

# Another Chance for the Last Chance Ranch

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**T**he historical Last Chance Ranch is located in the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge in a remote area of northwest Nevada. The refuge covers almost 900 square miles of land. The original 1885 ranch house was built next to a spring on the range. In 1910 a coursed, squared rubble stone addition was made to the original house. Recently it was included in a restoration project funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This project was required to meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Due to my experience in successfully meeting these requirements on previous historical masonry restorations, I was hired to rebuild the failing stone walls of the house.

The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service hired me to spend 11 days working on the house during September 2000. The plan was to get as much work done as I could in that time. Some additional work would be performed the following year as funding became available. The photographs that I had been sent recommended that the first phase of the restoration would involve rebuilding the severely damaged exterior wall. Any remaining time would be spent repointing.

So I loaded up my flatbed Ford and took the 9-hour drive from my home in the coastal range of Oregon to the Northwest Nevada high desert. The house is located in a remote area only accessible from late spring to early fall. The high desert environment is harsh. It is also quite spectacular. The herds of wild horses and antelope were fantastic to see. The crystal clear Nevada night sky is wonderful beyond words.

Upon arriving at the building I was finally able to personally inspect it. It was immediately apparent that it probably would not have required extensive rebuilding had more stones been used as through stones or bond stones in the original construction. The walls were built with very few stones to tie the outer skin of the wall to the inner. The few that were installed kept the building together enough to allow a major restoration job to take place almost a century later. A strategically located through stone holding up the second story window lintel kept the stonework above the window from collapsing.

The original builders had very workable Rhyolite stone to work with. It could be found on the surface in long but [Back to Table of Contents](#)  
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