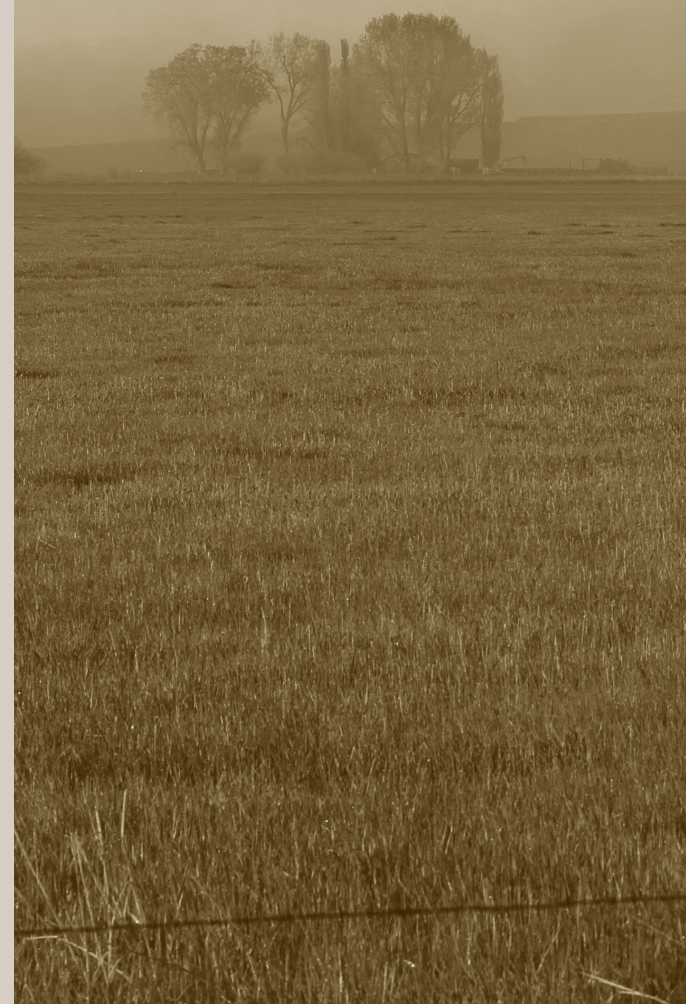


Malheur

National Wildlife Refuge

Sod House Ranch self-guided tour



Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
36391 Sodhouse Lane
Princeton, OR 97721
(541) 493-2612
Email: lpo@fws.gov

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge System Information
1 800/344 WILD

January 2015



11 The blacksmith shop is no longer standing. It was located behind the homestead near the cement livestock watering trough.

12 The Carriage Shed. After the harness shed was converted, this building was constructed to house the ranch carriage and, later, automobiles.

13 The Harness Shed. The ranch carriage was originally parked in this structure. The open, east side of the shed was later enclosed and the building became the harness shed where saddles and tack were stored.

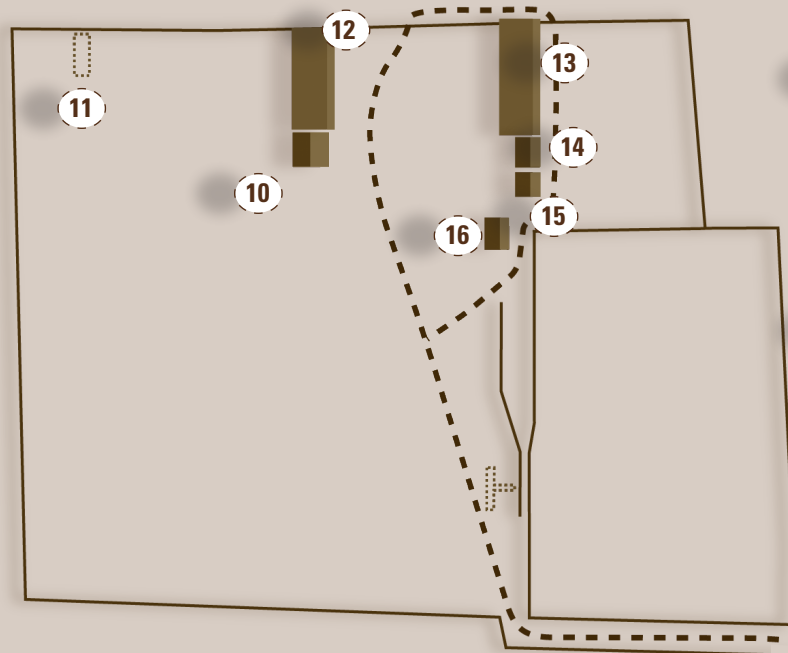
14 The Granary. Grain for horses and chickens was stored in this previously rodent-proof building.

10 The Original Homestead. This was the first building constructed at the ranch in 1886. The foreman and his family lived here until the ranch house was completed near the cottonwood trees.

The homestead was later converted to a ranch kitchen. Crews were fed three meals a day during haying season. The building has been set up to resemble the ranch kitchen when large crews of men were staying at the ranch.

15 Chickens were raised in this coop for meat and eggs. Now we have a pair of Says' Phoebes and barn swallows nesting within the building.

16 The Hide Shed. This open-sided shed was used to hang cow hides on frames so they could be scraped. Leather strips were later cut from the hide to create lariats, reins, and other rawhide products.



continued on other side

Cover:
Sod House
Ranch in
the fog

Welcome to the historic Sod House Ranch, the northern headquarters of the vast 140,000 acre cattle empire managed by Peter French for Californian Hugh Glenn. When the Californian Legislature ended open range grazing in 1872, Glenn sent 23 year old Pete French to Eastern Oregon to establish a cattle ranch. French traveled from California with 1200 long horn cattle, six Mexican vaqueros (cowboys) and a Chinese cook to this remote corner of Oregon.

Over the next 25 years French acquired property using a variety of methods in the Blitzen, Diamond, and Catlow Valleys to create one of the largest cattle ranches in the United States.

9 The Beef Wheel. All that remains are two tall posts. Slaughtered animals were hoisted off the ground, cooled and then butchered while hanging. The beef wheel kept the carcass out of reach of dogs and coyotes.

8 The rudder hay buck, mower and bunch rake were important pieces of equipment used during haying operations. Each piece of equipment was pulled by one or more horses as meadow grasses were cut, raked and moved to large hay stacks. Cutting and storing hay for winter feed was an important part of the ranch operation.

Equipment on display at the ranch is on loan from the Harney County Historical Society.

7 The stockade fence is constructed of split juniper slabs. The corral was used to break horses, separate calves from cows and for branding.



1 The original ranch office was constructed after Peter French's 1897 death. The ranch manager used this office to conduct all business affairs associated with the ranch. A separate room was available for overnight guests.

2 The main house was located with the boundary of these Lombardy poplars and cottonwoods which were planted between 1892 and 1894. The cottonwoods now support a large rookery of great blue herons and double crested cormorants. The Ranch is closed to the public until August 15th to protect these nesting birds.

3 This stone building is a root cellar, built in 1900. It has the French-Glenn brand on the lintel over the north door. The cellar is constructed of a double thickness of sandstone blocks from the Chalk Hills Formation west of the ranch. The mortared layers have a thin layer of mud in between for added insulation. The northern room was filled with ice, then covered with straw, and held the most perishable items such as milk, fresh meat and butter. The larger room held vegetables and cured meats. The ice lasted into the summer, keeping the cellar cool. The roof was originally covered with sod to increase insulation.

4 The two story bunkhouse slept 10-12 buckaroos upstairs in beds that were 6 long and 3 feet wide, filled with straw and covered with bedrolls. Two woodstoves located on the first floor were fueled with coal and provided heat in the structure. Meals were served at the main house and were cooked by the foreman's wife. If you look through the window you can see how the bunkhouse may have been arranged when in use.

Attached to the rear of the bunkhouse was a shed where coal and horse tack were stored.

5 Close to the bunkhouse is a two-seater outhouse and a well for livestock water.

6 The long barn was built in 1888 under the supervision of Nimrod Comegys, a local carpenter who also constructed the Round Barn. It was primarily a horse barn; a hay wagon was driven through the center aisle and hay was pitched into the mangers on either side. One section was used to feed and milk the milk cows. The original center aisle, now under a foot of dirt, has three layers of split juniper laid crosswise to each other. The upright posts are of juniper from Steens Mountain and the ponderosa pine boards came from the Ochoco Mountains to the north.

Restoration and stabilization of the barn was completed in 2003.

