When 22-year-old Howard Ruede decided to leave his Pennsylvania home in 1877 to look for a homestead in Kansas, he withdrew his savings -- $75 -- from the bank, bought a train ticket for $23.05, and set out. Though high hopes rode on short capital, Ruede counted on his determination and his strength to carve out his dream. For Ruede the dream came true. For others, the dream proved more elusive, especially as the prime agricultural lands of Kansas and Nebraska filled up. By 1883, the year in which the would-be pioneers of Frontier House were ostensibly living out their own version of the homestead dream, families were being drawn farther and farther west to the more arid lands of the Great Plains and the Interior Basin -- to the Dakotas, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. They were drawn by local promoters like Matt Alderson, who published a widely circulated pamphlet touting the attractions of Montana Territory, particularly of the Yellowstone Valley. Montana, Alderson boasted, was entering "upon a growth that will be as much greater than her sister Territories as her resources are superior." Here, he said, was where "immigrants [should]...go to farming." And indeed they did. Ultimately, Montana was far in the vanguard of the homestead states. Between 1868 and 1961, 32 million of the 270 million acres claimed under the law were claimed in Montana. The state that held second place -- Nebraska -- trailed with only some 22 million acres claimed. It should be noted, however, that the vast majority of those Montana homesteaders staked their claims in the early years of the twentieth century, after the areas more naturally endowed for farming had been claimed. By the third decade of the twentieth century, the homestead phenomenon had largely played itself out, though the venerable act upon which the movement was based was not repealed until 1976. And even then, in recognition of the spirit that had for more than a century moved Americans to look to the frontier for free land and a new life, Congress extended the law for another ten years in Alaska. It is all history now. But it was a formative part of our history. The Homestead Act of 1862 opened the American West to settlement, thereby fostering that most American of traits -- the spirit of independence. Everyone was after good land. Even though it came free, "proving" your section took more than inexhaustible reserves of energy and a little know-how. Diaries from those on overland trails record similar ambitions -- to find a pocket of fertile land, with nearby good water and timber to furnish shelter. Not surprisingly, at the end of many journeys travelers often found the best land had already been snapped up. Neat houses straddled the creekside, fields were already plowed, wells dug. Newcomers would require diligence and not a little good fortune in finding the next best plot. By the 1880s, even out in remote corners of the West, this was often the first discovery at the end of a difficult trek. Finding the land where we would film our endeavor brought us face-to-face with this reality. To give our participants a real sense of "the frontier" we had unique requirements. Settling on Montana wasn't the hard part -- it offered remoteness, beauty, and historical precedent as the state where the most homestead claims were filed. Even today its very name conjures up distant dreams in the minds of many urban Americans. Our research led us to districts rich in homesteading history, places like the Gallatin Valley, a fertile swath that's wrapped around Bozeman. There, and in many other locations diligently scouted, we discovered that these areas of productive soils still promised potential abundance to farmers today. Perhaps not surprisingly though, the only patches we found that remained undeveloped in such heavily farmed regions were lying fallow for good reason. A promising meadow soon revealed its true nature as walking boots sank into a deep mush of bog land. Another site that boded well was struck off the list when taking a spade to the ground hit bedrock just inches from the surface. A concrete lookout, complete with what appeared to be gun turrets, belonging to a nervous religious organization that overlooked another encouraging site had us hastening on. Our search found us having to look more and more remotely. In July of 2000 we made our first foray into the unknown, a journey that took us off the beaten track, where we found ourselves clinging to precipices in our 4x4s and examining the bleakest lands, occupied only by grizzlies and lonely coyotes. On occasion we found what, at first glance, offered good opportunities, but so very often, modern houses on neighboring land, power cables, or the roar of a passing jet engine would sober our enthusiasm. Some weeks into the search we got lucky. North of Missoula we found an ideal opportunity. Up in the Nine-Mile region, an area of great beauty, we found a forested area set way back on the edge of a cinematically perfect mountain. It was a homesteader's dream with three enticing meadows offering both water and timber aplenty. An existing cabin deep in the woods beguilingly showed firsthand evidence of just what sort of life had been played out

here. Written in pencil on the door was the still discernible boast: "Caught My First Bear. October 1889." Local landowners looked set to welcome the project, and for a brief moment we began making plans for how we might reutilize existing structures. A local diviner was ready to dowse for wells. Our construction expert staked the site. Then nature intervened. Fierce fires took hold as another devastating drought year hit Montana. Daily we called landowners Betty and Ralph each time a ring of flames moved closer. In late August 2000 the location was completely consumed by fire, yet another victim of one of the driest summers on record. We were back to the drawing board. You don't have to look far in Montana to find homesteading history. Many of its residents are of pioneer stock, their names revealing family roots. Gary Wunderwald, one of the state's many German descendants, came to our rescue. As former director of the Montana Film Commission he knows the state better than most, having staked out locations for many of the movies and commercials shot there. After a careful trawl of his files he unearthed a new site. This time we turned our backs on western Montana and headed south to an area rich in pioneer history. Passing the Crazy Mountains (legend has it named after a desperate settler who had been separated from her children), we entered Sweet Grass County. Lush pastures edge the mountains in a district renowned for its fine ranches. This is now cattle country but once saw one of the biggest concentrations of sheep farming in all of America. Road names passed en route such as Froze to Death Creek give clues to its difficult terrain. We knew it was remote as we completed the journey. Twenty-five miles out of the small community of Big Timber, the radio fell silent. Not a station on the dial. Occasional ranches dotted the road; otherwise we were in pristine land. Chasing the Boulder River, we drove past fields deep in hay toward the mountains that ring the magnificent Gallatin National Forest. A look at the map confirmed we were in the right territory, as dozens of abandoned homesteads dotted the page. With our deadline tightening it would have been easy to accept a location that made a good second best. But here we lucked out. Not only a filmmaker's dream (both The Horse Whisperer and A River Runs Through It were shot here), this territory also provided the perfect history. Ceded by the Crow Indians in 1882, the area was then opened to white settlers and promoted as a "homeseeker's paradise." Ranch owner Ken and his partner, Connie, guided us to a near secret valley at the end of a rough drive over five miles of dirt road. Here a generously flowing creek fed twelve hundred acres of rich pastures and deep forest. "Everything a homesteader dreamed of," said Ken, himself of pioneer stock. "Ten families tried it here...like so many, few of them made it." As we gazed out over the land that day, it appeared to hold only great promise and supreme beauty; in short, a wonderful place to live. Meadows deep in grass, berry bushes heavy with blossom, even in late summer the creek was flowing well...yes, we'd found homeseeker's paradise. "There Is No Country Like...Crow Country" The Story of the Boulder Valley When William Clark and the members of the Corps of Discovery passed through the Yellowstone Valley on their return trek from the Pacific Coast in the summer of 1806, that broad expanse of lush grasses, sparkling waters, and abundant game was the home and primary hunting grounds of the Apsaalooke, or the Crow, Indians. Before the century was out, however, much of that scenic and productive landscape had been claimed by white settlers. In actuality, for centuries before the Crow became the area's dominant settlers, the land had been home to the Sheepeater Indians, a branch of the Shoshone. Over time the Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, Cheyenne, Assiniboin, Flathead, Nez Perc, Bannock, Mandan, and Sioux -- as well as the Crow -- all occupied the region, at times coexisting on the plains and in the foothills and at times viciously contesting territorial rights. By the mid-nineteenth century, with westward migration rapidly increasing, the U.S. government moved to bring peace among the warring tribes and to secure safe passage across Indian lands for miners bound for California and settlers bound for Oregon. In September of 1851 at Fort Laramie, the government convened a gathering of some ten thousand Indians, representing all of the Western tribes, and there negotiated a treaty that assigned specific boundaries to the territory held by each tribe. Using a crude map sketched by Jim Bridger, the famed mountain man and guide, the chief negotiator for the United States pointed in turn to each of the "reserves" assigned to the respective tribes. In return for their pledge to stay within their own territories, the tribes were to receive annuities from the federal government to compensate for the loss of game and other damages that resulted from white settlement. The land reserved to the Crow included some 38 million acres that lay south and east of the Yellowstone River. It was land they had already come to dominate through an informal alliance with the whites forged many years earlier, land that had become sacred to the tribe. "Crow country is a good country," one of their chiefs, Arrapoosh, had said. "The Great Spirit has put it exactly in the right place....It has snowy mountains and sunny plains, all kinds of climates and good things for every season....Everything good is to be found there. There is no country like...Crow country." But that "good country" was about to be wrested from the Crow. The discovery of gold and other minerals in what was now Montana Territory brought a rapid increase in migration and settlement -- and resulted in a new treaty in 1868, one that reduced the Crow lands to a mere fraction of their original "reserve" and marked the beginning of the end of the Crow presence in the Boulder Valley. Then, in 1882, another treaty opened up even more land in the valley to white settlement, land already being squatted on by miners drawn there by deposits of gold and other minerals in the upper Boulder River. Frustrated by the relative lack of gold in the streams that drained the valley, most of the prospectors moved on to new discoveries at Maiden and Gilt Edge to the north. Others, tired of mining and not willing to rush to one more gold strike, took up homestead claims in the Boulder Valley in hopes of providing meat and produce to nearby mining camps such as Independence and to newly established settlements such as Melville and Dornix, which were giddy with anticipation

over the coming of the railroad. In fact, the entire Yellowstone Valley was about to experience an explosion in town building and homesteading as the Northern Pacific Railroad edged westward from Billings. In advance of the track layers came the publicists. Posters and newspapers proclaimed the Boulder Valley a "homeseeker's paradise." Land-hungry claimants were lured by such propaganda -- and by the beauty and richness of the country. The valley was ringed by the Crazy Mountains to the north, the Absarokas to the west. Game and wildlife roamed the foothills and the lush meadows. The Boulder and its many tributaries offered a plentiful supply of water. The very qualities that had made the valley a sacred place to the Crow were the qualities that drew the homesteader. The settlers who came to the Boulder Valley were primarily American-born, and they came, by and large, from rural roots. Most of them (47 percent) came from the Midwest, with fewer numbers from the East (16 percent), the West (7 percent), and the South (4 percent). Among the earliest of the valley's pioneers was one William McLeod, whose life story mirrors much of the "hopscotch" history of the American frontier. Born in 1833 in Palmyra, Missouri, to parents who were natives of the Carolinas, McLeod was barely twenty years old when he followed in the wake of the forty-niners, crossing the plains to California. However, the young man finally dedicated himself not to prospecting, but to stock raising. A dozen years after his arrival, he married Martha Sowell, a fellow Californian, and the couple had two children. In 1873, when wanderlust again overcame him, William moved his family north to Burns, Oregon, trailing a herd of cattle. Eight years later, McLeod made one final move. Now in his late forties, he brought his wife and his daughters -- along with 200 horses and 125 cattle -- to the Boulder Valley of Montana Territory, selecting a homestead on the upper Boulder River. Because the land he chose that summer of 1881 had not yet been ceded to the government by the Crow, he sought permission from the Indian agent to take his livestock onto the acreage -- in effect, to "squat" -- in anticipation of what everyone knew was the inevitable, the tribe's final relinquishment of the rich Boulder Valley. A year later, in 1882, with the Indians' cession of all their land west of the East Boulder River, McLeod filed his claim. Having finally satisfied his wanderlust, he remained on that homestead until his death in 1914. By that time, this homesteader had placed his mark so firmly on the valley that the small settlement that sprang up at its heart still bears his name. In 1883, two years after McLeod's arrival in the Boulder Valley, the tracks of the Northern Pacific reached Big Timber, the hub of the valley's commerce. That long-anticipated event -- plus the removal of the Crow to lands farther east -- brought new growth to the Boulder Valley. By the fall of 1884, some nine other homesteaders had filed claims on land near the main Boulder River or on one of its tributaries. But despite its natural beauties and resources, the Boulder Valley was not kind to the homesteader. Its mountainous elevation meant short growing seasons that made it especially ill-suited to small-scale farming, which became increasingly clear to settlers. So the homesteaders who succeeded in the valley did so by following the example of William McLeod -- turning to ranching and consolidating their 160 acres into larger holdings through preemption and purchase of nearby holdings. They built their herds as they built their land base, and by the turn of the twentieth century, the Boulder Valley was home to some eighteen thousand head of cattle, an equal number of sheep, and two thousand head of horses. The hunting ground of the Crow, the supposed "homeseeker's paradise" had become the rancher's bonanza. From the comfort of the twenty-first century it's easy to ask why so many staked their family's lives on such a perilous venture as homesteading, especially as many had little knowledge of the life they were about to encounter. Add to that the perils faced en route, and the daring spirit is to be more greatly admired. Imagine yourself, however, as a penniless emigrant, newly arrived in a land full of promise. Or as a veteran emerging from the turmoil of the Civil War looking for a new start for your family. Imagine further the prospect of "free land," yours for the asking. "Climb to the top of any of the surrounding mountains and view the landscape o'er. You will see tracts of land in many places seemingly almost level and not a stick of fencing thereon, not a furrow turned. No one can gaze upon the scene without being struck with the fact that the valley has not yet been called upon to contribute even a tithe of its resources. With an ambition and determination to work, but little capital is needed to give a man a good home and a valuable farm." With such claims, small wonder that frontier fever took hold. Another twenty pages of bold promises accompany these in a booklet published by Montana booster Matt Alderson in the early 1880s. Send twenty-five cents and it would be mailed to any of your friends as an incentive to join the rush. Even today, reading such tantalizing invitations, you can almost sense the flurry of excitement settlers must have felt in their anticipation of a better life. With railroad companies laying tracks ever deeper into the West, the campaign to woo newcomers was fought with vigor, and many "homeseeker's paradises" were promised in this promotion. With such palpable expectation in the air, the arrival of the iron road seemed the ideal period in which to freeze the clock and set our time-travel experiment. Having fixed on our location, we fixed our date when iron rails finally marched through the land bringing floods of eager newcomers: 1883. The frenzy of e-mail applications from would-be modern pioneers was just the beginning. Back in our New York office, sacks of mail continued to arrive even weeks after the application deadline. We finally shut the door on applicants in late January 2001, prompting protests from those left behind. Inducements followed, in the form of promises of financial donations to PBS, candy bars, candid photos, homemade corsetry -- even a gory video from a Dakota farmer showing his seven-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter expertly butchering a pig. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to ensure his or her application really caught our eye. From the final total of fifty-eight hundred, we now needed to find just three families and had only three months to make all the arrangements. Paring down the thousands of Frontier House applications was a

thorny process. Not only did we have to meet the needs of the television audience by finding articulate and interesting individuals, they would also need to be able to endure what would at times doubtless be a harsh encounter. It would have been easy to choose people who brought survival skills or those who were already adept at working land in testing conditions. Instead we wanted to find people who typified life in modern America. So out went the forest rangers from Colorado, a family who ranched at high elevation in New Mexico, the professional hunter from Maine along with his frightening arsenal of black-powder firearms, and reluctantly, the brave couple from Maryland who were keen to experience childbirth on the frontier. Having narrowed the field, we called in an expert to advise on family dynamics under pressure. Undoubtedly the experience would prove punishing physically, but the mental pressures could be equally intense, especially when mom and dad were volunteering their children. Laurie Kaplan of the Ackerman Institute in New York is a great listener. As a family therapist, she has acted as a go-between in hundreds of cases of family breakdown. After she briefed the selection team on where she felt the pressure points would occur, the search proper began. Our "short list" had over five hundred possible families. Each had to be interviewed, first by phone; those who made it to the next level were visited. In four months, our quest to find just three families took us to twenty states and forty-two families in over a quarter of a million miles in air travel. As everyone else stopped to enjoy Christmas, the selection team mined Web applications and hit the phones. While New Year's rolled by, another interview was taking place. Having stared fixedly at computer screens and been umbilically attached to their phones for close to three months, in the early weeks of 2001 associate producer Mark Saben and researcher Emily Ann were set loose to find our ideal participants. They had just six weeks to deliver the ideal lineup. For three of those families, those initial calls would be the first step toward a life-altering experience. "Oh, my God. I didn't expect you to call. Are you sure you mean us?" asked Karen Glenn of Pleasant View, Tennessee. "My mom and dad think this is a great idea...hang on, I'll put you on with them," said fourteen-year-old Ane Clune from their home just outside Los Angeles. Nate Brooks of Boston responded with one word: "Wow." At that point, everyone on our then long short list was asked to send a home video of themselves or to keep a written diary of their thoughts about the potential project. So why do I want to go to the frontier? There are many reasons why I really want to do this. From the moment I first learned of the project I knew in my heart that I truly wanted to do this. I want to do this with a passion that is almost inexplicable. Only once before in my life have I felt the same about an adventure. That was twenty-one years ago when I met my husband Gordon and I knew, in an instant, that I wanted to marry him and was prepared to follow him halfway across the world....I think I can endure a lot. I've camped in snow and ice, twenty degrees below and stuck it out. I worked very hard as a child growing up on a farm. It will be interesting to see if I have the mettle to survive on the frontier. -- Adrienne Clune Guess what?! My mom [Karen Glenn] entered us in this thing where if you get chosen you go to Montana...not for six days but for six months! We get to live like they did in the 1880s and we get to ride horses and own a farm....I can't wait to ride horses wherever I go and go to the bathroom in an outhouse!...I can't believe we will get to go. We are just a regular old family. I will need to learn to milk a cow. My nana has showed me how to skim butter because when she was young she used to use a churn. -- Erinn Patton Some point on December third, Nate wanted to show me something on the Internet, the Frontier House Web site, and asked me what I thought. I knew immediately that this was good and that both of us really wanted to do it....Wednesday night and I was cooking. I was thinking about potatoes for some reason and how something like preparing to make a potato dish on the frontier when you are really hungry and then finding a rotten potato -- something like that could wreck your whole dhis thing where if you get chosen you go to Montana...not for six days but for six months! We get to live like they did in the 1880s and we get to ride horses and own a farm....I can't wait to ride horses wherever I go and go to the bathroom in an outhouse!...I can't believe we will get to go. We are just a regular old family. I will need to learn to milk a cow. My nana has showed me how to skim butter because when she was young she used to use a churn. -- Erinn Patton Some point on December third, Nate wanted to show me something on the Internet, the Frontier House Web site, and asked me what I thought. I knew immediately that this was good and that both of us really wanted to do it....Wednesday night and I was cooking. I was thinking about potatoes for some reason and how something like preparing to make a potato dish on the frontier when you are really hungry and then finding a rotten potato -- something like that could wreck your whole day. Then the phone rang and Nate got it. (Thank God, I would have freaked out.) Nate went into capable, deep-thinking mode. I could tell by the way he was talking it was Frontier House, but I still gave him that "Are you serious? It's them?" face. He nodded in astonishment -- it was very cool. -- Kristen McLeod