

Welcome to the Homestead Heritage Forest !

The Homestead Heritage Forest is located 3kms south of the junction to Candle Lake along highway #120. Watch for the signs on the north side of the highway



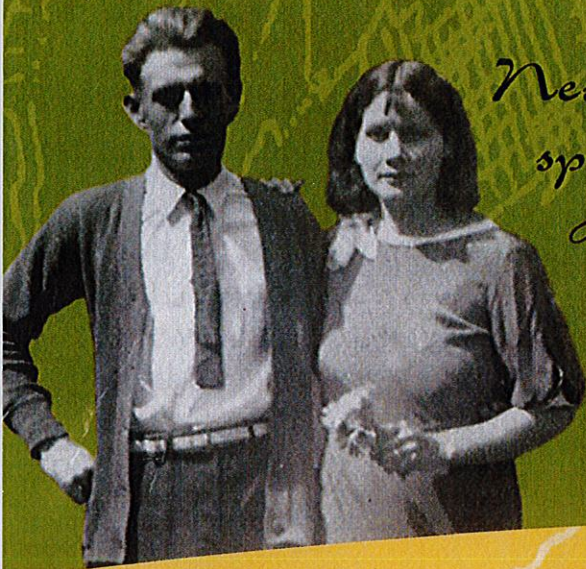
Homestead Heritage Forest



For more information on the Homestead Heritage Forest, please contact:

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Nestled below a canopy of spruce, deep in the Homestead Heritage Forest, awaits a story of pioneer culture that began over 70 years ago.



At home in the forest

Ansgar and Christina Aschim were the original owners and homesteaders of the property. They bought 320 acres (130 hectares) of land in 1932 and built the two-story house in 1937. The home is a Norwegian style cabin typical of the Aschim's homeland. It is built from fire killed spruce harvested from the east side of Torch Lake.

The Aschims cleared 35 acres of forest for cultivation and every spring burned 35 acres of willow flats for pasture. They raised cattle, horses, pigs and chickens, and grew bountiful gardens.

A barn, pig house, garage, smokehouse, warm-up shack and wood house were also built on the homestead. The horse drawn seeder, hay wagon and sets of wagon wheels that remain on the property remind us of farming days long past.

Woodlot stewardship

What started as periodic removal of trees to prevent forest fires soon turned into a source of income. In the late 1930s, the Aschims began intensive woodlot management. By selectively thinning trees, they improved the quality of subsequent generations. Saw logs, building material and pulpwood were harvested. In the late 1930s much of the pulpwood was shipped to Wisconsin where there was a severe wood shortage.

In 1941 the Aschims and their two children (Omar and Susie) left the homestead. They returned during the summers from 1947-56 to log and make forest improvements.

The woodlots are now used for silviculture demonstrations. Signs mark where thinning, selective cutting and clear cut activities have taken place.

Visit the past

In 1965 the provincial government acquired the homestead for the right of way for the highway. The highway ended up further east of the property so in 1977 responsibility of the site was given to the Saskatchewan Forestry Association. It was named the Homestead Heritage Forest and development began to turn it into a demonstration forest.

Today, boardwalks and signs guide visitors along five different trails and explain the history of the homestead.

Take a hike

If you want to catch a glimpse of a beaver family hard at work, follow the Beaver Pond Trail. Along the way look for gnaw marks on trees, as well as ditches used by the animals to move trees to the water. Take a break at the rest stop and you may be able to watch the beavers building on their lodge.

The beaver population must be controlled because of the damage they can cause. They create flooding, which drowns trees and destroys trails. The area to the west of the homestead was flooded by beaver activity in the 1960s. Dead wood was harvested in the 1970s and the area has still not recovered from the effects of the flooding.

In 1919 and 1929 forest fires swept through the area surrounding this trail. You can see scars on the trees that survived, and the new growth that has resulted since.

Dream of days gone by

Your walk along the trails will lead you through beautiful stands of white spruce trees. Take a minute to let your mind wander. As you look into the canopy above, imagine you are standing in the same place the Aschims stood when their dream began.

Many of the trees around you were planted and maintained by the homesteaders. As saplings, the trees were pruned so they would grow to full size and yield high quality timber.

Towering by the edge of the yard is an enormous white spruce. At 24 metres (78 feet) high and with a diameter of 64 centimetres (25 inches) it is the largest tree on the property. Now over 100 years old, this tree was already a robust 30 years of age when the Aschims settled here. The lives of those people touched this place and left, yet the tree remains.

Walk a well-worn trail

A wagon trail ran through the property long before the Aschims arrived. During the Riel Rebellion of 1885 the trail was used to haul fish from Torch Lake to feed General Frederick Middleton's troops. In 1919 this same trail was

used for logging. You can still see the ruts worn over time by the wagon wheels.

Look up, look around

As part of the boreal forest, the homestead supports a variety of native plant and animal life.

Spruce trees dominate the forest, however aspen trees often suppress the growth of young spruce trees. The branches of the aspen cause damage by knocking the tops off the spruce. In order to promote the growth of spruce, aspen have been removed around the younger spruce.

In the low marsh areas where the soil is less favorable, you can see swamp vegetation and stands of black spruce. Wildflowers, berry bushes and grasses lie along the trails and among the trees.

Watch closely for moose, elk and deer; they can be seen eating forage in the meadows and hiding in the trees. Smaller animals such as red squirrels are abundant and are attracted by the large supply of spruce cones. Listen to the songbirds chirping their tunes from the branches high above.