



Pioneer farmhouse simulation

Outside version

Facts

- A one-room farmhouse was typically 15 by 20 feet or 300 square feet.
- Wood came from the trees cleared from the land. No saw mills existed in the area so wood was left round or roughly squared. Ends were often notched and linked together if there were no nails available.
- A chimney was made of clay and sticks and often leaned out slightly from the structure so it could be knocked over if there was a fire.
- If cedar or cypress trees were available, shingles were made for the roof. If not available, palmetto fronds were used.
- Early pioneers bought very little from the store (either they did not have the money or the store was too far away) and had to make most of what they needed. These tasks were labor-intensive and time-consuming. Many pioneers had large families because more children meant more help with necessary chores. That meant that anywhere from 5-7 people could be living in the same, small home.

Instructions

- If the dimensions of a typical farmhouse were 15 by 20 feet, what shape do you think the building was? Measure each wall and mark each corner with a flag, then use the same color tape to create the building footprint by wrapping it around each flag.
- Cross-ventilation was very important because there was no electricity and thus no air-conditioning. Pioneers built their homes with many windows and doors to help the air circulate. If you were lucky, you had netting to hang over the windows and beds to keep mosquitoes away. However, many pioneers had to rely on smudge pots, containers of burning wood, whose smoke helped ward off mosquitoes. Knowing this, where should the doors and windows be located? Mark the location of each window and door using a different color tape from the one used for the building footprint.
- The hearth was the center of the home and was used for cooking and as a heat source on cold days. Knowing this, where should the hearth be located? Place the tarp where you think it should go.
- Most pioneers did not have store-bought furniture but used whatever they could salvage from the nearest town to use as furniture. Tables were often made from boards placed on trunks or crates and empty barrels often served as chairs. The home we are recreating today had five people living in it. Use another tarp and the five paint bucket lids to show where you think the table and chairs should be located.
- Just as the furniture was made by hand, so were the mattresses. Some farmers made mattresses by splitting palmetto fronds, drying them in the sun, and stuffing them into

cloth covers. Other farmers collected Spanish moss, scalded it in boiling water, hung it out to dry, and picked it apart to make it fluffy before filling mattress covers. Try out the stuffed mattress to see what a pioneer would have slept on. Then, take that mattress and the four tarps of the same size and find a place for them within the building footprint.

Questions

- How does your room compare to the pioneer home we created? And your entire home?
- What are some of the benefits of having a porch wrapped around the pioneer home?
- What might you have liked about living on a farm in the 1800s?
- What wouldn't you have liked?