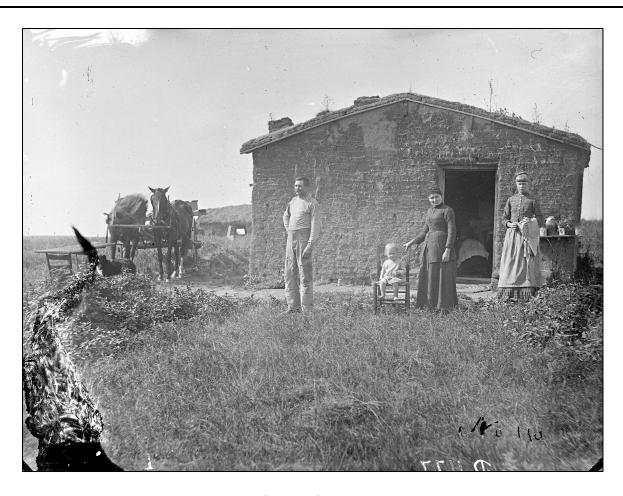


Document A

This photograph shows a family in front of their sod home. There were few trees on the Great Plains, so wood for building was scarce. Homesteaders constructed walls for their homes by stacking 3" thick slabs of sod cut from the prairie. Because photographs were rare, subjects often took a portrait seriously, dressing in their best clothes.



Title: Melanthan Price, West Union, Custer County, Nebraska.

Date: 1886



Document B

The photograph shows a father with his three children in front of their home. Butcher reported that the mother of the children had died and that the photograph was taken just after a heavy rainstorm. The roof had just collapsed under the weight of the wet sod on the top of the home.



Title: Three motherless children and a caved-in soddy [sod home]

Location: Custer County, Nebraska

Date: 1887



Document C

This photograph shows the Shores family. Jerry Shores, who is seated second from the right, had been enslaved decades earlier. Thousands of African Americans moved to the Great Plains from the South in the 1870s and 1880s for the opportunity to own land – and in hopes of escaping the oppression and injustice they experienced in the South.



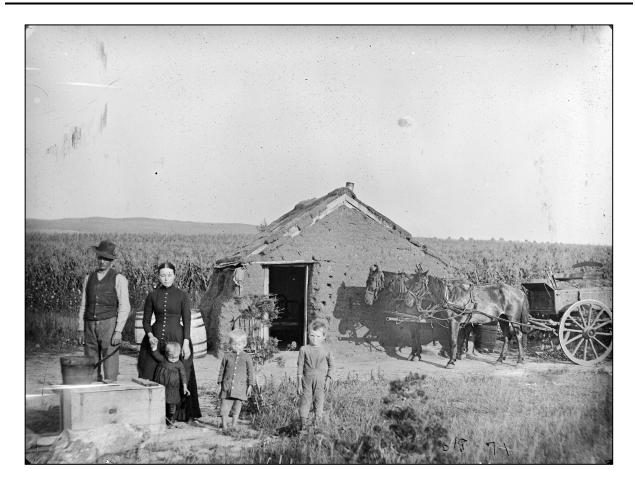
Title: The Shores family near Westerville, Custer County, Nebraska.

Date: 1887



Document D

Parents with their three children standing in front of their home. Butcher typically asked those he photographed to face the sun to improve the lighting for the image, which is why his subjects often appear to be squinting or looking down slightly. Because any movement would cause the image to be blurry, the subjects typically posed for the photographs, remaining still.



Title: Starting a New Family Northwest of West Union, Nebraska.

Location: Custer County, Nebraska

Date: 1886



Document E

This photograph shows a family with their livestock. Butcher reported that the family wanted to take the photograph with their piano so that their relatives back East would see it. However, they did not want their family to see the state of their house, so they asked to move it outdoors for the photograph.



Title: The David Hilton family near Weissert, Custer County, Nebraska.

Date: 1887



Guiding Questions

1. What does each photograph suggest about what life was like for homesteaders on the Great Plains in the 1880s?
Document A
Document B
Document C
Document D
Document E

2.	What other evidence might you want to examine if you wanted to determine
	whether these photographs were accurate representations of life in the
	tenements?

- 3. When evaluating whether a historical photograph is useful as evidence, historians consider various questions, including:
 - When and where was the photograph was taken?
 - Who took the photograph? What was their perspective on the events or people being photographed, and how might that have influenced what they chose to shoot?
 - Why was the photograph taken? Might the photographer have wanted to portray a scene in a particular way?
 - Under what circumstances was the photograph taken? How might these circumstances have limited or enabled what the photographer captured?
 - What technology did the photographer use, and how might that have influenced the image created?

Considering the questions above, why might Butcher's photographs be useful evidence about life for homesteaders on the Great Plains?



Considering the questions above, what about the photographs might cause you to question whether they are useful evidence about life for homesteaders on the Great Plains?

4. Butcher took the photograph below in 1900, about 13-14 years after Photos A-E. The photograph supposedly depicts a man firing a gun at another man's feet to make him "dance". Butcher posed the scene and later altered the photograph to make it look like white smoke was coming out of the man's gun.



Does the fact that Butcher posed and altered a photograph in 1900 affect your evaluation of the reliability of Photographs A-E?