Homestead Records: Partnerships in Digitization
Some **822,000** homesteader records exist in the National Archives

**75,787** for Nebraska alone

Also records elsewhere:

- BLM/Government Land Office
- County land offices, regional NARA offices, etc.

How will digitizing these records be useful – how will they be used?
The United States of America,

Go all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Homestead Certificate No. 8479.
Appliation No. 3468.

WHEREAS, there has been deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at
Kirtland, Ohio, whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress approved 20th May, 1862, "To secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain," and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of

WILLIAM C. BURLINGAME

has been established and duly documented, in conformity to law, for the Northeast quarter of Section thirty in Township one hundred fifty-four north of Range ninety-two west of the Fifth Principal Meridian, North Dakota, containing one hundred sixty acres,

according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said land, returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE by the Surveyor General,

NOW KNOW YE, That there is, therefore, granted by the UNITED STATES unto the said

WILLIAM C. BURLINGAME

the tract of land above described; TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said tract of land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said WILLIAM C. BURLINGAME

and to his heirs and assigns forever; subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the laws, and decisions of courts, and also subject to the right of the proprietor of a well, or lands to extract and remove his water therefrom, should the same be found to be damaged or injured by the premises hereby granted, as provided by law. And there is reserved from the lands hereby granted, a right of way therein for ditches or canals constructed by the authority of the United States.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I, The Hon. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

(SEAL) Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the first day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and eighty, and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and thirty-third.

By the President,

By

Recorder of the General Land Office.
Patents

Note: An *italic* entry denotes data that has not been indexed against the land patent document, and has no image.

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Homestead Records will also be used by scholars for re-writing the history of homesteading.

*counting vs. story-telling*”
Quantitative studies have been very limited in scope.
Andrea Curtis, then an undergraduate at UNL, was interested in women homesteaders and wondered:

**How did women homesteaders acquire their land?**

She used the digitized homesteading records for the Broken Bow Land Office [Custer County, Nebraska].
Andrea’s question: How did women homesteaders in Custer County obtain their land?

Her answer:
She found marked differences between different groups of females:

Foreign-born female claimants were twice as likely as American female claimants to inherit their claims from their husbands (31% v. 15%).

American females were much more likely to make their claims first and then marry afterwards (29% v. 20%).
Andrea’s research permitted more finely-grained analyses as well.

Her sample included 1720 homesteaders.

She was an **UNDERGRADUATE**.
Are there any precedents for history being revised by “counting” instead of “story-telling”? Well, yes ....
another project is re-writing the environmental history of the Great Plains does “counting” in history end the debates?
To make the digitized records become the basis for a “new history” of homesteading, there are two required phases:

a) digitize the records

b) attract scholars who use them

We’re well on our way to accomplishing (a); we need to achieve (b) as well.