**Homesteading and Settlement in the West for Crooked Creek and Rich Cabins**

Rich Loosbrock, Ph.D.

[rdloosbr@adams.edu](mailto:rdloosbr@adams.edu)

@DrRichLoos

Feel free to email or message on Twitter any questions you may have over the summer, or any insights into the camps and roles that you play.

Although these camps are set in different time periods, their functions are similar. In fact, self-sufficient farming looked about the same back in American colonial times. As your camp profiles indicate, these were family operations that would see a blurring of gender lines, although most self-sufficient farms did have a distinct sexual division of labor.

One central fact for both locations would be the presence of the Maxwell Land Grant Company, which sold or leased the lands of the area.

The one area that these programs offer effective teachable moments lies in the opportunity to teach women’s history. Women’s history is often dismissed as either irrelevant to the big picture, or a simple story of work and toil. It is neither. Women make up half of all human activity; they are critical to everything the country became. Labor is often categorized into productive labor (that which makes money or subsistence for a person or family) and reproductive labor (cooking, cleaning, child rearing). In American society, we typically celebrate one form of labor and degrade the other. The Industrial Revolution helped to identify men with productive labor, and women with reproductive labor. It was not always that way, and the connection is significant. There is a reason the first women’s rights convention came as the Industrial Revolution kicked in (Seneca Falls, 1848).

There is a slew of good scholarship about women and farming in the West.

This type of farming was also representative of the larger transition of the American economy. Note the books of Laura Ingalls Wilder; her family transition from hard scrabble and self-sufficient farming to buying spec houses and engaging in cash-crop farming firmly tied to a developing national market.