

Historic Sod House Ranch

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge/Oregon

Sod House Ranch is an intact 1880s era cattle ranch constructed and managed by cattle baron Peter French. At the peak of its operation, it was the largest cattle ranch on private property in the United States. Today, this historical legacy is preserved at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, where it serves showcases the cattle ranching heritage of southeastern Oregon.

The ranch, particularly its unique long barn (Figure 3), has been the focus of restoration efforts for the past five years. Despite its location more than 160 miles from the nearest urban center, this spectacular barn has drawn the interest and support of many diverse partners, including the University of Oregon Architectural Field School, AmeriCorps, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department, Harney County Historical Society, Malheur Wildlife Associates, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office; National Park Service, Architectural Division Youth Conservation Corps, and the High Desert Museum Teen Volunteers. Recently, the refuge hosted a Ranching Heritage Day at the site to celebrate completion of the barn restoration, as well as repairs to nine other buildings and construction of a Centennial Trail to facilitate visitation.

The ranch has been the site of historical re-creations and has spurred a teaching curriculum and heritage education. It has received grant funding from the Service Challenge Cost Share program, Service Centennial Challenge Cost Share program, Preserving Oregon for Historic Properties, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



Figure 3. Long Barn at the Historic Sod Ranch