

Scotts Bluff

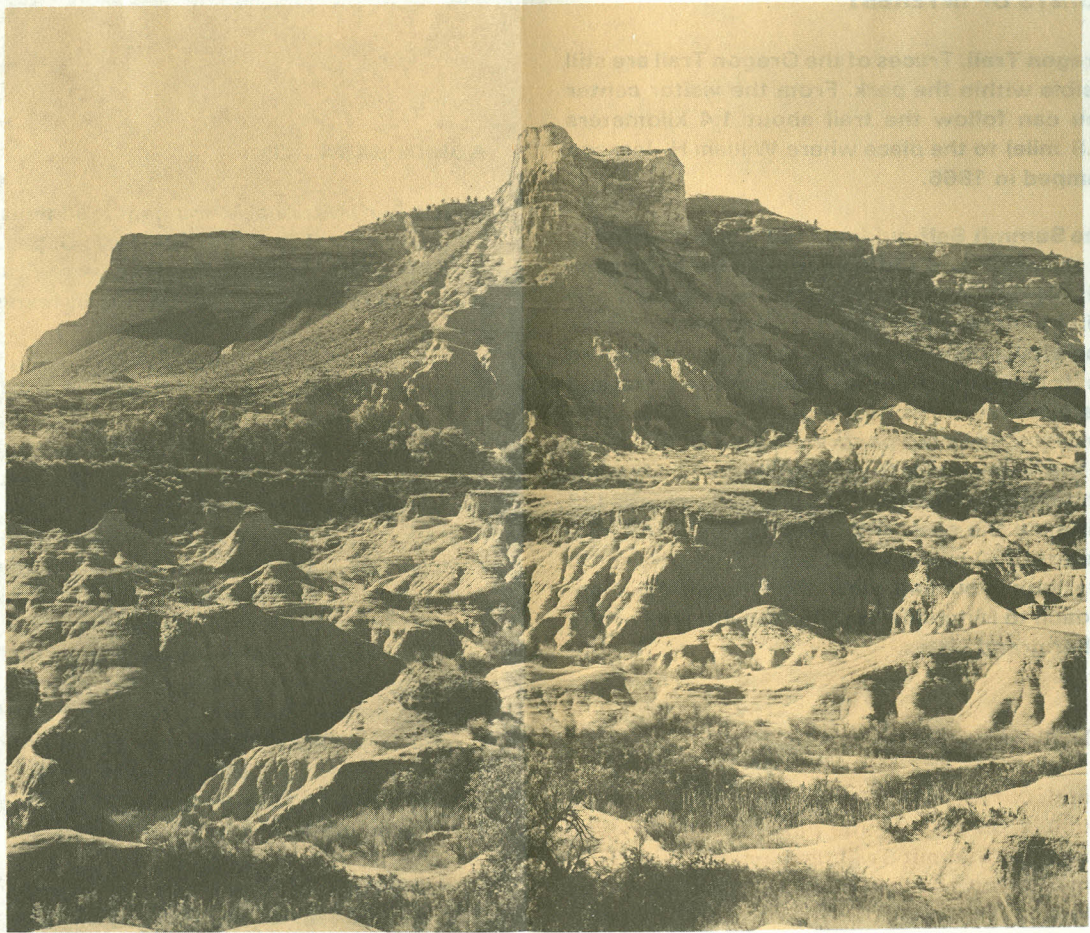
NATIONAL MONUMENT • NEBRASKA

Scotts Bluff is a massive promontory rising 245 meters (800 feet) above the valley floor and 1,420 meters (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, noted by the earliest tribes whose records have been preserved. To the Indians of the Plains, it 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 army of pioneers 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. In the two years following the discovery of gold in California in 1848, more than 150,000 men, women, and children traveled 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 4 kilometers (2.5 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.

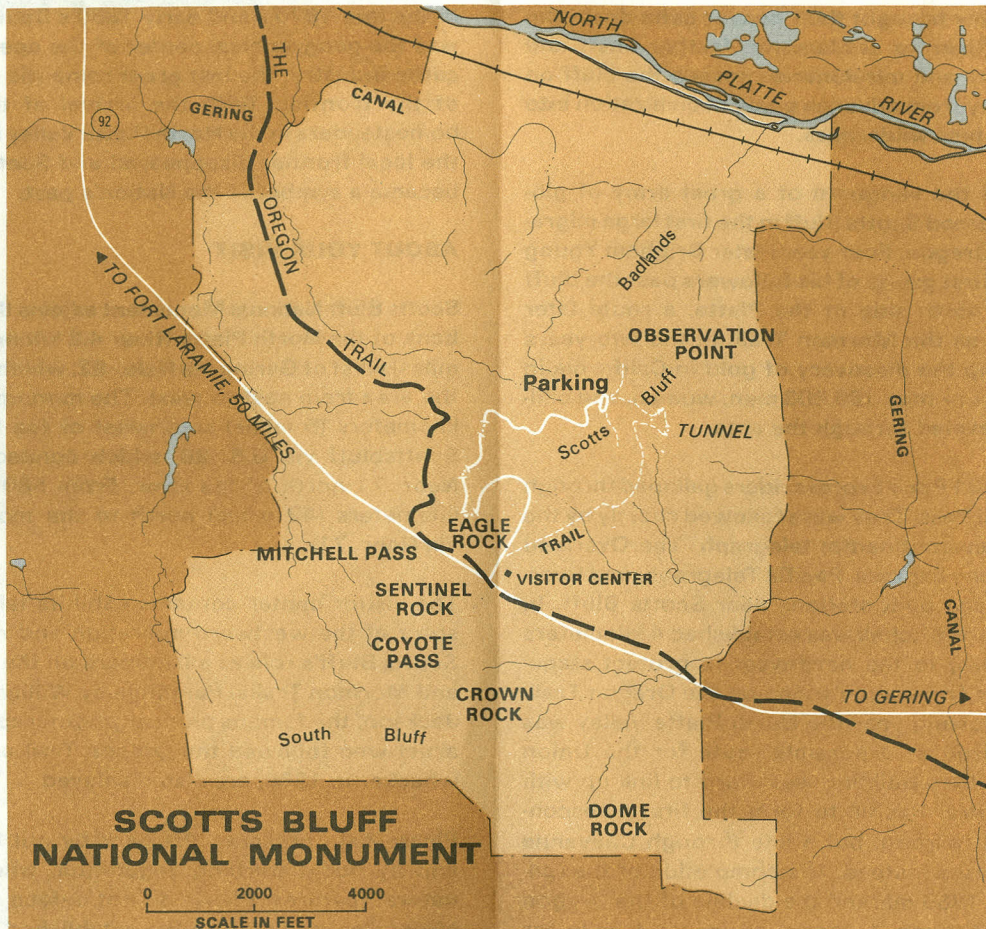
In the late 1870's and early 1880's Scotts Bluff was the geographical center of the open-range cattle industry, the last great romantic episode of the frontier. With the arrival of the first homesteaders in the North Platte Valley in 1885, the local frontier disappeared and Scotts Bluff became a symbol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

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Scotts Bluff National Monument adjoins the south bank of the North Platte River 4.8 kilometers (3 miles) west of Gering via Nebr. 92, which bisects the area from east to west. The monument is 8 kilometers (5 miles) southwest of the town of Scottsbluff via U.S. 26, which connects with Nebr. 71 north of the river. From I-80 it is 68 kilometers (42 miles) north 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 the park by not littering and by not disturbing vegetation, wildlife, or natural features. Please do not deface signs or structures, and stay on the established roads.



POINTS OF INTEREST

Oregon Trail. Traces of the Oregon Trail are still visible within the park. From the visitor center you can follow the trail about 1.4 kilometers (0.8 mile) to the place where William H. Jackson camped in 1866.

The Summit Self-guiding Trail. The trail extends to the north and south overlooks from the summit parking area, and is 0.96 kilometer (0.6 of a mile) long, hard surfaced, with an easy grade. The trail guide booklet is keyed to numbered posts along the trail and explains the natural and historical features of the park. From the north overlook there is a panoramic view of the valley of the North Platte River, highlighted by famous landmarks: Chimney Rock, 37 kilometers (23 miles) to the east, and Laramie Peak, 168 kilometers (120 miles) to the west. From the south overlook, you can view the Oregon Trail approach to Mitchell Pass. The summit trail offers other grand vistas.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Watch out for rattlesnakes. The rock is soft and crumbly, so stay on the path to the cliff edge along the Summit Trail, and on all trails. Firearms are not allowed in the park. Please do not litter.

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, NE 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.

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