

Adventures on the American Frontier

Pioneering on the Plains

Part Two

Howard Ruede, Kansas Sodbuster



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**The other book in this series:
Hamlin Garland, Boy of the Prairie**



This book features QR codes that link to audio of the book being narrated so that readers can follow along.

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In the 1870s, many people east of the Mississippi River thought about going west to build a new life on their very own homestead. All the land that was left to be farmed lay between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains in the states of Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas.



Families gathered around their kitchen tables and studied maps of the Midwest. "The homestead land is going fast," they said. "The state of Iowa is nearly all taken already. If we're going to get free land, we have to go soon. Just think! A family can have 160 acres, just for farming the land and living on it for five years. It's almost too good to be true!"

Far away across the Atlantic Ocean, in the countries of Europe, people were saying the same thing in different languages.



Many of them packed their trunks, bought tickets on the ocean steamers, and came to America.

Hundreds of Americans and Europeans made their way to the unclaimed land in the middle of the country. In 1877, a young man named Howard Ruede went to Kansas to homestead land for his family. We know his story because of the letters he wrote to his family, who waited back in the Pennsylvania town of Bethlehem while he built a home for them.

With a creaking of wheels, a last snort, and a tired hiss, the little locomotive came to a stop at the station in Kansas City. A young man in city clothes and carrying a suitcase stood ready to get off the train. Two other young men, both older than he was, were close behind him.

“Kansas at last!” said the first man, whose name was Howard Ruede.

The train conductor said, “Not yet. This here’s Kansas City, Missouri. Kansas begins just west of the city, across the river.”



“Then let’s get on the next train and get on to Kansas,” said Howard. But it wasn’t until 6:00 that evening—ten hours later—that the three men found seats in one of the crowded cars taking homesteaders to the government lands. Then at last they heard the puffs and chugs that meant that the train was starting and felt the jerk of the car as it began to move.

“Hooray!” cried Howard and his friends, Jim and Levin. Others in the car joined them in cheering, “On to Kansas!”