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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Landmarks of historical significance at the P Ranch include the long barn, beef wheel, and several century-old willow and stockade fences. As the only remaining original structures of the huge headquarters ranch which once included at least 21 buildings, these surviving features are representative of Peter French's innovative construction techniques.

Built in the early 1880's, the 150' long by 50' wide barn is made of materials native to the Harney Basin. The pine shingled roof is supported by two rows of juniper trunks (56 total) which border the 12' wide center aisle. Most of the massive, hand hewn sills were replaced by CCC men in 1939, but a few remain in place. The mangers and feed racks, on either side of the aisle which was generally stacked to the 30' roof with native hay, are constructed of hewn aspen and ponderosa pine lumber. French hauled the lumber for the walls about 100 miles by freight team. Double doors at either end of the barn were enlarged in 1939 to accomodate heavy equipment storage for the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

Originally built as a secondary horse barn for the P Ranch, today the impressive building houses a few horses and an occassional steer. The much-photographed barn attracts thousands of visitors, especially during the summer months. It is in need of stabilization and restoration and especially requires a new roof.

Also dating from the late 1880's, the square pine board beef wheel, one of the few remaining in the country, is mounted on two heavy juniper posts. For decades at the P Ranch it stood at one end of a large feed lot and was used to hoist a slaughtered beef off the ground to cool, safe from dogs and coyotes. Beeves were slaughtered once or twice weekly to feed the 100 or more P Ranch hands and buckaroos.

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Willow corrals, made by piling willow shoots between upright poles, grew stronger as they aged since new willows were continually added to reinforce the fence. Stockade fences were erected by setting juniper slabs into shallow trenches and binding crosspieces to them with strips of rawhide. These structures, besides being strong enough to hold wild horses being broke or cattle being branded, served as effective windbreaks. Several sections of both types of fencing still remain today, although they are in a somewhat deteriorated condition.

Interpretive site plan completed.

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SPECIFIC DATES June, 1872

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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Renowned as the headquarters of the Peter French cattle empire, the P Ranch was first established in 1872, when French arrived in the Harney Basin. During the next 25 years he rapidly expanded his holdings and cattle operation until he controlled nearly 200,000 acres, ran 45,000 head of cattle and had built a dozen subsidiary ranches. P Ranch, named after the P iron acquired along with the squatter's rights of a man named Porter, was the home ranch for this huge, well-managed spread.

After Peter French was murdered by a rival neighboring rancher in 1897, his holdings were sold to Henry Corbett of Portland and managed by the well-known eastern Oregon rancher, Bill Hanley. Later the firm was bought out by stockholder Louis Swift, of the Chicago packing company, and the French lands were managed by J. Craven and later Joe Fine. Many of the older local residents vividly recall buckarooing on the big ranch. In 1935, 65,000 acres in the Blitzen Valley, including the main P Ranch, were sold to the Federal Government to become part of a national wildlife refuge. Civilian Conservation Corps construction projects during the late 1930's resulted in the razing of most of the original ranch buildings and structures but the architectural integrity of the long barn has been maintained. In 1948 French's famous residence--the White House--burned entirely. The ranch has been occupied by refuge personnel as a refuge maintenance substation since the time of government purchase.

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The P Ranch is a symbolic remnant of the era of rapid acquisition and control of public lands in the west by powerful cattle barons. Pete French, celebrated in book and story as one of the most colorful of them all, was a progressive ranch manager and a vigorous builder who combined the Texas tradition of running large herds of half-wild cattle on the open range with the English methods of stockfarming. He carefully controlled the breeds and strains of his stock, harvested the abundant native hay for winter feed, and irrigated thousands of acres of meadowland. Local citizens still find his methods and merits a subject of hot debate.

Although one other subranch and a unique round horse barn, owned by the Oregon Historical Society, are intact today, the P Ranch headquarters structures should be preserved as representatives of his vast cattle operation. A restorative and interpretive site plan for the ranch has been prepared by refuge personnel.

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LIST ALL STATES ANI	O COUNTIES FOR PROPERT	TIES OVERLAPPING ST	ATE OR COUNTY BOU	INDARIES
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	4	соде 025
Oregon State	<u>41</u> соре	Harney COUNTY		CODE
11 FORM PREPARED NAME / TITLE Joseph P. Mazzoni, Ref ORGANIZATION	BY uge Marger		DATE	
MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDL STREET & NUMBER	IFE REFUGE		November 1	6, 1977
<u>P. 0. Box 113</u> CITY OR TOWN		97677561 (F).	(503) 493-2 STATE	
BURNS	, p.a.Mg MELLO V 	i de la construction de la const	いしょう ひとうひかわし とう	720
12 CERTIFICATION				an 1999 - 1999 - 19
SIA	TE HISTORIC PRESERVATI YES NO	ON OFFICER RECOMMI		
(ittailud)		and the second states		N OFFICER SIGNATURE
In compliance with Executive Or		ate this property to the N	lational Register, certi	fying that the State
Historic Preservation Officer has evaluate its significance. The eva FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SI	luated level of studificance i		/ X	eview Board and to
TITLE FUS Alinta	In PAINIAILA	- Alland		27/78
FOR NPS USE ONLY	S PROPERTY IS INCLUDED	IN THE NATIONAL REG		
Vina	lus alta	1 PANONAL NEC	DATE /	.2925
	POGY AND HISTORIC PR	RESERVATION K KI	EPER OF THE PA	TICHAL REGISTER
KEEPEROPTHE NATIONAL	EGISTER		DATE .	27.19

