

**McGraugh Homestead Video Transcript**

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**Title:** McGraugh Homestead  
**Location:** Casper, Wyoming  
**Date:** October, 2010  
**Featuring:** Mike Abel, Director, National Historic Trails Interpretive Center  
Jamis Johnson, Homesteader's Descendant

JAMIS. I live right here at this place. We're south of Casper about 30 miles, they call it Bates Hole. We got us pert near 6,000 acres here. It's not a big ranch, but it's all in one count. You don't have to cross other people to get to your summer range. It's just a nice, nice, nice ranch.

JAMIS. My great grandfather lived in Colorado and they got flooded out and he just loaded up and what they had left in a wagon, him and his wife, their kids, and this is where he ended up.

(sound of Jamis loading horse into a trailer)

MIKE. The geography of the area, and following the Platte River, meant that most of the trails heading West where the immigrants crossed in this part of Wyoming, so we had the Oregon Trail, the Mormon Pioneer Trail, the Pony Express Trail, and the California Trail all passing through this point.

MIKE. It was pretty rugged country a lot sand, a lot of river crossings as they followed the trail. The area here was rocky, rough, and required a lot of diligence to get through. They had to keep their pace to be able to get on from here to Independence Rock in the general area, so by mid-summer they were sure they could get to the mountains on to the west and across those mountains on their travels.

JAMIS. It's just amazing how tough and durable those people were. The homesteads are what, you know, what I think really settled this country. It was a great deal, you know, at that time.

MIKE. The Homestead Act was a very important part of the migration that we talk about here. We are not a museum. We are an interpretive center, so you can touch things here you can get involved you can take wagon rides, learn what it was like to be a pioneer and travel in those days.

(sound of video screen in interactive covered wagon. Cowboy: "No matter what happens just sit still")

MIKE. The trails then became the highway to travel to the West, especially when Oregon opened up and the Homestead Act came into being, and people had the legal opportunity to achieve these dreams, to be able to achieve their own land, their own farms, their own ranches, and we tell that story here by talking about the efforts and journeys that people made as they passed this point and headed on to the West to the different areas that were being settled.

(sound of water running in small creek)

JAMIS. Three creeks come here together, and I think those old timers knew water was real important to them. We came here in 1886, homesteaded here, and we've been here ever since.

JAMIS. I love it here. I wouldn't live anyplace else. If I had a chance to move I wouldn't. Yeah, it's just a fun place to live and raise a family. You gotta like this lifestyle because, you know, you don't get rich at it. Nobody gets rich off ranching, but it's something you got to like to do and enjoy it or you won't stay with it."

JAMIS. The old house, my granddad, he built that in 1892, and they said it set here for several years boarded up because they couldn't get windows for it. The old glass in there, it's still wavy, you know, like they came in the old days. They tell me that's the way it was. Of course it has been remodeled over the years a little bit.

(Bell on cabin ringing)

JAMIS. But 99 percent is original. We put a fireplace in it when we moved up here in 1977 and this front porch and stuff has been added on, but the old house is pretty original inside.

JAMIS. I wouldn't trade it for a mansion, this old house, no I wouldn't trade it for a new house. I guess I'm old too. We get along pretty good, me and that old cabin, you know. If we wanted to sell this ranch you might say, you know, I'll price it at ten-million just for a joke, well somebody might drive in a write you a check and then down the road you go, you know. If you don't want to sell one, you better not price it, because they don't make any more land, and it's pretty valuable, you really can't put a price on it.

MIKE. We need to ensure that there's an understanding of this resource and ensure that we consider the history, consider the land, as we make these decisions for development for the future. If we don't, these resources will be lost. That would be a disservice to the pioneers that worked and toiled so hard to come through this area as they headed west for a new life and new adventures.

JAMIS. It's gonna be a thing of the past one of these days, the small ranch. Someday there won't be any, you know. It's a way of life, and the kind of people that are still here and still fighting it are, you know, pretty unique people. They're not rich, they're never gonna be rich, but that's immaterial you can't leave it with you.

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