



Adeline Hornbek: Overcoming Challenges



Life is full of challenges. As a woman of the 19th century, Adeline Hornbek was not insulated from trials and tribulations.

While some of the struggles she faced were unique to her time, many of the obstacles she had to overcome are familiar to us all, even in the 21st century.

The struggle for home ownership

Today home ownership is a goal of many, and can be hard to attain. Up until 1862 working class women had little ability to own property in their own name. Thousands of women took advantage of a clause in the Homestead Act which enabled women who were single, widowed, divorced or abandoned to acquire 160 acres of land by meeting the same requirements as men.

Unfortunately, this clause discriminated against married women, such as Charlotte Hill. While she homesteaded here in the valley with her husband and family, the property was only in her husband's name. Eventually, under certain circumstances married women were able to file a claim on land adjacent to their husband's claim. What programs today help make ownership more accessible?

Moving far from home: economic and emotional losses

All who took advantage of the Homestead Act left behind a familiar life in the hope of the economic opportunity the Act offered. Adeline was no exception. Born in 1833 in Massachusetts, by the age of 25 she had married her brother's business partner, Simon A. Harker and moved to the Creek Territory, in what is now Oklahoma. There Simon worked as a clerk in the trading store. By 1861 the Harkers had two children and moved west to homestead along the South Platte River, near

Denver. Their third child was born in 1863. The next year was one of tragedy. During the famous flood of 1864 they suffered extensive losses and Simon, 39, died soon after. Adeline was left a widow with three small children. In 1866 she married Elliot Hornbek in Denver. Elliot Jr. was born in 1870. By 1875 Adeline and Elliot Sr. had separated and Adeline was alone in Colorado Springs with four children. In less than 20 years she had moved across the country, raised four children, and been through two marriages.

Adjusting to the neighborhood

When people and families move, much thought goes into choosing a new location. Factors such as jobs, neighborhoods, schools, and distance to work and shopping all are considered carefully. What factors do you think would have played into Adeline's decision to move her family from Colorado Springs to Florissant in 1878? Many factors were probably similar to today. Perhaps the proximity to the stage coach line in Florissant was important to her. The Castello trading post, only two miles north, provided supplies and goods. There was a school in Florissant which young Elliot could attend. The fertile soils of the valley, abundant grass and timber, and availability of water were most certainly

important considerations. It is hard to move to a new community, leaving friends and family behind. Moving the Hornbek family to Florissant meant establishing new relationships, very important in a time when neighbors were more dependent on one another. This homestead house was one of the first in the valley where many could gather under one roof and many social gatherings took place here. Another way to build relationships is to get involved. Adeline served as secretary on the local school board and worked outside the home at a store in Florissant. How would you build friendships and connections in a new neighborhood?