Frenchglen Hotel

Frenchglen is a small desert community sixty miles south of Burns whose population varies from twelve to fifteen permanent residents. In this small town on OR 205 is the Frenchglen Hotel, a hostelry built in 1924 and expanded in 1938. It replaced an earlier hotel at what was originally called the P Station, as the original hostelry and settlement were known, which had been built in 1916 by the Eastern Oregon Livestock Company (later a branch of Swift and Company).

The hotel provided overnight accommodations for stockmen visiting the Peter French P Ranch to purchase livestock. It also accommodated visitors to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which had been set aside in 1908 by the federal government. In 1926, the U.S. Postal Service adopted the name Frenchglen—derived from the names of Pete French and Dr. James Glenn, who created the P Ranch—and the town and hotel have been known by that name ever since.

Set among scattered cottonwood trees in an expanse of bunchgrass and sagebrush, the hotel is a 24-foot-wide, two-story, gable-roofed structure with a low hipped-roof entry porch. The building is sometimes described as American Foursquare with Craftsman detailing, but that suggests something a bit grander than the late-nineteenth-century vernacular building.

Restored by the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife in 1937-1938 with the participation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the hotel was enlarged by adding twenty feet to the rear and modifying the roof from a hipped form to a gable. The property was transferred to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Division in 1973 and is now known as the Frenchglen Hotel State Heritage Site. Operated by a commissionaire, the Frenchglen Hotel has eight guest rooms and serves meals during the warmer months, from March 15 through November 1.

The restored Frenchglen Hotel serves as a base for visitors to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge to the north and the Steens Mountain area to the east. These two modern recreational areas—a bird-filled marsh and an alpine mountain—brought new life to the Frenchglen Hotel almost a century after it was built.

Written by Leland Roth

Further Reading:

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St. John, Alan D. *Oregon's Dry Side: Exploring East of the Cascade Crest.* Portland Ore.: Timber Press, 2007.

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