

Scotts Bluff

NATIONAL MONUMENT • NEBRASKA



In the central foreground are the remains of a section of the Oregon Trail, which made a hairpin turn toward Scotts Bluff after emerging from Mitchell Pass.

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THE COVER

A view of impressive Mitchell Pass, looking westward. In the immediate foreground may be seen remains of the well-worn trough of the old Oregon Trail. Dominating the right background is the towering mass of Scotts Bluff, while across the pass, in the left background rises South Bluff. Skirting the foot of South Bluff may be seen a portion of the modern highway through the pass.



1942

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

HAROLD L. ICKES, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE • NEWTON B. DRURY, *Director*

Scotts Bluff

SCOTTS BLUFF, a majestic headland rising 800 feet above the North Platte Valley in western Nebraska, was one of the celebrated landmarks on the Oregon Trail. It stands today as a reminder of that great natural highway of American democracy, marching westward across a continent.

Vast herds of buffalo once roamed these plains, and savage tribes came to set up their tepees, to hunt, and to make war. Here passed the spear head of civilization, fur trappers, missionaries, and explorers, as well as the cavalcade of the "forty-niners," the Mormon "handcart" expeditions, the great lumbering freighting trains, stage-coaches bouncing and careening over the Trail, Pony Express couriers riding like the wind, cavalymen in blue, and Indian warriors, painted and eagle feathered, galloping to battle. Almost within the shadow of Scotts Bluff are to be found the ruins of old forts, trading posts, and stage stations; the evidence of emigrant crossings, camp sites, and unmarked graves.

Here can be seen the Oregon Trail, a rare section of it not obliterated by ploughshare or rubber tires, a winding trough gouged into the earth by the ceaseless tramping of the emigrant hordes, the pounding of a million hooves, the creaking, grinding rumble of the wagon wheels. It is the trail of democracy, preeminently the trail of the home builders, free men in the exercise of their freedom, carving out the destiny of America. They passed this area on their way to farms in Oregon, to the promise of gold in California, to the haven of the Great Salt Lake. The whipcrack, the bellowing of oxen, the shouts and curses as the caravans rolled on in clouds of dust, under the sun's hot glare, the laughter, the singing, and the sweet sleep of exhaustion in the campfire's glow were all part of it. There were tragedy and desolation as some pilgrim dropped by the wayside, perhaps from the plague, an Indian arrow, or exposure to a prairie storm. Lust, greed, and ugliness were also there in good measure, but to offset them were devotion, sacrifice, and brave dreams. Along this artery flowed the lifeblood of America, carrying into the West the spirit of self-reliance, of daring and achievement—the unconquerable spirit of the pioneer.

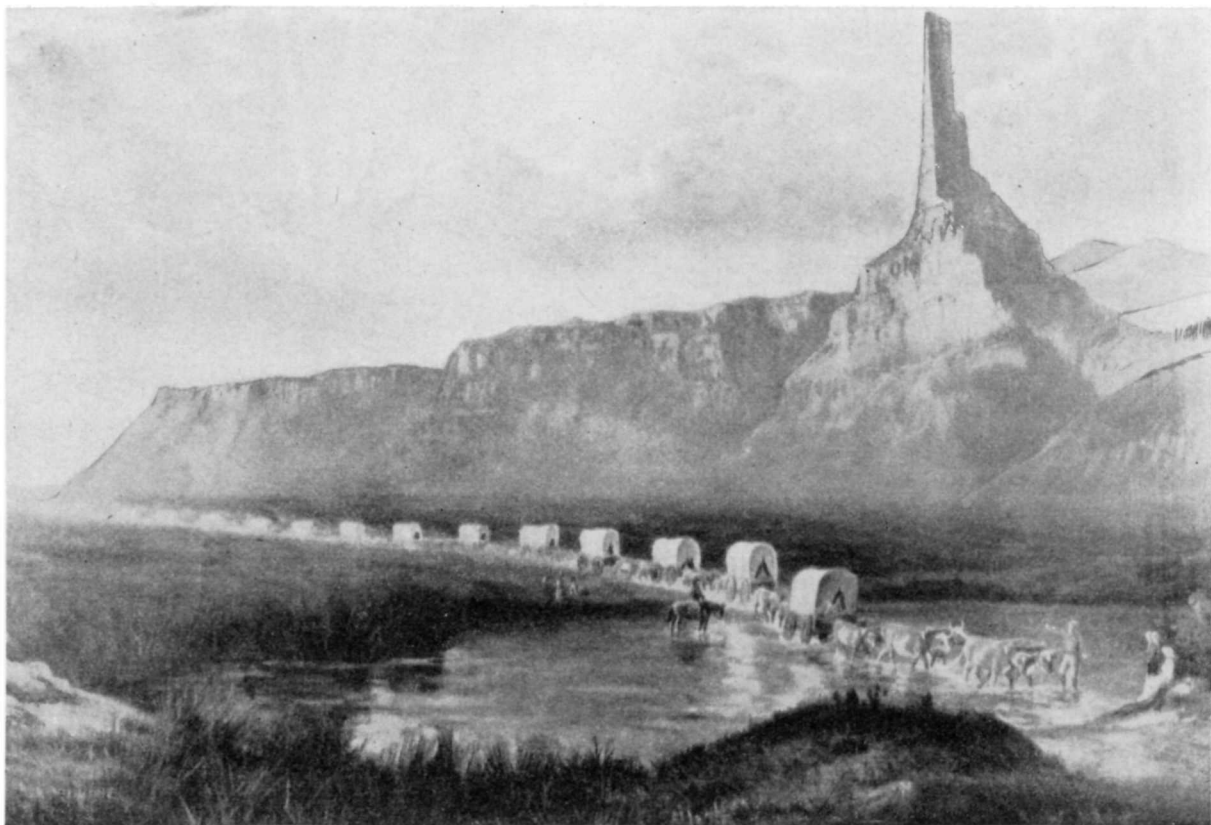
Geology and Prehistory

PROPERLY SPEAKING, the history of Scotts Bluff began 60,000,000 years ago, when the Rocky Mountains were uplifted and rapidly eroded by streams which deposited their load of sediment to form the Great Plains. Eventually the plains themselves were carved out by the ancient streams. Scotts Bluff and its neighboring ridges may be considered as "islands of erosion," remnants of the Great Plains, which have so far survived the slow attack of the North Platte River and its tributaries, and other leveling agencies.

Little is known of early man in western Nebraska, since there has been relatively little scientific inquiry. Yet a profusion of human artifacts, varying widely as to types and quality of workmanship, has been reported, indicating that the North Platte Valley was a human migration corridor for countless centuries before the coming of the white man. There have been occasional finds of stone "Folsom-type" weapons associated with the bones of extinct mammals in Pleistocene deposits, such as at the so-called "Scotts Bluff Bison Quarry," 12 miles west of the national monument. This phenomenon has led some archeologists to estimate an antiquity approaching 20,000 years for man in the Scotts Bluff region.

Exploration and the Fur Trade

IN 1720 a Spanish expedition under Pedro de Villasur was massacred by Pawnees at the forks of the Platte. This event, the high tide of Spanish explorations in the Great Plains, marked the first authenticated exploration by white men on Nebraska soil. In 1739, the Mallet brothers crossed Nebraska from the north on their way to Santa Fe. On this trip the Platte received its name, which is a translation of the Siouan name, "Nebrathka," meaning "shallow." In 1743, other Frenchmen, the Verendryes, advanced through the Dakotas, perhaps to the Rocky Mountains. During the succeeding years of Spanish and

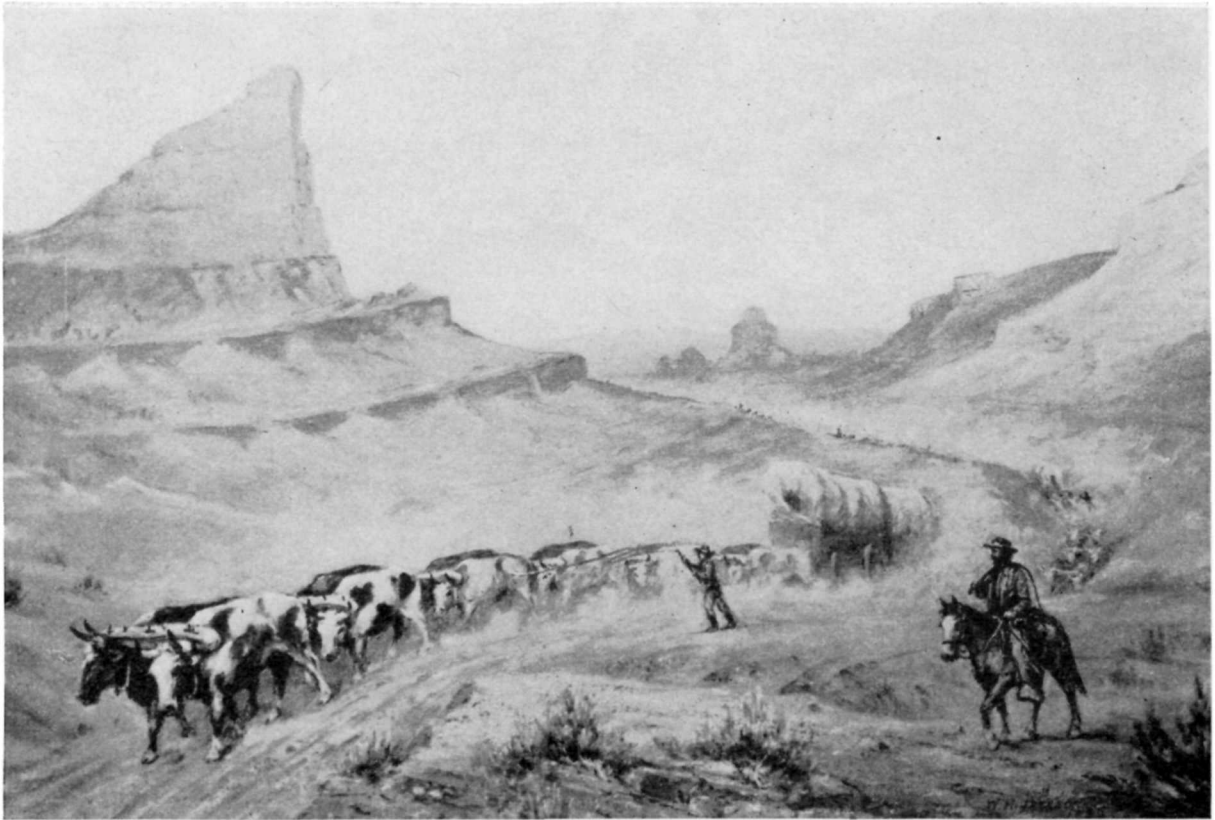


Reproduction of the original oil painting entitled, "Mormon Emigrants Ox Train Fording the Platt River at Sunrise Near Chimney Rock in 1847." Courtesy The Union Pacific Museum.

French occupation of the Great Louisiana province, undoubtedly a number of European or half-breed trappers penetrated the western Great Plains, up the Arkansas, Kansas, and Platte Rivers, but no record has endured.

When Jefferson consummated the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the United States had an unknown territory on its hands larger than continental Europe. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, Army officers, were commissioned to head an expedition to explore this wilderness. Their journey of 1803-06 took them from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean and return, by the Missouri River route, several hundred miles to the north of Scotts Bluff. In 1820, Major Long followed the South Platte to the mountains, beheld the famous peak which now bears his name, and returned east by way of the Arkansas. He is credited with coining the term "the Great American Desert," so that for half a century the Great Plains were regarded as an American Sahara.

The active exploration of the Scotts Bluff region began with the western extension of the fur trade into the upper Missouri and Rocky Mountain regions. Spaniards and Frenchmen traded in the upper Missouri country early in the nineteenth century; but it remained for John Jacob Astor, a German immigrant, to point out the American Rockies and the Oregon country. He sent out two parties, one going overland by the Missouri River route, the other on shipboard by Cape Horn, which joined at the mouth of the Columbia River in January 1812, and there set up a trading post. Shortly thereafter, a party of seven men under Robert Stuart started east with dispatches for Astor. Trying out a new route, they followed up the Snake River, crossed the Continental Divide at or near South Pass, and advanced down the Sweetwater and the North Platte to Scotts Bluff, where they arrived Christmas Day 1812. Since the snows were deep and their horses had been stolen by Indians, they decided not to risk the open plains, and retraced their steps "to a place where they had remarked there was a



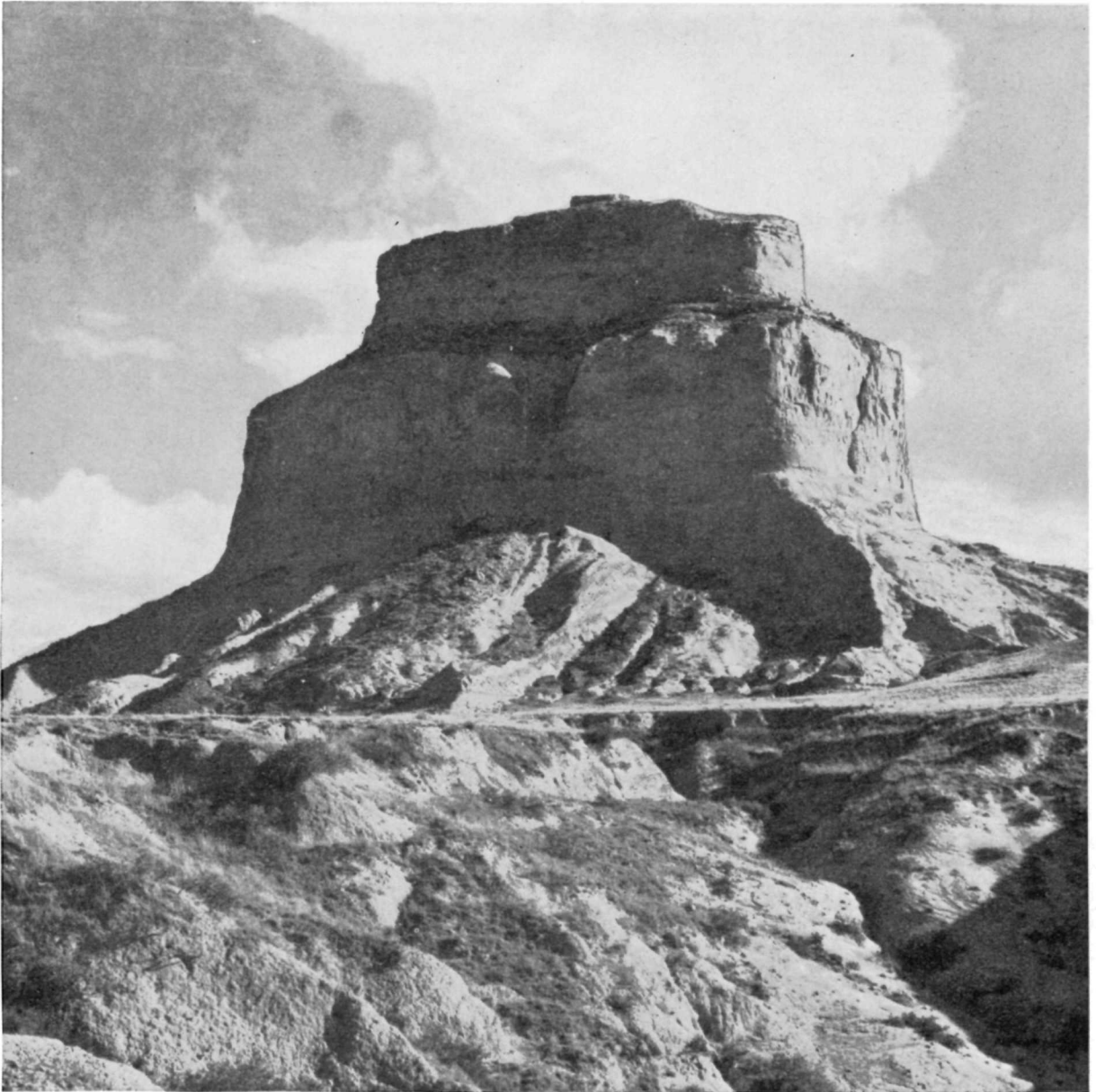
sheltering growth of forest trees and a country abundant in game.” The exact location of their camp site is uncertain. On March 8, 1813, they departed for St. Louis. These “returning Astorians” were the first white men to behold Scotts Bluff and were the true discoverers of the Oregon Trail.

In 1822–23, William Ashley and Andrew Henry organized brigades of fur trappers to work in the Rocky Mountains. In 1824, Thomas Fitzpatrick brought the first furs to the settlements by the Platte route, past Scotts Bluff. In 1825, the “rendezvous” system of gathering furs was initiated. The various bands of trappers were given a time and a place to meet a caravan, which would bring needed supplies and trade goods, and would then take back to St. Louis the skins acquired by trapping and trade. Pack mules were at first the favorite means of conveyance; but, in 1830, the partners William Sublette, Jedediah Smith, and David Jackson led a caravan, which included 10 wagons, to the head of Wind River, these being the first wagons to reach the

Reproduction of the original sketch by W. H. Jackson of an emigrant caravan in Mitchell Pass during the 1860's. From The Oregon Trail by Francis Parkman, The John C. Winston Co., Publishers.

Rocky Mountains via the Oregon Trail (yet known only as the Great Platte route to the mountains).

By 1830, the mountain country had been pretty thoroughly explored. There was a gradual reduction of beaver output, and a shift of fashion from beaver to silk hats further contributed to the decline of the trapping industry. Intense competition was another factor. The dominant outfit was the American Fur Company, which included such famous “mountain men” as Jim Bridger, James Clyman, Joseph Meek, and Zenas Leonard among its employees. Most important of the independent traders were Captain Bonneville, who brought an elaborate wagon-train outfit into the mountains in 1832, over the North Platte route, and Nathaniel Wyeth, who came through in 1834 with Jason and Daniel Lee, the first missionaries. A new era in the fur business came about with the founding of permanent trading posts. In 1834, Fort Hall was established



Dome Rock, at the southeast corner of the monument, captured the imagination of the emigrants by its resemblance to a tremendous block house, or fortification.

by Wyeth in Idaho on the upper Snake; and in this same year William Sublette and Robert Campbell of the American Fur Co. built the log stockade of Fort William, some 50 miles above Scotts Bluff. This later became the adobe-walled Fort John, in turn to become the United States Army post of Fort Laramie. Despite these transitions, the annual rendezvous in the mountains continued until 1840.

Hiram Scott

SCOTTS BLUFF received its name from a fur trapper named Hiram Scott, who died in the vicinity about 1828. *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* by Washington Irving, which appeared in 1837, contains the first published account of his death. Scott and others were descending the upper part of the Platte in canoes when these overturned, spoiling their powder, thus compelling them to depend upon roots and wild fruits for subsistence. Suffering from hunger, they arrived at Laramie's Fork (site of Fort Laramie), where Scott was taken ill;

and his companions came to a halt, until he should recover health and strength. Discovering a fresh trail of white men, and fearing that to linger might mean starvation for all, they abandoned Scott to his fate, and succeeded in overtaking the party of which they were in quest, reporting that Scott had died of disease. "On the ensuing summer, these very individuals visiting these parts in company with others, came suddenly upon the grinning skull of a human skeleton which, by certain signs, they recognized for the remains of Scott. This was 60 long miles from the place where they had abandoned him, and it appeared that the wretched man had crawled that immense distance before death put an end to his miseries. The wild and picturesque bluffs in the neighborhood of his lonely grave have ever since borne his name."

There are numerous later versions of Scott's death, provided by various travelers who were impressed by the lonely grandeur of the bluff, and its sad story. Most of these, however, appear to be ornamented by the imagination of the writers. Some of the variations on the Scott tradition are that he was attracted by the enchanting beauty of the place and made it his residence; that he was pursued by hostile Indians; that it was his wish that he be abandoned to his fate; that he was left in a boat; that he was a solitary trapper who lost his way; that he was put ashore by his boat's crew; that they had a grudge against him, et cetera.

Little is known of Scott beyond the garbled circumstances of his death. It appears that he may have been a man of more than ordinary ability and prestige. He has been identified as one of Ashley's trappers, who volunteered to serve as a captain under Colonel Leavenworth in the campaign of 1823 against the Indians on the upper Missouri. At the time of his death, it appears that he was in the employ of the Rocky Mountain Fur Co., and probably was in command of the party which betrayed him.

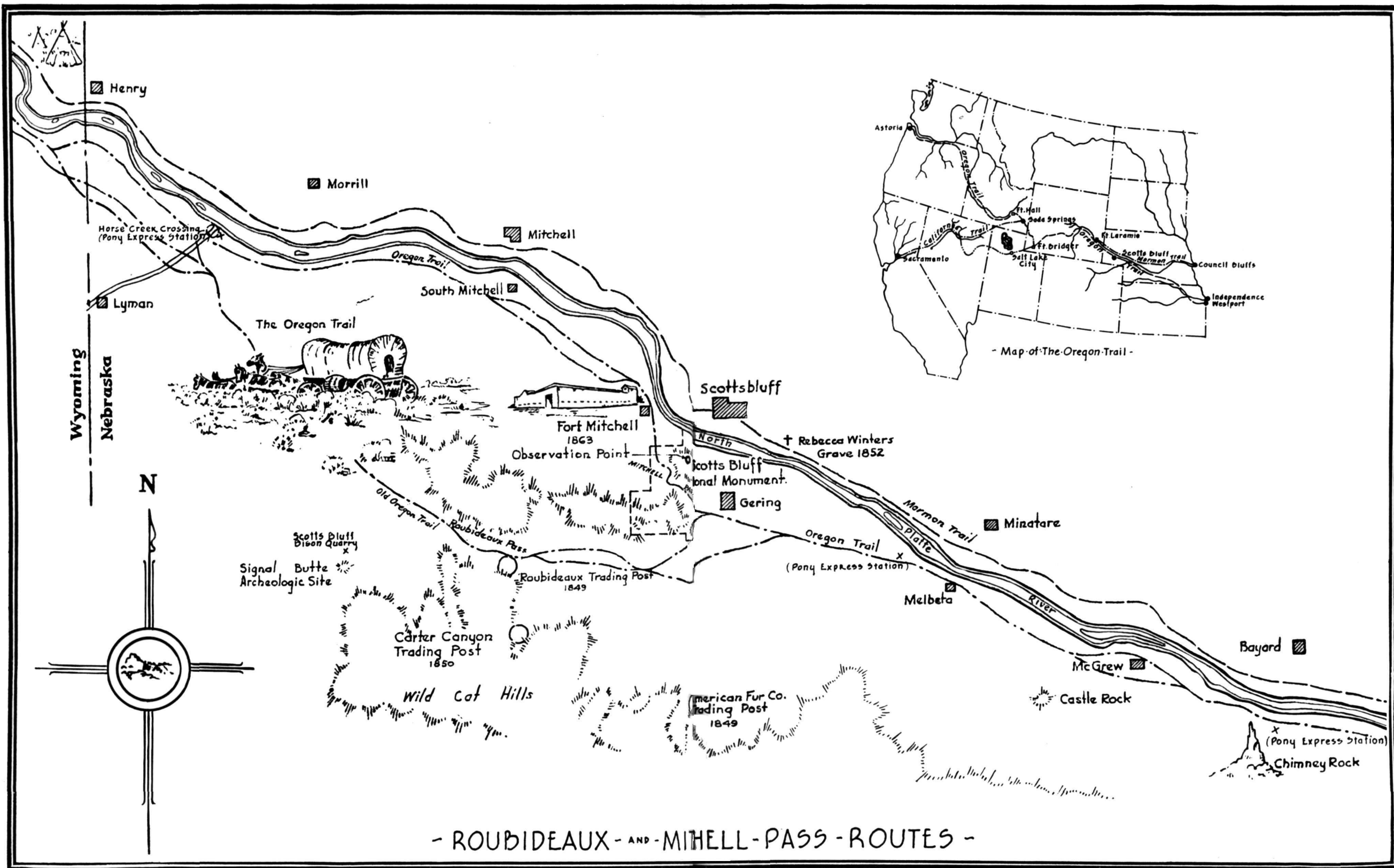
The name "Scotts Bluff" was used at least as early as 1832, since that was the date of Captain Bonneville's expedition. No published map showed Scotts Bluff until the Greenhow map of 1840, and here it is incorrectly located. The map in Lieutenant Fremont's report of 1843 has Scotts Bluff properly indicated, and this map was basic for most of the later emigrant guides.

Emigrations

THE MISSIONARIES Jason and Daniel Lee, who accompanied Wyeth in 1834, were followed the next year by Rev. Samuel Parker and Marcus Whitman. In 1836, the wives of Marcus Whitman and Rev. Henry Spalding became the first white women to travel the Platte route and cross the Rocky Mountains. A. J. Miller, whose sketch of Scotts Bluff (reproduced here) is the earliest known, passed by in 1837; also Rev. Joseph Williams and Father DeSmet, a Jesuit, journeyed past Scotts Bluff, in 1841, with the Bidwell Bartleson party to Oregon and California. This was the first emigration train to pass Scotts Bluff. A detachment of Lieutenant Fremont's expedition to the West followed the North Platte in 1842, and in this year also came Dr. Elijah White and Lansford Hastings, who wrote one of the first guides for western emigrants.

Up to 1843, westward migration was hardly more than a trickle. But in that year came the "Great Emigration," led by Marcus Whitman, when over 1,000 people made the heart-breaking journey to Oregon. This was an impressive vanguard of civilization, prophetic of the flood to come. In 1844 some 1,200 passed Scotts Bluff, and in 1845 the count exceeded 3,000. In this year Colonel Kearney took 250 dragoons to South Pass, the first soldiers of the United States to go over the Oregon Trail. In 1846 the budding young historian, Francis Parkman, met a band of Sioux at Scotts Bluff and was invited to partake of dogmeat. At Fort Laramie he overtook the Donner party, which was later to meet disaster in the Sierra Nevada. In 1847, the advance guard of Mormons, led by Brigham Young, passed here on their way to the Great Salt Lake.

News of California gold, reaching the East in 1848, released the floodgates. In 1849, it is recorded that 25,000 men, women, and children followed the Oregon Trail (thenceforward more properly known as the California Trail). Scenes of the early Oregon emigrations were repeated on a vast scale, with almost endless trains of emigrants departing from the various posts along the Missouri. Onward from Fort Kearney, where these divergent trails joined, the white-topped wagons of the "forty-niners" crawled like gigantic ants along both margins of the Platte and up the north fork past Scotts Bluff.



- ROUBIDEAUX - AND - MITCHELL - PASS - ROUTES -



View from the summit of South Bluff, looking north toward Scotts Bluff. In the foreground is the headquarters area of the monument, adjoining Summit Road and the Trans-Monument Highway.

The Oregon Trail at Scotts Bluff

THE Oregon Trail was not always one well-defined line of travel, but included the various branches, crossings, short cuts, and parallel routes which followed the Platte River to the West. The main trail crossed the entire length of the present Scotts Bluff country in a north-westerly direction along the south side of the North Platte River. A parallel route, generally referred to as the Mormon trail, followed the north bank, though it crossed and joined the main trail at Fort Laramie.

In this immediate vicinity, the main trail divided as a result of a peculiarity in the topography. At this point the south side of the North Platte is bounded by a ridge of bluffs about 30 miles long, now called the Wildcat Hills. Much closer to the river is another high range of bluffs about 8 miles long, bounded at its eastern end by Scotts Bluff, which forms a hook at right angles to the river; and its western end is connected by a low sandy hill with the western terminus of the Wildcat ridge. The entire series of bluffs, in the shape of a shepherd's crook, forms a barrier across the valley which can be penetrated at only two points—the deep gash at Scotts Bluff, called Mitchell Pass, and the low hill connecting the two ridges, called Roubideaux Pass. In earlier times the term "Scotts Bluff" or "Scotts Bluffs" was sometimes applied to the whole series of bluffs, including the Wildcat Hills, rather than

to the one main eminence now contained within the national monument. Similarly, both of the passes were at various times referred to as "Scotts Bluffs Pass." This accounts for much of the confusion that has prevailed about this sector of the Oregon Trail.

It appears that Mitchell Pass, within the monument area, was used from earliest times by travelers on foot and horseback. But, when the first wagons came through, it was thought that the badlands and rocky defiles at the foot of Scotts Bluff were impassable. Accordingly, the Trail swung away from its accustomed route along the river, and passed to the south of what is now the monument, describing an arc through Roubideaux Pass, and rejoining the river near Horse Creek. At Roubideaux there was a spring of some volume and a supply of firewood, which made it a desirable camp site. This site received its name from a Frenchman or half-breed who set up a trading post and a blacksmith shop there in 1849, which is frequently described in emigrant journals.

In the early 1850's someone discovered that Mitchell Pass could be negotiated by wagons, and it is probable that soldiers from Fort Laramie made some improvements there. In any case, henceforward Mitchell Pass became the favored route, although it is unlikely that the Roubideaux Pass route was ever altogether abandoned. Thus, the wagon trains to Oregon and the first contingent of California-bound emigrants used Roubideaux Pass, but the great bulk of the later migrations and the lines of transcontinental communication went through Mitchell Pass.



Transcontinental Communication

THE GOLD RUSH to California, which continued in the fifties, was supplanted by strikes of precious metals in various parts of the Rocky Mountain region, which led to ramifications of the Oregon Trail and a demand for speedy transportation. In 1847 the Mormons had initiated a private mail service over the Platte route. In 1850 the first mail contract for monthly service each way between Missouri and Salt Lake City, via Scotts Bluff, was awarded. In 1851 mail was carried monthly to California. During the "Mormon War" of 1858 the Government contracted for the hauling of great quantities of supplies. Nearly all of this freighting went up the North Platte past Scotts Bluff. By 1860 the firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell, which monopolized the freighting business, had acquired mail contracts for the entire stretch between the Missouri and the Pacific. This led to a famous experiment in fast mail.

The Pony Express began April 3, 1860, over a well-equipped route from St. Joseph, Mo., to Placerville, Calif., via Fort Kearney, Old Julesburg, Scotts Bluff, and Fort Laramie. Stations were about 15 miles apart, usually built of sod or adobe. About 75 mustangs were used for the complete run, requiring approximately 10½ days. Each rider made from 75 to 100 miles, doing his round trip twice a week through all kinds of weather and frequently through hostile Indian country. The stations in the Scotts Bluff region were Chimney Rock Station, Scotts Bluff Station 5 miles east of the bluff, and lower Horse Creek

Looking from the summit of Scotts Bluff toward the city of Gering. The road to the summit can be seen winding up the cliff in the left foreground.

Station. The Scotts Bluff Station was 20 by 50 feet, and had sod walls 30 inches thick. In 1871 it became the Mark Coad Ranch House.

The Pacific telegraph line that terminated the life of the Pony Express in October 1861 was constructed by Edward Creighton. There was a telegraph station at Fort Mitchell near the west slope of Scotts Bluff. Indians frequently yanked down the wires and burned the poles.

Beginning July 1, 1861, a daily stage and mail service covered the Oregon Trail route, between St. Joseph and California. This stage only ran past Scotts Bluff for a year, as Indian troubles along the North Platte caused a transfer of route and equipment to the Cherokee Trail, along the South Platte and Lodgepole Creek to Cheyenne. Holladay's Overland Mail & Express Co., which operated the Concord Coaches of the "Overland Stage," likewise used the more southern route. The Overland Stage had an exciting but a brief life, for ribbons of steel soon spanned the continent.

The War between the States decided that the first transcontinental railroad should be on the central route from Omaha westward along the Platte and over the Rocky Mountains to the Great Salt Lake. In August 1865, Gen. Grenville M. Dodge reconnoitered the upper Platte country on horseback to determine the exact route of the Union Pacific. The North Platte Valley was considered by General Dodge, but he finally

selected the Lodge Pole Creek route, 50 miles south of Scotts Bluff. Construction proceeded rapidly, and on May 10, 1869, a juncture was made with the Central Pacific. This date effectively marks the decline of the Oregon Trail and the romantic era of the covered wagon.

Indians

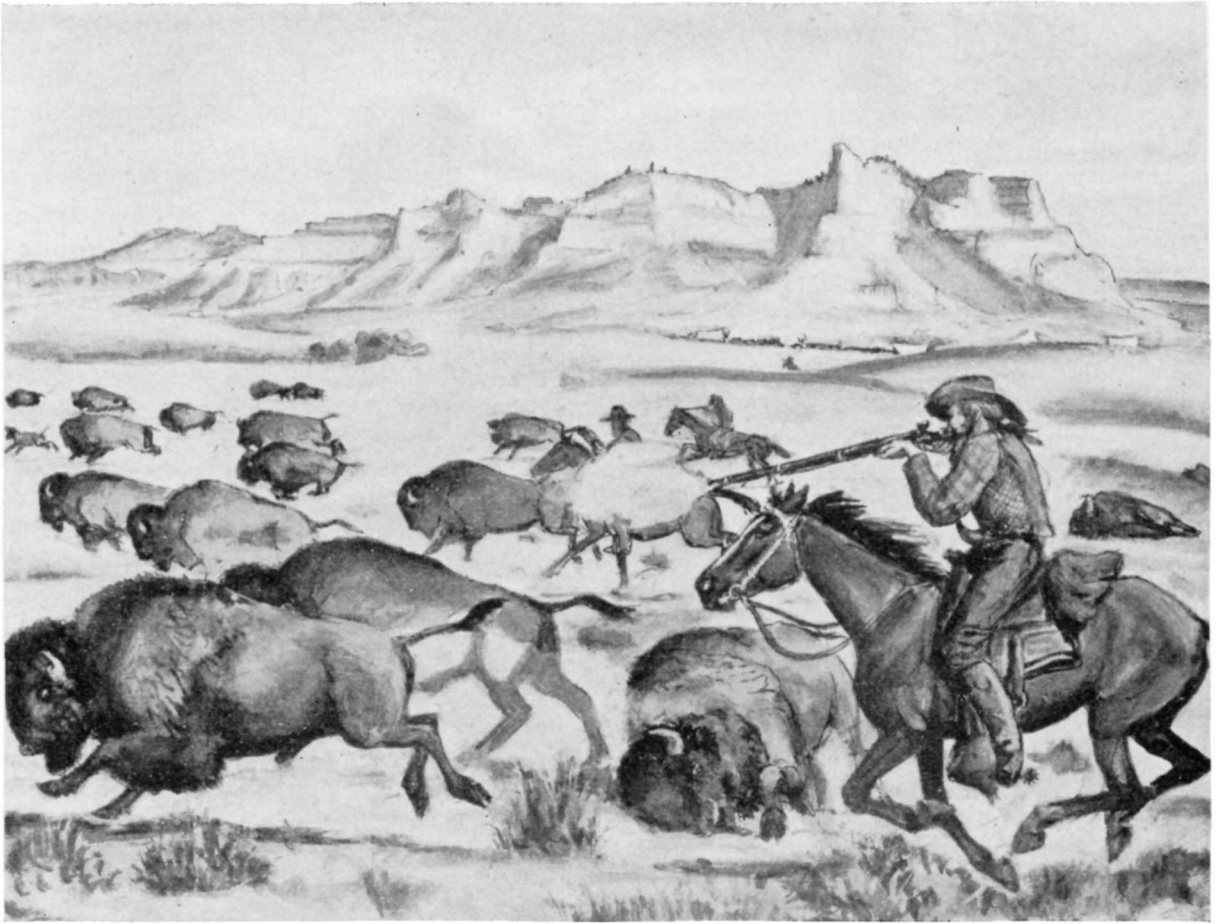
AT FIRST there was little trouble with the Plains Indians, who were contemptuous of the white man's insignificant numbers but appreciative of his trade goods. With the oncoming tide of emigration, the Indians became dismayed. Their buffalo herds began to dwindle, and epidemic diseases took their toll. When the army of California emigrants crossed the plains, wantonly

"The Talking Wires," showing a Pony Express Rider passing construction workers building the Pacific telegraph near Scotts Bluff; from a water-color painting in the Scotts Bluff museum.

slaughtering buffalo and stripping the land of forage, the Red Man began to take action.

At this time the North Platte country was in the hands of the powerful Teton Dakota Sioux and their allies, the Cheyenne and Arapaho. In 1851 the greatest peace council ever held on the Plains assembled at the mouth of Horse Creek, 15 miles west of Scotts Bluff, and here the Indians promised the United States commissioners peace and free passage of emigrants through their lands in return for an annual allowance of \$50,000 in trade goods. In 1854, a disagreement over an emigrant's cow led to the massacre of Lieutenant Grattan and 30 men, 8 miles below Fort Laramie. This was revenged the next year by the slaughter of a Sioux band on the Blue Water Creek, a few miles north of Ash Hollow. Thereafter, incidents of hostility multiplied, and the hatred of the Indians mounted steadily.





"Hunting Buffalo at Scotts Bluff," from a water-color painting in the Scotts Bluff museum.

The War between the States was the signal for open revolt. In 1863 the Plains tribes held a great war council in Horse Creek Valley, not far from Scotts Bluff, and in 1864 Captain Shuman, of the 11th Ohio Cavalry, built Camp Shuman, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles northwest of Mitchell Pass. This was made of adobe, with a log stockade and was designed to protect lines of communication from Indian attack. Its name was subsequently changed to Fort Mitchell, in honor of Gen. Robert B. Mitchell, commander of the district. This was likewise the origin of the naming of Mitchell Pass. In 1864-65, there were numerous skirmishes between soldiers and Indians along the North Platte. There are authentic accounts of fighting at nearby Horse Creek and Mud Springs, some evidence of a wagon train ambush in Mitchell Pass, and a siege of Fort Mitchell by the enraged Sioux.

At the end of the War between the States the Army was sent in some force to the Indian frontier, and peace settled upon the Platte, although hostilities continued for some time to the north. From 1871 to 1873, the Sioux, under Red Cloud, had an Indian agency near the present Wyoming line, 22 miles west of Scotts Bluff. In September 1872, about 9,000 Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoes were lodged here.

Indian hostilities on the Great Plains culminated in the Battle of the Little Big Horn, in southeastern Montana, in July 1876. This was precipitated by the gold rush into the Black Hills, the last stronghold of the Sioux. The Sidney-Deadwood Trail was one of the main routes to the Black Hills at that time. Crossing of the Platte was made at the Camp Clarke Bridge near modern Bridgeport, about 30 miles east of Scotts Bluff.

The Open Range

IN EARLY TIMES, when buffalo herds were so vast as to blacken the plains, the animal was hunted by Indians and whites alike for immediate food or hide demands. The thoughtless thousands of emigrants in the period 1849 to 1869 slaughtered wantonly, far beyond need. In the building of the western railroads there arose a demand for fresh meat that was supplied by professional buffalo hunters. When the railroads were put through, the hunters continued the slaughter for marketable hides and tongues. An idea of the appalling waste is conveyed by reports that buffalo bones sold for fertilizer in Kansas alone, between 1868 and 1881, represented 31,000,000 buffalo. Only a miracle of conservation has preserved the animal from total extinction. The buffalo deserted the Scotts Bluff area at an early date, being frightened away by the emigrations. For this reason, there was not as much slaughtering and bone hunting here as elsewhere in the Plains.

The buffalo was shortly replaced with the Texas longhorn. After the War between the States the northern demand for range cattle and the southern need for markets inevitably resulted in the great cattle drives into the northern ranges. This movement began about 1867. By 1868 the Texas Trail herds reached stations all along the Kansas Pacific in Kansas, and the Union Pacific in Nebraska. The principal trails in Nebraska terminated at Fort Kearney, North Platte, and Ogallala. During the years 1876 to 1881, the Sioux country was opened up, and thousands of head of cattle were driven out of Ogallala as stockers for the ranges of northwestern Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and Dakota. Thus came about the brief heyday of the cattle baron, with his enormous ranch holdings. The Scotts Bluff area was for many years claimed variously by the Coad Brothers, the Swan Land & Cattle Co., and the Bay State Land & Cattle Co.

The day of the open range and the roaming cowboy was short-lived. The cattle boom reached its peak in the early eighties; but overstocking of the range, business depression, and a succession of hard winters brought about a crash. Beginning in 1885, western Nebraska was invaded by homesteaders. The cattle ranches were broken up with barbed wire, and the wild, lank longhorns

were replaced by modern breeds of beef cattle, scientifically fattened in the feed lot. The city of Gering was plotted in 1888, and shortly thereafter irrigation was introduced into the North Platte Valley. This was the beginning of a new and as yet unfinished chapter in the history of Scotts Bluff.

What To Do and See at the Monument

SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT, established in 1919, embraces 2,300 acres of federally owned land, a roughly rectangular strip bounded on the south by Dome Rock and the South Bluff. The V-shaped passage between South Bluff and the main ramparts of Scotts Bluff is Mitchell Pass, familiar alike to the old Pony Express rider, the pioneer with his plodding ox team, and the fleeting motorist of today. Between Scotts Bluff and the North Platte River, which comprises the north boundary of the monument, is a tortuous maze of topography, known as the Badlands.

Remains of the Oregon Trail are to be found a few yards to the left of the east monument entrance on State Highway 86 and just across this highway from the monument headquarters area. From this point it jumps across the modern highway, describing a deep trough through Mitchell Pass, makes a hairpin turn toward the bluff, then meanders northwest along the base of the bluff toward the site of Old Fort Mitchell. The trail remains are marked and can be seen from the highway. At Mitchell Pass there is a marker, which tells briefly the story of the pass. There is a parking area, and one may walk from this point and follow the old trail for a distance of over 1 mile to the monument boundary.

At the headquarters area, the main building houses administrative offices for the monument and a museum. One exhibit room has been dedicated as an Oregon Trail memorial by the American Pioneer Trails Association, and plaques commemorating the Pony Express rider and the Covered Wagon Pioneer flank its entranceway. There are more than 150 water color paintings depicting successive phases in the history of the western frontier, two large dioramas illustrating methods employed by the white buffalo hunters, relic material gathered from the Scotts Bluff trading post sites, firearms, buffalo skulls, and other authentic historical objects.

Another exhibit room has been built, designed to relate the story of the rocks and the fossils at Scotts Bluff. A third exhibit room has been planned to outline the story of early man in the Scotts Bluff region.

The Scotts Bluff museum is open every day in the year from 9 a. m. until 5 p. m. Admission is free.

There is a paved road, 1.6 miles in length, from the headquarters area to the summit of Scotts Bluff. It is open during daylight hours, except when weather or road conditions are such as to make driving hazardous. A fee of 25 cents is collected by rangers at the summit road entranceway. A permit is issued, which authorizes the use of the permittee's automobile on the Scotts Bluff Summit Road throughout the calendar year. The fee is paid only on the original trip, but the permit card must be presented at the gate upon each return trip.

At the summit of Scotts Bluff there is a parking area designed to accommodate 80 cars. One may walk to several points of vantage and gain a complete panorama of the North Platte Valley from an elevation of about 800 feet above the river (4,649 feet above sea level). From here one may trace the route of the Oregon Trail and find such landmarks as Chimney Rock, 23 miles to the east, and Laramie Peak, 120 miles to the west. At the northernmost promontory there is an observation point, with a bronze orientation map and indicators which interpret the historical background of the peaceful irrigated valley spread below.

There is a foot trail from the headquarters area to the summit, via a spring on the east slope of the bluff. In the northern part of the monument there is a road open to visitors, which follows a modern irrigation ditch through the scenic Badlands, at the base of the bluff. The river boundary area is not open to automobiles.

There are no picnicking facilities available at the monument, but in the summer months the visitor will find such facilities at the Wildcat State Park, 10 miles south of Gering on State Highway 29.

How to Reach the Monument

SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT is located near the towns of Gering and Scottsbluff, in western Nebraska. It may be reached from the north side of the river by the Burlington Railroad, or U. S. Highway 26, and from the south side by the Union Pacific Railroad, or State Highway 86, which has lateral connections with U. S. Highway 30, the "Lincoln Highway," at Kimball and Sidney.

Administration

RANGERS in uniform are available at the headquarters area to provide information and to interpret the history of Scotts Bluff to the visitor. Inquiries and communications concerning the area should be addressed to the Custodian, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebr.

Reproduction of the original sketch by W. H. Jackson of Fort Mitchell showing Scotts Bluff and Mitchell Pass in the background, during the era of the 1860's. From The Oregon Trail by Francis Parkman, The John C. Winston Co., Publishers.

