

Scotts Bluff

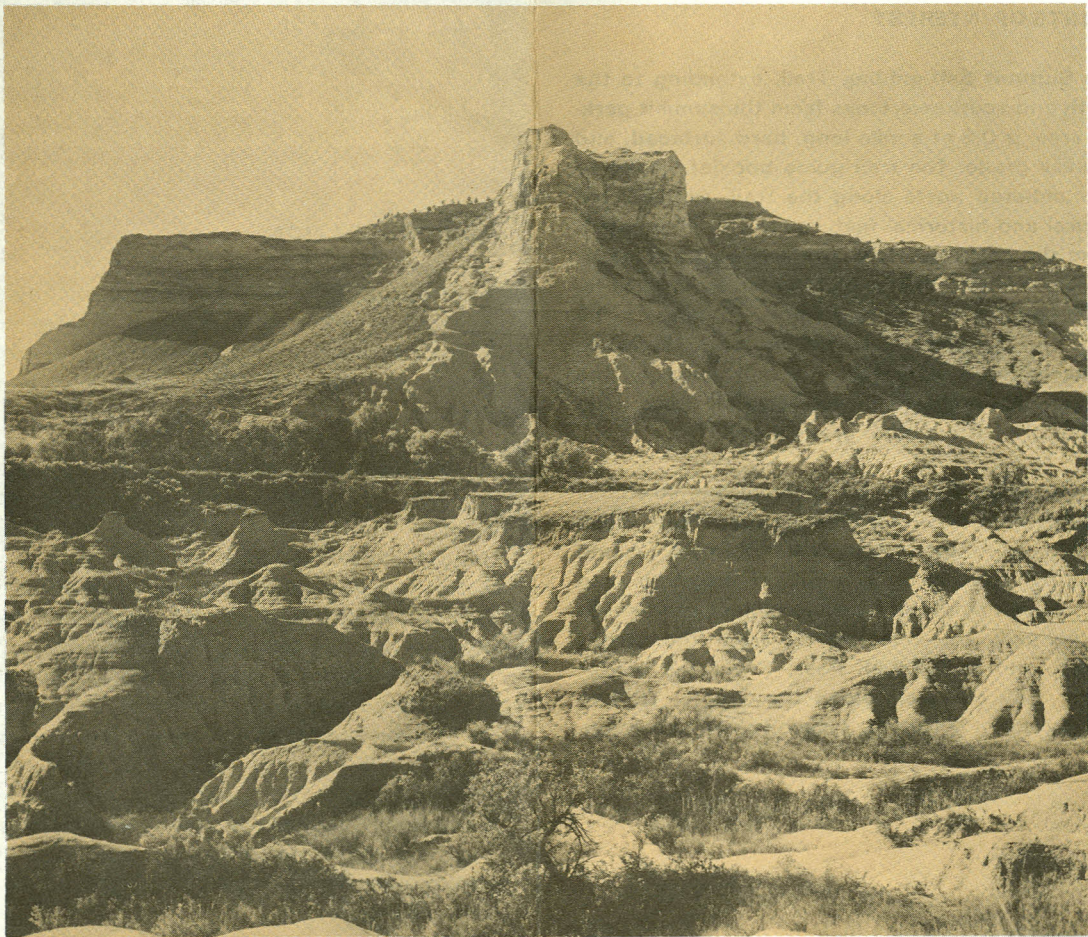
NATIONAL MONUMENT • NEBRASKA

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.

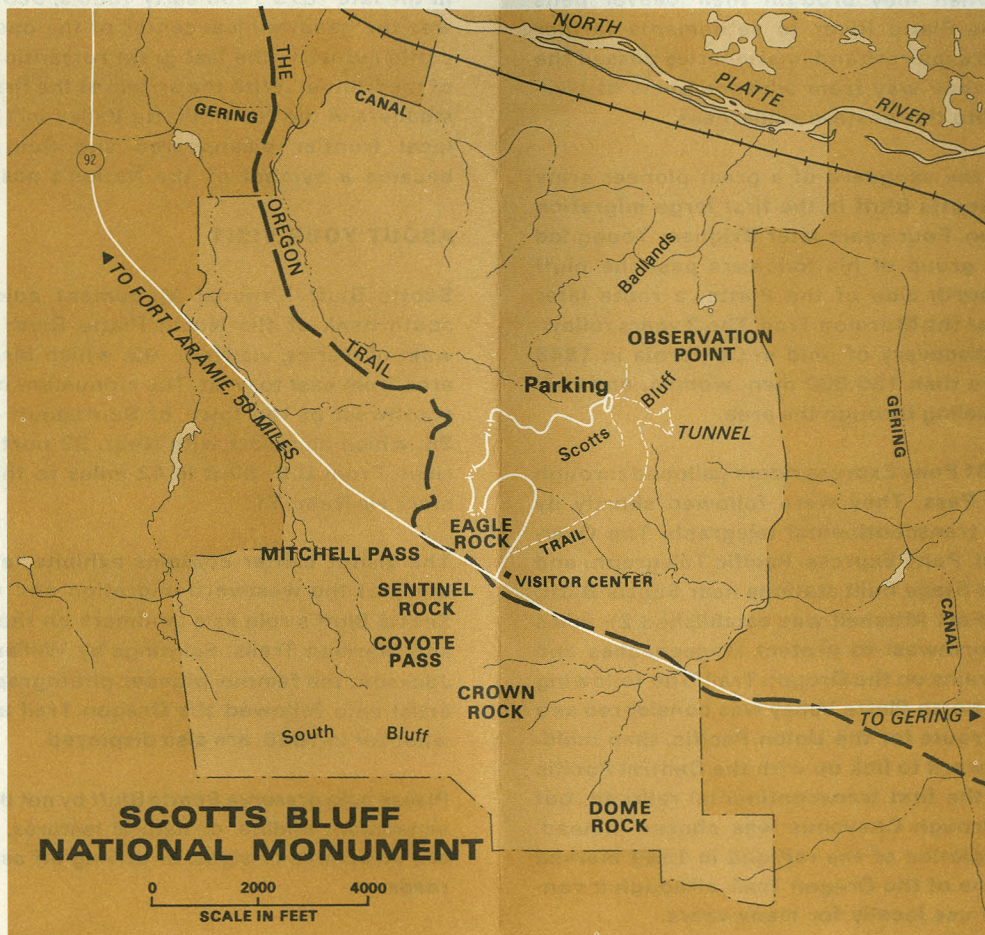
In the late 1870's and early 1880's, Scotts Bluff was the geographical center of the open-range cattle industry, the last great romantic episode of the frontier. With the arrival of the first homesteaders in the North Platte Valley in 1885, the local frontier disappeared and Scotts Bluff became a symbol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



POINTS OF INTEREST

The **Summit Self-guiding Trail**, extending to the north and south overlooks from the summit parking area, is 0.6 of a mile long, hard surfaced, and an easy grade. The trail guide booklet, keyed to 17 numbered posts along the trail, explains the natural and historical features of the monument. From the north overlook there is a panorama of the North Platte Valley, highlighted by several famous landmarks: Chimney Rock, 25 miles to the east, and Laramie Peak, 100 miles to the west. From the south overlook, you look down on the Oregon Trail approach to Mitchell Pass. The summit trail offers other grand vistas.

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 transmontane 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 site where William H. Jackson camped in 1866.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

For your own protection while on the Summit Self-guiding Trail, do not venture off the path to the cliff's edge; remain on the established trail. Firearms are not permitted in the monument.

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 responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service

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