



Wyoming Historical Society

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PRESS RELEASE

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2025 Lola Homsher Research Grant Awardees

“We are incredibly excited to announce this year's Lola Homsher Research Grant awardees. Their projects represent the very best of Wyoming historical inquiry, and we eagerly anticipate the fresh insights and engaging stories they will bring to light.” exclaimed Hailey Sorg, chair of the 2025 Wyoming Historical Society’s Projects Committee.

The committee recognizes amateur and professional historians through these grants that support the Society’s mission to make Wyoming’s past accessible to present and future generations. Sorg stated, “The Lola Homsher Grants are a cornerstone of our efforts to foster historical understanding across Wyoming. We believe that by supporting these researchers, we are directly investing in the public’s access to, and appreciation for, the unique history that shapes our state.”

“Lola Homsher's vision for preserving Wyoming's history lives on through these grants. We are proud to support these dedicated researchers who, through their meticulous work, are not only expanding our collective knowledge but also ensuring that the narratives of our past remain vibrant and accessible for generations to come” continued Sorg.

Grant monies are drawn from a fund established by the late Lola Homsher, a noted historian and state archivist. One of Homsher’s most significant contributions to preserve Wyoming history came when she spearheaded establishing the Wyoming State Historical Society in 1953. After her retirement Lola Homsher made a major donation to the Society that has been used as an endowment to help fund Society programs.

The total amount awarded for 2025 was \$7000. The five recipients of Homsher research grants for 2025 are:

Brian Beauvais - Cody, WY for "Thomas Jaggar Rephotography Project"

This project is a historical rephotography initiative focused on the Absaroka Mountains of northwest Wyoming. It builds on the work of geologist Arnold Hague and his assistant Thomas Jaggar, who documented the region during geological surveys in the 1890s. Jaggar’s photographs and field notes, preserved at the U.S.G.S. Library, offer invaluable insight into the historical landscape of the Yellowstone Park Timberland Reserve, now Shoshone National Forest. Beauvais has been working to locate and rephotograph Jaggar’s original vantage points during hiking excursions, producing a GIS map of photo locations and a published newspaper article on the endeavor. This project was supported by the Lola Homsher Endowment Fund in 2024 and was selected again in 2025 to aid Beauvais in finishing this project.

Conor Mullen - Laramie, WY for "A Voice in the Wilderness: Ending the Cold War in Grand Teton National Park"

A Voice in the Wilderness: Ending the Cold War in Grand Teton National Park” is a creative research project that explores a little-known but historically significant moment in Wyoming's past—when U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze met in Grand Teton National Park in September 1989 to lay groundwork for ending the Cold War. Against the striking backdrop of the Tetons, their conversations on nuclear arms control and global diplomacy were shaped not only by politics but by the calming influence of the natural landscape. This project uses archival research, oral histories, and artistic collage techniques to reconstruct and interpret these events, highlighting the unique role Wyoming’s wilderness played in international peace-keeping. Through interviews, photo documentation, and creative storytelling, the project will culminate in a public exhibition and presentation—reviving a forgotten moment of diplomacy and honoring Wyoming’s place in global history.

Joseph Esparza - Bozeman, MT for "Landmark Mountains: Empire, Experience, and Popular Imagination in the Making of a Vertical West, c. 1820-1945" Chapter 1 "Winds of Empire" and Chapter 3 "Emblems of the West"

“Landmark Mountains: Empire, Experience, and Popular Imagination in the Making of a Vertical West, c. 1820–1945” explores how iconic mountain landscapes—especially in Wyoming—became powerful cultural symbols in the shaping of the American West. Through art, literature, exploration, and overland travel, mountains such as the Wind River Range and the Grand Tetons were transformed into mythic “vertical frontiers,” reflecting national ideals of empire, identity, and nature. Chapters 1 and 3 center Wyoming’s pivotal role in this history. Chapter 1 shows how the Wind River Mountains, once seen as a Jeffersonian symbol of continental expansion, became both forgotten and reimagined as a site of Native sovereignty. Chapter 3 traces how the Grand Tetons became a romanticized emblem of rugged individualism and white American identity through photography, mountaineering, and popular culture. The project reveals how public imagination helped shape these landscapes into enduring national icons, and how they continue to inform our understanding of land, identity, and environmental challenges today.

Patrick Schmiedt - Covina, CA for "The Team from Laramie: The Early History of Wyoming Cowboy Football"

“The Team from Laramie” is a historical exploration of University of Wyoming football from its founding in 1894 through the mid-20th century—a largely overlooked period in the program’s history. While Cowboy football is often celebrated starting with its post-WWII rise under coach Bowden Wyatt, this project shifts focus to the lesser-known early decades marked by modest success but rich in character and historical significance. Despite limited on-field achievements, many players and coaches from this era went on to become war heroes, civic leaders, and influential figures across Wyoming and beyond. Through a game-by-game reconstruction centered around every point scored during this continued on page 10 Homsher’ continued from page 7 period, the project blends sports history with personal stories, correcting long-standing errors in university records and reviving lost narratives. With primary research from newspapers, university archives, and in-person visits to the American Heritage Center, this work will culminate in a published book aimed at deepening public understanding of Cowboy football’s roots and Wyoming’s broader historical identity.

Zane Pearson - Idaho Falls, ID for "An Analysis of the changes in the border between the Territories of Idaho and Wyoming."

“An Analysis of the Changes in the Border Between the Territories of Idaho and Wyoming” is a historical research project focused on tracing the evolution of the territorial boundary between Idaho and Wyoming prior to the formal creation of the Wyoming Territory in 1868. Through the examination of congressional, territorial, county, and personal records, the study seeks to uncover the motivations—political, economic, or otherwise—behind these boundary shifts and assess which factors most influenced

the final state lines. By clarifying the context of Wyoming's creation, it contributes to a deeper public understanding of the state's political and historical roots and encourages reflection on the administrative decisions and leadership that helped shape it.

Hailey Sorg, who also serves as First Vice President of the Wyoming Historical Society, said "Year after year, the Lola Homsher Research Grants empower passionate individuals to unearth and illuminate the often-untold stories of Wyoming. It's truly inspiring to see the breadth and depth of the projects funded, and we are confident that this year's recipients will make significant contributions to our understanding of the state's rich and diverse past."

Members of the 2025 Homsher Committee were Hailey Sorg, Douglas; Patty Kessler, Laramie; and Sara Davis, Cheyenne. Applications and rules for Homsher Research Grants can be obtained by visiting the Society's website at www.wyshs.org; select "Programs," then select "Lola Homsher Research Grant." Please contact the Wyoming Historical Society at 307.322.3014 or vp1.whs@gmail.com for more information. Electronic proposals for 2026 Homsher Grants will be due February 28, 2026.

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