



## Five Rocks of Scotts Bluff



### Scotts Bluff

Scotts Bluff, historically referred to as Scotts Bluff's second pass, refers to the range of hills which parallels the river, and is the largest isolated land mass in Nebraska.

Although Scotts Bluff was named for Hiram Scott, an employee of the American Fur Company who died here in 1828, it was referred to by many names throughout history such as: Capital Hills, Convent Rock, Gibraltar, Scott's Rock or Scotts Bluff Mountain to name a few.

In 1852, G. A. Smith said, *"These bluffs are 2 in number, situated on either side of the road"*.

In 1853, Leonetto Cipriani described Scotts Bluff as *"a semi-circle valley resembling an amphitheater with five enormous, almost regular steps of calcareous blocks"*.

In the same year, S. H. Taylor said the bluff *"is nearly divided but encloses a fine green area like a court, around which, except on the east, rises what seems like an imposing pile of regal buildings in the style of the earlier days of monarchy. It appears as if two immense structures had been raised . . . East . . . is a beautiful tower, apparently as perfect in its form as the hand of man could make it . . . In the center . . . rises a noble perfect dome"*.

In 1860, Richard Burton stated that *"Scotts Bluffs . . . are divided into three distinct masses, the largest 800 feet high . . . on the right and next to the river"* [Scotts Bluff], then a "second castle" [South Bluff], and "an outwork, a huge detached cylinder" [Dome Rock].

Edward Bryant, a future Governor of California, and J. Quinn Thornton both wrote descriptions of Scotts Bluff and nearby hills. They imagined "the ruins of some ancient vast city," complete with domes, towers, temples, minarets, amphitheaters, frowning parapets, and even "a royal bath".

### Dome Rock

The butte is 4,396 feet (1,339.90 meters) above sea level.

According to early diaries, Dome Rock reminded pioneers of the capitol dome, hence the name.

It is called Dome Rock because of its peculiar shape. It appears from a distance more like a grain elevator. The name "Dome Rock" was officially adopted by the U.S.G.S. on June 11, 1941, after being submitted by the National Park Service on April 3rd of that same year.

Dome Rock has been referred to by many names down through history, such as a: tower, spire, lighthouse, castle, church and cathedral. At one time, Charles Gering owned half of Dome Rock and the National Park Service owned the other half. The Oregon Trail Museum Association purchased Gering's half. This was later sold to the National Park Service.



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## Crown Rock

This promontory is 4,557 feet (1,388.97 meters) above sea level. Early pioneer diary accounts mention that men would climb up here and roll rocks down on wolves in the trees below to see them run. The crown is the knob of rock on top of the summit.



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## Sentinel Rock

The squat column sitting on the end of the bluff is 4,390 feet (1,338 meters) above sea level. Sentinel Rock forms the south abutment of Mitchell Pass. The rock is named for the comparatively small block which stands like a watchtower against the sky that formed as the capping layers of strata eroded away. Sentinel Rock was originally referred to as Sentinel Hill. There is a tradition that this pinnacle, as well as that portion of Scotts Bluff which adjoins Mitchell Pass on the north, was used as an observation tower.



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## Eagle Rock

Looking like a halved dome, Eagle Rock is 4,482 feet (1,366.11 meters) above sea level. In 1853, Mariett Foster Cummings stated *“There is a pass through that is guarded on one side by Sugar Loaf Rock [Eagle Rock], on the other by one that resembles a square house with an observatory [Sentinel Rock]. There is one (nearest the river) that is certainly the most magnificent thing I ever saw.”* Eagle Rock forms the north side of Mitchell Pass through which thousands of emigrants drove their covered wagons single file and Pony Express riders galloped to deliver mail.



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## Saddle Rock

This narrow buttress of rock is 4,659 feet (1,366.11 meters) above sea level and 780 feet above the North Platte River. Saddle Rock was named for the indentation between two thin spires on the bluff's edge. Saddle Rock has been referred to through the years as “Motorcycle Rock”, “Grandpa’s Toes”, and “Steamboat Rock” to name a few. The Saddle Rock Trail runs from the Visitor Center to the summit of Scotts Bluff and has its own tunnel to walk through.

