

Hagadone Homestead Video Transcript

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Title: Frank Hagadone Homestead
Location: Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, Montana
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Featuring: Zane Fulbright, BLM Archaeologist

ZANE. The Missouri Breaks is steep country with the Missouri River running through the bottom of it. You might see bighorn sheep, bald eagles, great eroded cliffs, timber slopes up high, cottonwoods down on the river, prickly pear cactus, sage brush, lot of grass, crested wheat grass, quiet, just a very quiet here.

ZANE. The best way to get to the Hagadone Homestead is by floating the Missouri river. A lot of people put in up river, nine miles, and they'll float down here in a day, and then they'll keep going two or three days down river. So floating the river is the best way to get to the Hagadone Homestead.

ZANE. The road that used to access this site washes every year, so it's not... there's no maintained road to the Hagadone Homestead, so, if people want to visit the homestead they float the river.

ZANE. This is the Francis or Frank Hagadone Homestead and he was here at this location from 1923 until 1954. He was an old codger. He was a pretty independent fellow. He always had Bull Durham tobacco, always rolled his own cigarettes. He would finish a cigarette; he would stop driving as he was going into town, roll another one and keep smoking.

ZANE. He drove a '34 Chevy coupe forever that he kept parked on top of the breaks, because down here, you couldn't get a car down here. He worked the road all the time. So, he was an independent cuss...and I think everyone at that time was trying to take advantage of any opportunity of free land that they could. People who knew about these river banks, these characters... from folks coming up on the steamboats in the late 1800s, so everything was mapped out and so I think any flat piece of ground they could find they took advantage of.

ZANE. By the time he died he had over 400 acres. Then, they auctioned off all of his personal belongings and they auctioned off the land separately, so for 10 bucks they got the land here, and then when the government acquired that land 30 years later they sold it for couple hundred thousand dollars so they made a lot of money over 30 years on this 10 dollar piece of land.”

ZANE. For the last 10 years we have been stabilizing the buildings at this location. Replacing logs and stabilizing the frame buildings and reroofing them and trying to maintain them as historic objects. So, we want to stabilize them without making them look like new buildings. So that a person can see, wow, what a desperate life this was when the Hagadone's lived down here.”

ZANE. You had to be prepared to be by yourself, and I don't think there were a lot of families who were willing to make that sacrifice. The difficult terrain here, the isolation, the fact that no community ever developed here. There was never any intent to run power to this location. The Missouri Breaks homestead, and this Hagadone Homestead, they were really left on their own, there was never any intent to include them in a community, so it's a rough life and we're trying to preserve that sense of place.

ZANE. Cans on the table still, the cook stove that's inside, the bed that I've struggled to sleep on one night, but the fact that's it all still here and the only ones who guard it are the rattlesnakes and the rabbits... it's amazing that it's still standing. It's been a labor of love though because there's been people passionate about this site for quite a few years and the people who float the river and come see it have been great about leaving artifacts on site.

ZANE. I think that people appreciate the fact that there's still evidence on the landscape of the homesteaders, people who came before us, and they appreciate the hardship, and say 'Wow, I'm here just for a few days and I get to visit and appreciate it for a few days, but I get to go home to my own bed.' But there were people who lived here, and without drinking water, without electricity, without a telephone, to contact anyone else, it's a pretty amazing feat and people appreciate the evidence they left for us.

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