

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Saddle Rock Self-Guiding Nature Trail, extending 1 3/4 miles from the Summit Parking Area to the visitor center, will help you gain the fullest understanding of the monument's natural history. It is hard-surfaced and the grades are easy because of numerous switchbacks. You may walk either direction on the trail, but the easiest way is to hike down from the summit (which can also be reached by paved road) and have some member of your party drive your car to the visitor center parking area.

The north promontory of Scotts Bluff has an observation point from which you can see a panorama of the North Platte Valley—you should be able to trace the Oregon Trail route and locate other landmarks, including Chimney Rock, 25 miles east, and Laramie Peak, 100 miles west. There is also an overlook on the south side of the summit.

Oregon Trail. Except for intermittent stretches of cultivation or where modern roads have been superimposed, the trough of the old trail, ground down by the passage of a million emigrants, can still be seen from the transmonument road south of the east entrance, across from the visitor center, and in Mitchell Pass. From the visitor center, you can walk along the Oregon Trail to the William H. Jackson campsite of 1866.

Scotts Bluff

NATIONAL MONUMENT • NEBRASKA

ADMINISTRATION

Scotts Bluff National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 427, Gering, NB 69341, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

Watch for rattlesnakes.

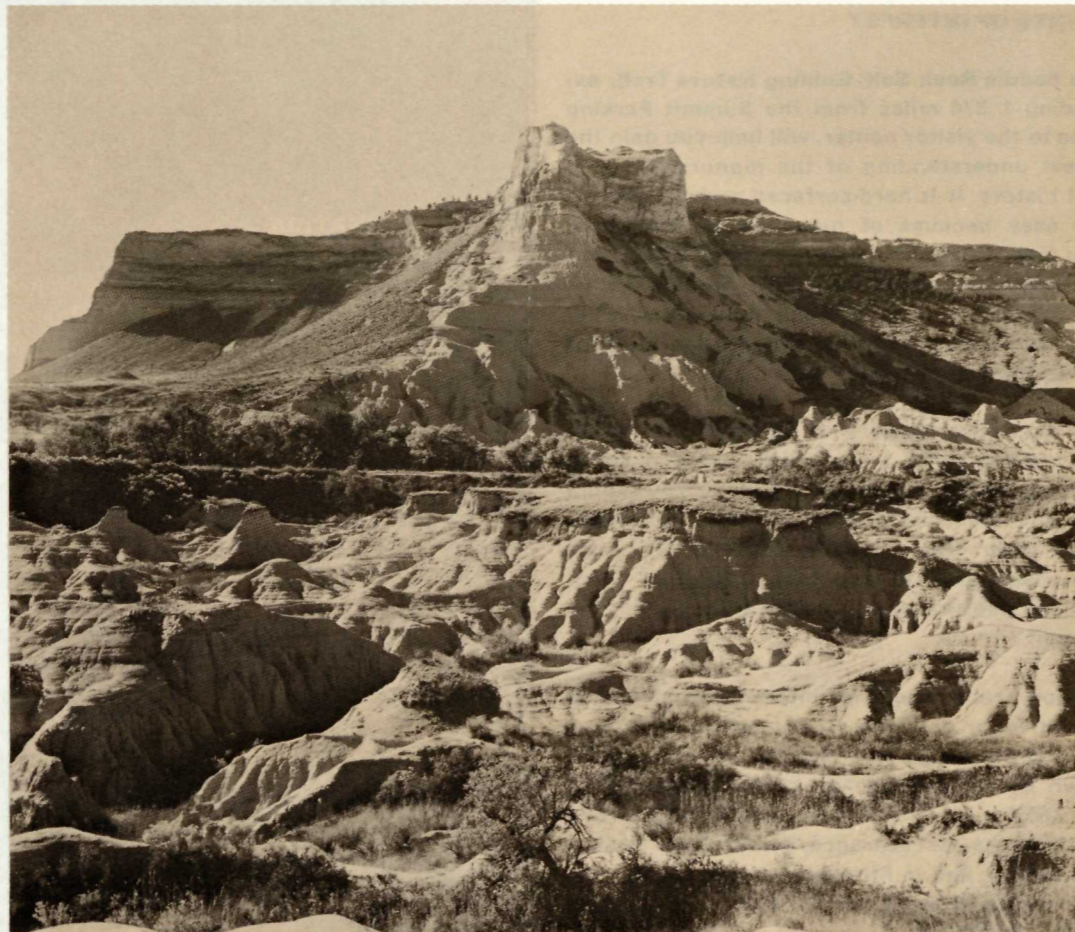
U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Scotts Bluff is a massive promontory rising 800 feet above the valley floor and 4,649 feet above sea level. Named for Hiram Scott, a fur trapper who died in the vicinity about 1828, the bluff is an ancient landmark and was noted by the earliest tribes whose records have been preserved. To the Indians of the Plains, Scotts Bluff was Me-a-pa-te, or "the-hill-that-is-hard-to-go-around."

The bluff was once part of the ancient High Plains. Erosion over long periods has cut down the surrounding valleys to their present level, leaving Scotts Bluff and the adjoining hills as remnants of the unbroken plains which now lie farther to the west.

The North Platte Valley, of which Scotts Bluff is the dominant natural feature, has been a human migration corridor for centuries. Some stone artifacts found here indicate that man has been here for more than 10,000 years. When white men first arrived, they found that this area was a favorite hunting ground of Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians, for here vast herds of buffalo came to water.

The first white men to see Scotts Bluff were Robert Stuart and his companions, who in 1812-13 passed by carrying dispatches to John Jacob Astor from his new fur post in Oregon. In the years that followed, trappers and traders



saw it when they brought their beaver pelts down the Platte River to settlements farther east; and explorers and missionaries passed the bluff on their way from advance posts of civilization into the western wilderness.

In 1843 the vanguard of a great pioneer army passed Scotts Bluff in the first large migration to Oregon. Four years later Brigham Young led the first group of his followers past the bluff on the north side of the Platte, a route later famous as the Mormon Trail. The 2 years following the discovery of gold in California in 1848 saw more than 150,000 men, women, and children traveling through the area.

In 1860-61 Pony Express riders galloped through Mitchell Pass. They were followed shortly by the first transcontinental telegraph. The Overland Mail, Pony Express, Pacific Telegraph, and Overland Stage built stations near Scotts Bluff. In 1864 Fort Mitchell was established 2½ miles to the northwest to protect stagecoaches and wagon trains on the Oregon Trail. The following year the North Platte Valley was considered as a possible route for the Union Pacific, then building westward to link up with the Central Pacific to form the first transcontinental railroad, but a line through Cheyenne was chosen instead. The completion of the railroad in 1869 marked the decline of the Oregon Trail, although it continued in use locally for many years.

In the late 1870's and early 1880's, Scotts Bluff was the geographical center of the open-range cattle industry, the last great romantic episode of the frontier. With the arrival of the first homesteaders in the North Platte Valley in 1885, the local frontier disappeared and Scotts Bluff became a symbol of the Nation's past.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Scotts Bluff National Monument adjoins the south bank of the North Platte River 3 miles west of Gering via Nebr. 92, which bisects the area from east to west. The monument is 5 miles southwest of the town of Scottsbluff via U.S. 26, which connects with Nebr. 92 north of the river. From U.S. 30 it is 42 miles to the monument via Nebr. 71.

The visitor center contains exhibits telling the story of the westward migration and recalling Scotts Bluff's role as a landmark on the Oregon and Mormon Trails. Paintings by William Henry Jackson, the famous pioneer photographer and artist who followed the Oregon Trail as a bullwhacker in 1866, are also displayed.

Please help preserve Scotts Bluff by not disturbing vegetation, wildlife, or natural features, defacing any structures or signs, or driving off established roads. Firearms are not permitted in the area.